

COLONIAL AFFAIRS IN BRITISH POLITICS, 1945-1959

The domestic politics of the transition from  
"imperial mission" to "wind of change"

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## ABSTRACT

In the years after 1959 Britain's disengagement from her colonial Empire was comprehensive and rapid. A newly re-elected Conservative government, well aware that many special interests would suffer in the process, set out nevertheless to press the policy of decolonisation speedily to its end. This new tempo of policy was a natural enough response to the experiences of the preceding years. The decade and a half since the war had encompassed both the rise of articulate and aggressive colonial nationalism and a steep decline in Britain's own power in the world. What Macmillan and Macleod recognised, in essence, was that a point had been reached beyond which the continuation of the old gradualist tempo of devolution would precipitate more colonial unrest than Britain could hope to contain.

Thus the period from the end of the war to the general election of 1959 appears in retrospect as the penultimate phase of Britain's colonial experience, spanning those events and movements of ideas in terms of which the hurried conclusion of the early sixties may be understood. This work attempts to discuss the domestic politics of colonial policy in the period. It is motivated not by any general belief that the approach to decolonisation is best studied from the domestic point of view, but simply by the hope of illuminating an area of the picture which, by comparison with the events in the colonies themselves, has remained in shadow.

The study deals with the activities of the major political parties and certain pressure groups within that area of British political activity having the Colonial Office and Parliament as its focal points. It is organised around two broad questions. Firstly, how were colonial problems and issues dealt with in British politics; that is, what kinds of attitudes and activities were stimulated among parties and groups by the existence, and the changing character, of this area of British responsibility? Secondly, how far did domestic political activity affect the course of governmental policy?

Chapter I attempts to set the study in perspective with a narrative account of colonial policy in the period, emphasising official attitudes towards colonial evolution and the distinctive contributions of successive Colonial Secretaries. The two "focal points," Colonial Office and Parliament, are then considered. Chapter II outlines the organisation and functioning of the Office and discusses some of the means by which domestic pressures could be applied to ministers and officials. Chapter III seeks to assess how adequately Parliament dealt with colonial affairs, and with the problems of representation and publicity peculiar to this field; it is argued that on the whole MPs interested in the subject did better parliamentary work than many writers have allowed.

The major part of the study, occupying Chapters IV to X, examines the activities of the parties, Labour and Conservative, and several groups, most notably the specialist groups surrounding the parties - the Fabian Colonial Bureau, the Movement for Colonial Freedom, the Conservative Commonwealth Council - and, on some issues, such non-party but politically significant groups as the Africa Bureau. The argument of these chapters may be summarised in terms of the two questions posed above.

With respect to the first question, the basic trend is clear enough. The main parties and their associated groups progressed from an apparent general agreement on colonial policy in the forties to a series of sharp disagreements over colonial issues in the fifties. It is interesting to consider this development in relation to the conventional wisdom that, in the interests of the dependent peoples themselves, a bi-partisan approach was the first essential for colonial policy. Why was there so conspicuous a departure from this conventional wisdom?

Actually, there was never any real prospect of a completely bi-partisan policy in the period. Though many colonial matters remained non-controversial throughout, there were certain major problems, particularly in relation to multi-racial territories in Africa, on which the parties consistently thought and felt differently. Even in the forties the apparent consensus on colonial policy rested on an extremely conditional basis, being sustained chiefly because the main divisive issues were generally avoided, the Labour left and the Conservative right were unusually ineffectual, and the parties'

chief front-bench spokesmen were able to co-operate unusually well.

In the early fifties, by contrast, a number of issues brought out and highlighted inter-party differences. Central African federation, above all, polarised the parties. For this matter brought into clearer focus than any previous issue the fundamental relationships between race and political power, and virtually imposed on the parties the duty of choosing to support the claims of one race against the other. It followed from the whole patterns of ideas and beliefs in the two parties that they should align themselves with different races. Elsewhere a series of colonial "crises", notably in Kenya, Uganda, British Guiana and Cyprus, cumulatively called into question such traditional assumptions of policy as "gradualism" and "British initiative". The Conservative government's somewhat inflexible responses to these crises were regarded by the Labour Party as additional justification for breaching the bi-partisan "norm".

The issues of these years produced further complications within the party-group cluster on the Labour side. In simplified terms, the Labour movement found itself dividing more sharply than before into a moderate, or "economics first" school - those who felt that ripeness for self-government should be measured by economic as well as political factors - and a radical, or "politics first" school - those who felt that political readiness alone was sufficient.

What happened between the mid-fifties and the end of the decade, in essence, was that both parties moved relatively to the left such that something akin to this "politics first-economics first" dispute was projected onto the larger inter-party battle. In the Labour Party a version of the politics-first belief became ascendant in the course of a long-drawn process of policy reformulation. This did not entail an unconditional acceptance by the leadership of the whole radical syndrome, and there was plenty of evidence that the leading colonial nationalists, to whose demands Labour's attitudes were increasingly geared, did not yet consider the party "advanced" enough. Yet in committing itself to transfer power to Africans in plural societies, in moving from a conservative to a radical estimate of the

possibilities of British intervention in Central Africa, in declaring that strategic considerations were irrelevant to the question of self-rule in such territories as Cyprus, the Labour leadership was still far enough in advance of the Government to be able to demand policy changes with its traditional self-image, as the party of the "oppressed", intact.

But Conservative policy was not in fact as static as Labour seemed sometimes to think. Under the pressure of events, the process of retreating from one traditional stronghold to the next was well under way by the end of the decade. The residual-imperialist rump had been isolated and left ineffective in the conflicts over imperial economic unification and the 1954 Suez withdrawal (though the subsequent Suez invasion brought a brief revival of glory). And in 1958-9 one of the most firmly drawn of Conservative lines was crossed when the Government publicly abandoned, in effect, its belief in the military necessity of hanging on to Cyprus - and did so with no significant party disturbances. By 1959 only the most fervently held of the old commitments remained: the commitment to stand by the settlers of East and Central Africa. Ostensibly this commitment was still being justified in terms of the territories' long-term economic interest. Yet the African outbursts of 1959 were making it more than ever apparent that the real issue was that of distribution of political power among the races in the near future. This issue stood now as the only real barrier against the establishment of broad inter-party agreement.

The 1959 election was crucial. A new generation came to prominence in the Conservative Party. There developed an internal conflict analogous to that already fought in the Labour movement. The result was a victory for men whose policy was essentially that of the Labour leadership. The final line was crossed; Government, as well as Opposition, had absorbed the lessons of the fifties.

We are led to the second question: how far did domestic political activity affect the course of actual policy?

Examples of obvious and direct influence on colonial policy-making by domestic parties and pressure groups are fairly difficult to find. This need be no cause for surprise. The central relationship wherein the themes and priorities of colonial policy were defined was always that continuous and

more or less private dialogue between the British Government and colonial political leaders; domestic parties and groups were only some among the numerous bodies which sought to impinge upon this relationship from outside. Yet influence was, in fact, intermittently possible. Let us consider pressure groups, opposition party and governing party in turn.

The only real weapons wielded by most domestic groups which sought to influence the government on colonial policy were their special relationships, if any, with decision-makers and colonial leaders and their expertise, if any, on their subject. But the period studied yields a quite striking example of the sustained efficacy of these weapons: that of the Fabian Colonial Bureau in the years 1945-50. And if this is only one example, it should not thereby be assumed that all the other activities of groups were so much wasted effort. Direct and visible impact on specific matters was not the only type of goal that most groups set themselves, and hence not the only criterion of their success. The various groups discussed in the study all undertook such tasks as mobilising sections of the community, playing host to colonial leaders and acting as their advisers and intermediaries in negotiations with policy-makers. In view of the fact that most of the colonial interests whose lobbying these groups assisted were, in the end, extremely successful in their lobbying, there is no reason to doubt that such group activities were of some consequence for policy-making - diffuse, indirect and unmeasurable consequence, but no less real for that.

For its part, the main opposition party retained always the potential ability to influence the course of policy by exploiting its role as a future government. Though not itself a participant in the policy-making dialogue, it could hope to affect the participants' demands and responses in conflict situations by aligning itself either on the government side (in "bi-partisan" areas of policy) or the side of some colonial interest (in "partisan" areas). Given suitable circumstances this device could and did work. Again, the point refers not only to immediately observable pressures on specific issues, such as policy towards Cyprus or the matter of Seretse Khama's repatriation; no less it refers to such more general and diffuse matters as the overall tempo of the Conservative approach to the wind of change. It is fair to conclude that Labour's efforts to augment the political power of the interests it supported in plural societies must have

played a real, if minor, part in bringing about the changed political climate to which the Conservatives eventually responded.

And finally, the governing party. In the Labour period there was very little visible evidence of back-bench influence over front-bench on colonial matters. But this was because very few back-benchers felt strongly about the subject, and most of those who did were prepared to channel their efforts through the Fabian Colonial Bureau. In the Conservative period, by contrast, there were quite obviously some strong feelings among back-benchers. If the party remained united on colonial policy in the fifties, it was chiefly because the Government generally stayed within the bounds that the party thought appropriate. In cases where the Government did give a lead away from Tory tradition - as on imperial preference, the Suez withdrawal, and eventually Cyprus - it could do so only because it well knew that the great majority of back-bench members were by then ready to support it, and that those who opposed could safely be represented as a small minority of extremists. On the absolutely central issue of the settler colonies, however, the opposing faction was not so small; and the leadership's awareness of the latent strength of the party's settler lobby was certainly high among the factors which prevented rash policy departures. Not until after 1959 did the composition and attitudes of the intra-party majority alter enough to enable new bounds to be set for policy towards these areas. In this instance, it may be said that influence was no less real for being latent and constraining rather than manifest and activist.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is concerned with the impact of colonial events and problems on British domestic politics, and conversely the impact of domestic politics on the course of colonial policy, in the period leading up to British decolonisation. The work was supervised by Dame Margery Perham and Mr. D.N. Chester, and I owe my principal thanks to them.

Further thanks are due to Mr. Chester in his capacity as Warden of Nuffield College, in company with the College's Fellows, for electing me to a studentship in 1962-4 and allowing me further use of college facilities in 1964-5.

Through Dame Margery's good offices I was able to interview, and in some cases re-interview, several people who had participants' views of the events I wished to study. Four former Secretaries of State for the Colonies, Lord Boyd, Lord Chandos, James Griffiths and the late Arthur Creech Jones, provided me with a wealth of information and opinion; highly flavoured personalities all, they also conveyed, in distinctive ways, the "feel" of their office. Gerald Sayers and John Hatch talked willingly of their past experiences as Commonwealth Officers in the Conservative and Labour parties respectively. Other participants whose remarks were of value to me were Dr. Rita Hinden, former secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau; Lord Brockway, chairman of the Movement for Colonial Freedom; R.D. Milne, of the Conservative Central Office; Lord Campbell, chairman of Bookers; and F.J. Pedler of the United Africa Company. Neither supervisors nor interviewees, of course, share with me the blame for the errors of fact and failures of judgment in this work.

The Conservative and Labour Party head offices and the Fabian Commonwealth Bureau all permitted me to consult papers and files in their keeping. In particular, my access to the extremely valuable Fabian collection, which contains material pertaining to the Colonial Office and many other institutions as well as the Bureau itself, was completely

unrestricted. I thereby feel compensated in some degree for my greatest disappointment - that the Creech Jones papers did not become available for study until after I had left England.

The staffs of several libraries were courteous in meeting my requirements. I must especially thank those connected with, in London, the libraries of the Colonial Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office, the House of Commons, the Royal Commonwealth Society and the press cuttings library at Chatham House; in Oxford, the libraries of Nuffield College, Rhodes House and Queen Elizabeth House; and in Melbourne, the State Public Library of Victoria and the libraries of Monash and Melbourne Universities.

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## INTRODUCTION

"Colonial policy is almost the only field of discussion in which there is a broad identity of aim and purpose between the two parties."

Bernard Braine MP, letter to The Times, 4 May 1955.

"There are real differences in conception of [colonial] policy between the two parties."

Arthur Creech Jones MP, letter to The Times, 12 May 1955.

In the years after 1959 Britain's disengagement from her colonial Empire was comprehensive and rapid. A newly re-elected Conservative government, well aware that many special interests would suffer in the process, set out nevertheless to press the policy of decolonisation speedily to its end. No previous government had shown any such clear resolve. Before 1959 British ministers were still promising most colonies their independence eventually rather than soon. For some of the more "difficult" territories, in particular those in Africa where different races competed for the succession to power, the very criteria of readiness for independence were still being phrased in question-begging terms.

Yet the new tempo of policy after 1959 was a natural enough response to the experiences of the preceding years. The decade and a half since the war had encompassed both the rise of articulate and aggressive colonial nationalism and a steep decline in Britain's own power in the world. What the Macmillan government recognised, in essence, was that a point had been reached beyond which the continuation of the old gradualist tempo of devolution would simply precipitate more colonial unrest than Britain could possibly hope to contain.

Thus the period from the end of the war to the general election of 1959 appears in retrospect as the penultimate phase of Britain's colonial experience, spanning those events and movements of ideas in terms of which the hurried conclusion of the early sixties may be understood. This work attempts to discuss the domestic politics of colonial policy

in the period. It is motivated not by any general belief that the approach to decolonisation is best studied from the domestic point of view, but simply by the hope of illuminating an area of the picture which, by comparison with the events in the territories themselves, has remained relatively in shadow.

The study addresses itself to two broad questions. Firstly, how were colonial problems and issues dealt with in British politics; that is, what kinds of attitudes and activities were stimulated among parties and interested groups by the existence, and the changing character, of this area of British responsibility? Secondly, how far did domestic political activity affect the course of governmental policy?

Of the two, the first question lends itself more readily to discussion. It was in the post-war period that the overall direction of colonial policy became an "issue" in metropolitan politics. At the end of the war most people in British politics could still regard the colonies as a durable but peripheral fact of political life. Among those who took a real interest in the subject a belief in Britain's "mission" was still pervasive: it had, indeed, acquired a new strength from recently formulated ideas about "development" as a policy objective. By the end of the fifties the picture was transformed. The major colonial issues were central rather than peripheral; and the majority of politicians were ready to accept that new trend in policy which came to be symbolised in the image of a British government bowing before the wind of change.<sup>1</sup>

Even as British power to control the course of colonial events slipped steadily away, in short, the search for solutions to colonial problems stimulated greater political activity at home than ever before. Interactions among government, opposition, pressure groups and colonial leaders became continuous and lively. Moreover colonial policy, previously a matter of general bi-partisan accord, became in the fifties one of

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<sup>1</sup> As it happens, the man whose name is linked with this phrase never intended it to be symbolic in quite this way. See Anthony Sampson, Macmillan: A Study in Ambiguity (Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1967), pp.189-90; also Lord Egremont (John Wyndham, formerly Macmillan's private secretary), "The Wind of Change Myth", Sunday Times, 10 May 1964.

the more controversial of topics. Malaya, Kenya, Uganda, British Guiana, Cyprus, Malta, above all Central Africa: during that busy decade the problems of all these territories provoked political conflict in Britain, sometimes creating divisions not only between but also within parties and groups.<sup>2</sup>

All this activity, commanding as it did the energies and talents of a great many people, is interesting to look back on and deserves an attempt at analysis. Certainly there is no lack of questions to be considered along the way. What conceptions of the aims and methods of colonial policy were in fact held by parties and the most interested groups? Precisely why and how did the change from the political accord of the forties to the quite vigorous contention of the fifties take place? How far was the discussion of colonial affairs in metropolitan politics affected by the peculiar nature of the subject; in particular by its capacity to attract into the debate large numbers of people and organisations inspired much more by altruism than by self-interest? How adequately did the Imperial Parliament (as some of its Members still liked to call it) deal with colonial affairs? All of these questions are taken up in the course of this work.

The second broad question, concerning the impact of domestic politics on the course of policy, is more difficult. It is complicated, for one thing, by the possibility that the transactions of the public political market-place - the milieu of groups, parties and Parliament - were so uninfluential in the formation of colonial policy as to make the search for influence all but nugatory. J.M. Lee, in the only work so far published which seriously attempts "to provide an alternative to those accounts of the transfer of power which fail to relate British colonial policy...to

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<sup>2</sup> This is not meant to imply that there was no further conflict after 1959. But in this respect too the date does indicate a turning-point. In the fifties the government had chiefly to contend with its "liberal" critics in and about all parties. In the early sixties, following the policy shift, its main task was to soothe the die-hard right-wingers of its own party; See Dan Horowitz, Attitudes of British Conservatives towards Decolonization in Africa during the Period of the Macmillan Government 1957-1963 (unpub. D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1967), chs. II and III.

events in Britain",<sup>3</sup> has argued that the formation of British policy was dominated, most of the time, by members of the traditional governing class within and without the formal governmental structure. He makes it clear enough, moreover, that these influential people could usually cooperate on a semi-confidential old-boy basis and needed very little recourse to public politics. Because of this, as he states in his final chapter, Mr. Lee has deliberately framed his arguments so as to avoid overemphasising "the influence of party warfare in the House of Commons", "the discussion of colonial problems in the Conservative and Labour parties", and the influence of the main pressure groups critical of British policy, "ranging from the Fabian Colonial Bureau to the Movement for Colonial Freedom."<sup>4</sup> But on this matter the assumptions underlying the present study differ from Mr. Lee's. Granted that political parties and pressure groups were, compared with the "official classes", relatively uninfluential in the formation of colonial policy, there still remains room for discussion about the actual extent of their influence. It is of interest to consider, for example, how far specifically "party" ideas on colonial problems found expression in the major parties' actual records as governments; and to consider what kinds of influence the same parties could hope to wield, in relation to government and colonial political leaders, while in opposition. Further, it is reasonable to suspect that on certain issues and at certain times the influence of particular pressure groups and party factions might have been quite great. One might instance the apparent influence of the Fabian Colonial Bureau on a number of issues during the 1945-50 Parliament; or the apparent influence of the Africa Bureau and the Labour Party, respectively, in the matter of Seretse Khama's repatriation in 1956; or the apparent influence of the Conservative Party's back-bench settler

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3 J.M. Lee, Colonial Development and Good Government. A study of the ideas expressed by the British official classes in planning decolonization 1939-1964 (Clarendon Press, Oxford U.P., 1967), p. v.

4 Ibid., pp. 242, 282, 283.

lobby in limiting the Government's freedom of manoeuvre in policy towards Central Africa and Kenya in the fifties. All that is being suggested here is that these kinds of matters should not be dismissed from consideration merely because they appear to involve relatively "minor" influences on policy-making. Upon examination they may in fact turn out to be not so much minor as spasmodic and inconsistent - and, occasionally, important. Hence, by attempting to assess the impact of party and group activities, the present study may be seen as essentially complementary to Mr. Lee's.<sup>5</sup>

The other complicating factor is an endemic one in academic research. "Influence" is always an elusive quarry. Lacking access to the official files, the student must expend much energy in reading between the published lines, tracking down such private papers as he can, interviewing the participants in events and cross-checking their revelations with further interviews. Inevitably his findings will be unevenly spread; on some matters the sources will prove gratifyingly fruitful, on others unyieldingly barren. And in the present case the task is made even more daunting by the sheer quantity and variety of the pressures which were imposed on the official policy-makers - pressures emanating not only from domestic sources but also from the colonies, from the United Nations, from Commonwealth countries and from foreign countries such as the United States. At the end of the whole process most of his attempts to identify influence will remain speculative, and must be offered, whether hesitantly or confidently, as such. These points, however, do not add up to an argument against making the attempt; and it is hoped that the present work may stand as at least a preliminary effort to particularise and generalise about the roles of the major parties and some of the leading interested groups in the shaping of post-war colonial policy.

One general point: the study is chiefly concerned with directly "political" aspects of colonial policy - that is, the political factors involved in colonies' progress towards self-rule - rather than the socially and economically important but less obviously "political" aspects, such as the negotiation of commodity purchase agreements or the establishment

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<sup>5</sup> Mr. Lee, it may be noted, allows at the end of his book that his own approach "perhaps overemphasized the role of the civil servant". Op.cit., p. 283.

of health and welfare services in colonies.

A word of explanation about method is in order. This work aims to be selective rather than exhaustive in its approach. It concentrates on certain colonial issues, and on certain domestic political organisations, to the exclusion of others. If there is a methodological assumption here, it is that a work which seeks to analyse a particular phase of political life will not necessarily be well served by a minutely-detailed account of the attitudes and alignments of all interested parties on all the issues of the period. Such an exercise, far from unravelling the subject's complexities, is likely simply to reproduce them. Analysis in fact presupposes a selection process: a series of choices between the significant and the less significant, the relevant and the not so relevant.

The selection process in this work follows certain broad guidelines in the domains both of "issues" and "organisations". As a general rule, issues are singled out for consideration not because they were the most "important" in the course of imperial history over fourteen years, but because they stimulated interesting (and for our purposes, instructive) kinds of metropolitan political activity. Land settlement in Kenya after the war, the revision of the Nigerian constitution in 1950, the birthpangs of the Central African Federation in the first half of 1953, the British Guiana crisis later in the same year, Seretse Khama's repatriation in 1956, developments in Cyprus in 1957-8: all were issues of this type, and all are discussed as case-studies in later chapters.

As for organisations, a distinction is necessary between those which were normally recipients of pressure and those which were normally concerned to press. In this work, the Colonial Office and Parliament are regarded respectively as the formal decision-making organ and the principal public forum of discussion of colonial policy, and hence as the most important foci of pressures and ideas. They are therefore discussed separately in early chapters. Thereafter attention is directed towards some of the organisations which formulated the ideas and applied the pressures.

But which organisations? It is here that the grounds of selection

should be mostly plainly stated. In fact, virtually all of the political organisations which are discussed in any detail in this study share two distinguishing characteristics. First, they were more or less continuously active within that area of political activity having Parliament and the Colonial Office as its focal points. Second, although many of them had other interests they all had an interest in problems of colonial political advance which was primary and self-justifying; that is, their interest in these problems was not derived from any more immediate interest in economic or social aspects of colonial policy. Accommodated by these criteria are, in particular, the parliamentary Labour and Conservative parties and their associated party bureaucracies; related bodies with a specialist interest in colonial affairs, notably the Fabian Colonial Bureau and the Movement for Colonial Freedom, both allied to the Labour Party, and, on the other side, the Conservative Commonwealth Council; on some issues the minor parties, Liberal and Communist; on some issues such "non-party" but politically important bodies as the Africa Bureau; and on some issues certain groups formed specifically to campaign thereon, such as the Central Africa Committee and the Seretse Khama Fighting Committee.

Excluded from all but passing references are bodies which, however active in certain specialist areas of policy, were not primarily interested in the political problems. This category encompasses, for example, both the British trade union movement and the whole range of commercial and industrial enterprises which operated in colonies, since in both their cases such interest as was shown in the problems of colonial political advance was contingent upon a primary interest in some other field - respectively, colonial labour policy and the enterprises' own economic and financial activities.<sup>6</sup> Another category of organisations, among them such

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6 Concerning the trade union movement's role in the field of colonial labour policy see D.I. Davies, "The Politics of the TUC's Colonial Policy," Political Quarterly, Vol. XXXV No. 1 (Jan.-March 1964), pp.23-34; also B.C. Roberts, Labour in the Tropical Territories of the Commonwealth (G. Bell & Sons, 1964), pp.146-56. The activities of British business enterprises would no doubt yield material for another full-scale study, although one writer has shown that up to about 1950, at least, business organisations

august bodies as the Royal Empire (now Commonwealth) Society and the Imperial (now Commonwealth) Institute, virtually excludes itself. Bodies of this kind incorporated a great deal of informed interest in colonial affairs but usually succeeded in being both "non-party" and non-political. Consequently they are not of importance for this study; although in some respects their apoliticism was itself politically significant, as will briefly be shown in the chapters dealing with the Conservative Party.

Perhaps the most noteworthy consequence of the selection process, however, occurs within the range of organisations discussed. A glance at the list above will suffice to reveal this consequence: a good deal more attention is given to organisations on the left of British politics than to those on the right. This apparent unbalance is imposed by the facts of the situation. It is a fact that the Labour Party, radical pressure groups and "liberal" pressure groups far out-numbered the Conservative Party and its attendant groups in the area of political activity chosen for discussion; they were also visibly more active throughout the period. The reasons for this phenomenon need not be explored at this stage. The point here is simply a quantitative one. Up to 1959 there was a predominance of discernible activity on the left-to-centre of the political spectrum, and this conditions the selection process, the arrangement and the emphases of the present study.

It is arguable that such an approach to the subject, "criteria of selection" notwithstanding, begs the question of quantity versus quality. The data may indicate a preponderance of liberal and left-wing organisations and a greater degree of discernible activity on the left, but it does not follow that these organisations were necessarily more "important" or

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6 (cont) seldom - perhaps surprisingly seldom - became involved in the domestic politics of colonial policy formation. Kathleen Stahl, The Metropolitan Organisation of British Colonial Trade (Faber, 1951), pp. 76-8, 193-7, 296-7. The reason may perhaps be found in the words of the chairman of Bookers, an international company operating mainly in British Guiana, the West Indies and Central Africa: "Businessmen are on the whole non-political creatures, and I know from experience that they are the first to try to adjust themselves to any situation as it is." Sir Jock Campbell (now Lord Campbell), "The New Africa: Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility," Africa Bureau Anniversary Address (Africa Bureau, 1962), p. 12.

"effective" than their less numerous, less vocal counterparts on the right. But in terms of this objection, the criterion of importance or effectiveness is presumably the degree of influence over government decisions; and it follows that the objection can be met with a point already made. The present study is concerned not only with supposed influences in official decision-making but also with an area of domestic political activity regarded as such. Accordingly "discernible activity" is a sufficient condition of the study's greater concern for the left.

Thus the scope of the inquiry. Chapter I attempts to set the whole in perspective with a narrative account of British colonial policy in the period, with emphasis on British official attitudes towards colonial evolution and on the personalities and distinctive contributions of successive Colonial Secretaries. Chapters II and III survey the roles and functions of the Colonial Office, the formal decision-making organ upon which ideas and pressures were imposed, and Parliament, the principal public forum for the discussion of colonial political problems. Chapters IV to X deal with the parties and groups chosen for study - their attitudes, their interactions with government, each other, and colonial interests - with selected case-studies of particular issues to illustrate these attitudes and processes in detail. And Chapter XI summarises the study in terms of the two principal questions raised at the beginning of this introduction. In what kinds of ways were colonial problems dealt with in domestic politics during the period which led up to the final hurried withdrawal from colonies? And how great was the impact of domestic political activity on the course of official policy in this period?

## CHAPTER I

## THE COURSE OF BRITISH COLONIAL POLICY, 1945-59

1. The Legacy

"It is the worst system of Colonial Government in which you have lethargy tempered by riots."

Lord Samuel, House of Lords Debates, vol. 125 col. 389  
(3 Dec. 1942).

In 1945 the Labour Government inherited a sprawling and complex colonial empire. The responsibilities of the Colonial Office were spread over some forty territories in all parts of the world, territories characterised by "every shade of dependency which political ingenuity has been able to devise"<sup>1</sup>: colony, protectorate, colony and protectorate, protected state, trust territory, and condominium. They ranged in population from Nigeria, thought at that time to have over twenty-two million inhabitants, to the Falkland Islands, with two thousand. Most were in the tropics; four-fifths of their total land area, and two-thirds of their estimated seventy million inhabitants, were in Africa. Almost all, in Joseph Chamberlain's phrase of fifty years earlier, were "undeveloped estates." But they had little else in common. Some were economically important to Britain: Malaya with its rubber and tin, the West Indies and British Guiana with their sugar. Some were important strategically: Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Aden, Singapore, Bermuda. A few, notably Kenya and the two Rhodesias, had substantial areas of white settlement which deeply influenced British attitudes towards their political development. Some were tiny islands which could not expect to achieve either economic or political independence: the Solomon Islands, the Seychelles, and others. One, Palestine, was an unwished-for mandate, for which the Colonial Office somewhat confusedly shared responsibility with the Foreign Office. There was no unifying pattern of empire organisation;

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1 W.Y. Elliott, "The Riddle of the British Commonwealth", Foreign Affairs, Vol. XIII No. 3 (April 1930), p.460. Facts and figures about the colonial territories are listed in an Addendum to this chapter.

rather there were as many colonial situations as colonies, for each territory had its own level of development and its own demands to make.

The Labour Government's predecessors also bequeathed some working traditions in colonial policy. In theory colonial policy was immune from the vicissitudes of British party politics; it was supposed to be "an expression of the undivided national will."<sup>2</sup> In practice this was most apparent with regard to the colonies of purely indigenous population, ranging from West Africa to the Far East, and least apparent with regard to the few colonies where white settlers demanded political recognition to the exclusion of native populations. Common to both kinds, however, were the three main categories of colonial problems: economic, social and political. Much of the history of colonial policy can be seen in terms of decisions about priorities among these three. In the years before 1945 economic and social problems definitely took priority over political. Colonial Office reports for 1937-8 and 1938-9, compiled at the request of interested MPs, were full of "social welfare" and economic betterment, and virtually devoid of references to constitutional change.<sup>3</sup>

The crucial development of these earlier years was a conceptual change concerning colonial economics. Older doctrines of "good government", whereby each colony was required to attain financial self-sufficiency from its own revenues, were appearing increasingly inadequate since they made no special provision for developmental expenditure. A few colonies' exports earned sufficient income for this purpose - Malaya's rubber and tin, and the Gold Coast's cocoa and Uganda's cotton in post-1918 booms - but these were exceptional. Chamberlain's pupil Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary from 1924 to 1929, had the vision to interpret his responsibilities to include positive measures of social and economic improvement for those whose trust he held.<sup>4</sup>

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2 W.M. Macmillan, The Road to Self-Rule. A Study in Colonial Evolution (Paber, 1959), p.253.

3 Cmd. 5760: The Colonial Empire in 1937-38 (HMSO, 1938), and Cmd. 6023: The Colonial Empire (HMSO, 1939).

4 As early as 1919 Amery, then Milner's Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office had told Parliament of the need to set up "a new and more positive standard of our duty and obligation towards the peoples to whom this House is...trustee." House of Commons Debates (henceforth HCD) vol. 118 col. 2174 (30 July 1919).

His work led in 1929 to the establishment, by the Labour Government, of a Colonial Development Fund designed to provide £1,000,000 a year for forms of colonial development which would reciprocally aid the British economy. The measure was slender, thanks chiefly to a parsimonious Treasury, but it was a key innovation and did put some meaning into Lugard's concept of the dual mandate, expounded in 1922, by which colonial development should work simultaneously "for the mutual benefit of the people and of mankind in general."<sup>5</sup> In the thirties there were powerful stimuli to further action. One was the publication in 1938 of Lord Hailey's vast African Survey, with its cogent arguments for the expansion of metropolitan responsibility for development. Another, more painful, was the rioting of West Indian native labour, precipitated by acute economic distress in the wake of the depression. Successive commissions of inquiry into these disturbances culminated in the Moyne Commission's interim report of 1940, which effectively supplemented Hailey's Survey by insisting on an imperial duty to extend welfare services, especially in health and education, to colonies. In an important White Paper the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, accepted these recommendations.<sup>6</sup> War broke down the financial obstacles, and the first legislation of the Coalition Government was the celebrated Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, under which £5,000,000 a year for five years was to be committed to "schemes for any purpose likely to promote the development of the resources of any colony or the welfare of its people."<sup>7</sup> But war also limited the application of the Act. For the Colonial Office it was essentially a time of active preparation with little chance of immediate fulfilment. In 1945 the chance came. A second Act, passed shortly before the election, provided for the outlay of £120,000,000 over a ten-year period; proposals for expenditure were to be prepared by individual colonies and submitted to the Secretary of State. The mandate was still dual. On one

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5 Sir F.D. Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (Blackie, 2nd edn., 1923), p.58.

6 Cmd. 6174: West India Royal Commission, 1938-1939: Recommendations (HMSO, 1940); Cmd. 6175: Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare (HMSO, 1940), p.3. On the official conversion to the 'development idea' see especially Lee, Colonial Development and Good Government, pp.41-7.

7 Colonial Development and Welfare Act, 1940 (3 & 4 Geo. 6, c. 40), 1(1).

hand, Britain was desperately short of food and dollars, and many hoped that the working of colonial resources would contribute to the national recovery. But on the other, by the standards of social justice to which war experiences had given increasing moral force, it seemed that the development of such underprivileged countries as the British colonies, for the benefit of the inhabitants themselves, was probably the most urgent of the world's post-war responsibilities.

For the most part these matters took priority over problems of political change. The one major political battle of the pre-1945 period concerned Kenya. The powerful settler minority in Southern Rhodesia had been granted responsible self-government in 1923. Their counterparts in Kenya, capitalising on their war effort, had been seeking a similar concession for themselves under the stimulus of the political challenge of immigrant Indians. The issue was complicated by the Colonial Office's indecision between two conflicting objectives: the fostering of white settlement, and the exercise of trusteeship on behalf of the politically inarticulate African majority. In the event a Conservative Colonial Secretary, Devonshire, declared in the same year, 1923, that Kenya was "primarily" African territory, in which African interests must rank "paramount" in cases of conflict with those of immigrant races.<sup>8</sup> Following this came a turmoil of commissions, White Papers, and debates which kept the "Kenya Question" alive for over a decade. Amery unsuccessfully sought closer union of the East African territories under settler rule; his successor, Lord Passfield, reasserted the paramountcy principle and the Labour Government won the settlers' condemnation for its "black papers." Depression and war finally cooled the political atmosphere in Kenya and turned attention back to bread-and-butter problems. The productivity of the settlers ensured their position for the time being even though the abdication of imperial trusteeship on the Southern Rhodesian model was not now countenanced by any British Government.

Elsewhere, any suggestion of self-government would have seemed impossibly premature. From the point of view of British administrators in indigenous

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8 Cmd. 1922: Indians in Kenya (HMSO, 1923), p.9.

colonies there were immense tasks of development, welfare and basic administration to be undertaken; they could be well done only within the nexus of a benevolent colonial relationship; and there was unlimited time in which to do them. Yet a vague idea of ultimate self-rule did exist. In July 1943 it was expressed by Oliver Stanley, Colonial Secretary in the Coalition, in terms of a pledge "to guide Colonial peoples along the road to self-government within the framework of the British Empire."<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, during the war years several constitutional changes were made to provide for greater native representation in politics and government. Ceylon and Jamaica, two of the most "mature" colonies with long records of aspiration to self-rule, received adult suffrage; Malta was promised the same; and in the Gold Coast provision was made for an African unofficial majority in the legislature. Lesser modifications elsewhere were all made in the same traditional spirit of cautious devolution.

But the gradualist basis of the old policy was already obsolescent. The onset of peace enabled a growing demand for colonial self-rule, a demand partly created by the nature of the war itself, to find new outlets for expression, and the trend of world opinion was on the side of the nationalists who made this demand. Thereafter British governments were - and had to be - more and more preoccupied with the political and administrative problems of the colonies' approach to independence. These problems, like those of development and welfare, had been the subject of theoretical discussion for some time; but it was the release of both Britain and the colonies from the wartime concentration of effort that made the long haul to independence a matter of serious politics.

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9 HCD vol. 391 col. 48 (13 July 1943).

## 2. The Labour Government: Men and Policies

"To my hon. Friends on this side of the Committee, the idea of one people dominating or exploiting another is always repugnant. It is not domination that we seek. Nor on the other hand, is it our intention in any way to abandon peoples who have come to depend on us for their defence, security, development and welfare. To us the Colonies are a great trust..."

George Hall, HCD vol. 425 col. 238 (9 July 1946).

"It is a sound, Tory Colonial policy and I give it my support."

Capt. Peter MacDonald, ibid., col. 298.

The colonies were not of the greatest moment to most members of the victorious Labour Party in July 1945. Although a solitary sentence in the party's election manifesto had referred to "the planned progress of our Colonial Dependencies,"<sup>10</sup> the party's main enthusiasm, understandably, was for its far-reaching programme of domestic reforms. It is true that there was wide interest in the problems of India and the Middle East, but these were top-level policy issues and were not to be confused with the unspectacular activities of the Colonial Office.

In the recent past, however, the efforts of the party's handful of colonial specialists had resulted in several detailed statements of official policy for colonies. The latest of these, The Colonies, had been adopted by the 1943 Party Conference and could now be regarded as a blueprint. Firmly within the trusteeship tradition, it dealt primarily with ways of solving the major economic, social and administrative problems of colonies in a spirit of enlightened altruism.<sup>11</sup> Of political change a sweeping resolution adopted at the 1942 Conference had more to say, envisaging equal status of the colonies with all other members of the Commonwealth and democratic forms of government "in order to enable the mass of the people

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10 Let Us Face the Future. A Declaration of Policy for the Consideration of the Nation (the Labour Party, 1945), p.11.

11 The Colonies. The Labour Party's Post-war Policy for the African and Pacific Colonies (the Labour Party, 1943), pp.2-17.

to enter upon self-government."<sup>12</sup> But for the most part the party's colonial specialists, while hampered by no feeling of party accountability for the creation of empire, never contemplated disposing of its wholesale. Rather they were fully prepared to accept "the duty of empire" - Leonard Barnes's phrase - as a going concern and a governmental responsibility. "Britain today is in the colonies and she cannot withdraw," said Arthur Creech Jones in 1944; "nor do I think it desirable that she should."<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after the election Attlee appointed George Hall as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Aged sixty-three, Hall had been Under-Secretary from 1940 to 1942. But he was not noted for special interest or expertise in the field. That he was Welsh, a former coal-miner, a trade unionist and a personal friend of Attlee's were considerations more relevant to his appointment, in accordance with the customary logic of cabinet formation. Many thought it a rather uninspired appointment, for Hall appeared to be a dull figure, less dedicated than dutiful. The appointment of Arthur Creech Jones as his Under-Secretary seemed more apposite, and was widely welcomed among those who followed colonial affairs. Creech Jones was then fifty-four and had a long record of devotion to colonial causes. Over many years he had developed extensive contacts with people in colonies. He had been associated with numerous liberal-minded organisations in Britain concerned with colonial affairs, including the Friends of Africa, the Anti-Slavery Society, and the Fabian Colonial Bureau, of which he had been chairman since its inception in 1940. For ten years as a back-bencher he had been the principal voice of the House of Commons' conscience on colonies. As a co-opted unofficial adviser on education he had also had several years' experience of the Colonial Office. The specialist knowledge of colonial affairs which he now brought to the Office was probably greater than that of any previous or subsequent minister.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Report of the Forty-First Annual Conference of the Labour Party (London, 1942), p.155.

13 HCD vol. 400 col. 1250 (6 June 1944). For a fuller discussion of the background to Labour's colonial policy see below, pp. 132-8.

14 Biographical notes on most of the individuals who feature prominently in this study will be found in Appendix I.

Hall and Creech Jones began work with no immediate declaration of their intentions. The major problem area of the day was Palestine, where the Colonial Secretary was responsible for internal administration, and this exacting task became Hall's chief preoccupation from the outset. Creech Jones was in effect left free to concentrate on the general problems of the rest of the Empire. The organisational task of the transition to peace, together with post-war shortages of money and materials, would have left precious little scope for radical changes of policy even if any had been contemplated. But Hall's first major statement of policy, a year after the election, made it clear that none was.

"I think I should state the policy of the party which is now the Government of this country. I can say without hesitation that it is our policy to develop the Colonies and all their resources so as to enable their peoples speedily and substantially to improve their economic and social conditions, and, as soon as may be practicable, to attain responsible self-government...a goal towards which His Majesty's Government will assist them with all means in their power...I know that the policy...is wholeheartedly endorsed by the great mass of public opinion in this country."

Hall went on to thank his Conservative predecessor, Oliver Stanley, for laying "foundations", and Stanley welcomed the implicitly bi-partisan basis of the stated policy.<sup>15</sup>

For all his good intentions, however, Hall's term of office was not a great success. The enthusiasm with which politically conscious colonial peoples had greeted the advent of a Labour Government steadily evaporated, as it increasingly seemed that under Hall there would be "no real change, and no nearer prospect of any change"<sup>16</sup> from the old system. But some sign of "change" was what these people most wanted to see. The war had been a solvent of old attitudes. It had brought wider experience abroad to colonial servicemen, who had not failed to notice that the Europeans,

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15 HCD vol. 425 cols. 238-9 and 262 (9 July 1946).

16 Anon., "Labour and West Africa", New Statesman and Nation, 13 July 1946, p. 23. That there had indeed been initial colonial enthusiasm was not in doubt. "From colony after colony", according to Empire, journal of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, in October 1945, "came letters and newspaper articles expressing confidence that at last the problems and grievances which have agitated the people for so long will be resolutely tackled."

hitherto their acknowledged superiors, were by no means all-powerful in the world. For many it had brought a deeper awareness of the principles crystallised in the Atlantic Charter such that the claims of emerging nationalism against colonial rulers could thenceforth be expressed in terms of the rulers' own ideals, thus placing them in a morally painful position. Colonial students in increasing numbers came to British universities and colleges - three thousand of them by 1946 - and were able to echo these claims, as could many of the already detribalised, urban middle-class minorities in the colonies who found no outlet for their energies in the existing colonial order.<sup>17</sup> Colonial Office ministers and officials were well aware of these aspirations, even as they expanded their organisation to provide for greater intervention from the centre in colonies. But according to an Office report, the expansion of work in London was not inconsistent

"with the declared policy of increased devolution of responsibility... The Colonies in general were, at the beginning of the war, already ripe for a big forward move in political, economic and social development. Progress was necessarily held up to a large extent during the war, with the result that, when it ended, irresistible pressure had accumulated...All this has meant that the Colonies now call even more insistently than before the war for advice, guidance and inspiration from London over a wide range of administrative and technical services...without which the realisation of their hopes would be indefinitely retarded."<sup>18</sup>

It was not George Hall's fault that this expansion of basic services and technical assistance went largely unnoticed in the small but growing clamour of emergent nationalism. Clearly no responsible Colonial Secretary could as yet contemplate grants of self-government on the strength of demands by vocal minorities, yet equally clearly the task of maintaining good relations with colonial peoples was becoming a great deal more difficult than

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17 At a conference in Manchester in October 1945 four unknown aspiring politicians, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Obafemi Awolowo and Hastings Banda, were among those who most forcibly voiced the new demand for colonial liberation. Scarcely noticed in Britain at the time, this particular conference has taken on great significance in the history of the "freedom struggle" from the African point of view. Its proceedings have recently been reprinted. G. Padmore (ed.), Colonial and Coloured Unity. A Programme of Action (Hammersmith Bookshop, 1st edn., 1947, 2nd edn. 1963); see further Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah (Thomas Nelson, Edinburgh, 1957), pp.52-7.

18 Cmd. 7167: The Colonial Empire (1939-1947) (HMSO, 1947), p.21.

it had been before. A fiduciary relationship or even "partnership", apparently, was no longer enough. Subdued by the special anxieties of Palestine as well as by these wider considerations, Hall was soon a sick man. Politically and psychologically it seemed a wise move on Attlee's part when in October 1946 Hall was removed to the peerage and replaced by Creech Jones.

The administration of Palestine remained a tormenting worry, but Creech Jones was able to spread his energies much more widely than Hall had done. Under him the tempo of Colonial Office work, already great, became even greater. By the beginning of 1948 the appointment of a Minister of State had become necessary to help handle the burden of work at ministerial level.<sup>19</sup> And the Under-Secretary, Ivor Thomas, could speak in 1947 of

"the extent to which the legal department...is overworked at the present time. There are something like twenty Constitutions being revised, and we have had to create a queue for the assistance of the legal adviser."<sup>20</sup>

Creech Jones was deeply committed to the cause of ultimate independence for the colonies. During his tenure, two important territories did in fact achieve independence. In February 1948 Ceylon, long regarded as the most "mature" of the Colonial Office's charges, followed in the path of the Indian sub-continent, and a few months later mandated Palestine became independent Israel. In the same year the Colonial Office's annual report bore the broad statement of policy, drafted by Creech Jones, which was to serve as a standard text for a decade:

"The central purpose of British colonial policy is simple. It is to guide the colonial territories to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth in conditions that ensure to the people concerned both a fair standard of living and freedom from oppression from any quarter."<sup>21</sup>

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19 The device of a third minister in a department was still relatively new, the Foreign Office having pioneered it in 1943.

20 HCD vol. 441 col. 1407 (20 July 1949).

21 Cmd. 7433: The Colonial Empire (1947-1948) (HMSO, 1948), p.1. In later quotations and paraphrases the word "oppression" was <sup>sometimes</sup> rendered as "aggression". See e.g. Cmd. 7958: The Colonial Territories (1949-50) (HMSO, 1950), p.1.

The statement was meticulously worded, and the stress it laid upon guidance and "conditions" was perhaps its most important feature; the following sentence ran: "But though the policy is clear enough, the problems to be overcome in carrying it out are numerous and complex." Creech Jones always interpreted his responsibilities in these terms. No more than his predecessor was he swayed by his sympathy for minority agitations. In 1948 the official view of such agitation was that

"It is a dynamic quality, and if it can be harnessed to the task of building up...the social and economic standards of the people, a most important contribution in development is obtained. But if it becomes linked to the aspirations of a narrow oligarchy of power-seekers... then no less it can do incalculable harm."<sup>22</sup>

"Conditions," "building up", "standards", were his proper concern. The legal department had its queue, but the queues at other departmental doors were longer. "I do not think we can proceed fast with political development until we expand the social services," he told Parliament in 1949. "Our job ...is to build up good living conditions."<sup>23</sup> Hall had taken a particular interest in problems of health, labour organisation, and co-operative self-help. Creech Jones followed up Hall's initiatives in these fields and appointed new committees and advisers on a variety of other topics: economic research, colleges of technology, pesticides, mineral resources, and primary products. And during his tenure a major legislative measure, the Overseas Resources Development Act of 1948, created large-scale economic machinery designed to help "build up good living conditions": the Overseas Food Corporation and the Colonial Development Corporation, with borrowing powers of £55,000,000 and £110,000,000 respectively. The Food Corporation was made responsible to the Minister of Food, and its first important task was to take over the ailing East African groundnuts scheme from the United Africa Company. The Development Corporation, responsible to the Colonial Secretary, was set up on a more ambitious scale. Designed to operate in an area between welfare grants and commercial investment, by 1951 it was running fifty-three schemes for which £36,000,000 of capital had been sanctioned.<sup>24</sup> Neither

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22 The Colonial Empire (1947-1948), pp.2-3.

23 HCD vol. 467 col. 1407 (20 July 1949).

24 HC 167: Colonial Development Corporation: Report and Accounts for 1951 (HMSO, 1952), p.1.

Corporation worked at first with great success. Bad luck and inefficient management brought the Development Corporation a loss of £4,500,000 in three years, much of it in abandoned undertakings, while calamitous failures with groundnuts and Gambia poultry brought the Food Corporation much opprobrium. There were, however, many modest achievements in matters of farming, public works and public health in several colonies, and once established the Corporations did retain the impetus of going concerns with hopes of better fortunes ahead. In addition, Colonial Development and Welfare funds were augmented with a further £20,000,000 in 1950. Extensive private investment, too, was always officially encouraged. All capital input was useful; by his own account, Creech Jones never felt any ideological compulsion to "impose socialism" on the colonies.<sup>25</sup>

Inevitably, quick results were not easily come by. The field for development was an exceedingly rocky one, and much of the labour appeared to be in vain. But the effort was self-evidently meritorious, and on the whole the problems were technical rather than political; hence Creech Jones won praise from many quarters for this general area of policy. With regard to questions of constitutional change, however, the situation was different. In spite of his belief that time was not yet ripe for the major decisions Creech Jones found himself confronted by tough political problems and much political criticism, for in this area of policy there was already great scope for conflict between the objectives of interested parties.

His approach to the task of developing new political structures had two aspects. On one hand, he aimed to group small territories into larger, more viable units; on the other, to decentralise power to local communities. The first objective was seldom controversial, at least as he pursued it: negotiations for a West Indian federation, the creation in 1947 of the Malayan Federation, the establishment in 1948 of the East African Common Services Organisation on the model of the Central African Council set up three years earlier. It was the second objective, or rather the questions of method, form and timing involved, that aroused the political difficulties.

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<sup>25</sup> See his contribution "The Labour Party and Colonial Policy", in A. Creech Jones (ed.), New Fabian Colonial Essays (Hogarth Press, 1959), pp.21-3.

The problem of transforming governments responsible chiefly to the Colonial Office into governments responsible chiefly to the colonial peoples was always the main dilemma of colonial policy,<sup>26</sup> and Creech Jones's intention was to pursue the traditional solution of acquainting colonial peoples with responsibility in piecemeal stages, by way of regulated entry to Legislative Councils, to the central administrations, and to local government. Inevitably he came under fire for making the pace too fast or (more often) too slow; for not embarking upon an expensive "crash programme" for staffing the highest levels of administration with local people, or for professing too uncritical a faith in British-style local government as a training school for "democracy".<sup>27</sup> The most important criticisms, however, concerned his attitudes towards two kinds of colonial minority: first, the white settlers, and second, the violently active nationalists.

With reference to the first, it has been said that he was sometimes so immersed in the details of colonial improvement as to lose his sense of where the levers of real power lay. Consequently he lost valuable chances to make "liberal" decisions about the future power-structure of multi-racial territories. "It was particularly unfortunate, for instance," according to one subsequent critic, "that - for the best of motives - he gave Roy Welensky such authority in Northern Rhodesia."<sup>28</sup> There is some point to this charge. Creech Jones always detested the idea of political and racial domination of settlers over natives, and while in office resisted all overt moves towards a settler-controlled Central African federation. But equally he believed that African territories desperately needed the productivity of settlers both in agriculture and in industry (and especially, in Northern Rhodesia, in copper mining). It followed that settler communities had to

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26 See M. Wight, The Development of the Legislative Council 1660-1945 (Faber, 1946), p.82. Wight describes the dilemma of the Crown Colony system thus: "In so far as it remains paternal, it unfits the colonial people for the necessary experience in self-government...in so far as it confers power upon them which they are incompetent to use, it defeats its own ends of the peace, order and good government of the colony." Loc.cit.

27 E.g., "the political progress of the territories is dependent on the development of responsibility in local government...without sound local government a democratic political system at the centre is not possible." The Colonial Empire (1939-1947), p.37.

28 'Flavus' (in this case, John Hatch) in New Statesman, 6 Dec. 1963, pp.822-3.

be kept reasonably contented: indeed, augmented by immigration. Social and economic progress, in his view, would eventually make racial and political problems more amenable to solution; in the interim he had to mark time.<sup>29</sup> But it was this interim which gave determined settler politicians scope for political manoeuvre. Obviously, though, Creech Jones's position was extremely delicate. Given all the circumstances of the time, and in particular the lack of outstanding African leaders, it is difficult to see what other courses were open to him.

With reference to the second, the criticism was different. It appeared, simply, that Creech Jones - along with many others - was slow to discern the real force of nationalist "agitation." Bound up as he was with Colonial Office plans and "guidance", he seemed reluctant to accept that the pace and character of events might also be determined willy-nilly by political initiatives emanating from the colonies themselves.

There was as yet little evidence of this trend, which was to become much more apparent in the various constitutional crises of the fifties. Most crises in Creech Jones's time, as earlier, were of a kind not immediately relevant to constitutional issues. The beginnings of a war against Communist guerillas in Malaya in June 1948 was one, watched with great anxiety at home because of the immense foreign exchange value of Malayan rubber and tin. Rioting miners and stray police bullets in Enugu, Nigeria, in 1949, set off another. But one event - the Gold Coast rioting of 1948 - was different in kind from these, and had significantly different consequences. From the official point of view the Gold Coast was a progressive model colony, complete with an African majority in the Legislative Council. Early in 1948, however, riots took place and a newly-formed nationalist party was able to use the situation to arouse much political feeling. Creech Jones appointed a commission under Mr. Aiken Watson, KC, to inquire into the circumstances. The commission went well beyond the terms of reference he had given it and recommended far-reaching constitutional reform, supporting its argument with an exhaustive list of

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29 A. Creech Jones, "British Colonial Policy with Particular Reference to Africa", International Affairs, Vol. XXVII No. 2 (April 1951), pp.179-82. (Article adapted from a speech given in November 1950).

grievances soon to be typical, mutatis mutandis, of almost all territories. There was the discontent of ex-servicemen who "by reason of their contact with other peoples" had developed a "political and national consciousness", and now felt disappointment with conditions at home - which made them "the natural focal point for any general movement against authority." There was a "general suspicion" of Government measures. There was the "frustration" of educated Africans who saw "no prospect of ever exercising political power." There was a "universal feeling" that Africanisation was "merely a promise and not a driving force" in Government policy. There was the "spread of liberal ideas" to act as one incentive to action, and the "achievement of self-government in India" to act as another. These were only the political complaints; there were numerous social and economic ones as well, beginning with "resentment at the growing concentration of certain trades" in foreign hands.<sup>30</sup>

Creech Jones's response to this report was to authorise a committee, composed of "moderate" Gold Coast Africans, to suggest a scheme of constitutional advance. From this committee's report and subsequent deliberation by the British Government there emerged a new Constitution with an almost entirely African legislature and a predominantly African ministry. Both Africans and Britons, according to the Colonial Office report for 1949-50, could take heart, for such a document

"could have resulted only from a fruitful partnership... [They] can also take heart from the manner in which the people of the Gold Coast ...refused to be coerced into irresponsible action by a handful of extremists of the Convention Peoples Party, agitating for immediate self-government by a campaign of 'positive action'".<sup>31</sup>

That one of the Party's extremists - indeed its founder - was Kwame Nkrumah, gaoled for his "positive action" in 1949, was not then a significant fact. What did emerge from this statement was a continuing belief that the Government still held the whip hand; that a form of guidance expressed as "fruitful partnership" would continue to determine the pattern of events.

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30 Col. No. 231: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in the Gold Coast (1950, 1948), pp.7-8.

31 The Colonial Territories (1949-50), p.8.

This in spite of all the trends unearthed by the Watson Commission, which had shown clearly that in this "model" colony an adherence to the principle of guidance had reduced colonial policy to an unproductive clash of frustrated altruism against frustrated nationalism. In fact these events presaged a future in which concessions increasingly had to come from the Colonial Office side; for in many territories each concession, instead of placating the nationalists, was to be treated only as a basis for demanding the next, with the nationalists often withholding cooperation of any kind until it was granted.<sup>32</sup>

In February 1950 an eventful ministerial career was ended when Creech Jones lost his parliamentary seat at the general election. From the depleted ranks of his colleagues Attlee settled upon his Minister of National Insurance, James Griffiths, to be the new Colonial Secretary. Griffiths, sixty years old, was characterised by a warm-hearted and somewhat emotional approach to public affairs. Like Hall he was a Welshman with a background in the Miners Federation; and like Hall he had very little practical knowledge of colonies. His main concern, taking the 1948 declaration of purpose as his theme, was to push on with the long-term plans and lines of development begun by his predecessors. More specialists were brought in to work on the development of trade unionism, cooperative self-help, and local government. Constitutionally, negotiations already in train were continued: a new constitution with more regional devolution and greater African participation in Nigeria; continued discussion of the possibility of West Indian federation; and new constitutions in the East African territories. There were also discussions concerning closer association among the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, but no clear decisions on this issue were announced during Griffiths's tenure. Conflicts between settlers and Africans did not yet hold the centre of the stage, and it was accepted, as Creech Jones said from the sidelines in November 1950, that "as yet the issues of majority rule or of ultimate independence [in plural societies] are almost irrelevant."<sup>33</sup> The Gold Coast remained the constitutional pace-setter: by late 1951

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32 Cf. the tactics described in K. Ezera, Constitutional Development in Nigeria (Cambridge U.P., 1960) and T.J. Mboya, Freedom and After (Andre Deutsch, 1963).

33 "British Colonial Policy with Particular Reference to Africa", p.180.

Nkrumah had emerged from prison to become Leader of Government Business. The focus of disturbance, increasingly, was Malaya, where the outbreak of "banditry" was by 1951 regarded as full-scale Communist terrorism and was costing the Government over £6,000,000 a year to fight. In his handover talk with his Conservative successor Griffiths admitted that this had become "a military problem to which we have not been able to find the answer."<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile the most publicised issue of African policy was the complex affair of Seretse Khama, heir to the chieftainship of the Bamangwato tribe in Bechuanaland; his morganatic marriage with an Englishwoman; his relations with the tribe and with his uncle, the regent Tshekedi Khama; and finally the British Government's decision, exercised through the Commonwealth Relations Office, to exile Seretse from Bechuanaland for a period of five years. South African pressure appeared to have influenced the decision, and world-wide publicity at once made the issue a test case of the soundness of the Government's attachment to the principle of racial equality. As such it was taken up as a discussion point by the educated elites in almost all colonial territories. The Government did not come out of it well.

This affair, together with the deepening bitterness of the Malayan conflict, made a sad conclusion to Labour's term of office. For the most part Labour Secretaries of State had shown much conscientiousness and some imagination in seeking social, economic and political applications of liberal-humanitarian principles. It was unfortunate for the Government that most of its achievements took place outside the range of the political spotlight.

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34 Oliver Lyttelton, Viscount Chandos, The Memoirs of Lord Chandos (The Bodley Head, 1962), p.362.

### 3. The Conservative Government: Men and Policies

"The first duty of the Government, of any Government, is to deliver peace and order. Social, economic and political advance are a mere mockery unless we can do that."

Oliver Lyttelton, HCD vol. 522 col. 417 (16 Dec. 1953).

Churchill's appointee as Colonial Secretary was Oliver Lyttelton, a personal friend who had served as his Minister of Production in the war. Lyttelton was fifty-eight, and well-known among parliamentarians as a somewhat inflexible man with an authoritative tone and manner. Although he came of a political family, his father having served as Colonial Secretary in Balfour's administration, he was not a professional politician.<sup>35</sup> He was a businessman by training and inclination, and had entered politics in 1940 only at Churchill's request.

Nevertheless he looked forward to a position of power and responsibility in the new government, and was enthusiastic when Churchill first mentioned the Colonial Office to him: "Now there is a job and there is Malaya, which we are going to lose unless something is done."<sup>36</sup> In fact neither Malaya nor any other territory was "lost" during Lyttelton's three years in office - years which The Times was later to describe as "possibly the most stormy three years in colonial history", both because of "the stresses of the colonial situation" and because of the Labour Opposition's dislike of Lyttelton and his methods.<sup>37</sup>

The beginning was not controversial. Lyttelton took an early opportunity to make a parliamentary statement on colonial policy, which, he said, was based on broad lines already accepted by all parties.

"First, we all aim at helping the colonial territories to attain self-government within the British Commonwealth. To that end we are seeking as rapidly as possible to build up in each territory the institutions which its circumstances require. Secondly, we are determined to pursue the economic and social development of the colonial territories

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35 "Seductive though it is to be listened to with respect even when talking at random, I never wholeheartedly relished the ministerial life." Chandos, op.cit., p.431.

36 Ibid., p.344. He had a special interest in Malaya, dating from a pre-war commercial interest in tin.

37 Editorial, The Times, 30 July 1954.

so that it keeps pace with their political development. I should like to make it plain at the outset that His Majesty's Government intends no change in these aims."<sup>38</sup>

This statement was perhaps most notable for explicitly putting politics first,<sup>39</sup> though the cautious term "self-government" was still preferred to "independence." But this by no means implied any new programme for accelerating the rate of political advance. The progress of the colonies, Lyttelton later wrote, had to be "careful and if possible gradual and orderly." He added that self-government was an end in itself but was in any case the only practicable objective, for two reasons: "we do not have the force to govern without...consent," and "with modern communications, the consent has to be engaged by open and candid discussion of policy."<sup>40</sup>

Lyttelton's main reputation was for financial expertise, and according to The Times "it<sup>was</sup> generally assumed that he would devote himself principally to economic development."<sup>37</sup> He did not; the "stresses of the colonial situation" left him no time to do so. But to a large extent he was able to leave the economic pattern to settle itself. The recovery of sterling and the easing of post-war controls meant that he could confine himself to ensuring that funds were forthcoming. In May 1952 it was announced that he required the Colonial Development Corporation to undertake only such new projects as had excellent prospects of a profitable return, on the understanding that it "was set up to deal with commercial-type projects."<sup>41</sup> The Colonial Loans Act of 1952 doubled the sum total of colonial loans which could be guaranteed by the Treasury, raising the level to £100,000,000. In 1953 it was announced that the current Colonial Development and Welfare Act would be renewed after its expiration. Meanwhile in most territories measures of social and individual welfare proceeded along established lines

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38 HCD vol. 493 col. 984 (14 Nov. 1951).

39 Similarly, the General Survey in the Colonial Office's first annual report under Lyttelton broke with precedent by listing political developments - in Malaya, Central Africa, Nigeria, East Africa and the West Indies - before going on to economic and social matters. Cmd. 8553: The Colonial Territories 1951-52 (HMSO, 1952), pp.1-10.

40 Chandos, op.cit., p.352.

41 Lord Munster, Under-Secretary of State: House of Lords Debates (henceforth HLD) vol. 176 col. 1611 (28 May 1952).

relatively free of directives from the Secretary of State. For administrators the main measure of Lyttelton's term was the reorganisation of the Colonial Service, announced in June 1954. The existing branches of the Service were to be merged into a newly-formed Oversea Civil Service, on terms designed to reassure officers that their careers and income would be safeguarded as colonies became self-governing.

But the days when a Secretary of State could devote personal attention to the detailed drafting of economic and administrative blueprints were fading. Through the force of circumstances Lyttelton's main attention was necessarily given to military and political matters. Everywhere new arrangements and structures were called for as old ones cracked under pressure.

When Lyttelton took office the Malayan war ranked most important in his mind. His first act as Colonial Secretary, in November 1951, was to fly to Malaya to see for himself. Subsequently he appointed General Sir Gerald Templer as High Commissioner with a free hand to pursue a firm campaign. Some of Templer's measures, notably the collective punishment of villages which had sheltered terrorists, were very firm indeed and aroused protests at home, but within three years the military situation was under control. The war, however, imposed much strain (augmented by a fall in world prices for rubber and tin) on local resources, and considerable financial aid to meet Malayan budget deficits, as well as military expenses, became necessary.

After his action in Malaya Lyttelton adopted the standard piecemeal approach to colonial affairs, considering the empire unit by unit. In the West Indies constitutional reforms were granted to individual territories while agreement was sought on the general form of federation. In Nigeria, a country which, like Malaya, he already knew well, the long-awaited federal constitution was introduced in 1952. Its working was disrupted by regionally-based dissensions a year later, but in two successful conferences in 1953 and 1954 the future pattern of the country was marked out and Lyttelton earned much Nigerian goodwill for his adroitness in negotiation. In the Gold Coast the office of Prime Minister was created for Nkrumah.

These were the less controversial areas. Wherever else Lyttelton turned argument and violence confronted him, and gave his term of office the

atmosphere of stress which became its best remembered characteristic.

In Central Africa he worked hard for federation. Churchill had given him carte blanche to push ahead with this scheme for a new British dominion. A series of conferences at various levels led to the eventual implementation of a federal constitution, with a settler-controlled central government and civil service, in August 1953. But although Lyttelton was a dedicated accoucheur, it was not an easy birth. There was vigorous opposition to the scheme from the articulate minority of Africans in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, and from the Labour Party and liberal groups at home. In Parliament bitter debates ended in divisions, until then a rare event on colonial issues. Whereas Lyttelton and the settler leaders Huggins and Welensky spoke of the progress of all races by way of "partnership", with the settlers cast temporarily as senior partners, their opponents saw federation as a device for perpetuating white domination with all possibility of genuine African advance excluded. During the Federation's first year there were some visible economic achievements, among them the securing of a large American loan for railways, and a comprehensive development plan was outlined. But critics continued to argue that such "progress" bore no relation to the real politico-racial issues; that the African Affairs Board set up under federal parliamentary control to watch African interests would prove powerless, and that the scheme could not last.

During and after the political battle for federation a series of crises broke in various colonies, making it clear that London could no longer ordain the pace of events everywhere as peacefully as in the West Indies or as firmly as in Central Africa. In Kenya in 1952 there had been Colonial Office plans for a Royal Commission on land and population problems, for a ten-year development scheme, and for cautious constitutional revisions. At the end of the year Mau Mau transformed the picture. Mau Mau was a secret society, based on the Kikuyu tribe, which aimed to expel immigrant races from Kenya, and to intimidate "loyalist" Africans, by force. By the year's end 270 people had been killed, all but fifteen of them Africans. The Kikuyu leader Jomo Kenyatta was arrested and convicted on a charge of organising the conspiracy, while his party, the Kenya African Union, was proscribed. As in Malaya Lyttelton felt that the immediate solution had to

be a military one, and British troops were brought in. Within a year the Mau Mau forces, although responsible for nearly a thousand deaths, had lost over three thousand of their own number. In 1954, after two visits to Kenya, Lyttelton announced constitutional changes to accommodate the "legitimate" aspirations of all races. In one way or another five Africans were now to be associated with the Kenya Government; all were required to undertake "to prosecute the fight against terrorism with the utmost vigour."<sup>42</sup> It was further agreed that by 1956 the Government would produce a report, with African cooperation, on the best method of choosing African members for the Legislative Council. By comparison with the radical aspirations for African freedom which had underlain Mau Mau, this advance was probably no greater than what might have been achieved in any case at this time. Indeed, it could be said that this drawn-out conflict was resulting only in an intensification of the racial bitterness which had been among its causes. The generalisation later became current that Mau Mau hastened independence everywhere else in Africa but delayed it in Kenya.

Before the end of 1953 there were two more emergencies on Lyttelton's hands. In British Guiana a new constitution had provided for internal self-government and an election in April resulted in a government formed from the People's Progressive Party, an organisation based on rural Indian labour and led by Cheddi Jagan. In the ensuing months the British authorities became convinced that a Communist clique associated with Jagan was aiming at subversion of the whole administration. In October Lyttelton decided to send in troops and suspend the new constitution in order to prevent "a dangerous crisis both in public order and in economic affairs."<sup>43</sup> He was attacked in the Commons for taking this extreme step, and the Labour Party sought unsuccessfully to annul the draft Order establishing an interim government. Meanwhile in Uganda a double outcry had arisen: first, because Lyttelton, in an after-dinner speech, had suggested the possibility of an East African federation, which Ugandan Africans had interpreted to mean

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42 Cmd. 9103: Kenya. Proposals for a Reconstruction of the Government (HMSO, 1954), p.4.

43 Cmd. 8980: British Guiana. Suspension of the Constitution (HMSO, 1953), p.16.

political control by Kenyan settlers on the Central African pattern; second, because of the constitutional argument between the British Government and Kabaka Mutesa II, the hereditary ruler and spiritual chief of Buganda. The Kabaka demanded that Buganda, as the protectorate's most advanced component, should be separated from the rest of Uganda and placed under the purview of the Foreign Office. When this was refused he publicly repudiated his responsibility, as outlined in an agreement of 1900, to act upon the advice of the Governor. In November, taking a stand on the protectorate's indivisibility, the Governor decreed and effected the Kabaka's exile. There was little violence and the emergency was soon ended, but Africans from all parts of the protectorate made common cause in demanding the Kabaka's return. In December Lyttelton had to withstand an Opposition motion censuring his handling of African affairs. It was Parliament's first experience of a censure motion on this subject.

Typically, Lyttelton's Secretaryship ended in yet another parliamentary uproar. This time the subject was Cyprus. The official view of Cyprus was that its role as a military fortress took it out of the main colonial stream, and that the political aspirations of Cypriots, both Greek and Turkish, were thus necessarily confined. In July 1954 the Minister of State, Henry Hopkinson, announced in the Commons that there would "never" be a change of sovereignty in Cyprus. The Opposition seized upon this and Lyttelton had to be summoned from the Colonial Office. Lyttelton rode the storm only by arguing that Hopkinson had meant that the Government would never "abandon its responsibilities" in Cyprus until a stable life had been ensured for minorities.<sup>44</sup> In his view, this incident "made me think that perhaps I should not miss politics so much...it was not an hour which increased any feelings of nostalgia which I might have entertained."<sup>45</sup>

The forties had been a period when for the most part socio-economic initiatives from London held sway in colonial policy, rather than political pressures, as yet relatively feeble, from below. During Lyttelton's tenure the growing force of these pressures, foreshadowed by the Gold Coast riots,

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44 HCD vol. 531 cols. 504-14, 548-53 (28 July 1954).

45 Chandos, op.cit., p.436.

resulted in breakthroughs of violence and numerous states of emergency, challenging the more sober official concept of the way colonial policy was destined to proceed; the nationalists had shown their strength. Lyttelton could look back on substantial achievements in such areas as Malaya, Nigeria and the West Indies. But he left office with the Kenya emergency still to be ended, the deadlocks in British Guiana and Uganda still to be broken, and the question-marks over Central Africa and Cyprus still to be erased. All these problems he bequeathed to Alan Lennox-Boyd, his successor.

Lennox-Boyd was a confident, energetic and friendly man, then aged forty-nine. Extremely tall, he had a natural exuberance which at times appeared to verge upon flippancy and was resented by his political opponents.<sup>46</sup> Like Creech Jones he had for some time specialised in colonial affairs, having been an Opposition spokesman on colonies before 1951 and subsequently Lyttelton's Minister of State for six months. His appointment to the Colonial Office after two years as Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation was thus a return to his chosen field.<sup>47</sup>

There followed a time of uncertain balance between recognised nationalist ambitions and official restraints. The colonies, especially in Africa, were universally acknowledged to be "awakening", and the names of their nationalist leaders appeared with growing prominence in the world press. But the wording of official objectives remained unaltered: piecemeal, gradualist guidance, constitutional, economic and social, was the aim, with perhaps a stronger emphasis for the time being on the maintenance of order in the face of unrest. And although bloodshed in Cyprus during the later fifties, and in Nyasaland in 1959, showed that "unrest" could be as

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46 One man who had dealings with them all was later to compare Lennox-Boyd's "enveloping friendliness" with Griffiths's "warm determination" and Lyttelton's "vigorous raciness". Sir Michael Blundell, So Rough a Wind. The Kenya Memoirs of Sir Michael Blundell (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), p.270.

47 "His devotion to the colonies was passionate", said The Times upon his retirement five years later. Editorial, 15 Oct. 1959. Creech Jones, in an otherwise heavily qualified tribute, allowed that Lennox-Boyd "worked hard, with fervour and enthusiasm, and was extraordinarily attached to his office". Venture (journal of the Fabian Commonwealth Bureau), Nov.-Dec. 1959, p.9. Lennox-Boyd himself described Oliver Stanley as "a most important influence"

inadequate a euphemism as in earlier crises, the Government by 1959 could begin to point to actual examples of policy fulfilled as an earnest of its good intentions and superior wisdom. For independence was coming to colonies - the Gold Coast and Malaya, preceded by the Anglo-Egyptian condominium of the Sudan - for the first time since the Labour Government gave independence to the Indian sub-continent, to Ceylon and to Palestine a decade earlier.

The change of Colonial Secretary in 1954, in short, did not bring any immediate change in policies and issues at hand. Technical matters of administration and social provision remained in general the unquestioned purview of experts and officials. In 1955 the Colonial Development Corporation under Lord Reith achieved Lyttelton's objective by showing its first small profits,<sup>48</sup> and the Development and Welfare Act was renewed to provide £80,000,000 for the next five years. Private investment in colonies, which had always far outweighed public investment, continued to expand under the inducement of tax relief for overseas trading concerns provided by the 1957 Finance Act. But the chief preoccupations of the Secretary of State himself, as of his predecessor, were necessarily political. Lennox-Boyd considered that the basic political battles over policy for most territories were long since fought and won, that disagreement could at most be about questions of timing, and that the functions of the Colonial Secretary were to travel and to negotiate, in conference after conference, towards agreed objectives.<sup>49</sup> And at any given time there was always evidence to suggest that things were going as planned. In 1955 Hopkinson spoke of the Government's continued adherence to the 1948 declaration of purpose, looked back

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47 (cont.) on him: "In the year in which he was dying [1950] Oliver made it clear to me that he hoped I would take the same intense interest as he had done in colonial affairs and equip myself to do so should the chance of service come." Interview reported in The Daily Mail, 7 Jan. 1959.

48 HC 260: Colonial Development Corporation: Report and Accounts for 1955 (HMSO, 1956), p.11.

49 Interview with Lord Boyd of Merton (Alan Lennox-Boyd). In his Daily Mail interview Lennox-Boyd also pointed out that the modern Colonial Secretary "has to deal more and more with elected ministers. His difficulties have therefore become those of a Foreign Secretary; he is dealing with responsible elected Governments who are answerable to their supporters - he cannot embarrass them."

on a year in which constitutional reforms had been proposed or initiated in fifteen territories, and observed that

"the realisation in most cases...that they cannot hope to attain all their aims overnight - and indeed, that it is not in their real interests to do so - is one of the most remarkable features of present colonial development...not less remarkable is the fact that, having gained power, the leaders have been very quick to realise its implications and responsibilities and have shown considerable courage in insisting on the need for the continued assistance of British officials and technicians for many years to come."<sup>50</sup>

At the same time he thought it noteworthy that colonies were increasingly providing skilled personnel of their own. But development was, and would remain, "orderly", so that colonies could be self-sufficient well in time for independence. And for most of them independence still lay a long way off. As a rule the Government eschewed "target dates"; it preferred its gradualism to be of a pragmatic and adaptable kind. But when a United Nations Visiting Mission to Tanganyika in 1954 suggested that the territory would not be ready for independence for another twenty or twenty-five years, no-one in the British Government seemed to consider this an over-estimate.

Particular issues came and went. In 1955, as a remedy for its economic difficulties, the Maltese Government proposed integration of the island into the United Kingdom on the model of Northern Ireland. The idea was received with some approval in Britain and was intermittently discussed until negotiations broke down over Maltese doubts about subsidies in 1958. A West Indian federation, of a sort, was finally achieved in 1958 when a central government was established with minimal functions and finances. Some loose ends were tied up. In 1955 the Kabaka was authorised to return to Uganda following a comprehensive revision of the 1900 Agreement, by which the Baganda were given more representatives and a larger role in a strengthened central government. Late in 1956 Seretse Khama was allowed to return to Bechuanaland as a private citizen after promising to renounce all claim to the chieftaincy of the Bamangwato. A new tribal council was set up with Seretse's cousin as Chairman, Seretse as Vice-Chairman, and Tshekedi as Secretary, thus preparing the way for the change which many Bechuanas were

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50 HCD vol. 542 col. 1165 (21 June 1955).

demanding, a Legislative Council in place of the chieftaincy. Concerning British Guiana a commission appointed by Lyttelton had decided that his actions were justified, and the interim government continued in office until in 1956 Lennox-Boyd agreed with the Governor that further political advance could safely be attempted. At elections in 1957 Dr. Jagan's party again won a majority of the elective seats, Jagan claiming to have matured politically during the interregnum. In the major areas of "unrest", the military campaigns were eventually brought to an end. In Malaya the number of terrorists was steadily reduced from the 1951 peak of about eight thousand, and increasing areas of the country were declared clear, until in 1958, after the loss of some ten thousand terrorist and nine thousand military and civilian lives, the emergency was declared over. In Kenya armed conflict was virtually at an end by 1956, at a cost of over ten thousand Mau Mau and over two thousand military and civilian lives, although emergency regulations were not officially lifted till 1959.

Two new centres of serious "unrest", however, developed during these years: Cyprus and Nyasaland. The Cyprus crisis was somewhat analogous to that of nearby Palestine in that the British Government was seeking to keep the peace between two national communities, with rival claims to the territory's soil, by withholding independence from both, and that international complications made this a matter of concern for the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister as well as the Colonial Secretary. In 1954 Hopkinson had said "never" to Cyprus. By 1956, after two years of the terrorist EOKA movement's fight for union with Greece, the deportation of Archbishop Makarios, and the Suez crisis, the Government was prepared to grant internal self-government but insisted on retaining authority for defence, external affairs and internal security. In 1959 the island's right to full independence was finally conceded, and plans were made for a bi-national form of government.

In its way the Cyprus affair was, as the Government often claimed, outside the main colonial stream: but less because of the diplomatic and military considerations stressed by the Government than because the capacity of Greeks and Turks to manage their own affairs had never been questioned in principle. The Nyasaland crisis, however, was well in the mainstream. Indeed nothing could have cut closer to the heart of the Government's policy

for the areas of white settlement, which for years had been the most controversial of its policies. In Kenya it was still pledging good faith to the settlers; but the skilful manoeuvring of Mboya and other Africans for control of the Legislative Council convinced many that white supremacy in Kenya could not last much longer. Thus the Central African Federation was the main focus of all arguments about the feasibility of "partnership" on settler terms.

For some years the federal authorities had been seeking, with fair success, to project an image of political stability and racial peace in their territory. Early in 1959 the image was shattered. Riotous political meetings initiated by Dr. Hastings Banda's Nyasaland African National Congress led to situations in which troops opened fire on African crowds. In a number of incidents during February and March some fifty Africans were killed by the security forces. The administration claimed meanwhile to have unearthed a Mau Mau-style plot to murder Europeans, Asians and moderate Africans. Early in March an emergency was declared, the Congress proscribed and its leadership imprisoned. Subsequently Lennox-Boyd set up a commission of inquiry under Mr. Justice Devlin; and four months later the commission announced some dramatic conclusions. Although Congress's resort to violence had fully justified the declaration of an emergency, the security forces had used "illegal force" and made "unnecessary arrests." The stories of a massacre plot were unfounded. Among Nyasaland Africans there was "almost universal opposition" to the Federation. And Nyasaland under federation was "no doubt only temporarily - a police state."<sup>51</sup>

The Devlin report made a remarkable impact. Hindsight suggests, indeed, that this was the first really decisive blow against the federal structure: the beginning of the Federation's end. But at the time the Government chose officially to reject the commission's main conclusions. They amounted, after all, to an indictment of the Government's own policies and attitudes towards Central Africa; and they were issued, after all, less than three months before a general election.

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51 Cmd. 814: Report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry (HMSO, 1959), esp. p.1.

Meanwhile, in May and July, attention had been directed back to Kenya by the publication of two reports concerning the deaths of a number of Mau Mau prisoners at Hola detention camp. A coroner had reached the "irresistible conclusion" that eleven prisoners had died as the result of beatings by warders. The revelation of this tragedy aroused much indignation in Britain. In Parliament there were angry demands for the Colonial Secretary's resignation. And in fact Lennox-Boyd's battle with the Opposition over these two issues, Nyasaland and Hola, was the dominating feature of the session's last few pre-election weeks.

But there was a much more creditable side to the colonial record with which the Government faced the election. In 1956, with the approval of all parties in Britain, the condominium of the Sudan had attained its scheduled independence: in 1957 the Gold Coast and the Malayan Federation had reached theirs. These were major events, particularly the transformation of the Gold Coast into Ghana. This was the first all-African colony to gain its independence. As such, its success or failure as a free state was awaited with the consciousness that this could be a test case for all the principles and methods of British policy. In the event its significance turned out to be a great deal wider than the Government had bargained for, since from the moment of its independence Ghana became a symbol and a prototype for nationalists in every other British African colony, just as in 1948 the Asian ex-dependencies had served as symbols and prototypes in the Gold Coast itself. In many territories - for example Nyasaland - independence campaigns gained enormously in fervour, all the more so after many nationalist leaders - for example Banda - had seen Nkrumah's Ghana for themselves at the Accra All-African Peoples' Conference in December 1958.

Yet even in 1959 the old Colonial Office assumptions had not really been demolished. In January of that year Lennox-Boyd convened a conference to discuss the future constitutional progress of East Africa. It was agreed that Tanganyika might well achieve independence by 1970, followed by Uganda and with Kenya much later, probably after 1975.<sup>52</sup> Two months later Lennox-

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52 Blundell, op.cit., pp.261-2.

Boyd's Minister of State, on a visit to Rhodesia, declared that "a halt is being called to the rapid advance of colonial territories."<sup>53</sup> Officially at least, the Government still held these views at the time of the general election in October.

No British election ever had greater significance for colonial policy. The governing party gained a substantial number of new, young, liberal-minded members. Harold Macmillan himself gained, for the first time, the authority in his party of a leader who had achieved a major electoral victory. Lennox-Boyd retired from his office; with Lyttelton and Lord Salisbury also retired the Cabinet now lacked any authoritative senior spokesmen for gradualism. And Iain Macleod, well known as a Tory radical, had the political courage to take on - indeed, to ask for - the Colonial Secretaryship.

Almost overnight, it seemed, the tempo began to quicken. Macleod has written:

"I think any Secretary of State would have decided that there was little time left in Africa to devise solutions. Those who now study and write about British colonial policy after the 1959 General Election assume that some dramatic Cabinet decision was taken to speed up the granting of independence in Africa, and that Macmillan's 'Wind of Change' speech was designed to announce this to the continent and to the world. This is not true. What did happen was that the tempo accelerated as a result of a score of different deliberate decisions. For myself, some months before the election and before of course I had any idea that I would become Secretary of State, I had convinced myself that for all the manifest dangers of moving quickly in Africa, the dangers of being too slow were greater."<sup>54</sup>

Many people on all sides of politics had been similarly convinced for some time. But now, beginning with the fateful Kenya Conference called by Macleod early in 1960, the conviction began to find full expression in actual policy. No longer was much heard of planned, orderly and gradual progress under British guidance; now, it seemed, to be gradual was simply

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53 Sir Roy Welensky, Welensky's 4000 Days (Collins, 1964), p.139.

54 Iain Macleod, "Britain's Future Policy in Africa", Weekend Telegraph, 12 March 1965.

to court danger - the danger of massive colonial unrest which Britain could not hope to contain. No longer was there the old insistence either on "viability" as a necessary condition of self-government, or on the need to "contain the extremists" and create a responsible official class to whom power would eventually be transferred. Increasingly it appeared that there was really only one prerequisite for independence: that an organised political elite with fairly wide popular support should exist, and be willing to take over. And no longer were small minorities - in particular, European minorities in Africa - to enjoy politically privileged positions; in Macleod's words, "independence once given to the African in the Gold Coast could not for long be denied to his brother in Kenya."<sup>54</sup>

A few days before the election the Colonial Correspondent of The Times had commented that the only possible radical decision in colonial policy would be to pull out, and that neither party would be so irresponsible.<sup>55</sup> Yet in the life of the following Parliament, from 1959 to 1964, the federations of the West Indies and Central Africa were dismantled - the latter at the expense of settler domination - and independence came to British Somaliland, Cyprus, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanganyika, Jamaica, Trinidad, Uganda, Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawak, Zanzibar, Kenya (under an African government), Nyasaland and Malta. In the ensuing years of Labour government other territories followed in steady succession: Northern Rhodesia, the Gambia, British Guiana, Bechuanaland, Basutoland, Barbados, the Leeward and Windward Islands, Aden, Mauritius, Swaziland. By the late sixties Britain was left with little more than a residue of tiny island protectorates scattered over the world's oceans. And a unique category of problems and issues had disappeared for ever from British political life.

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55 "Party Policies for Africa", The Times, 25 Sept. 1959.

Addendum to Chapter I : BRITISH COLONIAL TERRITORIES

REGION	NAME (1945)	STATUS (1945)	AREA IN SQUARE MILES (1945)	ESTIMATED POPULATION (1945)	ESTIMATED POPULATION (1959)	DATE OF INDEPENDENCE
EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA	British Somaliland	Protectorate	68,000	700,000	600,000	26.6.60
	Kenya	Colony and Protectorate	224,960	4,200,000	6,500,000	12.12.63
	Tanganyika	Trust Territory	362,688	5,650,000	9,230,000	9.12.61
	Uganda	Colony and Protectorate	93,921	4,000,000	6,517,000	9.10.62
	Zanzibar	Protectorate	1,020	250,000	304,000	10.12.63
	Northern <sup>1</sup> Rhodesia	Protectorate	287,640	1,660,000	2,420,000	24.10.64
	Nyasaland <sup>1</sup>	Protectorate	47,949	2,230,000	2,820,000	6.7.64
WEST AFRICA	Gambia	Colony and Protectorate	4,132	250,000	295,000	18.2.65
	Gold Coast	Colony	91,843	4,095,000	4,600,000 <sup>2</sup>	6.3.57
	Nigeria	Colony and Protectorate	372,674	22,000,000	38,000,000	1.10.60
	Sierra Leone	Colony and Protectorate	27,925	1,800,000	2,400,000	27.4.61
FAR EAST	Malaya	Protected States	50,850	4,878,000	6,500,000 <sup>2</sup>	31.8.57
	Singapore	Colony	217	941,000	1,612,000	16.9.63
	Brunei	Protected State	2,226	43,000	84,000	16.9.63
	North Borneo	Colony	29,417	230,000	429,000	16.9.63
	Sarawak	Colony	50,000	500,000	740,000	16.9.63
	Hong Kong	Colony	391	1,750,000	2,920,000	
MEDITERRANEAN	Palestine	Trust Territory	10,429	1,750,000	782,000 <sup>3</sup>	15.5.48

## BRITISH COLONIAL TERRITORIES (cont.)

REGION	NAME (1945)	STATUS (1945)	AREA IN SQUARE MILES (1945)	ESTIMATED POPULATION (1945)	ESTIMATED POPULATION (1959)	DATE OF INDEPENDENCE
MEDITERRANEAN	Cyprus	Colony	3,572	450,000	560,000	16.8.60
	Gibraltar	Colony	2	21,000	26,000	
	Malta	Colony	121	290,000	327,000	21.9.64
WEST INDIES	Barbados	Colony	166	193,000	230,000	30.11.66
	Jamaica (& dependencies)	Colony	4,846	1,308,000	1,600,000	6.8.62
	Trinidad (& Tobago)	Colony	1,980	558,000	820,000	31.8.62
	Leeward Islands	Colony	422	109,000	128,000	27.2.67 <sup>5</sup>
	Windward Islands	Colony	821	252,000	310,000	18.3.67 <sup>5</sup>
	British Guiana	Colony	83,000	376,000	558,000	26.5.66
	British Honduras	Colony	8,867	59,000	90,000	
WESTERN PACIFIC	British Solomon Islands	Protectorate	11,500	95,000	115,000	
	Fiji	Colony	7,083	260,000	388,000	
	Gilbert & Ellice Islands	Colony	333	35,000	45,000	
	New Hebrides	Condominium	5,700	45,000	61,000	
	Tonga	Protected State	250	40,000	62,000	
ATLANTIC AND INDIAN OCEANS	Bahamas	Colony	4,375	81,000	104,000	
	Bermuda	Colony	21	35,000	44,000	
	Falkland Islands (& dependencies)	Colony	4,618	3,000	3,000	
	St. Helena & Ascension	Colony	81	5,000	5,000	

## BRITISH COLONIAL TERRITORIES (cont.)

REGION	NAME (1945)	STATUS (1945)	AREA IN SQUARE MILES (1945)	ESTIMATED POPULATION (1945)	ESTIMATED POPULATION (1959)	DATE OF INDEPENDENCE
ATLANTIC AND INDIAN OCEANS	Aden	Colony and Protectorate	80 112,000	81,000 650,000	150,000 660,000	30.11.67
	Mauritius	Colony	805	430,000	650,000	12.1.68
	Seychelles	Colony	156	35,000	40,000	
	Ceylon	Colony	25,332	6,500,000	7,000,000 <sup>2</sup>	4.2.48
HIGH COMMISSION TERRITORIES <sup>4</sup>	Basutoland	Colony	11,716	550,000	635,000	4.10.66
	Bechuanaland	Protectorate	275,000	280,000	330,000	30.9.66
	Swaziland	Protectorate	6,705	185,000	240,000	6.9.68

Notes.

1. Under the Central African Office, March 1962-December 1963.
2. Estimated population at date of independence.
3. Estimated population within the new Israeli frontiers of November 1948.
4. Under the Commonwealth Relations Office, but with administrative staffs interchangeable with staffs of territories under the Colonial Office. Transferred to the Colonial Office in December 1961 as a result of South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth.
5. Date of Associated Statehood.

Sources.

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THE CENTRAL INSTITUTIONS OF COLONIAL POLICY

## CHAPTER II

## THE COLONIAL OFFICE

"The work of the Colonial Office touches on every aspect of government."

The Colonial Office List, 1959 edition, p.4.

The post-war Colonial Office was a much-harried department. Opinions, advice, requests, claims, demands and warnings flowed in from many sources. Parliament, press and public at home were only some elements in a complex of pressures to which individuals and organisations in the colonies, in foreign and Commonwealth countries, and in the United Nations all added their share. Some urged faster and some slower rates of change, but the vocal balance was apt to be on the side of more rather than less speed in the devolution of responsibility. "The Colonial Office, though at times attacked for going too fast," observed a Deputy Under-Secretary, writing in 1954, "is even more loudly urged to go faster and is regarded in some quarters as reactionary if it maintains a prudent pace."<sup>1</sup>

To understand what these pressures - the domestic ones in particular - were directed at, we need to look at the functions and organisation of the Colonial Office; and, to appreciate their effect, at some indications of the Office's degree of accessibility to pressure.

### 1. Formal Organisation and Functions

Administratively the Colonial Office formed part of the home Civil Service, and as such could be distinguished from the Colonial Service, or after 1954 the Oversea Civil Service, whose members the Office recruited and whose work it supervised. Its raison d'etre was analogous to that of any other government department: in the comprehensive phraseology of the Colonial Office List, the essence of its work was to advise, assist and carry out the directions of the Secretary of State "on everything pertaining to his responsibility for the good government of Colonial territories."<sup>2</sup> This work involved an extremely wide range

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1 Sir Charles Jeffries, The Colonial Office (Allen and Unwin, 1956), p.38.

2 The Colonial Office List, (HMSO, 1959 ed.), p.4.

of duties, for whereas other Ministers each dealt primarily with one broad aspect of governmental activity the Colonial Secretary had to take an interest in every area of colonial government. This was true even of those areas where local authorities in colonies enjoyed a large measure of autonomy, as the 1948 Colonial Office report pointed out in deliberately paradoxical terms:

"The Colonies are not governed from Whitehall; yet their governments are not established and then left without direction...They enjoy varying degrees of responsibility and invariably a large measure of autonomy...The Secretary of State, however, is constitutionally responsible to Parliament for the good government of colonial territories."<sup>3</sup>

The Secretary of State was always a member of the Cabinet and the key member of the Cabinet's colonial committee. This committee took on different forms at different times. In the Labour Cabinet there was a Colonial Affairs Committee, presided over by the Lord Privy Seal, from 1945 to 1947, and subsequently a Commonwealth Affairs Committee under the Prime Minister.<sup>4</sup> In the Conservative Cabinet from 1951 to 1959 there was a Colonial Policy Committee under the Lord Chancellor, normally with five members including the Commonwealth Relations Secretary and the Foreign Secretary.<sup>5</sup> In the Office itself, the Secretary of State was aided at ministerial level by a Minister of State and by a Parliamentary Under-Secretary, these two being customarily in different Houses of Parliament. The official hierarchy consisted of a Permanent Under-Secretary, who was both principal policy adviser and head of staff; two Deputy Under-Secretaries; between seven and nine Assistant Under-Secretaries, each overseeing a group of departments within the Office; and between twenty-five and twenty-eight Assistant Secretaries, each in charge of a single department. These were all career officials, though the top jobs did not always go by promotion inside the hierarchy since a proportion of administrative and advisory posts were filled by officials seconded, or recently retired, from the Oversea Civil Service. In 1957, for example, there were forty such officials in the Office,<sup>6</sup> including the Permanent Under-Secretary himself. The total establishment, during the years from 1945 to 1959, varied

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3 The Colonial Empire (1947-1948), p.3.

4 Lord Morrison, Government and Parliament (Oxford U.P., 2nd ed., 1959), p.22.

5 Interview with Lord Boyd.

6 Reference pamphlet 3460: Administration of the United Kingdom Dependencies (Central Office of Information, 1957), p.6.

between about 1,150 and about 1,270. Staff was recruited by competitive examination and sifted into the normal grades, Administrative, Executive and Clerical. Because the Office functioned much more as a headquarters than as an executive department the proportion of administrative to other grades was relatively large; in absolute size, indeed, its administrative staff was "one of the six largest in Whitehall."<sup>7</sup>

Of the Office's departments between eight and ten, at different times, had "area" responsibilities, covering in various combinations the dependencies of East, Central and West Africa, the Far East, the Mediterranean, the Pacific and the Caribbean. The rest, varying in number over the years between twenty-two (in 1955) and twenty-nine (in 1949), had "functional" responsibilities. In 1957, for example, there were twenty-three functional departments comprising seven in the Economics Division, four in the Overseas Service Division, two in the Legal Division, two in the Social Service Division, and eight others: Establishment and Organisation, General, Information, Intelligence and Security, International Relations, Library, Police and Students. Most of these served to integrate technical advice and knowledge, which could be made available to any territory, on some general aspect of under-development. As well as this the functional departments were directly in charge of organising centrally administered services under Colonial Development and Welfare, including scientific research, films, the welfare of colonial students in Britain (through the British Council), the establishment of colonial universities and colleges, and training courses for Overseas Service officers; and with maintaining necessary contacts with other government departments - for example, the Economic Division with the Treasury, the Board of Trade, and the Ministry of Supply; International Relations with the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office; and Social Services with the Ministries of Health, Labour and Education.<sup>8</sup> On functional matters .

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7 The Colonial Empire (1947-1948), p.13. The names of Colonial Office ministers, Permanent Under-Secretaries and Deputy Under-Secretaries are listed in an Addendum to this chapter.

8 Colonial Governments. Their Functions and Relationship with His Majesty's Government, with the Colonial Office and with other Government Departments (issued by the Treasury for circulation in the Civil Service, 1951), pp.14, 17.

the Secretary of State was also aided by expert Advisers, who had their own staffs but lacked executive responsibilities, and by advisory committees and councils drawn from other government departments and the world outside. In 1957 there were seventeen principal Advisers and twenty-seven advisory committees and councils.

These dimensions and subdivisions were of comparatively recent origin. Amery and his junior minister, William Ormsby-Gore, germinated the modern organisation by hiving off the old Dominions Division into a separate office and adding a group of functional advisers and advisory committees to a Colonial Office structure which in 1924 had comprised only one "general" department and eight geographical.<sup>9</sup> But there was no really dynamic growth or change for some time thereafter. Changes were no more than piecemeal. In 1930 three departments concerned with Colonial Service matters were set up. In 1934 the first Economic Department followed, a child of the depression and the Ottawa Agreements. The department had a staff of two, of whom one was an economist. But in general it remained the official view that the adviser system, free of departmental encumbrance, provided the best means of combining expertise with a proper regard for the different circumstances of different colonies. And for the most part the ruling conception of the Office's task remained that of supervising administration. It was still not common for senior officials to have had actual experience of the territories they were dealing with. Correspondence with colonial governments was still conducted mainly by the exchange of despatches, a "decorous but somewhat leisurely"<sup>10</sup> method. And the "man on the spot" remained a powerful figure in his dealings with the metropolitan government.<sup>11</sup> Though the Treasury stipulated that Governors needed formal approval from home for all items of expenditure, and though the Office was just beginning to take an active lead on technical matters, the Governors normally held the initiative on matters of policy; unless there

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9 For Amery's account of these reforms see his autobiography, My Political Life, Vol. II: War and Peace, 1914-1929 (Hutchinson, 1953), pp.335-8.

10 Sir Andrew Cohen, British Policy in Changing Africa (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p.81.

11 "I inherited from my predecessors the tradition of trusting the man on the spot." Malcolm MacDonald, Colonial Secretary 1938-40, in The Colonial Empire 1938-9, p.7.

were positive reasons to the contrary the actions proposed and reported in their despatches were almost always endorsed. The Governors thus supplied the main motive power of the whole system - to the extent that the system "moved" at all. In developmental matters, thanks chiefly to the prevailing climate of economic thought, there seemed very little opportunity for movement; and in constitutional matters, very little need.<sup>12</sup>

The breakthrough came in the late thirties and early war years. It was marked by the stimuli of Bailey's African Survey, the West Indian riots, and the Moyne Commission's interim report; and by the responses of the 1940 White Paper and the first Development and Welfare Act. In this period the modern conception of developmental colonial policy became established, and with it the corresponding conception of the Colonial Office as a dynamic "central organisation for policy-making and for giving assistance, advice and guidance to the Colonial Governments."<sup>13</sup> Within the Office the administrative response to this changing conception extended over several years, coinciding with the war and the subsequent transition to peace: roughly, from 1938 to 1947. A comparison of the Office in these two years indicates the extent of organisational change. In 1938 the Office establishment was about 460; by 1947 it was 1,168. In 1938 the Secretary of State commanded the services of principal advisers on matters of agriculture, education, labour, law and medicine, a broad but by no means all-inclusive range of subjects. By 1947 another eight Advisers had been enlisted, to deal with animal health, cooperation, demography, fisheries, forestry, geology, surveys and development planning; this last advisership had been created in January 1945 to assist the Secretary of State in considering applications for money grants under Colonial Development and Welfare. The advisory committee structure expanded similarly, the number remaining roughly in step with the number of principal Advisers and other consultants. But the most noteworthy structural change was

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12 For fuller descriptions of the pre-war Office see A. Creech Jones, "The Colonial Office", Political Quarterly, Vol. XIV No. 1 (Jan.-March 1943); B. Trevor Williams, "The Colonial Office in the Thirties", Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand, Vol. II No. 7 (May 1943); Kenneth Robinson, The Dilemmas of Trusteeship. Aspects of British Colonial Policy between the Wars (Oxford U.P., 1965), pp.29-37.

13 Sir Charles Jeffries, Partners for Progress (Harrap, 1949), p.71. The discussion of administrative developments in this and the next paragraph is based chiefly on material appearing in the Colonial Office Lists and annual

the multiplication of functional departments. At the beginning of 1938 there were five. Of these, three dealt with the Colonial Service and the others were respectively labelled General and Economic. Later in the year the West Indian riots prompted the establishment of a Social Services Department. In 1939 came a Development Department, foreshadowing the 1940 Act. Next, also a product of circumstances, came a Defence Department. In the next few years new departments jostled for Office floor-space in increasing numbers. Some, such as the department set up to deal with prisoners of war in colonies, were no more than ad hoc bodies with a limited life expectancy, but most, for example Communications, Public Relations and Welfare, were planned with an eye for peace-time problems as well. Even so, further subdivisions became necessary after the war to handle the colonies' external relations in the new world of the General Assembly, the Trusteeship Council, the Specialised Agencies, GATT, OEEC and civil aviation agreements. In 1947 the functional departments numbered well over twenty, and their growth accounted for the major part of the increase in Office staff.

The post-war Colonial Office was thus the product of a long period of comprehensive reorganisation. By about 1947 the Office appeared to be adequately equipped to manage its new responsibilities, and the patterns of activity and organisation which had emerged by then did not greatly change in the next dozen years. Such changes as did take place may be briefly traced in terms of the same indices already used - staff, adviserships and functional departments. For a time there were staffing difficulties as a result of the departure of temporary wartime personnel. But vacancies were steadily filled and the establishment rose by annual stages from 1,168 in 1947 to 1,250 in 1951. The political climate of the time, alive with demands for economies and reductions, obliged the Office to apologise even for this fractional growth,<sup>14</sup> and in 1951 the Conservative Government did make minimal staff

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13 (cont.) reports for the years 1947 to 1960. For a more detailed treatment see Lee, Colonial Development and Good Government, pp.100-110.

14 The Colonial Territories (1949-50), p.14: "This figure is notably low in relation to the enormous range of Colonial Office responsibilities and it is worth noting the small size of the staff compared with that of the very large U.K. Ministries, which have, of course, direct executive functions." Perhaps it is also worth noting that Parkinson's Law was based partly upon an observation of the Colonial Office; see The Economist, 11 Nov. 1955, p.636.

reductions "on grounds of economy."<sup>15</sup> But for several years thereafter the figure settled at a natural level of about 1,260, and not until 1957, when it was pared down to 1,247, was a tentative programme of small reductions instituted. The advisory structure, too, underwent relatively little alteration. The number of committees remained steadily in the high twenties, while the number of principal Advisers varied between thirteen and seventeen. Eleven adviserships remained constant throughout the period from 1947 to 1959: Agriculture, Animal Health, Co-operation, Education, Fisheries, Forestry, Geological, Labour, Legal, Medical and Surveys. Others operating at different times were Development Planning, which lapsed in 1948 when superseded by the Development Corporation; Inland Transport, from 1948 until abolished "on grounds of economy" in 1951; Training Courses for the Colonial Service, an advisership created for Sir Ralph Furse, from 1948 until his retirement in 1950;<sup>16</sup> Police, as from 1949; Agricultural Research, Medical Research and Pesticides Research, all as from 1954 (the Adviser on Pesticides Research becoming Adviser on Tropical Products in 1958); and Security, a consequence of colonial "unrest," as from 1956. Finally, the number and grouping of functional departments also varied but little. The usual number was twenty-three or four, although departmental fission in the Economic Division produced a temporary rise to twenty-nine in 1949. There was, of course, a certain amount of reshuffling within the pack, and the steadiness of this figure did not necessarily denote continuity in all departments. One example of a relatively major reorganisation, probably the most important of the whole period, should suffice to illustrate the process. In 1955 there were twenty-two functional departments and in 1956 there were twenty-four. This net increase of two was the outcome of an extensive reshuffle involving the abolition of one department, Defence and General; the transfer of another, Communications, into the Economic Division; the amalgamation of two more, Economic General, and Commercial Relations and Supplies, into one; and the creation of four new ones, Library,

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15 The Colonial Territories 1951-52, p.11.

16 Furse had been Director of Recruitment and Training for the Colonial Service from 1911 to 1948. His remarkable career is described in his Aucuparius. Recollections of a Recruiting Officer (Oxford U.P., 1962).

General, Police, and Intelligence and Security, the last three coming into being in the same year as the advisership on Security.

Almost all of these functional arrangements were determined by the incidence of colonial problems arising from local physical, economic and social conditions. But the Office, through its area departments, was also very much concerned with problems arising from the political dependence of territories. Before the war the political task could be described, broadly, as supervision of administration. After the war the phrase "conduct of relationships"<sup>17</sup> came into circulation. Territories were seen no longer as administrative regions but rather as political entities standing in a special relationship to Britain. The relationship took different forms in different contexts but wherever possible was conducted in a spirit of bilateral negotiation. Objectives thought desirable by the British Government were pursued "by persuasion, advice and guidance rather than by actual direction."<sup>18</sup> Formal and informal discussions with official and unofficial leaders replaced discursive gubernatorial despatches as the media in which differences were aired and conclusions reached. Governors lost their old lonely proconsular eminence, but gained a new importance as coordinators and conciliators in the task of negotiating with nationalist leaders. The Secretary of State himself came to have a special personal role to play. As political leaders in colonies gained in power and influence constitutional changes were more and more often worked out in discussions between them and the Secretary of State, with the advice of his officials and the Governors concerned. Griffiths, for example, argued about a new constitution with the leaders of Kenya's races in 1951; so did Lyttelton in 1954 and Lennox-Boyd in 1957. Thus the Colonial Office could claim that the pace of political advance, if excessively gradualist in some eyes, was at least based upon the outcome of practical discussions among political leaders on both sides. Official distaste for "target dates" always derived from a pragmatic belief that constitutional progress was basically a function of complex relationships among groups of human beings. Timetables

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17 Jeffries, The Colonial Office, pp.200-1.

18 Administration of the United Kingdom Dependencies, p.1. See also above, Ch. I, n.49.

were irrelevant to a process which, it was argued,<sup>19</sup> moved step by step in consultation with local opinion and whose chief virtue was that it sometimes produced unexpected results and unanticipated rates of change.

Around the end of the period the Colonial Office's high point was passed. From about 1960 the number of staff was cut back year by year. The number of subject departments was, by 1960, down to twenty-one, and advisory committees to twenty-three. In 1961 most of the Office's technical functions were transferred to the newly-formed Department of Technical Cooperation, while its political functions filtered steadily into the Commonwealth Relations Office until in July 1966, its task done, the Office was formally and finally disbanded. But for most of the period with which we are concerned the Office was riding a crest; the breadth of its responsibilities was never greater.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Ministers and Officials

A government department is more than a formally-organised administrative institution. It is also an aggregation of people among whom there are informal working relationships not necessarily coincident with those mapped out on the department's organisational chart. To look at this aspect of the department is often to gain insights into its functioning. Accordingly, this section aims to supplement the foregoing account with a brief sketch of some informal factors in the working of the post-war Colonial Office.

It should first be said that officials in the Colonial Office generally considered themselves to have an exceptionally fine esprit de corps. Sir Charles Jeffries, among others, has referred to an unwritten "Office code", based on a shared ideal of service. This code stood firmly against self-seeking, intrigue and personal rivalry among officials:

"I doubt whether any other official or unofficial organisation can be more free from these evils than the Colonial Office as I have known it... there is undoubtedly a corporate spirit in the Office which keeps such tendencies firmly in check."

Indeed, according to Jeffries, the Office inspired in its members

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19 E.g. by Sir Andrew Cohen: op.cit., pp.37-8.

20 The Office's activities are discussed in a different perspective in Appendix II, Colonial Office Expenditure.

"a special kind of loyalty which, without being pretentious or sentimental about it, I can fairly describe as a sense of vocation."<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps some allowance should be made for Jeffries' proprietary pride; but it does seem natural enough that an ideal of service amounting to a sense of "vocation" should exist in an Office which, alone among British government departments, had to meet a fiduciary responsibility for many aspects of the government, development and welfare of peoples not yet considered capable of handling these matters for themselves. To assume the role of arbiter of another people's fitness for self-management, and meanwhile to exercise comprehensive governmental powers in the capacity of alien ruler technically unaccountable to the ruled, was to undertake a task heavy with moral responsibility. At different stages of Britain's imperial history, broad moral justification for alien rule has been found in the doctrines of white man's burden, dual mandate, trusteeship, guidance and partnership. For the immediate purposes of Colonial Office administrators, the sense of moral responsibility would presumably find its expression in a strong desire to take "right" courses of action: "right", that is, according to such abstract but essentially moral considerations as justice, charity and fair dealing. Jeffries, for one, maintains that this was so;<sup>22</sup> and his view may be accepted as a tenable generalisation about official principles, without prejudice to the probability that in actual decision-making situations official briefs also reflected due regard for more pragmatic considerations - convention, economy, prudence or "national interest", for example.

For their part, the post-war Colonial Secretaries have also spoken highly of the personal qualities of the senior officials. In interviews, both Creech Jones and Griffiths described their officials as "dedicated," while Lennox-Boyd thought them a "superb set of men."<sup>23</sup> Lyttelton, in his autobiography, has gone into some detail. Sir Thomas Lloyd, his Permanent Under-Secretary, "was an example of the best in the Civil Service...enlightened and broad-minded on colonial policy"; Sir Hilton Poynton, then a Deputy Under-Secretary, was

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21 Jeffries, The Colonial Office, p.8.

22 Ibid., p. 7. Cf. the credo outlined by Sir Cosmo Parkinson, a former Permanent Under-Secretary, in The Colonial Office from Within 1909-1945 (Faber, 1947), pp.153-4.

23 Interviews with Creech Jones, Griffiths and Lord Boyd.

"brilliant" and had "many other merits"; Sir William Gorell Barnes, then an Assistant Under-Secretary, had "good intellectual equipment, a transparent character, and deep devotion to the cause of Africa." Even Lyttelton's private secretary, apparently, "brought to his work a natural piety and earnestness."<sup>24</sup>

As might be deduced from these encomia, Colonial Secretaries appear to have enjoyed generally good working relationships with their civil servants. There were no spectacular disagreements on major issues. Griffiths, Lyttelton and Lennox-Boyd have all said that the Office went along very willingly with their policies,<sup>25</sup> while the civil servants, according to one former official, considered themselves fortunate in having, in these three men, a series of "strong" Ministers.<sup>26</sup>

The case of Creech Jones, however, was more complex. His appointment as Colonial Secretary, in one view, was "rather like making a theoretical prison reformer a prison governor."<sup>27</sup> Creech Jones possessed great good will and an unrivalled specialist knowledge, but the practical task which he set himself was truly formidable. Coming into office after the war with a range of ambitious plans, he could hope for success only by activating the Colonial Service as well as the Colonial Office, the business community as well as domestic and colonial politicians, and moving them all along appropriate courses. But he lacked the ruthlessness necessary to compel people to do what he wanted them to do. By the very breadth of his sympathies, it appears, he was not always good at making decisions and giving orders; and he sometimes seemed to think that orders once given, were necessarily self-fulfilling, in spite of the interests with which they collided. It distressed him to discover how many people had a stake in resisting his policies. He sought to create local government structures and maintain a rate of constitutional

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24 Chandos, op.cit., pp.347-8.

25 Interviews with Griffiths, Lord Chandos and Lord Boyd.

26 Interview with Lord Campbell (who served as an official in the wartime Economic Division, and later, as a businessman, was a member of the Office's Advisory Committee).

27 Ibid. Cf. Harold Macmillan's comment: "He was a very good poacher, but I do not think he has been as good a keeper." HCD vol. 456 col. 1272 (24 Sept. 1948).

advance designed above all to implant a widely-based sense of "responsibility" among colonial peoples - and was bitterly attacked by colonial nationalists for trying to retard their progress.<sup>28</sup> By appointing "liberal" governors where possible he sought to mould the Colonial Service into a form more consistent with new ideas at home - and found himself accused of political appointments, and found, too, that in many colonies the local administrations resisted the new influences. Even in the Colonial Office itself he encountered what he regarded as "inertia," for all the wartime reorganisation and the spread of positivist ideas.<sup>29</sup> Here at least, though, he was in a position to attempt effective changes. He multiplied the number of advisory committees and made what were again described as political appointments, for example to the Colonial Economic Development Council.<sup>30</sup> By his own account he won an argument with Sir Ralph Furse on the subject of broadening the base of recruitment for the Colonial Service. When his Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir George Gater, wished him to comply with certain work routines which Cranborne, Stanley and Hall had accepted before him, for example the joint reading of telegrams, he rejected these as outmoded and inefficient. In appointing Gater's successor in 1947 he passed over the heir apparent, Sir Arthur Dawe, in favour of Lloyd, whom he considered to be more talented and more progressive. For similar reasons he advanced Poynton over four heads to a Deputy Under-Secretarship and made Andrew Cohen an Assistant Under-Secretary.<sup>29</sup>

Lloyd, Cohen, Poynton, Gorell Barnes, Jeffries: simply to list the names of these officials is to invite speculation about their personal roles in policy-making. This is not, however, a matter which can be taken up at length in this work, since it is far from germane to the goals outlined in the Introduction. It is taken for granted that the leading individuals inside the

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28 Kwame Nkrumah has recalled a Labour meeting at which Creech Jones "was exposed to much heckling by colonial students who made a point of being present"; Autobiography, p.58. See also report of public meeting, Daily Telegraph, 19 June 1948.

29 Interview with Creech Jones.

30 Speech by David Gammans (Con.), HCD vol. 453 cols. 607-8 (8 July 1948). On "political appointments" see also Lee, op.cit., pp.57, 137.

governmental structure were actively and continuously involved in policy-making; to the extent that this study is concerned, in later chapters, with influence over official decisions, it concentrates on the attempts made by parties and groups to exert influence from their positions outside the official structure. Yet this sketch of the post-war Office could not claim to be complete, even as a sketch, without a reference to the remarkable personal role of one particular official.

Andrew Cohen had worked in the Colonial Office at Administrative level since 1933. In 1947, at the age of thirty-eight, he was appointed Assistant Under-Secretary in charge of the African Division, a capacity in which he was soon known, among colleagues, by the rather less formal title 'King of Africa'.<sup>31</sup> Both Creech Jones and Griffiths regarded him not only as an excellent administrator but also as a man who broadly shared their political sympathies. Consequently, although he ranked no higher than fifth in the official hierarchy, both ministers chose to work closely with him. When he left the Office in 1952 it was to become Governor of Uganda, an appointment he had requested and obtained from Griffiths; and it was later known that had Labour won the 1955 general election Griffiths would have brought him back to be Permanent Under-Secretary.<sup>32</sup>

Policy towards Africa in those years was deeply marked with Cohen's ideas. More than any other official he incarnated the brand of paternalist liberalism characteristic of the government and the period. His was the brain, for example, behind Creech Jones's local government reforms of 1947 and a good deal of the Labour Government's development planning. But by far the most intriguing example of his capacity to impress his minister is provided by the federation affair.

Griffiths had been open-minded on this issue. He thought that the Central African Council, on which Creech Jones had based his hopes for economic and political progress, was working badly and that something better could surely be devised. At the same time he mistrusted Huggins and was aware of the federal scheme's portents for a possible entrenchment of the Rhodesian

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31 Observer, 21 July 1968 (Report of memorial service for Cohen).

32 Interview with Griffiths; Chandos, op.cit., p.418.

settlers' political domination; moreover he knew that liberal opinion in general was moving against the idea, and was himself advised against it by Creech Jones and the Fabian Colonial Bureau, among others.<sup>33</sup> Griffiths respected their advice but in the event he respected Cohen's more. Cohen had decided that on balance he would have to support federation. The scheme appeared to him not only economically desirable, for all the territories and all the races, but also politically necessary, chiefly as a means of checking the South African influence in Central Africa. If Southern Rhodesia did not join up with the two northern territories, so the argument went, it would be bound in the long run to be drawn into the orbit of its powerful southern neighbour; and as that happened, so its relatively liberal native policies would be increasingly supplanted by something like apartheid. It was Cohen's advocacy that decisively influenced Griffiths.<sup>34</sup> With Cohen's backing he determined to press on with an exploration of the federation idea, and later described the pro-federation proposals of the 1951 London Conference as "constructive" and worthy of consideration.<sup>35</sup> This attitude fell carefully short of a complete endorsement of the idea, but merely by keeping the discussion on the boil implied at least a cautious approval. In short, even though Cohen appeared to be arguing far out of political character on this issue, his influence with Griffiths was still powerful enough to override the counter-influence of most of Griffiths's political friends and induce him to act "out of character" as well.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude too much about the balance of authority between minister and officials from this single example. There is no evidence to suggest that Griffiths, or any other post-war Colonial Secretary, was consistently managed by his officials. The structure of authority over those fifteen years was clearly defined, with the minister, almost always, visibly in charge. Nor did the senior officials desire it

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33 Interview with Griffiths.

34 Ibid., and see Griffiths's statement, HCD vol. 497 cols. 210-2 (4 March 1952). Precisely when Griffiths made up his mind is not clear. His acceptance of Cohen's proposal that a conference of officials be convened was announced in November 1950, but there are indications that he had tentatively and unofficially accepted it as early as March - that is, within a month of coming into office. See Colin Leys and Cranford Pratt (eds.), A New Deal in Central Africa (Heinemann, 1960), p.19.

35 HCD vol. 488 cols. 2315-21 (13 June 1951).

otherwise. "Sense of vocation", "dedication", "transparent character" - these, after all, were the qualities typically attributed to the officials, both by their colleagues and by their political superiors.

### 3. Domestic Pressures on the Colonial Office

To conclude this account it remains to consider some of the means by which individuals and groups in Britain sought to exert pressure upon the Office. But it is as well to clarify two points in advance. The first is the sense in which the useful term "pressure" is to be understood: for it is not self-explanatory, in spite of a massive literature in recent years. The second is the way in which many of the domestic pressures on the Colonial Office differed in character from pressures on most other government departments.

The term "pressure" may here be understood purely as a shorthand description of a process, namely the process of urging forms of governmental action directly upon people who possess the appropriate governmental authority. (At this functional level of definition the term "lobbying" may be taken as a synonym of "pressure"). The advantage of using so basic a definition is that such factors as the motives for pressure, the media through which it is applied, the techniques of applying it, and its effectiveness as measured by results may be either isolated for comment or left implicit, according to what is convenient in the context. Hence there is no need to assess, for example, the balance of "coercion" as against "persuasion" except in a discussion of the techniques or, perhaps, the effectiveness of pressure. The purpose of the present discussion is simply to comment on some means used, or at least means available, for applying pressure. An evaluation of the techniques and effectiveness of pressure is best left for the discussion of particular cases; and of its motivation, for the discussion of particular organisations.

To point out the way in which many pressures on the Colonial Office were unlike those on other departments does, however, require a comment on motivation. Domestic departments normally come under pressure only from individuals and groups whose own tangible interests are directly affected by the departments activities - such activities as reviewing farm prices, regulating trade, planning roads or equipping the Army. By contrast the Colonial Office, with its comprehensive responsibility for the government and welfare of alien

peoples, lay open to an unusually wide range of domestic pressures based upon ideals, beliefs and sympathies rather than self-interest. This is not to say that it was immune from self-interested pressures. Lobbying initiated by organisations in the colonies themselves (often with domestic groups acting as middlemen) obviously came in this category. So too, on the domestic scene, did lobbying by commercial, industrial and agricultural concerns with interests in colonies, though for the most part these bypassed the Colonial Office and dealt directly with colonial governments or <sup>the</sup> Crown Agents. Further, lobbying by metropolitan groups and individuals on behalf of white settlers in colonies was often at least as self-interested as it was altruistic: sometimes because the close ties of family and friendship were involved, sometimes because "disinterested" support for settlers was only one part of a syndrome of attitudes which also included self-interested support for colonial commercial activities. But there was still a great deal of domestic lobbying which could be distinguished by the fact that the lobbyists had no tangible interests at stake, in particular the lobbying by liberal-minded organisations on behalf of the indigenous populations of colonies. Specific political, economic and social measures urged upon the Office by these organisations were typically based upon a conviction that the development of colonies for the benefit of the inhabitants themselves was self-evidently an important, even a morally urgent, task. And this conviction could stimulate lobbying at least as vigorous as could the concern for interests.

What, then, were the means available for domestic lobbying of the Colonial Office? At the cost of some simplification, it is possible to distinguish at least four different means by which "forms of governmental action" might have been urged directly upon Colonial Office ministers and officials. Pressure could come, firstly, through the medium of informal personal relationships among ministers and officials on one side, and group representatives, MPs and assorted private individuals on the other; secondly, through the medium of formalised relationships between organised groups and the Office; thirdly, through the medium of "expert advice" solicited by the Office; and fourthly, through the medium of public parliamentary activity. There are possible objections to this categorisation. One is that in practice these categories patently overlapped. An element of personal relationship, for example, often underlay the other kinds of relationship; an individual like

Sir Tom O'Brien could maintain informal personal relationships with Colonial Office administrators while lobbying them formally on behalf of the TUC, seeking to influence their decisions with expert advice through his membership of the Colonial Labour Advisory Board, and (had he wished to do so) prodding them with parliamentary Questions in his capacity as an MP. The only defence against this valid objection is that in the present context the categories are meant to serve purely analytic and expository purposes. Another objection is that it is possible to suggest other less direct means of pressure, such as the editorial, the letter to The Times, or the Trafalgar Square rally. But we are concerned only with means of direct pressure on the Office - that is, pressure applied to particular individuals and compelling at least a formal response.

The first three of these categories will be commented upon here; the fourth, the category of public parliamentary activity, has several aspects and will require a chapter of its own.

Of the first medium of pressure - the pattern of informal friendships and contacts among ministers, officials and people outside the Office - there is little to be said, except that it existed. One notable example has already been mentioned in passing: the close and fruitful personal relations between Creech Jones and various liberal intellectuals. Cohen was a party to most of these relationships; according to Rita Hinden, for instance, if Creech Jones was too busy to discuss a particular problem with her he would suggest that she "see Andrew about it."<sup>36</sup> More generally, the increasingly numerous corps of academic experts on colonial affairs - with Margery Perham as their doyenne - were often able to urge their views upon the Office via the channels of personal relationship. Another example was that of businessmen, such as Sir Jock Campbell or F.J. Pedler (chairman of the United Africa Company), who, as former officials, retained friendly contacts with administrators to whom they had easy access if they desired it. And naturally enough, much of the lobbying by MPs took place in the context of their purely informal relationships with officials or the Secretary of State, a practice recognised and

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36 Interview with Dr. Rita Hinden.

encouraged by - among others - Lennox-Boyd:

"As far as I am concerned, the door to the Colonial Office or the door to my room here, or the door to my private house, is always open to any Member, whatever his political view, at any time he cares to take advantage of it; and indeed a whole host of.. [Members] regularly do so."<sup>37</sup>

Obviously, the pattern ramified much more widely than these disparate examples can indicate. Suffice it that a good many individuals seriously concerned with problems of colonial policy had their contacts in the Office, and could, if they wished, use them to urge forms of governmental activity on people with the relevant authority.

The second medium was the formalised relationship which existed between the Office and the representatives of organised groups. Letters from group secretaries, memoranda, interviews and deputations were the currency of this relationship. The Fabian Colonial Bureau, to take a prominent example, maintained a formidable correspondence with the Office pressing for action and information on a panoramic range of topics. On issues which appeared to merit it, the Bureau would also mount deputations. In the eventful years from 1950 to 1954 there were four Fabian deputations to the Colonial Secretary to argue against the establishment of the Federation, one to urge the development of a system of non-racial representation in Tanganyika, one to argue for reform of the Northern Rhodesian Constitution, one to seek information about developments in Nigeria, and one to discuss the problems of Nyasaland; in the same period there were also deputations to the Commonwealth Relations Secretary concerning Seretse Khama, the High Commission Territories, and Southern Rhodesia.<sup>38</sup> The colonial department of the TUC, to take another, worked similarly. During the fifties the General Council's annual reports invariably had a tale to tell about "ceaseless representations" to the Colonial Office concerning trade union laws and ordinances, living standards, strikes, or the review of wage structures in territories as diverse as Northern Rhodesia, Malaya, British Guiana and Aden. These representations were usually conveyed in writing; as with the Fabians, the more dramatic technique of pressure by deputation was held in reserve for the most important

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37 HCD vol. 538 col. 1378 (16 March 1955).

38 Fabian Society annual reports, 1950-1 to 1954-5.

issues. For the TUC, such issues included the "need" to preserve the independent position of African trade unions in Kenya during Mau Mau, albeit several trade union officials had been convicted on charges of membership of the Mau Mau Central Council; the protection of African trade union rights in Northern Rhodesia under federation; and, in 1959, the detention and restriction of union officials in Nyasaland.<sup>39</sup>

Handling the correspondence and receiving the deputations of domestic organisations in this manner took a large share of Colonial Office working time, but it was seldom thought of as time wasted. On the contrary, the capacity to collect opinions and "see people" was regarded as an important attribute of ministers and officials. Lennox-Boyd, in particular, won admiration for his remarkable ability to see and be seen (or as Lyttelton put it, to receive Michael Scott of the Africa Bureau "three times to anyone else's once."<sup>40</sup>) In general terms, the Office was usually no less anxious to hear the views of the principal domestic organisations than they were to air them, for it naturally had a stake in maintaining close relationships with organisations known to be influential with certain colonial leaders, such as the Africa Bureau, or exceptionally knowledgeable in a certain field, such as the TUC. Thus it was not always a matter of organisations pressing the Colonial Office for information and action. The Office sometimes chose to make confidential information available to the organisations as a matter of political common sense. In 1954, for example, the unpublished appendix (dealing with Mau Mau oaths and practices) of a parliamentary delegation's report on Kenya was circulated by the Office to a select list of organisations which included the Conservative Commonwealth Council, the Liberal Party, the Labour Party, the Fabian Society, the TUC, the Africa Bureau, the Church Missionary Society, the International Missionary Council, the International African Institute, the Royal Empire Society and the Royal African Society,

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39 TUC annual reports for 1953, pp.213-5, and 1959, p.249.

40 Interview with Lord Chandos, In his Daily Mail interview, Lennox-Boyd revealed that he would shortly be visited by a deputation from Kenya, a deputation from West Africa, a Sultan from Malaya, a group of peers, a retired governor, a constitutional lawyer, a leading churchman, the secretary of the British Empire Service League, and a wild-life expert - one at a time, and all on a single day. Daily Mail, 7 Jan. 1959.

as well as to individual MPs (on request) and to library strongrooms.<sup>41</sup>

By the same token, initiatives often came from the official side in seeking the advice and opinions of domestic groups and individuals in advance of policy decisions. Here we come to the third of the media of pressure. As mentioned earlier, the Colonial Office, like any other department, sought to avail itself of unofficial expertise by associating outside groups and individuals with its own decision-making and advisory structure. It thereby provided them with a ready-made means of urging governmental action: that is, of applying pressure.

This was noticeably true, firstly, in the technical and functional fields of Colonial Office work. Group representatives were regularly co-opted into committees to advise on a wide range of governmental activity in colonies - economic policy, administration, labour problems, education, local government finance, and so on. Thus, the Colonial Economic Development Council, which existed from 1946 to 1951 and was intended, at least at its outset, to be the key advisory Committee to the Colonial Office, included at various times people with commercial interests in colonies (Sir William Goodenough and Sir Bernard Bourdillon, of Barclays DCO) and people associated with the Fabian Colonial Bureau (Lord Paringdon, Sir Drummond Shiels, and Rita Hinden).<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the Colonial Labour Advisory Committee spread its net to include representatives both of the TUC and of the Overseas Employers Confederation. It was sensible and logical enough for these and other organisations to be so represented: indeed, it would have been surprising if they were not. The point to remark is simply that the Office had sufficient interest in the views of unofficial groups to create its own machinery for hearing them, over and above the independent efforts of the groups themselves to make their views known.

By no means all of the Office's co-opted advisers, of course, were group representatives. Many were simply private individuals distinguished and knowledgeable in specialised fields. What is worth noting, if only in passing, is that a great many of these individuals did share a common profession - the

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41 HCD vol. 531 col. 485 (28 July 1954).

42 For an interesting account of this Council's life-cycle see D.J. Morgan, Colonial Development (Overseas Development Institute, British Aid Series No. 5, 1964), pp.38-43.

academic one. The prevalence of academics in and about the Colonial Office was not fortuitous. It had been accepted since the days when Lugard, Oldham, and later Hailey made it their business to establish contacts with academics interested in colonial affairs that trained thinkers and research workers could offer valuable contributions to policy formation - especially if British mistakes and misunderstandings in India were not to be repeated in the African and other colonies. Creech Jones set the post-war pattern by showing himself sympathetic to academic influence. Under him Cohen, as head of the African Division, gave academics a wide platform to address his successive Cambridge conferences on African administration, while the head of the West Africa Department under Cohen, K.E. Robinson, was a man whose interests later led him to the Chair of Commonwealth Studies at London University. Academics were strongly represented on almost all the advisory bodies, and not merely on those which dealt with education: of the two just mentioned, for example, the Economic Development Council included the West Indian economist W. Arthur Lewis and the historian Sir Keith Hancock, and the Labour Advisory Committee included, at various times, the labour economists A.D. Flanders, R. Firth, and D.T. Jack. The use of academics also became a standard practice on a series of fact-finding and advisory commissions in the colonies. The important East African Royal Commission of 1953-5, for example, with its wide mandate to investigate and advise on land and population problems, was predominantly academic in composition.

But it was not only in technical and functional fields that the Office made use of lay advisers. At times they were also invited to make investigations and recommendations in the field of directly political problems, such as the revision of constitutions and the resolution of political crises. The Office's political need to appear wholeheartedly concerned with the best interests of colonial peoples led inevitably to a heavy dependence upon commissions of inquiry in times of political difficulty; it was far better to be seen accepting the considered recommendations of a manifestly impartial commission than to appear to be imposing a "Colonial Office solution." Hence there were very few major colonial crises between 1945 and 1959 which did not precipitate the appointment of an independent commission of inquiry. The membership of these bodies varied at least as widely as the membership of the

technical advisory committees: former and current colonial civil servants, MPs, academics, businessmen, trade unionists and lawyers all rubbed shoulders on various commissions. The British Guiana Commission of 1950-1, for example, comprised Sir John Waddington (a retired Governor), V.T. Harlow (an academic historian), and Rita Hinden.<sup>43</sup> Its successor, the British Guiana Commission of 1953-4, comprised Sir James Robertson (late Civil Secretary of the Sudan), Sir Donald Jackson (Chief Justice of the Leeward and Windward Islands), and George Woodcock (Assistant General Secretary of the TUC). The situation in Kenya in 1953-4 was reviewed by a delegation of MPs; and in 1954 Sir Keith Hancock was sent to help advise on a new constitution for Uganda. Here, too, it may be noted that there were very few commissions in which academic services were not used. The same was true of the related field of constitutional draftsmanship, a task for which political scientists such as Professors R.C. Wheare and W.J.M. Mackenzie found themselves in some demand. The only major restriction on the use of academic ability was that academics could not expect employment as commissioners or constitution-makers if they were too prominent as committed publicists. Margery Perham never served on a political or constitutional mission chiefly because she was so influential as a publicist, especially in her letters to The Times.<sup>44</sup>

The Colonial Office normally accepted all or most of the recommendations of these and other commissions; though it was never bound to do so, as Lennox-Boyd's rejection of the Devlin Report in 1959 showed very clearly. But the basic point, once again, is that non-official opinions on colonial political problems were not merely tolerated by the Office but also, in many circumstances, actively solicited.

These, then, were three of the most important media by which domestic pressures could be brought to bear on the Colonial Office. In later chapters they will be further considered, in conjunction with the motives and effectiveness of particular pressures, when domestic organisations and their

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43 In appointing this commission Griffiths sought also a balance of political sympathies: Waddington was Conservative, Harlow Liberal and Hinden Labour.

44 For some general remarks on the role of academics see D.A. Low, "Academics and African Policy", Australian Outlook, Vol. XV No. 2 (Aug. 1961); also Neil Hope's rejoinder, ibid., Vol. XVI No. 1 (April 1962).

activities with regard to specific issues are discussed in more detail. We may now turn to the fourth medium, in some ways the most important one and certainly the only one of which the Colonial Office was constitutionally bound to take notice: the medium of parliamentary activity.

Addendum to Chapter II : COLONIAL OFFICE MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

These lists cover the years from 9 January 1919, when Milner was appointed Colonial Secretary, to 31 July 1966, when the Colonial Office ceased to exist as a separate department.

I. MINISTERS

Date of Appointment	Office and Office-Holder	Party
<u>SECRETARY OF STATE</u>		
9.1.19	Visc. Milner	Con.
19.2.21	Winston Churchill	Con.
25.10.22	Duke of Devonshire	Con.
23.1.24	James Thomas	Lab.
7.11.24	Leopold Amery	Con.
8.6.29	Lord Passfield	Lab.
26.8.31	James Thomas	National-Lab.
9.11.31	Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister [Visc. Swinton]	National-Con.
7.6.35	Malcolm MacDonald	National-Lab.
27.11.35	James Thomas	National-Lab.
29.5.36	William Ormsky-Gore [Lord Harlech]	National-Con.
16.5.38	Malcolm MacDonald	National-Lab.
13.5.40	Lord Lloyd	Coalition-Con.
8.2.41	Lord Moyne	Coalition-Con.
23.2.42	Visc. Cranborne [Marquess of Salisbury]	Coalition-Con.
24.11.42	Oliver Stanley	Coalition-Con.
3.8.45	George Hall [Visc. Hall]	Lab.
7.10.46	Arthur Creech Jones	Lab.
2.3.50	James Griffiths	Lab.
27.10.51	Oliver Lyttelton [Visc. Chandos]	Con.
30.7.54	Alan Lennox-Boyd [Visc. Boyd]	Con.
16.10.61	Reginald Mandling	Con.
17.7.62	Duncan Sandys	Con.
18.10.64	Anthony Greenwood	Lab.
22.12.65	Earl of Longford	Lab.
5.4.66	Frederick Lee	Lab.

MINISTER OF STATE (Office created in January 1948 and abolished in October 1964)

5.1.48	Earl of Listowel	Lab.
2.3.50	John Dugdale	Lab.
2.11.51	Alan Lennox-Boyd [Visc. Boyd]	Con.
8.5.52	Henry Hopkinson [Lord Colyton]	Con.
20.12.55	John Hare [Lord Blakenham]	Con.
19.10.56	John Maclay	Con.
17.1.57	Earl of Perth	Con.
19.4.62	Marquess of Lansdowne	Con.

## Addendum to Chapter II (continued)

## I. MINISTERS

Date of Appointment	Office and Office-Holder	Party
<u>PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY</u>		
10.1.19	Leopold Amery	Con.
1.4.21	Edward Wood [Visc. Halifax]	Con.
31.10.22	William Ormsly-Gore [Lord Harlech]	Con.
23.1.24	Lord Arnold	Lab.
12.11.24	William Ormsly-Gore	Con.
11.6.29	William Lunn	Lab.
1.12.29	Sir Drummond Shiels	Lab.
3.9.31	Sir Robert Hamilton	National-Lib.
29.9.32	Earl of Plymouth	National-Con.
30.7.36	Earl de la Warr	Con. <i>National</i>
28.5.37	Marquess of Dufferin and Ava	Con. <i>National</i>
15.5.40	George Hall [Visc. Hall]	Coalition-Lab.
4.2.42	Harold Macmillan	Coalition-Con.
1.1.43	Duke of Devonshire	Coalition-Con.
4.8.45	Arthur Creech Jones	Lab.
4.10.46	Ivor Thomas	Lab.
8.10.47	David Rees-Williams [Lord Ogmores]	Lab.
2.3.50	Thomas Cook	Lab.
5.11.51	Earl of Munster	Con.
18.10.54	Lord Lloyd	Con.
19.1.57	John Profumo	Con.
1.12.58	Julian Amery	Con.
31.10.60	Hugh Fraser	Con.
17.7.62	Nigel Fisher	Con.
20.10.64	Lord Taylor	Lab.
	{ Mrs. Eirene White	Lab.
10.10.65	{ Lord Beswick	Lab.
	{ Mrs. Eirene White	Lab.
5.4.66	{ John Stonehouse	Lab.
	{ Lord Beswick	Lab.

Memorandum to Chapter II (continued)

## II. OFFICIALS

Date of Appointment	Office and Office-Holder	Date of Appointment	Office and Office-Holder
<u>PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY</u>		<u>DEPUTY PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY (Office created in 1931)</u>	
(1916)	Sir George Fiddes		
30.8.21	Sir James Masterton Smith		
30.6.25	Brig-Gen. Sir Samuel Wilson	15.8.31	Sir John Shuckburgh
6.10.33	Sir John Maffey	18.3.42	Sir William Battershill
2.7.37	Sir Cosmo Parkinson	13.4.45	Sir Arthur Dawe
1.2.40	Sir George Gater	1.2.47	Sir Sydney Caine
28.5.40	Sir Cosmo Parkinson	6.4.47	Sir Charles Jeffries } Joint
13.4.42	Sir George Gater		Sir Charles Jeffries } Joint
1.2.47	Sir Thomas Lloyd	5.8.48	Sir Hilton Poynton } Joint
20.8.56	Sir John Macpherson		Sir Hilton Poynton } Joint
20.8.59	Sir Hilton Poynton	1.7.56	Sir John Martin } Joint
			(retired 1965) } Joint
		20.8.59	Sir William Gorell Barnes } Joint
			(retired 1963)
		7.1.65	A.N. Galsworthy

Sources:

The Colonial Office List (various years)  
Dod's Parliamentary Comparison (various years)  
D.E. Butler and Jennie Freeman, British Political Facts 1900-1960 (Macmillan, 1963)  
The Official Index to The Times.

## CHAPTER III

PARLIAMENT<sup>1</sup>

"The Parliament at Westminster in the supreme law-making, and Her Majesty's Government the supreme policy-making, authority for the colonies. In neither do the inhabitants of the colonies participate nor are they represented. Criticism of colonial policy in the House of Commons is, therefore, of obvious cardinal importance."

S.S. Ramphal, a self-designated "colonial", in a letter to The Times, 27 Dec. 1952.

### 1. The Roles of MPs

In constitutional theory Parliament possessed fairly wide powers in relation to the Empire. The normal instrument of legislation in colonial matters was the Crown in Council, which possessed both statutory and prerogative powers for the purpose; but legislation by Order in Council could not be repugnant to parliamentary statute, had to be laid before Parliament, and had to be enacted on the advice of ministers responsible to Parliament. And Parliament itself could legislate for colonies in certain fields. For the Empire as a whole, it could pass acts dealing with constitutional organisation, legal organisation, international relations, defence, finance, and economic and social development. For particular territories, parliamentary legislation might be required to federate, unite or separate certain areas; to empower the Crown to establish colonial constitutions; or to deal with financial matters, for example by authorising the Treasury to guarantee specific colonial governmental loans. Legislation both by Parliament and by Order in Council was deliberately circumscribed in that British policy aimed to foster the

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1 This chapter is concerned only with the House of Commons. But the Upper House has never lacked a leavening of retired Governors (e.g. Lugard, Hailey and Milverton), former Colonial Secretaries (e.g. Swinton, Harlech, Salisbury, Hall, Chandos and Boyd) and others well qualified to discuss colonial affairs; accordingly their Lordships have heard many well-considered debates on the subject. For some brief evaluations of the House of Lords's role in this context see H.M. Stout, British Government (Oxford U.P., New York, 1953), p.373, and the Fabian Colonial Bureau's Downing Street and the Colonies (Allen and Unwin, 1942), p.80.

growth of the local authority of Legislative Councils; but it was Parliament which acted as the final arbiter of the distribution of authority.

In practice the powers formally attributed to Parliament were generally exercised through it rather than by it. That is, Parliament provided the necessary legal framework for the legislative process, for the supervision of Orders in Council, and for determining the distribution of authority between Britain and colonies, but the actual decisions taken in Parliament's name were usually arrived at elsewhere. The topic of Parliament's formal powers vis-a-vis colonies will be pursued no further here.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning Parliament's "real" powers, roles and functions there is much more to be said. Parliament is widely and critically discussed nowadays; we are made continually aware, for example, of the view that Parliament needs drastic reform if it is to continue performing its "historic" functions under modern conditions. As a result anyone who ventures to describe the operation of Parliament, even if only with reference to a single governmental field, feels some compulsion to define an attitude towards the subject generally.

The usual argument runs as follows. A line may be drawn between the central function of government (that is, of ministers and their executive bureaucracy) which is to make and implement decisions, and that of MPs, which is to "supervise" the government. Such functions as the representation of grievances and the broad discussion of policy are all ancillary to this central function. But the amateur MPs of today lack the capacity to carry out their task, for several reasons - the vast scale and baffling complexity of modern executive responsibilities, the oligarchic rigidity of the party system which ensures the domination of Cabinet over parliamentary proceedings, and so on. MPs are "impotent" and "frustrated". The goal of reformers is to equip MPs with some at least of the supposed instruments of effective supervision, for example by strengthening the committee system and the office of the Parliamentary Commissioner.

This argument could, of course, be made to apply with special force

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<sup>2</sup> For discussions see Wight, Development of the Legislative Council, pp. 137-40; Kathleen Stahl, British and Soviet Colonial Systems (Paber, 1951), pp. 27-9; Lee, op.cit., pp. 61-2.

to the field of colonial affairs, in that the number, diversity and remoteness of colonial governments made effective parliamentary supervision of their activities very difficult indeed. If we were to hold to the customary argument the main task of the present chapter would simply be to describe MPs' frustrations in the colonial field, and perhaps to discuss ways in which parliamentary supervision might have been improved. This theme is indeed a recurrent one in the following discussion. But the terms of discussion go wider than this, for in fact the customary argument is valid only up to a point. That is, although it is valid for a wide range of parliamentary experience, it is still open to the criticism that it does not account for the whole range.

In the first place, with reference to MPs' relationships with government, the case for pessimism is often too strongly stated. The common view that MPs are virtually unable to affect the government's policy decisions and activities will always require emendation. Members do retain some small capacity to supervise the bureaucracy and influence government decisions: supervise, by means of existing committees, Questions, private intelligence networks, and informal contacts with ministers and civil servants; and influence, above all by means of government back-benchers' pressures upon their party leaders. So far from being rubber stamps, lobby-fodder, or voting automata - as they have been variously described - a good many back-bench MPs are extremely political animals who carry undoubted political weight.<sup>3</sup>

In the second place, the usual analysis can be criticised for concentrating on only one feature, albeit the central one, of parliamentary life. The relationship of MPs with government is not their sole *raison d'etre*. A.H. Hanson made the essential point most succinctly when he observed that the demise of Parliament would involve "the virtual disappearance of everything characteristically democratic about our political way of life"<sup>4</sup> - such as the party system and the whole apparatus

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3 This point has been well and truly established by Ronald Butt's The Power of Parliament (Constable, 1967). See also R.E. Dowse and Trevor Smith, "Party Discipline in the House of Commons - A Comment," Parliamentary Affairs Vol. XVI No. 2 (Spring 1963).

4 A.H. Hanson, "The Purpose of Parliament," Parliamentary Affairs Vol. XVII No. 3 (Summer 1964), p.295.

of general elections. The individual MP lives in a web of relationships made meaningful by these "characteristically democratic" aspects of the system: relationships, that is, not only with ministers and the bureaucracy, but also with his party, his constituency, interests which he "represents", and the public at large. It may be true, in a sense, that most of his activities are merely ancillary to his central relationship with government, but in general this is too simplified an account of the complex parliamentary life as the back-bench MP lives it. All his political relationships are intertwined, even interdependent, and to appreciate the significance of a given parliamentary action by an MP - for example, a speech in the House - one must first understand in which of his several overlapping roles he is acting. Thus, he might be delivering the speech with his party primarily in mind, in an attempt to improve or define his own party standing or simply to strike a blow in the overall party battle. He might be raising a topic because in his view it is obviously of some importance, such that serious and informed individuals (like MPs) would have no right not to discuss it. Or he might be out to air a constituency issue, as part of the process of nursing his electors. He might be raising the grievance of a particular interest group with special reference to some other group, or he might be regarding himself as a publicist - concerned, as Emanuel Shinwell put it, with using the House "as a sounding board to illuminate the minds of the public on important topics."<sup>5</sup> In each of these capacities he might see himself as one who acts within the nexus of a relationship with government: that is, in taking the party line, or in speaking for his constituency or for interests, or in seeking to form public opinion, he might be attempting to influence policy-makers or to impinge upon executive actions. But equally, he might not - each kind of activity could have significance sui generis.

To revert from the general to the particular, it becomes necessary to apply this analysis of MPs' activities to the field of colonial

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5 HCD vol. 589 col. 412 (12 June 1958).

affairs. And in fact it is not difficult to see that an MP concerned with colonial problems could act in any or several of these roles (with the obvious exception of the role of constituency representative). Thus, an MP who raised a colonial issue in Parliament - say, the ill-treatment of Mau Mau detainees - might do so with the general intention of urging the Colonial Secretary, and through him the Kenya Government, to take remedial action. Equally, he might have raised the issue chiefly in order to promulgate his party's views and policies and to discredit those of the other party; or because he considered it to be self-evidently an important issue, involving questions of principle, and therefore meriting the attention of other MPs; or because he regarded himself, in some sense, as a representative of the detainees' interests; or because he felt it necessary to educate the ignorant British public about the issue; or because of some combination of these motives. His activity, in short, could be seen to conform to the normal patterns of parliamentary behaviour.

In some ways, however, colonial issues were unlike any others that came before the House, and the point of MPs' activities could not always be fully appreciated without reference to these unusual aspects. Apart from the basic element which, for many MPs, differentiated colonial issues from all others - the fact that they were charged with all the moral implications of the use and abuse of power exercised by trust - there were several factors which influenced the consideration of colonial affairs. These could be summarised as geographical remoteness; the almost total lack of impact made by colonial matters upon the lives and interests of the British populace; and the fact that British policy aimed at the deliberate devolution of power and responsibility from London to the colonies. (Other aspects, for instance the range and complexity of colonial problems, and the chronically poor supply to MPs of detailed information about them, could be said to differ only in degree from similar aspects of domestic problems.) Such daunting factors as these naturally discouraged many MPs from taking any close interest in the subject at all. But they also affected the activities of those who did maintain

an interest: in particular, in their roles as representatives and as publicists.

Firstly, as representatives. British colonial policy, unlike French, never provided for the direct representation of colonies in the metropolitan legislature. "I want to put one or two points about Zanzibar," said the Labour MP James Johnson in 1958, "because...Zanzibar has no member here to put its case."<sup>6</sup> His attitude was shared by many of his colleagues. Over the years the idea that MPs were the vicarious representatives of colonial peoples was frequently expressed, and was sometimes reinforced by a quasi-constitutional argument running roughly as follows.<sup>7</sup> All British ministers ought to be constitutionally responsible to the people whom they governed: responsible both directly, at elections, and indirectly, by way of accountability to the people's elected representatives. But the Colonial Secretary, who presided over the fortunes of the colonial peoples, was responsible to them in neither of these ways. In other words, the two most essential sanctions upon his actions were lacking. Therefore a clear duty fell upon British MPs to fill the constitutional vacuum. The colonial peoples could be seen as being, in a special sense, their joint constituents, for whom parliamentary representation was all the more necessary in that they were voteless constituents. True, they were supposed to enjoy official representation in their own territories: in some cases through chiefs, in others through nominated or elected members of Legislative and Executive Councils. But the argument for representation at Westminster was not invalidated by this. As long as decisions affecting colonial peoples were made not only in the territories but also in London, it remained arguable that a system of purely local representation was inadequate and should be

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6 HCD vol. 587 vol. 1665 (9 May 1958). See also below, pp. 111-5.

7 For typical expositions see the editorial "Parliament and the Colonies," Empire, Sept. 1946, p.1; the editorial "The Labour Movement and the Colonies," Venture, Nov. 1957, p.1; W. Arthur Lewis, M. Scott, M. Wight, and C. Legum, Attitude to Africa (Penguin, 1951), p.7; or the comments by S.S. Ramphal noted at the head of this chapter.

complemented by the representation of colonial interests (however defined) in the British Parliament. In some cases, indeed, the nature of local representation appeared to reinforce the case for vicarious representation. Thus Johnson, who articulated this point probably more often than any other MP, argued in 1956 that the metropolitan representation of Africans in Northern Rhodesia was in fact their most important safeguard against the kind of "representation" which they could expect in a self-governing federation:

"There is no doubt that they have a protection, when questions can be asked about their affairs. It is a protection for them still to be able to look to Westminster and not be cut off, as they<sup>8</sup> might be...if they were to be joined with Southern Rhodesia."

This notion of a special representative duty underlay a good deal of parliamentary activity, notably the activity of several Labour MPs in Opposition - the "honourable Members for Africa," as they were sometimes known.<sup>9</sup>

But if the nature of British policy gave rise to the idea of vicarious representation, it also created a task of some difficulty: the task of drawing the line between matters which could be left for local representation and those meriting representation in Parliament. In a general way almost all MPs, even - or especially - those who advocated bringing colonial affairs under much closer parliamentary supervision, declared themselves in favour of the speedy development of internal self-government in colonies. In theory, this should have meant that there was no need for any colonial problem capable of being settled locally to have come before the House. But the line demarcating the permissible area of MPs' concern was not so readily drawn. One complicating factor has just been mentioned: the nature of local

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8 HCD vol. 553 col. 658 (1 June 1956). For an earlier version of the argument see Johnson, Vol. 497 col. 305 (4 March 1952).

9 In his earlier back-bench days Creech Jones had sometimes been referred to as the "unofficial member of the Kikuyu at Westminster." Richard Pankhurst, Kenya: The History of Two Nations (Independent Publishing Co., 1954), p.84 In later years the designation was most often applied to <sup>Finn</sup> Brockway, who often spoke as if MPs' responsibilities towards their domestic constituents and towards the colonial peoples were the same in kind. See e.g. HCD vol. 535 col. 2769 (22 Dec. 1954).

representation in several multi-racial territories over most of the 1945-59 period. If the people of indigenous race appeared to be under-represented, then for several MPs it followed automatically that they should receive strong representation in Britain regardless of how much formal self-government was enjoyed by the territory - that is, as they saw it, by the territory's immigrant race or races. More generally, a large number of MPs were prone to consider that in this realm of fiduciary power almost any problem could be shown, if pursued far enough, to involve issues of principle and hence to merit metropolitan attention: regardless, again, of the territory's ostensible degree of self-government. Even more generally, it could be said that with so many fine shades of devolution distributed among so many colonial territories it would be extremely difficult to make consistent distinctions between what was of local and what of parliamentary concern. In short, there was no obvious intermediate position between representation at MPs' own discretion and no representation at all. The result was intermittent conflict between Colonial Secretaries and the more zealous MPs about what were, and were not, topics clearly within the House's purview and the minister's sphere of answerability. Lyttelton felt that MPs should refrain from troubling him "about such things as the dismissal of a clerk in a post office in some colony."<sup>10</sup> But in general the impracticability of drawing lines put the benefit of doubt on the side of the MPs. During a debate in June 1955 William Blyton (Labour) raised a problem concerning the rights of trade unionists in the Gold Coast, with the comment:

"The Minister may reply that this is a matter for the Government of the Gold Coast, for which he is not responsible; but if employers ...create bitterness and resentment among colonial peoples by their actions, the responsibility is ours for maintaining the peace of that colony."

In reply Lennox-Boyd observed that

"no doubt...constitutionally-minded people might be a little uncertain as to my exact standing in this matter in view of the large measure of internal self-government in the Gold Coast"

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10 HCD vol. 530 col. 1602 (22 July 1954).

- but he went on nevertheless to answer Blyton's points, and to declare the British Government's attitude towards the unionists' difficulties.<sup>11</sup> A minister might or might not approve of a particular topic being raised; but he could not prevent it, and most topics, once raised, did elicit some kind of ministerial response.

Representation was not the only parliamentary function thought to take on a special significance. So too, from time to time, was the closely related function of publicity. The incentive to act by public rather than private means in this field was unusually strong. A good indication of this was the fact that Questions in Parliament on colonial affairs sometimes outnumbered MPs' letters to the Colonial Office in a ratio of nearly two to one, whereas for domestic departments such as Housing and Local Government or the Home Office the ratio of Questions to letters in the period was usually more like one to six or seven.<sup>12</sup> The basic reasons might be outlined as follows. Firstly, whereas the operations of these domestic departments inevitably gave rise to many minor grievances for which MPs' letters were a suitable vehicle, almost any colonial problem which reached the House could be seen by sympathisers - as was suggested above - to embody large issues of principle, and hence to merit the public spotlight. Secondly, many MPs felt (justifiably) that public and parliamentary ignorance about colonial affairs was greater than on most other subjects. In view of this, MPs have at various times presented two distinct arguments: first, that the bad image of "colonialism" should be countered by arousing greater public pride in British policies;<sup>13</sup> and second - especially if they were Opposition MPs - that the Colonial Secretary should be made more fully subject to publicity qua political sanction.<sup>14</sup> The second of these two arguments

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11 Ibid., Vol. 542 cols. 1459, 1465 (22 June 1955).

12 These ratios have been estimated on the basis of a count of Hansard (see Table I, p. 88, and information published in D.N. Chester and Nona Bowring, Questions in Parliament (Clarendon Press, Oxford U.P., 1962), pp. 104, 172.

13 E.g. George Wigg, HCD vol. 503 cols. 2441-2 (17 July 1952).

14 E.g. Anthony Wedgwood Benn, "The Colonies in the House of Commons," Venture, Feb. 1957, pp.6-7.

(clearly a special case of the broader argument for vicarious representation) was probably, in practice, the more important. The consequence of publicising some unheard-of colonial problem in Parliament was that it would become known to a number of MPs and perhaps to newspaper readers at home and abroad. This publicity might not always be unfavourable to the Colonial Secretary, but might well oblige him in some instances to re-examine the strength of his case. Chester and Bowring make the point that

"When one thinks of the worries of the Colonial Secretary in recent years...one cannot but wonder at the added strain of having to prepare careful answers to...Questions...knowing that each answer will receive publicity and be examined carefully, not only by the Member but by thousands of people in this country and abroad."<sup>15</sup>

From the Opposition's point of view, to remove him even this short distance from the impunity which domestic ignorance might otherwise allow him could be regarded as an achievement.

In passing, it may be noted that for their part colonial leaders, both indigenous and European, were generally willing to accept parliamentary activity on their behalf. MPs could be useful to them in a variety of ways, for example as private lobbyists and political advisers, but not least as representatives and public spokesmen within the prestigious environment of Westminster. If they sought political or economic concessions from the British Government, a well-timed Question or adjournment motion could be an important factor in their calculations. If they desired more publicity in their own territory, parliamentary utterance by an amenable MP was a good way to create it; for debates and Questions on colonial subjects were usually well reported in the colony concerned, and sometimes throughout Africa if it was an African colony.<sup>16</sup> In general, parliamentary deliberation about their affairs was followed with interest by colonial political elites. The West Indian George Padmore, who later became Nkrumah's chief political adviser, recognised a real demand when in 1946 he began to edit a monthly

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15 Chester and Bowring, op.cit., p.261.

16 Ibid., p. 177.

digest of proceedings, for colonial consumption, entitled Colonial Parliamentary Bulletin.<sup>17</sup>

So far we have suggested, in very broad terms, the kind of interpretation which may be placed on the public proceedings of the House of Commons. To sum up: every MP maintains a web of significant relationships, as a result of which he may act in any of several roles on a given issue; and with reference to colonial affairs, the roles of representative and publicist often acquired a heightened importance. In the next two sections we will consider and analyse some relevant opinions and some statistical data about the actual nature and extent of MPs' activities.

## 2. MPs' Activities: Some Opinions

How conscientious have MPs really been in meeting their presumed responsibility to their voteless colonial constituents? Very different answers have been given to this question, both by onlookers and by MPs themselves. It is fair to say, however, that the dominant tradition over many years has been one of pessimism and complaint. These two observations, separated by twenty-two years, are typical of many:

"Parliamentary supervision is of a somewhat perfunctory kind. The House of Commons has in the past shown little general interest in colonial policy and finds increasing difficulty in arranging time for [it]...Very few Members take a continuous interest in colonial problems. The weight of other responsibilities makes the physical task of doing so almost intolerable." (1942)

"A much larger unconsidered field, and one in which Parliament's disinterest verges on abdication, is that of colonial affairs... There is little political advantage to be gained from colonial debates. As the colonies themselves have no direct representation at Westminster, they cannot force attention on themselves. As a result each individual colony gets remarkably little parliamentary time devoted to its problems until disorder breaks out there." (1964.)<sup>18</sup>

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17 This publication comprised verbatim transcripts of selected debates and Questions, unadorned by editorial comment. It ceased publication in 1949.

18 Downing Street and the Colonies, pp. 80-2; A. Hill and A. Whichelow, What's Wrong with Parliament? (Penguin Special, 1964), pp.33-5. For other comments in similar vein see e.g. Bernard Crick, The Reform of Parliament (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1st edn., 1964), p.163, and J. Harvey and L. Bather, The British Constitution (Macmillan, 1963), p.494.

Between them, these comments list most of the reasons usually offered to account for Parliament's observed "disinterest." In some respects, apparently, it can be attributed to circumstances regrettably beyond the ordinary MPs' control: lack of parliamentary time, the "weight of other responsibilities," the lack of direct colonial representation. In at least one other respect some of the blame may be put on MPs themselves and reproof added to regret: the lack of "political advantage" to be gained from colonial debates. Both comments are by outsiders, but MPs themselves have often made similar criticisms - though with the emphasis usually on the circumstances beyond their control. Opposition MPs' revival, during the fifties, of the old proposal for a Standing Committee on colonial affairs was perhaps symptomatic of their style of self-criticism. By making this proposal MPs could advertise their genuine concern for colonies, and claim that even if many of them were ill-informed or spent too little time on the subject, this was less the result of apathy or party considerations than of purely procedural limitations.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, at least some onlookers have been prepared to generalise differently. In 1963, reviewing the fifties, John Hatch reminisced:

"When one recalls the passion raised by questions like the deportation of the Kabaka, the emergencies in Kenya and British Guiana, Cyprus, Malta, Central Africa, Singapore, one realises what a large part colonial issues took in the parliamentary life of that time."<sup>20</sup>

It may be noted, though, that simply to point to parliamentary excitement over colonial crises is quite compatible with wider sentiments of regret at parliamentary apathy. In the forties and earlier it had always been allowed that even the more lethargic MPs were liable to develop an interest in any territory undergoing spectacular "disorder." During the fifties, disorder appeared to be the almost permanent condition of some territories. MPs, naturally, took note; in addition, party differences developed. Yet it could still be said that the interest prompted by

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19 See below, pp. 115-22

20 John Hatch, "The Opposition's Part in Colonial Policy," The Listener, 25 April 1963, p.702.

disorder was not the desired kind of parliamentary interest. What was desired was an interest that would be sustained, informed, shared by a large body of MPs, and directed towards all colonial matters - not just the critical ones.

On the whole, then, impressionistic generalisations have been of the regretting type. But they should by no means be accepted without further discussion, if only because none of the generalisations quoted so far offers any specific comment on the details of the overall scene: the relative use of various parliamentary procedures, the spending of parliamentary time, the actual number and party distribution of Members showing a special interest in the field. It is worth noting a few further opinions bearing upon these details - though inevitably the picture will vary according to different points of view, and it will remain difficult to dogmatise.

Firstly, the relative use of different procedures. What emerges here is a notable contrast between attitudes towards debates and attitudes towards Questions. Particularly in the immediate post-war years, it would appear that colonial debates could clear the House as nothing else could. Perhaps the most traditional feature of the annual Supply day debate on the colonies was the expression of disappointment, by those present, at the absence of their colleagues. "The thin attendance this afternoon" (Kenneth Younger, Labour, 1947); "it makes me sad to see so few honourable Members here" (Max Aitken, Conservative, 1951);<sup>21</sup> these phrases typified the refrain. On this indication at least, the impressionistic view of parliamentary apathy would appear to be soundly based.

To turn to Questions, however, is to discover a completely different prevailing attitude. Questions were widely seen as an index of positive parliamentary enthusiasm, and not only in the fifties but earlier as well. Younger in 1947 could go on to observe that "the flood of Questions with which the Colonial Secretary is faced every week" showed "the interest which has been taken since the war in colonial matters." A

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21 HCD vol. 441 col. 325 (29 July 1947); Vol. 490 col. 473 (11 July 1951).

few months earlier the Conservative Edward Keeling had taken the opportunity of the Colonial Secretary's Question day to congratulate the House on its diligence:

"Is the Prime Minister aware that 45 of the first 46 questions today were devoted to the colonial empire? Is that not proof that this House does take an interest, contrary to what is sometimes alleged, in the colonies?"<sup>22</sup>

In 1951 an academic observer agreed that the increasing number of questions on colonies, and especially the higher proportion which were followed up by supplementaries, was a significant indication of "interest and knowledge."<sup>23</sup> And in 1955 the Manchester Guardian lent the weight of an editorial comment: "Surely this pressure on question time is proof of an interest that is not reflected in the opportunities afforded for debate."<sup>24</sup>

These contrasting sets of observations should suffice to provide a prima facie case for scepticism concerning easy generalisations about "interest" or "apathy". Certainly the discussion of Members' attitudes would hardly be complete without a fairly full consideration of the relative use, and usefulness, of questions and debates. This is attempted below.

Secondly, as to estimates of parliamentary time spent on colonial topics by comparison with other topics. At least two such estimates, on a very restricted scale, were attempted during the period: both by colonial specialists, and both provoking their authors to express despondency. The first was offered by the Conservative David Gammans in July 1948.

"During the past year, apart from the Ceylon Independence Bill and the Overseas Resources Bill, which also dealt with the food supplies of this country, we have spent only seven hours in discussing the affairs of 60 million of our fellow British subjects ... [But] the House spent 95 hours over the representation of the People Bill, which, incidentally, took away the university representation of colonial graduates, and 111 hours in discussing the Town and Country Planning Bill."

Gammans therefore concluded "that there is something wrong in our

22 HCD, Vol. 434 col. 1324 (12 March 1947).

23 Stahl, British and Soviet Colonial Systems, p.30.

24 Editorial, Manchester Guardian, 24 June 1955.

sense of proportion and in our sense of responsibility."<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps there was. It is clear enough how few were the stimuli to domestic interest at the time: even so, the discrepancy appears gross. The process by which Gammans arrived at the minuscule figure of seven hours, however, is open to question. Presumably he took into account only the nine Adjournment debates on colonial topics which had occurred since the Supply debate of July 1947; these averaged half an hour in length, with the longest running to some four hours. The Supply debate itself, which lasted for over six hours, must have been excluded from the reckoning. Clearly, he also excluded not only the two Bills mentioned - which, between them, were debated in the House for some fourteen hours - but also debates on the year's crisis territory, Palestine, which occupied about another thirty. By way of postscript it may be noted that during the month in which he spoke - July 1948 - there were another two six-hour Supply debates and another two half-hour Adjournment debates on colonial topics. But in any case it is doubtful whether any such bald computation of time spent in debate can be very fruitful. We have already noted preliminary evidence that such parliamentary interest as existed found public expression less in debates than in Questions. Gammans did not take Questions into account in his assessment of the House's "sense of proportion"; nor, for that matter, the discussion of ministerial statements, nor any form of offstage activity. His limited observation about debating time, therefore, conveys very little.

A more comprehensive calculation was made several years later by Wedgwood Benn.<sup>26</sup> He estimated that in the course of the 1954-5 session (replete with crises in Kenya and Uganda) the House spent approximately 110 hours, out of the session's total of 1320 hours, on colonial matters: nine hours in Questions, six in hearing and discussing ministerial statements, and 95 in debates. A colonial specialist at the time, Wedgwood Benn thought it cause for gloom that "less than 9%" of the session should have been devoted to colonies. But it would certainly be possible - and by no means arbitrary - to dispute his interpretation of

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25 HCD vol. 453 cols. 606-7 (8 July 1948).

26 Op.cit., p.6.

the figures: to express surprised pleasure, for example, that Parliament was able to spend thus "almost 9%" of its time, in view of the enormous array of claimants for its attention. In short, such exercises as these are obviously perilous. Not only do they necessitate large value judgments concerning the relative importance of scarcely commensurable subjects; they also use time as a measuring-stick where it may be quite inappropriate. Time spent on Questions, in particular, is hardly the best indication of their significance.

Thirdly, as to the actual number of interested MPs. Obviously, the total range of Members who ever took an interest in a colonial topic is not susceptible to precise estimate. Nor would such a catch-all category be of any great interest. The hard-core specialists contented themselves with observing a general widening of interest over the years, without putting a figure to it. Griffiths, as Opposition spokesman, noted in 1952 "an ever-growing number on all sides of the House" who showed some concern; by 1959 Brockway, specialist par excellence, could declare that his chief impression of change during his time in the House was "the number of Members...now who are interested in colonial issues and who have visited the colonial territories."<sup>27</sup> As for the specialists themselves, there have been isolated attempts to estimate their strength more precisely. In the late forties, according to one well-informed onlooker, the number of Labour specialists could be put at fifteen to twenty.<sup>28</sup> The number rose until at its high point the party had "twenty 29 or thirty MPs., well-informed and vigilant, all of whom know their subject." During the fifties, the hard-core members of the Conservative back-benchers' Colonial Affairs Committee also numbered between twenty and thirty.<sup>30</sup> These might seem to be small or large proportions of the whole parties, according to one's expectations or by comparison with specialists in other fields such as public finance or foreign affairs. Their numerical

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27 HCD vol. 503 col. 2345 (17 July 1952); Vol. 603 col. 1332 (17 April 1959).

28 Interview with Dr. Rita Hinden.

29 Fenner Brockway, Outside the Right (Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 156.

30 Interview with Gerald Sayers, formerly Commonwealth and Colonies officer in the Conservative Research Department.

strength, however, is not necessarily the most significant fact about the specialists. There must obviously be a division of labour among MPs' specialisations, and in colonial affairs - as in any field - what presumably mattered most was the degree of zeal and effectiveness with which the specialists did their work. The immediate reason why these rough estimates are nevertheless of some value is that they help to bring some perspective into generalisations about the apathy or interest of Parliament. For such generalisations can too easily create the impression of Parliament as some kind of holistic entity capable of registering its own degrees of interest and apathy: an impression which can seldom assist analysis and usually impedes it. To attribute degrees of interest and apathy to identified MPs, on the other hand, is both more realistic and more likely to promote accurate generalisation.

This review of observations on the relative merits of various parliamentary techniques, the spending of parliamentary time, and the range of specialists, should indicate that the task of commenting upon Parliament and colonies is more complex than might have seemed apparent when we first noted some broad observations on the subject. Accordingly, we may now turn from opinions to some facts and statistics which may help to clarify the picture. Only passing comparisons with other topics are made, since - for the two reasons already suggested - such comparisons are seldom a helpful exercise. The chief purpose of what follows is to illustrate the use made of different parliamentary devices and the kinds of topics which attracted most attention within the field. On this basis it will be possible to identify the more important colonial specialists and their techniques of public activity; further, to note some of the differences, in terms of activity, between members of the two major parties.

### 3. MPs' Activities: Some Facts

#### (i) Questions

Between 1945 and 1959 the Colonial Office was a heavily questioned department. The figures for Questions in each calendar year, for Colonial

Office Question days, and for the average number of Questions per week, are as follows.

TABLE I<sup>31</sup>QUESTIONS: TOTALS AND AVERAGES

June-Dec.									
	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953
A	256	1073	990	949	905	773	790	796	1015
B	5	35	36	34	34	25	29	31	33
C	4	11	11	11	12	10	9	9	9
D	51	31	28	28	27	31	27	26	31

  

						Jan-Oct.	
	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	
A	1046	981	1164	1334	1258	1045	A: Total Questions
B	35	30	34	45*	65	50	B: No. of C.O. Question Days
C	9	10	8	9	14	11	C: No. of days C.O. 1st or 2nd on rota
D	30	33	34	42	38	42	D: Average no. of Questions per sessional week

\* The C.O. came onto the Question rota twice a week in June 1957.

The totals are remarkably high by any standards. In June 1956 a Member could point out "that more Questions are now being asked on colonial affairs than on any other subject;"<sup>32</sup> in the 1958-9 session the Colonial Office still headed the list, outstripping such hard-pressed departments as the Ministry of Transport, the Foreign Office, the Treasury and the Board of Trade.<sup>33</sup> As in all fields, the great majority of these Questions were put down for oral answer (the actual proportions may be seen in row A of Table II). On several occasions Colonial Office Questions occupied

31 Based on a count of Hansard.

32 Leslie Hale (Labour), HCD vol. 553 col. 704 (4 June 1956).

33 Chester and Bowring, op.cit., p. 210.

the bulk of Question Time, and at least once - on 20 October 1954 - the whole period. So much oral questioning naturally placed something of a burden on ministerial stamina. Lyttelton has described how, on 16 December 1953, he had to rise "from a sitting to a standing posture" eighty times, and later "felt as stiff as if...[he] had made a hundred at cricket."<sup>34</sup> On 8 December 1954 and fairly frequently thereafter, Lennox-Boyd lightened the burden by adopting the system whereby both he and his Minister of State cooperated to answer Questions on the same day. This did not, however, solve the problem as Members saw it - the problem of ensuring that as many as possible of their starred Questions actually received oral answer. On seven occasions between 1947 and 1959 various Members put forward the suggestion that an extra Minister of State should be appointed at the Colonial Office, partly to enable at least one minister to be constantly on duty in the colonies and partly to improve the position in the House. In March 1954, for example, James Johnson asked:

"Is the Prime Minister not aware of the feeling on both sides of the House that colonial affairs are becoming so vast that they need more than two ministers in this Chamber? Is he also aware that the Secretary of State for Colonies has become so peripatetic lately that this, combined with the unfortunate absence of his colleague the Minister of State, has meant that for weeks on end we have had no minister from that Department at the Box to answer Questions, which is unfortunate both for this House and for the Empire?"<sup>35</sup>

No Prime Minister was prepared to accept this kind of proposal ("One has to strike a balance between the duties to be performed and the number of ministers which this House would willingly tolerate," said Eden in 1955.<sup>36</sup>) But each expressed his willingness to consider any other solution for the problem. In June 1956 Leslie Hale proposed that Colonial Office Questions should come onto the rota twice a week.

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34 Chandos, *op.cit.*, p.402. Lyttelton says that Colonial Office Questions on that day occupied the whole of Question Time. In fact they fell some way short of this.

35 *HCD*, vol. 525 cols. 1049-50 (23 March 1954). Questions in similar vein were asked by Vernon Bartlett (Independent), 2 Dec. 1947; Frederic Harris (Con.), 12 May 1952; James Johnson, 23 April 1953, 16 June 1955 and 31 July 1956; and Desmond Donnelly (Lab.), 30 June 1959.

36 *Ibid.*. Vol. 542 col. 755 (16 June 1955).

R.A. Butler, Leader of the House, rejected the suggestion in view of the "conflicting claims" of several departments for an extra Question day. But he admitted the strength of the case, and left the door open for discussions "through the usual channels".<sup>37</sup> Almost a year later he announced that after discussions with the Opposition and "a careful analysis of the numbers of Questions submitted to particular ministers," the Government had decided to accept the suggestion.<sup>38</sup> Thus, on 25 June 1957, the Colonial Office joined the Treasury, the Foreign Office, the Board of Trade, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as a "double-turn" department, receiving Questions on Tuesdays and Thursdays in place of its traditional Wednesdays. That the case for reform had indeed been strong is shown by the figures in row B of Table II. Questions answered orally, expressed as a percentage of Questions put down for oral answer, had fallen from a high point of 71% in 1949 to 38% in 1956 and the first part of 1957. Clearly, the reform succeeded. The proportion rose to 55% in the second part of 1957, and in 1958 reached 63% - a higher proportion than at any time since the three years 1948-50.

TABLE II<sup>39</sup>QUESTIONS: PROPORTIONS

A: Starred Questions as % of total questions.

B: Questions answered orally as % of starred questions.

Year	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
A	71	32	75	82	82	32	81	78	80	79	71	59/76	67	70
B	58	51	69	71	64	54	48	53	45	46	38	38/55	63	56

37 HCD, Vol. 553 cols. 704-5 (4 June 1956).

38 Ibid., Vol. 571 cols. 610, 614-5 (30 May 1957). Note also prior comments by James Callaghan and Lennox-Boyd on the progress of the discussions, Vol. 569 cols. 653, 758 (6 May 1957).

39 Percentages calculated on the basis of a count of Hansard. No calculation is made for the period July-December 1945 as starred and unstarred Questions were not distinguished in the Hansards of that period.

Why were there so many Questions to the Colonial Office? What kinds of subjects, within the field, provided the most material for Questions? And who were the most persistent Questioners?

One general answer to the first of these queries is to be found in a point discussed earlier - the point that the parliamentary functions of representation and publicity acquired heightened significance with regard to colonial affairs. The Question was easily the most appropriate device for the fulfilment of these two functions. Questions enabled the MP qua representative to pinpoint topics, to compel ministerial answers, and to challenge these answers; and since Questions were asked and answered continually whereas colonial debates were relatively infrequent, they also provided a steady supply of material for colonial newspapers and other organs of publicity. Apart from this general consideration, three other points may be made. The first is that Question Time provided the best means at Parliament's disposal for dealing rapidly with large numbers of heterogeneous topics; and it hardly needs stressing that colonial affairs was a field of singular vastness and heterogeneity. The second is that detailed information about colonial affairs was unusually - indeed, notoriously - difficult to obtain by any alternative means. It was true that MPs could exploit their own informal contacts with Colonial Office ministers and officials, and could, if they desired, consult all publications of the colonial governments in the Office library. The Office also maintained extensive public and parliamentary information services whose value MPs never questioned.<sup>40</sup> Further, Members could sometimes gather knowledge at first hand while visiting colonies, whether privately, on a party, parliamentary or governmental mission, or under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. For all this, it was inevitably the case that a vast amount of miscellaneous data about governmental responsibilities and activities should remain deep in the files of the

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40 "I am sure," said Griffiths in 1952, "that all who take an interest in these matters...will join me in paying tribute to the excellence of the literature from the Colonial Office." HCD vol. 503 col. 2345 (17 July 1952). The work of Sir William McLean, who became honorary

several colonial administrations. The only way - apart from writing letters - in which MPs could tap these sources of information at short notice was to put down Questions.<sup>41</sup>

The third point is that over the years government policies and actions in many territories became subjects of controversy. In consequence MPs, especially Opposition MPs, increasingly sought the means to expose and to criticise these policies and actions. It was at Question Time that the Colonial Secretary was most readily available - and, in theory, most vulnerable. This no doubt had some contributory effect in stimulating the high rate of questioning. Certainly it was observable that Colonial Office Question Time, from the early fifties onward, seldom lacked the element of hostility. Griffiths and Lennox-Boyd both had to endure a good deal at the hands of their respective Oppositions at Question Time. Neither, however, was ever so belaboured by his Opposition as was Lyttelton, who has testified to the strain: "The Colonial Office ship rarely faced anything but the roughest weather at Question Time."<sup>42</sup> It was a strain that Opposition MPs did not hesitate to impose.

To turn to the next query: what was the subject-matter of Questions? For obvious quantitative reasons, an answer to this query can be attempted only in terms of broad categories. It is necessary, therefore, to establish some kind of typology of Questions according to subject. A cursory glance at any list of Colonial Office Questions suggests at least three categories at once: "politics", "economics", and "rights". The "politics" category can be taken to include any Question concerned

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Parliamentary Liaison Officer in the Office in 1931 and held this post for over thirty years, was particularly appreciated; see e.g. remarks by Dr. H.B. Morgan (Lab.), Vol. 441 col. 338 (29 July 1947), and Sir Patrick Hannon (Con.), Vol. 465 col. 1256 (25 May 1949).

41 The need to unearth the answers to Questions, of course, sometimes created enormous additional burdens for hard-working "men on the spot." According to Lennox-Boyd, over 70% of the Questions to the Colonial Secretary had to be referred to colonial Governors for answers; HCD vol. 569 col. 758 (6 May 1957). For an anecdote see Margery Perham, The Colonial Reckoning (Fontana edn., 1963), p.81.

42 Op.cit., p. 349.

with the constitutional situation of a colony: emergency situations; and general problems affecting its advance to independence in the light of British policy, such as the recognition of its parties or the reflection of its racial composition in political institutions. "Economics" would include any topic connected with a colony's economic structure or its progress towards economic viability, such as the grouping of its peasant farmers into cooperatives or the initiation of mining operations by the Development Corporation. "Rights"- meaning both social and individual rights - would include any topic connected with the dignity and welfare of colonial people as people, such as the medical and educational activities of missions, individual cases of race discrimination, or the treatment of detainees and prisoners. Clearly these categories can overlap, but in cases of doubt it is always feasible to try to assess primary emphasis. Consider, for example, this Question asked in March 1958:

"To what extent [does] the Kenya Government now propose to implement the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Land in East Africa that the Highlands in Kenya should no longer be subject to exclusive occupation by white settlers but should be available for African farming under proper safeguards?" 43

This was a Question with profound economic and social implications. But given the crucial political importance of the "land question", as an issue affecting the whole pattern of Kenya's constitutional development, the questioner's primary emphasis could surely be said to be political.

But these categories do not cover all the possibilities. Two others are necessary. One of these, loosely describable as "British-orientated", can be taken to include any Question in which the primary emphasis was on the usefulness of colonies to Britain (in such respects as the provision of military bases, markets, commodities, or manpower) or to Britons (chiefly those with commercial or other financial stakes in colonies). The other category may be called "administrative", and would include problems of organisation, methods and efficiency in colonial

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43 John Stonehouse (Lab.), HCD vol. 584 col. 1403 (20 March 1958).

governments. These five categories - "politics," "economics," "rights," "British-orientated," and "administrative" - are arbitrary, but should at least be comprehensive.

For a breakdown of Questions into categories two sample calendar years have been chosen: 1949 and 1958. In 1949 Creech Jones was long established in office, and the successes and failures of Labour's policies were increasingly apparent to all who followed colonial affairs. There were no major crises (groundnuts were the Minister of Food's headache). In 1958 the devolutionary process was well advanced under the supervision of Lennox-Boyd; but the situation was complicated by a major crisis in Cyprus. The breakdown, comprising all oral and written questions (excluding supplementaries) is as follows.

TABLE III

QUESTIONS: BY SUBJECT

<u>1949</u>					<u>1958</u>				
	LAB	CON	OTHERS	TOTALS		LAB	CON	OTHERS	TOTALS
Pol.	139	59	39	237	Pol.	427	98	3	528
Ec.	112	94	22	228	Ec.	169	53	1	223
Rts.	95	10	37	142	Rts.	294	30	-	324
Br-or.	7	67	2	76	Br-or.	2	14	-	16
Adm.	114	80	28	222	Adm.	99	67	1	167
	467	310	128	905		991	262	5	1258

These are no more than lump sums, and it would be a mistake to over-analyse them. But a few comments are possible. Some commonsense impressions are borne out; for example, it is easy to see in the totals how much more activity at Question Time was precipitated by matters of politics and rights in the later year than in the earlier. This is only partly explained by the Cyprus crisis, for when the number of Questions about Cyprus in these two categories - 113 and 20 - are subtracted from the 1958 totals, the figures are still about twice their 1949 counterparts. In 1958, too, as all the important colonies were

seen or assumed to be rapidly approaching self-government and subsequent independence, there was a decrease in the numbers of questions about administrative and British-orientated matters. By coincidence the total numbers of economic questions in the two years were virtually the same; it may be apposite to note that in 1949, when problems of self-government and independence were still largely theoretical, colonial economic development had already been a matter of practical legislative concern for several years.

The comparisons by party show how members of both major parties were much more active at Question Time in Opposition than in Government; how much greater was the activity of Labour MPs than that of Conservatives in both years, especially the latter; and how within the categories there is evidence to support some further popular impressions. Labour Members asked a great many more questions than did Conservatives about matters of politics and rights. (In 1949 almost all of the 76 questions in these two categories under the heading "Others" were asked by Labour Independents and Communists). By contrast, Conservatives asked more questions than did Labour MPs about British-orientated matters, though from the very small totals in this category it must be assumed that neither side regarded the question as the best device for expressing British-orientated attitudes. Finally, there was some convergence on matters of economics and administration.

The compilation of these figures also provides an opportunity to note the most active of the colonial specialists within this area of parliamentary activity. In 1949 both sides had their insistent questioners. Among Conservatives David Gammans (on all subjects), Douglas Dodds-Parker (on administrative, economic and British-orientated subjects), and Sir Richard Glyn (on economic subjects) could be seen as counterparts to Labour's Reginald Sorensen and Frederick Skinnard (in the first three categories), and Thomas Reid and Herbert Hughes (mainly economic). But in 1958 the new generation of Conservatives included no single Member, except perhaps Patrick Wall, who for enthusiasm at Question Time was able to match Labour's Fenner Brockway, James Johnson, John

Stonehouse, John Rankin, Stephen Swingler, Barbara Castle and Lena Jeger, all indefatigable questioners in the first three categories. As for the total number of questioners in each party, there were 53 Labour, 67 Conservative, and ten others (including two Communists) in 1949, and 77 Labour, 42 Conservative, and three others (including one Liberal) in 1958. But these figures are not very significant, since the sources of supply of Questions, as distinct from the people who asked them, were fairly limited in number.

This is not the place, however, to pursue the party-political implications of these figures and facts. Our concern in this section has not been to analyse party attitudes and performances in any detail, but simply to gain an impression of the scope and subject-matter of Questions on colonial affairs, the uses to which they could be put, and the identity of questioners.<sup>44</sup> A similar analysis may now be applied to debates.

#### (ii) Debates

The main distinction for present purposes is that between debates initiated by front-benchers and those initiated by back-benchers. In the first category are debates on Supply, on Bills, on Supplementary Estimates, on particular Government or Opposition motions, and sometimes on the Adjournment; in the second, almost all debates on the Adjournment, debates on Private Members' Motions, and some debates on the Consolidated Fund Bill. (Front and back-benchers may both initiate sub-debates in the course of the Address-in-Reply.) Our aim here is briefly to review the use made of the more important kinds of debate in the field; the frequency of their occurrence, their subject-matter, and the purposes which they served.

Firstly, Supply debates. The parliamentary year includes 26 Supply days on which a series of general debates, on topics selected by the Opposition, are held. As Table IV indicates, 25 Supply days were

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<sup>44</sup> Further discussion will be found in David Goldsworthy, "Parliamentary Questions on Colonial Affairs: A Retrospective Analysis," Parliamentary Affairs, forthcoming.

devoted to colonial debates over the whole period, an average of nearly two per year - by no means a meagre proportion of the number of days available. The changes in the content and style of these debates were closely related to the broad development of political interest in colonial affairs. To examine the uses of Supply debates, therefore, is to bring the wider change of attitudes into conveniently sharp focus.

TABLE IV

DEBATES: SUPPLY

Date	Subject		Initiator	Govt. or Oppn.
9/7/46	Colonial Affairs		Hall	G
25/7/46	Malay States		Hall	G
29/7/47	Colonial Affairs		Creech Jones	G
8/7/48	Colonial Affairs		Creech Jones	G
22/7/48	Colonial Empire (Economic Development)		Dodds-Parker	O
20/7/49	Colonial Affairs		Creech Jones	G
12/7/50	Colonial Affairs		Griffiths	G
27/2/51	Malaya: Situation		Eden	O
29/5/51	Colonial Development Corporation		W. Fletcher	O
11/7/51	West Indies		P. Smithers	O
4/3/52	Central African Federation	DIVN.	Griffiths	O
29/4/52	Central African Federation		Griffiths	O
17/7/52	Colonial Affairs		Griffiths	O
24/7/52	Central African Federation		Gordon Walker	O
16/7/53	Colonies and Backward Areas: Dev't		Shinwell	O
22/7/54	Kenya		Bottomley	O
16/3/55	Colonial Affairs		Bottomley	O
14/5/56	Cyprus	DIVN.	Griffiths	O
6/6/56	Kenya (Situation)		Creech Jones	O
19/7/56	Cyprus	DIVN.	Griffiths	O
19/2/57	Cyprus	DIVN.	Callaghan	O
6/5/57	Colonial Territories and South African Protectorates		Callaghan	O
4/6/57	Central African Federation, Kenya and Tanganyika (Racial Policy)		Lennox-Boyd	G
26/6/58	Cyprus		Lennox-Boyd	G
22/7/59	Central Africa	DIVN.	Gaitskell	O

Thus, in the first few post-war years one good indication of the relatively low level of interest in colonies was the fact that the

Opposition only once exercised its right to initiate a Supply day colonial debate in an area of the field chosen by itself. On this occasion Dodds-Parker led off in a debate on economic development, a subject chosen in the wake of the Overseas Resources Development Act. On all other occasions the Opposition simply put a day at the Colonial Secretary's disposal, in effect to enable him to read out an annual report on the "progress of the dependencies." This was a continuation of pre-war custom. Attendance was invariably poor, just as it had been at the pre-war debates - when it had been common practice, indeed, to mount the colonial affairs debate on the afternoon of the Royal Garden Party, a much higher priority for most of His Majesty's legislators. It was this kind of generalised debate, with the Colonial Secretary delivering his report for one and a half hours out of six and desultory contributions filling up the remaining time, that a good many contemporary observers had in mind when they deprecated the parliamentary attitude to colonial affairs. The Fabians' criticism was typical:

"Perhaps a dozen conscientious MPs are all who bother to attend... The annual debate is usually a dull affair. The custom of trying to survey the whole Empire in one speech, and of allowing Members to ride their hobby-horses at random, kills all coherent discussion." 45

But back-bench MPs themselves were no less dissatisfied. David Rees-Williams declared in the 1947 debate:

"I said last year and I repeat today, that there is little value in debates of this kind. They are far too wide...I know from my own knowledge that in various parts of the colonial Empire the inhabitants are feeling that we neglect them in this House to a large extent, and they point to this one unsatisfactory day as one of the reasons for that feeling." 46

A few weeks later Rees-Williams became Under-Secretary at the Colonial

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45 Empire, April 1947, p.4. On the 1946 debate similar comments were made by the Manchester Guardian, 10 July 1946, and the Observer, 14 July 1946. The former pointed out that the poor attendance could not be blamed entirely on the Garden Party, since at 9 p.m., when the summing-up speeches began, the attendance was still only 38.

46 HCD vol. 441 col. 318 (29 July 1947).

Office and was not again heard from on this theme. But in the 1948 debate at least eight speakers were: their "sense of frustration and disappointment," as one of them put it,<sup>47</sup> was very apparent. During these years there were various proposals for reform. One MP suggested that the Colonial Secretary's report should be circulated in advance, and his main points "set to music and sung," in order to save eighty minutes.<sup>48</sup> Several felt that the single all-embracing debate should be replaced by a series of shorter "regional" debates.<sup>49</sup> Conservative speakers occasionally pointed out that Supply debates were held in Opposition time, and suggested that the Government might match this by providing more days for colonial debates out of its own time.<sup>50</sup>

As it happened, 1950 was the last year in which a Supply debate of the old annual-report style was held. The format changed as a result not of procedural tinkering but of a change in parliamentary attitudes, produced in turn by colonial events and developments in policy. In 1951 the Opposition proved willing to make three of its Supply days available for debates on specific colonial topics - the Malayan situation, the poor performance of the Colonial Development Corporation, and the future of the West Indies - the first two of which could be described as controversial subjects. This change of practice set the pattern for the ensuing decade. Only twice more, in 1957 and 1958, were Supply day debates initiated by a Government speaker; only thrice more, in 1952, 1955, and 1957, were there general debates ramifying over the whole field of colonial affairs; only once more, in 1953, was there a debate on a topic of primarily economic,

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47 John Rankin (Lab.), HCD, Vol. 453 col. 688 (8 July 1948). Also David Gammans (Con.), cols. 606-7; Otho Prior-Palmer (Con.), col. 635; Haden Guest (Lab.), col. 642; Thomas Reid (Lab.), col. 658; Edgar Granville (Lib.), col. 678; Cyril Dumbleton (Lab.), col. 681; John Hare (Con.), col. 685.

48 Kenneth Pickthorn (Con.), ibid., vol. 441 col. 329 (29 July 1947).

49 Rees-Williams, loc.cit., and Lennox-Boyd, ibid., Vol. 490 cols. 481-2 (11 July 1951).

50 Beresford Craddock, ibid., Vol. 477 col. 1437 (12 July 1950), and Lennox-Boyd, loc.cit.

rather than political, interest. All the other Supply debates, nine in number, were regarded by the Opposition as providing opportunities to criticise the Government on specific, politically controversial areas of policy: Central Africa four times, Cyprus three times, and Kenya twice. Several took place in what was plainly a highly-charged partisan atmosphere, and five, as the Table shows, were pressed to the point of division. The contrast with the earlier period could hardly have been stronger.

A broadly similar pattern is visible in the list of topics in Table V. This table groups together all the other colonial debates which took place on front-bench initiative during the period, excluding only debates on Bills. It is presented chiefly as further evidence concerning the kinds of colonial topics which had an airing in Parliament and the relative frequency of their recurrence. It also provides a slightly more detailed guide to the areas of party conflict. Here we may briefly trace, once more, the broad contour of change. The earlier years were quiet. Neither front bench saw any reason to introduce motions for debate on colonial affairs; it is true that the Government initiated three lengthy debates on the Palestine situation, but this was widely regarded more as an issue of foreign policy. The later years of the Labour Government appear as something of a transitional period, with motions introduced - and a division forced - on those aspects of the Government's developmental schemes which left it most obviously exposed to attack on grounds of waste or inefficiency. Thereafter, throughout the years of Conservative government, the emphasis was firmly on political matters. Government and Opposition alternated with motions for full-scale debate on lively issues. Sixteen out of twenty-five debates ended in divisions. In the peak year, 1953, there were six debates, culminating in a motion of censure on the Government's general handling of African policy. In respect of these debates, it seems fair to conclude again that colonial affairs did not lack a reasonable share of the parliamentary timetable.

TABLE V

DEBATES: GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION MOTIONS ETC

Date	Subject	Initiator	Govt. or Oppn.
19/11/45	Nigeria: Constitution	Stanley	O
31/7/46	Palestine	Morrison	G
1/8/46			
31/1/47	Palestine: Jewish Terrorism	Stanley	O
25/2/47	Palestine: Government Policy	Bevin	G
11/11/47	Palestine	Creech Jones	G
12/11/47			
24/2/49	Colonial and Middle Eastern Services	Rees-Williams	G
	West African Produce Board	Rees-Williams	G
	Colonial Development and Welfare	Rees-Williams	G
19/10/50	Colonial Development Corp'n: Report	Griffiths	G
13/3/51	Gambia (C.D.C. Poultry Scheme)	DIVN. Lennox-Boyd	O
7/11/52	Colonial Affairs	Lyttelton	G
25/11/52	Kenya (Situation)	Griffiths	O
16/12/52	Kenya	DIVN. Griffiths	O
24/3/53	Central African Federation	DIVN. Lyttelton	G
4/5/53	Central African Federation	DIVN. Griffiths	O
27/7/53	Rhodesia and Nyasaland Federation (Constitution) Order in Council: Motion for Address	DIVN. Lyttelton	G
22/10/53	British Guiana	DIVN. Lyttelton	G
7/12/53	British Guiana (Suspension of Constitution)	DIVN. Chuter Ede	O
16/12/53	Affairs in Africa	DIVN. Griffiths	O
9/7/54	Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Gift of Mace)	Crookshank	G
16/2/55	Kenya	Bottomley	O
5/12/55	Cyprus	Macmillan	G
14/3/56	Cyprus	2 DIVNS. Bevan	O
26/3/56	Malta (Round Table Conference)	Lennox-Boyd	G
1/8/56	Seretse Khama	Griffiths	O
26/7/57	British Caribbean Federation	Lennox-Boyd	G
25/11/57	Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Constitution)	DIVN. Callaghan	O
18/2/58	Rhodesia and Nyasaland Electoral Bill	DIVN. Lennox-Boyd	G
1/4/58	Malta	Lennox-Boyd	G
27/11/58	Northern Rhodesia (Constitutional Changes)	DIVN. Lennox-Boyd	G
3/3/59	Nyasaland (State of Emergency)	DIVN. Callaghan	O
4/3/59	Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Hon. Member for Wednesbury)	DIVN. Callaghan	O
19/3/59	Cyprus	DIVN. Lennox-Boyd	G
16/6/59	Hola Detention Camp	2 DIVNS. Soskice	O
28/7/59	Nyasaland (Report of Commission of Inquiry)	Manningham- 2 DIVNS. Buller	G

The only other category of debates initiated by front-bench speakers was that of debates on Bills. Colonial Bills are listed in Table VI. One thing is immediately apparent from this table: the striking difference, in terms of subject-matter, between debates on Bills and the kinds of debates tabulated earlier. The content of Bills depended, of course, upon the Government's planned or ad hoc legislative requirements, and in colonial affairs it was only on rare occasions that these requirements fell within an area of current parliamentary interest. Through the years from 1954 to 1958, for example, the events in Kenya, Central Africa, Cyprus and Malta - for that matter, the very existence of these territories - could not be predicated from the titles of any Bills passing through Parliament. The reason was simple. In so far as metropolitan legislation was required for these territories it was effected by Order in Council and not by parliamentary enactment. For all territories, indeed, the Order in Council was the legislative instrument normally used; legislation by Parliament was required only for the circumscribed purposes outlined at the beginning of this chapter. In terms of the content and relative frequency of debates on Bills, then, it is not possible to trace any overall development of parliamentary concern, as it was with other kinds of debates. Yet it is interesting to survey the list of titles for the very reason that most of them dealt with topics other than those of immediate contemporary interest. How many topics which otherwise might never have received attention in the House found their way into debate by way of the legislative door?

The answer, it appears, is not many. There were thirty Bills in the period. Of this total nearly half consisted of successive reincarnations of developmental and financial measures: six Overseas Resources Development Bills, four Colonial Development and Welfare Bills, and two Colonial Loans Bills. Apart from these, four provided for the independence, respectively, of Ceylon, Palestine, the Gold Coast and Malaya; two more for the federating of formerly separate

units in Central Africa and the West Indies; and one for the conferment of statehood on Singapore. The remainder, about another dozen, were an exotic miscellany: a Bill on Naval Defence, a Bill on Divorce Jurisdiction, Bills to transfer responsibility for the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island to Australia, and so on.

TABLE VI

DEBATES: BILLS

Date (Second Reading)	Short Title
8/3/46	Straits Settlements (Repeal) Bill [Lords]
24/1/47	Malta (Reconstruction) Bill
6/11/47	Overseas Resources Development Bill
21/11/47	Ceylon Independence Bill
10/3/48	Palestine Bill
19/11/48	Colonial Loans Bill
22/2/49	Colonial Naval Defence Bill [Lords]
27/5/49	Colonial Development and Welfare Bill
15/7/49	Overseas Resources Development Bill
30/6/50	Colonial and Other Territories (Divorce Jurisdiction) Bill [Lords]
9/11/50	Colonial Development and Welfare Bill
20/2/51	Overseas Resources Development Bill
14/11/52	Colonial Loans Bill
6/5/53	Rhodesia and Nyasaland Federation Bill
20/10/54	Overseas Resources Development Bill
31/1/55	Cocos Islands Bill
2/2/55	Colonial Development and Welfare Bill
24/11/55	Leeward Islands Bill [Lords]
29/6/56	British Caribbean Federation Bill
25/7/56	Overseas Resources Development Bill
11/12/56	Ghana Independence Bill
5/7/57	Tanganyika Agricultural Corporation Bill
12/7/57	Federation of Malaya Independence Bill
21/1/58	Cayman Island and Turks and Caicos Islands Bill
21/1/58	Overseas Service Bill
28/1/58	Overseas Resources Development Bill
12/5/58	Christmas Island Bill
11/7/58	State of Singapore Bill
2/2/59	Malta (Letters Patent) Bill
2/3/59	Colonial Development and Welfare Bill

Only three Bills in the period - those which fell within an area

of high current interest - were the occasion for prolonged second readings and numerous committee amendments: the Palestine Bill, the third Overseas Resources Development Bill, and the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Federation Bill. Most of the others were regarded as uncontroversial and debated at much less length. It may indeed be assumed that some of these topics would never have been debated had not the relevant Bills been introduced, and that these Bills therefore fulfilled a marginally useful function over and above that of legislation. For if it was desirable to maximise Parliament's attention to colonial matters then any debate, however fleeting, was presumably better than no debate. But the list is a very short one, and too much should not be made of it.

Before going on to consider the debates initiated by back-benchers we may perhaps draw some threads. It can surely be said that colonial debates on front-bench initiative were not markedly lacking in quantity at least. That there were nearly a hundred of these debates in fourteen years may not in itself serve to refute generalisations about parliamentary indifference - we would need to know a good deal more about attendances, for example, before this could be claimed - but it certainly offers them no support. As for subject-matter, it appears that on the whole these debates were concerned with major issues, which in most cases meant colonial crises. This might at first appear to bear out the complaint that MPs took insufficient interest in "routine" colonial matters. But it must be allowed that front-bench debates in any field have normally - even necessarily - dealt with major issues. The area in which to seek out evidence of parliamentary concern with lesser matters is that of private Members' debates. These we may now review.

From 1945 to 1959 colonial debates initiated by back-benchers, including Adjournment debates, debates on Private Members' Motions, and debates on the Second Consolidated Fund Bill, numbered 142 - virtually all of which were, in fact, Adjournment debates. In Table VII these debates are tabulated in the same manner as were Questions in Table III (for an Adjournment debate may be regarded as a form of

extended question, serving similar purposes from the MP's point of view and compelling a ministerial response in the same way). Each debate is categorised by the party of its initiator and is also graded into one of the five subject-categories according to the initiator's own interpretation of the subject in his speech. From this tabulation we may hope to learn more about the kinds of "routine" colonial topics in which MPs of the two major parties most consistently professed an interest, and also about the identities and activities of the colonial specialists.

TABLE VII  
DEBATES ON BACK-BENCH INITIATIVE

	<u>1945-51</u>				<u>1951-2</u>		
	LAB	CON	TOTALS		LAB	CON	TOTALS
Pol.	6	5	11	Pol.	29	3	32
Ec.	17	3	20	Ec.	10	3	13
Rts.*	12	1	13	Rts.	24	3	27
Br-Or.	2	6	8	Br-Or.	2	2	4
Adm.	1	3	4	Adm.	7	1	8
	<u>38</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>56</u>		<u>72</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>84</u>

\* There were also two debates in this category on Liberal initiative.

The relative proportions indicated by the figures in the "Totals" columns are fairly similar to those indicated by the figures for questions. In the earlier period the subjects which MPs chose for debate revealed a predominant concern with economic matters; in the later period the priorities changed and matters of politics and rights came into their own. There were relatively few debates on British-orientated or administrative matters, although it may be noted that half the Conservative-initiated debates in 1945-51 fell within these categories.

Members of both parties were relatively more active in Opposition than in Government. Again the overall predominance of Labour MPs,

in both periods, was marked. Among individual initiators Labour outnumbered Conservatives by 51 to 21. Brockway was the dominant figure with twelve debates, over half of them to do with questions of rights; next were James Johnson with eleven and Eirene White with seven, both chiefly concerned with political matters; Ernest Kinghorn with six, mainly on economic subjects, all initiated in the period 1947-9; Stonehouse with five, in the politics and rights categories, and Arthur Skeffington with four, in the economic. Among the Conservatives there were no really persistent initiators, though Gammans and Keeling might be mentioned for their five and three debates respectively, on assorted topics, in the Opposition years 1948 to 1951.

(iii) Other Forms of Activity

To round off this survey of parliamentary activities it remains to consider three other forms: the Early Day Motion, the petition, and - in a very limited compass and for a very limited purpose - the ordinary back-bench contribution to debate.

Since the publication of Finer's Back-bench Opinion in the House of Commons it has become accepted that findings based on Early Day Motion statistics should be treated with extreme wariness.<sup>51</sup> It is plainly unreasonable to regard all signatures to all motions as true indicators of the signatories' commitment to the attitudes expressed. Lacking insights into the motives of signatories, we can at best regard only the signatures of a motion's sponsors in this way. It is, however, reasonable to regard a heavily-supported motion as significant in a way that a virtually unsupported one is not.

But in any case, there have not been many Early Day Motions bearing upon colonial matters. Between 1945 and 1959 back-benchers put down some 1200 motions for debate "on an early day". Of these only 48 had direct or indirect relevance to colonies; and of these 48, 28 attracted

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51 S.E. Finer, H.B. Berrington and D.J. Bartholomew, Back-bench Opinion in the House of Commons 1955-59 (Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1961), pp. 8-10; see also the review of this book by Sir Edward Fellowes, formerly Clerk of the House, in Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. XV No. 2 (Spring 1962), pp. 244-5.

so few signatures that it would be pointless to regard them as revealing anything about "back-bench opinion." The remaining twenty motions are listed in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII

EARLY DAY MOTIONS<sup>52</sup>

Date	Subject	Party support	No. of signatures
26/2/51	Commonwealth and Colonial Policy	Lab	106
8/4/52	Collective Punishment (Malaya)	Lab	131
9/4/52	Imperial Preference	Con	42
7/7/52	Land Utilisation in Kenya	Lab	199
19/5/53	Bamangvato (Chieftainship)	Lab-Lib	65
21/7/53	Casualties in Kenya	Lab	51
24/11/53	Bermuda State Dinner [Colour Discrimination]	Lab	47
1/2/54	Bombing of Africans [in Kenya]	Lab	23
4/3/54	Kenya (Peace Overtures)	Lab	73
26/4/56	Furtherance of Development of Commonwealth Raw Materials	Con	136
19/6/56	Recognition of the Devotion to Duty of Her Majesty's Forces in Cyprus	Con	41
28/6/56	Kenya (Administration of Justice)	Lab-Lib	57
30/7/56	Empire Preference	Con	44
4/12/56	Cyprus Emergency Regulations	Lab-Lib	69
2/2/59	Conditions in Kenya Prisons and Detention Camps	Lab-Lib	183
23/2/59	Cyprus [in praise of Her Majesty's Forces]	Con	208
24/3/59	Discriminatory Legislation in Southern Rhodesia	Lab-Lib	120
6/5/59	Church of Scotland's Role in Nyasaland	Lab-Lib	21
17/6/59	Pensions of Colonial and Ex-Colonial Civil Servants	Con-Lab-Lib	181
7/7/59	Detention Without Trial [Kenya, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland]	Lab	51

Short though it is, the list does provide another clear picture of the differing concerns of activists in different parties. The pre-occupation of Labour and Liberal activists with matters of "politics" and "rights" is easy to see, as is the Conservative activists' concern with imperial economic development and the application of the Government's

<sup>52</sup> Source: Register of Early Day Motions, House of Commons Library. Qualifying phrases in square brackets have been added where the subject-matter of motions is not self-evident.

firm measures in Cyprus. No less evident, as further confirmation of points made earlier, is Labour's general predominance in the field. Among individuals, Broadway co-sponsored ten of the total 48 motions, Leslie Hale eight, Eriene White six, Wedgwood Benn five, and John Dugdale, Jennie Lee and Desmond Donnelly four each, whereas no Conservative sponsored more than two.

This being said, it should be repeated that the number of motions gaining any real support was extremely small. Indeed, if the two short periods April-July 1956 and February-July 1959 are excluded, the grand total for the remaining thirteen years is ten. Perhaps because of the scant publicity surrounding them, Early Day Motions clearly did not appeal very greatly or very often to MPs as a vehicle for expressing their views on colonial topics.

Petitions, too, have seldom been attempted - a fact which may be attributed mainly to the extreme difficulty of collecting signatures, and even thumbprints, among colonial populations. Between 1945 and 1959 there were only four. All were concerned with promoting the political causes and personal rights of colonial subjects, and all were presented to the House by Labour Members. The first and second, concerning the utilisation of Kenyan land, were presented by Brockway in July 1953. One of these, organised over a period of two years, bore 158,642 African signatures and thumbprints;<sup>53</sup> the other, with the same text, 16,434 British signatures. The third, presented by Brockway in March 1954, concerned the Khama issue and bore 10,839 British signatures. The fourth concerned the rights of Cypriots, bore 7,970 British signatures and was presented by Wedgwood Benn in May 1958. None made any discernible impression; petitions, it would seem, should be regarded mainly as further testimony to the energy of their organisers.

Finally, back-bench contributions to debate. These are mentioned here not in any attempt further to isolate attitudes, but solely to provide a corrective to a possible distortion in the foregoing analysis.

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53 Cf. Brockway's Outside the Right, p.57, where for no apparent reason the figure appears as 67,000.

This concerns the identification of specialists. Each form of activity so far analysed has indicated a great preponderance of Labour activists. In this chapter no attempt is made to explore the reasons for this preponderance. But whatever the reasons, it would be wrong to conclude from the evidence so far reviewed that the Conservative Party was virtually devoid of colonial specialists. Of activists within certain important categories of activity, yes; but this is as far as the conclusion may go. The Conservative specialists, it would appear, must be identified by means other than those so far used. For this purpose the device readiest to hand is that of a roll-call of back-bench contributors to colonial debates. Though Labour MPs may have predominated in other parliamentary activities, in debate the number of contributors from each side was carefully balanced by the Speaker or Chairman so that neither side could predominate. To list the names recurring most frequently in colonial debates over a long period, therefore, should provide a fair guide to a party's self-professing colonial specialists. Such an analysis may suitably be applied to the twenty-five Supply debates on colonial subjects between 1945 and 1959, since Supply debates were widely recognised, especially in the earlier years, to be the province of those "really interested" in colonial affairs.

A roll-call reveals that in these debates 57 Labour back-benchers delivered 134 speeches and 64 Conservatives delivered 125 speeches - figures whose congruence reflects credit upon the efforts of successive Chairmen to preserve the party balance. And in Table IX the names of those MPs who spoke fairly regularly in these debates are listed.

It will be seen that on the Labour side a fairly familiar set of names crops up once again. On the Conservative side, however, there are several names which have not appeared in any category previously discussed. They are presented here as a rough guide which, for lack of any other means of identifying specialists, may serve until the party as such is discussed more thoroughly.

TABLE IX

BACK-BENCH MPS MAKING THREE OR MORE SPEECHES IN SUPPLY DEBATES, 1945-59

	9	8	7	6
LAB	-	J. Johnson T. Reid	J. Dugdale	Mrs. E. White
CON	F.M. Bennett	F.W. Harris	-	P.H.B. Wall
	5	4	3	
LAB	A.F. Brockway H.B. Morgan R.T. Paget	L.H. Guest Mrs. L.M. Jeger F.E. Noel-Baker M. Philips Price J. Rankin K. Robinson	S.S. Awbery H.D. Hughes D.R. Rees-Williams R.W. Sorensen	
CON	J.D. Barlow A.D. Dodds-Parker	A.E. Baldwin P.W. Donner W. Fletcher L.D. Gammans P.D. MacDonald	C.J.M. Alport G.B. Craddock C.E. Ponsonby J.R. Robinson	

In this section we have investigated the use of certain parliamentary devices. On the whole, the findings of the investigation suggest that MPs met their responsibilities rather well in the colonial field: better, certainly, than has sometimes been maintained. Questions on colonial matters were prolific, for long periods outnumbering Questions on any other subject. Debates, too, came to be held frequently if irregularly. "We have had many debates on colonial matters in the past two years," said a Colonial Office Minister in 1955, adding "I think that colonial ministers have taken part in more major debates than those of any other department."<sup>54</sup> In one way or another probably a quarter of the House's back-bench Members took some part in colonial

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54 Henry Hopkinson, HCD vol. 542 col. 1162 (21 June 1955).

discussion during an average session of the fifties.

Yet we can never presume to pronounce dogmatically upon whether the levels of parliamentary interest and activity in a field are "sufficient." Even if we argue that these levels appear to have been higher than was sometimes contended, we cannot dispute the point that they might have been higher still - had circumstances permitted. The argument that colonial affairs would have been much better dealt with had certain proposals for parliamentary reform been given effect is a common one, and has been powerfully put. Accordingly, before concluding this chapter and this part of the study it is advisable to look at these proposals for institutional reform and to essay a judgment on their merits.

#### 4. Proposals for Reform

Two kinds of reform have been advocated: direct colonial representation at Westminster, and a standing colonial committee of one or both Houses of Parliament.<sup>55</sup>

Of these, the first was less important and much less canvassed. The awakening of interest in colonial matters around 1940 - aided, perhaps, by a wartime sentiment of imperial unity against the foe - produced a few discussions of the idea. Creech Jones, for example,

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55 Another idea sometimes put forward was that of a Grand Colonial Council or Colonial Assembly. Such a body would have provided for regular meetings in the metropolis of representatives from Britain and the colonies, and would presumably have discussed common problems and policies. The Africa Conference convened by Creech Jones in 1948 was regarded by some as an attempt to realise this idea. But the experiment was not repeated, and the idea is not discussed here since it had no implications for the working of Parliament. For discussions see e.g. Gammans's letter to The Times, 11 April 1951, and subsequent correspondence; speeches by Lord Ogmores (formerly David Kees-Williams, Creech Jones's Under-Secretary), and Lord Milverton, HLD vol. 190, cols. 912-3, (2 Feb. 1955); Sir Hilary Blood, "A Crown Colonial Council," Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. X No. 2 (Spring 1957).

debated it with Professor W.M. Macmillan in the columns of Empire: the ex-Governor Sir Donald Cameron advocated a version of it in The Spectator; the Fabian Colonial Bureau weighed the arguments in its pamphlet Downing Street and the Colonies.<sup>56</sup> Thereafter it was seldom heard of until three Labour MPs - Samuel Segal, Leslie Hale and Harold Davies - successively brought it before Parliament in the later forties. Segal in 1947 considered that the current electoral boundary commission provided an opportunity "on a small, limited scale of bringing our colonial friends to sit among us."<sup>57</sup> Early in 1949 Hale asked the Colonial Secretary if he would appoint a departmental committee "to consider the French system of colonial parliamentary representation,"<sup>58</sup> and later in the same year Davies, more ambitiously, asked the Prime Minister if he would recommend a Royal Commission "with a view to considering the advisability of establishing colonial representation in the House of Commons."<sup>59</sup> To each question the answer was an unambiguous no. The idea made no further appearance in public life (although overtones of it were later perceptible in the scheme for the integration of Malta into the United Kingdom, which would have entailed Maltese representation at Westminster on the Northern Irish model).

The main arguments for and against the proposal may be distilled from these scattered exchanges. The first argument used in favour of it was that it would bring greater "realism" into Parliament's consideration of colonial affairs. In Professor Macmillan's words, the surest way to bring "even a high-brow audience" down from the clouds to actualities was "to confront it with the case put directly by even quite humble spokesmen of the colonial peoples themselves." Colonial MPs

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56 Empire, Nov. 1941, p.4; Spectator, 8 May 1942; Downing Street and the Colonies (1942), pp. 84-7.

57 HCD vol. 441 col. 359 (29 July 1947).

58 Ibid., Vol. 460 col. 135 (26 Jan. 1949).

59 Ibid., Vol. 470 col. 1873-4 (7 Dec. 1949).

would bring a more realistic consideration to colonial questions, make discussion more lively, and replace MP's' "existing indifference and complacency" (Downing Street) with a firm sense of responsibility. Secondly, the scheme would fulfil a valuable symbolic function: it would "demonstrate to the colonies that we really want to feel them at one [sic] with this House of Commons" (Davies), and provide a "constant living testimony of our colonial dependencies" which would augment their "dignity and status" in Britain (Segal). Thirdly, direct representation would be of practical use to the representatives themselves. Their participation in the British legislative process would provide good training in the detailed routine of government; they could also do useful public relations and committee work at Westminster (Macmillan). It would be better to enlist responsible colonial MPs than to persist with the policy of enlarging Legislative Councils while reserving arbitrary powers for Governors, since "complete responsibility, even if the field be limited, affords much the sounder school of training" (Cameron). Finally, metropolitan representation would please colonial political opinion much more than "what is called constitutional progress in colonies" (Macmillan).

The main argument against the proposal was that it ran counter to the whole centrifugal trend of British policy (Downing Street, Creech Jones). Metropolitan representation might be appropriate in an integrated colonial system like the French, but not in a multifarious and decentralising one like the British. It would be quite illogical to take away from the colonies those leaders whose ability and experience were the very qualities which the nascent local polity needed most. Secondly, the practical difficulties would be vast. Herbert Morrison, replying to Davies's Question, pointed out that

"there are round about fifty colonies and dependencies which all have their individualities and whose constitutions vary very much. It was thought that it was better to go on handling them in regard to their individual circumstances, encouraging development towards self-government, and so on, rather than set up a Royal Commission which we thought would get into great difficulties."

The main difficulty, it was usually argued, would be to discover a basis

for representation. The 70 million colonial people could hardly be given equal votes lest their representatives swamp Parliament. But however many there were, the presence of colonial MPs - if they were really to function as MPs - "would completely confuse the politics of this country" (Thomas Reid, in a Supplementary to Davies's Question). There could hardly be a system of one representative per territory, for the territories were highly differentiated in size and constitutional status. But how would representation distinguish between tiny island protectorates and large self-governing colonies? Whatever the basis, the more advanced territories would inevitably consider their degree of self-government comparatively diminished (Creech Jones). They were also much too varied in their internal social and racial compositions. How would representation work for the trade interests of West Africa, the settlers of Kenya, and Indian immigrants everywhere? In these respects there would be far too many problems of precedence (Downing Street). There would be other practical difficulties too. "The most ardent of present Members find themselves severely hampered by the restrictions of parliamentary procedure" (Downing Street). Colonial Members would be unlikely to prove capable of securing more time for colonial matters than was already provided; their own time would be wasted and they would suffer frustrations. The final argument was simply that most colonial political leaders probably had no desire to serve in Parliament anyway, being much more interested in making progress in their own territories (Downing Street, Reid).

Obviously the arguments on both sides varied in plausibility. It is not apparent, for example, why it should be thought that relevant training in the routine of government would be better imparted to colonial politicians in the House of Commons than in their own Legislative Councils. And on each side some arguments were nullified by superior arguments on the other. Thus the opponents' contention that colonial MPs would find little to do in the House was well enough countered by the advocates' reasonable suggestion that colonial MPs could do appropriate committee and public relations work. At the same time, the advocates'

rather dubious contention that representation would make colonial politicians feel "at one" with the House, and would also please colonial political opinion, was undermined by the argument that colonial leaders might not wish to serve in the House even if they could.

In retrospect, it is clear that the objections to the scheme were always much more convincing than the arguments for it. The by-product of a period rife with altruistic "plans for the colonies", it did run against the whole trend of British policy and the aspirations of colonial politicians. And had it been established it would have run counter to events. The advocates of the plan in the early forties could not foresee the way in which the forces of colonial nationalism would come to govern policy formation. But with hindsight it is not difficult to imagine how colonial MPs in Britain would probably have been regarded as "stooges", and how, cut off from power bases in nationalist movements at home, they would have become increasingly remote from the central policy-making dialogue. As for the repercussions of colonial representation on Parliament itself: according to the advocates, colonial MPs would have brought greater realism to Parliament's consideration of colonial affairs, and would have helped to replace attitudes of "indifference and complacency" with interest and a sense of responsibility. In the forties this was no doubt quite a plausible line to take. But in fact, as we saw earlier, parliamentary attitudes came to change in the desired way without any help from a system of colonial representation. In this respect as well as others, therefore, it is fair to regard the plan only as a historical curiosity. Of much greater importance was the idea of a Standing Colonial Committee.

Proposals for specialised subject committees of Parliament, as a device to promote qualitative improvements in parliamentary supervision of the executive, have by no means been confined to the field of colonial affairs. This field, however, has often been singled out as one in which the case for a specialised committee was particularly strong, basically because of the sheer "extent and diversity" of the subject and the

chronic paucity of up-to-date information about it.<sup>60</sup> Unlike the proponents of direct colonial representation, whose premise was that MPs were indifferent, they argued from the premise that MPs were frustrated.

The peak period for discussion of this idea was, once again, the period of new colonial stimuli and metropolitan responses from 1938 to about 1943. The idea then remained dormant until revived in 1956 by members of the Labour Party, chiefly left-wingers, who advocated it intermittently until 1960. It is this second debate which, though less intense than the first, is discussed here: partly because it falls more nearly within the period under general consideration, partly because the earlier debate has already been described elsewhere.<sup>61</sup>

Labour Members' espousal of the committee idea in 1956 was one aspect of the overall rethinking of colonial policy which the party was undertaking at that time. No doubt it also owed something to the fact of being in Opposition, for the party had ignored it when in power. The first indication of a renewed interest in the idea came in a speech by Bevan on the Kenya situation in June.

"There is a grave breakdown in communication between Parliament and what is happening in the colonies. We have been considering this for some time, and we are going to make certain proposals to Parliament for revising the constitutional machinery...The purpose of the proposals will be to bring the Colonial Office under a more continuous examination...We are not really trying to do our duty by the 70 million people who depend upon us in the colonies merely by putting down Questions every six weeks."<sup>62</sup>

A few months later, at the 1956 Party Conference, Jennie Lee moved, and the Conference accepted, a composite resolution on colonial policy which included this sentence:

"This Conference, deeply concerned...that until colonial territories

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60 Crick, The Reform of Parliament, p.162; Hansard Society, Parliamentary Reform, 1933-1960. A Survey of Suggested Reforms (Cassell, 1961), p. 51. See also Colin Legum, Must We Lose Africa? (W.H. Allen, 1954), pp. 223-4.

61 David Goldsworthy, "The Debate on a Parliamentary Committee for Colonial Affairs", Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. XIX No. 2 (Spring 1966), esp. pp. 193-8.

62 HCD vol. 553 cols. 1194-6 (6 June 1956).

attain responsible self-government the House of Commons should maintain the most vigilant check on the exercising of the power of the Colonial Office, considers that...the National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party <sup>[should]</sup> investigate the entire question of the relationship between the Colonial Office and Parliament with a view to making such reforms as are necessary in order to improve parliamentary control over this department."

Explaining the resolution, Miss Lee made clear what was envisaged:

"In the House of Commons again and again those of us who are concerned with colonial affairs are in great difficulty because we cannot get at the facts quickly enough. Even now we do not know if somebody wanted to burn down Georgetown in British Guiana... We want a Standing Committee of the House of Commons to which the Minister will answer and which will be a fact-finding and fact-checking concern." 63

Shortly afterwards Wedgwood Benn argued along the same lines in Venture,<sup>64</sup> and in May 1957 the matter was raised, for the first time in thirteen years, in the House.<sup>65</sup> But James Callaghan, as the front-bench spokesman on colonial affairs, seems to have had reservations on the subject. At any rate his point was made very tentatively:

"Another matter which I want to raise...is the committee system. I am no lover of the committee system as such...but I think there is a case for considering here, to put it no higher than that, whether we do not need another forum outside this Chamber in which the affairs of these territories can be considered at regular intervals and in which information can be obtained...[At present] I am relying upon newspaper reports and on the voluntary work done by a number of devoted persons...This is really a rather slapdash way of doing it...and I am, therefore, putting the thought - it is not a proposal - that we ought to consider whether there is not a better way of organising our affairs."66

This was not potent advocacy, and it elicited no response from the Government. In 1958, however, there arose a major opportunity for reform when a Select Committee on Procedure was appointed. Two of its six

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63 Report of the Fifty-Fifth Annual Conference of the Labour Party (the Labour Party, 1956), p. 165.

64 Op.cit., p. 7.

65 The idea had last been discussed in a Supply debate on 20 July 1944.

66 HCD vol. 569 cols. 653-4 (6 May 1957).

Labor Members, Leslie Hale and Wedgwood Benn, were left-wingers on colonial issues and strong supporters of the colonial committee idea. Support also came from some important witnesses. Sir Edward Fellowes, Clerk of the House, agreed with an interrogator that a colonial committee would serve "to keep under more or less continuous review an important subject which is only intermittently considered in the House, apart from Questions"<sup>67</sup> Asked by a Conservative member why the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association should not suffice for the purpose, he opined that the Association "was just a little too informal", meeting too infrequently "even for CPA visitors to give their impressions." (Q195). He was unwilling to limit a colonial committee initially with precise terms of reference, but thought it might suitably question civil servants about administrative matters, examine Colonial Estimates, and function as a public debating committee (Q328-30). Ministers could be asked to attend "occasionally" (Q277). There should be no reason why policy might not be discussed, provided a minister was present; although, as Fellowes put it, the House was not as a rule "inclined to encourage its committees to discuss policy" (Q377). Other supporting witnesses included the leaders of both Opposition parties. Gaitskell thought that MPs would be interested and, therefore, that "it could be done" (Q1004). Grimond made the point that it would be better for the smaller and the less controversial colonies to be discussed in a committee than not at all (Q782).

The two witnesses who opposed the scheme were both veteran front-benchers. Herbert Morrison's main point was that it would be wrong to delegate to a committee and thereby take away "the dignity of the floor of the House on these matters of public policy" (Q460). The Leader of the House, R.A. Butler, trod a very orthodox path. He declared that a colonial standing committee would inevitably pattern itself on the precedent of the powerful French and American specialised committees and "imagine it had a direct say in the administration of colonial

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67 HCD 2-I of 1958-9, Report from the Select Committee on Procedure (HMSO, 1959). Minutes of Evidence, Q. 194.

affairs." It was essential that the minister should "know where he is"; it would be most confusing to have a specialist committee, which would only "get in the way of administration and blur ministerial responsibility." The whole concept was a "muddle in our constitution" (qs 1159, 1161).

Thus the witnesses. The Select Committee itself, in compiling its report, revealed divergent views on the subject. The eight Conservative members drafted a long paragraph which summarised the proposal for a colonial committee as they interpreted it, and outlined their reasons for rejecting the proposal.<sup>68</sup> The kind of committee which, they thought, had generally been advocated would not be a particularly powerful body (though to maintain this was to ignore Sir Edward Fellowes's views). It would apparently function purely as a debating forum, informed and advised by ministers in the capacity of ex officio members. The main claim of such a body to usefulness, as the Conservative members saw it, would be that it could provide time for the discussion of smaller territories. It might also - in some manner not specified by the Conservatives - seek to "assist" the Secretary of State and the Governors in their tasks. But these did not appear to be very strong arguments for existence. The Conservative members rejected the proposal, thus conceived, for four reasons. The first they derived, fairly obviously, from Butler:

"The main argument against the proposal, and one which convinces us, lies in the nature of the committee, which in our view would constitute a radical constitutional innovation...there is little doubt that the activities of such a committee would ultimately be aimed at controlling rather than criticising the policy and actions of the department concerned. In so doing, it would be usurping a function which the House itself has never attempted to exercise."

The second reason was the Morrisonian one: since colonial affairs were "important", it followed that they should be discussed only in the House, where all might have a say. The third was that smaller territories could always be discussed upon Adjournment motions and in private

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68 Report, pp. xxiv-xxv.

Members' time. The fourth was that people in colonies might think that the House, by relegating colonial problems to a committee, was under-rating these problems.

In response, Hale drafted an alternative paragraph on behalf of the Labour members.<sup>69</sup> He countered the first objection by asserting that the committee could not possibly "be regarded as controlling, rather than criticising the executive" if, in terms of actual powers, it could do no more than "refer questions for consideration by the House." The second and third objections were sound in theory, but it was an inescapable fact that Parliament's time was limited: hence the evident usefulness of a committee which could make more time available. As for the last objection, Grimond's point - better to have discussion in a committee than none at all - was surely sufficient rebuttal. Hale then went on to propose the kind of committee which he thought should be recommended in the report. Rather anti-climatically, his committee differed very little from the model envisaged by the Conservatives. It would have thirty-two to forty members, established in proportion to party strength in the House, and would meet for a fortnightly morning session; one Colonial Office minister would be a member; and it would be a debating, not an investigatory, body. Where Hale parted company with the Conservatives was in his estimation of the committee's usefulness. According to him the committee could undertake constructive consideration of methods of colonial development and expansion, discuss economic planning, and consider plans for social, cultural and intellectual advance. It would also provide a means "of calling attention to the necessity for redress of grievances in the colonies in advance of an emergency" - an aspiration on Hale's part reminiscent of a view sometimes expressed in the wartime debate that tours by parliamentary committees would minimise the likelihood of colonial crises.<sup>70</sup>

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69 Report: Proceedings, pp. xlix-l.

70 See e.g. Lord Samuel, HLD vol. 121 col. 125 (26 Nov. 1941).

But Hale's plan could not really be equated with those of his wartime predecessors. Whereas they had generally proposed an inquisitory body with full research and travel facilities,<sup>71</sup> he was advocating a debating society which, however effective as such, yet lacked any power of scrutiny. It is open to speculation why Hale should have put forward no more than a minimal proposal. In Crick's view, the lesson to be drawn was that "even reforming MPs are - once again - obsessed with the virtues of mere debate, as distinct from the need for more premeditation, inquiry and preparation."<sup>72</sup> What is more probable is that Hale was simply advocating the most that seemed even remotely likely to gain acceptance. A stronger proposal would have met certain defeat; a weak one might just possibly pick up the maverick support of one or two Conservative members when it came to a vote. In the event it did not. All the Conservative members stood by their draft, and Hale's amendment was lost by eight votes to six.<sup>73</sup>

When the Select Committee's report came up for debate in the House, on 13 July 1959 and 8 February 1960, the same arguments were rehearsed once again. Hale's proposal, although defeated in the Committee, was discussed at some length. Some speakers - mainly Privy Councillors - regarded it as the thin end of a potential wedge: an attempt to establish a single experimental committee as a precedent for several more. This indeed it was, as the Conservative majority of the Select Committee had also recognised in passing.<sup>74</sup> But as such it drew heavy fire. Butler once more led the attack, referring darkly to committees "à l'américaine": "surely there would be a real danger of usurping the functions...of United Kingdom ministers."<sup>75</sup> Hale, <sup>unrepentantly,</sup> reintroduced his proposal in the form of an amendment motion, but the Government whips

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71 Goldsworthy, "Debate," pp. 195-6.

72 Crick, op.cit., p. 163.

73 Report: Proceedings, p. li.

74 Report, p. xxv.

75 HCD vol. 609 col. 42 (13 July 1959).

were applied and the amendment was defeated by 220 votes to 89.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, with a flourish of parliamentary formality, serious political discussion of the idea came to an end. The government of the day was obviously committed to resisting any such innovation, and to judge by the attitudes of Opposition front-benchers such as Callaghan and Morrison, it was not apparent that a change of government would produce any change in the official view. In any case, time was now against the advocates. As colonies were transmuted one by one into new states the idea of a standing colonial committee steadily lost relevance. He was an egregious critic who could still write, so late in the imperial twilight as December 1963, that "the case for such a committee [and for one to debate Defence estimates] ...remains the minimum and urgent ground for reform of the parliamentary committee system."<sup>77</sup> In fact, by this time "the case for such a committee" scarcely existed.

This being said, it remains feasible - and is an intriguing exercise - to speculate about whether a colonial committee, if established, would ever have lived up to its advocates' expectations. An inquisitory one might have, in the sense that the supply of information to interested MPs might have been improved - though at the cost, no doubt, of some MPs' good relations with the Colonial Office. With any less powerful body, it is unlikely that the kind of information gleaned would have bettered that already available to MPs belonging to party subject committees and to external organisations with their own colonial contacts. This is not to say that these sources were always adequate for MPs' purposes. But it does mean that expectations for a committee with anything less than inquisitorial powers should never have been pitched too high. It would have been a deliberating body, whose merits would stem from the virtues of deliberation as such. About these, however, it would be wrong to dogmatise. We have seen that different sections of the 1958 Select Committee estimated very differently the likely value of deliberations in a colonial committee. There is no saying which estimate

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76 HCD, Vol. 617 cols. 171-2 (8 Feb. 1960)

77 Crick, op.cit., p. 164.

would have come nearer to reality, if only because we cannot know who would have manned the committee or the extent to which party feelings would have intruded. But it is reasonable to suppose that a committee in any form would have had certain minimal merits. It would have allowed for more contacts among those MPs most interested and knowledgeable in the field, and its proceedings would have added to the sum of thought and consideration devoted to colonial affairs. From these contacts and interchanges a modicum of worthwhile ideas on non-controversial matters might well have emerged; or at least, there is no obvious reason why they should not. Presumably there would also have been more publicity for the smaller territories and more extensive vicarious representation of colonial causes and grievances - activities whose value has already been discussed. Whether the existence of a committee would have created wider parliamentary interest and expertise in the subject is more doubtful. Probably specialists would simply have become more thoroughly and efficiently specialist. But this would have been a useful enough development; and on balance, it must be allowed that interested MPs might well have worked better - and certainly would have worked no worse - had there been a standing committee at their disposal.

This, of course, is pure conjecture. As such it does not affect the conclusion of the central section of this chapter: that MPs generally did better parliamentary work in the colonial field than some of their critics have suggested.

This is a very broad conclusion, and it would be wrong to complete the chapter without a final comment on those objections, already noted in other contexts, which it clearly invites. The first is that colonial events were never really capable of commanding wide parliamentary attention unless they were "crisis" events - imperilling lives, property, good government, and so on. The second, the other side of the same coin, is that the genuine colonial specialists who did most of the work were extremely few in number.

The first objection contains a deal of truth. But it is questionable whether MPs should therefore be criticised. In any field it is natural for large or sensational issues to arouse the widest interest. In this field it is arguable, further, that many crises were the outcome of fundamental resistance to British policy by some colonial interest or other; thus it could reasonably be said that discussions of colonial crises were essentially discussions about the aims, the problems and the failures of policy in the field, surely an appropriate parliamentary concern. Apart from this, it can be argued that the objection does not contain the whole truth. In this respect MPs may be defended on the more substantial basis of the evidence reviewed earlier. From this evidence some impression may be gained of the different degrees of attention actually given to "crises" by comparison with other subjects. The tables indicated that crises bulked large in the well-attended major debates initiated by front-bench speakers - which is where they might be expected to - but much less so in other areas of activity. In the area of Adjournment and other back-bench debates (attended mainly by specialists), the distribution of topics among the five subject-categories suggests that colonial crises were far from being the chief preoccupation of the debates' initiators. The figures for Questions are more specific. There were no major crises in 1949 but over 900 Questions to the Colonial Secretary, and in 1958 a protracted major crisis in Cyprus provoked no more than 133 out of some 1260 Questions. It is true that crises provoked most supplementaries, most heat and most publicity, but this, again, is a point applicable to any field of government. It remains noteworthy that most Questions dealt with lesser problems which nevertheless, in the opinion of interested MPs, merited a public airing.

We have already observed that the second point is a true one. The specialists were, in fact, never very numerous. Yet it would certainly have been utopian to expect a corporate parliamentary interest in this field, as in any other. There must always be a division of parliamentary labour among specialisms, and what matters in the long run, in any

field, is how well the nucleus of specialists do their work; how numerous they are is a secondary issue. To judge by the evidence the energy and enthusiasm, at least, of the colonial specialists could never have been in question. In 1957, shortly after coming fresh to the subject as principal Opposition spokesman, Callaghan paid them this tribute:

"In the last six months, during which I have been making a detailed study of colonial affairs, I have marvelled more and more at the devotion with which a number of hon. Members give practically their whole time to following the affairs of our fellow-citizens in our overseas territories. A great deal of devoted work goes on in the House of Commons among hon. Members of all parties which...is rarely acknowledged. It is valuable work." 78

It would of course be a mistake to overrate the importance of these activities - to go as far, for example, as the Conservative MP who declared in 1952 that "everything we say [about colonies] is of such importance that every word carries its weight across the seas."<sup>79</sup> But it would be no less a mistake to consider them lacking in all significance. As was suggested at the beginning, the significance of parliamentary activity may best be understood in terms of the ability of MPs to fulfil the functions inherent in certain roles: party member, representative, publicist. We have seen, with reference to the two latter roles at least, that interested MPs did well.

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78 HCD vol. 569 col. 656 (6 May 1957).

79 Frederic Harris, ibid., Vol. 497 col. 284 (4 March 1952).

**THE BI-PARTISAN APPROACH: 1945-51**

## CHAPTER IV

## LABOUR AND COLONIES: THE FABIAN YEARS

"The aims and aspirations of our own Labour Movement are at one with the aims and aspirations of colonial people."

Mr. J. C. Prothero, a delegate to the 1947 Labour Party Conference (Conference Report, p.115).

1. The Party Before 1945(1) Party attitudes

"Labour", announced a party document in 1926, "has hitherto naturally given little detailed attention to the Empire."<sup>1</sup> "Naturally": it could be taken for granted, apparently, that colonial policy was not a matter of moment to a party founded to promote domestic change. Certainly the party's two prewar periods in government provided little evidence of a distinctive Labour approach to colonial problems. Neither of Labour's Colonial Secretaries, J. H. Thomas in 1924 and Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb) in 1929-31, was noted for special interest in the subject. Labour's policy in 1924 has been described as an "uninspiring" amalgamation of "routine Conservative" and "routine Liberal" policies, consisting of nothing more than "the defence of the status quo".<sup>2</sup> Passfield by 1929-31, according to his Under-Secretary Drummond Shiels, has already "got into a Civil Service way of looking at things".<sup>3</sup> He believed, reasonably enough, that colonial progress could not go faster "than our officials can be persuaded to go" and that what was needed was "mainly a change of spirit"; but he quite

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1 The Empire in Africa : Labour's Policy (The Labour Party, 1926), p.1.

2 Richard Lyman, The First Labour Government 1924 (Chapman and Hall, n.d. but 1957), pp.214, 216.

3 Sir Drummond Shiels, "Sidney Webb as a Minister", in Margaret Cole (ed.), The Webbs and their Work (Frederick Muller, 1949), p.206.

failed to realise, according to Shiels, that "many of the younger men, at least, in the colonial field ... had already got this change of spirit and were expecting a vigorous lead in its application from a Labour government."<sup>4</sup> Today Passfield's tenure is remembered for three main measures: the Colonial Development Act of 1929, the initiation of administrative reforms in the Colonial Service and Colonial Office in 1930, and the reaffirmation in 1930 of the doctrine of African paramountcy in Kenya. Of these, only the second could be attributed entirely to his initiative.<sup>5</sup> The first gave effect to a proposal made earlier by the Conservatives and was designed primarily to alleviate British unemployment; and the third, an important pronouncement issued after intense lobbying from many sources, was, nevertheless, no more than a restatement of a principle already laid down by a Conservative government.<sup>6</sup>

The prewar party should not, however, be judged only by these fleeting appearances in office. Viewed more broadly, the party in and out of Parliament never wanted for thinkers and publicists concerned with colonial affairs. From its earliest days, a strikingly broad range of attitudes towards Empire had coexisted in the party. The publication of Hobson's famous attack on imperialist economics - liberal and moral in inspiration but essentially Marxist in argument - had virtually coincided with the party's formation, and had readily won Labour adherents to its thesis that imperialism was an extension of capitalism, maintained purely as a means to "exploitation" in the interests of a privileged class. Implicit in this thesis was the conclusion that there could be no remedy for imperial ills, nor salve of the socialist conscience, short of the liquidation of Empire - a course forcibly advocated in 1925 by so prominent a figure as Stafford

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4 Ibid., p.207. Cf. Leonard Woolf's judgment of Passfield: "He was a progressive, even a revolutionary, in some economic and social spheres; where the British Empire was concerned, he was a common or garden imperialist conservative." Leonard Woolf, Downhill All the Way, An Autobiography of the Years 1919-1939 (Hogarth Press, 1967), p.236.

5 Shiels, op. cit., p.216.

6 Gregory, Sidney Webb and East Africa, Chs. III and IV.

Cripps. But on the whole the neo-Marxist view, though destined for a strong revival in the fifties, carried little weight in the prewar period. At the other extreme some party members maintained doctrines of imperial federation and protection barely distinguishable from the views of the Conservative Party's convinced imperialists. The idea of a tightly organised imperial federation acting as a world power bloc found Labour adherents at least until the twenties, among them the influential trade union leader Ernest Bevin. And the related idea of a coordinated imperial economic policy appealed to many of the party's leading figures, among them Ramsay MacDonald, Oswald Mosley and again Bevin, in 1929-31. But because their primary concern was the wellbeing of British industry and the relief of British unemployment, the kind of imperial "planning" envisaged was intended as much to inhibit as to promote colonial development. Thus Bevin, the only member of the party to sit on the Colonial Development Committee (otherwise composed of businessmen) set up under the 1929 Act, frequently urged his view that there should be no development of new colonial industries which might compete with their British counterparts: "Ought there not to be some control against the possible development of coal in Tanganyika?"<sup>7</sup>

Between these extremes there were a number of prominent party members who could be described broadly as liberal-humanitarians. Few of the writers and publicists in this number were MPs. In the interwar period they included such a diversity of men as Norman Angell, Leonard Barnes, Roden Buxton and Josiah Wedgwood; Lord Olivier, one of the original Fabians and a former Governor of Jamaica; E. D. Morel, a Liverpool shipping clerk of independent mind; Norman Leys and MacGregor Ross, who both lived in and wrote about Kenya; and Leonard Woolf, a former Colonial Civil Servant who for many years played

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7 Speech by Bevin, Trades Union Congress Report 1930, p.286.

secretary to Buxton's chairman of the party's Imperial Advisory Committee. Within Parliament the humanitarian view was urged by a small, all-party group of MPs in which Creech Jones, after his election in 1935, became Labour's leading figure.<sup>8</sup> Generally the humanitarians were free-traders, and anti-imperialists in the restricted sense that they denounced the abuses of the Crown Colony system and advocated eventual self-government. But they discounted "liquidation" as a solution for the moral problems of Empire. The solution, in their view, lay in the traditional concepts of "service" and trusteeship. For most of them trusteeship implied some form of international supervision; for a few, Angell in particular, it implied the full-scale internationalisation of colonial administration. In either case the colonial relationship was regarded as a context within which to serve indigenous interests, which, as liberal-humanitarians, they conceived chiefly in terms of welfare and the protection of individual and social rights. This conception of native interests had an important consequence. While approving broadly of "development" as an economic policy, very few of the humanitarians were prepared to support its current priorities - building up plantation systems, settler enterprise, rural industries and the like. Lord Olivier, among others, argued that such concomitants of "development" as the seizure of native lands, the disruption of native social systems and the introduction of forced labour were evils that outweighed economic advantages. Wedgwood, whose views on this subject shaded into those of the doctrinaire anti-imperialists, often argued that any form of development should be avoided because it could be administered only by capitalists and would therefore lead to exploitation.<sup>9</sup>

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8 In 1924 a "Commonwealth Group" of Labour back-benchers had been formed by Dr. Haden Guest MP, with the aim of subjecting the Labour Government's colonial policies to critical discussion. But the Government was unenthusiastic about this and the group did not last long. Lyman, *op. cit.*, p.216; see also Lord Haden Guest's reminiscences, *HLD*, vol.190 col.928 (2 Feb., 1955).

9 The ideas and attitudes of these men were clearly indicated by the titles of their books, e.g. Olivier's White Capital and Coloured Labour and The Anatomy of African Misery; Morel's The Black Man's Burden; Woolf's Empire and Commerce in Africa; and Barnes's The Duty of Empire

Thus, for very different reasons, both the protectionist and the humanitarian elements in the party were substantially opposed to large-scale development projects. In consequence it was hardly surprising that until the later thirties the party leadership too saw no pressing need for action in the economic field. But the leadership's static outlook extended into the political and social fields as well: and in these respects it was not always so easy to reconcile the leadership view with the views of other sections of the party. Throughout the interwar years the dependency (not, strictly, a colony) with the strongest claim to political advancement was India. In office in 1929-31, MacDonald, Snowden, Lansbury and the other party leaders adhered to the report of the Simon Commission which had recommended no changes in Indian representation. In doing so they were very much at variance with those Labour radicals who had already been canvassing Indian independence for a decade or more. Nor did the leadership ever show much inclination to take up as party issues the numerous social and administrative injustices unearthed by the humanitarians. On the matter of actual policy implementation, therefore, it would be wrong to overstate the influence of the radicals and liberals. Few of them got very far in the party hierarchy - of the party's major leaders only Lansbury had ever been associated with them; in particular no radical or liberal was ever appointed Colonial Secretary. True, under Buxton and Woolf humanitarians dominated the party's Imperial Advisory Committee; but this body, though it actively criticised Passfield's Kenya policy, drafted many pamphlets, and regularly submitted papers to the National Executive, made little real impact on the attitudes of the prewar leadership.<sup>10</sup> Such influence as Labour's "native rights lobby" did possess, as Professor Robinson has pointed out, could be attributed not so much to party support as <sup>to</sup> the non-party character of the wider, like-minded circle with which it had connections: the missionary

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10 Woolf, Downhill All the Way, pp.238-9.

groups, the churches, the Anti-Slavery Society and the sympathetic ex-officials, who were jointly capable, on some issues, of mobilising "a substantial part of what is nowadays called the Establishment".<sup>11</sup>

But there was another sphere of party activity in which the liberal-humanitarians could and did come into their own. The several official pronouncements on colonial policy issued during the long years of opposition were increasingly permeated by their ideas. If these pronouncements bore little relation to the leadership's actions in the brief years of government, their evolution is still worth tracing as one element in the long prelude to 1945 - the year in which Labour first gained the freedom of action conferred by a parliamentary majority and first installed a liberal-humanitarian colonial specialist as a Colonial Minister.

(ii) The Evolution of Policy, 1918-45<sup>12</sup>

The first pronouncement of any importance appeared in the official party document Labour and the New Social Order (1918), drafted almost entirely by the Fabians Sidney Webb and Arthur Henderson.

"If we repudiate, on the one hand, the Imperialism that seeks to dominate other races ... so we disclaim equally any conception of a selfish and insular 'non-interventionism' unregarding of our special obligations to our fellow-citizens overseas ... [and] of the moral claims upon us to the non-adult races; ... the Labour Party stands for its [the Empire's] maintenance and its progressive development on the lines of Local Autonomy and 'Home Rule All Round'; [and for] the fullest respect for the rights of each people, whatever its colour ... to the proceeds of its own

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11 Robinson, The Dilemmas of Trusteeship, p.59. On Labour's prewar attitudes towards colonies see also Woolf, op. cit., pp.221-38; J. Henderson, The Attitude of the Labour Movement to Imperial Issues 1899-1924 (unpub. D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1965); and Ian Davies, "The Labour Commonwealth", New Left Review, No. 23 (Dec. 1963), pp.75-80.

12 On this subject see also S. A. H. Haqqi, The Colonial Policy of the Labour Government (1945-51), (Aligarh, India, 1960), pp.1-16; Robinson, op. cit., pp.56-60; and Robert A. Brady, Crisis in Britain. Plans and Achievements of the Labour Government (California U.P., 1950), pp.579-81.

toil upon the resources of its own territorial home."<sup>13</sup> These were orthodox liberal-humanitarian themes: moral obligation, the prevention of exploitation and domination, progress towards self-government. Next, however, the statement went on to advocate the "continuous participation" of Dominion and colonial leaders "in the most confidential deliberation of the Cabinet, so far as Foreign Policy and Imperial Affairs are concerned". This notion of an integrated political high command had a traditionally "imperialist" ring, and perhaps read oddly in its context. But this was in fact the only occasion on which any such plan for political coordination found a place in an official party document. Thereafter liberal, and occasionally radical, ideas predominated. In 1919, for example, the element of international supervision found its way into official policy at the special Congress which met to discuss the League of Nations Covenant and which pledged support for the mandates system.<sup>14</sup> Two years later a conference resolution gave strong expression to the party's vein of doctrinaire anti-capitalism. The capitalist system, it affirmed, was responsible for "war and imperialism"; in turn, imperialism "tends to perpetuate the reign of capitalism".<sup>15</sup> The 1926 Conference returned to the attack on a different front, carrying a resolution proposed by the Teachers' Labour League which condemned "the widespread reactionary and imperialistic teaching in the schools, particularly with regard to Empire Day celebrations".<sup>16</sup>

In the same year the party produced The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy. This was the first policy paper to deal exclusively and in some detail with colonial problems; it was drafted by

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13 Labour and the New Social Order (the Labour Party, 1918), pp.21-2. The frequent use of capital letters was a characteristic of Webb's writing.

14 Report of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, 1918-1919 (the Labour Party, 1919), p.25.

15 Report of the 21st Annual Conference of the Labour Party (the Labour Party, 1921), p.207. Labour Party Conference reports will be cited henceforth, in this chapter, in the form 1921 Conference Report.

16 1926 Conference Report, p.265.

Buxton and Woolf of the Imperial Advisory Committee. Here the main liberal themes were reiterated and developed: the abhorrence of exploitation and racial injustice, the ideal of international accountability, the ideal of economic self-development by the native "as a free man" within the context of trusteeship, and, with it all, a supremely cautious programme for self-government. According to this programme native representation on Legislative Councils, when it eventually came, must still precede the granting of "responsibility" to the Councils - "in order to prevent legislation in the interest of the exploiters before the natives have an effective voice". Meanwhile the proper area in which to acquire a sense of responsibility would be local government, in the supervision of sanitation, irrigation, roads and -a"possibly" - education.<sup>17</sup> In 1928 these ideas were restated in the lengthy document Labour and the Nation. Labour would make no compromise with colonial development policies "which undermine the independence, the social institutions and the morale of their inhabitants". It would seek to "protect them in the occupation and enjoyment of their land"; to "prevent absolutely forced labour"; and to "ensure that contracts between native workers and European employers are entered upon voluntarily and ... subject to the approval of a public authority". It would "encourage" the development of health and education services. It would transfer to native inhabitants "such measure of political responsibility as they are capable of exercising". It would seek to "strengthen and extend" the authority of the Mandates Commission. The party noted with satisfaction that wherever the principle of subordinating all other interests to native welfare had been observed,

"primitive people have achieved, in a comparatively short time, results which decisively disprove the statement that they are incapable of social progress."<sup>18</sup>

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17 The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy (the Labour Party, 1926), pp.7-9. See also Woolf, op. cit., pp.233-4.

18 Labour and the Nation (the Labour Party, 1928), p.44.

The next policy document, The Colonies, appeared in 1933. Since Labour and the Nation the party had experienced two years in government, and the new statement seemed to reflect this in being even more cautious on the subject of political advance. It was recognised that colonies differed too widely for a uniform policy to be practicable. The West Indies alone were "probably" ready for a degree of self-government; the African colonies, not least those with settler populations, remained very far from that goal. Perhaps to compensate for the conservatism of this judgment, the statement asserted - as none of its predecessors had done - that "socialism" was an immediate objective in colonies, and that the ultimate vision was of "a commonwealth of self-governing socialist units".<sup>19</sup> But the content of colonial socialism was not specified; nor could the term be readily applied to a developmental policy which continued to stress the purely negative task of opposing capitalist development and, in outlining welfare schemes, made no mention beyond a reference to the 1929 Act of where the money was to come from.<sup>20</sup> Finally, internationalism was pressed to the conclusion of advocating an Open Door for colonial trade. Thereby, only one year after the National Government had demonstrated its faith in imperial preference by negotiating the Ottawa Agreements, the Labour Party officially discarded whatever sympathies it might have had for the preferentialist doctrine.

The evolution of policy reached its final stages in the war years. At the 1942 party conference it took perhaps its most intriguing turn. A policy statement was moved by Dr. Haden Guest MP, the founder of the 1924 "Commonwealth group", as an amendment to the official NEC motion on colonial policy. Apparently unexpectedly, it was carried without dissent. Much more radical than the leadership's proposed statement, this resolution outlined a "Charter

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19 Policy Report No. 6: The Colonies (the Labour Party, 1933), pp.5-6.

20 However, in a little-noticed pamphlet three years later the party approached this problem by outlining plans for a Colonial Development Board and a Colonial Loans Board which would float loans on the international market. The Demand for Colonial Territories and Equality of Economic Opportunity, (the Labour Party, 1936), p.38.

of Freedom for Colonial Peoples" embodying five main principles: full equality, in political, economic and social rights, of colonial peoples with British; the abolition of colonial status and the elevation of former colonies to equal status with the self-governing dominions; the organisation of democratic systems of government based upon indigenous institutions; communal native ownership of land and the nationalisation of all natural resources; and the establishment of a Commonwealth Council.<sup>21</sup> The leadership, speaking through Philip Noel-Baker, accepted this "testament of principles" but contrived to have it referred to the Central Committee on Reconstruction; and, a year later at the 1943 conference, was able to water it down considerably. In a new resolution purporting to be a reaffirmation of the testament, the leadership undertook to aim at "the abolition of colonial status" but for immediate policy purposes committed itself only to make "the terms of the Atlantic Charter and the 'Four Freedoms' ... active principles in colonial administration" for the "backward" territories.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time the leadership secured Conference's endorsement for a document, The Colonies, prepared by the party's Reconstruction Committee. With this statement the series came to its end and the humanitarian tradition found its culminating expression in a novel form. For this was the first detailed party statement - by any party - to take full account of the new concepts of dynamic development and metropolitan financial responsibility embodied in the 1940 Act. Not only were there specific proposals for long-term economic plans; for agriculture, mining, transport, controlled industrial growth, cooperation and trade unionism; for an equitable redistribution of colonial wealth; for health and education services and the elimination of social and economic colour bars; there were also specific proposals about ways and means, about the administration of development and the sources of finance. No longer was even lip-

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21 1942 Conference Report, p.155.

22 1943 Conference Report, pp.207-8.

service paid to the notion of capitalist exploitation. Instead it was asserted that "international capital", through the Open Door, would be necessary to supplement the large public loans and the free grants which would be forthcoming under a new and expanded version of the 1940 Act.<sup>23</sup>

But it is worth noting that this new approach to economic development was not accompanied by any departure from prudence on political development. On this topic, indeed, the document was virtually silent. By way of broad principle it offered only the standard view that a "primary object" of colonial trusteeship "should be to train the Native inhabitants in every possible way so that they may be able, in the shortest possible time, to govern themselves". Subsequently it was reaffirmed that local government would provide "the most effective method of training"; but in any case, as the statement's preamble unambiguously declared, "for a considerable time to come these peoples will not be ready for self-government". The general implication was that Labour at last felt ready to tackle social and economic problems in a manner appropriate to their enormity, and that political advance must be geared to the progress achieved in these fields.

Of all Labour's pronouncements, this one seemed most deliberately to aim at "realism" and "practicality". And yet, by showing such caution on political development so late as 1943, it was in a sense the least "practical" of all. For the new policies could be implemented only within the traditional framework of unchallenged British authority; and colonial political developments were very soon to demonstrate that the old authority was no longer Britain's to command.

At the time, however, Labour's colonial specialists were able to congratulate themselves on having equipped the party with a coherent and detailed programme. In essentials it differed little,

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23 The Colonies, The Labour Party's Post-war Policy for the African and Pacific Colonies (the Labour Party, 1943), pp.2-17.

of course, from the kind of policy which those who held office in the Coalition Government had been working out in the same period. Nor was there much, apart from Labour's rejection of imperial preference and its continued fascination with international supervision, to distinguish this programme from official Conservative policy. But this convergence was for Labour moderates a welcome trend. It was also one for which, as Creech Jones later argued, they felt entitled to some credit. In their view some at least of the Government's new liberalism could be attributed to the work of Labour's liberal-humanitarian publicists in the past and the influence of Labour members upon Conservatives in the wartime coalition.<sup>24</sup>

Rather wider was the gap which divided the official party view from the radical sentiments embodied in the 1942 conference resolution. A number of left-wing party members believed, then and later, that because the "testament" was sponsored from the floor and carried without dissent it was a much truer expression of party feeling than the views of the leadership and the "moderate" colonial specialists.<sup>25</sup> The moderates were inclined to dismiss the event on the grounds that a spontaneous conference resolution passed virtually without debate could never be as authoritative as a policy statement based upon expert research and careful thought.<sup>26</sup> The leadership, for its part, was concerned enough to ensure that the 1943 conference amended the record by approving a new, more moderate resolution. But although there was nothing so dramatic as a party split over the issue, the event was nevertheless significant: as a sign less of the times than of the future. It was Labour's first warning that the issue of colonial political development could be a cause of factional intra-party dispute.

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24 Speech by Creech Jones, HCD, Vol.425, cols.342-6 (9 July, 1946).

25 Interview with Lord Brockway, ...

26 Letter of 15 Jan., 1949, from Rita Hinden to Robert A. Brady, an American economist, quoted in Brady, op. cit., p.581n.

(iii) The Fabian Colonial Bureau

It is necessary now to examine the origins and early development of a remarkable organisation. Though constitutionally independent of the party, the Fabian Colonial Bureau became within a very short time of its foundation the main source of intra-party pressures on the Colonial Office; it came also to canalise virtually the entire flow of party ideas on colonial affairs.<sup>27</sup>

The original conception of the Bureau was Dr. Rita Hinden's. A South African-born economist and a person of rare energy and organising skill, Dr. Hinden had moved in the immediate prewar period from a concern with Palestine's economic development, in which field she had gained a doctorate by work in the Jewish Agency, to a concern with the rights and wrongs of British colonial policy in general. In 1940, as a member of the Fabian Society, she suggested to the Society's executive that the current awakening of interest in colonies justified the establishment of a Fabian colonial department which could formulate, in practical terms, that part of Socialist "War Aims" dealing with dependent territories. She was told that the Society would agree to finance such a department provided that Arthur Creech Jones consented to act as chairman.<sup>28</sup> He did. Dr. Hinden undertook to be full-time secretary, and the two jointly founded the Bureau by calling the first committee meeting in October 1940. It was a short meeting with only four others present: Wilfred

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27 Several accounts of the Fabian Colonial Bureau's activities have been published; all are ex parte and brief. Four are by Rita Hinden: "How a Political Society Functions", Fabian Quarterly, April 1944; Socialists and the Empire (FCB pamphlet, n.d. but clearly 1946); "The Fabian Society and the Colonies", Fabian Quarterly, Spring, 1948; "The Fabian Society and the Colonies", Fabian Journal, April, 1954. One is by Rita Hinden and Creech Jones - a potted history of the Bureau in Venture, April, 1958. One is by Margaret Cole: The Story of Fabian Socialism (Heinemann, 1961), pp.281-8. An account by Ioan Davies, op.cit., pp.80-1 (see note 11) is marred by serious inaccuracies, as is pointed out in a letter by Anthony Wedgwood Benn in New Left Review No. 25 (May-June, 1964), pp.84-6.

28 Interview with Rita Hinden; Cole, op.cit., pp.282, 284.

Benson, an official of the ILO; Professor W. M. Macmillan; and Margaret Cole and John Parker MP, respectively Honorary Secretary and General Secretary of the Fabian Society. The discussion dealt with the possibilities of immediate action rather than broad policy issues. Mrs. Cole secured agreement that there was a clear need for a metropolitan "clearing-house for colonial information and research", and for publicity about colonial affairs in press and Parliament. It was also agreed that one of the main lines of work should be to inspire informed parliamentary Questions, and Creech Jones agreed to approach several Labour MPs to act as a panel of questioners. A number of points on which the Bureau might press for explanation and action were raised: the recent reduction of cocoa prices and the provisions of the Kenya Defence (Native Personnel) Regulations were typical, and indicated the Bureau's determination to concentrate on manageable issues.<sup>29</sup>

The Bureau's evolution from these beginnings until 1945 followed a diversifying pattern.

It sought, firstly, to enlist eminent and sympathetic individuals in a widening range of advisory and executive capacities. Within a month the Advisory Committee had lost Benson but been reinforced by Frank Horrabin, Julian Huxley, the West Indian economist W. Arthur Lewis, Miss Margery Perham, Sir Drummond Shiels and Leonard Woolf. Two of these, Miss Perham and Lewis, later resigned because of official connections with the Colonial Office and one, Macmillan, because of an appointment in West Africa, but the committee steadily expanded with the recruitment of new members: among them C. W. W. Greenidge, another West Indian and Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society; Lord Listowel; the journalist and author H. N. Brailsford; the TUC official Andrew Dalglish; and Rev. Reginald Sorensen, MP. For the first year or so the Advisory Committee met infrequently, partly because of war conditions but also because the Bureau's initial

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29 FCB Minutes of Meeting (henceforth FCB-MM), 26 Oct., 1940.

work was mostly administrative - "the creation of contacts, the collection of basic information". Thereafter, however, monthly policy meetings of the committee were called since "with its position and reputation more firmly established, the Bureau is able to go more deeply into matters of policy".<sup>30</sup> The parliamentary panel, too, increased its membership - from an initial dozen headed by Creech Jones and Parker to about twenty, including Lords Listowel and Faringdon, by 1945 - and also found itself <sup>laden</sup> with a growing volume of work as the Bureau, on the basis of its collection of colonial newspapers, furnished more and more material for Questions. Other individuals were invited to join with Advisory Committee members and MPs on a series of research sub-committees. A Colonial Constitutions Committee published a document already cited, Downing Street and the Colonies, in January 1943, and subsequently turned its attention to West African constitutional reform. A Labour Committee and a Cooperation Committee published research findings and policy recommendations in booklet form in 1942 and 1945 respectively. A West Indies Committee, set up in 1943, concentrated less on research and more on acting as a specialist component of the parliamentary panel.

Secondly, the Bureau worked diligently to spread the net of its contacts. Beginning locally by approaching such a diversity of bodies as the Colonial Office, the Royal Empire Society, the League of Coloured Peoples, the West African Students Union and the Anti-Slavery Society, the Bureau could soon inform its Advisory Committee that steps were being taken "to develop contact with progressive bodies in the colonies".<sup>31</sup> Before long it was a two-way process, with colonial trade unions, parties, social groups and individuals themselves seeking contact with the Bureau. This reverse flow produced one unanticipated change in the character of the Bureau's work. Having begun as a research and educational body it soon found

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30 Secretary's Report (henceforth SR) No. 7 to the Advisory Committee, Dec.1941-Jan.1942.

31 SR No. 3, Jan.-Feb.1941.

itself developing into "a Mecca for [colonial] letters, travellers and grievances",<sup>32</sup> particularly the last of these; accordingly an increasing proportion of its time had to be devoted to advising on individual problems. But this, to the Bureau, was gratifying. To be "a recognised centre in London to which colonial groups may turn for support"<sup>33</sup> seemed in itself to be a sufficient justification for existence.

Thirdly, the Bureau sought to associate a widening public with its work. Early in 1941 the Fabian Society executive decided to open the Bureau to membership by subscription. By the end of the year membership numbered about 150, and by 1945 about 400.<sup>34</sup> Public membership helped both to stabilise finances and to provide a guaranteed minimum market for the Bureau's output of pamphlets. In addition there were almost always good attendances at Bureau conferences and public meetings, with men such as Azikiwe and Hastings Banda among the early guests and speakers.

To extend its audience still further, the Bureau began by supplying news items to the press but soon felt the need for a regular journal of its own. In January 1941 Frank Horrabin, co-editor with Norman Leys, Leonard Barnes and Julius Lewin of an ailing independent-socialist journal named Empire, proposed a takeover by the Bureau. Empire - the title was intended ironically - had been founded in June, 1938, proclaiming editorially that "the last twenty years have been wasted. The people of the Colonial Empire are subjects still, no nearer by a single step to being citizens."<sup>35</sup> With the outbreak of war publication had become erratic and circulation had fallen. The Bureau, however, readily accepted Horrabin's offer. Dr. Hinden became editor with Horrabin, Creech Jones and Mrs. Cole prominent on the editorial board.<sup>36</sup> Empire first appeared under

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32 Report of Activities of the FCB [to the Fabian Society], April-Aug., 1945 (mim.).

33 A Year's Work of the FCB, Oct. 1943-Oct. 1944 (mim.), p.4.

34 SR No. 7, Dec. 1941-Jan. 1942; Report of Activities, April-Aug. 1945.

35 Empire, June 1938, p.1.

36 FCB-MM, 30 Jan., 1941.

Fabian auspices in March 1941 and functioned as a "bi-monthly record" throughout the war years. The circulation, which at the end of 1941 stood at "several hundred", had by August 1945 reached 2,000.<sup>37</sup>

Many of these copies were sold in the colonies and the Bureau had the satisfaction of seeing its journal quoted extensively in its mounting collection of colonial press cuttings. Empire's contents followed a standard pattern: editorials usually aimed as much at the Colonial Office as at the general readership, factual articles, by contributors, book reviews, an account of the Bureau's activities, and a selective list of colonial debates and questions in Parliament. This last, apparently, was soon recognised as the most interesting and important feature to "the majority of the readers who very rarely see Hansard."<sup>38</sup>

Fourthly, the Bureau soon went beyond its original self-assigned brief in the kinds of topics with which it dealt. The initial object of giving practical attention to relatively small-scale issues was supplemented, within a year or so, by what the Bureau called "a deeper consideration of the assumptions of colonial policy":<sup>39</sup> a series of discussions at the level of general principle about race relations, development and welfare and political advance. The Bureau itself attributed this new emphasis to the shock occasioned by the fall of Malaya, to the growing volume of American criticism of British imperialism, and to the recurrent demands - in which the Bureau joined - that the Government produce a Colonial Charter designed to complement the Atlantic Charter.<sup>40</sup>

Generalities, however, were not really the Bureau's forte. It is worth noting that the Bureau's letter to the Labour Party NEC

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37 As note 34. The ambiguous term "bi-monthly" meant, in this case, every second month.

38 SR No. 7, Dec. 1941-Jan. 1942.

39 A Year's Work of the FCB, Oct. 1943-Oct. 1944, p.1.

40 SR No. 8, Feb.-March 1942; Empire, March, 1942, p.1, and July, 1942, pp.3-5; reports of FCB meetings on "A Charter for the Colonial Peoples" (Nov. 1942) and "British Imperialism and America" (March 1943), in A Year's Work of the FCB, Oct. 1942-Oct. 1943, p.2.

concerning an official resolution for the 1942 party conference specifically warned against optimistic generalisations and referred the party back to its detailed policy pamphlet of 1933.<sup>41</sup> Undoubtedly the Bureau worked best when applying its principles to particular local issues. Mining policy in Tanganyika, the cost of living in Mauritius, the civil liberties of Jamaican trade unionists, the minutiae of marketing arrangements for colonial cash crops, plans for post-war European settlement in Kenya, the demobilisation of African troops; these were the kinds of matters to which the wartime Bureau gave most of its attention, which it publicised in Empire, and concerning which it sought particular courses of official action. And concerning which, be it noted, it could soon claim to wield influence. For the ready entrée to the Colonial Office which Creech Jones, for one, already enjoyed in 1940 was soon extended to the Bureau in general. The Questions it inspired and its representations by letter and deputation were taken seriously, such that in some cases - concerning, for example, cooperative societies - the Office established internal committees to consider them. In consequence the Bureau was sometimes able to announce in its annual reports that measures which it had proposed were being incorporated into administrative practice; and conversely, that the Office had paused to reconsider measures which the Bureau had opposed.<sup>42</sup>

To say that the Bureau functioned most usefully at the level of specific problems is not to say that its activities lacked wider significance. Its very concentration on details was proof of the growing expertise with which Labour colonial specialists, in step with the Government, were doing their homework in these years. And as its existence and activities became increasingly well-known in colonial circles, so it formed an increasingly important component of the Labour Party's image in colonies. To colonial supporters and colonial critics alike, Bureau and party had become so closely associated by 1945 that the Bureau often found it difficult, then and later, to

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41 FCB-MM, 14 April, 1942.

42 See e.g. A Year's Work, 1943-4, p. 2.

convince its colonial visitors that it was a separate body and not an integral part of the party machinery.<sup>43</sup>

## 2. The Party, 1945-50

To gain office with a majority was a novel experience for parliamentary Labour, and in some ways the 1945 election turned it into a different party. Physically it was renewed; of the 393 M's, 259, or two-thirds, came fresh to the House. Of the 134 veterans, about 65 - or half - became ministers. The task of drawing up policy documents on all subjects, which had for so long preoccupied the party in opposition, now lost its purpose. The party's main tasks were immediate and practical, with party leaders at work in their departments and back-benchers concerned to apply pressures and offer support. All of these changes had effect in the colonial field. The new M's included a few who professed a desire to follow colonial events. Two of the party's leading specialists, Creech Jones and John Parker, were among those taken into the ministry, the latter as Dominions Under-Secretary. Detailed party policy statements about colonies ceased to appear. On the other hand the practical work of applying pressures with reference to particular issues, in which the Colonial Bureau and its panel of M's had become skilled, acquired a new importance. For in the past Conservative Colonial Secretaries had not been personally committed by party allegiance to the principles which inspired these ad hoc pressures. Now, in theory, Labour ministers were, so that these pressures reflected a concern to hold the party's leaders to the party's principles.

The goals and activities of Labour's ministers were discussed in Chapters I and II above, but with only passing references to the party framework. This section alters focus to include it. Where

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43 "It is constantly necessary for the Bureau to explain to the colonial peoples - who come to it in deputations, etc. - that it has no official blessing from the Labour Party and is not financed from Labour Party funds." Letter of 26 Jan., 1948 from Rita Hinden to Denis Healey, secretary of the Labour Party International Department.

lay the main sources of intra-party pressure and influence? What kinds of topics stimulated most concern and activity? What was the party's formal machinery for dealing with the subject? Was it possible to discern an independent set of attitudes, in the spirit of the 1942 conference resolution, on the party's left?

The last two of these questions are specific, and amenable to answers in kind. The first two are broader; however, the context within which answers may be sought is narrow. For it bears repeating that the party in general remained unexcited about the topic. Chapter III pointed out some indications of this: the unattended debates, the almost total absence of colonial subjects from the register of parliamentary motions. But there were other indications. Until 1949 the party's International Department did not employ a single permanent official to deal with colonial affairs. At annual conferences delegates usually "left 'imperialism' ... to experts to discuss while they went to have tea"; or else restricted discussion of the subject to a few minutes at the end, "when delegates are rushing to catch their trains home".<sup>44</sup> The area in which to pursue the two broader questions, therefore, is reducible to that small number of M's whom we began to identify from the examination of data in Chapter III, together with certain of their extra-mural colleagues - above all, those in the Fabian Colonial Bureau.

#### (i) Specialists at Work: Colonial Bureau and Colonial Office

The Bureau, though not a formal element of party machinery, was very much of the party in sentiment and individual membership, and it entirely dominated the party's relationship with the Colonial Office throughout the life of the 1945 Parliament.

As Creech Jones's successor the Bureau chose Frank Horrabin,

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44 Respectively, Cole, op. cit., p.286, and Empire, July, 1947, p.2. The 1947 conference provided the only exception to this rule in the period 1945-51; colonial policy was discussed on the first afternoon with the party chairman, Harold Laski, replying for the executive after three very brief floor speeches. 1947 Conference Report, pp.114-7.

geographer, colonial-specialist MP in 1929-31, co-founder of Empire, and a supporter (in particular a financial supporter) of the Bureau from its inception. To achieve "greater coherence" of thought, in view of "the importance which appeared to attach to the Bureau since Labour took office", the rather unwieldy Advisory Committee was supplemented in 1946 by a smaller General Purposes Committee, comprising members of the Advisory Committee who were also members of the Fabian Society executive.<sup>45</sup> The new body met monthly, alternating by fortnights with the Advisory Committee, and acted also as Empire's editorial board. In the same year Empire reverted to monthly publication; as good a sign as any of the Bureau's determination to work at maximum pressure.

The Bureau's leading role could be illustrated in many ways. One possible approach is to reconstruct the typical experience of a colonial-specialist Labour MP in that Parliament. Once elected he would have been approached by the Bureau as soon as his interest had become apparent, if he had not himself made the first contact. (The Bureau's secretary was able to report in October 1945 that contact had been established with about twenty new MPs, most of them interested in colonies because of war service abroad or because of a trade-unionist concern with colonial labour problems.<sup>46</sup>) His name would have been added to those of the Bureau's parliamentary panel, and in due course he might have been invited to join the Bureau's Advisory Committee - whose parliamentary membership in this period corresponded substantially with the list of the House's most active specialists. (Sorensen was the parliamentary doyen on the Committee; others recruited between 1945 and 1949, for varying periods of service, included George Brown, Cyril Dumbleton, H. D. Hughes, John Hynd, John Rankin, David Rees-Williams, Arthur Skeffington, Frederick Skinnard, and Lyall Wilkes.) He would have become a reader of, and perhaps a contributor to, Empire; he would have had

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45 FCB-MM, 15 Oct., 1946.

46 Ibid., 29 Oct., 1945.

at his disposal the Bureau's many other publications, its research files, and its extensive list of colonial contacts. A large proportion of his Questions and letters to the Colonial Secretary would have been based - even to the very phraseology - upon material supplied by the Bureau, and supplied on the Bureau's initiative. He would also have joined the party's colonial subject group and become aware that the group's chairman, Lord Faringdon, was himself an active member of the Bureau's Advisory Committee; that most of the group's working papers were supplied by the Bureau; and that group and Bureau activities were coordinated at weekly liaison meetings between Lord Faringdon and Dr. Hinden. He would have become a regular attender at meetings in House of Commons committee rooms to meet colonial delegations, administrators and politicians (in the first three months after the election, for example, trade union delegations from Cyprus and the West Indies, constitutional reform delegations from Ceylon, and a cocoa delegation from West Africa); and known that the Bureau had played the major part in organising most of these meetings.<sup>47</sup> Thus he would probably have accepted the judgment of the Manchester Guardian editorial which observed, early in 1946, that the Bureau had made itself "not merely a useful but an indispensable institution"; and would probably not have contested that paper's view, in a year when the Colonial Secretary received for the first time over a thousand Questions, the majority from the Bureau's panel, that the effect of the Bureau's work "is seen in the much greater vigilance of the House of Commons".<sup>48</sup> The Conservative colonial-specialist MP who subsequently wrote that the "power" behind all the efforts of Labour specialists in

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47 FCB-MM, 29 Oct., 1946.

48 Manchester Guardian, 26 Feb., 1946.

the period was the secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau<sup>49</sup> was perhaps overstating - but not by much.

Concerning the relationship which it ought to seek with Labour Colonial Ministers (as distinct from Labour MPs), the Bureau, by its own account, "thought very long".<sup>50</sup> That the Bureau should maintain its independence in principle was not in doubt; the post-election issue of Empire announced that "as an independent source of information, opinion, and education, we believe we have an important part to play whatever the government in power".<sup>51</sup> The difficulty lay rather in defining the limits of independence in the likely event of ministers pursuing policies which the Bureau's members had themselves helped to formulate. In such a situation it might be thought that the Bureau, as Margaret Cole put it, "would have to accept at least part-responsibility" for what was being done:<sup>52</sup> in which case, an insistence upon maintaining complete liberty to criticise ministers might appear as an attempted evasion of responsibility. But how much "responsibility" could be accepted before "independence" was compromised?

That the likely event did take place, in the Bureau's estimation, is shown by the fact that as early as December 1945 its committee contemplated (though it did not produce) a pamphlet describing "how policies advocated by the Bureau in the past have now, in point of fact, been implemented by the Labour Government".<sup>53</sup> But in practice the problem of responsibility appears not, after all, to have made much difference to the Bureau's activities. In 1948 Creech Jones appointed four of its leading members - Rita Hinden, Lord Faringdon, Drummond Shiels and W. Arthur Lewis - to the reconstituted Colonial

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49 Sir Charles Ponsonby, Ponsonby Remembers (Alden, Oxford, 1965), p.115.

50 FCB Annual Report for 1946-7.

51 Empire, Sept.-Oct., 1945, p.3.

52 Cole, op. cit., p.287.

53 FCB-MM, 10 Dec., 1945.

Economic Development Council; their willingness to serve presumably demonstrated that not even a formal association with Colonial Office machinery was to be regarded as a serious restriction on their independence. By then the Bureau had defined its role, to its own satisfaction, as that of "a friendly critic and spur, rather than an uncritical supporter".<sup>50</sup>

The nature of the relationship, however, was not everywhere understood as well as the Bureau might have desired. To those not close to the Bureau's leaders, the friendliness was usually much more apparent than the criticism. To those in particular who disapproved of the gradualism of the Government's policies, the Bureau often appeared to be so close to the responsible ministers as to be almost equally culpable. In 1947 a subscribing member of the Bureau could write:

"I resigned my membership of the Bureau after I had found that the Bureau merely seemed to be acting as a sort of Public Relations Officer for the Labour Government's Colonial Ministers, whose policies are indistinguishable from those of the Conservatives. I cannot conscientiously support people who do not try to live up to principles they have maintained so long in opposition."<sup>54</sup>

And if the Bureau's attitude could provoke this reaction inside its own walls it is hardly surprising that there were some even stronger ones outside, especially among the more outspoken colonial nationalists. In April 1946, disturbed at the growing volume of colonial criticism of government policies, the Bureau called a weekend conference at which the critics were strongly represented. About half of the hundred or so participants were Africans and West Indians; many, including Nkrumah, had been prominent at the 1945 Pan-African Conference in Manchester. The result of this Fabian experiment in discussing

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54 Letter quoted in Rita Hinden, "The Fabian Society and the Colonies", Fabian Quarterly No. 57 (Spring, 1948).

differences was the depressing realisation that for many nationalists these differences were too fundamental to be resolved by discussion. There was acrimonious dispute on subjects ranging from trade union registration to the overall rate of constitutional change. Africans and West Indians expressed the feeling that they had been betrayed by the new Government and also by the Bureau, formerly seen as a friend, which now sought to defend the Government.<sup>55</sup> In short, the Bureau was regarded as the very thing it professed not to be - the Government's "uncritical supporter".

It is true that the Bureau frequently did defend the Government against its more radical castigators, usually on the grounds that colonial problems were simply not amenable to rapid solution. Immediately after the election Empire was already anticipating the disillusionment to come:

"It seems almost inevitable that many of these exaggerated hopes should be disappointed ... No declaration of 'freedom' or 'self-determination' is in itself an answer. Political 'freedom' will not solve the problems of finding a fair price in the world markets, of defence, of putting a halt to soil erosion, of eradicating pests, of spreading literacy, or of securing good labour conditions."<sup>56</sup>

A few months later Empire observed that already "the Jeremiahs are lamenting", and commented:

"Many of the hopes pinned on Labour were ... over-facile. The Labour Party is not a revolutionary party. Its colonial programme is well-known and its evolutionary approach was absolutely plain to anyone who took the trouble to understand these matters ... [Also] it is not just a matter of a Labour Minister wishing to do certain things; he has to act through the means of an immense, slow-moving machine ... there is no magic button for the man at the top to press."<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to regard the Bureau as a body concerned chiefly to justify the ways of Labour Ministers. Though colonial nationalists might understandably feel that a body not

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55 Interview with Rita Hinden. For reports of this conference see Empire, May-June, 1946, p.2., and the Bureau's pamphlet Domination or Cooperation? (Colonial Controversy Series No. 1, Oct., 1946.)

56 Empire, Sept.-Oct., 1945, p.1.

57 Ibid., May-June, 1946, p.1.

unequivocally for them was against them, the Bureau itself conceived its position as somewhere intermediate between Government and nationalists: a vantage point from which it could perceive the need for "mutual understanding of each other's actions, and mutual sympathy for each other's difficulties".<sup>57</sup> Upon occasion its public attitude moved cautiously closer to that of the nationalists, as when, in the year of the Gold Coast riots, Empire's readers were told that

"If we have a complaint against the Labour Government, it is ... [that] perhaps our leaders have not fully appreciated the logical inevitability of increasing colonial discontent. Perhaps, in spite of their speed, they have still not gone quite far enough in understanding the mentality of the new colonial generation."<sup>58</sup>

And on the specific details of policy, as might be expected, the Bureau was a fund of critical comment.

To turn to the actual record of exchanges between Bureau and Office, in order to seek out the details of this critical comment, is to approach a central question: how far was the Bureau a "power", not only behind Labour MPs but also behind the Colonial Secretary? It is a question that has sometimes been raised before, if not quite in that form (which might seem to imply the manifestly untrue, that the minister's decisions were taken for him by an outside group) then in this: to what extent was Creech Jones's special relationship with the Bureau relevant to decisions made while he was in office? At least one well-placed writer - Margaret Cole, a member of the Bureau's Advisory Committee until 1947 - has credited the Bureau with

"making suggestion after suggestion - far too numerous to be listed here - which were taken up in whole or part by virtue of the close relationship of its officers and members with those who were to run the Colonial Office in the Labour Government;"

and has stated, more generally, that "the Fabian Society could claim

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58 Empire, Aug., 1948, p.4.

that in affairs colonial its influence had played no small part in formulating policy which was actually carried out".<sup>59</sup> At the time the same point was made often enough, though usually in more sardonic vein, by the Government's parliamentary opponents.<sup>60</sup> In so far as "the party" was steadily and influentially in contact with Colonial Office policy-makers, then, this would certainly appear to have been the key relationship. The material noted in the next section may help us to evaluate it,

### (ii) Some Issues

For Labour's first few months in office the Bureau and back-bench MPs had no substantial criticisms to offer. The last Empire for 1945 dwelt on the Government's "considerable achievements", among which it listed constitutional advances in Ceylon, the introduction of common citizenship in Malaya, the appointment of three Africans to the Uganda Legislative Council, the establishment of an Inter-University Council for higher education, the strengthening of the Colonial Office's labour section, plans for cooperative enterprises and first plans for development corporations. The Bureau could plausibly claim that its own earlier publications, discussions under Creech Jones's chairmanship and representations to officials formed part of the essential background to current decisions about these matters; probably it had some of them in mind when projecting its pamphlet, in December 1945, about the Bureau's influence. But it was at about the same time that the probationary period - if such it was - came to an end. A Bureau meeting decided that a government paper just published in Kenya, entitled Land Utilisation

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5) Cole, op. cit., pp.333, 288.

60 In 1949, for example, Lennox-Boyd made an elaborate joke out of the fact that the title of the Colonial Office's Annual Report had been changed from The Colonial Empire to The Colonial Territories. He suggested that this change reflected the influence of the Bureau, which had recently changed its own journal's title from Empire to Venture. MCD, Vol. 467, col. 1409 (20 July, 1949).

and Settlement, had implications disturbing enough to justify a deputation to the Office.<sup>61</sup> Thereafter, the Bureau fairly often found reason to consider that the Government was compromising party principles, and to propose changes in policy.

What were the party's principles? In July 1946 Creech Jones summarised them thus. First, there should be no racial discrimination in colonies but rather a relationship of partnership. Second, there should be no minority political privilege but rather political freedom leading to democratic self-government. Third, there should be no "economic imperialism". Fourth, the test of any policy should be the colony's, not Britain's, advantage. In an Empire editorial the Bureau pronounced this a good summary.<sup>62</sup> The following are leading examples - they are not an exhaustive list - of issues on which the Bureau and specialist MPs criticised government actions or inaction; each one could be seen in terms of a principle compromised. With reference to the first principle, there were the Government's plans for further European immigration and extended European land tenure in Kenya. There was also the Government's maintenance of what the Bureau regarded as racially discriminatory salary scales in the East African Civil Service.<sup>63</sup> With reference to the second, the Bureau criticised government failures to consult local opinion and associate it with constitutional changes, especially in relatively advanced territories such as Nigeria. With more particular reference to the principle of opposing minority political privilege, it expressed anxiety in 1948 at the drift of power to European unofficials in Northern Rhodesia.<sup>64</sup> With reference to the third, it drew attention to the dominating role still played by overseas firms such as the United Africa Company in colonial economic life;<sup>65</sup> and with reference to the fourth, it deplored the stress on British consumption needs accompanying colonial development plans. As Dr. Hinden expressed it in a memorandum on the Colonial

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61 FCB-MM, 10 Dec., 1945.

62 HCD, Vol. 425, cols. 342-6 (9 July, 1946); Empire, Aug., 1946, pp.1-2.

63 Empire, Dec., 1946, p. 1 (report of letter to the Colonial Office).

64 Ibid., Oct., 1948, p. 1.

Development and Overseas Food Corporations:

"This is understandable from the point of view of getting British support for such large expenditure. But from the point of view of securing colonial cooperation it is unfortunate."<sup>66</sup>

To illuminate the relationship of interest here, it will be helpful to discuss more fully the two issues among these which inspired the most insistent representations: land use in Kenya, and Nigerian constitutional progress.

The Kenyan Government sessional paper which prompted the Bureau's interest in the land issue dealt with both African and European settlement, and also with the problems of African "squatters" (resident labourers) in the White Highlands. For African settlement it was proposed that a board should be established to re-settle Africans in already occupied "African" areas in order to make more efficient use of resources, and in addition to survey areas of vacant land, undertake experimental settlement schemes, and provide agricultural training. For the squatters, the paper declared the Government's intention to remedy "the objectionable features about the resident labour system". The Government hoped in particular to bring about freer labour conditions and to establish African community centres, with town facilities and employment opportunities, in the Highlands. For Europeans two new settlement schemes were foreshadowed. A Tenant Farming Scheme, with priority for Kenya nationals, would open up hitherto unalienated Crown land in the Highlands; and an Assisted Ownership Scheme would provide other new farmers with land bought from the surplus lands of existing European farms. According to the paper, about five hundred new European farmers could be absorbed "at this stage".<sup>67</sup>

What chiefly exercised the Bureau was the statement that new areas of the Highlands were to be unlocked for Europeans, apparently

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66 Rita Hinden, The Development Corporations: Four Points of Doubt (FCB paper No. 14 of 1947), p. 1.

67 Government of Kenya, Land Utilisation and Settlement. A Statement of Government Policy (Sessional Paper No. 8 of 1945). Phrases quoted from paras. 53 and 35.

as the first "stage" of a long-term policy. African claims for new land in these areas seemed, in the Bureau's estimation, more urgent than European claims. In view of the doctrine of African paramountcy, never repudiated by any British government, was there any good reason why the European claims in this case should have been preferred? This and related "points of doubt", as the Bureau called them, provided the motivation for the Bureau's deputation.<sup>61</sup>

Apparently the deputation was assured that African interests would indeed rank paramount in cases of conflict, and advised that the Bureau should wait until the respective schemes had been given a chance to work. There the matter rested until the Bureau revived the subject in April 1947. In the course of a letter to the Colonial Secretary dealing with a number of Kenyan topics, the Bureau's secretary observed that European settlement schemes seemed to be receiving more attention than African, and asked whether the Minister could now make any statement about the possibility of African settlement in the "White" areas.<sup>68</sup> Creech Jones replied at length and with a touch of asperity. The secretary's observation seemed to him an "odd" one which could not have been based "on any study of the relevant facts". European settlement was proceeding "under very stringent conditions and on a self-supporting financial basis"; by contrast African settlement was a large-scale project which required many preliminary surveys and was therefore making an "inevitable [sic] pedestrian start". But the tempo was already increasing (details of several schemes were adduced). Concerning the White Highlands, Creech Jones firmly defended the existing arrangements:

"Much of the land in European occupation today was for all practical purposes vacant when taken up ... Nor can European settlement be much modified without prejudice to the economic requirements of Kenya ... The African land problem is less one of the distribution of existing land ... than of the use to which the lands are being put ... It is hardly the case that a solution to the Africans' large and complex problems can be found by individual or communal settlement of Africans

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68 FCB to Colonial Secretary, 24 April, 1947.

in the Highlands marked for European settlement."<sup>69</sup>

With this answer the Bureau Committee was less than satisfied, as was explained in a secretarial memorandum to members:

"The Bureau remains anxious ... The Secretary of State does not give a categorical statement that the present Labour Government will allow non-European settlement on the 'White' Highlands ... There is no doubt that advanced African opinion regards such settlement as a test of the Labour Government's land policy."<sup>70</sup>

When in the next few weeks a number of press reports referred to substantial new European immigration into Kenya, the Bureau - having already sent a formal deputation and a letter - was moved to renew its pressure by other means. First, leading committee members visited two key officials: Andrew Cohen in the Colonial Office, and Sir Philip Mitchell, Governor of Kenya, then in England. In neither case, however, did they receive much more than an "official" response. Second, deciding that it had become necessary to compel the Office to disclose facts and figures, Bureau members began drafting parliamentary Questions. Six of these were asked by Frederick Skinnard between June 1947 and February 1948, and John Hynd asked another two later in 1948. By this means the Bureau accumulated the information that by September 1947, 669 Europeans, of whom 188 were new immigrants, had taken up farming land under the two schemes; in addition 259, including 93 immigrants, had taken up residential land. For the farmers 800,000 Highland acres had been provided, of which 42,500 acres were newly alienated Crown land and the rest acquired from European owners. For African resettlement some £150,000 had been spent, mainly on investigatory schemes, out of £3,000,000 set aside for expenditure over ten years. Comprehensive figures relating to land made available and numbers of families moved were not available, but it was clearly stated in one answer that there was no new African land "in that part of the Highlands assigned to

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69 Colonial Secretary to FCB, 22 May, 1947.

70 Rita Hinden, Comments on the Secretary of State's Reply to the Bureau's Letter on Kenya (FCB paper No. 9 of 1947).

Europeans".<sup>71</sup> Concerning, finally, the scheme for the provision of Highland villages for squatters, it appeared that by late 1948 no steps had been taken other than the appointment of a committee to prepare, and possibly publish, a statement of policy.

The conclusions drawn by the Bureau were that progress in the various plans for Africans was inadequate, that the White Highlands were still being regarded as "sacrosanct" for European ownership, and that "the European settlers' group is being strengthened beyond the limit envisaged in ... Land Utilisation and Settlement".<sup>72</sup> These conclusions seemed to the Bureau to provide sufficient cause for another approach by formal letter, and in June 1949 a letter was sent.

Creech Jones's reply set out to justify again what the Government was doing. With reference to African settlement, his argument was that in spite of "a general desire for greater speed, sheer necessity has forced a more cautious approach", the limiting factors being "the shortage of trained staff and machinery and the need for a clearer understanding among Africans as to what is wanted". As for whether or not he regarded the White Highlands as "sacrosanct", he made it plain that for practical purposes he did.

"I have no desire to reawaken suspicion by seeking to re-open the land controversies of the past ... Radical alterations in land allocation would open out a controversy which might prejudice the whole policy of development for Kenya. The Settled Area has been developed by European enterprise and, indeed, with African labour, contributes the major part to the economy and prosperity of the country and much of the finances which enable schemes to be undertaken in the general territorial interests as well as African interest. I believe that if the Settled Area were declared to be generally available for African settlement it would have a most disturbing effect on the relations between European and African ... It would I am afraid engender such a lack of confidence that the Government would have the greatest difficulty in persuading the European farmer to adopt long-sighted

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71 Reply by Rees-Williams, HCD, Vol. 446, col. 203 (29 Jan., 1948). The other Questions were asked on 25 June and 12 Nov., 1947, 11 Feb. and 15 Dec., 1948.

72 Land and Settlement in Kenya (FCB paper No. 10 of 1948), p. 4.

and efficient farming policies."<sup>73</sup>

Thereafter the matter was pursued no further. It must be concluded that on this issue the Bureau could claim no success at all. At the same time, it may be questioned whether the Minister had in fact compromised a principle. Certainly his arguments in support of the Kenyan status quo appeared sharply different in flavour from his own restatement of the paramountcy principle in 1948 - "the doctrine of paramountcy means ... that the interests of the over-whelming majority of the indigenous population should not be subordinated to those of a minority belonging to another race, however important in itself"<sup>74</sup> or from the attitude he had expressed in 1943, when chairman of the Bureau:

"There is in Kenya a civilisation of a dominant race, supported by cheap labour, and that kind of society is completely intolerable. The present policy in the European highlands of a stratified society, in which black can be put to labour for the Europeans on the European lands, means the continued existence of a dominant people, and that seems to us to be an indefensible policy altogether."<sup>75</sup>

But it is evident that as a Minister he did believe his policy to be the right one. To extend European holdings ~~was~~ was to realise more of the territory's economic potential, which was in the interests of all the inhabitants and hence fully reconcilable with the doctrine of paramountcy. Thus Creech Jones's policy involved no abandonment of principle as he perceived it. And this is the point; for paramountcy was always an ambiguous notion, capable of being invoked to justify very different policy proposals. By the same token there were indications that the Government's attitude towards European settlement in general was ambiguous, or at any rate less clearly defined than the Government cared to allow. Within the space of a

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73 Colonial Secretary to FCB, 16 Aug., 1949.

74 HCD, Vol. 456, col. 869 (22 Sept., 1948). Statement made as an oral answer to Question by Skinnard.

75 HCD, Vol. 395, cols. 1907-8 (17 Dec., 1943).

few weeks in mid-1949, for example, Creech Jones told the Europeans of Northern Rhodesia that permanent settlement would have to be "controlled" in accordance with British guarantees to the Africans; told Parliament that there was no reason why European interests should ever conflict with African interests; and strongly defended white settlers against their critics in the UN Trusteeship Council.<sup>76</sup>

In fact, as was pointed out earlier, his position with regard to white settlers was delicate, and in the circumstances of the time he had no obvious course but to continue the kind of ambivalent Kenya policy which the Government had inherited.<sup>77</sup> Accordingly it is hardly surprising that on this issue the Bureau's pressures had no effect other than to elicit from Creech Jones a staunch defence of existing policy.

Secondly, Nigerian constitutional advance. During the life of the Labour Government, Nigeria received two new constitutions: the "Richards Constitution" of 1947 and the "Macpherson Constitution" of 1951. The details of these measures need not concern us here. The point of interest is the change that occurred between 1947 and 1951 in the method by which constitutional provisions were worked

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76 On these episodes see editorial comments in The Economist, 6 Aug., 1949, pp.283-4.

77 See above, pp.22-3. Another issue which brought out the ambiguities of the Government's Kenya policy was that of interterritorial organisation. In December 1945 the Colonial Office published a plan for an East African Assembly (Col. No. 191). Its provisions for parity in racial representation met with African support and European criticism. It was later withdrawn and replaced in March 1947 by revised proposals (Col. No. 210), with provision for a multi-racial unofficial majority. The revised proposals met with European support and African criticism. The reader is referred to two accounts of these events - Haqqi, op. cit., pp.48-57, and George Bennett, Kenya: A Political History (Oxford U.P., 1963), pp.100-7; instructively enough, he will find that it is possible for different writers to argue (1) that the revised proposals represented a concession by the Government to the Europeans (Haqqi, pp.53-4), and (2) that actually they represented a concession by the Europeans to the Government (Bennett, p.106). In fact, Bennett's account is the subtler: superficially less plausible, basically more so.

out, since in this respect the Bureau claims to have been influential.<sup>78</sup>

The 1947 Constitution was expected by its creator, Sir Arthur Richards, to last for at least nine years. But from its inception - indeed from its first publication in proposal form in 1945 - it was unpopular among politically active Nigerians, not only because of its substance but also because it had, in their opinion, been "imposed" without consultation. Subsequent events showed that the Government was keen to avoid this accusation in future. In August 1948 Sir John Macpherson, newly appointed Governor in succession to Richards, made this announcement to the Nigerian Legislative Council:

"The progress already made [under the Richards Constitution] ... has been, in my considered view, so rapid, and so sound that I suggest that we might be justified in reviewing our timetable, and that we might consider together what changes should be made, and whether they should be made earlier than originally intended."<sup>79</sup>

In March 1949 the Chief Secretary, Hugh Foot, put a resolution before the Council for the appointment of a select committee to advise "on the methods to be adopted for revising the Constitution, with special reference to the necessity for consulting all sections of opinion".

This committee, under Foot's guidance, proposed a series of conferences

"first at village and divisional level, and then at provincial level, when the various Provincial Conferences would make recommendations to be considered by Regional Conferences ... The views of the four Regional Conferences were then to be considered by a Drafting Committee, ... then a General Conference ... before being submitted to the Governor and the Secretary of State."<sup>80</sup>

To provide guidance for all these discussions Foot prepared a series of broad questions, of which the first, and most fundamental, were:

- "1. Do we wish to see a fully centralised system ... or do we wish to develop a federal system ...?"
2. If we favour a federal system should we retain the existing regions ... or should we form regions on some new basis...?"<sup>81</sup>

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78 Interview with Rita Hinden.

79 Quoted in James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (California U.P., 1958), p.311.

80 Quoted in FCB-MM, 22 March, 1949.

81 Quoted in Obafemi Awolowo, Awa (Cambridge U.P., 1960), p.175.

The consultative procedure was duly put into effect, culminating in the General Conference at Ibadan in January 1950. Of this Conference one leading delegate, the Sardauna of Sokoto, wrote:

"It says a lot for Sir John that he would not attend these meetings himself, neither would he permit any European, except the Attorney-General, to be present. The matters were of the highest importance to the country and to the future of British Administration, and yet he left them entirely in our hands."<sup>82</sup>

What part did the Bureau play in the formulation of this procedure, providing as it did for such wide consultation and local participation? The following is circumstantial evidence.

In June 1947 Azikiwe led a delegation of his party, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, to England, in order to demand from the Colonial Secretary further steps towards self-government. The delegation also sought, among other things, to enlist the Bureau's aid. In August Creech Jones received the delegation but gave it fairly short measure, insisting that the new constitution should be given a chance to work before changes were proposed.<sup>83</sup> Subsequently the Bureau decided that although it could not have endorsed the delegation's more sweeping demands the constitution did have unsatisfactory features which merited representations.<sup>84</sup> With Farington, Sorensen and Professor Arthur Lewis - the Nigerian experts - in charge of drafting, the Bureau then exchanged a series of letters with the Minister. Initially the Bureau was mainly concerned with certain technicalities of the electoral system. By May 1948 the Bureau had received a half-promise that these points would be discussed when aspects of the Constitution came up for review in 1950, and decided to send no more letters "owing to difficulties in framing".<sup>85</sup>

In the process of correspondence, however, a second theme had emerged. From the Bureau's point of view, Nigerian complaints about the unilateral way in which the Richards Constitution had been drafted could be seen in conjunction with an idea that Dr. Hinden in particular

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82 Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto, My Life (Cambridge U.P., 1962), p.68.

83 Coleman, op. cit., pp.293-4.

84 PCB-MM, 30 Sept., 1947.

had been canvassing for some time. The idea was that assemblies of local people should be set up in the more advanced indigenous territories to formulate their own national constitutions, with the administration intervening only to outline the broadest possible terms of reference. In a submission to the Colonial Office in 1946, Dr. Hinden had argued that the plan would be at once a psychological improvement on previous methods and also perfectly "safe" from the British point of view:

"... making it quite clear that we desire that the people should choose their own Constitution and shape their own destinies. If such a choice were put before a properly elected constituent assembly, the decisions reached would probably be responsible and by no means revolutionary. They would have the great advantage of being the people's own decisions and not imposed from above."<sup>86</sup>

At the time the colonies which seemed most suitable for the experiment, in Dr. Hinden's view, were Trinidad, British Guiana, Cyprus and Mauritius. By early 1948 no territory seemed more suitable than Nigeria, and the Bureau's second letter on Nigeria raised the issue thus:

"As you are well aware, political feelings are not in a happy state in Nigeria, partly due to the whole manner in which this Constitution has been imposed, which had a strong aura of paternalism about it, and was therefore particularly galling to politically conscious Africans. We believe that one of the few ways of coming to better terms would be to call together African representative opinion, long before the nine year period is over, and deliberately consult it as to revisions in the Constitution."

In reply Creech Jones was non-committal:

"You have used in your letter ... the term 'African representative opinion', although you have not suggested any definition of the term. The extent to which ... the processes of revision of the Constitution can be accelerated must depend to some extent upon the rate at which a fully representative body of African opinion emerges and matures ... It is only by a period of trial extending over some years that the pace of future advance can be determined."<sup>87</sup>

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86 Colonial Policy from the Public Relations Point of View (FCB Memorandum to CO, n.d. but clearly 1946), p.3. Emphasis in original.

87 FCB to Colonial Secretary, 8 March, 1948; Colonial Secretary to FCB, 5 April, 1948.

Yet only four months later Macpherson made his announcement to the Legislative Council about constitutional revision. One of the Nigerian parties thereupon invited Sorensen and Dr. Hinden to visit Nigeria, at the party's expense, to explain the details of the Bureau's plan. During their visit they called on the Chief Secretary, Foot, and outlined the details to him as well.<sup>78</sup> On returning home Dr. Hinden formulated the idea in a memorandum entitled A National Convention for Nigeria; copies were sent to Creech Jones and Foot.

"Who is to frame the new constitution?... If the political leadership in Nigeria were all rational and moderate, it would certainly be simplest to select a special committee to do the job. But ... with the two parties rivalling each other for popular support, the danger in practice is that each might try to outbid the other in criticism of any Government-selected committee, and the result might well be a boycott of the new committee from the start ...

But as the future constitution will almost certainly be based on a strengthening of the regional principle, could not ... a National Convention be based on the regions as well? In other words, each region would be given a total representation in proportion to its numbers and might then find its own formula for choosing its representatives; the constitution for each region would be worked out by the representatives of that region alone ...

It is possible that, working on this regional basis, all will go well until it comes to choosing the body which is to decide on the Central Legislature, and then the old differences between regions and parties will rear their irreconcilable heads. On the other hand, the mere fact of going through the process of choosing regional representatives and coming to grips with the regional constitutional arrangements, might breed a change in psychology and a greater realism in facing problems, even a greater readiness for compromise.

The representation envisaged should be entirely African, unless the Africans themselves wish otherwise. British advisers could always be in attendance at the deliberations to give needed legal or constitutional advice."<sup>88</sup>

On the face of it, there does seem to have been a direct connection between this advocacy and the Government's subsequent decisions on procedure. But before judgment is passed there are some other considerations to be noted. In the first place, several historians

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88 Rita Hinden, A National Convention for Nigeria, (FCB paper No. 2a of 1949), pp.1-2.

of this period in Nigerian politics have concluded that a major change in the British Government's general approach to Nigerian problems took place in 1948. This has been attributed in part to the change of Governor. Richards, described by Awolowo as "self-contained and oracular", was more commonly described as unpopular.<sup>89</sup> Macpherson, by contrast, was seen as "a tactful and conciliatory official", who, in Awolowo's view, "clearly recognised the political ferment in the South, and quickly made up his mind to do something to meet the upsurge".<sup>90</sup> Creech Jones himself, working through the Governor, has been seen as another key figure: according to Coleman, the change of Governor "also meant that A.Creech Jones, the new Labourite Secretary of State for the Colonies and a sincere Afrophile of long standing, was in a stronger position to institute positive reforms".<sup>91</sup> Ezera, similarly, has suggested that major policy changes at this time were consciously directed from London.<sup>92</sup> In 1948, in short, it became politically possible for the British Government to begin making concessions to nationalist demands "with a minimum loss of face".<sup>93</sup> Macpherson's announcement that the constitution would be revised according to the wishes of the people needs therefore to be seen in context as only one of a series of changes announced in that year.<sup>94</sup> From this it would appear that the particular change of interest here would have taken place with or without the Bureau's intervention.

In the second place, concerning the method of consultation, it may be noted that the procedure adopted was not quite that which the

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89 Awolowo, op. cit., p.230; Coleman, op. cit., p.309 and W. B. Hamilton, "The Evolution of British Policy towards Nigeria" in Robert O. Tilman and Taylor Cole (eds.), The Nigerian Political Scene (Duke U.P., Durham, N.C., 1962), p.37.

90 Coleman, loc. cit.; Awolowo, op. cit., p.231.

91 Coleman, loc. cit. Creech Jones's "non-committal" letter to the Bureau was written shortly before the change of governor took place.

92 K. Ezera, Constitutional Development in Nigeria (Cambridge U.P., 1960), p.83n.

93 Coleman, loc. cit.

94 For an account of some of the other changes see Coleman, op. cit., pp.310, 312-6, and Hamilton. op. cit. pp.37-8.

Bureau had proposed. Instead of three regional conventions and a national convention with a large number of delegates there was a process of participation from the grass-roots up, with no single body, including the General Conference, being much larger than committee size. Coleman observes that Azikiwe's NCNC, then the most radical of the parties, "would have preferred a national constituent assembly. The official method ... appeared to them to give too much weight to traditional authorities."<sup>95</sup>

These considerations weigh against the Bureau's post hoc claim to have decisively influenced official policy. At the same time they too provide purely circumstantial evidence and are not basically at odds with the claim. If the scheme implemented differed in details from the Bureau's scheme, it was designed to serve exactly the same principle - that if only for psychological reasons, Nigerians should be permitted to achieve their own compromises on the substance of their constitution. And if it were true that the Government's procedure gave more say to relatively conservative forces in Nigeria, this too was an objective on which the Bureau's ideas, to judge by its earlier statements, were much the same as the Government's - even if Bureau and Government differed, again, on points of method. Given the lack of substantial evidence against the Bureau's claim it would, at the least, be uncharitable to contest it strenuously.

To generalise tentatively from these two leading examples, it would appear that the Bureau's degree of success in influencing policies was not simply a function of the special relationship between Bureau and Minister. The degree of success was related also to the nature of the issue, the other pressures being applied on the Office from different sources, and the current broad trends of events - to say nothing of the independently formed ideas of the policy makers themselves. This generalisation may be tested by a very brief discussion of some other types of issues on which the Bureau claimed varying degrees of success.

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95 Coleman, op. cit., p.312.

Not all of the Bureau's pressures concerned matters of political principle (although these did inspire the strongest pressures). Another area of concern was the administrative gap between the Office and the men in the field, between policy formulation at home and policy implementation in the colonies, on such matters as trade union legislation, cooperation and colonial mining. On matters like these the Bureau seldom offered complaints about the actual policy statements - not surprisingly, since its own ideas were often flatteringly evident in them. Thus Hall's white paper of April 1946 on cooperation drew extensively from the Bureau's 1945 pamphlet Cooperation in the Colonies, and Creech Jones's 1946 white paper on colonial mining policy incorporated many of the Bureau's ideas proposed in letter form in August, 1943.<sup>96</sup> Rather, the complaints took this form:

"More and more disturbing reports come in from all over the Empire, of the hostile - or, at best, negative attitude of local officials to instructions from London. We have often commented on the impressive quantity and quality of the White Papers and despatches sent out by the Colonial Office. But what happens on the spot?... The 1946 memorandum on Colonial Mining Policy [for example] ... proposed that mineral rights in all colonies should be nationalised, and that colonial governments should themselves consider the operation of mines, and the strict control of all concessions where government operation was impossible. This was designed to put an end to the old system of exploitation by private mining companies ... There are reports of how this particular memorandum evoked cynical laughter in Colonial Secretariats, and was then cast into convenient pigeon-holes. Are Labour Ministers to sit quiet under this sort of thing?"<sup>97</sup>

Whether they were or not, there is some indication that Creech Jones was not altogether prepared to sit quiet under this sort of criticism. In a series of letters to the Minister in 1947 and 1948 the Bureau argued the case for the appointment of a Mining Adviser in the Office.

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96 Cooperation in the Colonies (FCB, 1945) and Col. No. 199, The Cooperative Movement in the Colonies (HMSO, 1946); FCB to Colonial Secretary, 16 Aug., 1943, and Col. No. 206, Memorandum on Colonial Mining Policy (HMSO, 1946).

97 Empire, March, 1948, p.2.

In the Bureau's view, Creech Jones's answers to questioning by Skinnard in the House had clearly revealed the breadth of the "unfortunate gap" between enunciation and implementation, and hence the need for an official "to keep the eye of a watchdog on how policy is being implemented". In his replies Creech Jones consistently argued that the Bureau was overstating the position; that he had ample evidence that colonial governments were "endeavouring to apply the principles of the memorandum"; and that in the Office the watchdog function was already being carried out by the Geological Adviser and certain other officials.<sup>98</sup> Eventually the Bureau expressed satisfaction with these answers and published selections from the correspondence in Empire.<sup>99</sup> From this example at least it is not apparent that the Bureau would have made much headway with its wider complaint about administrative inertia, even if the complaint had been accepted as justified. Our tentative generalisation stands.

Another field of interest to the Bureau was the Office's public relations. From an early stage of the Government's life the Bureau argued that Labour's work was "not understood and appreciated", and that the Office's style of performance and presentation was partly to blame.<sup>100</sup> The Bureau has since claimed a fair degree of success for its representations in this field,<sup>101</sup> and once again there is some circumstantial evidence of the post hoc ergo propter hoc variety. In 1946, for example, the Bureau more than once urged the Office to resume publication of annual reports of the kind tried experimentally before the war.<sup>100</sup> The Office did so in 1947. In mid 1946 it urged the Colonial Secretary to begin appointing a different type of governor, since until then there had been "no spectacular changes" in spite of the fact that "one of the acts by which the people of a colony judge the Imperial Government is by its choice of governors ...

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98 In particular, FCB to Colonial Secretary, 8 March, 1948; Colonial Secretary to FCB, 2 April, 1948.

99 FCB-MM, 27 April, 1948; Empire, May 1948.

100 Colonial Policy from the Public Relations Point of View (FCB memorandum to CO, n.d. but clearly 1946), pp.1-2; Information and Surveys, (ditto), pp.1-3; Empire, Dec., 1946, pp.1-2 (report of letter to CO).

101 Interview with Rita Hinden.

It should be recognised that the Governor sets the tone for the whole social relationships in the colony".<sup>102</sup> By the end of that year the Bureau was able to applaud in Empire the appointment of two former Labour MPs, P.C.R. Douglas and Lord Winster, to the governorships of Malta and Cyprus respectively; more especially, perhaps, the second appointment, since Winster had been chairman of the Bureau sub-committee which produced Cooperation in the Colonies. At about the same time the Bureau began to argue the case for convening a grand "Colonial Conference" in London.<sup>103</sup> Such an assembly, the African Conference, was indeed convened by Creech Jones in 1948, if with very little publicity. A fourth proposal, made late in 1947, was that the Office should stage "a really first-class colonial exhibition which would bring the problems of the colonies to life for a much broader public than conference decisions can ever reach".<sup>104</sup> It is at least possible that this suggestion lay behind the most grandiose attempt ever made by the Office to publicise its work: the exhibition "Spotlight on the Colonies" which toured London and the provinces continuously from 1949 to 1954.

None of these sequences of events, of course, provides "proof" of influence. In each case there is no logical barrier to the argument that the Office would have done it anyway. But if the Bureau's own claim to successes in this field is allowed - and empirically it appears reasonable to allow it - then we might extend our tentative generalisation in this way. Special relationships apart, the Bureau seems from the examples discussed to have been more influential, first, with regard to the Office's domestic rather than its overseas activities; second, at the policy discussing, rather than implementing, stage in economic, rather than political, fields; and third, with reference to political issues (such as the Nigerian constitution) on which its views blended fairly easily with governmental views in any case, rather than those (such as Kenyan settlement) on which the

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102 Colonial Policy from the Public Relations Point of View, p.2.

103 Empire, Dec., 1946, loc. cit.

104 Ibid., Nov., 1947, p. 1.

government either thought differently in the first place or was obliged by a wider conflict of interests to avoid taking too clearly defined a view. In short, the less politically difficult an issue the greater the Bureau's influence; the more difficult, the less the Bureau's influence.

In conclusion, the main significance of the "special relationship" seems to have been indirect and retrospective rather than direct and immediate. That is, it seems clear that many of the ideas and policies applied by Creech Jones in office had their basis in ideas formulated in the Bureau before Labour took office. The wartime Bureau had been a context within which Creech Jones had presided over the discussion of countless colonial topics, and had helped to commit many detailed policy proposals to paper. Thus, to the extent that he implemented these proposals once in office he was giving effect to ideas already conceived, rather than succumbing to current pressures. After the war the Bureau was an outside group: unique, hyper-active, comprising several of his closest political friends, but nevertheless a group outside the Government and in no sense the director of its current colonial policies.

### (iii) Party Machinery

A formal organisational chart of the party in the later forties would have indicated, with respect to colonial affairs, a division of labour among three committees: the Commonwealth and Imperial Sub-committee of the NEC, the colonial subject group of the parliamentary party, and the Imperial Advisory Committee.

These bodies were meant to have complementary memberships, representing the decision-making leadership, the interested back-benchers, and the experts. In theory they also had complementary functions. Broadly, the NEC sub-committee was supposed to consider problems of party policy and to supervise the formulation of policy statements for endorsement at conferences; it had been set up in March 1946 "to reduce the work of the International sub-committee", with Denis Healey, at that time secretary of the party's International Department, as

secretary.<sup>105</sup> The subject group, under Lord Faringdon's chairmanship, was supposed to keep a watching brief on government decisions, to work out arguments and tactics for parliamentary debate, to hear speakers and generally to inform itself. The Imperial Advisory Committee, with Faringdon and Greenidge as chairman and secretary in the later forties,<sup>106</sup> was meant to provide most of the working papers for both the sub-committee's and the MPs' consideration.

The formalities were not very close to the realities. Of the three only the back-bench group, which met once a week or so during sessions, was really maintained in working order. With the party in power the NEC sub-committee found itself without a leading role and all but ceased to function, even though its membership included, at various stages, such prominent figures as Attlee, Griffiths and Driberg. The Imperial Advisory Committee too fell on lean days. Though it continued to produce a few papers a year<sup>107</sup> its members were too busy in their other roles to spare it much time, and its old functions were effectively taken over by the Fabian Colonial Bureau. It was eventually wound up in 1950.

The apparent inadequacy of this machinery in the early post-war years was treated as a matter of concern by the Fabians, if by no-one else; Empire first announced its anxiety in August 1946. Party leaders could perhaps be excused if they felt that the Bureau itself was more than sufficient compensation for any lack. But in January 1948 Dr. Hinden raised the matter formally in separate discussions with Creech Jones and Healey. Creech Jones suggested only that a meeting might be convened to consider the matter. Subsequently, with an accompanying request to "let me know if I have trodden on the corns of the International Department in any way", Dr. Hinden submitted to Healey a memorandum entitled The Handling of Colonial Affairs by the Labour Party.

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105 1946 Conference Report, p.25.

106 These two having succeeded, respectively, Creech Jones and Leonard Woolf in 1945.

107 See, e.g., the titles noted in 1948 Conference Report, p.20.

This was an interesting document. After a critical account of the party's existing committees - in the course of which Healey's corns were firmly trodden on with the comment that the NEC sub-committee had "no proper secretarial guidance or advice" - Dr. Hinden argued that:

"The detailed coherent colonial work within the Party is done by the Fabian Colonial Bureau ... The Bureau's position is, however, completely unofficial ... Also, its effectiveness depends to a dangerous degree on personal relationships between itself and the present Ministers at the Colonial Office ...

There is a good case for an independent body like the Bureau to continue to function actively in this field ... At the same time ... [there are] certain special fields where only the Party can act. Such a special field is likely to be arising in the creation of socialist contacts between the European countries on the one hand, and the Asiatic and other colonial countries on the other ... The Fabian Colonial Bureau has many of the contacts and information, but it can clearly not itself take any official part in the discussions on such a matter. The initiative must come from the Labour Party itself ...

The suggestion is, therefore, that the Party should consider the creation of a special colonial - or better, Commonwealth - department. It should begin with a nucleus of at least one full-time person with a knowledge of these problems."108

But this communication does not seem to have provoked any activity in the International Department, nor is there any indication that the meeting proposed by Creech Jones ever took place. It was left to Dr. Hinden to keep the issue alive. In July she wrote again to Healey, approaching on a different front and arguing in more urgent terms.

"There are now over 3,000 colonial students in this country, and there is a constant stream of visitors from the colonies - very often delegations of a political nature ... While the Labour Party does nothing to meet and greet these people, the Communist Party does everything. The Communists bring out a regular African News Sheet which is distributed free to everyone who asks for it, always - I understand - accompanied by a letter inviting visits to their Colonial Department and expressing a readiness to take up any grievances or problems. I need hardly add that these offers are often taken advantage of. I know, from very considerable contact with the students here, that few of them have any real respect or affection for the Labour

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108 Hinden to Healey, 26 Jan., 1948; encl., The Handling of Colonial Affairs by the Labour Party (3pp.).

Party; they feel that the Party takes no interest in them, even though its spokesmen are ready enough to say that Africa is the solution of all Britain's economic problems ...

What is needed is ... someone who will receive the people from the colonies, will keep in touch with the colonial students here, occasionally attend their meetings, talk to them about their problems, represent the Labour Party at their Conferences, perhaps eventually visit some of the colonies in the name of the Party and so on."<sup>109</sup>

This letter probably did not reveal much about Communist activities which the party hierarchy did not already know, for these activities were becoming common political knowledge at the time. Only three days after the letter was written a front-bench Conservative MP made almost exactly the same point in a Commons debate:

"If the Colonial Office will not look after these students then the Communist Party will. I was interested to read in the Daily Worker a short time ago that so many of the West Indians who had come over on the 'Empire Windrush' were already happily placed in Communist homes."<sup>110</sup>

Almost certainly, however, it was Dr. Hinden's letter which prompted the party to take action. Immediately prior to its despatch the party seems to have had no relevant plans other than a vague idea, communicated by Healey to the Fabians, of "doing some research on colonial policy".<sup>111</sup> Shortly afterwards it was learnt that Attlee had authorised the appointment of a "political worker" to carry out precisely the functions suggested in the letter.<sup>112</sup>

Early in 1949, E.G. (Eddie) Farmer, a London University economics graduate, was appointed to the post with the title of Colonial Assistant, International Department. In a letter to the Bureau Farmer stressed that he would like all the help it could give him; he also asked, and was given, permission to attend the Bureau's meetings as an observer.<sup>113</sup>

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109 Hinden to Healey, 5 July, 1948.

110 David Gammans, HCD, Vol. 453, col. 614 (8 July, 1948).

111 Quoted in Hinden to Healey, 5 July, 1948.

112 Interview with John Hatch.

113 Farmer to FCB, 29 April, 1949.

Indicative of his activities was the publication of a four-page leaflet which, as from mid 1949, was distributed among colonial students arriving in Britain. Signed by the party secretary, Morgan Phillips, it invited students to make contact with Farmer and their university Labour Societies, and hoped they would "learn something of the work we are doing to build a democratic socialist society and to make a decisive contribution to the political and economic advancement of those territories in which we share the responsibilities of government."<sup>114</sup> In October Farmer arranged for several colonial students to attend the party's annual conference, and in November was given space in Venture to describe his work. It emerged from his article that underlying all his efforts to provide hospitality, maintain contact with students and so on, the main - and most difficult - task was to "prove" the party's "sincerity".<sup>115</sup> His was a job, it seems, which required essentially diplomatic skills.

In 1950 Farmer took over from Healey the secretaryship of the NEC's Commonwealth Sub-committee, and began to be referred to as "Commonwealth Officer". From these beginnings, as will be seen later, the work steadily expanded until eventually, in 1958, the party established a full-scale Commonwealth Department.

#### (iv) The Dormant Left

Throughout the 1945-50 period Labour's parliamentary left wing was virtually silent on colonial issues. Certainly Palestine, until the settlement of 1948, was a quasi-colonial issue which aroused left-wing MPs; but the resulting activity barely touched the Colonial Office and its ministers, since for almost all purposes the minister regarded as responsible was Bevin, the Foreign Secretary. No party conference in the period witnessed a left-wing coup comparable to that of 1942. The list of parliamentary motions remained innocent of the kind of radical demand which left-wingers were later to table so frequently.

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114 Welcome to Britain (the Labour Party, 1949).

115 Venture, Nov., 1949, p.7.

In the House there were no articulate spokesmen for the older Robsonian view of Empire as exploitation - though there were several prepared to dissociate the party from it when Conservatives taunted them with, for example, Cripps's youthful extremism.<sup>116</sup> Occasionally a back-bencher would express disillusion with official policy on the basis of a sentimental notion of international fraternity, of a sense of solidarity between the British "workers" and the colonial "oppressed". Thus the West Indian-born Dr. H.B. Morgan in 1946:

"Welfare work in the colonies is not enough. Development is not enough. Trusteeship is not enough, not from the Labour Party point of view. I understand the old legalistic idea of trusteeship put forward with great condescension, help, and good will from the other side, but I cannot understand why there is not some difference in the policy enunciated from this side ... Cannot we regard colonial human beings as our brothers in a system of brotherhood? ... Have we not realised that these people are human beings, brothers of a different race and colour?"<sup>117</sup>

But if there was no rallying-point for the left inside Parliament, there was always a potential one outside. Then in his late fifties, Penner Brockway had been a conscientious objector in the first world war, an ILP Member of the 1929-31 Parliament, and an energetic worker and journalist in countless humanitarian and socialist causes. One of his many roles in the mid-forties was that of chairman of the British Centre against Imperialism. An organisation of modest means in which Brockway was associated with Frank Horrabin (also chairman of the Fabian Colonial Bureau) and Professor Harold Laski, the Centre promoted occasional conferences and maintained good contacts with several of the more radical colonial student societies and nationalist bodies in London. In July 1946 Brockway drew attention to the Centre's existence and its views in a letter written from the Centre's address to the Manchester Guardian:

"I do not know whether Ministers, MPs, and the public realise how deep has been the disillusionment caused by last week's colonial debate. During the last few days I have met many representatives of the colonial peoples and I find that their

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116 See, e.g., the exchange between Lennox-Boyd and Haden Guest, HCD, Vol. 453, col. 645 (8 July, 1948).

117 HCD, Vol. 425, col. 287 (9 July, 1946).

attitude towards the Government and Britain has undergone a radical change.

Since the general election the tendency among them has been to give the Labour Government a chance to inaugurate a new relationship. Now the hope of this has gone. It was not merely the small attendance ... it was the policy announced by the Government which has brought about the shock. Mr. Hall ... emphasised the continuity of his policy with that of his Tory predecessor, and even Mr. Creech Jones ... stressed the altruism of Britain towards the colonies rather than the right of the colonies to govern themselves ... The colonial peoples do not desire Britain to be good to them. They desire to have the freedom to decide their own good."<sup>118</sup>

In 1947 Brockway rejoined the Labour Party after more than thirty years with the ILP. In the same year he began moving into wider spheres of activity bearing upon colonial affairs. A conference in April, convened by the Centre and attended by representatives of the Pan-African Federation and the Coloured Workers' Association, agreed on the need to establish a stronger organisation whose aims would be to brief UN delegates about the grievances of colonial peoples and to "retrieve the honour of British socialism in the eyes of the colonial peoples". Brockway was included in the five-man committee.<sup>119</sup> And in June 1948 he was elevated to the international chairmanship of a new body, the Congress of Peoples against Imperialism. The British section at least of this organisation never pretended to much strength or influence, but the Congress merits more than a passing mention. For it contained the seeds of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, and this can be seen both in its expressed objectives and in the kind of intra-party support which it attracted.

The Congress was born at a conference in Puteaux, near Paris. According to the record of proceedings there were 325 delegates from 87 organisations in 33 countries. Conceived by Blum, Mollet and other French socialists as a means for evolving among colonial nationalists and European socialists a common economic policy, the conference did not in fact proceed as planned. The African and Asian delegations

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<sup>118</sup> Manchester Guardian, 20 July, 1946.

<sup>119</sup> Harold Soref and Ian Greig, The Puppeteers (Tandem Books, 1965), p.40.

made clear their rejection of any such ties with European policy, met separately and established the Congress with Brockway as International Chairman. Brockway has written that "this was a turning-point in my life"; from this time on his energies were to be devoted almost entirely to colonial causes.<sup>120</sup>

Affiliation with the Congress was opened to "all organisations for national liberation in dependent territories and to anti-imperialist organisations in the metropolitan countries" which accepted the Congress's Charter and Resolutions.<sup>121</sup> The Charter was drawn up by Brockway and others. The core of the lengthy section on British colonies, endorsed with "complete unanimity" by British and British colonial delegates, read as follows:

"We reject any theories about the 'cultural and political unfitness' of any people for full immediate independence and equally the imposition of schemes like 'Dominion Status', 'Indirect Rule', etc., as a substitute for self-determination and genuine self-government. These schemes are merely replacements of the earlier naked and open exploitation of the colonies, utilising the method of collaboration with the native bourgeoisie who themselves fear mass movements. By this alliance for the joint exploitation of colonial peoples the imperialists are seeking to safeguard the dominance of finance-capital in these countries.

We reject any economic development schemes such as the East and West African groundnut projects in which the indigenous peoples are not fully consulted or in which they do not act as equal partners ...

We vehemently protest against the employment of force in dealing with the grievances of the colonial peoples. Within a short period we have witnessed the use of physical suppression in the Gold Coast, Malaya and British Guiana. We believe these methods to be utterly unworthy of the British Labour Movement ...

We demand that the British Government ... meet the representatives of the colonial peoples and in agreement with them appoint a time limit after which British rule will cease and power be handed over to democratically-elected constituent assemblies."

The Charter also demanded "agrarian reform", industrial development, the abolition of "repressive colour legislation", a health scheme,

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120 Brockway, Outside the Right, p.41. Brockway's account of the conference is in ibid., pp.41-3.

121 Charter of the Congress of Peoples against Imperialism (min.,1948), p.1.

free education, and other social and economic changes. It ended by stipulating that British representatives in colonies "should be appointed from those who fully accept the rights of the colonial peoples to freedom and who are animated by a sense of full racial equality".<sup>122</sup>

Much of this harked back to the traditional neo-Hobsonian notions; the references, for example, to "the dominance of finance-capital" and the Marxist class-categories - "native bourgeoisie" as against "mass movements". But it also anticipated the Movement for Colonial Freedom's insistence that the main issue, the right to "full immediate independence", could be dissociated from economic matters: that the level of economic development was not, whatever British governments said, a criterion of readiness for self-government. The existence of a mass "national liberation" movement was sufficient criterion, and hence, since such movements were even then coming into being, the demand that "time limits" be specified. It was a demand that Brockway and the Congress were frequently to repeat. Newly re-elected to Parliament, Brockway voiced it at the 1950 Labour Party conference;<sup>123</sup> a year or so later, a Congress publication added the gloss that if nationalist movement and colonial power failed to agree on a terminal date, then "the United Nations must be empowered to fix a period".<sup>124</sup> It was also the demand which Conservatives were most frequently to cite, during the fifties, as the principal proof of left-wing impracticality.

As a working institution the Congress was probably hampered by the oddities of its organisation. Brockway was International Chairman, yet the International Headquarters and the General Secretary were in Paris. In London Brockway wore another hat as Co-Vice Chairman of

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122 Charter of the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism (min., 1948) pp. 1-4.

123 1950 Conference Report, p.124.

124 The Colonial Peoples Appeal to the United Nations (CPI, Jan., 1952), p.30.

the affiliated British section, of which Gold Coast African, J. Kwesi Lamptey, was Chairman.<sup>125</sup> But what probably restricted the Congress most, paradoxically, was the very breadth of its objectives. No organisation could be expected to push such a sweeping programme very far past the manifesto stage. Yet the alternative course, to work in the Fabian style towards limited concrete goals in an attempt to influence officials, did not seem to appeal greatly to the Congress. It proved, in fact, to be a somewhat inward-looking organisation. Brockway's International Committee assembled quarterly to hear reports on their current activities by representatives of the affiliated nationalist movements, and once a year or so it organised a conference at which resolutions on large topics were approved. The first such conference was held in London in October 1949 and concerned "The Colonies and War"; rather more than a year later a second conference discussed "Africa". These were delegate conferences, restricted to participants who accepted the Congress Charter. Thus the Fabians, for example, were not invited, although the Congress did send the Bureau publicity material for the 1949 conference with the expressed hope that "you will give notice of it in your columns".<sup>126</sup> (The Bureau did not.) In due course the Congress arrived at what was probably a fairly precise description of its functions: "to disseminate information [through a regular bulletin] and to defend the claims of each colonial territory without intervening in matters of the tactics of each [nationalist] movement."<sup>127</sup> By the early fifties these affiliated movements included Nkrumah's Convention People's Party, Azikiwe's National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, Kenyatta's Kenya African Union, the Uganda African Congress and similar movements in Sierra Leone and the Sudan, as well as a number of organisations based in French North and West Africa. But there is no indication that any of these bodies -

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125 Lamptey, at that time a leading Nkrumahist, was to break from Nkrumah's party in August 1951 in the belief that Nkrumah was not pressing hard enough for self-government. He was later prominent in the Ghanaian opposition. Dennis Austin, Politics in Ghana 1946-1960 (Oxford U.P., 1964), pp.167, 181, 384n.

126 CPI to FCB, 1 July, 1949.

127 The Colonial Peoples Appeal to the United Nations, p. 1.

except Kenyatta's, in the period 1950-3<sup>128</sup> - ever regarded the Congress as much more than a proclaimer of manifestos.

In another respect, however, the Congress had a significance which should not be underestimated. It was the first post-war organisation concerned with colonial issues to attract the attention and support of a proportion of the Parliamentary Labour Party's left-wing members; to bring colonial issues into suitable ideological focus, and to provide the kind of venue - still rare in the forties - within which they could meet the Azikiwes, Awolowos and Nkrumahs. Twenty-three Labour MPs were among the sponsors of the 1949 Conference on colonies and war. A few of these names (Coldrick, Crawley, Rankin) read oddly in context<sup>129</sup> - a normal enough feature of any such list. Apart from these it was substantially a list of left-wingers, ranging from the well-known (Silverman, Mikardo, Fred Lee) to the obscure (including several elected in 1945 and destined to disappear from Parliament in 1950). These did not constitute a solid bloc of MPs; many of them did nothing for the Congress other than lend it their names. They nevertheless provided an indication that the Fabians held only a near-monopoly, not a total monopoly, of party interest in the field. If the parliamentary left was generally silent on colonial affairs it was not entirely for lack of interest; what was lacking, rather, was a leader and - Palestine excluded - an issue. In the 1950-1 Parliament the left was to find both.

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128 See below, pp. 318-20.

129 William Coldrick was a right-winger who later became an enthusiastic advocate of Central African federation; Aidan Crawley was currently Creech Jones's PPS and later became a Conservative MP; John Rankin was a member of the Fabian Colonial Bureau committee and of its parliamentary panel.

### 3. The Party and Groups, 1950-1

The heightening of interest in this period was not confined to Labour's left; it was characteristic of the "liberal" side of politics in general. It requires explanation mainly in terms of events and the kinds of issues thought to be at stake, but also, partly, in terms of the activities of a few key individuals.

First, two of the individuals. At the election of February 1950 Brockway became an MP. He lost no time in spreading his parliamentary wings. Before the new session was three debating days old he had criticised the party front bench for the decision to exile Seretse Khama from Bechuanaland, and had given notice of his intention to move an adjournment for discussion of the case.<sup>130</sup> Behind the scenes he was approached by the "Keep Left" group of MPs and agreed to join them and specialise for them on colonial issues.<sup>131</sup> His personal network of colonial friendships, many of them formed through the Congress of Peoples, could now be put to parliamentary use. Thus, in the course of a "long political talk" with Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya in mid-1950 he arranged for information to be sent from Kenya as material for MPs and drew up initial plans for a parliamentary petition on land use in Kenya<sup>132</sup> - of which more later.

The other key individual was the Reverend Michael Scott. An Anglican cleric of passionate idealism, Scott had lived and worked in London's East End, in India, and since 1943 in South Africa. He had recently returned to England after being declared a prohibited resident by the South African government. Early in 1950 he began working with a number of liberal-minded groups. He had already connections with the Anti Slavery Society; two other bodies which had not normally taken an interest in African problems, the Union of Democratic Control and the National Peace Council, both decided to do so at this time,

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130 HCD, Vol. 472, cols. 291, 297 (8 March, 1950).

131 Outside the Right, pp.79-80.

132 Fenner Brockway, African Journeys, (Gollancz, 1955), pp.89-90.

partly as a result of Scott's advocacy.<sup>133</sup> For the UDC he produced a pamphlet, Shadow Over Africa, to which Tom Driberg, one of several Labour MPs on the Union's executive, contributed a foreword. In mid-year the Union formed an Africa Committee and arranged a discussion on Africa at one of its conferences. In both these respects it was foreshadowed and to some extent overshadowed by the NPC, a body whose chairman, Reginald Sorensen, was sympathetic to African causes. Scott formed and presided over an Africa Committee of the Council and in June 1950 convened a conference of "representatives of political, social and religious societies" to discuss what was termed "The Human Crisis in Africa". The main resolution of this conference will serve to illustrate the characteristic attitudes of its convenor:

"This conference welcomes the moral awakening, as shown by the activity of many organisations, political, religious and social, in this country, for the establishment of racial equality and mutual trust in Africa ... this conference particularly affirms ... its support for the proposals of the Reverend Michael Scott that the welfare of Africa can be best achieved through the full and equal cooperation of Africans in all schemes of social and economic development ... The Conference ... calls upon all groups in church, society and state and on all people of goodwill to support the people of Africa in achieving their freedom on a basis of equality; believing that by so doing new ways of goodwill and peace will be found."<sup>134</sup>

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133 Both the UDC and the NPC were long-established - having been founded, respectively, in 1914 and 1908 - and enjoyed distinguished support. Among the UDC's executive committee members in 1950 were Kingsley Martin (chairman), Basil Davidson (secretary), Ritchie Calder, and the Labour MPs Harold Davies, Tom Driberg, Elwyn Jones and George Wigg. The NPC's president was Lord Boyd Orr and its chairman Reginald Sorensen MP; among its numerous "vice-presidents" were Ritchie Calder, G. D. H. Cole, Clement Davies MP, Victor Gollancz, C. E. M. Joad, Hewlett Johnson, Kingsley Martin, Gilbert Murray, John Middleton Murry, John Parker MP, Canon Charles Raven, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Rev. Leslie Weatherhead and Francis Williams - a fair cross-section of the "liberal establishment".

134 The Human Crisis in Africa. Resolution of conference arranged by the Africa Committee of the NPC, 10 June, 1950 (mim.), p.1. Among the organisations invited to support this Africa Committee was the Fabian Colonial Bureau. Sorensen, in his two capacities as Chairman of the NPC and vice-chairman of the Bureau, was keen to develop links between the two bodies. The Bureau committee agreed to let its assistant secretary serve on Scott's Africa Committee in an individual capacity, (cont'd...)

Thus, in effect, Scott's arrival was announced, and with it the principles which were to animate some intense pressure activity in the years ahead.

The Fabian Colonial Bureau too was being affected by the movements of key individuals. In July 1950 Rita Hinden, feeling after ten years' service the need for a change, resigned the secretaryship. At the same time ill-health obliged Horrabin to step down from the chair. Four other committee members, Dumbleton, Hughes, Skeffington and Skinnard, had lost their parliamentary seats at the election and could not always find time to attend.<sup>135</sup> With these losses, and with Creech Jones replaced in office by Griffiths, a relative stranger to the Bureau, it seemed that a phase had ended and that the character of the Bureau's work must change. Dr. Hinden herself, speaking at the Bureau's tenth anniversary dinner late in 1950, suggested that the Bureau was indeed entering a new stage of its existence. From 1940 to 1945 the task had been to criticise, and to express colonial aspirations. From 1945 to 1950 there had been a responsibility to see not only what should but what could be done. Now "objectives were agreed. This period ahead would be an era of unceasing vigilance to ensure that policy announced in Whitehall was in fact carried out in the territories."<sup>136</sup>

The new chairman was Lord Faringdon. Sorensen became Vice-chairman, and a former assistant secretary, Marjorie Nicholson, became secretary with Hilda Selwyn-Clarke as assistant. A number of MPs, several newly elected, joined the committee by invitation, among them Sir Richard Acland, Tom Driberg, James Johnson, H. W. Wallace, Eirene White, Ronald Williams and Lord Listowel (late Minister of

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(134 cont'd...)

but took no further steps towards cooperation. Its feeling appears to have been that Scott's approach would not blend easily with the Bureau's. NPC to FCB, 26 June 1950; FCB-MM, 28 June, 1950.

135 FCB-MM, 14 March and 26 July, 1950.

136 Venture, Jan., 1951, p.9.

State at the Colonial Office). Creech Jones rejoined, but not until June 1951.<sup>137</sup>

Secondly, the impact of events. The exile of the Khamas, the moves towards "closer association" in Central Africa, constitutional developments in Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia; in widely differing degrees these and other events of the time all helped to turn the attention of the British left-to-centre towards colonial affairs, above all by dramatising the fundamental problems of race. It became a time of deepening liberal concern at the apparent consolidation and extension of European minorities' political and economic power over African majorities in British Africa: concern coupled with a fear that the government had either failed to recognise the process or was prepared to do virtually nothing to halt it. Developments in South Africa, then a Commonwealth country, reinforced these anxieties. For the new policy of apartheid, based on explicit and dogmatic racialist assumptions, seemed to offer both a direct challenge to the traditionally liberal assumptions of British policy and a seductive example to European minorities in territories still dependent.

These anxieties received plenty of expression in 1950 and 1951. Dr. Hastings Banda distilled the prevalent view by observing simply, in a letter to Venture in July 1950, that "the Government in this country [Britain] seems to be giving in to the European settlers".<sup>138</sup> Among Labour activists the Bureau itself had earlier told the Commonwealth Relations Secretary that its members "noted with some alarm an attitude of appeasement towards white opinion in South, East and Central Africa"; subsequently Venture demanded of readers: "Have we made one convincing

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137 Apparently Creech Jones had been holding off in anticipation of "the first by-election", which the party leadership had promised him after his defeat. Instead the first by-election in a safe seat went to Sir Lynn Ungeod-Thomas KC, because the party needed a lawyer; a subsequent safe seat went to Anthony Wedgwood Benn. Interview with Mrs. Violet Creech Jones.

138 Venture, July 1950, p.9.

gesture or uttered one unambiguous word which can really carry confidence to the black populations that their white neighbours will not continue - for as long as anyone can see - to be their masters?"<sup>139</sup> The most wide-ranging expression of Labour anxiety came in February 1951, when an attack on British colonial policy by the South African Prime Minister was made the occasion for a House of Commons motion sponsored jointly by Fabian and left-wing MPs:

"This House reaffirms its confidence in the course of British Commonwealth and colonial policy in the last five years and, whilst recognising the difficulties encountered today in communities where different races have reached different stages in development, calls upon white people everywhere to free themselves from the conception of racial superiority and to follow courses directed towards the brotherhood of man."<sup>140</sup>

Ostensibly affirming support for the Government, this motion in effect demanded that the Government should not deviate from the standards of the past. It was signed by 106 Labour MPs, or almost half of the party's back-bench members: a breadth of support quite without precedent in this area of policy.

Undeniably it was the Khama episode that did most to stimulate this general concern. Here the intention is not to trace in any detail the many complexities of the affair, which have been amply described elsewhere,<sup>141</sup> but to indicate some of its consequences for domestic political activity.

On 8 March 1950 the new Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Patrick Gordon Walker, announced in Parliament a government decision.

139 FCB-MM, 29 March 1950 (report of deputation); and Venture, special issue, "Labour and the Colonies", Sept., 1950, p.1.

140 EDM No. 38 of 1950-1 Session, 26 Feb., 1951. The sponsors were Acland, Brockway, Sorensen, Eirene White, James Johnson and W. T. Williams. The link between Dr. Malan's speech and this motion was pointed out in The Times's report of the speech, 27 Feb., 1951.

141 For example in Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama (Faber, 1960); Michael Scott, A Time to Speak (Doubleday, New York, 1958); M. E. A. Laschinger, "The Khamas and their British Campaigns" (mimeo. seminar paper, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1964). Laschinger's paper is extremely allusive, and difficult to follow without some prior knowledge of the case.

Seretse Khama, heir to the chieftainship of the Bamangwato tribe, was to be exiled from his native Bechuanaland for five years, during which recognition of his claim to the chieftainship would be withheld. Seretse's uncle, the regent Tshekedi Khama, would be exiled from the Bamangwato reserve (though not from Bechuanaland) for as long as the chieftainship was "in suspense".<sup>142</sup> At that time Seretse had been married for some seventeen months to Ruth Williams, an Englishwoman. Tshekedi had profoundly disapproved of the marriage because it was morganatic, Ruth being in his view an unsuitable person to carry on the royal Khama lineage. The tribe had discussed the issue at three successive tribal meetings, eventually deciding, but by very dubious procedure, that it would accept Seretse as chief. Tshekedi, with some followers, went into voluntary exile elsewhere in Bechuanaland. The Government appointed a judicial commission of inquiry which reported back in November 1949. The report was not made public, but in February 1950 Seretse was invited by the Government to London where, unexpectedly, he was asked to remain on a government allowance and relinquish his claim to the chieftainship. He refused. In that case, he was told, he was banished from Bechuanaland.<sup>143</sup> Officially the motive behind the Government's decision was its anxiety about "the danger which recognition [of Seretse as chief] would cause to the unity and well-being of the tribe and the administration of the Protectorate".<sup>142</sup>

In Britain the Government's action caused a stir, probably much more of a stir than it had bargained for. On the previous day Seretse had called a press conference to announce that the Government had "tricked" him into coming to England, and this made front-page news on the day of Gordon Walker's statement in Parliament. After his statement the Minister was interrogated at length by MPs; some were concerned

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142 HCD, Vol. 472, cols. 285-7 (8 March, 1950).

143 For a full account of these events, see <sup>25</sup>(for example) Benson, op. cit., pp.175-98.

with the Government's alleged trickery, but it soon became evident that among Labour Members both the Fabians' main spokesman (Sorensen) and the left-wingers' (Brockway) were primarily concerned with the racial aspect. While accepting Gordon Walker's assurance that the Government had received no communication from the South African Government, these two appeared unconvinced by his broader claim that South African attitudes towards miscegenation had not influenced the decision. Sorensen opined that the decision would have "grave repercussions in many parts of the world, particularly within the Commonwealth".<sup>144</sup>

In the next few weeks sections of the party expressed in different ways their dissatisfaction with the decision. Brockway shared a platform with Seretse at a Trafalgar Square protest meeting on March 19.<sup>145</sup> A few days later he raised the matter for debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, argued that Seretse's case provided a "symbol" of the racial problems of the world and accused the Government of appeasing South Africa.<sup>146</sup> A division followed: six leading left-wing MPs - Acland, Brockway, Crossman, Driberg, Foot and Jennie Lee - abstained from voting, while a seventh, Mikardo, was teller for the Noes.<sup>147</sup>

Sorensen, for his part, had a long private discussion with Gordon Walker and reported back to the Fabian Colonial Bureau committee. The Bureau had already received many letters and telephone calls from people who recognised it (in Rita Hinden's words) "as the organisation within the Labour Party which had openly championed colonial peoples", and the Fabian Society executive had authorised the Bureau to mount a deputation to the Minister. Sorensen's report provided the deputation with material.<sup>148</sup> Led by Lord Faringdon and including several of

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144 HCD, Vol. 472, cols. 288 and 297 (Sorensen), 291 and 297 (Brockway).

145 The Times, 20 March, 1950.

146 HCD, Vol. 473, cols. 334-7 (28 March, 1950).

147 Laschinger, op. cit., p.4.

148 FCB-M1, 14 March, 1950.

the Bureau's MPs - Sorensen, Parker, Hynd, Rankin - the deputation saw the Minister on March 21, but was unable to move him. Accordingly on the 22nd, the day on which the Government published a White Paper defending its decision, the press published a statement of the Bureau's regret "that the decision of the Bamangwato people to accept Seretse Khama as their chief had not been recognised by the British Government".<sup>149</sup> The April Venture further publicised the Bureau's position.

The speediest reaction by interested groups took place outside the party. On March 9 a meeting representing "every organisation of coloured peoples in Britain" set up the Seretse Khama Fighting Committee with Learie Constantine as chairman. A large protest meeting was convened by this committee on the 12th.<sup>150</sup> Sorensen, attending in a private capacity, reported to the Bureau that "extravagant and bitter speeches" attacking the Government and, retrospectively, Creech Jones, had been made; the Bureau felt that to some extent Communists had exploited this opportunity.<sup>148</sup> On the 17th a deputation from the Fighting Committee saw Gordon Walker and Griffiths, but drew from the Ministers little more than an expression of concern "lest misunderstandings of the Government's motives should cause uneasiness among colonial peoples".<sup>151</sup> In the Labour Party there was sympathy for the Fighting Committee. The Bureau felt that the Committee was unlikely to survive for long and decided that it could not associate itself organisationally, but did send Constantine a letter expressing "our sympathy in the struggle ... and an assurance of our moral support";<sup>152</sup> while the Trafalgar Square meeting in which Brockway took part was organised by one of the Fighting Committee's constituent bodies.<sup>145</sup>

In none of these quarters did the Government succeed in allaying suspicion about racialist motivations. Venture succinctly put the

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149 Cmd. 7913: Bechuanaland Protectorate: Succession to the Chieftainship of the Bamangwato Tribe (HMSO, 1950); FCB press release (mime.), 21 March, 1950.

150 The Times, 10 March, 1950 and 13 March, 1950.

151 Commonwealth Relations Office Press Release No. 15, 17 March, 1950.

152 FCB-MM, 14 March, 1950; FCB to Constantine, 16 March, 1950.

general view:

"The Government has denied emphatically that it was motivated by prejudice. Many people are prepared to concede the truth of this, but believe that what it was really motivated by was the fear of prejudice in other people."<sup>153</sup>

For evidence to confirm the suspicion was accumulating. Both the South African and Southern Rhodesian Prime Ministers, it appeared, had publicly announced that they had informed the British Government of their views, statements simply irreconcilable with the Government's claim - repeated in the White Paper - that it had received no such communications.<sup>154</sup> More significantly, in his off-the-record talks with Labour MPs Gordon Walker himself alluded to a number of "special factors". It appeared that Field-Marshal Smuts, Leader of the Opposition in South Africa, had advised the British Government against recognition of Seretse as chief because if he were installed, with a white wife, majority "white opinion" in the Union would be inflamed and support for Malan's Government consolidated. Malan might then renew the demand for the incorporation of the High Commission Territories, impose a blockade on them and/or secede from the Commonwealth. Further, if disorders broke out in Bechuanaland he might attempt unilaterally to "restore law and order"; Britain's only possible countermove would be to fly in troops. In all these eventualities Smuts's party would be unable to intervene without seriously undermining its own electoral support. To guard against these risks the Government had concluded that the correct decision must be to exile Seretse, in spite of "the repercussion of their decision on the coloured people".<sup>155</sup>

All of these factors eventually became public knowledge. To insiders they were known all along, and the intensity of liberal anxieties is thereby understandable. For the affair could be, and was, interpreted as the first major confrontation of Britain's liberal policy

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153 Venture, April 1950, p.9.

154 Benson, op. cit., pp.193 and 200; speech by Brockway, HCD, Vol. 473, col. 336 (28 March, 1950).

155 Sorensen's report, FCB-MM, 14 March, 1950; Benson, op. cit., pp.200-1.

with southern African white racialism. And by choosing to "sacrifice Seretse", as Venture put it, "the Government ... has only postponed the inevitable clash with South Africa, and it has lost the confidence of those who would have supported it in this clash".<sup>156</sup>

In the perspective of this study the importance of the affair could be stated in another way. It was the issue which aroused many Labour MPs and in particular the dormant left, whose reaction on this occasion was the prototype for reactions towards numerous colonial issues yet to come.

Fifteen months later consciences were tested further. The first round of protestations had concentrated on the injustice done to Seretse; the case of Tshekedi Khama had passed almost without comment. The reason given both in public and private for his banishment was that he might "exploit latent grievances and that trouble and disorder might occur" in the tribe.<sup>157</sup> Not until Tshekedi arrived in England in March 1951 to press his case did the view begin to gain currency that he too had been unjustly dealt with. A number of his friends in England had believed this from the outset, believing too that the tribe needed his abilities at least as much as it needed Seretse's presence. These friends included Michael Scott, who had known Tshekedi since collaborating with him on behalf of the Hereros tribe of South West Africa in 1946; Margery Perham, a respected adviser since 1931; David Astor and Colin Legum, respectively editor and Commonwealth correspondent of The Observer; and C. W. W. Greenidge, secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society and a leading member of the Fabian Colonial Bureau Committee. Another who became a friend after meeting Tshekedi in 1951 was Clement Davies, leader of the Liberal Party. These people were able to assist Tshekedi in a sustained pressure campaign, using the influence of the organisations with which they were associated and providing him with valuable contacts in and out of the Government.<sup>158</sup>

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156 Venture, April 1950, p.1.

157 Sorensen's report, loc. cit.

158 The campaign is fully described in Benson, op. cit., pp.215-255.

In June 1951 the issue came to the surface in Parliament. Davies, who in March 1950 had unsuccessfully tried to initiate a debate on Seretse,<sup>159</sup> was able to bring Tshekedi's case to debate when the Opposition obligingly provided a Supply Day. For the Government, with its majority of only six, the debate was a crucial one. Tshekedi and Scott had lobbied Labour MPs thoroughly and received word that several left-wingers intended to abstain from voting. Just before the debate, however, in a party meeting, Attlee had sharply summoned these potential rebels to heel, while promising as a concession that the Bamangwato would be allowed another tribal meeting to decide on Tshekedi.<sup>160</sup> Accordingly, even though Gordon Walker was criticised from both sides in the course of the debate, with Sorensen and Geoffrey Bing, for example, referring to the unseen presence of South Africa,<sup>161</sup> the Government survived the vote. But some consciences suffered in the process. Michael Foot, for one, described his vote as "the worst vote I ever cast in the House".<sup>162</sup>

Six Labour MPs, by one account, did abstain; but so did fifteen Conservatives of "rigid Tory concepts".<sup>163</sup> For Tshekedi and his friends this irony was shortly to be compounded by another. Not only was the Labour Government's winning margin greater because of the tacit approval of "rigid Tories" for its policy towards Tshekedi: the reversal of that policy, when it came in March 1952, was the decision of a Conservative government.

In the perspective of this study,<sup>again,</sup> perhaps the most significant outcome of Tshekedi's campaign in England was the stimulus it provided for the formation of the Africa Bureau. This body was created early in 1952 by several of the people who had worked with Tshekedi. In the

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159 He had been told by Herbert Morrison, Leader of the House, that he had "got the thing a little out of proportion". HCD, Vol. 472, col. 2178 (23 March, 1950).

160 Benson, op. cit., pp.236-7.

161 HCD, Vol. 489, cols. 1264-5 (Sorensen), 1281 (Bing) (26 June, 1951).

162 Quoted in Benson, op. cit., p.240. The debate is also described in Scott, op. cit., pp.271-2.

163 The figures and the phrase quoted, are The Economist's; 30 June, 1951, pp.1548-9.

words of Mary Benson, Scott's assistant:

"it was largely as a result of our experience in fighting the campaign with him that we had seen the need for an organisation detached from any political party, providing a platform and a political lobby, as well as a means of educating British public opinion."<sup>164</sup>

Thus in more ways than one the Khama affair was seminal. It remains to be said that other events contributed to the sense of alarm at the apparent drift of policy, chiefly among those who were already colonial specialists. Thus a Fabian Colonial Bureau paper prepared early in 1950 listed several "outstanding issues" other than the Khama case which, in the Bureau's view, were augmenting racial tensions in East and Central Africa. They included "the outburst in Tanganyika on the constitutional issue", "the Morris case in Northern Rhodesia which has revealed the implications of the agreement reached last year between the European Elected Members' representatives and the Secretary of State", and of course "the revival of discussion on central African federation".<sup>165</sup>

On Tanganyika a Bureau deputation in April 1950 argued the case for seeking "a system of non-racial representation" with a common voters' roll as the ultimate objective, but with no great result other than Griffiths's agreement in principle.<sup>166</sup>

Northern Rhodesia, in the Bureau's eyes, was the territory where Europeans had been most successful in their efforts to gain executive power; where one man in particular, Welensky, "talks and acts as if he were in effect the Prime Minister ... it is unfortunate that these activists have been strengthened in the last few years in spite of a Labour Government".<sup>165</sup> But a deputation came away from Griffiths with the impression "that the Colonial Office felt that they might be able to do no more than hold the existing position".<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Benson, op.cit., p.278. The foundation of the Africa Bureau is discussed in Chapter VII below.

<sup>165</sup> Racial Problems in East and Central Africa (FCB paper No. 1 of 1950, mime.).

<sup>166</sup> FCB, Annual Report for 1950, p.3.

Central African federation as an issue had not yet made any great impact in domestic politics, but the Bureau, at least, fought a steady campaign against the scheme during much of 1951. Leadership in this campaign was provided by Creech Jones after his return to the Bureau; his was the responsibility for not only letters in the press and the editorial content of Venture but also for leading deputations to confront Griffiths in the very office he had himself occupied.<sup>168</sup> The Bureau saw itself as intermediate between the Government and African political organisations in the three territories, and sought to exercise influence in both directions. With the Africans some success could be claimed: for example, an African plan to boycott a fact-finding tour by Griffiths and Gordon Walker was abandoned upon the Bureau's advice.<sup>169</sup> But with the Government the Bureau, once again, was frustrated; not, in this case, because the Government was committed to the opposite view but because it sought to be uncommitted to either. Thus Griffiths assured the second of two Bureau deputations in July "that on his forthcoming visit to Central Africa he did not intend to 'sell' the scheme, and that African opinion would be the decisive factor in the final decision". He did, however, suggest "that the Bureau should propose alternative methods of achieving co-operation in Central Africa if this scheme were not acceptable", and made it clear that he would not regard "development of the Central African Council" - the course advocated by Creech Jones - as an alternative.<sup>170</sup>

All in all, it was not turning out to be quite that new era of holding the Government to "agreed objectives" which Dr. Hinden had anticipated.

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168 FCB-AM, 14 June, 3 July and 10 July, 1951.

169 Ibid., 22 Nov., 1951.

170 Ibid., 10 July, 1951.

More generally, it could be said that by the time Labour relinquished office, late in October 1951, the pattern of centre-to-left political activity with regard to colonial affairs had begun to change. The days of relatively uncontroversial issues, when Fabian colonial experts had dominated the Labour Party's approaches to policy-makers within a nexus of shared experiences and shared assumptions, were already receding into the past. The growing prominence of the difficult and divisive issue of racial conflict, especially in relation to the distribution of political power in African plural societies; the apparent hardening of governmental attitudes into less liberal moulds; the emergence on the political landscape of activists such as Brockway and Scott, each working from his own organisational base and each determined to wield influence on colonial matters in accordance with his own ideas and ideals; these things provided a tea-leaf pattern in which coming trends could (given hindsight) be read.

## CHAPTER V

## CONSERVATIVES AND THE COLONIAL EMPIRE

"We of the Conservative Party talk an awful lot of waffle about the British Empire... I myself am a keen and ardent and quite unrepentant Young Imperialist."

Mr. Brian Webbe, a delegate to the 1950 Conservative Party Conference (Conference Report, p. 36).

The post-war period was a time of change for the Conservative Party. Reduced in 1945 to a parliamentary strength of 213, its lowest ebb since 1906-10, the party blamed its electoral failure on defective organisation and on policies both outdated and misunderstood. The main lines of the story of its efforts to modernise itself are by now familiar.<sup>1</sup> But its approaches to colonial problems in the period are not. This is perhaps surprising. Considering how important an element of the Conservative world-view its "colonialist" attitude was once thought to be, one might have expected to see more attention given to the question of how far this attitude too underwent "modernisation." That it has been neglected is probably explained partly by the fact, previously noted, that colonial issues were of scant public interest in the period by comparison with domestic issues. There must have appeared to be very little need for the party to express itself on colonial matters. But it was also true that Conservatives, particularly those who might be described by the self-explanatory term "traditional Conservatives", were less interested in colonies as such than in the British Empire as a whole.

The party's usage of the term "Empire" in the immediate post-war years was indistinguishable from its pre-war usage - the term "Commonwealth" not yet

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1 J.D. Hoffman, The Conservative Party in Opposition, 1945-51 (MacGibbon and Kee, 1964).

being in any great vogue among Conservatives;<sup>2</sup> that is, most Conservatives who spoke of the Empire still meant first the old dominions and India, and only secondarily the great range of territories which came under the aegis of the Colonial Office. But the fact that they thought in this order of precedence did not prevent them from conceiving of the Empire as a whole. Dominions and dependencies comprised "an essential unity."<sup>3</sup> In the terms of a favourite metaphor, it was the unity of a family whose members differed chiefly in their degrees of maturity; the colonies were simply the least mature members, to be helped to develop and fulfil themselves "within the framework of the British Empire."<sup>4</sup> And it was because they generally thought and spoke in these terms that Conservatives referred relatively seldom to specifically "colonial" problems. What mattered for the Conservative Party were "imperial" problems - chiefly the problems of imperial unity, chiefly its economic aspects - all of which concerned colonies along with the other components of Empire.

These assertions will be illustrated in the following pages. They are foreshadowed here because an obvious point of method is involved. Of necessity, while seeking to separate out references made specifically to colonies we cannot hope to see them in context without also observing something of the traditional Conservative Empire-syndrome. Subject to this necessity, the first aim of this chapter is to discuss the range and content of relevant party attitudes. The second is to provide an account of relevant party activity: the party's organisational changes, its attempts to formulate and document a distinctive colonial policy, and its parliamentary tactics.

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2 Not even, as yet, in the forms "British Commonwealth" or "British Commonwealth and Empire". Accordingly the term "Empire" will be used in the present discussion. The changes in terminology in this field provide, of course, a fascinating study in themselves; see for example S.R. Mehrotra, "On The Use of the Term 'Commonwealth'," in Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies Vol. II No. 1 (Nov. 1963). In passing one might note what now appear to be some surprisingly belated changes: Empire Day did not become Commonwealth Day, the Empire Games the Commonwealth Games, or the Royal Empire Society the Royal Commonwealth Society, until the late fifties.

3 Lord Swinton (formerly Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, Colonial Secretary 1931-5), 71st Annual Conference of the Conservative Party (National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, 1950), p.38. The reports of the party's conferences will hereafter, in this chapter, be cited as Conference Reports.

4 This was the phrase used in the party's 1949 policy document Imperial Policy. It echoed the phrase used by Stanley in a famous statement made when he was Colonial Secretary (see above, p.14).

## 1. Attitudes

### (i) The Imperial Sentiment

That the Conservative Party always felt a strong sense of involvement with the Empire is a point which hardly requires stressing. Nowhere was this involvement more evident than at the party's annual conferences, in whose hothouse atmosphere traditional Conservatism flowered to finest effect. Conference reports provide numerous examples of warmly-applauded perorations along these lines:

"Let us never forget the Imperial spirit, the indefinable, sentimental, if you like, feeling which is the spark that sets our reason aglow; and it is our reason that tells us that the policy that we are now advocating, the policy of Joseph Chamberlain and the policy of Benjamin Disraeli, remains the right one."<sup>5</sup>

For most Conservatives the "indefinable, sentimental feeling" could be classified, quite simply, as pride. The British imperial achievement was, emphatically, something to be proud of. In part this was because the modern Empire was by all manner of criteria a praiseworthy institution. Conservatives typically credited the Empire, for example, with "maintaining over a large part of the earth's surface the rule of law, of justice, and the moral influence of the only league of nations which has ever worked."<sup>6</sup> More than this, it was held to provide the whole basis of Britain's claim to national greatness in modern times; and Conservatives were nothing if not "conservers of Britain's greatness."<sup>7</sup> Sustained indeed by a belief in greatness, Churchill and other traditional Conservatives in the immediate post-war years were never merely retrospective in their expressions of pride. Had not the war demonstrated the continuing strength both of British resolve and of imperial solidarity?<sup>8</sup> The imperial cause was still, in the words of Leopold Amery's son, "a hope, a vision of the future."<sup>9</sup> Even for a man such

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5 A delegate to the 1949 Conference: Conference Report, p.53.

6 David Gammans, HCD Vol. 453 col. 618 (8 July 1948).

7 Leon D. Epstein, British Politics in the Suez Crisis (Pall Mall Press, 1964), p.20.

8 See for example remarks by Bernard Braine, 1948 Conference Report, p.67.

9 Julian Amery, 1949 Conference Report, p.58.

as Oliver Stanley, in some ways a most unorthodox Conservative, it was manifest that the Empire, though it could never again be "the Empire of Kipling and the Diamond Jubilee," would have "as great a part to play in the future as ever the British Empire played in the past."<sup>10</sup>

Pride in the nation's imperial achievement, of course, was by no means exclusive to Conservatives. But for Conservatives the sentiment was all the stronger in that it was a matter of pride in party as well. Conservatives were apt to claim that they were in a special sense the "imperial party", and that their attitudes towards Empire differentiated their party from others as fundamentally as, say, attitudes towards nationalisation. Cuthbert Alport was only one of many Conservatives who argued that socialism "by its nature" could not comprehend the problems of the Empire, particularly the Colonial Empire: "they nurse a few prejudices and call these a policy, but they regard the responsibilities of the Colonial Empire as a tiresome hindrance to other things." For Conservatives, by contrast, the imperial sentiment was so important an attribute of their party that "without a wise imperial policy the Tory Party is nothing."<sup>11</sup> Typically, the 1947 Conference resolved that the party "should reaffirm itself the great imperial party."<sup>12</sup>

There was in fact a good deal of justification for their claim. The Empire was in many ways a Conservative institution. It was unquestionable, for example, that the Colonial Service, drawn largely from the public schools and the ancient universities, was predominantly Conservative in political outlook; so too were the settlers, planters and others of British stock who lived in colonies or were even then emigrating to colonies.<sup>13</sup> The fact that they felt special links with like-minded Europeans in colonies no doubt made it easier for Conservatives to believe that the entire Empire was bound by an

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10 1949 Conference Report, p.60.

11 1950 Conference Report, pp.32-3.

12 1947 Conference Report, p.27.

13 Thus a delegate to the 1948 Conference: "These men (in Malaya) and their fellows in other colonies are a tremendous silent body of practical support for Conservative principles." Conference Report, p.69. As Colonial Secretary, Creech Jones recognised that he had to cooperate "with many natural supporters of the Conservative party;" Lee, Colonial Development and Good Government, p.40.

emotional and spiritual unity. But the main justification, and the one most frequently invoked, was that of history. There would have been no Empire at all, declared one MP, had it not been for "various Conservative-minded individuals from Drake to Rhodes";<sup>14</sup> while according to a Conference delegate all imperialists "have been, and still are, Conservatives, either initially or by the process of gravitation."<sup>15</sup> These were sweeping claims, yet with reference at least to the period of Rhodes (if not that of Drake) few people would have disputed them. The imperial history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the period during which Britain had attained the zenith of "imperial greatness", was studded with the names of Conservatives, many of whom ranked, by 1945, as permanent deities in the party pantheon. Disraeli, the party leader credited with setting the whole tone of imperial optimism in his Crystal Palace speech; Salisbury, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary while the British did well in the African scramble; the Liberal-Unionist Chamberlain, a "Conservative by gravitation", Colonial Secretary for eight creative years; all these names were repeatedly invoked by the latter-day party. Conservatives had canvassed the idea of Greater Britain, and subsequently Imperial Federation. They had countered the Liberal ideal of free trade with that of imperial preference. They had done most to formulate the ideas of social-imperialism, by which, in effect, the working classes had been offered imperialism as a substitute for socialism. And, especially from the time of the Boer War, they had defended the cause against its critics. Undoubtedly the imperialist beliefs which many Conservatives were still professing after 1945 had been fixed by the history of this period. For many the period was, after all, a personal memory. About half the members of the parliamentary party had been born before the turn of the century. It was still possible for a Conference to be addressed by a man who had been Joseph Chamberlain's PPS.<sup>16</sup> Most notable, of course, was the case-history of the party's leader; for Churchill's whole career reflected his belief in Britain's national greatness, and this belief was based upon an imperialist

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14 Brigadier Ralph Rayner, HCD vol. 454 col. 633 (22 July 1948).

15 1948 Conference Report, p.64.

16 Earl Winterton, MP: 1947 Conference Report, pp.6-6.

sentiment formed well before 1900.

Conservatives, then, were able to maintain that belief in Empire was a matter which transcended narrow party attitudes and, at the same time, that the Conservative Party alone had a proper appreciation of this fact. Britain's imperial mission and the Conservative imperial mission were one and the same.

We may now look more closely at the elements of this continuing imperial belief; after which we may go on to examine the extent to which one at least of the party's leaders was beginning to doubt the relevance of the old aspirations in the new post-war world.

(ii) Traditional attitudes: economic and political

To judge by their speeches and writings, if any of those traditional Conservatives who spoke broadly of imperial mission were asked to explain their actual objectives for the Colonial Empire they would have replied that the prime necessity was to achieve a greater measure of "imperial unity", embracing colonies and dominions alike. Within a more nearly unified imperial system Britain could the more effectively go ahead, in colonies, with economic and social development and the task of guidance towards political maturity. In outlining this order of priorities they might just as well have been speaking twenty or thirty years earlier. But they would not have considered their views outmoded; if anything they would have claimed that the present world situation made the attainment of their objectives a task even more urgent than before.

To achieve some form of imperial unity had, of course, been a Conservative dream since the later nineteenth century. Essentially the object was to give institutional expression to that emotional and spiritual unity (focused upon the symbol of the crown) which, in their opinion, already existed. At first there had been hopes and schemes for full political integration. But the long chain of events which culminated in the statutory recognition of dominion status in 1931 had shown clearly that such a pooling of sovereignties would never be feasible. Accordingly the Conservative imperialists had concentrated their hopes on plans for economic unity, for imperial preference and ultimately an imperial Zollverein. Some preferential

arrangements had actually been made around the turn of the century. The dominions had taken the initiative in extending tariff preferences to British manufacturers, and Britain, largely a free trade nation until then, later reciprocated with respect particularly to primary products. The greatest triumph for the cause came with the Ottawa Agreements of 1932, when preferences were established not only among the dominions but also for several colonies. An imperial economic union seemed, at that stage, a distinct possibility.

In the years after the second war it was clear that, in spite of a good deal of chastening experience since 1932,<sup>17</sup> the aspirations of traditional Conservatives for economic unity remained undiminished. The fervour with which imperial preference was advocated during the Empire debates at all six party conferences between 1945 and 1950 (there was no conference in 1951) was easily the most striking feature of these debates. "we have got to be quite clear about it," announced Julian Amery in 1948, "Empire Preference is a foundation for our whole economic life."<sup>18</sup> Typical of motions carried at all conferences was the 1946 resolution "that the development, prosperity and defence of the British Commonwealth and Empire call for economic unity and, therefore, the principle of Imperial Preference must be maintained."<sup>19</sup> Ottawa was a magic word; to be able to produce a speaker who had "been at Ottawa", as was done with Lord Swinton in 1950, was to ensure a rousing finale for any Empire debate. Fervour was joined with anger when delegates contemplated the actions of the Labour Government, which had scaled down existing preferences and agreed to a no-new-preference rule under the terms of the Anglo-American Loan and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs. Labour stood condemned of a total lack of imperial spirit, a failure to appreciate the economic potential of the Empire, and of "nothing other than a reversion to the Liberal Party policy of free trade."<sup>20</sup> For most speakers it was axiomatic that the next Conservative Government should reserve the right to contract out of Labour's commitments.

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17 The classic account of the interwar fortunes of imperial preference, both as doctrine and as policy, is W.K. Hancock's Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, Vol. II: Problems of Economic Policy 1918-1939, Part 1 (Oxford U.P., 1940), passim, and Part 2 (Oxford U.P., 1942), pp.307-13. A detailed economic analysis is provided in F.V. Meyer's Britain's Colonies in World Trade (Oxford U.P., 1948), chapters II-VIII; and for an illuminating postscript see Robinson, The Dilemmas of Trusteeship, pp.75-9.

18 1948 Conference Report, p.67.

19 The Times, 5 Oct. 1946.

20 A delegate to the 1948 Conference: Conference Report, p.68.

Nor was imperial preference simply a slogan to be cheered at conferences and otherwise put into storage. Two organisations closely linked to the party existed largely for the purpose of canvassing the cause through meetings, lectures and publications. One, the Empire Industries Association, declared as its objects "to promote the development of Empire economic unity" and "the extension of Imperial Preference in production, trade and transport."<sup>21</sup> Founded by Leopold Amery, Neville Chamberlain and Lord Lloyd in 1923, the Association included over 200 Conservative MPs among its members immediately prior to the 1945 election; through ostensibly a non-party organisation, it included no MPs from any other party. Amery was also prominent in the second organisation, the Empire Economic Union, founded in 1929. Describing itself as "primarily a research body",<sup>22</sup> the Union maintained<sup>a</sup> membership of fewer than 100 on the principle of membership by invitation. In the late forties its 17-man Research Committee included three former Conservative MPs—Amery as Chairman, Sir Herbert Williams and Sir Leslie Hore-Belisha; six current Conservative MPs—Robert Boothby, Douglas Dodds-Parker, Walter Elliot, Christopher Hollis, Brigadier Austin Low and David Renton; and, in its Research Secretary Ronald Russell, at least one future Conservative MP. Its postal address, Abbey House, was also that of the Conservative Central Office. Most, though not all, of its publications were devoted to imperial economic policy, the bulkiest in a series of substantial pamphlets after 1945 being the one dealing directly with imperial preference.<sup>23</sup> And although it sometimes claimed to reach its conclusions only on the basis of scholarly economic research, the Union's a priori assumptions were usually fairly evident. "It is clear", wrote one pamphleteer,

"that the Ottawa Agreements are the beginning and not the end of the full development of Imperial Economic Unity, and, accordingly, it is hoped that the Union may continue to receive support for the pursuance of its objects."<sup>24</sup>

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21 Commonwealth Handbook. A Guide to Departments, Organisations and Societies in the United Kingdom concerned with the British Empire (Royal Empire Society, 1949), p.40.

22 Ibid.

23 Ronald S. Russell, Imperial Preference (Empire Economic Union, 1948).

24 Postwar Economic Policy (Empire Economic Union, 1945), p.83. The kind of support which the Union could count upon was indicated by its entry in the Commonwealth Handbook (loc. cit): "No compulsory subscription, but members contribute from time to time as they feel disposed."

The actual arguments for and against imperial preference have been discussed and analysed on many occasions, and there is no need to review them at length here. It was always, of course, a contentious doctrine. The record of the actual working of preference was open to conflicting interpretations: critics of the doctrine could and did advance statistics minimising the advantages of Ottawa, suggesting both that Empire trade had increased more rapidly before Ottawa than after, and that after Ottawa Britain's Empire trade actually expanded less rapidly than her foreign trade.<sup>25</sup> But figures could also be interpreted so as to associate the Empire's post-depression recovery with Ottawa; and this was the way in which traditional Conservatives, in the years after the war, invariably did interpret them.<sup>26</sup> It was their firm belief that preference had been "shown to work".

A good deal of criticism, however, had always been directed not only to questions of performance but also to the fundamental assumption of the preferentialist case: the assumption that the Empire comprised a number of broadly complementary economies which could be transformed by protected trade relationships into a vast, economically self-sufficient bloc. The main objection to this was simply that many colonies and dominions would almost certainly have more to gain from foreign, rather than imperial, trade. And if this point were allowed it could follow that those who continued to argue the preferentialist case were chiefly concerned with Britain's economic self-interest; preference had to do less with Empire development for its own sake than with providing a solution for the long-term problems of the British economy.<sup>27</sup> Though Conservative preferentialists would have denied this it was quite true that they often spoke in terms which could justify the criticism, and never more so than in the conditions of the post-war world. "The great majority of us on this side", Douglas Dodds-Parker told Parliament in 1948, "...believe that on the proper and rapid development of the Dominions and Colonial Empire depends our ability to

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25 Hancock, op. cit., Part 1, pp.230 ff.

26 See Russell, op. cit., passim, and speech by Hore-Belisha at the 1949 Party Conference: Conference Report, pp.56-7.

27 Epstein, op. cit., p.27.

keep the 45,000,000 people in the United Kingdom, particularly after the end of Marshall Aid."<sup>28</sup> No doubt any politician would have agreed that a Britain enfeebled by war must remain extraordinarily dependent on other countries. What distinguished the preferentialists was their insistence that if there must be dependence, then it should be dependence upon Britain's own Empire so that Britain could be sure of retaining the dominant voice in deciding her economic fortunes: not upon Europe, and certainly not upon America.

Arguments on the economic level, however, represented only the surface of the traditional Conservative case. The unwillingness of the party at large to contemplate economic association with Europe, for example, could not be explained purely in economic terms. "If in fact we had to choose between Europe and the Empire", said Stanley at the 1948 Conference, "the whole of the Conservative Party, without dissent, would say 'We choose the Empire'". (Hear, hear and applause.)<sup>29</sup> Though Stanley himself did not believe that such a choice would have to be made, it was clear that he was not making an economic point; nor was his audience applauding one. In fact, the programme of trade and tariff preferences was simply the most tangible of the party's general imperialist convictions. The arguments offered for preference, after the war as before, always involved the belief that it would contribute to Empire "solidarity". And this belief still had decidedly political overtones. Economic interdependence would be the framework within which colonies and dominions could become, under British initiatives, more tightly interrelated in other ways. Traditional Conservatives still spoke of organising an imperial defence system, for example, convinced that wartime experience had shown this to be a possibility.<sup>30</sup> Another hope rekindled by the experience of wartime solidarity was that some form of Empire citizenship might be accepted by all colonial peoples as a right in perpetuity.<sup>31</sup> As a result Britain would not

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28 HCD vol. 454 cols. 597-8 (22 July 1948).

29 1948 Conference Report, p.70.

30 E.g., speech by a delegate to the 1947 Conference, Conference Report, p.66; and letter by Brigadier Low, MP, to The Economist, 2 July 1949, p.10.

31 E.g., speech by Gammans, HCD vol. 453 col. 618 (8 July 1948), and letter by Gammans to The Times, 11 April 1951.

only be mistress in her own economic house; as the "leader" of an Empire bound by ties of defence and citizenship, she could fairly claim the voice of a great power in the post-war world. A further point followed from this. It was not simply a question of achieving economic independence from the United States, though that in itself was important for "conservers of Britain's greatness". It was also a question of achieving imperial solidarity against the Soviet Union, both as a military necessity and as a means of preventing the spread of Communist ideology within the "politically immature" colonies.<sup>32</sup>

In retrospect it is possible to say that the men who could still put forward these arguments as late as 1950 were, to say the least, enormously optimistic. Even to anticipate the establishment of full-scale imperial preference as the "first step" since Ottawa required the optimistic assumption that the dominion and colonial leaders were as enamoured of the preferential principle as were the traditional Conservatives themselves, and, therefore, ready and waiting for Britain to initiate the process. That many Conservatives did assume this is manifest in the wording of a resolution carried at the 1949 Conference:

"... While grudging to no other State or group of States the right to make their own tariff arrangements, it [the Conference] insists that Great Britain and the British Commonwealth and Empire must have full freedom to exercise the same right."<sup>33</sup>

But such optimism was always possible given the continued strength of the "imperial sentiment" described earlier. For this sentiment, fundamentally, had the characteristics of a faith. It has often been remarked that the preferentialists advanced their case with quite as much ideological zeal as the Manchester School ever showed for free trade; the difference between the two, according to Amery père, was no mere question of trade policy but "a conflict between two wholly different philosophies of

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32 As Alport reminded the 1950 Conference, "Lenin long ago marked their colonial territories as the soft under-belly of the capitalist system." Conference Report, p.33. See also delegates' speeches at the 1947 Conference Conference Report, pp.69-70.

33 1949 Conference Report, p.23. Emphasis added.

national life."<sup>34</sup> Alternatively, in the words of Amery files, belief in the imperial mission "is our faith. Imperial preference is its practical expression."<sup>35</sup> The fervour with which the Government's economic kow-towing to America was denounced derived very largely from the fact that both America and the Government were classifiable as "anti-imperialist" - opponents of the faith. And underlying the fervour was the sense that time was being lost. So long as Labour remained in office there would be no moves towards imperial unity. Britain's whole imperial opportunity, therefore, was at stake; only the return of the Conservatives to power could ensure that the opportunity would be realised.

It is perhaps clearer by now why the imperial believers were seldom concerned to stress the distinction between the self-governing and the dependent elements of Empire. In a grand design for unity the distinction was simply not very relevant: colonies and dominions alike would make their contributions and receive their benefits within the general framework. It is nevertheless possible to observe, in the expression of Conservative attitudes, one or two colonial themes subsidiary to the main imperial one. Traditional Conservatives often spoke of the need to advance colonies economically and politically, in order to improve their capacity to contribute to the new imperial system.

In the economic context the key word, naturally, was development. As the imperial believers had always seen it, colonial development "fell naturally into place in the wider aim of Empire Development, Empire Settlement, and greater Empire self-sufficiency."<sup>36</sup> But in practice their views on the precise techniques and goals of development shaded into those of the wider body of opinion, common to all parties, which looked upon development as a self-justifying end. To judge by their parliamentary speeches, they emphasised all the long-accepted priorities - improved communications, agricultural research designed to improve crop yields,

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34 L.S. Amery, My Political Life, Vol. III: The Unforgiving Years 1929-40 (Hutchinson, 1955), p.95.

35 1949 Conference Report, p.58.

36 Robinson, op.cit., p.53.

and expanded medical and educational services to increase the economic potential of native populations.<sup>37</sup> In this there was little to distinguish them from, say, the Fabian-sponsored MPs. Nor was there in their attitudes towards the sources of development finance. In the aftermath of the 1940 and 1945 Development and Welfare Acts no Conservative ever questioned that developmental funds to supplement local revenues should rightfully be a charge on the British Exchequer. Indeed, it was a source of party pride that the concept of metropolitan financial responsibility which underlay these Acts had been formulated during a period when Conservatives had dominated government office. At the same time, post-war Conservatives missed no opportunity to emphasise that European private enterprise must remain a permanent and indispensable agency of development. There was in fact, as is noted later in this chapter, some room for disagreement between the parties about the past achievements and future scope of private enterprise in colonies. But the actual proposition that private enterprise should have a "part to play" was never in dispute. Most Labour MPs, certainly Labour Colonial Ministers, were no less willing than Conservatives to stress the importance of the larger firms in "building up sound colonial economies,"<sup>38</sup> and to welcome the efforts of individual traders, planters and farmer-settlers as well. On the means of economic development, in short, there was very little at this time to distinguish the attitudes of traditional Conservatives from those of anyone else.

This was not true, however, with regard to political development. It was by their reactions to colonial political events that traditional Conservatives could most easily be distinguished in almost any post-war parliamentary debate on colonial affairs. If they invariably agreed that

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37 See for example the contributions by Dodds-Parker, Sir John Barlow, Colonel Charles Ponsonby, Lennox-Boyd, Frederic Harris and Sir Peter Macdonald to the Economic Development debate of July 1948; also contributions to the annual Supply debates by Ponsonby, Macdonald and Patrick Donner (1946); Dodds-Parker, Walter Fletcher and Lennox-Boyd (1947); Gammans, Sir Otho Prior-Palmer and John Hare (1948); Lennox-Boyd (1949); and Harris, Gammans, Dodds-Parker and Lennox-Boyd (1950).

38 Creech Jones, HCD vol. 441 col. 281 (29 July 1947).

colonial policy should be bi-partisan, it became increasingly apparent that they wanted it to be bi-partisan on their terms. But their own position, related as it was to the old imperial objectives, was necessarily a partisan one which non-imperialists could not be expected to share. To understand their position it is helpful to consider, first, the form of colonial political evolution which they advocated as desirable; second, the current political trends which they found alarming; and third, the measures which they suggested to counteract these trends.

To judge, again, by their public utterances, the Conservative imperial believers usually professed to have no quarrel with the standard official formulae about guiding colonies to eventual self-government within the Empire. They gave their strongest emphasis, however, not to the goal itself but to the words and phrases which qualified it: "guiding", "eventual", and especially "within the Empire". "I suggest to the Government", said Gammans, referring in a front-bench speech to the 1948 declaration of purpose, "that their main aim should be not merely to grant self-government within the Commonwealth: their aim also must be to hold the Empire together". Political progress, that is, should be so directed as to further the cause of imperial unity: "To hold the Empire together is the real task of the Colonial Office today."<sup>39</sup> Implicit in this argument (though traditional Conservatives did not put in so many words) was <sup>the belief</sup> that the main political objective in colonies should be the permanent legitimation of the British connection. The means to this end - presumably part-administrative, part-educational, part-constitutional - were vaguely conceived, but the end itself was clear enough. As Gammans put it:

"There must be a positive as well as a negative side to our constitutional developments... Our real problem, surely, is that we have to create a sense of Empire citizenship, so that a man from Nigeria will talk about his status as a British subject permanently and with pride, just as a man would who was born in Yorkshire."<sup>40</sup>

This was not a novel aspiration. Milner, among others, had voiced it long

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39 HCD vol. 453 cols. 616 and 618 (8 July 1948).

40 Ibid., col. 618.

before.<sup>41</sup> But after the second war, if only because talk of "eventual self-government" was much more in the air than in Milner's day, it appeared to traditional Conservatives a good deal more relevant. For if at some distant date the Colonial Empire were really to become self-governing, there could be no guarantee that the old imperial association would endure unless the ex-colonies continued to feel important "ties" with Britain. It seemed clear that only some form of shared citizenship could provide the basis upon which the new forms of imperial unity might be built.

In the special case of settler colonies in Africa the emphasis was different. The same aspiration, that indigenous Africans might come to acquire a permanently "British" outlook, was of course expressed. But it certainly did not follow that the Africans, however loyal, might one day be permitted to inherit the political kingdom in these territories. Rather it would be necessary to legitimise not only the imperial connection but also the political ascendancy of the settlers. For it was axiomatic that the political ambitions of the settlers had to be supported: because they were economically productive, because they were "kith and kin", and also because dedication to the Empire ideal was presumed to be as natural to them as to the Conservative Party itself - so that to reinforce them in their demands for self-government was a ready-made means of reinforcing "Empire bonds." For all these reasons it was still common for some Conservatives openly to advocate devices for ensuring the permanent political domination of Europeans over Africans. Thus the South African-born MP Sir Ian Fraser, in 1950:

"I commend the doctrine of equality for all civilised men to the Minister for application or re-application in the Colonial Empire. It is a doctrine which bears examination. It gives all black men the feeling that there is no technical bar between them and others to the highest rights, including the right to vote, yet it admits a sufficiently small number of them to make the outvoting of the whites by the blacks impossible."<sup>42</sup>

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41 "I do not admit that Imperial patriotism of a kind may not be developed among the races that are not of British origin," Milner, The Nation and the Empire (Constable, 1913), p.492, quoted in Epstein, op. cit., p.18. See also the passages by Milner quoted in George Bennett (ed.), The Concept of Empire. Burke to Attlee 1774-1947 (Adam and Charles Black, 1st edn. 1953), esp. at pp.352 and 359.

42 HCD vol. 477 col. 1417 (12 July 1950).

There was of course a further dimension to these views: the belief that most indigenous people were simply not yet capable of participating in modern political systems. Black men, as Fraser went on to point out, were "as children."<sup>43</sup> This belief was by no means confined to traditional Conservatives in the political discourse of the day. What was disputed was the fundamental question of how long the period of "childhood" could be expected to last. Fraser, for one, appeared to consider it a permanent condition (perhaps seeing it as a function of innate characteristics). It was more usual, however, for traditional Conservatives to speak as if they believed native peoples to be capable of attaining a kind of maturity provided they were "treated" in the right way. A belief in their educability, after all, was presumably a necessary condition of the hope that the imperial connection might be legitimised in colonies of purely indigenous population. And with regard to the Africans in settler colonies the brand of paternalism expressed by Archer Baldwin, an MP with business interests in East Africa, was probably more typical than Fraser's:

"I have met the African native and I am fond of him. I realise that, if he is to get where we want him to get, he must be led properly, with firmness and kindness. I say to him that he must have patience, and then the slogan which he is so fond of displaying of 'Africa for the Africans' may well come about, but it will be an Africa for Africans of all colours."<sup>44</sup>

But the status implied by the phrase "where we want him to get" was probably the same as that envisaged by Fraser: political subordination, willingly accepted.

Such aspirations were all very well in theory. In practice, as traditional Conservatives recognised, powerful factors were working against them. Of these, by far the most important were the incipient growth of colonial nationalism and the policies of the British Government itself. Nationalist movements, though presumed to be "unrepresentative" in their leadership, were alarming for many reasons. One was that they appeared to command the loyalty of many of the intellectual, or at least educated, elements in colonial populations - the very elements whose co-operation was most desired

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43 HCD vol. 477 col. 1418.

44 Ibid., vol. 467 cols. 1465-6 (20 July 1949).

by Conservatives. By 1950, Gammans had reluctantly to admit that his dream of voluntary colonial allegiance to the British crown was, if anything, further than ever from realisation among these elements:

"To my mind, the largest single failure in the British Colonial Empire is that we have very largely failed to carry the intellectuals with us. To that type of man the British connection has always been regarded, I am afraid, as something temporary, and to a certain extent, it seemed to imply a status of inferiority."<sup>45</sup>

Also alarming was the fact that nationalist agitations appeared sometimes - notably in the Gold Coast - to have aroused genuine excitement among large masses of people. Though it could be assumed that these people were not necessarily endorsing the political demands of the extremist ringleaders, there was a danger that agitation as such might become popular - a useful factor for future extremists and a most irksome prospect for British administrators. Third, and worst of all, there was the possibility that the anti-British elements, however "unrepresentative", might fall prey to the sinister influence of that new post-war bogey, World Communism, and thenceforth be used as tools for the kind of subversive activities already discernible in Malaya.

The policies of the Government provided further cause for anxiety. Far from acting to suppress the extremists the Government appeared to be pandering to them, thereby aggravating the situation. Creech Jones frequently declared his personal disapproval of extremist agitation as a political instrument<sup>46</sup> and, on at least one occasion, his recognition that Communist infiltration into some African colonies had already begun and would require firm handling.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, in the years from 1948 to 1951 it must have appeared to many Conservatives that the Government was following, in non-settler colonies at least, the same course that it had pursued in India. For those hard-core imperialists to whom the "loss" of

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45 HCD vol. 477 col. 1432 (12 July 1950).

46 Though he recognised that there was scope, and even a need, for "legitimate" agitation by constitutional means "if there is to be any healthy political and social life in our territories at all". Ibid., vol. 467 col. 2910 (29 July 1949).

47 Ibid., cols. 2908-10.

India had been little short of traumatic,<sup>48</sup> and who were convinced that the maintenance of Empire unity depended upon avoiding a repetition of "the Indian mistake" in colonial territories, it could have been no comfort to see independence granted to Ceylon and a series of constitutional concessions granted to colonial nationalists, especially in West Africa, apparently in response to agitation. The long-term consequence of these policies, as Conservatives foresaw accurately enough, would be the disintegration of the Empire. In their view this would be disastrous economically and strategically for Britain, and in every possible way for the colonies. The alternative to British rule in Africa, as Alport put it, was not "a series of peaceful and prosperous African states but at the best the degradation of Liberia and at the worst the inhumanities of Soviet colonial rule."<sup>49</sup> Dodds-Parker obviously spoke for many of his colleagues when he declared, in 1948: "I am convinced that further fragmentation of the Empire must be ruled out. We have seen enough of this breaking-up."<sup>50</sup>

Exactly how the new trends and policies were to be halted was a difficult question. Three main kinds of remedial action were regularly suggested. They had in common the goal of cooling the political atmosphere in colonies; if colonial peoples could be shown that there was nothing to be gained from the formation of nationalist movements or the instigation of disturbances, then perhaps such activity would cease and "progress", along approved lines, might be made. The first remedy, advocated most notably by Alport, was that British colonial administration should itself be reformed and strengthened:

"Our first task in Imperial policy, as I see it, is to re-establish throughout the Colonial Empire a firm basis of ordered administration, without which no social nor economic progress is possible. Responsibility must be decentralised by the Colonial Office to Governors who are not afraid of those responsibilities and who know that their policies, if vigorous and progressive, will not be upset by a Colonial

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48 At the 1947 Party Conference a delegate drew applause for this deeply-felt outburst: "India! The finest jewel in the British Crown it was called. It has now been cast like pearls before swine, and not because the Indians wanted it but because of a small minority who had been got at by Communist influence." 1947 Conference Report, p.69.

49 1950 Conference Report, p.34.

50 HCD vol. 454 col. 598 (22 July 1948).

Secretary, nagged at the behest of every back-stairs expert from Transport House. The task...can only be done by picked men on the spot."<sup>51</sup>

The second, advocated by Gammans among others, was that the focal point of constitutional decision-making should be removed as far as possible from the extremists' reach - indeed, back to the metropolis:

"I suggest...that only this Imperial Parliament should decide the pace of constitutional advance, and not a politically conscious and vocal minority avid for the spoils of office. Unless we are definite on [this]...we shall lay ourselves open to agitation and also to blackmail."<sup>52</sup>

Third, and "firmest" of all, was the recommendation that in certain territories the Government should make it clear, by some sort of unequivocal decree, that independence on the nationalists' terms would never be contemplated. Thus Archer Baldwin on the settler colonies:

"Statements which are sometimes made by responsible Ministers are giving the impression to the Africans that we are on the way out. That is not the way to get long-term development. The result is more lawlessness and crimes...I wish the Secretary of State would come out with a forthright statement, such as that made by the Governor of Kenya, Sir Philip Mitchell: 'This is a British Colony for better or worse. The choice has been made, and this Kenya and all its people are for ever British.'"<sup>53</sup>

On colonies considered "strategic", Gammans spoke similarly:

"No territory can leave the British Empire when by so doing, it imperils Imperial strategy and Imperial communications. I do not see why we should have any diffidence whatsoever in enunciating that as a principle. The Russians certainly have not...The Americans have held on to Panama...only on the grounds of their security. We who are very much more vulnerable than they are, need have no hesitation...in putting that limitation to any further grant of self-government."<sup>54</sup>

It would be easy to dismiss these recommendations as patently unrealistic even at the time they were made. The first two recommendations could also be criticised on the subsidiary ground of mutual inconsistency; only by depending heavily upon the dubious distinction between administrative decision-making and policy decision-making could the renewed authority of

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51 1950 Conference Report, p.33; see also article by Alport in the Daily Mail, 14 July 1950.

52 HCD vol. 453 col. 617 (8 July 1948).

53 Ibid., vol. 467 col. 1463 (20 July 1949).

54 Loc. cit., cols. 616-7.

Governors be reconciled with the renewed authority of the metropolitan legislature. Such criticisms, however, are beside the point. Here we are concerned only to note that certain attitudes did exist and were given forceful expression; also that all three remedies were at least consistent in their objectives, namely to restore order to colonies and the political initiative to Britain. The outcome of applying some or all of these measures, it could be hoped, was that colonies would revert to a kind of pre-political stability such that social and economic progress and the work of establishing imperial unity would become feasible once more. Thus the imperial believers returned to their starting-point. Just as there could be no colonial progress without imperial unity, there could be no imperial unity without colonial stability. Unity, progress and stability were interrelated policy goals. The ambition was vast: to most traditional Conservatives it was not yet apparent that it was also vain.

(iii) New Conservative Attitudes: the Role of Stanley

Undoubtedly most of the Conservative MPs who were articulate about colonial matters were traditional Conservatives who still spoke and thought in the idiom of a bygone heyday. This is not to say that all Conservatives were traditional Conservatives. Although the party in conference annually reaffirmed its support for the preferential principle, for example, it is likely that those who ardently believed in preference as the key to imperial unity - and, for that matter, who still looked upon the attainment of imperial unity as the party's most crucial post-war objective - constituted no more than a dedicated minority. Certainly they were a minority in the party's policy-making leadership, and to judge by the interwar history of preference they always had been.<sup>55</sup> A similar observation could be made about India. Though the party in general had been saddened by its loss, the truly dedicated imperialists - and on this issue, if not on preference, they included some of the party's leaders - were few in number and further saddened by the meekness with which their party colleagues had accepted the blow.<sup>56</sup> As yet no Conservative MP

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55 The practice of departing from the letter and spirit of Ottawa in favour of trade agreements with America had begun not with the Labour Government but under Conservative leadership in the late thirties. See Robinson, op.cit., p.53.

56 Interview with Lord Chandos.

would have disclaimed the appellation "imperialist" altogether; but the imperialism of most Conservatives existed chiefly as an emotion (that of pride), and bore no necessary relation to the specific policy objective of unification. This objective was almost entirely the preserve of such hardcore believers as the Amerys, Baldwin, Dodds-Larker, Gamman, Macdonald, Mackeson, Monsonby and others: in short, of the party's colonial specialists.

That the party specialists were in general the most extreme traditionalists makes all the more remarkable the position of Oliver Stanley. For Stanley, from 1945 until some months before his death in December 1950, was simultaneously the leader of the party's colonial specialists and by far the most liberal of the party's influential men in his approach to colonial problems. His role in these years, therefore, merits examination.

There could be no doubt that he was indeed influential. He was close to Churchill, but could stand up to him and have his own way in the planning of tactics.<sup>57</sup> He had held several ministerial offices and was spoken of as a future Chancellor. He was a member of the policy committee which drafted the Industrial Charter. As an orator he was witty and commanding.<sup>58</sup> By all accounts he was respected and liked not only by his party but also by his political opponents and other people with whom he dealt - not least people in colonies.

Nor could there be any dispute, in view of his record as Colonial Secretary from 1942 to 1945, about his liberalism. Stanley was entirely in sympathy with the new conceptions of development and welfare which had come into currency since the later thirties, and for three years was the driving force behind the preparatory work of the bustling wartime Colonial Office - a fact publicly and graciously acknowledged by George Hall in

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57 Chandos, Memoirs, p.336.

58 "No politician since Lord Birkenhead has been quicker with the bubble-pricking sally." Obituary notice, The Times, 12 Dec. 1950. At conferences his wit was usually exercised at the expense of those favourite butts, Cripps and Bevin. For example: "What are we to think of Sir Stafford Cripps who now embraces the Empire for which he once used to blush? It is so like Sir Stafford to be different from everyone else. After all, most of us carnivora kiss first and blush afterwards." 1948 Conference Report, p.71.

1946.<sup>59</sup> In particular, in the developmental field Stanley was responsible for the formulation of the 1945 Act, notably for the provisions which differentiated it from its predecessor.<sup>60</sup> And in the constitutional field he created important precedents. Internal self-government for the "mature" territories of Ceylon and Malta, universal adult suffrage in Jamaica and an African unofficial majority in the Gold Coast Legislature were all established or promised during his tenure. The last two of these changes appeared, in retrospect, particularly significant. The Jamaican precedent was important in that it was the first example, outside the Asian territories, of a major constitutional advance following hard upon local nationalist agitations (led in this case by Bustamante). And to provide for the first African majority in an African Legislative Council was clearly a breakthrough, a constitutional modification different in kind from any of its precursors.

Subsequently, as chief Opposition spokesman he supported the general line of Labour policy. He believed on principle that colonial policy must remain outside the arena of party conflict: "In the possibility of putting the colonial administration above the chances...of British elections, rests the only chance of a sane administration and a stable policy."<sup>61</sup> But his support was more than just a matter of principle. In fact he was pleased to see Labour pursuing policies which he felt he could regard as a continuation and development of his own.<sup>62</sup> Symptomatic of this approval was the continuing close relationship between himself and Creech Jones. Earlier this relationship had been valuable when Stanley, as Colonial Secretary in an all-party government, had habitually consulted Creech Jones and used his good offices

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59 HCD vol. 425 col. 239 (9 July 1946); and see above, p. 17.

60. The 1940 Act had authorised an annual expenditure of £5,000,000 (plus £500,000 for research), with the proviso that any money not spent in any one year had to be returned to the Exchequer. Stanley considered that the sum itself was inadequate and that the limiting proviso would prevent forward planning. Hence in the 1945 Act the limiting proviso was repealed and a much larger sum, £120,000,000, made available for spending over a ten-year period. Stanley envisaged even greater outlay once Britain's own economic situation was healthier. The Act was meant to function chiefly as a pump primer; he wrote later, in the Industrial Charter, that the present fund was "quite inadequate for extraordinary schemes for large-scale production, which Britain would have to finance by ad hoc grants." The Industrial Charter (Conservative and Unionist Central Office, 1947), p.17.

61 HCD vol. 453 col. 695 (8 July 1948).

to sound out the feelings of Labour MPs on proposed lines of policy. In 1949 he declared himself

"not interested in who has been responsible for bringing about this closer proximity, whether it is that the right honourable Gentleman has moved far from his early Fabian theories, or whether it is that we on this side have moved far from earlier conceptions of colonial relationship. The fact I am interested in is that we appear to have arrived, at any rate, at some community of purpose."<sup>63</sup>

With his traditionalist colleagues, on the other hand, Stanley had rather less community of purpose. He shared only at the most general level the sentiment of a continuing imperial destiny. On the level of practical policy he was no ardent preferentialist; indeed it was he who, as President of the Board of Trade, had negotiated the Anglo-American Trade Agreement of 1938. He was not dedicated to the idea that the "new" Empire could become more tightly organised than the old in the economic or any other sphere, and he did not believe that it could serve much longer as a basis for British claims to great-power status. The new Empire, as he conceived it, would be bound only to the extent that its members felt "a community of interest", and could exist only by "resting on mutual agreement."<sup>64</sup> And in the field of colonial policy he differed significantly from his traditionalist colleagues on the increasingly important issue of how to handle the nationalists, especially in the non-settler colonies. For him as for Creech Jones, the central problem was not how to eliminate political agitation but how to accommodate it within the framework of the guided-devolution policy. Whereas the traditionalists were prone to regard all agitations as unrepresentative and potentially subversive, Stanley was prepared to recognise what he called "agitation by constitutional means"<sup>65</sup> as a phenomenon to be ignored or suppressed at the administration's own peril. And where there appeared to be a genuine popular basis for nationalist demands, it followed that concessions would have to be offered. Stanley's approval of the extension of the Jamaican suffrage in the wake of local agitations was, for Creech Jones, a clear precedent for the much more widely publicised advances which he and Griffiths authorised for the Gold Coast after 1948.

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63 HCD vol. 467 cols. 1492-3 (20 July 1949).

64 1949 Conference Report, p.60.

65 HCD vol. 467 col. 2910 (29 July 1949).

Stanley was not, of course, permanently at odds with the traditionalists. Indeed there were important areas of colonial policy in which he appeared to be at one with them. No less than any other Conservative he drew the line at any design for colonial advance which might imperil Britain's "vital national interests" - the early abandonment, for example, of such a fortress colony as Cyprus. Nor would he countenance schemes which might drastically undermine the accumulated political privileges of European settlers. His concern for settler interests showed most clearly in his approval of the Rhodesian settlers' plans for closer union of their territories; by Welensky's account, for example, it was Stanley who gave him the profitable advice to aim for federation, rather than amalgamation, if he wanted to make any impression on the Government.<sup>66</sup> Yet even in these two areas of policy his attitudes could be distinguished from those professed by some of his colleagues. Baldwin, Dodds-Parker, Gammans and others often spoke as if any substantial political advance by native peoples was out of the question in strategic and settler territories. Stanley, like most of the interested Labour MPs, was more concerned to seek an optimum level at which the protection of British national interests in fortress colonies, and of settler enterprise in Kenya and the projected federation, could be reconciled with legitimate native aspirations to self-rule. The difference between these two positions was not nearly so polar as the differences which were later to divide the parties when a third option - native self-rule at the expense, if necessary, of British and settler interests - entered political calculations. But it was an important difference nevertheless; the difference between serving one dominant interest to the virtual exclusion of others, and seeking a political compromise among all the interests in a given area.

Yet in spite of all these divergencies, it is apparent that Stanley

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66 Sir Roy Welensky, Welensky's 4000 Days, pp.23-4. Welensky relates that he met Stanley through the good offices of Creech Jones, after the latter had informed him that amalgamation would be unthinkable.

retained the undiminished respect and confidence of his traditionalist colleagues. That he did so is one measure of his achievement as party spokesman. But there can be no easy explanation of how it was done. He obviously possessed the valuable political gift (shared, as later became evident, by his close friend Harold Macmillan) of appearing to be all things to all men: of looking like a Conservative while acting like a liberal. Thus, according to his aide Gerald Sayers, he was greatly assisted by a kind of induced myopia among his colleagues which enabled them to perceive and applaud his achievements as Colonial Secretary in the uncontroversial field of economic development while remaining apparently unaware of the implications of some of his decisions in the field of political advance.<sup>67</sup> And there is corroboration for this point in that as late as 1952 a Conservative pamphlet could declare that "Mr. Stanley's reputation as an outstanding Colonial Secretary will be judged by his work in the sphere of economic development."<sup>68</sup> But to a large extent his achievement could also be attributed to the conscious exercise of political skill. His speeches at post-war party conferences clearly reflected this. He always expressed an obviously sincere devotion to the Empire. At the same time he always took it upon himself gently to question the traditionalist ideas, and to inform the conference that a future Conservative government would not feel bound by them. His style can be observed in the contrast between, on the one hand, the traditionalist generalisation in the opening phrase of this sentence and, on the other, the scepticism of its hard core and the ambiguity of its ending:

"We want an economic unity, an economic exchange between the various parts of the Empire, brought about by how it may be, and do not let us exalt what is only one of the media of attaining our desire into being the object itself; and, quite clearly, Imperial Preference, if by that you mean merely a differential tariff, is by no means the only and often not the most efficacious way of securing our Empire trade; and if you are taking the broad feature, Empire Preference merely as a symbol, as a symbol of an Imperial economic unity which is now being subjected to external attack, then I think all of us stand four-square

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67 Interview with Sayers.

68 Conservatives and the Colonies (Conservative Political Centre, 1952), p.31.

by the doctrine that we must be allowed to make, within our own Commonwealth and Empire, the arrangements which appear best to us."<sup>69</sup>

But there was one point which Stanley stressed more than any other. In four successive conferences he sought to restrain the enthusiasm of those who pursued the goal of unity under British leadership by pointing out the undue optimism of assuming that all the Empire territories were ready and waiting for a lead. No longer, he told the 1949 conference, was it a case of

"dictation by this country and obedience by the other parts of the Commonwealth... Even in the colonies where the machinery of government is still in our hands, even there you find everywhere growing up a public opinion which has got to be consulted, a public opinion which has a right to be consulted, and a public opinion which can only be ignored at the cost of terrible troubles in the future."<sup>70</sup>

To sum up, Stanley was a key figure. For five years he worked within his party as an educator, stressing (if unobtrusively) the unreality of the old ideas in the post-war world. At the same time he provided the basis for bi-partisan colonial policy; partly because he believed, as a matter of principle, in the need for one, but also because he was in broad agreement with the goals and methods of Labour's policy. It is not obvious that there would have been any such agreement without him. For the traditional Conservatives tended to speak as if the profession of a "non-party" policy necessarily connoted support for the old imperial aspirations; as soon as government policy veered away from these it became their duty to express partisan opposition. This was most clearly true, in the post-war years, with reference to the problems of political advance in non-settler territories. It was Stanley's conviction that the nationalist movements in these territories must be heeded, even if the result were to be evolution towards imperial diversity rather than unity, that most sharply differentiated him from those of his colleagues who still hoped to implant a sense of imperial kinship among colonial populations, and who deplored Labour's drift towards "fragmentation."

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69 1948 Conference Report, p.71.

70 1949 Conference Report, p.59.

## 2. Party Organisation, Policy Formulation and Parliamentary Activity

### (i) Party Organisation

Until the mid-forties the Conservative Party lacked any machinery for the systematic consideration of colonial affairs. In the parliamentary party a backbench Imperial Affairs Committee existed but on strictly colonial topics had seldom been very active. In the Central Office there were no full-time party officials or research workers in the field. There was no journal to deal regularly with colonial matters, nor any output of pamphlets and policy statements. Most notably, perhaps, there was no Conservative equivalent of the Fabian Colonial Bureau. The Empire Economic Union, essentially a pressure group for those Conservatives who most ardently sought certain changes in imperial trade policies, could not be cast in the role of counterpart to a body which since 1940 had functioned as a research organisation, clearing-house of information, centre of an extensive web of colonial contacts, and focus for the activities of Labour MPs interested in all aspects of colonial affairs.

A broadly similar story could in fact be told of the party in almost any policy field. The Conservative Party had never shared Labour's passion for arguing, defining and publishing its policies. By 1945 it had governed the country, alone or in coalition, for the best part of thirty years, and was long accustomed to the fact that in general party policy was government policy, worked out at ministerial level with the benefit of Civil Service advice. The role of the party organisation was chiefly to provide liaison between leadership and constituencies for electoral purposes; only in a very small way was it also concerned to undertake the tasks of research, publication, provision of material for party study groups and memoranda for its leaders. The lacuna in the colonial field, therefore, was not really very remarkable.

But it should not be assumed, simply because the party lacked appropriate machinery, that there were no means by which Conservative MPs interested in colonial affairs could pursue their interest. Outside the formal party framework a variety of means did exist. In the mid-forties there were some fifty private societies, based in London, whose raison d'être was the Empire. Some of these, such as the Royal Empire Society and the

Royal African Society, were primarily learned societies which also provided club facilities and venues for meetings and discussions. Others, bound together with the learned societies in the Joint Empire Societies Conference, were primarily organs of hospitality such as the Victoria League and the Overseas League, "cause" organisations such as the Empire Day Movement, or organisations existing mainly for people with an interest in a particular region such as the East India Association or The Association of British Malaya. Several other bodies were chiefly concerned with business and commercial matters, among them the British Empire Producers' Organisation, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire, the Empire Industries Association, the Ceylon Association in London, the West India Committee and the Joint East Africa Board.<sup>71</sup> In this milieu of voluntary organisations Conservatives could often be found playing prominent parts. The Royal African Society, for example, which brought together about a thousand people with assorted African backgrounds - administrative, commercial, military, academic - included a fair sprinkling of MPs and peers, most of whom were Conservatives: Harlech (a former Colonial Secretary), de la Warr and Plymouth (both former Colonial Under-Secretaries), Clarendon (a former Dominions Under-Secretary), Cranworth and Chesham among the peers, and Sir Irving Albery, Alport, Sir George Broadbridge, Beresford Craddock, Dodds-Parker, Frederick Erroll, Sir Edward Grigg, Sir Geoffrey Peto, Ponsonby and Alfred Wise among the past, present and future Conservative MPs. Of these Ponsonby was probably the most active member. He had revitalised the Society from its lowest wartime ebb both by soliciting subscriptions from banks and firms and by providing premises in the Joint East Africa Board's building,<sup>72</sup> and eventually became the Society's President. Several of the same people were active in the Royal Empire Society, whose membership substantially overlapped

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71 This last body was set up in 1926<sup>at</sup> Ormsby-Gore's suggestion to represent in London the views and interests of East African business concerns. It widened its representation in 1947 to include Rhodesian firms and re-named itself the Joint East and Central Africa Board. See Stahl, Metropolitan Organisation of British Colonial Trade, pp.189-93.

72 "Fifty Years of a British African Society," African Affairs (Journal of the Royal African Society), Vol. L No. 200 (July 1951), p.191.

that of the Royal African Society. There were numerous connections, too, between the party and those bodies representing business and commercial interests. In the 1945 Parliament several MPs were connected with the British Empire Producers' Organisation by reason of their own business interests in colonies. Among them were Roland Robinson, with an interest in British Guianese gold; Baldwin, Dodds-Parker, Sir George Harvie-Watt, Sir Hugh O'Neill, Kenneth Pickthorn and Ponsonby, all with business interests in East or Central Africa; and Sir John Barlow, Rupert de la Bere, Walter Fletcher, Sir Arnold Gridley and William Morrison, all with business interests in Malaya. Conservatives dominated among the parliamentary representatives on the executive of the Joint East Africa Board, a notable point if only because this executive sought, as a matter of policy, to maintain liaison with Westminster by the inclusion of representatives "of all parties." In the mid-forties its parliamentary representation was provided by three Conservative peers (Tweedsmuir, Chesham and Cranworth), four Conservative MPs (Baldwin, Dodds-Parker, Donner and Ponsonby) and two Labour MPs (Ernest Kinghorn and Ivor Thomas<sup>73</sup>). Finally, as has already been mentioned, the membership of the Parliamentary Branch of the non-party Empire Industries Association was exclusively Conservative.

That Conservatives should have pursued their interest in colonies through extra-party bodies was natural enough, and should not be ascribed simply to the lack of party machinery. Lord Boyd, when interviewed, pointed out that the miscellany of organisations to which interested Conservatives belonged had in common the assumption that the Empire was a permanent, highly respectable and very British institution. On the whole, their view of Empire mirrored the traditional attitude of the Conservative Party; hence they provided perfectly appropriate outlets for the party's interest.

Throughout the forties these outlets remained important. In 1944 and 1945, however, in the course of general organisational reform, the party took its first steps towards supplementing them. In May 1944, in recognition of the increasing public and governmental interest in colonial affairs, an "adviser" on the subject, Gerald Sayers, was appointed to the Conservative

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73 It may be noted that the first of these two had business interests in East Africa and the second, having risen to become Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, resigned from government and party in 1948 and joined the Conservative Party in 1949.

Central Office.<sup>74</sup> After the 1945 election defeat a "Parliamentary Secretariat", comprising a corps of party officials who specialised in various fields and were supposed to act as a kind of shadow Civil Service to the party, was established under the direct control of the party leader. Sayers became a member of this corps. He was to remain in his new post until his retirement in 1963.

Sayer's functions as imperial expert can be briefly described.<sup>75</sup> Primarily, he was expected to serve as adviser to the party's principal imperial spokesman. This task entailed both research and the writing of briefs and memoranda. Research was almost entirely a matter of collecting and tabulating published material, chiefly press cuttings; Sayers had no privileged access to Colonial Office files, though like most people professionally interested in the field he was able to build up good personal relationships with Colonial Office officials. He produced numerous briefs for Stanley on day-to-day issues arising in Parliament, but detailed memoranda were not often required - perhaps because Stanley already had a specialist knowledge of the field.

Occasionally party members proposed that Sayers might also embody his researches in a regular publication to act as a Conservative counterpart to Empire. Sayers and Stanley felt, however, that it would be most difficult for him to run a journal while serving as principal adviser. Since he was a party servant it could not be an "independent" journal; all material published by him ought to conform with the party's official views on policy. But equally, because he was a servant it was not for him to decide what these views were. Everything in the journal would have to be re-edited and cleared by Stanley. Thus a journal would be a most tiresome undertaking, and certainly no counterpart to Empire. As Sayers saw it, Empire was feasible only because the Fabians were an autonomous association, independent of

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74 The Times, 9 May 1944. Then in his fifties, Sayers had worked in the Colonial Service in East Africa from 1914 to 1939 and in the Ministry of Production during most of the war.

75 Most of the material in the next eight paragraphs is based upon an interview with Gerald Sayers and, to a lesser extent, upon letters received from Sayers and interviews with Lord Boyd and Lord Chandos.

Transport House. That they could also act as policy advisers simply indicated that they had the best of both worlds - which Sayers, in his official capacity, did not.

Sayer's other major task was to serve as secretary of the party's Imperial Affairs Committee, though he did not do this on a regular basis until the amalgamation of the Parliamentary Secretariat with the Research Department and Library in 1948 made him a Civil Servant to the party in general as well as to the principal spokesman. This committee had been re-constituted in 1945 and, under Stanley's chairmanship, became much more lively than hitherto. In organisation and functions it corresponded closely to other Conservative back-bench committees. It was re-elected for each new parliamentary session, with a Chairman, one or two Vice-Chairmen, and two Joint Honorary Secretaries. The turnover of office at sessional elections may be seen in the table below.

Imperial Affairs Committee: Officers<sup>76</sup>

	Oct 1945	Nov 1946	Nov 1947	Nov 1948	Apr 1950	Feb 1951
Chairman	Stanley	Stanley	Stanley	Stanley	Stanley	Lennox-Boyd
Vice-Chairman	Macdonald	Macdonald	Mackeson	Mackeson	Lennox-Loyd Gammans	Gammans
Secretaries	Gammans Dodds-Parker	Gammans Dodds-Parker	Gammans Dodds-Parker	Gammans Dodds-Parker	Dodds-Parker Alport	Dodds-Parker Alport

The Committee's activist membership numbered about fifteen. A further thirty or so MPs were moderately active members, and on a few occasions attendance went up to about sixty. A structure of regional sub-committees covered East, Central and West Africa, the Far East, the Caribbean and the

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<sup>76</sup> Based upon reports appearing in The Times, 12 Oct. 1945, 18 Nov. 1946, 4 Nov. 1947, 13 Nov. 1948, 13 April 1950, 19 Feb. 1951. Sir Peter Macdonald was a previous chairman. He was credited by the party with having invented the "member" system of ministerial representation in colonies: as chairman of the committee he had urged this system in a letter to The Times on 30 Dec. 1944, after which Stanley, though not at first convinced, had taken up the matter with colonial governors.

Mediterranean, as well as the dominions. Most of the sub-committee chairman had business interests in the regions concerned. Walter Fletcher, for example, chairman of a firm of rubber merchants, served as chairman of the Far East sub-committee.

The Committee met in the evenings, about once a fortnight, during the session. Its chief function was to rehearse debates; before each Supply debate, for instance, Stanley and his lieutenants would work out the party line for public presentation. To a limited degree its sub-committees also worked as study groups. From time to time either the whole body or the relevant sub-committees met to be addressed by visiting speakers. These were usually colonial politicians or Civil Servants whose own political sympathies were broadly Conservative and with whom Committee leaders had fairly close contacts. They included politicians such as the East and Central African settler leaders; they also included some Governors and other senior Colonial Civil Servants who, it appears, often passed on to the Committee's leaders information about colonial situations which the Colonial Office would probably have classified as confidential.

Sayers, once he was full-time secretary, was required to attend and if necessary take minutes of meetings, to coordinate the activities of sub-committees, and to provide a steady supply of factual information to members. He was not required to provide them with briefs for parliamentary speeches, but upon request he would suggest reading and lines worth following up in debate. He would also advise MPs on answering letters, particularly those from people, formerly or currently resident in colonies, who were alarmed not only at the trend of Labour policies but also at what appeared to be Conservative acquiescence in them.

Neither Sayers nor the Committee had the authority to formulate and issue detailed statements of policy. But in the imperial field no less than any other, the post-war party felt it necessary to produce at least one lengthy policy document. We may go on now to observe the process of this document's gestation.

(ii) Formulating a Policy Statement

According to Sayers, Stanley saw two large obstacles in the way of producing a policy document. The first was the difficulty of meeting the expectations both of people at home and of people in colonies. For the party and the domestic electorate, a statement of broad principles would be most suitable; but it seemed likely that people in colonies would be less interested in such a statement than in detailed proposals for their own territories. To reconcile the two within one reasonably compact pamphlet would not be easy. The second was the difficulty of deciding whether the extremely traditional views still held by most of the party's colonial specialists should receive the imprimatur of publication in a policy document or whether they should be supplanted by less traditional formulations. Largely because of these difficulties, Imperial Policy was slow to emerge. Though preliminary work had begun in 1945 the document itself did not appear until four years later - the last but one of the series of party statements covering all major areas of policy.

The first attempt at formulation took place some months after the 1945 election, when a small committee, including Sayers and a few leading members of the Imperial Affairs Committee under the chairmanship of a retired governor, began meeting in the Central Office. The resulting draft pamphlet was circulated in the Office but was considered unsuitable for publication and, it appears, was never referred to again.<sup>77</sup> The next step was an attempt to work within the framework of the first phase of R.A. Butler's celebrated Two-way Movement of Ideas. In January 1947 a short pamphlet by Lord Cranborne (Salisbury), Stanley's predecessor as Colonial Secretary, came out in the party's What Do You Think series. Entitled Lord Cranborne Talks with You about the Commonwealth and Empire, it provided a brief account of the Commonwealth's evolution and was "not intended to draw a moral" -

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77 Report of the Colonial Affairs Sub-committee (Sir A. Cochrane, chairman) of the Conservative Party Central Committee on Post-war Problems, 1945. (~~held in the Conservative Research Department~~). Cochrane had been a Unionist MP 1924-9 and 1932-6, and Governor of Burma 1930-41.

although in its author's opinion certain conclusions were clearly indicated, for example:

"The peoples of the Empire, differing from each other in race, colour and religion, have this in common: they have a mutual interest in the maintenance of the British way of life."<sup>78</sup>

Participants in the Two-Way Movement were then invited to consider and discuss six questions about the dominions and colonies. In his notes for discussion group leaders Cranborne hinted strongly at the "right" answers to these questions. Thus:

#### QUESTIONS

"...Q3. Is the existing imperial preference system justified under the present conditions of world trade? Should it be extended?

Q4. How far should the United Kingdom taxpayer be financially responsible for the economic and social development of the colonies? Or should the colonies be left to rely on their own resources?

Q5. Is the existing tendency towards regionalisation a sound development from the point of view of the colonies and the United Kingdom?

Q6. In what way has the new situation in India and the Middle East affected the political, strategic and economic importance of the Central and Southern African colonies?

#### NOTES

Discuss the advantages gained from the Ottawa Agreement of 1932...

Consider...the importance of improving the social and economic conditions of the colonial peoples.. Consider the effect of improved economic standards in the colonies on British trade.

There are five groups of colonies where regionalisation has or may have definite advantages - Malaya, East Africa, Central Africa, West Africa and the Caribbean...

...There may be advantages in locating in one or other of these colonies an Imperial strategic reserve..."<sup>79</sup>

The report on Phase One of the Movement was published later in 1947. It revealed that on all questions in the imperial field the replies of participants had closely followed Cranborne's lead.<sup>80</sup> Clearly, no substantial upward movement of ideas could be expected on this subject; the initiative in framing a policy document thus remained firmly with the leadership.

78 What Do You Think? Lord Cranborne talks with you about the Commonwealth and Empire (Conservative Political Centre, 1947), p.13.

79 Ibid., pp.22-3.

80 Two-Way Movement (Report on Phase 1, 1947), pp.7-9.

At the 1947 party conference several speakers called for the early publication of a document. They included E.S. Amery, Aubrey Jones (who wanted an "Imperialist Empire Charter"), and a constituency delegate who declared, rather implausibly, that an imperial charter would be just what the party needed to "capture the imagination of the floating vote in this country."<sup>81</sup> A year later several delegates pressed the point again. Stanley gave an assurance that "work is far advanced",<sup>82</sup> but offered no hint as to the document's substance. Almost another year had passed before, on 24 June 1949, Imperial Policy at last emerged.

At the time of publication it was revealed that the drafting committee had included Lennox-Boyd, Dodds-Parker, Gamman and Brigadier Low, under the chairmanship of Lord Tweedsmuir. It was generally assumed that Stanley had guided the committee in wording its draft, that Butler had played some part in the editing, and that Churchill had probably intervened as well.<sup>83</sup> Both Sayers and Alport (then a Research Department official) had provided secretarial assistance and had also made drafting suggestions.<sup>84</sup>

The outcome of this labour by so many hands was a glossy booklet of sixty-four pages in which almost every strand of Conservative sentiment and thought found expression. Perhaps inevitably, it was a document full of compromises between traditional and less traditional ideas. It began conventionally, with an account of the party's historical connections with Empire and the assertion that by contrast with the "parochial" and "unrealistic" socialist approach, the party had a unique appreciation of the deeper imperial values.<sup>85</sup> Thereafter a series of statements counterpoised each other. Imperial preference was of proven value; in future, however, it would have to be subordinated to a wider system of Imperial Priorities -- for "the investment of money, capital goods, migration, research and trade as essential

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81 1947 Conference Report, pp.63 and 67.

82 1948 Conference Report, p.70.

83 Hoffman, The Conservative Party in Opposition, pp.181-2.

84 Interview with Sayers.

85 Imperial Policy. A Statement of Conservative Policy for the British Empire and Commonwealth (Conservative and Unionist Central Office, 1949), pp.3-4.

to our whole combined economy" (pl. 29,31). Private investment would be essential for colonial development; but all private enterprises must fit in "with any general economic plans approved by the colonial government concerned" (p. 39). Imperial unity would be achieved through such devices as a Commonwealth Tribunal, a civil liaison staff, more frequent Prime Ministers' Conferences, an advisory Defence Council, and "adequate machinery for economic consultation as our counterpart to the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation" (pp. 20,29); at the same time it was recognised that the idea of common citizenship, which some considered the basic pre-requisite of effective unity, had been ruled out by the British Nationality Act of 1948. Rather lamely, the party accepted the implications of this Act but declared itself "free to return to the old concept of common citizenship, if this should be the wish of the other dominions." (p. 11).

Several pages were devoted to the subject of central interest here, that of constitutional development in the colonies. The drafting committee's problem of whether to outline general principles or proffer specific plans for individual territories had been resolved - again, perhaps, inevitably - in favour of the former approach. Repeatedly stating the party's adherence to the accepted goal of guiding colonies to self-government "within the framework of the British Empire" (pp. 43,52,55), the document outlined several "considerations" which should govern all decisions on the method and timing of the transfer of power (pp. 53-5). Firstly, it would be wrong to hand over control "to a small and clamorous political group" out of touch with the masses. (No doubt this point was conceived with the West African nationalists in mind; no doubt, too, many Conservatives did not appreciate that its phraseology applied equally well to the East and Central African Europeans). Secondly (and obviously with the Europeans very much in mind) it was stressed that the "welfare of minorities" in plural societies must be ensured; it would be wrong to hand over these minorities to "possible victimisation by politicians incapable of exercising power in accordance with democratic conceptions of justice, tolerance and humanity." Thirdly, the value of tribal systems of local self-government should be recognised but replaced, "where necessary, with suitable forms of local government...an essential preliminary to the granting of self-government on a wider scale." Fourthly, the document declared that Conservatives, "unlike the Fabians",

did not

"underestimate the difficulties which surround the application of democratic constitutions and ideas to people whose traditions are totally different from those of the western world...progress must inevitably be gradual. Each constitutional step forward must be accompanied by a growing understanding, not only of the machinery, but also of the spirit of democratic government."

The fifth point reiterated one made several pages earlier, to the effect that economic development in colonies must take priority over political: it was essential that self-government should be preceded by "economic stability." Finally, attention was drawn to the point that self-government should be granted only "within the Empire":

"We believe that colonial peoples on achieving self-government will find greater security, prosperity and freedom as members of the Commonwealth than as small independent units, which could fall an easy prey to the greed or ambition of other great powers less liberty-loving than ourselves. Moreover, there are certain colonies whose retention within the Empire is essential to the security of the Commonwealth."

In all this there was nothing novel or unexpected. Even the specific proposals for new Commonwealth machinery had often been made before, though without effect. But the party in general seemed to find it satisfactory. In sharp contrast to its most famous predecessor, the Industrial Charter, it had an untroubled passage to formal acceptance. At the 1949 conference the only point which Stanley felt it necessary to explain to his audience was that the phrase Imperial Priorities had been deliberately chosen in place of imperial preference.<sup>86</sup> A solitary delegate complained that the statement as a whole did not provide a "definite lead";<sup>87</sup> subsequently it was endorsed without dissent.

Outside the party, Imperial policy provoked interest and editorial comment. Most of the journals and newspapers which pronounced upon it were more impressionistic than analytical, and were also predictably partisan. Thus, whereas East Africa and Rhodesia, a London-edited weekly solicitous of

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86 1949 Conference Report, p.59.

87 Ibid., p.54.

settler interests, found it "a modern-minded, bracing piece of work",<sup>88</sup> monthlies such as Venture and Socialist Commentary (whose editorial committee then included Vita Hinden, W. Arthur Lewis and Frank Horrabin, all members of the FCB) found only "unctuous paternalism" and "a woeful impression of blimpishness."<sup>89</sup> Among the dailies the liberal News Chronicle sought, and was pleased to detect, "marks of the 'new liberalism'", while The Times gave cautious approval yet revealed an odd misunderstanding of current party attitudes, for example by asserting that the Conservatives "acquiesce by silence in the lapse of the Imperial Conference" and that Conservative demands for "a proper place" for private enterprise in partnership with state-directed concerns "definitely challenge Socialist thought" on colonial development.<sup>90</sup> Only the weekly Economist remarked on the compromise between progressive and traditional elements in the party; concerning colonial political evolution, for example, there was "evidence of a desire to frame a policy in accordance with the facts as they exist today", but also "evidence of a carefully controlled distaste for certain new constitutional development."<sup>91</sup> In a subsequent issue, The Economist amplified its comment on the latter tendency by drawing attention to this sentence:

"The Conservative Party sees every reason for encouraging further white settlement in those colonies which are climatically suitable, provided that this can be done without prejudice to the rights of native peoples."

What The Economist found significant in this formula was that the phrase "white settlement" was placed first and native rights second. Yet in the Devonshire Declaration of 1923 a Conservative Government had asserted that African interests must rank paramount in the event of any conflict of interests in Kenya. Could it be that the wheel had turned full circle? In the absence of any close definition of "the rights of native peoples", it might well be concluded that Imperial Policy was offering, in guarded words, the party's support for

89 Venture, Aug. 1949, p.1; Socialist Commentary, Aug. 1949, pp.169-70.

90 News Chronicle, 25 June 1949; The Times, 25 June 1949.

91 Economist, 2 July 1949, p.10.

88 East Africa and Rhodesia, 30 June 1949.

the principle of European paramountcy.<sup>92</sup>

This point was not taken up elsewhere, not even by Labour MPs or the Fabians. As was shown in the last chapter, Labour's own official attitude towards European settlement was none too clearly defined at this time. It seemed curious, nevertheless, that Labour should have missed this opportunity to press the Conservatives to amplify their concept of what, precisely, constituted the rights of native peoples. Not until the Conservatives were back in government did Labour seriously and persistently seek to do so.

### (iii) Parliamentary Activity

Conservatives usually maintained that their parliamentary activities were regulated by their belief in the need for a bi-partisan policy. As we have seen, this notion could mean different things to different men. On the issue of West African political advance, for example, it was equally possible for those Conservatives who supported the Government's policy and for those who opposed it to justify their views in the name of the bi-partisan approach. For whereas to a liberal Conservative the term implied broad acquiescence in the Government's goals and methods, to a traditional Conservative it implied rather that both parties ought to subscribe to the older objectives of "firmness" and imperial unity. In traditional eyes, to the extent that the Government was moving away from these objectives it was breaching bi-partisan policy<sup>and</sup> therefore merited criticism. As early as 1946 one traditional Conservative, Ponsonby, had presented this point of view, if in vague terms: "I think the only way the Opposition would come into it as an Opposition, would be if the Government in power were weak...if they vacillated or showed lack of courage."<sup>93</sup> On the Labour side, naturally, it was the criticism rather than the policy which was regarded as a breach.

But back-bench attempts and counter-attempts to distribute blame in this respect never really provided the stuff of full-scale party warfare in the House. They found expression rather in isolated speeches and, at least once, in an exchange of letters in The Times.<sup>94</sup> In general, parliamentary

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92 Economist, 6 Aug. 1949, p.283.

93 HCD vol. 425 col. 286 (9 July 1946).

94 Letters by Baldwin (10 April 1951), Gammans (11 April 1951), and (jointly) Sir Richard Acland, Leslie Hale, James Johnson and George Wigg (13 April 1951).

bi-partism did operate: which is to say that as a rule colonial policy was genuinely regarded by the Opposition as a field in which neither head-on collisions with the Government nor "tactical" opposition was called for. Hence, as was shown in Chapter III, there were no general motions of censure on colonial policy and for five years the Opposition even waived its right to initiate Supply debates in order to allow the Government time to present its annual report on the colonies.

This self-restraint derived from a belief in Opposition responsibility to which Stanley gave early expression:

"I am certain that hon. Members on this side will never forget that in the colonial field we also have our responsibility, and that we share the responsibility that rests upon Parliament as a whole, of guiding sixty million people of all races, colours and creeds to...self-government."<sup>95</sup>

To the party conference he justified the parliamentary party's self-restraining tactics in rather different terms, suggesting that it was Conservative moderation which helped keep the Government itself on a moderate course:

"I have done everything I could to keep the Empire out of party politics. There is no hope of a consistent Imperial policy if that policy is put on a partisan basis...therefore, we Conservatives in the House have, during this Parliament, been generous to our opponents on Imperial matters. We have preferred to support the Creech Jones of the Colonial Office rather than to resurrect the Creech Jones of the Fabian Colonial Bureau."<sup>96</sup>

Yet, whatever the form these justifications took, it would be a mistake to assume that the Opposition's attitude was maintained on anything other than a conditional basis. It was argued earlier that no Conservative, traditional or liberal, would have condoned any serious attempt by the Government either to undermine the position of European settlers or to initiate a withdrawal from those colonies regarded as vital for Imperial communications and security. As it happened the Government never did, in the Opposition's estimation, overstep these two most important lines. But on less "fundamental matters too there were limits to the Opposition's tolerance, and these occasionally became evident.

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95 HCB vol. 425 col. 275 (9 July 1946).

96 1947 Conference Report, pp.67-8.

In the field of economic policy, for example, one line was quite plainly drawn when in 1948 Stanley rejected an invitation to sit on the Government's new Colonial Economic Development Council, on the grounds "that it might inconvenience him in any criticism he might have to make."<sup>97</sup> Even for him, apparently, the principles of "bi-partism" and "Opposition responsibility" would not accommodate participation in the Government's machinery of economic consultation. And more broadly, there was often a good deal of party feeling manifested in debates on the relative merits of private and state enterprise in colonial development.<sup>98</sup> Here it is worth resurrecting, for a moment, that most celebrated and controversial of all colonial-development schemes: the affair of the East African groundnuts. For in this instance it was a matter not just of party feeling, but of full-scale attack. The issue was brought to angry debate three times during 1949, and on each occasion the Opposition divided the House.

Of course, the groundnuts fiasco was never regarded wholly, or even mainly, as a colonial issue. The responsible minister was John Strachey, Minister of Food, and his was the resignation which the Opposition demanded. And for the most part the Opposition's line of attack, in a pre-election year, was simply to depict the affair as a generic example of socialist "muddle" and "waste". But at the same time it was obvious that the Government's general policy for colonial development was implicated. Both sides recognised this in their choice of front-bench speakers in the final censure debate - Stanley and Lennox-Boyd for the Opposition and Creech Jones supporting Strachey for the Government. In addition, several of the back-bench speakers in the three debates spoke in their capacity as colonial specialists: for example Baldwin, Barlow, Dodds-Parker, Harris, Macdonald and Ponsonby among the Conservatives and Hynd, Sheffington and Sorensen among Labour Members. And Lennox-Boyd stated for the Opposition the view that the Government had made an administrative blunder in not assigning the scheme to the Colonial Office in the first

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97 See the exchanges between Gammans, Rees-Williams (the Under-Secretary) and Stanley, HCD vol. 453 col. 608 (8 July 1948).

98 See e.g. remarks by Dodds-Parker, HCD vol. 441 col. 324 (29 July 1947), and Frederic Harris, ibid., vol. 454 col. 670 (22 July 1948); also letter by Gammans, Financial Times, 14 Dec. 1950.

place:

"It has always been our view that the conduct of this scheme should be in the hands of the Colonial Office. Many of the difficulties in the life of the African people that may well spring from this well-meaning, large-scale, mechanised effort, could be reduced if not avoided if the Colonial Office, with its vast experience, were the responsible Government Department for this scheme."<sup>99</sup>

For these reasons, the groundnuts affair may fairly be regarded as the major example of a case in which the Opposition judged that its conditions for "generosity" on colonial matters had not been met.

In the 1950-1 Parliament there were three more divisions on questions of policy in British dependencies: the exile of Seretse Khama (28 March 1950), the failure of the Colonial Development Corporation's Gambia poultry scheme (13 March 1951), and the exile of Tshekedi Khama (26 June 1951).

Of the three it is clear that the first at least had no tactical significance, since the Opposition applied only a one-line whip. Nor was the division related exclusively to Seretse; it came at the end of a debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill during which several topics had been raised. But that it did relate substantially to Seretse's case, which was in fact the last topic discussed before the division, was shown by the abstentions of the Labour left-wingers mentioned in the last chapter. And that the Opposition did disagree with the Government on principle had been evident since Churchill led the interrogation of Gordon Walker on March 8, albeit that the principle in question was not the one which Fabians and Labour back-benchers had held to be at stake. Taking their lead from Churchill's phrase "a very disreputable transaction,"<sup>100</sup> most Conservatives were more concerned about the Government's alleged trickery than its alleged appeasement: if the Government had indeed deceived Seretse, then it had violated a principle of honour. The case was therefore sui generis. The Conservatives' opposition was not merely tactical, but neither was it based on disagreement about a principle which pertained peculiarly to colonial policy.

The second of the three, by contrast, was pre-eminently party-political. Like East African groundnuts, West African eggs were political ammunition with

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99 HCD vol. 470 col. 143 (21 Nov. 1949).

100 Ibid., vol. 472 col. 295 (8 March 1950).

which to pelt the Government. Opposition speakers, led by Lennox-Boyd, described the Gambia failure as another glaring instance of "maladministration" and "waste", and after a heated debate the Government very narrowly won a vote with three-line whips applied on both sides.

Finally, the debate on Tshekedi. In this case there seems to have been a mixture of motives. The subject was actually raised and the debate initiated by Clement Davies, the Liberal leader. But the necessary parliamentary time was made available by the Conservative Party, and there can be no reason to dispute the claim of Labour speakers<sup>101</sup> that the Conservatives provided time very largely because they saw this as an issue on which the Government could be seriously embarrassed. At the same time, as Tshekedi's biographer shows, many Conservatives were deeply concerned with the principle of the case, and Lennox-Boyd, Julian Amery and Brigadier Low among others spoke eloquently on Tshekedi's behalf.<sup>102</sup> But as with Seretse's case, they saw it chiefly as a matter of "unjust" treatment: what was at stake was not some special principle of imperial policy so much as the general reputation of British justice. In the event the vote was close, but would have been closer still had not fifteen right-wing Conservatives demonstrated their approval of the Government's policy by abstaining.

In later years Conservatives sometimes claimed that when in Opposition their party "never" divided the House on a colonial issue. This was a significant claim because it was used to support the argument that the "breakdown of bi-partisan policy" in the early fifties was attributable entirely to the Labour Party, having originated in an election broadcast made by Griffiths in October 1951.<sup>103</sup> But the preceding discussion indicates that the breakdown had antecedents, if not origins, in Conservative Party activities on occasions earlier than this. It is technically arguable that, as in the case of Palestine, the groundnuts and Khama affairs were not really colonial issues, since the minister primarily responsible was not the Colonial

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101 E.g. Reginald Paget and Eirene White: HCD vol. 489 cols. 1248, 1257 (26 June 1951).

102 Benson, op.cit., pp.238-9.

103 See e.g. Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs (monthly, Conservative Research Department), Jan. 1954, p.3; Chandos, op.cit., p.355.

Secretary. But the point is that those issues, unlike Palestine, were widely regarded and discussed on both sides as if they were, in large measure, colonial issues; while in the Gambia poultry case not even the technical argument is applicable, since no one disputed the Colonial Secretary's ministerial responsibility. It remains true that - for a variety of perfectly valid reasons - the Conservative Party several times divided the House on questions of policy implementation in dependent territories.

YEARS OF CONFLICT: 1951-9

## CHAPTER VI

## THE BREAKDOWN OF BI-PARTISAN POLICY, 1951-4

"Policy in its broadest sense appeared to be bi-partisan. I was, however, to witness with sorrow the complete breakdown of a bi-partisan policy."

Viscount Chandos, The Memoirs of Lord Chandos, p.355.

In the forties it was still possible to conceive of colonial policy as a series of British initiatives. Political pressures from the colonies were relatively feeble, and the main problem in dealing with these pressures was thought to be that of "harnessing" them to "the task of building up community life".<sup>1</sup> In the early fifties this conception appeared increasingly inadequate. Foreshadowed by the Gold Coast disturbances, the growing force of colonial political pressures produced eruptions of violence, most notably in Kenya, and several emergency situations. In many territories new arrangements and constitutional structures were called for as old ones cracked under strain. In Britain the Conservative Government made plain not only its recognition of colonial ambitions but also its intention to retain the initiative. On one hand colonial peoples were acknowledged to be "awakening", and Lyttelton won praise for his work towards the eventual independence of Nigeria, the Gold Coast and the West Indies. On the other hand official statements remained steeped in the flavour of "guidance", with a stronger emphasis than before on the maintenance of order; thus Lyttelton acted as accoucheur of Central African federation against vocal African resistance and sought wholly or partly military solutions for problems in Malaya, Kenya and British Guiana.

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1 Cmd. 7433: The Colonial Empire (1947-1948), (HMSO, 1948), pp.2-3.

From the Labour Party's point of view the political importance of colonial affairs increased greatly in these circumstances. When in December 1952 the party's National Executive Committee sent to West Africa the first fact-finding mission it had ever sponsored in colonial territories, Venture could describe it as "a sign of the times".<sup>2</sup> At the party conferences of 1952 and 1954 there were unprecedentedly long discussions and several resolutions on colonial policy. In 1953 the subject was not reached on the conference agenda - at which Attlee expressed regret<sup>3</sup> - but many resolutions were sent in and their content typified the resolutions submitted to all three conferences: twelve condemned racial discrimination, fifteen called for independence (with some suggesting target dates) and six for increased economic aid (with some expressing a readiness to make economic sacrifices in Britain), while others referred to educational and land reforms and the withdrawal of British troops.<sup>4</sup> At Transport House new administrative staff was appointed to assist Farmer; by 1954, when John Hatch took over as Commonwealth Officer, the post was acquiring sufficient importance to justify an ultimately successful campaign by several people for the establishment of a Commonwealth Department. In Parliament one of many signs of Labour MP's' growing interest could be found in their recourse to House of Commons motions in order to express views on colonial matters. By contrast with their previous neglect of this medium, Labour Members sponsored thirteen colonial affairs motions between February 1951 and March 1954. Seven concerned Kenya, two Malaya, two the Khamas, and two colonial policy in general. All were "liberal" motions, whether advocating the partial opening of the White Highlands to African farmers or the cessation of the collective punishment of villages in the Malayan war. Three motions drew over a hundred signatures, another four between

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2 Venture, March 1953, p.3.

3 1953 Conference Report, p.206.

4 Venture, Nov. 1953, p.5.

forty and a hundred.

Colonial issues became not merely politically important; they became politically contentious. Lyttelton had to defend his policies and actions not only against colonial leaders but also, frequently, against a hostile Opposition. Intense conflict between Colonial Secretary and Opposition party was something new in British politics, and the principal aim of this chapter is to identify its causes and trace its course by means of an analysis of Labour reactions to the Colonial Secretary's policies on major issues.

At the time, both onlookers and protagonists made a number of attempts to account for Labour's behaviour. Among Labour MPs themselves, not surprisingly, there was an insistence that parliamentary tactics were based on principles. For the present this view may be illustrated by an extract from a letter by Creech Jones to The Times, written in May 1955:

"There are real differences in conception ... between the two parties ... [The Labour Party] tends to put a different emphasis on human values, political rights, land rights, and matters such as immigration and discrimination."<sup>5</sup>

A second hypothesis was that to some extent Labour's opposition was based upon its opinion of Lyttelton personally. Briefly, Lyttelton was seen as a man far too stern and inflexible for so sensitive a job.<sup>6</sup> Failings of policy were attributed to his personal shortcomings, and not only by left-wing backbenchers: Attlee himself charged Lyttelton with an "insensitiveness" which had led some people to question

"whether part of the troubles in the colonial sphere, which have increased so markedly during his term of office ... may not be due to a certain lack of appreciation of the views of other people."<sup>7</sup>

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5 The Times, 12 May, 1955.

6 Or in the phrase of Emrys Hughes MP, a man of "iron hand and wooden head". This was the title of a pamphlet, written by Hughes for the Union of Democratic Control, on Lyttelton's handling of the British Guiana crisis.

7 HCD vol.518, col.2262 (22 Oct. 1953).

And on occasion the party was supported in this view by the quality press. The Times, in a retrospective editorial, considered that the "storms" of recent colonial history "were abetted ... in the early stages, by the Minister's own intransigent manner"; more picturesquely, The Economist described the Minister as "a large, rawboned man with a rather large and rawboned manner and with more than a touch of that appearance of superiority which so often gets upper-class Englishmen into trouble with foreigners".<sup>8</sup> It followed that "Lyttelton must go", if not for The Times and The Economist then certainly for the Labour Party and its sympathisers: the Fabian Colonial Bureau, for example, announced itself "entirely in agreement with those who call for the resignation of Mr. Oliver Lyttelton".<sup>9</sup>

A third explanation was that Labour's hostility sprang from opportunist motives having nothing to do with colonial policy. This was a favoured view among Conservatives. Lyttelton himself subscribed to it, as several passages in his autobiography indicate. For example:

"In 1951 the Labour Government had left office only just in time. Economically they had brought the country to the verge of disaster ... and they feared an inquest on their performance as a Government. The high-flown hubris of 1945 was being stalked by the economic nemesis of 1951. What more natural than to turn a good deal of attention, under one of the leaders of the party, to an area where there appeared to be endless opportunities of trouble, whether those troubles were spontaneous or fanned into flame by faction: at least Lyttelton seemed to be a weak parliamentarian and a toothsome victim."<sup>10</sup>

Another and probably more common version of this explanation was that Labour's attitude grew out of the party's internal difficulties. In the Conservative journal Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs Sayers provided a typical expression of this view:

"It is clear that Socialist leaders were prepared to go a long way to meet the [Bevanite] rebels in the hope of maintaining a semblance of unity: but it says little for their outlook on colonial affairs if part of the price of appeasing the extremists included an agreement to carry

8 The Times, 30 July 1954; Economist, 12 Dec. 1953, p.794.

9 Venture, Jan. 1953, p.1.

10 Chandos, op. cit., pp.355-6. (The leader referred to was Griffiths.) See also ibid., p.432.

party warfare into the field of colonial problems."<sup>11</sup>

All of these explanations will require consideration in the light of our analysis.

A word on the significance of different issues. It is necessary to distinguish between colonial "crises", "emergencies", "disorder" as such, and the issues on which Labour explicitly and heatedly opposed the Government. Although the frequency of crises was made part of the general case against Lyttelton, there were many events of the former kind which did not specifically come into the latter category: for example, disturbances which occurred for various reasons in Nigeria and Nyasaland in mid 1953. Of the latter kind there were relatively few examples. In view of all that has been said about the departure from the bi-partisan norm, it may seem surprising to note that Labour divided the House on only three specific colonial issues - federation, anti-Mau Mau tactics and the British Guiana crisis - and on the one general issue of the Government's handling of "affairs in Africa". And a further distinction should be drawn between federation and these other issues; for out of the nineteen divisions forced by Labour on colonial topics between March 1952 and December 1953, fifteen related to federation. Clearly, for most of Lyttelton's term of office this was by far the greatest issue between the parties. Until fairly late in 1953, indeed, it remained possible to see federation as the only real issue; and even on federation there was a party truce once the matter had been decided. Hence, in spite of the atmosphere of colonial stress and Labour's frequent attacks on Lyttelton and his methods, it was at least arguable that the "breakdown" was far from total; Central Africa apart, policy was still basically bi-partisan. Only towards the end of 1953, when there were successive party confrontations on British Guiana, the exile of the Kabaka of Buganda and the general censure motion, was Lyttelton himself moved to observe that "the final breakdown" had taken place.<sup>12</sup>

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11 Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs, March 1952, pp.8-9.

12 HCD vol.522 col.427 (16 Dec. 1953).

Thus, in the course of our analysis, we will reserve our closest attention for two major issues. One, obviously, must be federation. The other will be the British Guiana crisis; for this complex matter placed the Labour Party in a dilemma such that the range of intra-party attitudes were revealed in an exceptionally clear light.

### 1. Colonial Wars

To the question of when the first signs of party conflict became evident there is no ready answer. Earlier we noted that Labour's opposition tactics had antecedents in several of the Conservatives' parliamentary manoeuvres between 1949 and 1951. But by Conservative accounts the first straw in the wind was a statement by Griffiths in an election broadcast in October 1951:

"I do want to remind you that many of our troubles today have their roots in the Tory past, and that most of them need never have happened if the Tories had learnt in time to treat other people as equals ... There's only one way to learn democracy, and that's by practising it. Our job is to do in a few short years what our forefathers learnt in the hard struggle of centuries. Is there any liberal-minded man or woman in this country who believes that you can trust that job to the Tories? ... There are sixty million people in the colonies. They don't have votes in our election. It's you, by your votes, who decide what happens to them."<sup>13</sup>

Lyttelton and Sayers, among others, later went on record several times with the assertion that the transition from the old to the new style of party relations could be dated from this broadcast. Lyttelton went further: at constitutional conferences, he told Parliament in December 1953, he had often found among colonial delegates a distrust of the Conservative Government which, they acknowledged, had arisen directly from what Griffiths had said.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Broadcast of 10 Oct. 1951, quoted in Conservative Research Dept., Notes on Current Politics, 15 Feb. 1954, p.2.

<sup>14</sup> HCD vol.522 col.425 (16 Dec. 1953). See also article by Sayers (writing anonymously), Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs, Jan. 1954, p.3.

These attributions of blame, however, were not made until some time afterwards when party conflict was already evident in other ways. At the time, Lyttelton for one did not believe that the Labour Party contemplated a deliberate breach. He had "no inkling" of what was to come when he made his first policy statement in November 1951<sup>15</sup> - a statement couched in "almost the very words of Mr. Creech Jones, one of my respected predecessors".<sup>16</sup> And, indeed, there was no opposition on any specific issue for some time after the election.

The first specific issue, when it came, was the war in Malaya. On taking office, Lyttelton had chosen to give the Malayan problem top priority. Late in 1951 he flew to Malaya to assess the situation and decided that a tougher military policy was necessary. In February 1952 General Sir Gerald Templer was appointed as High Commissioner with a directive to achieve, as his "primary task" in Malaya, "the restoration of law and order, so that this barrier to progress may be removed".<sup>17</sup> By April the new measures in force included the destruction of rice crops which were likely sources of supply for terrorists and the punishment of villages (by such means as 22-hour curfews and the curtailment of rice rations) whose representatives would not cooperate with the authorities.

At home, the first rumblings of protest from the Opposition became audible early in December. On November 29 Lyttelton had stated in Singapore that "political progress was not an integral part of the struggle against militant Communism in Malaya". Woodrow Wyatt in a Question to the Prime Minister, and Griffiths and Attlee in supplementaries, sought to establish if this view represented Government policy. On the same day Driberg asked a Question about allegations of police brutality in the interrogation of suspected terrorists.<sup>18</sup>

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15 Interview with Lord Chandos.

16 Chandos, op. cit., p.356.

17 The text of the directive is reprinted in HCD vol.496 cols.25-6 (20 Feb. 1952).

18 Ibid., vol.494 cols.2382-5 (5 Dec. 1951).

In the ensuing months members of the Opposition returned to these two themes. Concerning the relative importance of political and military measures George Wigg and Stanley Awbery, among others, criticised Lyttelton's sense of priorities, arguing for example that his handling of the situation would "reap a terrible harvest" and that a solution could not be found "merely by sending troops there".<sup>19</sup> On the matter of interrogations Driberg maintained a correspondence with the Minister, while on the general issue of "toughness" in anti-terrorist methods Griffiths and left-wing backbenchers made common cause in private representations. On another issue, however, Griffiths found himself aligned with Lyttelton against some of the left-wingers. Whereas the latter were inclined to regard the fighting as an anti-imperialist "people's war", Griffiths had no hesitation in holding Communists responsible. In the House he was careful to state that he "appreciated the true position" in Malaya, having seen it for himself; and for this attitude he was criticised - though not in public - by some of the party's left.<sup>20</sup>

But it was a united party which in April mounted its most important attack on the Government's new methods. Opposition criticism was occasioned by the initiation of the crop destruction programme and, in particular, by the collective punishment of a village called Tanjong Malim. On crop destruction Driberg observed that "the method now used to get two-thirds of the people of Malaya on our side is the method of starving villagers", while another backbencher, Maurice Edelman, described the policy as "contrary to the principles of natural justice ... both immoral and ineffective". Griffiths intervened to point out that the Labour Party was not alone in taking this view; in the Singapore and Malayan press "considerable apprehension has been expressed by representatives of the community about the new policy".<sup>21</sup> The collective punishment of Tanjong Malim provoked not only outbursts in the House - for example from Wyatt, who described

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19 HCD vol.495 col.905 (5 Feb. 1952) (Wigg); vol.496 col.25 (20 Feb. 1952) (Awbery).

20 These points were confirmed in interviews with Griffiths and Chandos.

21 HCD vol.499 cols.395-8 (23 April 1952).

it as "very reminiscent of Fascist methods"<sup>22</sup> - but also a motion sponsored by Driberg, Wyatt and Awbery along with the left-wingers Brockway and Anthony Greenwood. The motion - "that this House ... believing that such punishment is contrary to civilised practice and is more likely to antagonise the Malayan people than to win their friendship and support, urges Her Majesty's Government to modify the policy under which this punishment was imposed" - drew 131 Labour signatures, the greatest number yet appended to any motion on a colonial issue.<sup>23</sup>

In the face of this attack Conservative MPs rallied to their Minister. The Opposition was chided for asking Questions "which only tend to destroy confidence".<sup>24</sup> Dodds-Parker and five party colleagues put down an amendment to the Labour motion which welcomed the Government's "inflexible determination" and described the collective punishment as "appropriate, just and firm, and recognised as such by the great majority of all inhabitants of Malaya, ... and by all in this country with real knowledge of the military and political problems involved". Over the next few days this and a related Conservative amendment acquired 138 signatures. In a sense the breach between the parties was thus formalised, for the whole exercise had the atmosphere of an unofficial division on government policy which the Conservatives duly "won".

Lyttelton himself viewed these domestic developments thus:

"The Opposition lost no time in making trouble. The questions and arguments seemed directed to show that our countrymen were always wrong, and nearly always wicked ... I had determined not to be moved an inch by all this clatter. I began to be an unpopular Minister, and a popular target for attack."<sup>25</sup>

On this issue the "attack" continued intermittently during the year. In October, however, attention was sharply diverted from Malaya by the outbreak of Mau Mau killings in Kenya. Parliament

22 HCD vol.498 col.1670 (2 April 1952).

23 EDM No. 63 of 1951-2 Session, 8 April 1952.

24 Martin Lindsay, HCD vol. 499 col.1452 (30 April 1952).

25 Chandos, op. cit., p.382.

discussed this new crisis several times in the next few weeks. For the most part the debates were solemn occasions, marked by Griffiths's repeated pledge that the Opposition would support measures taken in the interests of order and peace and by his announcement, in one debate, that he had advised his party against pressing a division.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, criticisms of the Government's more rigorous measures - including detention without trial and, again, the collective punishment of villages - could be heard from such Members as Driberg, Brockway, Edelman, Hector Hughes and Mrs. Eirene White.<sup>27</sup> "The weight of the Opposition's attacks upon the Colonial Office and myself", wrote the sorely tried Lyttelton, "was now largely transferred from Malayan to Kenyan affairs".<sup>28</sup> And early in December

The Economist summarised a commonly-held view about these attacks:

"There can be little doubt that a section of the Labour party is exploiting this concern as a stick for beating the Government and Mr. Lyttelton in particular". No matter that such attacks were "unofficial", since "few Europeans in Kenya and fewer Africans can be expected to appreciate the difference between official and unofficial Labour opposition". Griffiths, said The Economist, should forthwith dissociate the front bench from "the mischievous campaign behind him".<sup>29</sup>

So far from doing so, however, Griffiths himself began to take an increasingly critical line. Late in November, when Lyttelton announced that tougher measures would be necessary to meet a worsening situation, Griffiths responded by distinguishing between "steps that are required to suppress Mau Mau" and "the trends of present policy ... [which are] fraught with the danger of converting the whole Kikuyu

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26 HCD vol.508 col.383 (25 Nov. 1952).

27 In particular, at Question time on 19 Nov., 3 Dec. and 10 Dec. 1952; and in response to a statement by Lyttelton on 25 Nov.

28 op. cit., p.401.

29 Economist, 5 Dec. 1952, p.669. At that time Rita Hinden was writing on colonial affairs for The Economist; it has not proved possible, however, to establish if she were the author of the article quoted.

people into our enemies". With Attlee's support he secured an adjournment under Standing Order 9 to discuss the newest developments in the crisis; later he again expressed dissatisfaction with the "general trend of policy" and announced that the Opposition would seek a further chance to discuss "the larger questions".<sup>30</sup> When the chance came, the party leaders chose to turn it into a censure debate. Griffiths, Attlee and four other ex-Ministers tabled an omnibus motion expressing concern at measures "which involve the punishment of innocent people and which if continued may permanently embitter race relations", and going on to demand that the Government give immediate attention to the social and economic problems underlying Mau Mau, "including the land problem", both by hastening the appointment of a Royal Commission and by taking "all practical measures to mitigate the most pressing hardships and frustrations of the African people".<sup>31</sup> The motion was brought to debate and with Liberal support the Labour leaders proceeded to force a division. This in spite of the argument offered by Harold Macmillan, winding up for the Government, that such a demonstration of disunity would ill befit a House that called for a "united Kenya".<sup>32</sup>

To censure and divide on a matter of this kind was certainly a serious step for the Opposition to take. The Government's understanding of the situation, in line with the "Conservative" view outlined above, was that the Labour leadership had been driven to it under backbench pressure.<sup>33</sup> But whether this was true of the Kenyan case is difficult to say. Labour leaders did not again attack the Government's measures to the same extent; in the next few months backbenchers tabled motions protesting against the treatment of prisoners and Mau Mau suspects, but either did not seek or failed to obtain leadership support.<sup>34</sup>

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30 HCD vol.508 col.256-7, 383 (25 Nov. 1952).

31 EDM No. 21 of 1952-3 Session, 4 Dec. 1952. Redrafted as No. 29, 11 Dec. 1952.

32 HCD vol.509 cols.1319-20 (16 Dec. 1952).

33 Interview with Lord Chandos.

34 EDMs No. 77 and 124 of 1952-3 Session, 19 March and 21 July 1953.

Yet the censure motion should not be seen as wholly contrary to the leadership's normal line on Kenya. That parts of it were based upon official party policy is illustrated by the fact that in July Griffiths and Dugdale had joined with Brockway and Leslie Hale to sponsor a motion urging the Government to revise its views on the crucial problem of land utilisation, and notably to

"seek agreement in Kenya for a policy which will permit Africans, and in particular African cooperatives, to own lands in the highlands and which will enable the Government of Kenya to acquire, as part of a general policy of agricultural development, unused land in that area for African use."

Substantially echoing a recent NEC policy statement, this was the best-supported Labour motion on any colonial issue in the whole 1945-59 period: it drew 199 signatories, fully two-thirds of the parliamentary party. A few days after its tabling Griffiths went out of his way to draw the House's and the Government's attention to it.<sup>35</sup> Hence there is no necessary reason to attribute the December division to backbench pressure upon the leaders.

## 2. Labour and the Federation

It is no part of our aim to recall in detail the successive conferences on Central African federation, the various draft schemes put forward or the numerous arguments deployed on both sides. These things have been amply recounted elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> Our concern is to trace the development of party conflict over the issue; more particularly,

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35 EDM No. 97 of 1951-2 Session, 7 July 1952; HCD vol.503 cols.2348-50 (17 July 1952).

36 For an introductory narrative of the main events and the "great debate" which accompanied them see e.g. Philip Mason, Year of Decision: Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1960 (Oxford U.P., 1960), Part II; Colin Leys and Cranford Pratt (eds.), A New Deal in Central Africa (Heinemann, 1960), Parts I and II; or W. F. Gutteridge, "The Debate on Central African Federation in Retrospect", Parliamentary Affairs, Vol.X, No.2 (Spring 1957). There are many other works covering much the same ground; some are cited in notes below.

to identify the motives behind Labour's public attitude and to discern something of the intra-party range of views.

On this matter there was - and is - a clash of opinion which encapsulates the main interpretations of Labour attitudes adumbrated earlier. The "official" account of Labour's position has been expressed in essence by Hatch, writing as the party's Commonwealth officer:

"Labour Ministers discussed the plan with the Central African peoples. As soon as it became apparent that the majority of Central Africans were opposed to the scheme, the Labour Party fought every attempt to impose it ... the Party Conference of 1952 passed a clear resolution against it. Prominent members of the party took a leading part in the opposition to it in this country."

The contrasting view has been expressed - again, in essence - by the journalist and Africanist Colin Legum.

"The Labour Government ... continued to play an active role in the negotiations even after it had become clear that the overwhelming majority of Africans were opposed to federation. It is true that ... the Conservative Government changed the federal Constitution, and then 'imposed' it. The Parliamentary Labour Party was divided until the last stages of the lengthy debates: only then did it resist 'imposition'. But the Government's decision was made easier by Mr. Attlee ... calling for loyalty to the new State if the necessary parliamentary majority were obtained."<sup>37</sup>

Legum's account says nothing about the party's motivation; for a view on this which conflicts with Hatch's we may turn once again to Lyttelton. On coming into office he had expected "not to get too much trouble in the House of Commons, because the Labour Party ... [was] already committed to federation". That the party ended up by resisting "was in my belief as much dictated by parliamentary expediency as by any belief that a majority of Africans were opposed to federation".<sup>38</sup>

From these contrasting observations a small complex of questions arises. Had the Labour Government really been "committed" to federation? If so, at what point was Labour's commitment abandoned and why? How seriously and on what grounds was the party "divided until the last

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37 Letters by Hatch and Legum to the Observer, 12 Aug. 1956.

38 Op. cit., pp.334-5.

stages"? Our purpose will best be served by seeking answers to these questions.

Firstly, the question of commitment. There is in fact no great problem about assessing the Labour Government's position, since a number of perfectly consistent statements were made by the party leaders. In 1949, following some overtures by Sir Godfrey Huggins and other settler leaders, Creech Jones stated:

"So far there has been no substantial evidence that a reorganisation of government is necessary in the form of a confederation. That is not to say, however, that our minds are absolutely closed, but we do say, with great emphasis, that this country has definite responsibilities towards the African peoples of the Protectorates."<sup>39</sup>

After the 1950 election this cautious and conditional open-mindedness gave way by degrees to a cautious and conditional support of federation in principle. We noted in Chapter II the reasons why Griffiths initiated an exploration of the federation idea: the fear of South African influence in Southern Rhodesia, the economic, strategic and administrative considerations, and so on. Cohen in particular persuaded Griffiths to permit a conference of theoretically impartial British and Central African civil servants to consider and decide whether or not federation would be feasible and profitable.<sup>40</sup> Meeting in London early in 1951, these officials went well beyond their mandate to discuss "practical" problems and produced a report strongly recommending federation. Griffiths subsequently decided to make this private report public, and while insisting that the Government was not committed either way he described it as a "constructive" basis for discussion and promised further consultations. These initiatives marked the beginning of British governmental participation

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39 HCD vol.467 col.2915 (29 July 1949).

40 The initiative in pressing for this conference has been wrongly attributed by one author to Huggins and by another to G. H. Baxter, the Commonwealth Relations Office official who chaired it. See Robert I. Rotberg, The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa (Harvard U.P., 1966), p.231n.

in the post-war debate on closer association, which up till then had been carried on mainly among the European politicians of the two Rhodesias. Later, after touring the Central African territories, Griffiths and Gordon Walker represented the Government at the Victoria Falls conference of September 1951 and put their signatures to a communiqué which declared the participants' commitment to "the principle of federation as so far presented and examined".<sup>41</sup>

Throughout, however, Labour Ministers stressed that federation in practice - as opposed to principle - would have to meet certain requirements in order to merit their support. Above all, it would have to be so designed that Britain's "definite responsibilities towards the African peoples" could be fully and honourably discharged. The primary (though not the only) meaning attached to this condition was that the Africans' own willing consent to federation would have to be engaged before the scheme could be proceeded with. For if it were not so engaged, the scheme would be, first, undemocratic, and second, unworkable. Griffiths emphasised this condition in private as well as public.<sup>42</sup>

After going into Opposition the party leaders continued to profess conditional commitment. Griffiths made this clear when in March 1952 the next opportunity for a parliamentary discussion of the issue arose:

"My right hon. Friend and I were convinced then ... and are convinced now that federation of these three territories is desirable in principle. The problem is how to achieve it with the willing consent of the Africans."

Later in the debate Gordon Walker expressed himself similarly.<sup>43</sup> In each of the next two debates, in April and July 1952, Griffiths reaffirmed the leadership's view, while in August he implied in a letter to The Times that Labour would support a federal scheme based on genuine racial partnership.<sup>44</sup> Finally, in September Attlee himself toured

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41 Annex to Cmd.8573: Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland: Draft Federal Scheme (HMSO, 1952).

42 FCB-MM, 10 July 1951.

43 HCD vol.497 cols.221, 313-4, 317-8 (4 March 1952).

44 The Times, 16 Aug. 1952.

Central Africa and told African representatives that Labour backed the federal idea, chiefly on economic grounds.<sup>45</sup>

In short, from 1950 onwards the responsible party leaders made a series of pronouncements indicating that Labour was conditionally committed to federation. Lyttelton, in the brief statement quoted above,<sup>38</sup> could be said to have misrepresented Labour's position by failing to acknowledge the conditions; and to perceive this is to resolve at least one of the apparent contradictions among the quoted statements.

This leads to the second question: at what point did the party's opposition to the actual federal scheme begin? It is a more difficult one to answer. The official view, <sup>as presented by Hatch,</sup> was that Labour opposition developed as soon as African hostility towards federation became apparent to the party leaders. Now it is plain enough - since all accounts, including Griffiths's and Gordon Walker's own, concur on the point - that the two Ministers were confronted by overwhelming evidence of African hostility during their tour of the territories in August and September 1951. Yet - and this is Legum's point - the two Ministers nevertheless "continued to play an active role in the negotiations". Not only did they attend the Victoria Falls conference, they also signed the communiqué in support of the federal principle and in anticipation of further discussions, even though the five African delegates at the conference refused to do likewise.

The contradiction extends further than this. On the next occasion when Labour leaders made public statements, nearly six months later, they objected to the new Government's approach to the problem and carried their objections to the point of forcing a division. Here, it would seem, was an indication that the kind of federation contemplated by the Conservatives was already unacceptable to Labour. Yet unhelpfully for this view, there were no further divisions on the issue for over a year; instead Griffiths explicitly decided against dividing

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45 See Harry Franklin, Unholy Wedlock (Allen and Unwin, 1963), p.75; L. H. Gann, A History of Northern Rhodesia (Chatto and Windus, 1964), p.418; and Rotberg, op. cit., p.245. At one point Attlee even supported Welensky's demand for 500,000 white immigrants: Rotberg, loc.cit.

in the debates of April and July 1952. Really vigorous opposition in the House did not begin until the very last phase of the whole gestatory period, extending from March to July 1953. How, then, are these facts to be reconciled? Did opposition date from September 1951, or March 1952, or March 1953?

Part of the difficulty may be traced to the fact that the three leaders most closely involved - Attlee, Gordon Walker and Griffiths - did pursue different courses. Initially all three took the position of agreement in principle. But to judge by some of his reported remarks in Central Africa Attlee, for one, seems to have gone beyond this to a virtual acceptance of the scheme actually proposed - at least for a time. At other stages he was enigmatic, stressing the seriousness of the dilemma and the dangers involved both in resisting and accepting the scheme.<sup>46</sup> Generally he took the view that final support for federation must depend upon the production of sufficient evidence by the white Rhodesians that they would in fact implement the "partnership" which they claimed to be federation's central object.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, when the evidence failed to appear, Attlee withdrew his conditional support and led his party's parliamentary fight against imposition. His change of position can probably be dated, within a month or so, to the turn of the year 1952-3. In December 1952 he had led a delegation including Griffiths, Mrs. White and Morgan Phillips to Lyttelton's office, in order to convey the party's reservations prior to the final constitutional conference scheduled for January.<sup>48</sup> Once that conference had been held and it

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46 Daily Herald, 8 Sept. 1952; Mason, op. cit., p.43.

47 Leys and Pratt, op. cit., p.56.

48 "A most extraordinary thing for Attlee to do. It must have been the strongest deputation ever sent anywhere by the party." This was the comment of Miss Marjorie Nicholson, secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, in a letter to Jay B. Krane, an official of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which had itself issued several public statements opposing the federal scheme. Nicholson to Krane, 27 Jan. 1953 (FCB papers).

had become apparent that the constitution decided upon went even further towards meeting the settlers' requirements than previous drafts had done, Attlee became unambiguously hostile.

Gordon Walker, on the other hand, moved from his initial agreement in principle to unrepentant support of the scheme actually evolved. From the outset he had accepted the argument that closer association was not just necessary but urgently necessary, chiefly because of the South African factor.<sup>49</sup> Touring Southern Rhodesia to consult African opinion in September 1951 he had also acted to some extent as an advocate, telling Africans that federation would mean more schools, more hospitals and more services.<sup>50</sup> In the end he had become so firmly committed as to abstain from voting with his party in the crucial debates of March to July 1953.

Griffiths's, however, is by far the most intriguing course to trace. Throughout the controversy Griffiths was the party's official spokesman, its champion in a long succession of gladiatorial debating encounters with Lyttelton. In so far as there was an official party line, therefore, it will best be understood by following his route from position to position up until the last stages.

We have already seen that Griffiths, when in office, agreed to initiate official talks but stressed from the outset that African consent must be engaged or the scheme could not proceed. Firstly, then: if Griffiths did observe for himself the intensity of African hostility towards the federal plan, why did he go on to the Victoria Falls conference?

The answer lies in what actually happened at the conference.<sup>51</sup> Having made their tour of the territories, both Griffiths and Gordon Walker, supported at the conference by Cohen, were concerned above all

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49 HCD vol.497 cols.314-6 (4 March 1952).

50 Manchester Guardian, 14 Sept. 1951.

51 This account is based on some of the works cited in notes 36 and 45, statements in Parliament and an interview with Griffiths.

to discuss the position and the rights of Africans. But from beginning to end there was deadlock between the British Ministers on one side and Huggins's Southern Rhodesian delegation on the other. For Huggins's aim was to cut the conference down on the Central African side to the European delegates from the two Rhodesias, and then to obtain a number of specific alterations, already formulated by his delegation, in the Officials' Plan. In fact, Huggins was well aware that the Ministers had been impressed by the Africans' expressions of hostility. Accordingly he had sought at first to have the conference postponed in expectation of a British election and the return of a Conservative Government. Griffiths, however, refused to postpone the conference and the arguments began. Procedurally, the British Ministers insisted that all discussions should take place in the presence of the five African delegates, whereas at one stage Huggins openly - but unsuccessfully - demanded their exclusion on the grounds that there was "no point in continuing" with them present. On matters of substance the Ministers kept stressing three points which Huggins consistently waved aside. The points were that native land rights and the protectorate status of the northern territories must remain unaltered, that African political advance must remain outside the control of the federal government, and that the policy of partnership must be clearly defined and implemented. In his own statements on partnership during his tour Griffiths had in fact been no less vague than anyone else, apparently envisaging an ideal situation with no domination of any kind by any race.<sup>52</sup> At the conference, however, he treated this as an especially important point.

With argument on these matters continuing inconclusively, the Southern Rhodesian list of amendments to the Officials' Plan was not even presented for discussion. Yet it was typical of the whole exercise that the provisions in the Plan which Huggins most wished to alter were the very provisions to which Griffiths attached most importance.

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52 E.g., to an African audience: "I want all the Europeans to treat you as partners and I want you to treat them as partners. It is only by partnership that I see any prospect of decent orderly development ... The British Government does not want white or black supremacy." Quoted in Franklin, op. cit., pp.61-2.

These were the various devices to "safeguard" African interests, such as the African Affairs Board, with power to reserve proposed legislation affecting Africans for the British Government's approval, and the Minister for African Interests, independently appointed by the Governor-General, with power similarly to reserve proposed executive actions.

The conference ended not only abortively but precipitately, chiefly because Attlee secretly informed the two Ministers of the imminent prorogation of Parliament. Their signing of the communiqué in spite of the Africans' refusal to sign needs to be seen in this context. Departing with their eyes on the coming election, they had no option but to put their names to a document that conveyed accurately enough the reasons for the conference's deadlock while asserting that federation remained a desirable goal. And it is clearly no reflection on their solicitude for African interests that both continued to hope that federation might be achieved. As Griffiths said, in anticipating a further conference in July 1952, the proper course with regard to African opposition was to admit its validity and seek to remove its causes. If the Africans' fears on the three crucial points of European ambitions, African political advance and land could be met, then it could be hoped that "their opposition would gradually disappear".<sup>53</sup>

The next three stages along the route were the debates of March, April and July 1952, all of them settings for statements by Griffiths. If the official or "Hatch" account of the party's attitude is to be accepted, it needs to be explained why Griffiths advised his party to divide the House in the first of these debates but not in the second and third.

Again a large part (though not all) of the answer is on the public record. In the March debate, having reasserted his belief in the urgent need for "closer political association", Griffiths offered some criticisms of the new Government's approach with the warning that whether or not the Opposition called a division would depend upon the Government's answers. It was essential that Africans should have

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53 Quoted in Mason, op. cit., pp.27-8.

confidence in the proposals: yet since Victoria Falls the authorities had made no attempt to follow up the undertaking to hold discussions on the meaning of partnership. Instead Lyttelton had already held private talks with Huggins, and the outcome of these was that the date of the next conference had been advanced from July to April. What could be more encouraging to African suspicion? Africans were bound to conclude that Lyttelton and Huggins were conspiring to rush through a federation designed to settler specifications. Accordingly, Griffiths pleaded that the original conference date be restored to allow time for consultations with African representatives and for talks on partnership.

Lyttelton's reply, in essence, was that these were matters of "mechanics", not of principle, and that since the parties were agreed on the principle of federation there should be no division. To judge by the subsequent exchanges Griffiths and other Labour speakers were much antagonised by this reply. In their view Lyttelton was using Labour's acquiescence in the principle of federation to obscure the fact that what now preoccupied them was an entirely different point of principle - that the discussions should at no stage proceed in the absence of Africans. In spite of reiterated and eloquent pleas by the Under-Secretary for Commonwealth Relations, John Foster, that there be no division - because it would "impede federation", "undo the [Labour Government's] splendid work", and "solidify and emphasise the opposition of the Africans" - Griffiths insisted that the gulf between the parties on this point was great enough to justify one.<sup>54</sup>

The next debate, on 29 April, was called by Griffiths so as to coincide with Lyttelton's conference of interested parties. The purpose of the conference was to produce a "definite scheme" as a basis for future discussion. But its beginning was marked by the dramatic announcement of the African delegates from the northern territories that they would not take part. Their views were explained in a long letter to The Times on the day of the debate. The Europeans' real intention, they

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54 HCD vol.497, esp. cols.210, 222-6 (Griffiths), 229 (Lyttelton), 326-34 (Foster, with numerous interruptions) (4 March 1952).

wrote, was not to practice partnership but to "throw off Colonial Office control" and "entrench themselves in political dominance". For Africans to take any part in the conference would imply that they accepted the principle of federation, whereas actually, seeing themselves as "deputations sent by our people to reaffirm ... our unanimous opposition", they rejected any form of union with Southern Rhodesia. It was "in the context" of this action by the Africans, Griffiths said, that the debate had been mounted.

Lyttelton found it "rather embarrassing" that there should be any debate at all during the conference, and Griffiths sought chiefly to register his disquiet that the Africans should have had reason to boycott it. The question, he argued, was not whether federation was desirable but whether it should be imposed against the Africans' wishes.<sup>55</sup> In emphasising this distinction between the scheme's content and the method of enacting it Griffiths was introducing a note which in retrospect appears significant, for as we shall see the Labour Party's general attitude came to be coloured more and more strongly by the view that "imposition" would be wrong. But in this debate Griffiths chose not to call a division, and there seem to have been at least two overt reasons for his self-restraint. First, two African representatives, members of the Southern Rhodesian delegation, were present and active throughout the conference; and second, the conclusions reached by the conference were not yet known (although it was possible for Griffiths and others to make well-informed guesses).

The last of the three debates was mounted by the Opposition on 24 July, chiefly to discuss the "definite scheme" that had emerged from the April conference. Two among the scheme's many new features seemed to confirm the Opposition's fears: the composition of the African Affairs Board had been altered, making it less obviously independent of the federal government, and the Minister for African interests had vanished. Griffiths therefore announced that he could not commend the scheme in its present form to the Africans, and was outspoken about the absence

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55 HCD, vol.499, esp. cols. 1234, 1243-5 (Griffiths), 1248-9 (Lyttelton) (29 April, 1952).

of any real concern for partnership. But the House did not divide because he accepted Lyttelton's assurance that Parliament would be consulted again before any "irrevocable step" was taken.<sup>56</sup>

So much can be interpreted from the public record. At this point it seems fair to observe that Griffiths's attitude revealed a certain vagueness about what could and should be the nature and goals of federation. His belief in "federation in principle" was never translated into a full set of practical proposals, a draft scheme to set against the Government's. He had considerable faith in the kinds of technical safeguards outlined in the original Officials' Plan: yet there were many in the party, including Griffiths's own former Minister of State John Dugdale, who were not slow to point out (for example) the political unreality of planting a Minister for African Interests, responsible to the British Government, in a federal cabinet responsible to an elected assembly.<sup>57</sup> His emphasis on the need to discuss "partnership" was not accompanied by any attempt to give a lead with a precise analysis of the term (he did attempt imprecise ones, as we saw earlier). Nor did he show any awareness of the problem latent in his view that "imposition" would be undesirable: the problem of what he would do if the Africans refused to consent to alternative proposals which he himself considered desirable and in their best interests.

But an assessment of the lead which he gave the party need not rest entirely on the public record. One of Griffiths's first acts after going into Opposition was to join the committee of the Fabian Colonial Bureau. Some of the views on federation which he expressed in the privacy of this circle of colonial experts were recorded in the correspondence of the Bureau's secretary, Marjorie Nicholson, and this source provides a most useful supplement to the public record.

For example, Griffiths's reported statements until late in 1952 never really made clear how far his desire to see some kind of federation

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56 HCD, vol.504, esp. cols. 863, 870-1 (24 July 1952).

57 Ibid., vol.497 col.255 (4 March 1952).

accomplished acted as a constraint on his opposition to the Government's actual scheme. On this point Miss Nicholson's comment in a letter to Professor W. Arthur Lewis, written in March 1953, is interesting. Having reported that Griffiths "has not used his position in the Committee to get support for federation in any way" (as if it might have been presumed that he would), Miss Nicholson observed:

"We have stuck to this question from the beginning and I personally believe that if we had not done so, Jim Griffiths would have supported federation and there would have been no party vote against it on any grounds except for what might be called the 'lunatic fringe' "58

- in other words, that it required a good deal of discussion with the party's colonial experts before Griffiths was finally won over to the anti-federation side. And an earlier letter to Krane throws light on Griffiths's tactics in mid 1952 - that is, after the "definite scheme" had been published but well before the party embarked on full-scale opposition:

"We are trying to get Africans to put up alternative proposals so that we can have a platform to fight on here. Jim Griffiths thinks that if the Labour Party votes solidly against it in the House (by 'it' I mean 'imposition'), the Tories will not push it through. But we also feel that if the Africans don't make any constructive suggestions of any kind, or only make the kind that they are making now, this will create such an unfavourable impression in the Labour Party that the very serious step of voting against a major step in the imperial field will not be taken."59

If Griffiths really believed that the Government would not proceed with a measure which Labour - when it came to the point - solidly opposed, then it becomes easier to understand why he saw no immediate need to divide the House against the unpalatable "definite scheme"; while his apparent failure to lead in the quest for an alternative scheme can be explained in terms of the desire that the Africans themselves should take the initiative. In this connection it may be noted that in

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58 Nicholson to Lewis, 6 March 1953 (FCB papers).

59 Nicholson to Krane, 22 Aug. 1952 (FCB papers).

August 1952 the Northern Rhodesian African National Congress, in response to the Fabian Colonial Bureau's urging, did produce "alternative proposals" for their territory, providing for a transition in four long stages to manhood suffrage. This document was, however, virtually ignored by the territorial administration.<sup>60</sup> And a party of Nyasaland chiefs, arriving in London in January 1953 to petition the Queen to act against federation (but without offering any alternatives) fared no better, as the Queen was advised by the Government not to receive it. These rebuffs to African representatives presumably played a part in the hardening of Griffiths's attitude.

The last stage on the route was the official conference of January 1953. This produced a constitution under which practically all of Huggins's original demands were met, including the further dilution of the safeguards. Once this had been done, self-restraint on Griffiths's part was clearly no longer possible; in terms of his own stated views he had no choice but to oppose the Government's scheme. Yet even in the first ratification debate, held on March 24, the amendment he moved did not condemn federation in principle. Instead it disapproved on the two grounds, by now familiar, that the safeguards were inadequate and the scheme was being imposed. And these remained the major grounds of the Labour leadership's opposition all through the final stages: the debate on an Opposition motion that addresses from African representatives in the northern territories should be referred to a select committee; the debate on the second reading of the federation bill; the debate on the bill's committee stage, when sixty-nine Labour amendments were moved to<sup>a</sup> measure only two clauses in length; and, last of all, the debate to approve the Federal Constitution Order in Council on 27 July.

Thus Griffiths's passage from conditional approval to ~~outright~~ opposition. It is apposite to recall Lyttelton's view that the Labour leadership ended by opposing the scheme not out of conviction but for reasons of "parliamentary expediency": that is, presumably,

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60 "It amused the Secretariat", in Rotberg's phrase. See Rotberg op. cit., pp.245-6, and Leys and Pratt, op. cit., pp.36-7, for accounts of the Congress's "Proposed Constitution".

in order to placate the "less responsible" elements in the party. In the light of this account it should be apparent that the leadership's views, if at times confused, were independently and conscientiously formed.

We cannot, however, overlook Lyttelton's implication that different elements in the party did hold different views. We are led in fact to the last of our initial set of questions. Was the party, to recall Legum's phrase, "divided until the last stages"? If so, how seriously?

Evidence is slender about the views of the party in general, but such evidence as there is all tends in the same direction. There were indeed divisions in the party. These divisions, however, did not follow the normal lines of cleavage: it was not simply a matter of Bevanite left-wing versus the rest, as it was for example on such important contemporary issues as German rearmament. Rather they were divisions between an overwhelming majority and two small minorities, with the Bevanite left accommodated with the bulk of the party in the majority.

To elaborate. The "overwhelming majority" was held together by one consideration above all others: the belief that it would be wrong to establish federation against the will of the Africans of the northern territories, who were supposedly under British protection. Whatever their individual views on the merits of the scheme, almost all the party's members concurred in their distaste for imposition as a procedure. It is possible to trace the strengthening of this distaste over quite a long period. From Franklin's account it may be deduced that Griffiths's lead in the debates of March and April 1952 played an important part. At that time, according to Franklin, there was no general consensus in the party about the actual merits and drawbacks of the scheme. Griffiths certainly knew this, and perhaps it was partly because of this that his main criticisms in debate did not touch on the scheme's content; he concentrated instead on the arguments that discussion should never proceed in the absence of Africans, and that imposition without consent would be wrong. The second argument was clearly an extension of the first, and much of its significance, by Franklin's account, was

that it provided "the only firm plank on which he could stand in view of previous favourable statements [about federation in principle] by himself and other leading members of his party".<sup>61</sup> Thereafter, it appears that the bulk of the party was prepared to maintain the distinction between the scheme's content and the method of its application, and, while continuing undecided about the former, to concur in dislike of the latter. Thus in July 1952 Marjorie Nicholson commented in a letter to Martin Levinson, another ICFTU official:

"It is true that the Labour Party is split on the subject, but not as badly as you may think. In general, there is a feeling that federation is the sensible thing, but a dislike of imposing anything. Even the ones who are prepared to go farthest in meeting the settler position rather jib at imposing it on the Africans."<sup>62</sup>

When in February 1953 the party met in order to resolve its line for the ratification debates, the Times correspondent was able to report much the same situation:

"So far as opinion can be assessed at present, about 80 per cent of Labour MP's appear to be opposed to federation. The majority view is that the federal plan would be virtually imposed on the Africans of the three territories without effective consultation, and that this could not be tolerated."<sup>63</sup>

And that the left wing's attitude fell within this consensus, with its main - though not its only - ground for objection being the imposition procedure, may be learned from the text of a petition submitted to the Government in March 1953 by the Central Africa Committee, a pressure group formed by Brockway and Hale to serve as their platform on the issue. The petition carried among other signatures those of ninety-six MP's, most of them Labour left-wingers.

"Signatories to this petition are not opposed to the general principle of federation ... But recent statements by Her Majesty's Ministers convey the impression that there may be an intention of forcing through proposals which are not accepted

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61 Franklin, op. cit., p.78.

62 Nicholson to Levinson, 30 July 1952 (FCB papers).

63 The Times, 25 Feb. 1953.

by the vast majority of African peoples ... The future of the African inhabitants of these territories will therefore be in the hands of a privileged minority. The Africans have asked for our continued protection ... We therefore pray that Her Majesty's Government should not betray its trust by imposing the Constitution without the full and free consent of the African peoples."<sup>64</sup>

This, then, was the main objection to the Government's plan. If, for Griffiths, it provided in April 1952 "the only firm plank on which he could stand", it was by 1953 a plank both firm and broad enough to accommodate the great majority of the party. Although Griffiths's and Attlee's attitudes owed nothing directly to intra-party pressures, it was small wonder, given this situation, that the leadership based its amendment motion and the greater part of its argument in the final debates on the premise that imposition was wrong.

Only two small groups deliberately took up positions outside this broad consensus. One of them, significantly, included many of the colonial specialists clustered in and about the Fabian Colonial Bureau: Creech Jones, Lord Faringdon, Dr. Hinden, Miss Nicholson, Greenidge, Mrs. White, Sorensen, Driberg and Dugdale. More of them outside than inside the parliamentary party, they were all determined opponents of federation but departed from the party majority by maintaining that "opposition to federation on the grounds of imposition is the weakest possible opposition".<sup>65</sup> Their main attacks were directed at the actual substance of the scheme, and the essence of their view was never more clearly expressed than in a letter from Professor Arthur Lewis to Miss Nicholson:

"To oppose federation exclusively or mainly on the ground that Africans oppose it plays into the Government's hands. H.M.G. has a moral duty to do what it considers to be right, in the interests of the Africans, and only in exceptional circumstances can a government be justified in following the cowardly line of abandoning what it thinks to be right in deference to mob pressure. The Labour front-bench has manoeuvred itself into this weak position, because it let the Africans down in the first instance

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<sup>64</sup> Reprinted in Our Trust in Central Africa (1953), a pamphlet published jointly by the National Peace Council, the Central Africa Committee and Racial Unity.

<sup>65</sup> Nicholson to Arthur Lewis, 6 March 1953 (FCB papers).

by issuing the first federation White Paper ... It has therefore deprived itself of the right to oppose federation on its merits ... My main objection to the present proposals is ... to the fact that no change can be made in the qualifications of the electorate or the members, or in the Constitution generally, without a two-thirds majority of the members. The normal evolution of these mixed societies is that their legislatures are wholly white to begin with, but that the U.K. Parliament gradually increases the representation of the native population. What happens when the U.K. gives up control over the Constitution is the opposite: the Assembly begins with some native representation and this is gradually whittled away. It is a moral crime for the U.K. to surrender to white settlers in Central Africa the right to determine political representation."<sup>66</sup>

The Fabian specialists were of course not alone in using this argument against the federal scheme; many of the party's speakers advanced it in the course of parliamentary debate. But the Fabian group did stand alone in the Labour Party in seeking to discard the "imposition" argument and substitute this one as the core of the opposition case. Even within the Bureau's circle, in fact, some of the parliamentarians, such as Johnson, Hynd, Parker and Rankin, preferred to adhere to the party's majority view. Thus Miss Nicholson replied to Lewis:

"The whole discussion for two years has been dogged by division on the committee between those... who have felt that this scheme and the principles underlying it are so bad that we would have opposed it even if the Africans accepted it, and those who believe in 'federation in principle' but don't like imposing it on Africans ... The latter group are principally Members of Parliament ... We are fighting a losing battle against 'moderate' elements in our committee who really do not understand the issues."<sup>65</sup>

In brief, the Bureau's leading members found themselves in the perhaps unfamiliar position of being the party's most "extreme" oppositionists, regarding the attitude adopted by the bulk of the party - including the traditional left - as far too "moderate".

Finally, there was at the other extreme a handful of MPs grouped around Gordon Walker who found themselves unable, in the end, to oppose the Government's scheme at all. Their stated reasons were "liberal"

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<sup>66</sup> Lewis to Nicholson, 5 March 1953 (NCB papers). Lewis was a member of the Bureau's Advisory Committee; he committed his views to paper because he had been unable to attend the Committee's meetings on this issue.

rather than "imperial" - that is, they involved the belief that multi-racial partnership was feasible and that British kith and kin could be trusted; that almost any measure which appeared to counteract South African influence was justifiable; and that federation would fulfil its advocates' predictions of economic growth to the advantage of all races.<sup>67</sup> Undoubtedly there were many in the party who shared some or all of these beliefs, but only the Gordon Walker group found in them sufficient reason to ignore the anti-impositionist argument and the party Whips. The group included, among other ex-ministers, Richard Stokes, Maurice Webb and possibly George Brown, and among back-benchers the trade unionist Charles Hobson, the former Colonial Civil Servant Thomas Reid, and Stanley Evans and William Coldrick, two Members who had toured Central Africa in a small parliamentary delegation in 1951 and had been committed federationists since then. Their total number is difficult to assess; on the evidence it could have been anywhere between sixteen and twenty-eight, but was probably close to the lower figure.<sup>68</sup>

It is true, then, that the party was "divided until the last stages". But the importance of the internal divisions should not be overstated. Certainly they were not especially serious from the tactical point of view. The Fabian-influenced MPs who believed the majority's arguments to be inadequate nevertheless aligned themselves with the majority for voting purposes. And Gordon Walker's splinter group managed only to isolate itself. Its views might have commanded sympathy, but this was not translated into large-scale defections from the party line nor into abstentions from the voting lobbies. The substantial degree of cohesion which the party achieved for its parliamentary manoeuvres, in short, was never really jeopardised.

We have attempted to trace the development of Labour's various

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67 See e.g. the speeches by Evans and Hobson in the debate of 24 March 1953, and statements by Stokes and Webb in The Times, 27 Feb. 1953, and Reynolds News, 1 March 1953, respectively.

68 In the divisions of 24 March and 27 July the Government's majorities were 44 and 46, as against a normal majority of 18. This indicates the possibility of up to 28 Labour abstentions. The figure 16 was received by the writer from a Labour source. With reference to the division on 24 March the same figure is mentioned speculatively in the Conservative Research Dept.'s Notes on Current Politics, 15 Feb. 1954, p.16.

attitudes towards federation and indicate the motives underlying different points of view in the party. In the short term, of course, most of the party's efforts came to nothing, since the plan was approved by formal majorities and Attlee did bind the party to help make the federal experiment a success once the arguments were over.<sup>69</sup> But in the long term it was the experiment that came to nothing. Whether Labour could claim to have influenced the course of federal history in the later fifties is a question to which we shall return in Chapter X.

### 3. Labour and the British Guiana Crisis

The dust of Central Africa had barely settled before the party found itself once again embroiled in disputes over a colonial issue. The issue was the British Guiana constitutional crisis of October-December 1953, and it is a peculiarly instructive one to consider. For the events in the colony were such as to catch the party in a series of tactical dilemmas. Throughout, two underlying questions probed, painfully for many, to the core of the party's principles. Labour was committed to democracy: should this commitment extend to a tolerance of a colonial government that was popularly elected (under a constitution drafted at Labour's initiative), but proving itself to be anti-democratic in temper? Labour was committed to socialism: should it therefore ally itself with a widely-based socialist political movement in a colony, albeit that movement's version of socialism was a great deal more radical than Labour's own? On these problems the party divided more or less neatly into a right, a middle and a left, and the different factions clashed repeatedly since all were represented in all the relevant party organs.

In this instance our analysis will take the form of a narrative case-study: partly because it seems the best way of illuminating the interaction of attitudes, partly because no account of this political dispute - unlike the dispute over federation - has previously been attempted.

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<sup>69</sup> BCD vol.515 col.425 (6 May 1953).

In 1953 British Guiana's population numbered some 450,000. Apart from a few minority communities, this population was divided almost equally between the descendants of indentured labourers from India and those of African Negro origin. The major crop was sugar, an industry which employed predominantly Indian labour: most of the Negroes, descended from an earlier generation of slave labour, had migrated to urban employment since emancipation.

In April 1953 a new constitution, founded upon the recommendations of the Waddington Commission appointed by Griffiths in 1950, had come into force. It granted substantial internal self-government. In the House of Assembly there were to be only three nominated officials as against twenty-four members elected by universal suffrage. Dr. Cheddi Jagan's Peoples Progressive Party, based mainly on rural Indian labour, was the only established and cohesive party in the country. In the election it fought a well-organised campaign characterised by lavish promises and the exploitation of grievances. Thanks to vote-splitting among the other parties it won eighteen seats on the basis of 51% of the votes. Jagan became Leader of the house, and he and five PPP colleagues (including the Negro Forbes Burnham, president of the party) were given ministerial posts.

What happened in the next few months caused great anxiety to British administrators in the colony. As they saw it the PPP Ministers were negligent in their official duties and sought to use their position to gain control of the trade union movement and to exercise political influence over the police and the Civil Service. Jagan, his wife and some of his colleagues were known to have attended conferences of international Communist organisations. The Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, became convinced that they were aiming to establish a left-wing dictatorship and in the process were ruining the economy, not least by organising strikes in their capacity as trade union leaders. He recommended to Lyttelton that the Ministers be removed from their posts and the constitution suspended.

His advice was followed. Under an Order-in-Council of October 4 the Governor was enabled to act without the advice of the Executive

Council and was given emergency powers. The six Ministers were dismissed; they promptly attempted to organise a general strike. At the same time Lyttelton authorised the despatch of a cruiser and seven hundred troops from Caribbean bases to reinforce the local security forces. There were, however, no incidents. The Government justified its action in a lengthy official statement on October 9, announcing too that a commission of inquiry would be appointed.

Members of the Labour Party reacted variously to the Government's measures. The left was quick to protest. At a Bevanite meeting on October 5, Driberg put forward an interpretation of events which was to be widely voiced by the left in the next few weeks: a cruiser was going to British Guiana because people there

"voted for a government which has radical reformers in it and whose programme includes a proposal to nationalise the sugar industry. When the Labour Party wanted to nationalise the sugar industry here, Mr. Cube got busy fighting it and so it was not nationalised. Now, Mr. Cube is again busy over in British Guiana."<sup>70</sup>

Addressing another meeting, he made a second point which was to become familiar in left-wing Labour speeches: that "if we fail to help these backward people to fight for better standards they will look elsewhere - possibly to the Communists".<sup>71</sup> Brockway too made a statement: "I

am utterly opposed to Communism, but the Guiana Government was elected by adult suffrage. It would make us totalitarian if we suppressed it on the grounds that some of its members had Communist associations."<sup>72</sup>

But at least one Labour MP, James Harrison, a trade unionist, was prepared to express support for Lyttelton's action. According to him trouble inevitably sprang from giving the franchise to "primitive people"; this "merely handed over the whole future of such people to the mercy of any adventurer who made attractive promises. It had led to the return of

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70 Daily Worker, 6 Oct. 1953.

71 News Chronicle, 8 Oct. 1953. Driberg later reiterated both these arguments in a foreword to a book by Jagan: Forbidden Freedom. The Story of British Guiana (Lawrence and Wishart, 1954), pp.5-6.

72 Daily Herald, 8 Oct. 1953.

a Communist-dominated government."<sup>73</sup>

For their part, the parliamentary leaders remained silent until the Colonial Office released its official statement on October 9. In a public speech that evening Griffiths spoke for the leadership in terms which, as the News Chronicle observed, "showed a restraint in marked contrast with views expressed privately by many Labour MPs".<sup>74</sup> According to Griffiths the Government statements made so far were

"too vague and inadequate when judged against the extremely serious step that has now been taken. It appears from these statements that the justification put forward by the Government for their action is that they had reason to fear that some of the leaders of the PPP were contemplating the establishment of a Communist state. It is for the Government to satisfy Parliament and the nation that this fear is well founded, not by vague and general allegations but by evidence set out in specific terms. This should be published as a White Paper."<sup>75</sup>

The statement could hardly have been more studiously non-committal. According to the Daily Worker,<sup>76</sup> "left-wing Labour MPs" were unlikely to be satisfied by this caution on the part of their leaders. The desire to play for time, the unwillingness to condemn Lyttelton outright, even the apparent reluctance to call a special meeting of the NEC - upon which the Bevanites had six representatives<sup>77</sup> - would all be challenged by the left when opportunity arose.

Meanwhile, Guianese individuals and organisations had been actively seeking to impress the Labour Party with their views. Two officials of the British Guiana TUC, already in London, demanded that the party and the British TUC should forthwith initiate their own inquiry into the situation.<sup>78</sup> The strength of their appeal, however, was reduced by the fact that they made no direct approaches, speaking instead through the

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73 Daily Worker, 10 Oct. 1953 (reporting speech of 7 Oct.).

74 News Chronicle, 10 Oct. 1953.

75 The Times, 10 Oct. 1953.

76a Daily Worker, 13 Oct. 1953.

77 Bevan, Mrs. Castle, Crossman, Driberg, Mikardo and Wilson.

78 Daily Worker, 9 Oct. 1953.

Caribbean Labour Congress - a far-left organisation regarded with disfavour, though not actually proscribed, by the Labour Party. Jagan himself showed a better tactical sense in lobbying the party from a distance. On October 7 he had sent the NEC a copy of the official protest which he had lodged with Lyttelton. At the weekend he sent separate cables to Brockway and the NEC, calling respectively for unofficial and official party action. But on Monday October 12 the NEC's leaders, Attlee, Griffiths and Morrison, released a statement which did no more than echo Griffiths's earlier non-commitment; however, if Jagan chose to come to London the party leaders would be willing to hear his case.<sup>79</sup>

It was not yet certain that there would be a White Paper, but Churchill had agreed on the need for a debate and there was speculation about the line Labour would take. The Telegraph correspondent anticipated left-wing charges that Lyttelton had acted under pressure from the sugar firms and the American Government: if, however, the Bevanites demanded a major attack they would be resisted "by the same strong minority that resisted the party's decision to oppose Central African federation".<sup>80</sup> The unknown factor was still the attitude of the leadership. As late as October 18 Gaitskell would do no more than reiterate the terms of Griffiths's original statement.<sup>81</sup>

The leadership's prudence seemed well justified by the nature of the information coming in from the colony. Much of it concerned the trade union situation.<sup>82</sup> The British TUC maintained relations with the Man-Power Citizens Association, which was recognised by the sugar firms as a bargaining agent and, like the TUC, was affiliated with the ICFTU. Its rival was the Guiana Industrial Workers Union, formed by

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79 Manchester Guardian and Daily Herald, 13 Oct. 1953.

80 Daily Telegraph, 12 Oct. 1953.

81 The Times, 19 Oct. 1953.

82 As reported in The Times, 15 Oct. 1953 and The Observer, 18 Oct. 1953.

Jagan and others in 1948 as a breakaway from the MPCA. The GIWU was affiliated to the British Guiana TUC, an association of some fifteen small unions, and to the Communist-front World Federation of Trade Unions; its president had been one of Jagan's ministers. What was unclear was which of the two had the greater popular support. Both unions were small in registered membership, the MPCA with some two thousand members among sugar workers and the GIWU with fewer than a thousand members all told. The GIWU, however, appeared to wield much the greater influence among the Indian sugar workers; in September it had successfully called a strike on all sugar estates, and later called it off again. An aspect of Labour's dilemma was thus becoming plain. The MPCA appeared to be moderate but not widely based, the GIWU extremist but more popular. Suppose Jagan was indeed the genuine popular leader of a depressed and understandably radical working class: would it therefore be incumbent upon the Labour leaders to take up his cause?

As the week passed it seemed less and less likely that this would happen. On the 14th a telegram came to Attlee from the United Democratic Party, one of the Guianese opposition groups, pointing out that the PPP had repeatedly denounced the Labour Party as "capitalist agents ... Please pay no heed to their sudden overtures".<sup>83</sup> On the 17th a cable in similar terms arrived from Norman Manley, head of the Jamaican Peoples National Party, a body associated with British Labour in the Socialist International.<sup>84</sup> On the same day Rita Hinden, the only prominent Labour figure to have had previous personal experience of Jagan,<sup>85</sup> published an article which denounced the PPP's attitude at the time of the Waddington Commission:

"They interpreted democracy as what I can only describe as 'one-party rule' ... In other words, democratic institutions were to be given by Britain as the stepping-stone to a totalitarian state"

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83 Daily Telegraph, 15 Oct. 1953.

84 The Times, 21 Oct. 1953.

85 As a member of the Waddington Commission; see above, p. 66.

- a process which, Dr. Hinden implied, no Democratic Labour Party could tolerate.<sup>86</sup> Dr. Hinden also took the lead in formulating the attitude of the Fabian Colonial Bureau committee, of which Griffiths was a member. In a paper prepared for the committee on the 19th, she stated unequivocally: "My strong doubts about these radical actions [by Lyttelton] to alter the Constitution are matched by an equally strong belief that the PPP had sooner or later to be stopped in its course."<sup>87</sup> One indication that the party's leaders were forming definite views behind their official mask of non-commitment was provided by Attlee's terse reply to a cable from Jagan, asking for the party's help in arranging an air passage to London: "Regret impossible intervene".<sup>88</sup>

By contrast, the Labour left organised a public meeting in order to make its commitment clear. Sponsored jointly by the Bevanite weekly Tribune and Brockway's Congress of Peoples against Imperialism, the meeting was attended by some four hundred people and addressed by Brockway, Jennie Lee, Geoffrey Bing, a Cooperative Party official and two Guianese. Most speakers declared that "socialists" believed the PPP to be "essentially a Labour rather than a Communist party".<sup>89</sup>

On Tuesday October 20 the Government, as requested by Griffiths, published a White Paper. Consisting mainly of quotations from the platform speeches of PPP members and a tabulation of circumstantial evidence about their Communist sympathies, it enabled the party to begin

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86 Manchester Guardian, 17 Oct. 1953. This article made a strong impression, being quoted by both sides in subsequent parliamentary debates. In private Dr. Hinden did not attempt to hide her distaste for Jagan. The distaste was mutual, as this passage by Jagan suggests: "History is moving too fast for people like Dr. Hinden. She wrote some good books on the colonial question before ... 1945 ... I suppose Dr. Hinden will never recover from the boeing she received in London in 1951; perhaps it was the first time she had been boomed by colonials. The occasion was a meeting ... under the joint auspices of the League of Coloured Peoples and the Caribbean Labour Congress, at which both she and I spoke on the British Guiana Constitution." Jagan, op. cit., p.66.

87 Rita Hinden, "The Crisis in British Guiana" (PCB paper No. 5 of 1953); PCB-124, 21 Oct. 1953.

88 Daily Worker, 19 Oct. 1953.

89 Manchester Guardian, 19 Oct. 1953.

at last the task of formulating a line for Thursday's debate. This process of formulation passed through several distinct stages, and by following these an insight may be gained into the party's methods of accommodating its disagreements.

The first stage was a well-attended meeting on Tuesday night of the party's back-bench Colonial Affairs subject group, presided over by Griffiths. The tenor of the group's proceedings reached several ears, Lyttelton's among them.<sup>90</sup> It appears that several trade union members were shocked by the White Paper's account of PPP ministers' activities in their capacity as union leaders, and at first refused to support any motion of censure on Lyttelton's actions. Griffiths too would not accept proposals from left-wing members that the Government should be condemned out of hand. There was, however, a general feeling that the Government should not be allowed to escape entirely uncriticised, and by the end of the meeting most of the group had agreed that criticism should be pursued along two lines: first, that the White Paper presented insufficient evidence to justify the charge of a Communist plot, and second, that even if an emergency situation had existed the Government had not explained why it was thought necessary to suspend the Constitution rather than invoke the Governor's reserve powers. As it was, suspension would have the long-term effect of prejudicing political advance by placing "moderate elements in the colony" in an impossible position. If necessary, these criticisms should be pressed to a division.<sup>91</sup>

The second stage was initiated by Griffiths's report of these proceedings to the party's fifteen-member Parliamentary Committee later the same evening. At this meeting Bevan repeated the case for all-out attack, but his was a lonely voice in a body composed almost entirely of moderates. Griffiths stressed that the party should avoid any suggestion of condoning the PPP ministers' conduct, and it was decided that attack would be concentrated upon the suspension of the Constitution rather than the sending of a gunboat. Further, in view of the lack of

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90 Chandos, op. cit., p.428.

91 Manchester Guardian and Daily Telegraph, 21 Oct. 1953.

evidence time need not be wasted in speculation about the putative role of the sugar firms and the American Government in the crisis.<sup>92</sup>

Next morning saw the third stage: a full meeting of the parliamentary party. Griffiths reported the Parliamentary Committee's decisions and gave the wording of the proposed amendment:

"This House, whilst emphatically deploring the actions and speeches of some of the leaders of the PPP in British Guiana, as set forth in the White Paper, ... and condemning methods leading to the establishment of a totalitarian regime in a British colony, nevertheless is not satisfied that the situation in British Guiana was of such a character as to justify the extreme step of suspending the Constitution."

The mildness of these terms<sup>93</sup> won approval from Thomas Reid (one of the supporters of Central African federation), and Charles Pannell, acting as spokesman for the trade union MPs. The Bevanites protested but not strongly. Possibly a tactical speech by Attlee, attacking Lyttelton in sharp personal terms, helped to placate them; in any case the leadership had promised a division, and now promised further that the wording of the amendment would not be considered final until the Shadow Cabinet talked with Jagan and Burnham, who were expected to reach London that day.<sup>92</sup>

Arriving as expected, Jagan and Burnham were closeted with the Shadow Cabinet for more than two hours. But they failed to win it over; after the meeting Labour's amendment was tabled with the wording unchanged. Probably the main significance of the meeting was that it enabled the party leaders to form personal impressions of the two men. It was conveyed to the press that "Mr. Burnham made a more favourable impression than Dr. Jagan".<sup>94</sup>

Clearly there was no prospect now of any change in the line of attack. On Thursday morning yet another cable arrived from the Caribbean. Sent by Grantley Adams, president of the Barbados Socialist Party, to

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92 Daily Telegraph, 22 Oct. 1953.

93 "Nearly all soda water; only a drop of whisky". Chandos, op. cit., p.429.

94 Daily Telegraph, 22 Oct. 1953. Reporters in British Guiana had by then discovered that Burnham was the unofficial leader of a moderate Negro faction within the predominantly Indian PPP, and had gone to London mainly to "keep an eye" on Jagan. News Chronicle, 21 Oct. 1953.

C.W.W. Greenidge in his capacity as secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, it echoed the substance of its predecessors: "Strongly urge you warn Attlee, Griffiths, other Labour speakers against backing wrong horse. We here know Jagan's crowd and sympathisers elsewhere to be positive menace to West Indian socialist progress."<sup>95</sup> Adams, like Hanley, was respected by the Labour leadership. Dr. Hinden suggested in November that their communications were "perhaps most decisive" of all the influences which had hardened the leadership's attitude against Jagan. Both Morgan Phillips and Griffiths later made statements which justified this view.<sup>96</sup>

So to the debate. By most accounts, the Opposition's performance was not very impressive. The main lines were laid down by Griffiths. He believed that "some" of the PIP leaders did have "Communist associations", though it was only fair to say that in their meeting with the Shadow Cabinet Jagan and Burnham had denied this. In answer to a question from Lyttelton he agreed that if he were Colonial Secretary he would certainly have responded to a call from the Governor requesting troops. Never, however, would he have withdrawn the Constitution. He was convinced that the situation could have been met, and better insurance made for the future, by temporarily invoking the Governor's reserve powers. Attlee, winding up, amplified these points only by adding a personal attack upon Lyttelton, similar, perhaps, to the one he had made in the party meeting.<sup>97</sup> Other Labour speeches served mainly to indicate the breadth of the spectrum of opinion which lay behind the terms of the party's amendment. Reid, Charles Grey and John McGovern all spoke for the right. All three departed from the official brief by describing Jagan and his supporters, in unqualified terms, as Communists. McGovern

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95 The Times, 23 Oct. 1953. Dame Margery Perham has pointed out to the writer that this unanimous hostility to Jagan among West Indian leaders probably owed something to the racial factor, these leaders being of African descent.

96 Socialist Commentary, Nov. 1953, p.249; The Times, 6 Nov. 1953; 1954 Conference Report, p.170.

97 HCD vol.518 cols.2180-95, 2240-1 (Griffiths), 2262 (Attlee) (22 Oct. 1953).

further announced that he considered the suspension fully justified and therefore could not vote in the division. John Hynd's speech came closer to the left-wing view. He concentrated less on the suspension than on the White Paper, suggesting that it offered no proof of Communism and did not justify the landing of troops.<sup>98</sup> But the Bevanite left was quiet, less perhaps from lack of inclination than from lack of opportunity; Jagan, watching from the gallery, later wrote that "many of the members of the left wing of the Labour Party who were prepared to speak strongly could not catch the Speaker's eye". But other onlookers felt that the left conveyed its attitude effectively enough: both the Times and the Guardian correspondents observed that Bevan and several back-benchers were "visibly" irked by Griffiths's restraint.<sup>99</sup>

As for Lyttelton, the press reported that he put his case well. After quoting Rita Hinden's Guardian article, among other sources, in support of his position, he acknowledged that the central charge to be met was that the situation could have been handled by the use of the reserve powers. He had obviously been well briefed on this point.<sup>100</sup> The reserve powers, he argued, were never designed to cope with continuing crises but were intended rather to meet single cases. If they were used continuously there would have been conflict with ministers, "an ever-increasing tension and risk of disorder". There would also be a de facto abrogation of the Constitution, which he did not consider "proper or seemly".<sup>101</sup>

He made no reference to the disagreements within Labour ranks, though he was well aware of them. It was left to the winding-up speaker,

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98 HCD vol.518, cols.2218 (Reid), 2226 (Grey), 2231-5 (McGovern), 2199-208 (Hynd).

99 Jagan, op. cit., p.67; The Times and Manchester Guardian, 23 Oct. 1953.

100 And not only, perhaps, by the Colonial Office. Sayers had taken it upon himself to consult a number of ex-Governors for their opinions. All supported the government view. Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs, Nov. 1953, p.9.

101 HCD, loc. cit., cols. 2172-3.

Harold Macmillan, to suggest that the leadership was insisting on a division purely as a sop to the left, and to ask, in terms similar to those used in the Central African and Kenyan dispute, that the division be called off: its motivation, well enough understood at home, would "not be so well understood in the West Indies".<sup>102</sup> Labour was, however, committed to its division. The Liberals, after hearing Lyttelton's speech, voted with the Government. By one count there were also nine Labour abstentions, though only one - McGovern's - had been publicly foreshadowed.

This was the end of the first round. Clearly there was more to come. The Labour left remained unsatisfied. The TUC had not yet spoken. Jagan's lobbying was not yet at an end; immediately after the debate he addressed a protest meeting organised by the Caribbean Labour Congress and announced that he would "take this matter to the British people".<sup>103</sup> Accordingly, there was no diminution of activity in and about the Labour Party. Very little of this activity helped to create an impression of party cohesion. Two broad problems continued to arouse conflict: that of defining the party's attitude towards Jagan's movement, and that of reaching agreement on the party's attitude towards Lyttelton's policy.

In an effort to resolve the first of these, the Commonwealth sub-committee of the NEC, a body dominated at that stage by moderates, invited Jagan to a discussion on November 3. At the meeting Jagan requested the use of Labour platforms in order to publicise his case.<sup>104</sup> Thus, for the first time, the party had to face in practice the dilemma which had confronted the Government: how far should they extend democratic tolerance to the anti-democratic? Two days later, after the sub-committee had also seen representatives of the Guianese opposition parties,<sup>105</sup> the answer

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102 HCD vol.518, col.2278.

103 Manchester Guardian, 23 Oct. 1953.

104 Ibid., 4 Nov. 1953.

105 Ibid. These representatives also met the Conservative Colonial Affairs Committee's West Indies sub-committee, of which J. Roland Robinson, a director of British Guiana Consolidated Goldfields, was chairman. Jagan and Burnham made no attempt to approach the Conservatives; according to the Guardian correspondent they would probably have been rebuffed if they had. Ibid., 3 and 5 Nov. 1953.

came in a long NEC statement which was clearly intended to close the matter. The party leadership's considered view was that it would be "inadvisable" for local Labour Parties to provide platforms for PPP speakers and to beware of cooperating "with other bodies (which may well be Communist-inspired)" in supporting Jagan. If local parties wished to hold meetings on British Guiana "they should engage speakers who will present the Labour Party's point of view". There followed a resumé of the official case as put by Griffiths in the debate.<sup>106</sup>

The one element of this statement which detracted from its air of finality was that it was phrased as advice and not as instruction. Griffiths himself later allowed that local parties were entitled to reject the advice.<sup>107</sup> Whether or not the NEC moderates would have preferred to issue a total ban on Jagan is not clear, but it does seem probable that an advisory circular was all that was politically possible: it was leaked to Jagan that even the statement which did emerge had been approved in the NEC by a majority of only one.<sup>108</sup> Two of the NEC's leading left-wingers subsequently had no reservations about indicating their own disregard for the statement, Bevan by giving a party for Jagan and Mikardo by sharing a platform with him. The statement was also attacked vigorously in Tribune. At lower levels there was further defiance. Several constituency parties protested publicly against the statement, while organisations with Labour members, such as the Union of Democratic Control and the Congress of Peoples against Imperialism, offered platforms.<sup>109</sup> Even a year later at the 1954 party conference, a constituency delegate sought to have the NEC's advice "referred back".<sup>110</sup> But on the whole the advice was effective. Though Jagan pressed on

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106 The Times, 6 Nov. 1953.

107 1954 Conference Report, p.170.

108 Jagan, op. cit., p.92.

109 Tribune, 13 Nov. 1953; The Times, 9 Nov. 1953; Jagan, op. cit., p.93.

110 1954 Conference Report, p.169.

with his plans for a grass-roots campaign, and managed to address thirty meetings before leaving on November 19, no local parties other than Mikardo's, in Reading, offered a platform. His chief sponsoring organisation throughout was the Caribbean Labour Congress.

The second problem, that of reconciling the different intra-party attitudes towards government policy, was a persistent one. The debate of October 22 was hardly over before left and right were visibly clarifying their differences again. On the day after the debate the left managed to add a postscript to it. Emrys Hughes, speaking on the adjournment, was able to place on record the views which had gone unvoiced in the debate: in particular, that the results of the Guianese free elections should have been respected and that the sinister influence underlying the whole affair was that of British capitalism.<sup>111</sup> A few days later the TUC General Council at last announced its own view. There had been no great doubt about the line it would take; in fact its statement placed it well to the right of the party leadership. It roundly condemned the PPP ministers' activities in the union field and failed to rebuke the Government in any way, even for its suspension of the Constitution.<sup>112</sup> The terms of this statement reached an NEC meeting, taking place elsewhere in Transport House, and provoked from the Bevanite group expressions of concern that the Government would be able to quote the TUC against the party. Later one of the group, Mikardo, took direct action. On the day after the NEC issued its advisory circular Mikardo published an article, entitled "New Friends for Mr. Oliver Lyttelton", in Tribune. The General Council, he wrote, had swallowed the White Paper whole, and had issued a statement directly opposing the views of the parliamentary party. In response the General Council protested in a letter to the NEC, demanding that Mikardo's article be judged in the light of an earlier NEC resolution that members of the Labour movement should not attack each other in public. Far

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111 HCD vol.518 cols.2393-401 (23 Oct. 1953).

112 The Times, 29 Oct. 1953.

from backing down, Tribune reported with an anonymous article commenting on "the childish absurdity of the General Council's approach".<sup>113</sup>

These activities during November left the party in a far from happy situation. On the kinds of issues raised by the Guiana crisis, it seemed, there could be little if any hope of achieving unanimity. And two more events, bound to be well reported, lay in the offing: a parliamentary debate on the Guiana Order-in-Council, and the next NEC meeting at which the argument between Mikardo and the TUC would have to be considered.

The debate proved to be the last public occasion on which Labour views of the crisis were presented. The Bevanites had let it be known that they would press for another division, and on November 19 a prayer for the annulment of the Order had been tabled in the names of Griffiths, Chuter Ede (the party's expert on statutory instruments) and 57 back-benchers. But this did not mean that the party was internally reconciled. The debate itself, on December 7, revealed that the respective attitudes had if anything become more firmly set than ever. The left's views about the role of the sugar interests, about the lack of justification even for sending troops (let alone taking constitutional action), and about Lyttelton's proclivity for making "many more Communists" than Communists themselves could, were firmly voiced by Brockway. Right-wing speeches, offering unqualified endorsement for the Government's actions, were made by Ian Winterbottom and Donald Chapman, the latter announcing that he would abstain from the division. And the effect of Ede's opening speech, largely a discussion of legal niceties, was disastrously undermined when he referred to British Guiana as an island.<sup>114</sup> In the division the Liberals again supported the Government, and it was understood (by The Times) that there were several Labour abstentions; the Telegraph thought that "a growing number of socialist MP's" were by now

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113 Tribune, 6 Nov. 1953; Daily Telegraph, 26 Nov. 1953; Tribune, 4 Dec. 1953.

114 HCD vol.521 cols.1654-9 (Brockway), 1731 (Chapman), 1632-3 (Ede), (7 Dec. 1953). As one account delicately put it, Ede's remark "suggested a certain detachment from the subject". The Annual Register for 1953 (Longmans Green, 1954), p.59.

"in opposition to the trend of Labour party policy on colonial issues".<sup>115</sup>

The NEC meeting, held on December 16, provided a melancholy finale. Mikardo was indicted by Sam Watson (a trade union representative), Morrison and Griffiths, for having jeopardised party unity. His right to free speech was then argued by Wilson, Driberg and Bevan. After this, by a vote of about twenty to five, he was censured for having written his article and reproved for having shared a platform with Jagan. That the NEC should censure one of its own members was, according to most observers, without precedent.<sup>116</sup>

A few weeks earlier, at the party conference, there had been some hopeful claims that the party's wide-ranging factional disputes belonged already to the past.<sup>117</sup> The Guiana crisis showed how premature this optimism had been. It demonstrated too how much not only the Labour Party but also the nature of colonial issues had changed in the space of a few years. In the late forties colonial policy would have been almost the last topic on which a Labour split might have been expected. Now, apparently, it had to be ranked with foreign policy and defence as one of the divisive issues of principle.

#### 4. Other Issues

1953 was the annus mirabilis of colonial causes; federation and British Guiana may have been the most hotly debated, but they fell far short of being the year's tally. Here, though, it is unnecessary to do more than touch upon some of the other issues, since they will tell us little about the "breakdown of the bi-partisan approach" that is not already apparent.

Lyttelton's opponents, while refraining from taking up certain colonial troubles as full-dress debating topics, seldom lost an opportunity

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115 The Times and Daily Telegraph, 8 Dec. 1953.

116 Manchester Guardian, 17 Dec. 1953.

117 E.g. by Arthur Greenwood, chairman of the conference: 1953 Conference Report, p.210.

to attribute them in some measure to his presumed maladroitness. One example of such troubles was the disputation among Nigeria's regional politicians at a time when Lyttelton was attempting to secure agreement among them on the country's future. Venture argued that "the federation issue is poisoning the whole continent, and plays no inconsiderable part in the current crisis in Nigeria. Will nothing cure the Secretary of State's invincible obstinacy?"<sup>118</sup> And the "left-wing press", Lyttelton observed ironically, "foretold doom if these delicate balances were to be subjected to the ruthless and clumsy hands of the Secretary of State." For his part, he attributed some of his difficulties in bringing the Nigerian politicians into conference to "shadow-boxing by the Opposition".<sup>119</sup> As it turned out the July 1953 conference on Nigeria had to be adjourned without reaching agreement. Re-convening in Lagos in January 1954, however, it was successful in devising new, more decentralised federal forms for the country, and it should be noted that Labour leaders were among those who gave Lyttelton credit for this.

A second instance was the supposed correlation between a remark by the Colonial Secretary and a series of disturbances in Uganda. Lyttelton's words, spoken in an after-dinner speech to the British Africa Club on June 30, were:

"That Federation, both politically and economically, will be of immense benefit to the three Central African territories is, I believe, an established and unshakable fact. Nor should we exclude from our minds the evolution, as time goes on, of still larger measures of unification, and possibly still larger measures of federation of the whole East African territories. This is the sort of idea which the man who gave his name to the Rhodesias would, I believe, have supported."<sup>120</sup>

Passing almost unnoticed in Britain, this statement was prominently reported in the East African press. Subsequent disorder in Uganda was widely believed to have been caused - or at least occasioned - by it;

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118 Venture, July 1953, p.2.

119 Chandos, op. cit., p.408.

120 As reported in East Africa and Rhodesia, 2 July 1953.

Ugandan Africans were said to have regarded it as a hint that the Government aimed to establish an East African federation with political control in the hands of the Kenyan settlers. Later in the House Labour MPs, in particular Brockway and Hale, stated unequivocally that the remark and the disorders were cause and effect. Lyttelton denied the correlation, maintained that the disorders had been latent, and gave assurances that there would be no East African federation without popular approval.<sup>121</sup> But there seems little doubt that the correlation did exist. It soon became known that the Governor of Uganda himself, Sir Andrew Cohen, had persuaded Lyttelton to issue a disclaimer of any intention of "imposing" an East African federation. According to a contemporary newspaper profile of Cohen, Lyttelton's words had vitiated "all his efforts to win popular confidence".<sup>122</sup>

In December there were two more parliamentary confrontations. Both of these, however, turned out to be counter-productive from Labour's point of view: the light which the Guiana affair had thrown on the party's internal disagreements continued to shine, and in each case Lyttelton was widely adjudged the victor.

The first of the two concerned the exile of Kabaka Mutesa II, the hereditary ruler and spiritual head of Buganda. The Kabaka had been demanding that Buganda, by far the most "advanced" component of Uganda, should be allowed to secede and come under the purview of the Foreign Office. When this was refused he publicly repudiated his responsibility, as outlined in an agreement of 1900, to act upon the Governor's advice. Cohen, with Lyttelton's authorisation, thereupon decreed his exile.

Lyttelton announced this decision to Parliament on November 30. By the next day Labour spokesmen were announcing that their party would seek a debate and that several members, regarding this new crisis as the final straw, were also advocating an official censure of the Secretary of State.<sup>123</sup>

The Kabaka debate took place on December 2, Brockway having secured

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121 HCD vol.521 cols.1244-5 (2 Dec. 1953).

122 Observer, 6 Dec. 1953.

123 The Times, 2 Dec. 1953.

the adjournment under Standing Order 9. The outcome, briefly, was that Lyttelton produced a sufficiently convincing argument "as temporarily to stun the Opposition into silence".<sup>124</sup> If there had been any intention of forcing a division it was abandoned in the course of the debate: according to Harold Macmillan, "it was common knowledge that as hon. Members walked out [after Lyttelton's speech] they said, 'This is the end of that'".<sup>125</sup> The real weakness of Labour's position was that once again the different elements in the party could not agree on the policy to be adopted. Thus Richard Crossman commented in the New Statesman:

"If, after taking into account the gravity of the risks that flow from it, the decision is reached [by Labour] that Mutesa's return is essential for the well-being of Uganda, then a solemn pledge should be given ... that the next Labour Government will restore him to his throne. On the other hand, the Labour Party may reach the conclusion - to which I myself have been driven - that ... the conduct of the Kabaka made his deposition inevitable and justifies the Governor in advising against his return. If that is Labour's view, it should be stated as soon as possible. The one unforgiveable thing would be to raise false hopes and to prolong a most dangerous crisis by well-intentioned equivocation."<sup>126</sup>

But "well-intentioned equivocation" was precisely the impression of the party which its activities towards the end of 1953 seemed most likely to create. The air of indecision which had damaged the party over British Guiana, and now the Kabaka, reappeared in the manoeuvres which accompanied the general censure motion. On December 2, the day of the Kabaka debate, Opposition spokesmen conveyed to the Government and the news agencies that a motion deploring Lyttelton's handling of colonial affairs, with Brockway prominent among its sponsors, was about to be tabled. During the Kabaka debate Griffiths unexpectedly announced his decision - reached, he later said, on his own responsibility and without consulting any colleagues - that there would be no such motion "for the time being", in the hope that a settlement with the Kabaka might

124 The Economist's phrase: 5 Dec. 1953, p.729.

125 HCB vol.522 col.503 (16 Dec. 1953).

126 New Statesman, 6 Feb. 1954.

yet be reached. The following weekend The Observer could state, with an air of inside knowledge, that the Government's publication of a White Paper on the Kabaka "is expected to cause the Labour Party finally to withdraw its motion." On December 10, however, the motion was retabled by the party leaders, with Brockway's name replaced by that of Sir Frank Soskice.<sup>127</sup> The Manchester Guardian's political correspondent commented:

"It is ... odd that the ostensible reason for suspending the censure motion last week ... should be abandoned without a word of explanation before the visitors from Buganda have seen the Colonial Secretary ... Part of the explanation is that Labour members have been stung by the premature trumpeting of Mr. Lyttelton's 'triumph' in last week's [Kabaka] debate by Tory speakers at the weekend."<sup>128</sup>

The House was called upon to express "its grave disquiet at the handling by Her Majesty's Government of affairs in Africa", and the motion was brought to debate on December 16. It was Labour's first and last censure motion on this subject. Griffiths led off by drawing a contrast between "the Africa of 1951" when "there was trust, there was confidence, there was mutual relationship" and Africa in 1953, marked by the Africans' "deep mistrust" of the British Government. There was a "drift to disaster" in Africa, and Lyttelton's cumulative errors of omission and commission had greatly augmented the process.<sup>129</sup> In response Lyttelton set out to justify his major decisions one by one and, more generally, argued that the origins of the current troubles antedated both the present and the late governments: they were the inevitable result of the ferment caused by the projection of Western ideas and influences into the continent

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127 Sir Frank, according to the Guardian correspondent (11 Dec. 1953), had "won great credit with his party for his attack on Central African federation last session". The other side of the coin was presented by the Conservative Research Dept.: "It is understood that this substitution reflected growing criticism within the Socialist Party that Mr. Brockway's extreme views have been allowed too much influence on the party's attitude towards colonial policy." Notes on Current Politics, 15 Feb. 1954, p.12.

128 "Again the Censure"; Manchester Guardian, 11 Dec. 1953. On these manoeuvres see also Griffiths, HCD vol.521 col.1283 (2 Dec. 1953) and vol.522 col.402 (16 Dec. 1953); Macmillan, loc. cit., cols.505-6; Observer, 6 Dec. 1953.

129 Phrases quoted from HCD vol.522 cols.393, 407 (16 Dec. 1953).

Arrival of the V.I.P. of Bungloozle to object to new democratic constitution imposed on his people by the Colonial Office, and to demand freedom for civilized principles of dictatorship, intolerance and ignorance. A section of the Labour Party denounces moves to prevent the V.I.P. from laying in a stock of high explosives as a denial of his democratic rights.



OLD LOUIS ALMANNAR'S

PROPHECIES FOR 1954

Manchester Guardian, 11 Dec. 1953.

(Griffiths, Bevan, Attlee and Chuter Ede at right.)

over a long period. Thereafter neither side's contributions added anything fresh to the arguments already advanced in the conflicts of the preceding year or so. Viewed simply as a parliamentary occasion, the debate was chiefly memorable - if the tenor of press comment is to be accepted - as the most considerable of Lyttelton's hat-trick of debating victories. For example, the parliamentary correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, a journal which had often been editorially hostile to Lyttelton, wrote:

"Mr. Griffiths was playing too obvious a party hand. Mr. Lyttelton's approach was broader and ended in an almost moving lament that the non-party treatment of colonial affairs had broken down, coupled with the hope that it might soon be restored. It would be difficult for any impartial person studying the speeches of the two men to deny that the vote of censure was made to appear to have no justification at all. Mr. Lyttelton had already had two undoubted debating successes against the Opposition over British Guiana and Buganda. Today's performance excelled either of them, and he sat down to a long roll of Tory cheers. These, by the way, contrasted sharply with what seemed to be the merely dutiful cheers which Labour bestowed on Mr. Griffiths."<sup>130</sup>

The last few months of Lyttelton's tenure were passed in relative parliamentary calm. The Opposition did not again attempt a premeditated attack on him or his policies. For these few months at least colonial affairs seemed to lose their critical urgency and the party's energies were mainly directed elsewhere. In addition, Griffiths had undoubtedly suffered a loss of esteem among sections of the party. His somewhat emotional manner had already earned for him the sobriquet "Minister of Tears" among Labour members. And the lines he had followed in several major debates satisfied neither the left, which considered him too restrained, nor the right-wing MPs, a few of whom had openly expressed the view that the party's activity in this field might begin to damage it electorally.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Manchester Guardian, 17 Dec. 1953. The Times correspondent expressed himself similarly; so later, did the New Statesman correspondent (26 Dec. 1953). Two Labour members - Phillips Price and, again, McGovern - abstained from the division.

<sup>131</sup> E.g. Stanley Evans: "This sort of frivolity does not pass unnoticed, and we shall pay a heavy electoral price if a more sober outlook is not quickly forthcoming". Constituency speech (11 Dec. 1953), reported in Conservative Research Dept., op.cit., p.5. (In 1956 Evans resigned from the party in protest against its attacks on Eden's Suez policy.)

Only on the very last day of Lyttelton's tenure - 28 July 1954 - did an occasion arise for the rejoining of battle. Henry Hopkinson, as recounted earlier, announced that the Government would "never" contemplate a change of sovereignty in Cyprus. In the ensuing uproar the Conservative Chief Whip was obliged to summon Lyttelton, who was drafting farewell telegrams to the Governors, from the Colonial Office. That a measure of peace was restored to the House perhaps owed something to Lyttelton's argument that his junior minister had meant "never" in a conditional sense. But there may have been a further reason, on which Lyttelton himself may be permitted the last word: "The Opposition knew that this was the last time that they would see me and this gratifying thought no doubt calmed them down".<sup>132</sup>

##### 5. The Breakdown Assessed

By the end of 1953 Labour was being severely taken to task in many quarters for its approach to colonial affairs. Lyttelton's rebukes were widely echoed in the press: as an example, consider this series of strictures by The Economist:

"Mr. James Griffiths's combination of sentiment and political opportunism on colonial matters has served his party ill..."  
 "Privately, the Labour leaders must be aware that in both the recent debates the party has succeeded only in making a fool of itself. This would not matter if domestic politics alone were in question. But, unfortunately, Labour's irresponsibility in colonial affairs is beginning to have a bad effect in the colonies themselves..."

"In colonial affairs, the Labour Party puts on blinkers to look at the present and rose-coloured spectacles to look at the past ... The motion of censure could in effect be regarded as being a censure on Labour's attitude in opposition as much as on Mr. Lyttelton's in office."<sup>133</sup>

It could not have been Labour's intention to create such an impression of itself, in the quality press or anywhere else. How, then, may its attitudes and tactics in this period be explained?

We recounted earlier the three main explanations that have been advanced. The party's beliefs and principles; its view that Lyttelton personally was the wrong man for the job; irrelevant motivations, such

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132 Chandos, op. cit., p.436.

133 Economist, 5 Dec. 1953, p.729; 12 Dec. 1953, p.793; 19 Dec. 1953, p.871.

as a desire to placate the party's "irresponsible" elements - all were advanced at various times. In the light of our discussion it seems necessary, if unadventurous, to conclude that there was some truth in each. The party's opinion of Lyttelton personally has been sufficiently illustrated and need not be lingered over. But the other two explanations require some consideration.

First, party principles. One point that emerges clearly is that Labour recurrently took the part of indigenous peoples against the Government, white settlers, or both. The arguments used were basically moral. In Central Africa, for example, the party in its own estimation was defending the otherwise unrecognised rights of the vast majority of the population; in the Malayan and Kenyan wars, urging the application of humanitarian principles; in British Guiana, arguing for a broad demonstration of confidence in a colonial people, however wayward its temporary leadership. All these were natural expressions of Labour's traditional self-image concerning colonies. For Labour politicians, as we saw in earlier chapters, had always been prone to argue from an assumption of moral superiority on colonial questions. Feeling no accountability for the creation of Empire, and accepting a self-stereotype as the party of the underprivileged, they were able to argue that the Labour Party was necessarily more alive than the Conservatives to the moral issues of alien rule, better qualified to perceive the interests of indigenous peoples, and hence to act in their interest. In the early fifties the moral implications of colonial issues took on a new urgency. The effect for many Labour Members was to make them more keenly aware of their presumed "special relationship" with indigenous peoples and their obligation to promote under-represented colonial causes. In these circumstances Labour felt relatively few qualms about pressing the party battle. Some remarks by the front-bencher John Dugdale in the censure debate should illustrate the point:

"We believe that while Africa can be developed in the interest of all races ... the race there which has to be considered first is the race which is the overwhelming majority of the people, namely, the African people. Hon. Members opposite say that the race which has to be considered first is the race which has the least people there - the white people ... I do not think it is

wrong that colonial affairs should be brought into party politics ... There is a fundamental difference between the two parties on colonial policy, and it is right that those differences should be brought forward tonight so that all shall see them."<sup>134</sup>

This, to Labour speakers, was a sufficient answer to the Government's argument that it was wrong on principle to divide the House on colonial affairs: genuine policy differences made divisions a regrettable necessity. No Labour speaker ever expressed the difference between the parties on this question of principle more pointedly than did S. S. Ramphal, a correspondent to The Times who described himself as a "colonial", in December 1952. Both sides, Ramphal suggested, thought it a "sin" to divide the House on a colonial issue. The difference between the two was that Labour "considered the sin pardonable".<sup>135</sup>

Secondly, opposition as a reflection of the party's internal tensions. Undeniably their attitudes towards colonial issues were among the characteristics by which the main Labour factions in these years could be distinguished. Previously the Fabians' attitudes had constituted the dominant strain. The party's leading colonial specialists in the Labour Government years, such men as Reginald Sorensen, John Hynd, John Rankin, Frederick Skinnard and James Johnson as well as Creech Jones himself, had all been variously associated with the Fabian Colonial Bureau and held broadly similar views. Their emphases had lain upon the economic and social priorities, upon community development and cooperative self-help, upon the value of research, and, within the political sphere, upon consulting colonial opinion and winning positive colonial cooperation for each new phase of policy. In framing new political institutions the underlying

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134 HCB vol. 522 cols. 469, 473 (16 Dec. 1953).

135 Ramphal himself (writing from lawyer's chambers in the Temple) thought it no sin at all. "Those who deprecate the use of the division lobby on colonial affairs do so in the name of unity - the implication ... being that a facade of unity at Westminster is as essential in dealing with Africa or the West Indies as it is in dealing with the Soviet Union or the United States. Such a proposition is fallacious for the simple reason that in colonial affairs Her Majesty's Government decree, while in international affairs they bargain ... Moreover, even the appearance of unity must cease to be desirable were it ever to become the appearance of unity in error." The Times, 27 Dec. 1952.

objective was always to ensure the growth and preservation of a liberal, democratic spirit, a point reaffirmed by Rita Hinden in December 1953:

"Self-government alone is not our true objective; our objective is democratic self-government ... But democracy is not just a matter of forms and institutions - it is a set of values, and institutions are only a means for safeguarding them ... To safeguard these values, quite different institutions may be required in heterogeneous Africa from those we know in homogeneous Britain, and which were never designed to settle the problems of a mixed society."<sup>136</sup>

The Fabians had tended to be cautiously optimistic about the prospect of achieving these goals, of helping responsible colonial politicians to assimilate the right priorities. By the early fifties, however, it had begun to appear that Labour would have to take fresh stock. Where the party's colonial specialists had once felt "certainty" about correct courses of action - as Dr. Hinden pointed out at a meeting of MPs, also in December 1953 - now they were often in doubt. In the forties the formulation of attitudes towards the issues of the day had usually been a straightforward and uncomplicated task; it was so no longer. The main difference lay in the fact that many newly articulate colonial political leaders were acting and speaking in ways which seemed most unlikely to assist orderly progress and shore up democratic values. Faced with the choice of endorsing the more extreme demands and resisting them in the cause of defending democratic values, Dr. Hinden for one considered that Labour moderates would have to resist. Labour's self-image notwithstanding, this would entail the endorsement of such measures as Lyttelton's dismissal of the Guianese ministers and his expulsion of the Kabaka.<sup>137</sup>

In the same period, however, a different strain was emerging. Since the Seretse Khama affair in 1950 the left had taken an increasing interest in colonial policy. A faction broadly coextensive with the original "Keep Left" group and its followers, and after 1952 with the Bevanites, made much of the running in the party's indictments of Lyttelton and his

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<sup>136</sup> "Insurgent Africa Today", Manchester Guardian, 9 Dec. 1953. Emphasis in original.

<sup>137</sup> Notes of a meeting in the House of Commons, n.d. but clearly Dec. 1953 (FCB papers).

policies. Fenner Brockway coordinated back-bench efforts and acted as a major source of supply of Questions; with Leslie Hale and others he also took private initiatives to form or sustain a number of pressure groups, all of which promulgated views more radical than the leadership would endorse.

The left's attitude represented in fact the logical extreme of Labour's traditional attitude on colonial questions. The task of speaking for indigenous interests gave rise to an obligation, for many among the left, to ally with such leaders as Nkrumah, Jagan and the Kenyatta of 1952, on the ground that they were leaders of spontaneous popular movements, and to endorse their most radical demands. From the left's point of view the moderates' attitude amounted to residual paternalism; talk of winning colonial confidence and cooperation was vitiated by the fact that the metropolis would still dictate the terms of cooperation. The left was prepared to accept, rather, cooperation on these indigenous leaders' terms. In particular the attainment of political goals took priority over, and was supposed to facilitate, the attainment of social and economic goals.

But the moderate and radical versions of the traditional moral approach did not exhaust the range of party attitudes. Upon occasion a third kind of attitude was discernible, finding expression mainly among the non-Bevanite party leaders. Prudential and pragmatic, this attitude derived less from an a priori party stereotype than from the fact of being in leadership positions, from a concern to act in a "responsible" manner. And when this attitude appeared to run counter to party principle, it was sometimes the principle which suffered. In office the decision to exile the Khamas and the decision to initiate federation discussions with the settler leaders were regarded by many in the party as examples of principles abandoned. And in opposition the same attitude re-emerged with reference to Central Africa, with such leaders as Gordon Walker and, for a time, Attlee suggesting that the most responsible course would be to give the scheme a chance to prove itself.

Several elements, then, coexisted, and not always peacefully. The New Statesman, ever a candid critic of the Labour Party in and out of

office, noted in that climactic month of December 1953 that

"today the veiled disagreements which exist inside the Labour Party are at least as large as those overt disagreements about colonial affairs which divide the two front benches. So long as its spokesmen keep to the generalities of anti-Government propaganda sufficient for platform oratory, the Labour Party appears united on colonial affairs. But how superficial that unity is, might very soon be revealed if a Labour Minister were to replace Mr. Lyttelton."<sup>138</sup>

The point was shrewdly made. Undoubtedly the semblance of unity was most apparent when party spokesmen kept to generalities. Dugdale's statement, quoted above, was a good example of the kind of sentiment behind which the party could appear to stand united, for it conformed to the generalised self-image held in common by moderates and radicals without descending into the kind of particularity which differentiated them. By contrast the British Guiana crisis provided instances of particular issues which aroused latent disagreements. Caught between the conflicting views of right and left on this matter, the leadership was forced to devise an amendment motion which, in effect, deplored both the punishment and the crime in British Guiana - a remarkable attempt at gap-bridging.

The question to consider, however, is not whether differences existed nor by what means the leadership sought to hold the party's elements together. The question is whether the party's broad policy of opposition to the Government's colonial policy was to a significant extent the consequence of these internal differences. For this, to repeat, was the charge which the party's opponents repeatedly made. To quote Sayers again:

"It was when the Socialists became divided amongst themselves that the attacks became really violent ... The inference to be drawn is that the party leaders made a disreputable bargain with the Bevanites whereby the latter, as a quid pro quo for toeing the line on domestic issues, were to be given a free hand in attacking the Government on colonial affairs."<sup>139</sup>

The short answer to the question, based on the discussion of cases in the present chapter, must be that this kind of notion was never so

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138 New Statesman, 26 Dec. 1953.

139 Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs, Jan. 1954, p.3.

serviceable as the party's opponents maintained. The left did not instigate and lead the policy of opposition, nor did it browbeat the leadership into doing so. Rather the party leaders and the moderates generally, if cautious at times on individual issues, were actively committed to the wider battle along with the left-wing. Though there were minority abstentions in the important divisions, it is fair to say that the party as a whole had no doubt that the Government merited attack in some degree. Intra-party compromises were typically reached not on the question of whether opposition should be offered, but on the extent to which it should be pressed. At the same time, the party's internal differences did affect the character of the opposition offered in the party's name. Generally the party lines adopted for the big debates reflected their own origin as compromises not entirely to the liking of those who stood at the two extremes. British Guiana, again, provides an outstanding example: while Bevan and others were irked by the moderation of Griffiths's criticisms in both the main debates, a few Members could abstain from voting in the belief that criticism could not justifiably be pressed to the point of dividing. But much the same was also true of the federation issue; the party's attacks in the debates of March to July 1953, too muted in the opinion of some MPs (and not just the left-wing MPs) were still strong enough to make several others abstain from voting.

Labour's tactics, in sum, arose from a mixture of motives. Certainly the party believed that some of the Government's policies deserved attack on grounds of principle, Central African policy above all. True, Labour leaders in office had themselves been forced to depart from party principles on occasion. But this does not affect the point, for as a general rule opposition conferred on party leaders the freedom, in the New Statesman's rather sardonic phrase, "to preach party principles as fervently as those of their colleagues who were never in office".<sup>138</sup> Certainly the party believed too that Lyttelton was the wrong man for the job, that failings of policy and the rising tide of African distrust of Britain owed a good deal to the Minister's manner of handling affairs and men. It is much less certain, however, that the party's internal

travail played the causal role which some observers thought they discerned. The fact that some party members were more zealous than others in the task of opposing undoubtedly affected the nature of the opposition which the party offered. But "affecting the nature" and "causing" are two completely different things and should be kept distinct, in matters of fact as in logic.

## CHAPTER VII

## LIBERAL AND RADICAL PRESSURE GROUPS, 1951-4

"The practice of setting up new committees from among the same sort of people to deal with African issues every time a new one arises is both confusing to the British public and bewildering to Africans."

Miss Mary Benson, of the Africa Bureau, in a letter to Leslie Hale M.P.,  
of the Central Africa Committee, 24 June 1952.

The "Lyttelton era" was a time of unprecedented activity among liberal-minded individuals and organisations interested in colonial affairs. By far the most important stimulus to this activity was the federation issue. Several well-known colonial experts contributed to the general debate, among them Lord Hiley, Sir Keith Hancock and Miss Margery Perham. All manner of organisations sought to make their views known; they included the Anti-Slavery Society, the National Council for Civil Liberties, the National Peace Council, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Racial Unity, the Union of Democratic Control, the London Missionary Society and Christian Action. And the Churches, weightily represented by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Moderators of the Church of Scotland and the Free Church Federal Council, expressed misgivings about federation and issued an appeal that no irrevocable step should be taken.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter we shall concentrate on the major liberal and radical organisations which meet the criteria outlined in the Introduction. We are concerned, that is, with the most prominent of those organisations whose main reason for existence was an interest in problems of colonial political advance, and which were continuously active within that area of domestic politics having Parliament and the Colonial Office as its focal points. In effect, this will involve taking up some of the threads which we began to trace in Chapter IV. We will follow, first, the fortunes of the Fabian Colonial Bureau; second, the early activities of the Africa Bureau, created in 1952 as a vehicle for Michael Scott and the people associated with him; and third, the pressure group activities chiefly stimulated by that other

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1 Leys and Pratt, op. cit., p. 36.

key individual Fenner Brockway, culminating in the formation of the Movement for Colonial Freedom in 1954.

### 1. The Fabian Colonial Bureau

A month after Labour's electoral defeat the Bureau Committee assembled to discuss their organisation's future. The outgoing Colonial Office ministers, Griffiths, Dugdale and Thomas Cook, had all been invited to join the committee and were present at the meeting. A working paper, "Future Policy of Fabian Colonial Bureau," was presented by the secretary, Marjorie Nicholson; as an analysis of the changing problems which confronted the Bureau and its panel of MPs, this document is worth quoting in extenso.

"1. The changes in the colonies in recent years, the developments which are now going on, and the change of the Labour Party's position from Government to Opposition afford us an opportunity for reviewing the policy of the Bureau...

2. In planning our work we must recognise certain fundamental changes in the problems of colonial policy in the eleven years the Bureau has been in existence:

(a) In principle, our fight for political progress, economic development, social services, trade unions, cooperatives, etc. in the colonies, has been won. The Conservatives may try to make inroads in the achievements of these years, and there are further advances still to be made, but they cannot turn the clock back.

(b) One result of the great constitutional advances in the colonies is that it is no longer very fruitful, in some cases no longer possible, to question the details of colonial administration in Parliament...

(c) Another result is that the colonial peoples are standing more independently on their own feet, and do not need our help in quite the same way that they did in the past...

3. What is the nature of the new problems and new emphases? Following are some examples:

(a) The colonial national movements, as they move towards responsibility, are uncertain as to their own programmes and organisation and how genuine political democracy can be achieved...

(c) The political problems of the mixed communities are still unsolved. East and Central Africa is the major danger-point in the Empire. Also Malaya. The concept of 'partnership' has never been clarified...

5. The Bureau also has some responsibility for sustaining interest in colonial problems in the wider Labour Movement and maintaining links with organisations in the colonies..."<sup>2</sup>

Accepting this outline of priorities, the meeting devoted much of its attention to the practical problem of coordination with the Labour Party. It was decided that the most efficient division of function would be for individual MPs to specialise in particular topics and to report back at intervals and for Farmer to continue to provide liaison with party headquarters and the NEC's Commonwealth sub-committee (which could be expected to revive now that the party was in opposition). The Bureau itself would concentrate on current questions in the context of an expanding programme of research into the problems itemised in the working paper. If possible, there should be no duplication of functions with any other organisations.<sup>3</sup>

By January 1952 the MPs' special subjects had been decided and distributed. Driberg would follow events in the Sudan; John Parker, Basutoland and Swaziland; and Mrs. White, Bechuanaland. Together with John Hynd, Mrs. White also undertook to specialise in land problems, and James Johnson, Reginald Sorensen and Harry Wallace would concentrate on East African education, racial discrimination and labour problems respectively.<sup>4</sup>

The Bureau's various intentions were fulfilled to very different degrees. There was no great problem in "maintaining links with organisations in the colonies" since this was chiefly an administrative matter, nor in "sustaining interest in colonial problems in the wider Labour movement", since this responsibility could be interpreted and met in terms of preserving organisational liaison, publishing Venture, and arranging "fringe" meetings at the party's annual conferences. But in the field of research, it is not apparent that the Bureau was able to expand its programme to any extent. In fact pamphlets based on research were published at a lower rate than previously: two dealing with East Africa, one with Malaya, one with the Caribbean, one with the implications of partnership and one with colonial trade unions comprised the output for the next three years. Similarly, the broad plans for parliamentary work were scaled down as time passed: in October 1952 it was decided that the Bureau's parliamentary work "in the next six months" would be concentrated on East and Central Africa, and

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3 FCB-MM, 22 Nov. 1951.

4 Ibid., 30 Jan. 1952 (including Secretary's Report).

labour and cooperative developments in colonies generally.<sup>5</sup> Some of the MPs, for their part, seem to have been less than punctilious in observing the allocation of special topics. A count of the Questions asked by the MPs named above on their special subjects, in relation to Questions they asked on other colonial subjects, in the three sessions 1951-2 to 1953-4, produced the following totals:

	Qs. on Special Subjects	Qs. on Other Colonial Subjects
Driberg	15	54
Hynd	15	56
Johnson	18	288
Parker	0	12
Sorensen	8	225
Wallace	2	0
White	29	123 <sup>6</sup>

The figures suggest, if anything, that the idea of distributing special topics was probably unworkable from the beginning, since the range of colonial subjects was so vast that no colonial-specialist MP could be expected to confine himself to one or two subjects.

There was one respect, however, in which the Bureau did seek to adhere closely to plan: the avoidance of duplicating functions with other organisations. The Bureau committee believed that their organisation was best suited to perform such tasks as publishing pamphlets, working out long-term policies in practical detail, and making private approaches to MPs and the Colonial Office. Such tasks as exerting pressure by way of demonstrations and manifestos, achieving liaison with (say) the churches, and providing public platforms for colonial visitors, were best left to other bodies. This attitude of the Bureau's became especially plain during 1952, when a number of other organisations became increasingly active in and about the field which the Bureau had once had virtually to itself. Early in the year, for example, the Bureau was asked to support a petition on Kenyan Land

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<sup>5</sup> Unnumbered FCB paper by Marjorie Nicholson, 30 Oct. 1952.

<sup>6</sup> These figures, based on the three sessional indices, are meant to indicate orders of magnitude only. They should not be regarded as strictly accurate, since some Questions are noted more than once in the indices.

sponsored jointly by Brockway's Congress of Peoples against Imperialism and Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya African Union.<sup>7</sup> The Bureau declined on the grounds that the Fabian Society Constitution forbade collaboration with outside bodies. But it was obvious that the Bureau would have been unwilling in any case to associate itself with this sort of activity: at a meeting committee members had already agreed that the petition "was unsatisfactory as a basis for policy since there were so many omissions and that the Bureau should work out an acceptable long-term policy in the light of which immediate action could be decided." To this end the committee sought to discuss with KAU delegates then in Britain "some of the wider issues omitted from the petition"; later, since the delegates had been "unable to attend", the committee resolved instead to send a series of detailed questions on land policy to KAU headquarters. Meanwhile one of the committee's MPs, Mrs. White, raised several questions on the Government's policy for Kenya land in an adjournment debate speech, which the Minister of State, Lennox-Boyd, undertook to answer by letter.<sup>8</sup> These procedures were typical of the Bureau's approach to most issues; the petition was typical of an approach it eschewed.

A rather different demarcation was envisaged between its own and the newly-created Africa Bureau's functions. In May, in response to an inquiry from a subscribing member, Marjorie Nicholson tried to explain the difference in a nutshell. The new body was

"different from ours in that its function is not to produce publications as we do but to give an opportunity for the statement of African views etc... It is bringing in various church bodies in order to get their support on political matters if it considers this desirable."<sup>9</sup>

Less than a week later, however, the Bureau had been informed by the new body that it did plan a programme of publications, beginning with a pamphlet on Central Africa, and that the Fabians' assistance was invited. Replying,

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7 Mary Klopper (campaign secretary, Kenya Land Petition) to FCB, 13 Feb. 1952 (FCB papers). The petition is discussed below, pp. 319-20.

8 FCB-MMs, 30 Jan. 1952 and 27 Feb. 1952.

9 Nicholson to T.B. Caldwell (an adult education worker in York), 14 May 1952 (FCB papers).

Miss Nicholson was openly sceptical about the need for a pamphlet on Central Africa, since the Fabians and others had published several in the last few years, and about the Africa Bureau's grasp of the economics involved: "If we cross each other with publications, the only final result will be that we shall all go down financially."<sup>10</sup> But within another fortnight two more groups had decided to attempt pamphlets on federation: the Central Africa Committee, founded by Brockway, and the Union of Democratic Control. "You see what I mean," wrote Marjorie Nicholson to Miss Mary Benson of the Africa Bureau, "about cutting each other's throats?"<sup>11</sup>

In due course the Fabians accepted that the Africa Bureau at least was in the field of pamphlet production to stay, and a modus vivendi was reached between them. This item in the minutes of a Fabian Colonial Bureau committee meeting, held in December 1953, was indicative of the relationship:

"Since the Africa Bureau was contemplating a pamphlet on Nyasaland it was agreed that the Fabian Colonial Bureau should not start work on Nyasaland... It was agreed that whatever the Africa Bureau did, the Fabian Colonial Bureau should not suspend work on the Northern Rhodesian Constitution and Northern Rhodesian trade union position."<sup>12</sup>

Along with its belief in a clear division of functions, the Bureau took the view that the fulfilment of its own functions required organisational independence: a core of like-minded people untrammelled by any need to cooperate with others of different persuasions. This view, quite as much as the provisions of the Fabian Society's Constitution, underlay most of the Bureau's rejections of other bodies' overtures to it to collaborate on various issues. And there was certainly no lack of these. In 1952, for example, the Bureau refused invitations from both the main left-wing pressure groups concerned with Seretse's case, the Seretse Khama Fighting Committee and the Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama and the Protectorates. In the former instance the invitation was specifically to support a petition campaign, and the secretary's report to the Bureau indicated how much more

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10 Nicholson to Africa Bureau, 20 May 1952 (FCB papers).

11 Nicholson to Benson, 4 June 1952 (FCB papers).

12 FCB-MM, 1 Dec. 1953.

than constitutional formalities lay behind the Bureau's attitude: "As the secretary of this committee is Billy Strachan, no reply has been sent."<sup>13</sup> Again, in mid 1953 the Bureau successively declined invitations from the "Kenya Provisional Committee" to send delegates to a conference on Democratic Rights for Kenyan Africans, and from the Congress of Peoples <sup>against Imperialism</sup> "to participate in a joint meeting of various organisations to lay down a common policy in Kenya."<sup>14</sup>

But on the rare occasions when it saw good reason for doing so the Bureau did not hesitate to ignore the Constitution and collaborate. On federation, in particular, the Bureau debated whether or not collaboration would be advisable. It was agreed that official contact with the Central Africa Committee should be avoided and that the Bureau "might do better to put its weight behind the campaign of the Africa Bureau, which had a wide appeal to all sections of the British public, particularly the churches."<sup>15</sup> Later the Africa Bureau itself took an initiative, writing to the Fabian Colonial Bureau in connection with the forthcoming visit of a delegation of Northern Rhodesian Africans. On behalf of the Africa Bureau, Miss Benson sought the Fabians' good offices in arranging introductions for the Africans to Edward Farmer and the colonial-specialist MPs, adding (persuasively?) "they would also prefer not to meet the Central Africa Committee for the time being."<sup>16</sup> Within a few weeks Miss Nicholson could report to her committee that the two bodies were working in close co-operation on the federation issue. From the Fabians' point of view the Africa Bureau complemented their efforts admirably: in particular it was well placed to ask churches with missionary organisations in Central Africa to lobby Conservative MPs, who were normally well beyond the Fabians' reach.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the Colonial Bureau's organisation and functions. As for its attitudes in the controversies of these issue-laden years, we have already noted in passing the Bureau's views on the Kenya land question, on the

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13 FCB Secretary's Report, 22 May 1952; MMs, 11 June 1952 and 26 Nov. 1952. Strachan was secretary of the Caribbean Labour Congress, and a prohibited immigrant in Trinidad.

14 FCB-MMs, 16 June 1953 and 22 July 1953.

15 Ibid., 11 June 1952.

16 Benson to Nicholson, 16 Nov. 1952 (FCB papers).

17 FCB Secretary's Report, MM 28 Jan. 1953.

Nigerian disturbances and on the British Guiana crisis, as well as on federation. But to illustrate the Bureau at work it is appropriate to consider further its activity with reference to the last, and for the Bureau the most important, of these.

The Bureau had never been in doubt about its attitude towards any scheme for closer association instigated wholly or partly by the settlers. Its first pamphlet on the subject had appeared in 1944.<sup>18</sup> In 1949 it had vigorously opposed the conclusions of the unofficial Victoria Falls conference of settler politicians, convened by Huggins in order to reopen the question.<sup>19</sup> During 1951, alarmed at the growth of official interest, it had pursued under Creech Jones an "unequivocal and unwavering" policy of opposition.<sup>20</sup> True, it had advised African organisations in the northern territories not to boycott Griffiths's and Gordon Walker's tour - but mainly so that the extent of African opposition might be more vividly impressed upon the Ministers.

After the 1951 election and Lyttelton's prompt statement that the new Government was in favour of federation, the Bureau's task gained a new dimension of difficulty. Previously it had tried to occupy the middle ground between the African Congresses and the Labour Government so that it might influence both; now it had to act in relation to the Congresses, a Labour Opposition and a Conservative Government, of which the last body was at once the most distant and the one which the Bureau most wished to influence.

Very early in the piece - in fact, on the morrow of Lyttelton's statement - the Bureau committee decided that one initiative at least was available to it, and might be useful in bringing these diverse bodies closer together. A Bureau sub-committee, comprising Faringdon, Sorensen, Griffiths, Creech Jones, Hinden, Nicholson and Greenidge, would formulate

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18 Contribution by Colonel Stewart Gore-Brown (member representing African interests in the Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council) to FCB, Four Colonial Questions: How Should Britain Act? (Fabian Society Research Series No. 88, Dec. 1944).

19 FCB-MM, 22 Feb. 1949; Venture, April 1949, pp. 1-2.

20 The adjectives were used by Lady Hilda Selwyn-Clarke, Miss Nicholson's successor as secretary of the Bureau, in a letter to the Observer, 26 Aug. 1956.

a statement on partnership.<sup>21</sup>

During the next few months the Bureau's grasp of this nettle seemed to become less confident. A preliminary draft entitled What is Partnership? was discussed at a committee meeting early in April 1952, and the different contributions to the discussion revealed something of the dilemmas latent in the question. Griffiths adopted the view that it was not, after all, desirable to publish a "theoretical paper" on partnership, and that the Bureau should be more concerned with the immediate problems in Northern Rhodesia such as African representation in the Legislative and Executive Councils and the colour bar in government buildings. Others who considered that the project should be continued disagreed on the word "partnership" itself. Sorensen felt that it could not be dropped, as it was "an advance on the previous conception of trusteeship." Creech Jones, however, argued that the word had been unacceptable even when first introduced, and he doubted whether it had any meaning left for anyone. Its only real effect, in his view, was that Africans understood by now that the Europeans were there to stay. Following his lead, the committee generally agreed that the paper should concentrate on "democracy" rather than "partnership" - not that this was an easier term to deal with.<sup>22</sup>

In June the pamphlet Advance to Democracy was published. Not surprisingly, in view of the difficulties encountered, the Bureau's statement offered no sweeping solution, and on the crucial points it retreated into generalities. There would have to be a steady progress towards ultimate full democracy, but the interests of the minority communities must at all times be recognised and protected by procedural devices. It was stressed that the working of democracy required compromise on all sides.<sup>23</sup>

There is no evidence that the document made any great impact on any of the parties aimed at - the African organisations, the Labour Opposition, the Conservative Government; and it must be recorded that the Bureau's other attempts to influence these bodies came generally to frustrating ends.

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21 FCB-MM, 22 Nov. 1951. It would not be inaccurate to describe this group excepting Griffiths, as the Bureau's "inner cabinet".

22 "What is Partnership?", FCB paper no. 4 of 1952, 27 March 1952; MM, 2 April 1952.

23 Advance to Democracy (FCB Colonial Controversy Series No. 8, June 1952).

With regard, firstly, to the Africans, the Bureau sought chiefly to persuade them to put up alternative proposals, rather than purely negative opposition, to federation. To this end it urged them, when its advice was asked on the matter, not to boycott the April 1952 conference.<sup>24</sup> Its advice was not followed. In the ensuing months it tried to persuade the African Congresses that an initiative on their part would not only make an impression on the Government but also give their allies in Britain, including the Fabians, "a platform to fight on."<sup>25</sup> In August the Northern Rhodesian Congress did produce a draft scheme for their territory in response to this urging, but in the event its very provenance, as was noted in the last chapter, ensured that the local administration took little notice of it. In the wake of these setbacks the Bureau committee was obliged to decide whether it could conscientiously advise the Africans to attend the final federal conference in January 1953. Creech Jones thought not, in view of the Africans' open and unremitting hostility to the whole scheme: they could not take part in a conference or even put forward alternatives without eating their words. It was decided, however, that if it were technically possible for Africans to attend without committing themselves either to the principle or details of the draft scheme, they should do so.<sup>26</sup> But the possibility was too remote. Although Africans did come to London in January they did so for other reasons: the Nyasaland Chiefs' Delegation to petition the Queen, the two African members of the Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council to take part in a conference on their territory's constitution. And as it became increasingly plain that the federation battle would be lost, so the Bureau redirected its own attention towards the Northern Rhodesian Constitution.<sup>27</sup> Thenceforth co-operation with the Africans of Central Africa became a matter of working to secure reforms in whatever matters still fell within the British Government

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24 FCB-MM, 27 Feb. 1952.

25 Nicholson to Jay B. Krane, 22 Aug. 1952 (FCB papers).

26 FCB-MM, 29 Oct. 1952.

27 E.g., the Bureau sent a major deputation to the Colonial Secretary on this matter in July 1953, the very month in which the federation Order in Council was promulgated.

purview.

With regard, secondly, to the Labour Party, the Bureau's main objective was to persuade it to oppose federation for the right reasons. For a time it seemed possible that many in the party might not wish to oppose at all. Labour MPs who heard the African delegates speak at a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting in April 1952 later commented unfavourably on the Africans' "confusion on policy and their tendency to ignore the interests of the Europeans";<sup>28</sup> while as Marjorie Nicholson observed, writing in July, "of course there are also those who say that African opinion hasn't been expressed and that we are responsible and must do what we think is right."<sup>29</sup> As time passed, however, the general Labour attitude crystallised into a dislike of "imposing" the scheme. It thus became the Bureau's self-appointed task to induce the party not to make this the main ground of its opposition. For as Miss Nicholson expressed it, "the Africans can't have protection as well as self-determination, and...even if our suggestion of a High Commission were substituted for federation, that (unless the Africans get out of their purely negative mood) might have to be imposed."<sup>29</sup> But to little avail; as we saw earlier, far from inducing the bulk of the party to abandon "imposition" as its main grievance against the scheme, the Bureau committee was unable even to persuade some of its own member MPs.

Thirdly, with regard to the Government. During most of the controversy the Bureau pursued its strategy of prompting the Africans to make the necessary approaches to Ministers. Thus, after an early deputation to Lyttelton in February 1952, the Bureau itself made no direct approaches for over a year. In January 1953, a committee meeting reached the conclusion that "as powerful as possible a deputation" was the only weapon remaining to it. By this time most of the committee believed that "no deputation could shake Mr. Lyttelton's decision"; nevertheless the attempt had to be made.<sup>30</sup> But to the great regret of the committee's 'inner cabinet', it was resolved that the deputation's major point of protest would be imposition. Lewis,

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28 FCB-MM, 30 April 1952.

29 Nicholson to Martin Levinson, 30 July 1952 (FCB papers).

30 FCB-MMs, 28 Jan. 1953 and 10 Feb. 1953.

a member of the Bureau's Advisory Committee, thereupon refused to participate in any delegation "which could be manoeuvred into saying that if the Africans had not understood the proposals, and had not organised resistance to them, then the Fabian Colonial Bureau would have been willing to accept them." But as Miss Nicholson apologetically explained, "this was the best that we could get through our committee."<sup>31</sup>

The deputation, ten strong including five Members of Parliament, was received by Lyttelton's deputy Hopkinson on March 12. And as many had anticipated, the Minister's task in replying was probably made easier by the deputation's presentation of its case. To the anti-imposition argument stressed by the deputation, Hopkinson was able to answer that the Government as trustee felt bound to take this decision, that in the Government's view African opposition was not so widespread as it had been represented, and that the scheme's many advantages would seem justify it to any sceptical Africans. To the argument put secondarily, that African political advance would now depend on the say-so of the European minority, his answer was essentially that any complaints by the African Affairs Board would be bound to receive great publicity.<sup>32</sup> This was a weaker reply than the first; no doubt the hard-core Fabians thereby felt confirmed in their view that their arguments should have been differently ordered.

In the midst of these failures to achieve major objectives, however, the Bureau could find at least one consolation. Federation's Labour opponents might not have presented their case to maximum effect, but at least they had done a good deal better, in the Bureau's estimation, than the scheme's parliamentary supporters. And for this the Bureau felt entitled to some credit. Thus, on the morrow of the ratification debate of March 24, Marjorie Nicholson wrote:

"The Tory side was appallingly weak, and I think it was a real moral defeat for them. This and the previous Debate on Central Africa... were at a much higher level than most Debates on colonial subjects, and I really feel that they have justified all the amount of work that has been put in on those MPs."<sup>33</sup>

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31 Lewis to Nicholson, 5 March 1953; Nicholson to Lewis, 6 March 1953 (FCB papers).

32 Colonial Office - FCB joint press release, 12 March 1953.

33 Nicholson to Krane, 25 March 1953 (FCB papers).

## 2. The Africa Bureau<sup>34</sup>

Since the late forties the Rev. Michael Scott and a few associates had been active in a number of controversies involving Southern Africa, Britain and the United Nations: the case of the Hereros of South-West Africa, the continuing argument over the South African Government's demands for the incorporation of the High Commission Territories and the Khama affair, especially as it affected Tshekedi.

These experiences had widening consequences. First, the individuals involved felt a growing need to define their general attitude towards Africans' national aspirations and the way in which British policy was dealing with them. During 1951, the year of the campaign with Tshekedi, a number of discussions were held among a group comprising Scott, David Astor, Colin Legum, Arthur Lewis, Martin Wight, Margery Perham, Arthur Creech Jones, John McCallum Scott (secretary of the Liberal International), and ~~John~~ Elizabeth Pakenham (wife of the future Lord Longford, a prominent Labour politician). Miss Mary Benson, a South African, joined Scott as secretary at about the same time. Out of these consultations grew the Penguin book Attitude to Africa, with contributions by Scott, Legum, Lewis and Wight. The book sold well, suggesting that the "attitude" expressed in it might command some public support.<sup>35</sup>

Second, the group felt an increasing need for centralised organisation. It had worked well with Tshekedi, but this success only heightened the feeling that in general it was virtually powerless to influence policy-makers. It lacked both an institutional base and a source of funds, and had no means of publicising its views or approaching influential people except by the individual efforts of group members already preoccupied in other ways. Early in 1952 the federation issue provided the decisive stimulus. The Africa Bureau was set up in March of that year.

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34 The events discussed in this and the following section will doubtless receive much more detailed treatment in M.E.A. Laschinger, Radical British Pressure Groups and African Nationalism, with Special Reference to the Africa Bureau and the Movement for Colonial Freedom (M.A. thesis in preparation, University of Manchester).

35 Report on the Africa Bureau, 1952-1954 (Africa Bureau, 1954), p. 2; Michael Scott, A Time to Speak (Doubleday, New York, 1958), p. 269. For an unsympathetic account see Harold Soref and Ian Greig, The Puppeteers (Tandem Books, 1965), pp. 63 ff.

Much care went into the selection of the committee, since it was intended that the new body should have wide connections with various elements in public life. The chairman was Lord Hemingford, a Conservative peer, recently retired after a distinguished career as an educationalist in Africa. The others were Lady Pakenham, Creech Jones, John MacCallum Scott and Michael Scott, who became Honorary Director.<sup>36</sup> Mary Benson became secretary. Astor floated the Bureau financially, and together with Legum, his Commonwealth correspondent on The Observer, was able to provide the Bureau with information from professional news sources. In September 1953 the Bureau recruited an Assistant Director: John Hatch, at that time a lecturer and research worker in African studies at Glasgow University.

In addition the Bureau appointed a number of widely representative honorary presidents: four churchmen, two university figures (including Lewis), a social worker, a trade union leader, and an elder statesman of the Liberal Party. Later Tshekedi himself was to join their number.

The Bureau did not, however, seek connections and representativeness at the expense of like-mindedness among the people who actually did the work - the executive committee members and the permanent officials. "Some have said," the Bureau allowed in one of its reports,

"that the Bureau has been too 'personal' in its composition... [But] experience has shown that representative bodies tend to become unwieldy for the reason that procedures are slow and questions have to be referred back to organisations before decisions can be taken. The object of the Bureau being a small body was to ensure that it was agile and that it consisted of people...who had confidence in one another and the capacity to carry their ideas into action."<sup>37</sup>

In drawing up a constitution for the Bureau its founders sought further to ensure this agility by stipulating that the committee could not exceed ten persons, that three could form a quorum, that committee members could be expelled (by the committee) - and also that the committee could change the constitution.<sup>38</sup>

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36 Initially the committee also included Messrs. Dingle Foot and Learie Constantine, but neither remained for more than a few weeks. Africa Bureau, circular letters of 31 March and 3 April 1952.

37 Report on the Africa Bureau 1952-1954, p. 5.

38 The Constitution of the Africa Bureau, Articles 5 and 8.

Why was this new body created when other organisations interested in African affairs already existed? What distinctive objects and programme of work did it envisage? The Bureau itself felt it necessary to meet these questions. It worked out the answers during its early discussions, and incorporated them in a series of mimeographed circulars. The first question was treated at length in the text of a "statement of aims" circulated in June.

"The history of a number of recent African controversies in which some of us were involved...has shown that there is no single organisation in Britain concerning itself exclusively with African affairs, and able to anticipate the needs of a situation and to intervene at the right time... most of the existing organisations have so many other interests to take into account that they may not be able to give priority consideration to a particular issue which has suddenly arisen... An all party committee having ready access to various sections of British public opinion and to political, social and religious organisations in Britain could exert a great deal more influence than we have yet seen brought to bear upon these African questions."

But there was more to it than this, as was indicated at other points in the statement.

"African issues will tend to be drawn into the 'cold war', and there is the probability that they will be used by Communists, Trotskyists and others having ulterior political motives in Britain. It is therefore imperative that there should be an independent organisation which will aim at ensuring that these African affairs are dealt with in Britain on their own objective merits and inherent rights and wrongs... Militant action is long overdue on some issues and if not taken by a responsible body occupying a central and non-party position these issues are likely to be taken up irresponsibly and will probably be side-tracked into one or another ideological groove, or blind alley."<sup>39</sup>

The same desire for "independence" lay behind the Bureau's choice of name. The task of lobbying different parties and even competing groups within the same party, Scott later wrote,

"is a very intricate and delicate one... It cannot be performed by a strongly partisan group, or an organisation with a flag-waving name... It is one of the reasons why our advisers, knowledgeable in the ways of the world and human nature, recommended an innocuous-sounding name such as the Africa Bureau."<sup>40</sup>

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39 Statement of Aims (Africa Bureau, mimeo., n.d. but probably June 1952), pp. 1-3. Scott later stressed the same argument in his autobiography: A Time to Speak, p. 267.

40 Scott, op. cit., p. 272.

The second question - how it planned to work, and towards what broad objectives - proved difficult to answer, largely because, by the Bureau's own account, "while it was still trying to hammer out its own policy and programme of action, a succession of important and immediate issues arose with which it was called upon to deal."<sup>41</sup> An initial statement was drafted and circulated in March. Five objectives were outlined at length; the statement's first and last phrases indicate their range, from the abstract and far-reaching to the concrete and immediate: "to strengthen and further the best traditions of Britain's policy in relation to Africa"; "to establish an African Trust Fund for the provision of bursaries and other facilities for higher education and technical training."<sup>42</sup> During subsequent discussions the five items were reworded and reshuffled until eventually a condensed statement of objects was agreed upon for inclusion in the Bureau's constitution and annual reports.

"To inform people in Britain and elsewhere about African problems and African opinions thereon, and to convey to Africa accurate reports on events and attitudes in Britain that concern them.

To help peoples in Africa in opposing unfair discrimination and inequality of opportunity and to foster cooperation between races.

To promote policies for furthering the economic, social and political development of all communities in Africa, and especially the establishment of responsible self-government in countries where this does not exist.

To promote projects in Africa or for Africans elsewhere of education, development and inter-racial cooperation.

To establish and administer, through its Executive Committee or Trustees, Trusts and Trust Funds for any of the foregoing purposes."

Presented in this order, the list gave prominence to the objective which undoubtedly came to be associated most closely with the Africa Bureau's name: the conveying of "African opinions" to "people in Britain". In its June circular the Bureau stressed the need for an organisation on which Africans could rely "to convey their opinions, however controversial they may be, to wide sections of the British public and Members of Parliament," since "a more fully informed public opinion in Britain is no less necessary than the confidence of the peoples of Africa that their voices can be heard."<sup>43</sup>

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41 Report on the Africa Bureau 1952-1954, p. 2.

42 Aims (Africa Bureau, mimeo., n.d. but clearly March 1952).

43 Statement of Aims, pp. 1, 3.

One of the Bureau's first actions was to invite "representatives of interested organisations" to a meeting to hear the African delegates to the April conference on federation.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the delegates' stay the Bureau worked closely with them, arranging several private and public meetings in an effort to secure them a hearing among influential groups and individuals, press representatives and the public at large. This activity set a pattern. All the African delegations to subsequent conferences on the Central African territories were similarly provided for. And when at the end of 1953 the Kabaka was exiled and a delegation from the Lukiiko (parliament) of Buganda came to Britain to appeal for his return, it was the Africa Bureau to which the delegation first turned.<sup>45</sup>

Of the Bureau's other objectives the establishment of trust funds, though last on the list, was one of the first to be realised. This remained in fact the most concrete - and, therefore, realisable - of the Bureau's goals. Within a short time two trusts had been set up. The African Protectorates Trust, financed partly by the royalties of a book on South-West Africa, Freda Troup's In Place of Fear, was designed to provide opportunities for higher education and technical training for Africans of the High Commission Territories; the African Development Trust was designed to support inter-racial projects such as the St. Faith's mission farm in Southern Rhodesia. The device of the trust also enabled the Bureau to recruit as trustees such people as the Rev. C.E. Raven, Lord Noel-Buxton and Miss Perham, who were supporters of the Bureau but not members of its executive.

Most of the Bureau's activities in support of its broader objectives - "opposing unfair discrimination", "furthering the economic, social and political development of all communities" and so on - came down in practice to an extension of the first activity: that is, the presentation of information and arguments designed both to mobilise opinion and to influence policy-makers. In this way a great many activities may be understood: the maintenance of links with MPs and the provision of briefs for debate, the furnishing of speakers for all manner of organisations ranging from townswomen's

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44 Circular letter (mim.), 3 April 1952.

45 Report on the Africa Bureau 1952-1954, p. 3.

guilds to Rotary clubs, the organisation of public meetings and lectures all over Britain, the establishment as from early in 1953 of regional "Africa Councils", the publication of a monthly Africa Digest and of five pamphlets on Southern African topics in two years - all of which the Bureau listed among its "activities" in its first two reports.<sup>46</sup>

Though the Bureau claimed in these ways to be playing a distinctive role it is clear that some of its activities did resemble the work of older bodies, most notably the Fabian Colonial Bureau. As early as June 1952 representatives of these two bodies had met to discuss "the avoidance of overlapping."<sup>47</sup> It may be useful, therefore, to compare the Bureaux at this stage of their histories.

The basic difference between them was not one of goals but of working techniques. The Fabian Colonial Bureau usually sought to work by itself, and to achieve its ends through private contacts with the Labour Party, to which it was bound both by political loyalty and by formal affiliation, and with people in government. The Africa Bureau was more outgoing, eager to form links with wide sections of the community and to supplement its private approaches to the influential with large-scale public campaigns. An example of the difference lay in their approaches to parliamentary work. Whereas the Fabian Colonial Bureau made intensive use of a fairly small group of Labour MPs, some of whom were members of its committee, in order to ask Questions and perform other functions allocated to them, the Africa Bureau maintained contacts with a larger number of members of all parties and as a rule sought to "inform" them, either at their request or on its own initiative, rather than ask them to do particular jobs. And it was no less symptomatic of the difference that the contacts between the two bodies themselves were

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46 The Africa Councils arose out of a countrywide series of Bureau meetings, with African speakers, on the federation issue. Thereafter they obtained their speakers and information from the Bureau but were otherwise autonomous, providing hospitality for speakers, distributing literature and so on in their respective areas. The Africa Digest had begun life in 1951 aiming chiefly at an African readership. Like George Padmore's Colonial Parliamentary Bulletin (see above, pp. 80-1), it began by concentrating on relevant events in the British Parliament, since these were too often "inadequately or one-sidedly reported in the African press." Later it aimed mainly at a coverage of events in Africa and built up a circulation in Britain as well as overseas. Scott, op. cit., pp. 267-8.

47 FCB-MM, 1 July 1952.

established at the Africa Bureau's initiative. For by contrast with the Fabians' policy of avoiding "collaboration", the Africa Bureau openly stated its intention "to secure the goodwill and active collaboration of existing societies and organisations engaged in African and colonial affairs."<sup>48</sup> From the month of its formation, indeed, the Africa Bureau began issuing invitations to members of the Fabian Colonial Bureau committee: to join a discussion on the best handling of the federation question, to assist in the drafting of a pamphlet on the "practical alternatives to federation", even to "discuss the purpose and aims" of the Africa Bureau.<sup>49</sup> In due course it became fairly regular practice for one or two members of the Fabian Colonial Bureau committee to attend the Africa Bureau's committee meetings on matters of common interest.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps the best single indication of the difference was that whereas the Fabians' most active personnel were people not well known outside political circles, Scott was something of a public figure in his own right. And not just on the domestic scene: he spent a good part of almost every year travelling in Africa, and it was certainly a tribute of a kind to his influence that he was declared a prohibited immigrant, over the years, by the then governments of Nyasaland, Kenya, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, Tanganyika and Uganda.<sup>51</sup> In one capacity or another, whether as representative of the Hereros or the International League for the Rights of Man, he was also a familiar figure at the United Nations. Of course Fabian Colonial Bureau members also travelled abroad on business from time to time. But even had their organisation commanded the necessary funds - and it did not - it is difficult to imagine it sending a representative to the United Nations.

Which body was the more effective? Only the most tentative of answers can be suggested. In the period both were concerned above all else with

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48 Statement of Aims, p. 2.

49 Circular letters of 31 March, 18 May and 19 June 1952. The pamphlet never materialised, although the Africa Bureau did publish a pamphlet analysing the federation proposals; it was written anonymously by Creech Jones.

50 See e.g. the reports of Africa Bureau meetings in FCB-MMs, 1 July 1952, 16 June 1953 (Secretary's Report), 22 July 1953.

51 Soref and Greig, op. cit., p. 65.

the federation issue. Neither achieved the major goal of forcing significant changes in government policy. Each, however, could claim a subsidiary achievement arising from its own distinctive approach to the problem. The Fabian Colonial Bureau, with its preference for relatively unpublicised work in political circles, could claim that federation's opponents had at least scored a moral victory in Parliament, and that "all the amount of work" put in on certain Labour MPs was thereby justified.<sup>33</sup> The Africa Bureau, with its sponsorship of public campaigning all over the country, could claim by contrast:

"It is clear that much of the concern shown by the British public over this issue was due to the initiative taken by the Bureau, and it can be assumed that the promises to safeguard the rights of Africans and the care of the Europeans in Central Africa to profess a policy of partnership was partly due to the public concern thus stimulated."<sup>52</sup>

There is no possible way of testing these claims, nor of measuring them against each other in terms of some common standard of value. Suffice it that each body felt the satisfaction of having had an effect on the audience at which it aimed. A decade later each would similarly be able to claim a small and unmeasurable portion of the responsibility for the federation's collapse.

### 3. The Labour Left

We noted earlier some of the consequences in party and Parliament of the "awakening" of Labour's left wing in the early fifties. Outside Parliament the left's campaigning on current issues was channelled through a number of pressure groups.

Immediately after the 1951 election only one such extra-parliamentary base for left-wing MPs existed: the London Committee of the Congress of Peoples against Imperialism, of which Brockway was vice-chairman and Hale treasurer. Its main preoccupation at the time was Kenya. The Congress had formed close relations with the Kenya African Union, based partly on Brockway's own friendships with several of the Kikuyu leaders.<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> Report of the Africa Bureau, March 1952 to November 1953 (Africa Bureau, 1953), p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> On a visit to Kenya in 1950 he had been ceremonially installed as a blood brother of the Kikuyu tribe. Brockway, Outside the Right, p. 62.

organisational relationship was maintained even after the Kenya emergency regulations of 1952 and 1953 had prohibited international affiliations for KAU and, later, proscribed the party itself. In a Congress pamphlet written by Brockway and published in March 1953, Why Mau Mau?, it was announced that the Congress's London office was arranging for the defence of Africans arrested on Mau Mau conspiracy charges.<sup>54</sup> A year later the link was again demonstrated when Joseph Murumbi, KAU's general secretary, was made a member of the council of the Movement for Colonial Freedom.

By far the largest project carried out in collaboration with KAU was the Kenya Land Petition. This had been planned by Brockway and Kenyatta during Brockway's visit in 1950.<sup>55</sup> Its main contention was "that a grievous wrong is being suffered by the people of Kenya through the alienation of 16,700 square miles of their most fertile land, and the consequent overcrowding of the native reserves"; its specific requests were that

"1. The Crown Lands Ordinance No. 27 of 1938 and the Native Lands Trust Ordinance of 1938 which authorised the alienation of African land and the restriction of African occupation to reserved areas be withdrawn;

2. Africans shall have rights to the ownership and occupation of land in any part of Kenya;

3. Africans shall immediately be allowed to occupy and farm the large unused areas which are in the territories reserved to Europeans;

4. Immigration of further settlers shall be stopped in view of the land hunger from which the African community suffers;

5. Conjointly with the withdrawal of the above Ordinances arrangements should be made in agreement with representatives of the African people for the provision of agricultural credit, equipment, and training to permit the Africans to develop their land cooperatively."

The project was slow to begin, and it was to be nearly three years before the petition was finally submitted to Parliament. During that time the signatures or thumb-prints of 158,642 Africans were affixed to it; some thumb-prints, as Brockway explained to Parliament, were made in blood to show that for the petitioners "land is life."<sup>56</sup> Since January 1952 another petition of identical

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54 Fenner Brockway, Why Mau Mau? (CPI, March 1953), p. 21.

55 Outside the Right, p. 57.

56 UCD vol. 517 cols. 2029-30 (15 July 1953), where the full text of the petition may also be found. Brockway had originally hoped for a million signatures and thumbprints: see Daily Herald, 18 Jan. 1952.

text had been circulating in Britain under the supervision of fifteen left-wing Labour MPs.<sup>57</sup> It was laid before Parliament, bearing 16,434 signatures, one day after its twin.

The consequences of the whole effort seem to have been negligible. The only recorded parliamentary reaction was that of Archer Baldwin, Conservative MP and Kenyan property-owner, who rose after Brockway had read out the text to demand whether Members had "no right of making any reply to the statements which have just been made, which are not in accord with the facts."<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere in the Labour Party the Fabian Colonial Bureau's inner cabinet regarded it coolly, "since there were so many omissions," although some members of the Bureau's advisory committee had signed it.<sup>58</sup> The Government was not obliged to comment; had it done so it could well have sheltered behind the fact that it had already appointed a Royal Commission with an extremely wide mandate to inquire into the land and population problems of East Africa.

Kenya, however, did not remain the Congress's only interest. In May 1952 the London Committee decided that more vigorous action on the Central African issue was required. A circular letter signed by Brockway and Hale invited "representatives of interested organisations" to a meeting "to consider the formation of a special committee to continue the campaign against the imposition of federation." Both the Fabian Colonial Bureau and the Africa Bureau were invited; both sent apologies, although Sorensen agreed to attend in his private capacity.<sup>59</sup>

The meeting was held in the Palace of Westminster on May 26, and 26 people attended. Apart from Brockway, Hale and Sorensen they included two Labour MPs, Sir Richard Acland and George Craddock; Dr. Hastings Banda, representing the Nyasaland African Congress; and representatives of the Union of Democratic Control, the Crusade for World Government, the Federal Union, the Political Committee of the London Cooperative Society, the National Union of Students and the Sierra Leone Students Union. The fruit of this gathering was the Central Africa Committee. Hale was made chairman,

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57 Daily Herald, 18 Jan. 1952.

58 FCB-MM, 30 Jan. 1952.

59 London Committee of CPI, circular letter of 15 May 1952.

and in his other role as treasurer of the Congress of Peoples undertook to raise money for a campaign. Banda announced that he would prefer to act as an "outside adviser" rather than a committee member.

The idea behind the formation of this body, as Brockway told the meeting, was that it would act as a "coordinating committee." Since a number of organisations opposed to federation already existed, there was need for a central body to "organise a unified struggle." The Congress of Peoples "had accordingly approached the Africa Bureau with the idea that that body might act as the unifying organisation. They...had suggested that the Congress of Peoples should take the initiative."<sup>60</sup>

If Brockway had contemplated "coordinating" the work of the Fabian Colonial Bureau and the Africa Bureau, however, it was soon made plain that the idea had no chance of realisation. Sorensen reported the meeting to the Fabian Colonial Bureau committee, and after some discussion of whether individual members of the Bureau might cooperate with the Central Africa Committee it was concluded that they would be well advised to stay clear, since "the African cause would not be benefited if colour were given to the allegation that opposition to federation was stirred up by 'extremists' in Britain."<sup>61</sup> For its part the Africa Bureau committee was extremely annoyed at Brockway's statement that the Congress had approached it and gained its permission to take the initiative. Lady Pakenham sent Brockway a terse letter:

"Members of the committee of the Bureau are at a loss to know on what information you wrote that statement. Quite contrary to the impression that statement gives the Africa Bureau are working very closely with the African delegations from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland throughout their stay... We should be glad if you would make the position of the Africa Bureau clear at your next meeting."<sup>62</sup>

And a few days later Mary Benson sent Hale a letter which developed at more length the Bureau's views:

"I am not at all clear about the need for setting up another committee to deal with this question... I should have thought the lesson of the Bechuanaland case would have warned all those who genuinely want to

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60 Central Africa Committee-MM, 26 May 1952 (mim.).

61 FCB-MM, 11 June 1952, The "allegation" was soon afterwards made by Lyttelton himself: HCD vol. 504 col. 789 (24 July 1952).

62 Lady Pakenham to Brockway, 8 June 1952.

assist Africans against the setting up of special committees making their own competing appeals to the British public on matters for which it is hard enough already to secure a fair hearing. I am sorry if I sound obstructive for I do not mean to be so and if for any reasons you think it preferable to form a new committee...it is for you to decide. But it does seem to me that any major change of policy on the part of Britain...such as we desire, will only be accomplished as the result of broad united effort in England."<sup>63</sup>

A "broad united effort", of course, had been precisely Brockway's goal in forming the new committee. But it was clear enough that neither body was prepared to accept "unity" as conceived by the other.

The Central Africa Committee carried on regardless. It raised its money and collected a fairly wide range of names for its masthead, including those of some Liberal MPs; its most active members included Lord Stansgate (the father of Anthony Wedgwood Benn), John Stonehouse, and Canon L. John Collins. It sponsored public meetings, deputations and Questions in the House. In cooperation with the National Peace Council and Racial Unity it published a pamphlet, Our Trust in Central Africa: interestingly enough the first section, entitled "The Background to Federation", was based on material supplied by the Africa Bureau. But the main product of its work was a "Memorial pleading for a reconsideration of the present proposals." A delegation led by Hale and Lord Stansgate presented this document to the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Secretaries on 27 March 1953, three days after the first ratification debate. Characteristically the Committee had sought to strengthen its case by collecting signatures. But in this case the collection was selective: the Memorial bore 623 of them, appended, according to the Committee's pamphlet, by "129 leading clergy; 96 Members of Parliament; 8 Members of the House of Lords; 92 professors, lecturers and members of universities; 51 medical doctors and hospital authorities; 39 headmasters and headmistresses; 21 trade union leaders; 40 artists, musicians, writers and playwrights; 66 members of the legal profession; 36 members of the London County Council; and 44 others holding important positions."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Benson to Hale, 24 June 1952.

<sup>64</sup> Our Trust in Central Africa, Part III. These figures add up to 622, not 623. For the major points made in the text of the Memorial see above, pp. 266-7.

This main product of the Committee's work was also the last, for once federation was an accomplished fact it disbanded. But by this time another committee had been established: the Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama and the Protectorates. Including many of the same people as the Central Africa Committee, this body had been set up in November 1952 with Brockway as chairman and Jo Grimond as vice-chairman. The Council did not open its public campaign until March 1953, however,<sup>65</sup> presumably because federation was for the time being a matter of much greater concern for the Council's members. Its main asset was Seretse himself, who spoke at almost all of the Council's public meetings. The Council also organised a petition on Seretse's behalf; bearing 10,839 signatures, the petition was duly presented to Parliament by Brockway on 22 March 1954. Throughout, one of the Council's principal targets was the Labour leadership. In an attempt to influence the leadership to pledge Seretse's restoration under the next Labour government it circularised all delegates to the 1953 party conference.<sup>66</sup> But this initiative came to nothing since - as was all too often the case at party conferences - the colonial debate on the agenda was not reached. Nor is there any indication that the Council made much impact outside the party. 1953 was the year of many colonial causes, but not Seretse's.

Late in the year one more group appeared on the scene. This was the British Guiana Association, founded by Brockway along with two other Labour MPs, John Baird and Sir Leslie Plummer, while the Guianese crisis was still a live issue. Plummer became chairman; he had been born in British Guiana and knew the country well. In a letter to the press he announced that the Association's members, while supporting neither communism nor the PPP, believed that "the voice of the peoples of British Guiana must be heard." Their aim was to work for "friendship and understanding between the peoples of British Guiana and Great Britain"; they would seek, therefore, to purvey accurate information about the colony through meetings, pamphlets and press releases.<sup>67</sup> This announcement could be construed as an expression

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65 The Times, 11 March 1953.

66 Laschinger, "The Khamas and their British Campaigns", p. 7.

67 Manchester Guardian, 26 Nov. 1953.

of reluctance by these MPs to work within the formal party framework on the issue, in view, perhaps, of the line the leadership was taking. It implied too that the information then reaching Britain from the territory, most of it accepted as accurate by the leadership, was in some way unsatisfactory. However, this enterprise too came to very little. After an unsuccessful attempt to obtain copy for a newsletter by circularising prominent individuals in British Guiana the Association lapsed into silence.

The fitfulness of these groups' activities was no reflection on the enthusiasm of their members: it arose rather from the groups' concern with single issues which fluctuated in importance and public interest. Nevertheless the result in each case was a weakening of their long-term effectiveness. Aware of this, Brockway had for some time been contemplating a stable organisation which, like the Fabian Colonial Bureau, could concern itself with an unlimited range of colonial issues, bringing them into suitable ideological focus and acting accordingly. In his view the London Committee of the Congress of Peoples had outlived its usefulness, chiefly because it had come under the sectarian influence of Trotskyists.<sup>68</sup> A completely new body was required.

Early in 1954 a special committee under Brockway and Wedgwood Benn formulated proposals for the new organisation. The London Committee, the Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama and the Protectorates and the British Guiana Association would all be merged into it, bringing in their assets. Membership would be open to individuals and organisations; there would be standing committees of specialists in various fields; there would be regional councils in the provincial cities. At this stage the name proposed was "Council for Colonial Freedom."<sup>69</sup>

By 6 March, when a press release was distributed, it had become "Congress for Colonial Freedom." The release announced that "a new organisation to rally public opinion in favour of a change in colonial

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68 Interview with Lord Brockway.

69 Proposals for a Council for Colonial Freedom. Recommendations of the Special Sub-Committee (mim.). In the case of the Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama, "assets" totalled £2. Ibid., par. 10.

policy will be launched at a special delegate conference on Sunday 11th April 1954 at the Waldorf Hotel." Among those actively concerned, apart from Brockway and Benn, were the Labour MPs Jennie Lee, Sir Richard Acland, Leslie Hale, Sir Frederick Messer, Walter Padley and Sir Leslie Plummer, and the churchmen Canon Collins, Rev. C.E. Raven and the Rev. Dr. Donald Soper. The objects were to support

"(a) The rights of colonial peoples to independence (self-government and self-determination) and of all peoples to freedom from external economic or military domination.

(b) The application throughout the world of the principle of "fair shares for all" by extending to under-developed territories economic aid free from exploitation or external ownership.

(c) The application of the Four Freedoms and the Declaration of Human Rights to all peoples, including Freedom from Contempt by the abolition of the Colour Bar.

(d) Technical assistance to educational and economic advance in the under-developed territories, particularly to the Trade Union and Cooperative Movements.

(e) The substitution of Internationalism for Imperialism in all economic and political relations, including action through the United Nations."<sup>70</sup>

The inaugural conference was held as scheduled, and the birth of the Movement for Colonial Freedom received wide publicity in the press. There were some three hundred delegates, including representatives of 38 constituency Labour Parties, 22 trade unions and 21 cooperative bodies. Among those elected to the Council were Brockway as chairman, Wedgwood Benn as treasurer, Jennie Lee, Joseph Murumbi and Canon Collins. The list of objects was endorsed without change, and a policy statement outlined as "immediate" goals the end of fighting in Kenya and Malaya, the release of political leaders in British Guiana, the introduction of a democratic constitution in British Honduras, the "democratisation" of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, the return of the Kabaka and Seretse Khama, resistance to the incorporation of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland into South Africa, and the termination of "British military domination in all overseas territories, including the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez Canal zone."<sup>71</sup>

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70 "Congress for Colonial Freedom" press release, 6 March 1954 (mim.).

71 This account is based on reports in the Daily Herald, Manchester Guardian, Scotsman and Times of 12 April 1954.

Like its main predecessor, the Congress of Peoples, the Movement thus committed itself from the very beginning to a vast programme. Unlike its predecessor, however, it was almost immediately successful in making its presence felt. The circumstances of 1954 were very different from those of 1948. The broad development of events in colonies and the long train of politico-moral issues, from the exile of Seretse to the exile of the Kabaka, had brought about a political climate in which the cause of colonial freedom ranked among the most urgent of all the causes espoused by the British left. The Movement was established at a time which psychologically could not have been more opportune. Though it was not formally affiliated to the Labour Party - since it did not limit its membership to members of the party - it could soon claim over a hundred Labour MPs among its members and be regarded by colonial nationalists and British press as a major platform for Labour opinion on colonial issues.

From this time on the Fabian Colonial Bureau could no longer present itself, as it sometimes had in the past, as the only full-time specialist organisation of Labour sympathisers interested in colonial affairs. Within the party the Movement gained strength partly at the expense of the Bureau, both outstripping its membership and challenging its ideological ascendancy. To this theme we shall return.

## CHAPTER VIII

## CONSERVATIVES AND THE IMPERIAL RETREAT

"The increase in responsibilities of the colonies has been accompanied by a loss of faith in ourselves."

Mr. Peter Walker, a delegate to the 1955 Conservative Party conference (Conference Report, p. 28).

In a recent discussion of the 1956 Suez crisis an American scholar, James B. Christoph, has written of

"a continuing problem that had plagued the leaders of the Conservative Party ever since they had regained control of the government in 1951. This was the question of how far the party should go in presiding over the dissolution of the British Empire. Despite the efforts that had been made by Conservative leaders during Labour's period in office to "modernise" the party in the direction of...the need to reduce colonial commitments abroad, there remained a strong undertow of imperialist feeling within the party. Britain had begun to accommodate itself to its new, and lesser, power position, but a total conversion to little Englandism had not occurred, particularly within Conservative ranks. After all, the Conservative Party more than any other had been associated with the great days of the Empire."<sup>1</sup>

The theme of this passage is also the main theme of the present chapter. During the fifties the Conservative Party began to adjust itself to the diminution of Britain's imperial power, but not without reluctance and, in some quarters, outspoken resistance. <sup>or</sup> preliminary discussion of developments in party organisation will open the way for an exploration of this theme in terms of the interaction of party members' attitudes.

### 1. Organisation

In each relevant aspect of party organisation there were changes, some brought on by the translation from opposition to office and some by the development of events.

First, the parliamentary party's Commonwealth Affairs Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> James B. Christoph, "The Suez Crisis", in James B. Christoph (ed.), Cases in Comparative Politics (Little, Brown, Boston, 1965), p. 94.

After the 1951 election the committee's chairman and vice-chairman, Lennox-Boyd and Gammans, were recruited to the ministry. Their successors were Dodds-Parker and Alport, formerly the committee's joint secretaries. By the end of 1955 these two as well had been elevated to ministerial office, and from 1954 the chairman was Sir Roland Robinson. A former chairman of the West Indies sub-committee, Robinson was to hold office for ten years with Bernard Braine as vice-chairman during most of them. The structure of sub-committees remained as before, with Archer Baldwin, Sir Edward Keeling and Walter Fletcher, for example, continuing as chairman of the East African, West African and Far East sub-committees.

The committee continued to carry out its traditional functions: the discussion of policy, the formulation of lines for debates, the provision of facilities for visiting colonial politicians and so on. Such functions inevitably declined in importance once the party was in office, since the committee was no longer led from the front bench as it had been in opposition. From the front-bench point of view, however, the committee gained a new importance. It comprised all those back-benchers most concerned with colonial affairs; obviously, therefore, whenever the Colonial Secretary wished to secure the party's support for lines of policy his main task was to win over the members of the committee. Neither Lyttelton nor Lennox-Boyd could ever afford to assume that the committee would be automatically complaisant. We shall take up this point in the discussion of party attitudes.

Second, the Central Office machinery. Once the party had left opposition and the Colonial Secretary had his Civil Servants to advise him, Sayers's old function as policy adviser lapsed. His task became much more that of information officer to the party, both in and out of Parliament. This was a duty he had performed at least since 1948, but he was now able to expand the work in a significant respect. Relieved of responsibility for offering advice on policy, he felt himself free of the inhibitions which in opposition had prevented the establishment of a regular journal. In February 1952 the first number of Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs appeared under his editorship.

This began life as a bi-monthly, devoid of editorial comment and

concerned chiefly to provide background information on current issues. Initially it did not make lively reading, nor did its editor necessarily intend it to. But the repercussions of the politics of the period soon became evident in the journal. As colonial issues became more hotly contested in Parliament the journal became increasingly devoted to the presentation of arguments, a purpose to which the presentation of factual information was consciously geared. As from January 1954 the pressure of copy resulted in monthly publication, and a steadily widening intra-party audience was reached. But it remained in effect a house journal and in its editor's opinion never really resolved the two functions of arguing cases and providing information: it had always to attempt something of each, and the explicitly editorial copy which might have served to clarify its role went unwritten because it was not the party leadership's policy to permit it.<sup>2</sup>

Occasionally, but not often, the Central Office supplemented the journal with other publications in the field. In 1952 Conservatives and the Colonies, published by the Conservative Overseas Bureau, provided an historical perspective on Empire-minded Conservative statesmen from Disraeli to Stanley. In 1958 the Conservative Political Centre published, under the title Imperium et Libertas, the text of an address on the colonies delivered by Lennox-Boyd at a party conference fringe meeting. More publications followed after 1959, in some of which, for example Awakening Africa (1961), Sayers was acknowledged as author.

By comparison with other subjects on which the Central Office published material in the fifties this was a tiny output. But there was a good reason for this, namely that after July 1953 the major responsibility for published and printed material in the colonial field passed to another body, the Conservative Commonwealth Council.

This Council was something new in Conservative machinery. It was set up as a result of initiatives taken by Dodds-Parker, then chairman of the parliamentary Commonwealth Affairs Committee. The central argument which he put to the party's leaders early in 1953 was concisely expressed in the statement of purpose later outlined in the Council's prospectus:

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2 Interview with Sayers.

"While the party adheres to its view that Commonwealth and Colonial affairs should be kept outside political controversy, the increasing activity of organised left-wing bodies in this field clearly calls for some answer. It is vitally important that it should be widely known both at home and overseas that the party is constantly producing new thought and ideas on the problems that confront the Commonwealth."

It followed that the party should attempt to

"build up a body consisting firstly of those with wide knowledge and experience of the Empire, and secondly of active supporters who seek to know Commonwealth affairs in up-to-date detail and to make good use of that knowledge."

The party leaders accepted the force of this argument apparently without demur, and in the Central Office the new body's structure and functions were worked out. Membership would be confined to members of the party together with "individual sympathisers overseas." There would be links with the Commonwealth Affairs Committee and the Central Office; secretarial work would be done by the Conservative Overseas Bureau. Funds would be provided by the party, although there would be a modest subscription for members. The main work would be done by groups specialising in the affairs of particular regions. The initial activities would include setting up advisory and literature services for members, undertaking a publications programme and working out a hospitality scheme for colonial students, to be expanded from a scheme established early in 1952 by Sir Patrick Spens MP.<sup>3</sup>

A governing body was assembled. Lord Woolton, the party chairman, invited Sir Angus Gillan, a former Civil Secretary of the Sudan and British Council representative in Australia, to become chairman. R.D. Milne, secretary of the Conservative Overseas Bureau, was appointed secretary. Sayers was appointed to provide liaison with the Research Department. A general committee of twenty was built up by invitation. It included five MPs: Dodds-Parker, Spens, John Hare, Niall Macpherson and Angus Maude. Four others, invited for their different representative capacities, were later to become MPs: John Biggs-Davison, Mrs. T. Emmett, W.R. van Straubenzee

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3 Conservative Commonwealth Council (henceforth CCC). Prospectus.

and Miss Joan Vickers. Several, among them Sir Stephen Pierssené and Ian Page, had major business interests in colonies: one, Lord Tweedsmuir, also represented the party in the Upper House. On 7 July 1953 members of the Council were invited to meet the general committee at a House of Commons reception, and the Council was officially launched with the Colonial Secretary's blessing.<sup>4</sup>

From the outset the Council sought both to educate itself and to wield influence over other bodies. Most of its day-to-day operations fell in the former category. The first year's working set the style. The groups and sub-groups met to draft papers on developments in their regions. The Council met eight times to be addressed, in the Council's own phrase, "by outstanding experts"; these included Viscount Swinton (the Commonwealth Relations Secretary), Peter Smithers (Hopkinson's PPS), Hopkinson himself, and Alport. And in May 1954 a hundred or so members attended a conference which "pooled a large part of the year's work in the groups", with group convenors presenting papers on their special topics.<sup>5</sup> In later years the only major variation from this pattern of self-education was that conferences were normally made the occasion for set-piece speeches by ministers. Some conference sessions were also opened to a wider public, largely because they were thought to provide an exemplary picture of party members at work. Thus Sayers could report that the 1955 conference was attended not only by two hundred Council members but also by "obviously impressed" visitors, chiefly colonial students in Britain and "distinguished observers" from diplomatic missions.<sup>6</sup>

Self-education blended with modest attempts at a wider influence in the Council's programme of publications. By the time of the 1959 election over 160 papers, in the form of "unofficial but informative memoranda",<sup>7</sup> had been prepared by the regional groups for submission to annual conferences.

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4 CCC, First Annual Report: July 1954, p. 1.

5 Ibid., p. 2.

6 Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs (henceforth in this chapter CCA) July 1955, p. 7.

7 Calendar of Background Papers Submitted to the Annual Conferences of the Conservative Commonwealth Council (CCC, mim., 1963), p.1.

All of these were available to outsiders upon application, and no doubt some enjoyed a wider, if still mainly intra-party, circulation. In addition the Council sponsored a series of pamphlets in association with the Conservative Political Centre. As in 1947, when his discussion pamphlet had set the tone of the party's attempts to evolve a policy statement, Lord Salisbury was given the opening word: the Council's first pamphlet, Commonwealth and Empire (1953), was a reprint of a speech he had made to the Primrose League. The second, entitled Colonial Rule: Enemies and Obligations, was published in 1955; it was devoted largely to a discussion of the Movement for Colonial Freedom and various fellow-travelling fringe groups.<sup>8</sup> Three more pamphlets had appeared by 1959, discussing India, the smaller colonial territories, and aid to Commonwealth education. Most of the Council's publications dealt in generalities rather than particulars, and deliberately so. Detailed technicalities, according to one report, were a matter

"with which the public services and Parliament are infinitely better equipped to cope. The fact remains that even in a complex world ideas - sometimes of the crudest kind - do count and are moving multitudes. This is the stuff of politics, and our own as yet modest contribution is no exception."<sup>9</sup>

There were, however, attempts to wield influence which took forms more

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8 This pamphlet was based on a paper "African - U.K. Anti-Colonial Activities" submitted to the Council's 1954 conference by Harold Soref, convener of the East African sub-group. Soref, a journalist and oft-defeated parliamentary candidate, appears to have specialised for many years in exposés of radical pressure groups concerned with African affairs. In 1965 he published with a co-author, Ian Greig, The Puppeteers. An examination of those organisations and bodies concerned with the elimination of the white man in Africa (Tandem Special, 1965). The organisations examined were the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Christian Action, the Movement for Colonial Freedom, the Africa Bureau, the Southern African Freedom Group, the Union of Democratic Control, the National Peace Council and five Southern African groups. According to the blurb, the book "carefully analyses the extent to which communists are using organisations of British people to further their campaign for the overthrowing of the Governments of Southern Africa." The theme of the book "originated in discussions held at meetings of the Africa Group of the Monday Club" (a group of right-wing Conservatives formed in 1961).

9 CCC, Annual Report for 1955, p.4.

direct and immediate than these. The Council sought consciously to emulate the Fabian Colonial Bureau's methods in gaining footholds in both parliamentary and governmental circles. Firstly, to achieve liaison with the parliamentary party's specialists, MPs associated with the corresponding sub-committees of the Commonwealth Affairs Committee were invited to serve on the Council's regional groups. Initially, for example, Roland Robinson served as deputy chairman of the West Indies group, being succeeded in 1955 by John Vaughan-Morgan; John Tilney was first deputy chairman and later chairman of the West Africa group; the East and Central Africa group enjoyed in succession the services of Archer Baldwin, Beresford Craddock and Patrick Wall as deputy chairman, while Major Wall served also as convenor of the Mediterranean group. In 1955 the Council was able to report its success in "bringing information and suggestions on current questions to the notice of the relevant sub-committees of the parliamentary Commonwealth Affairs Committee... This is facilitated by our having working groups similar to those sub-committees", and two years later it was reaffirmed that "our close liaison with the parliamentary sub-committees contributed to their counsels, and increased their regard for our efforts."<sup>10</sup> Secondly, in its relations with ministers and government departments the Council, like the Fabian Colonial Bureau, concentrated on relatively small-scale issues, if not always the issues that the Fabians would have chosen. "We, for our part," the Council reported in 1956, "have felt it right to press hard for action in such questions as the Overseas Civil Service and the taxation of companies' overseas earnings."<sup>11</sup>

On neither of these questions, as it happened, could the Council claim to have wielded any great influence. Though the Minister of State, John Hare, flatteringly chose the Council's 1956 conference as the setting for an announcement that the Service's retirement and pensions provisions would shortly be modified, there can be no doubt that the Government would have acted in this matter with or without the Council's representations. And

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10 CCC, Annual Reports for 1955, p. 4, and 1957, p. 2.

11 CCC, Annual Report for 1956, pp. 1-2.

in the matter of taxation relief for "pioneer" industries operating in colonies, the Council's efforts served only to supplement the work of interested parties which had been applying steady pressure on the Government for years. In particular a Taxation Policy Committee representing the Joint East and Central Africa Board, the British Commonwealth Producers Organisation, the West Africa Committee and the West India Committee, meeting under the chairmanship of John Vaughan-Morgan, had been active since 1953, and had received its reward when the Chancellor of the Exchequer promised to meet its main demands in the 1957 budget. Even then it had maintained its pressure, forming a sub-committee under Lord de la Warr to discourage too narrow a Treasury definition of "pioneer industry relief" and, in the budget debate, submitting amendments to the Finance Bill through the agency of Bernard Braine.<sup>12</sup> The Council's role in these cases was to echo rather than initiate.

Indeed, the Council was never really influential. There may have been other reasons why it failed to achieve a position similar to the Fabian Colonial Bureau's in relation to government and party, but the central reason was that it lacked autonomy. Whereas the Bureau was created independently of the Labour Party and was free to work as it thought fit, the Council was created by and within the Conservative Party organisation and was totally dependent upon it for finance, premises and secretarial guidance. Consequently it functioned simply as an adjunct to the party machinery, providing its members with plenty to do but conveying nevertheless an impression of respectability and harmlessness.<sup>13</sup>

Not that members of the Council seemed particularly concerned at finding severe restrictions on their organisation's freedom of manoeuvre. If they did seek to pursue their interest in colonial matters in an extra-party setting there remained numerous ways and means of doing so. In Chapter

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12 Joint East and Central Africa Board, Annual Reports for 1956, pp. 13-4, and 1957, pp. 16-7; CCA, July 1956, p. 4.

13 Gerald Sayers, who served on the Council's executive, recalled when interviewed that on one occasion in the early sixties the Council did criticise Central African policy. It was sharply reprimanded, and reverted swiftly, in Sayers's phrase, to being "safely wishy-washy."

V we observed the extent to which party members found outlets for their interest in the work of various august voluntary societies, organisations founded upon an interest in a particular region, and organisations concerned with colonial business and commerce. During the fifties Conservatives continued to participate in the work of such bodies in much the same way. The case of taxation policy, noted above, provides an example; further examples will appear during our discussion of party attitudes, since in some cases attitudes were most clearly stated in and through particular groups.

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## 2. Attitudes

In our analysis of the post-war party in Chapter V, we concluded that "traditional" attitudes were still pervasive. Among the party rank and file and at the grassroots level there was certainly no lack of imperial sentiment - that is, pride in the imperial achievements of party and nation. Among the party's articulate specialists this generalised attitude was distilled into relatively precise views on various leading topics. Oliver Stanley, the principal spokesman, provided an exception; it was his considerable achievement to have retained the close loyalty of his traditionalist colleagues while seeking to guide the party towards a more liberal attitude on imperial matters.

During the fifties the picture altered. For one thing, the party's colonial specialists concerned themselves less and less with the old, all-embracing cause of imperial unification. But this traditional imperialist cause was not yet dead. Rather the task of advocating it passed to a new set of men, distinguishable from their immediate predecessors by the fact that their primary interest lay in foreign rather than colonial policy. The affair which brought this group most prominently into public view was the Suez crisis. We will not be concerned in any detail with this adventure in foreign policy, but we will certainly be concerned with the motivation of the "Suez group" - its fierce determination to stem the outflow of British power - and the forms which this determination took in relation to imperial problems.

The Suez group was never more than a right-wing minority, and was

generally regarded in the party as such.<sup>14</sup> But if extreme traditionalism on broad imperial matters was thus contained, there was no great or necessary advance of outspoken liberalism on specifically colonial matters. Such an attitude did not really begin to permeate the party until after the pivotal election year of 1959. During the fifties vague attitudes based on nostalgia, together with a quite specific hostility towards the advance of colonial nationalism in certain areas, still had many spokesmen and commanded many adherents in the party. These spokesmen included most of the colonial specialists, who might have abandoned the broad unificationist dream but continued to show keen interest in policy for areas where the party's emotional stake remained high, such as East and Central Africa. There was no coherent party view on colonial problems, in short, more liberal than the leadership's own. Nevertheless, for the purposes of decision-making and policy formation the party at large was almost invariably willing to be led by its relatively advanced leadership. Because of this docility among the majority of party members there was seldom any danger of a serious split over colonial policy.

To illustrate these points we will consider first the declining fortunes of the broad imperialist cause, and second the interaction of party attitudes in the field of colonial political problems.

(i) The Slow Death of Residual Imperialism<sup>15</sup>

If the high imperial theme had been out of touch with the real

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14 The term "right-wing" is meant here to apply only to the group's views on imperial policy. Some of the group's leading members, for example Julian Amery, John Biggs-Davison and Lord Hinchingbrooke, combined their imperialism with liberal views on such important and sensitive issues as capital punishment. In this respect, as Leon D. Epstein has argued, they represented "an element that had been prominent in the imperial movement of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Domestic reform and overseas expansion had often gone together. This was surely the Joseph Chamberlain tradition...the notion of a Britain dynamic at home and abroad." Leon D. Epstein, British Politics in the Suez Crisis, p. 52.

15 Epstein's chapter "The Staunch Imperial Position" in ibid., pp. 41-60, is a definitive discussion of Conservative imperialist ideology in the fifties with special reference to the Suez crisis. The following discussion differs from Epstein's in emphases but not in essential themes.

world in the forties, still more was it so in the fifties. Yet it continued to have a strong appeal among party activists in the constituencies and in a section of the parliamentary party. These Conservatives regarded themselves in effect as the upholders of a faith that had once been general in the party and was bound to rise again.

At the heart of the imperialist attitude in the fifties, as earlier, was a preoccupation with national greatness. The residual imperialists of the parliamentary party were convinced that the evident decline in Britain's power and independence since the war could and should be halted, and the trend reversed. To them it was clear that Britain could regain its old international standing only by exerting effective leadership over some unit larger than itself, and equally clear that the "British Commonwealth of Nations" must be that unit just as the British Empire had been in the past. They refused to accept that Britain no longer commanded the power to mould the modern Commonwealth in its own image; all that was lacking was the will. They seem to have tacitly assumed, however, that such a Commonwealth could not feasibly be multi-racial. The important thing was not to try to accommodate nations like India and Pakistan, which had loosened the old ties by insisting on republican status and complete autonomy; it was rather to develop unity among those countries of substantial British settlement which, it could be assumed, were already bound by the ties of race.

In a phrase, they were advocating a modernised version of the old Greater Britain concept. The negative complement to this positive notion was a powerful anti-Americanism. The United States was identified as a major enemy of British imperial interests, possibly even more dangerous than the Soviet Union because it was nominally a friend and ally. The American Government's campaign against the Empire had been manifest at least since its prewar hostility towards the Ottawa trade agreements. After the war, as the residual imperialists saw it, the United States had ruthlessly taken advantage of Britain's materially weakened condition to impose non-discriminatory trade agreements, to assume control of the seas, and to hasten the contraction of imperial power wherever possible. Accordingly the new imperialism had a strong flavour of defiance. In spite of this postwar American dominance the old balance was to be

restored. The new Commonwealth would be at once the expression of Britain's continued greatness and the guarantee of Britain's freedom of action in a world of great-power blocs.

The means to the end, the actual measures required to bolster Britain's flagging will to greatness, remained those which had always figured in the imperialist liturgy. A revitalised system of imperial preference should be established. Commonwealth defence and communications should be fully integrated. On many issues there might be joint planning of foreign policy. Some form of common citizenship might yet be instituted. It was an essential characteristic of the residual imperialist view that its proponents retained their faith in the practicability of so utopian a programme. And it was this faith which had sustained them during the Conservatives' barren years in opposition. They had looked forward to the party's return to power as the occasion when a decade and more of frustration, imposed by way and a perverse electorate, would end. Led by one of the greatest of Empire men, the party would at last resume its unfulfilled task.

In the event, when the party did return to office the imperialist frustrations were not relieved but compounded. In two crucial areas of policy the Churchill Government proceeded to betray the faith. First, it grievously undermined the hopes for an integrated trading bloc by consistently opting for multilateral arrangements under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) rather than restrictive arrangements under imperial preference. Second, it weakened the most vital link in imperial strategy and communications by withdrawing British troops from the Suez Canal zone. In each case, as the imperialists again saw it, the Government was driven on by American pressure.

Naturally the self-appointed preservers of the faith tried to block the course of these policies. An imperial preference lobby and a Suez lobby became active. Between them there was a substantial overlap of some thirty to forty MPs, and these represented the solid core of residual imperialism; their attitudes towards both issues were based on "much the same instincts and prejudices".<sup>16</sup> Their leading figures

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16 Editorial on the 1954 party conference, The Times, 7 Oct. 1954.

included Viscount Hinchingbrooke; Captain Charles Waterhouse, a veteran MP and director of companies with African interests; and the youthful Julian Amery, an MP since 1950 and the only one to have had any previous reputation as an articulate imperial specialist. Other prominent MPs associated with the factions' various campaigns were John Biggs-Davison, Anthony Fell, Harry Legge-Bourke, Patrick Naitland, Angus Maude, Sir Victor Raikes, Patrick Wall and Paul Williams. On both issues their activities extended intermittently over most of the decade; in charting the decline of their cause we will consider each issue in turn.

(a) Imperial Economic Integration

The years 1952 to 1954 spanned the last great effort of the imperial preference campaigners in the party. For the first year or so after the party's return to office their case was repeatedly pressed upon the party leaders. One of their main platforms was the Empire Industries Association, L.S. Amery's "non-party" creation whose parliamentary membership was exclusively Conservative. In a memorandum to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in March 1952 the Association stressed the traditional argument that the value of extended preferences would be political as well as economic:

"The policy of imperial preference, while not an alternative to other methods of building up the resources of the Empire..., is an indispensable element in assuring their success and enabling it to remain 'an independent factor in world affairs.'"<sup>17</sup>

And a subsequent pamphlet explained why GATT, to which Labour had negotiated British adherence in 1946, was striking at Britain's true national interest:

"It is obvious that the system which has been in vogue for the past six years has not contributed to the expansion of Empire trade... It is also clear that...the attempt to deal with the dollar shortage by direct exports from Great Britain [to the dollar area] is destroying the one method by which the dollar shortage might be eliminated, that is to say the re-establishment of Commonwealth and Empire trade on a basis which would lead to dealing with the dollar area on level terms."<sup>18</sup>

In these two statements the essence of the case may be seen. The advocates

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in W.A. Wells, Imperial Preference, A Short Historical Sketch (EIA, April 1952), p. 1. Wells was director of information for the Empire Industries Association and the British Empire League.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

saw their economic programme as an indispensable means to the goal of "uniting" former imperial possessions to Britain, and hence providing a basis for Britain's international freedom of action. To remain in GATT, by contrast, was to become virtually an American dependency.

Another platform used by the advocates was the register of House of Commons motions, significant if only because it gave them a formal chance to demonstrate their parliamentary strength by collecting as many signatures as possible. In March, April and May of 1952 three motions called upon the Government to "use every influence to promote as free an exchange of goods between all nations of the Commonwealth as possible," to "remove...all obstacles which prevent the United Kingdom from increasing and extending preferences," and "to initiate, during the year of Her Majesty's Coronation, a conference of Commonwealth and Empire leaders to prepare measures to resolve these [economic] difficulties."<sup>19</sup> The first, the mildest of the three, was actually an amendment to a Labour motion and drew only nine signatures. The second and third, however, made stronger by the veiled reference to GATT and the call for a conference, attracted 42 and 45 respectively. These figures probably gave an accurate indication of the campaign's breadth of support; it may be noted that over four years later a similar motion on Empire preference drew 44 signatures, comprising very much the same set of names.<sup>20</sup> Among the better known of the regular signatories were Julian Amery, Braine, Craddock, Dodds-Parker, Maitland and R.S. Russell; those who were not MPs in 1952 but were on hand for the 1956 motion included Biggs-Davison, Wall and Paul Williams. Most of these held executive office at some time or other in the Empire Industries Association.

The third main platform for presentation of the case was the party's annual conference. Here too was the opportunity for a proof of strength, since the advocates could hope for support from the party's Empire-minded constituency activists. At the 1952 conference the elder statesman himself, L.S. Amery, rose to support the cause. Speaking to a pair of motions which

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19 1951-2 session, EDMs No. 50, 13 March 1952, No. 64, 9 April 1952, and No. 75, 22 May 1952.

20 1955-6 session, EDM No. 110, 30 July 1956.

called for "closer economic integration" and the amendment of any articles in GATT which were hindering Empire trade, Amery found a responsive audience. His peroration - "at any moment, on 60 days' notice, we can walk out of the GATT prison camp. Well, why not walk out and walk our own way in the world?" - brought cheers, and the two motions were carried with negligible opposition.<sup>21</sup>

In response to all these overtures during its first year of office, the Government was generally sympathetic. Lyttelton's reply to the debate at the 1952 party conference typified the way in which the Government chose to handle the preferentialist lobby at this stage. GATT, he said, was indeed "hampering, even crippling" the development of Commonwealth commerce. The question would be discussed at the next Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference, when the Government "proposed to seek a common basis of agreement." But along with these conciliatory words went one or two warning notes. Although the Government believed in preference, it was "not for the purpose of cutting Great Britain and the Commonwealth off from the United States." In fact, the Commonwealth might well stand to gain by multilateral foreign trade.<sup>22</sup>

At the next year's conference the cause might have seemed, at first sight, to be as popular as ever. Out of the twenty motions on the agenda which referred to Commonwealth or colonies, no fewer than seventeen called for greater economic integration.<sup>23</sup> L.S. Amery was again warmly received, and a motion proposed by Lord Balfour of Inchrye (chairman of the Empire Industries Association), once again demanding a modification of GATT in the interest of extended preferences, was carried unanimously. There were, however, signs that the Government's line against the preferentialists was

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21 1952 Conference Report, pp. 53-4.

22 Ibid., pp. 54-5.

23 Two others sought wider recognition of Empire Day, one congratulated the Government on its general colonial policy and one commended the achievement of Central African federation. Comparing this list with the motions put down for the same year's Labour Party conference (see above, p.241), Venture was moved to ask: "Can a bi-partisan colonial policy really be based on such conflicting emphases?" Venture, Nov. 1953, p. 5.

hardening. The President of the Board of Trade, Peter Thorneycroft, allowed that GATT did require some emendation from Britain's point of view. He was even then involved in discussions on the subject. But emendation could not possibly be of a fundamental kind. Britain was in GATT to stay, and Thorneycroft challengingly announced that he knew of no fundamental differences "either within the Conservative Party, or within the British Commonwealth and Empire as to what our attitude ought to be."<sup>24</sup>

As The Times pointed out, the preferentialists knew perfectly well that discussions were in train and had timed their attack at this conference in the hope of embarrassing the Government. But it was clear that the bulk of the parliamentary party could be expected to support the leadership. Far from being the keepers of the party faith, the preferentialists had become no more than dissenters from the new orthodoxy.<sup>25</sup>

The decisive blow was dealt at the party conference of 1954. An official motion emphasised the need to maintain imperial ties of culture and trade, "if need be by revisions of the General Agreement." But if this phraseology was meant to pacify the dissentients, it failed. An amendment moved by Sir Victor Raikes MP, and strongly supported by L.S. Amery, demanded the substitution of the full-blooded phrase "by such revision of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade as will restore freedom of action in respect of imperial preference." Against this attack Thorneycroft produced the strongest possible argument. He pleaded with Raikes and Amery not to press their amendment "on the grounds of unity in this great Commonwealth and Empire," and not to "press him to pursue a policy "which would earn at best the cold indifference, and at worst the active hostility, of the great majority of our partners in this great Commonwealth and Empire."<sup>26</sup> It was a moment of sad irony: the champions of imperial unity were being asked to drop their case in the name of that very cause. For it had been apparent for some years, and especially since

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24 1953 Conference Report, p. 65.

25 See The Times's editorial of 12 Oct. 1953.

26 1954 Conference Report, p. 57.

the Prime Ministers' conference of December 1952, that the Commonwealth countries were united not in any belief in imperial preference, but in a determination to make their own economic arrangements.<sup>27</sup> Against this insistence on their right to trade in whichever foreign markets they chose, Britain could not hope to prevail. And against this fact of economic life it was vain for Raikes to argue now that "even if there is a division of opinion amongst the Dominions, that does not absolve Britain from giving a lead if she believes that lead to be both right and just."<sup>28</sup> In the words of the conference report, Raikes's amendment was defeated by a "substantial" majority and the original motion carried by an "overwhelming" one. In effect, British adherence to GATT now had the Conservative Party's official endorsement.

There were to be still further reverses in subsequent years. The campaign's father-figure, L.S. Amery, died in 1955. The heir apparent to the campaign leadership, Amery's son Julian, was muffled by absorption into the Government of his father-in-law Harold Macmillan early in 1957. Later in the same year Britain joined the European Free Trade Association; at the 1957 party conference only one MP, Anthony Fell, was prepared to attack this new betrayal, and the conference defeated the amendment to which he spoke by a large majority.<sup>29</sup> But these blows fell upon a cause that had been irretrievably lost in 1954.

However forlornly, the campaign continued. The newly re-named Commonwealth and Empire Industries Association provided one home for it. Even in 1958 the Association's Monthly Bulletin was still arguing the preferentialist case, while its more prominent parliamentary members such as R.H. Turton and R.S. Russell were contributing likewise to Commons debates.<sup>30</sup> Another home was created inside the party itself. In 1955,

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27 See CCA, April 1954, pp. 1-2.

28 1954 Conference Report, p. 54.

29 1957 Conference Report, pp. 76, 79. 1956-7 was the year of the Angry Young Men; Fell described himself as "an angry old Tory."

30 C and EIA, Monthly Bulletin (edited by W.A. Wells), e.g. issue for Dec. 1958. See also contributions by Turton and Russell to the Commonwealth affairs debates on 21 July and 2 Dec. 1958.

following the defeat at the previous year's conference, the Expanding Commonwealth Group was founded by Patrick Maitland. With Maitland as chairman and Biggs-Davison as vice-chairman, this group comprised fifteen (later sixteen) of the most dedicated MPs and enjoyed the tacit support of several others. Under its auspices three pamphlets and a book by Maitland, Task for Giants, were published between 1956 and 1958.<sup>31</sup>

Biggs-Davison supplemented this output by publishing in 1957 a book he had written four years earlier entitled The Uncertain Ally. His work was principally a polemic against the United States, which he accused of working to destroy the British Empire in order to make way for America's own brand of economic imperialism.<sup>32</sup> The group's pamphlets and Maitland's book, by contrast, were bravely optimistic in tone. In the 1958 pamphlet it was argued that Britain could still re-negotiate GATT and transfer £300 million worth of trade purchases from foreign to Commonwealth sources.

But the group's publications were chiefly distinguished by the novel and remarkable argument that Commonwealth membership should be thrown open to foreign countries which accepted "the fundamental principles on which the Commonwealth was founded," in particular the Western European countries. What was envisaged was a community of nations under British leadership, powerful enough to stand apart from the two great-power blocs.<sup>33</sup> Whether or not the group really believed in the feasibility of such a scheme

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31 Patrick Maitland et al., The Expanding Commonwealth (Conservative Political Centre, henceforth CPC, Oct. 1956); Expand or Decay? (ECG, July 1957); The Commonwealth: Expanding Opportunity (CPC, Sept. 1958); Patrick Maitland, Task for Giants: an Expanding Commonwealth (Longmans, Green, 1957). A further pamphlet, Expanding Obligation, was published by the CPC in March 1961. Fourteen of the group's members are listed in Appendix I. The other two members were William Aitken and the Hon. James Lindsay.

32 John Biggs-Davison, The Uncertain Ally (Christopher Johnson, 1957), e.g. p. 71.

33 E.g. Maitland, op. cit., passim. Contemporary critiques of the Group's ideas may be found in P.C. Gordon Walker, "Policy for the Commonwealth", in T.E.M. McKitterick and Kenneth Younger (eds.), Fabian International Essays (Hogarth Press, 1957), pp. 190-1, and J.D.B. Miller, The Commonwealth in the World (Duckworth, first edition, 1958), pp. 281-5.

is hard to say. It is apparent, however, that the group's proposal represented the final desperate gesture in a prolonged effort whose main objective, to the end, was to avoid the American embrace.

(b) Suez

Like the preference lobby with which it was largely coextensive, the Suez group was responsible for the last agonised expression of an attitude which had once been general in the party but was so no longer. Its moments of prominence were occasioned by two momentous decisions. The first was the Churchill Government's decision to remove Britain's major Middle Eastern military base from Suez, where it had been established since 1882, to Cyprus. Prompted partly by questions of cost and effectiveness in a nuclear age, partly by the fact that Britain's retreat from the old Asian empire was now virtually complete, and partly by pressure from the strongly nationalistic military regime which had overthrown King Farouk in 1952, this decision was taken early in 1953 and resulted in the signing of a treaty between Britain and Egypt in July 1954. The essential terms were that Britain would withdraw all its 80,000 troops within twenty months on the understanding that ownership of the Suez Canal, in which Britain had a controlling financial interest, would remain unaffected. On this occasion the Suez group's reaction was one of violent protest against government policy.

Not so on the second occasion. Eden's decision to use force against Egypt, three months after Colonel Nasser seized the canal in July 1956, earned from the Suez group uninhibited expressions of support. On this occasion, indeed, the group's arguments for the reassertion of British authority

"seemed to provide a sturdier support for the government than did some of Eden's own arguments. It was the moment for the resurgence of an unadulterated imperial spirit. The essence of the old doctrine, unencumbered by the doubts and qualifications of the government, was having its day."<sup>34</sup>

The "old doctrine" on this issue, as frequently expressed by the residual imperialists of the fifties, ran thus. Whereas imperial

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<sup>34</sup> Epstein, op. cit., p. 42. "Eden's own arguments" are touched on below, p. 349.

preference was the main device by which the Commonwealth would become more tightly organised, the Suez base represented the chief military guarantee that Commonwealth ties would survive. Suez was still the lifeline of Empire. Considerations of both strategy and communications made it so: in Julian Amery's uncharacteristically bathetic words, it was at once "the hinge of our Imperial strength" and "the Clapham Junction of the Commonwealth."<sup>35</sup> In addition the British presence was thought to ensure that the entire Middle Eastern area would remain a British sphere of influence in world politics, and hence serve as a standing testimony to Britain's great-power status. For these reasons military control of the canal zone remained essential. And for the residual imperialists, it may be added, control of Suez was not just a strategic but also an emotional imperative. For Suez was not simply an imperial outpost. Rather it signified "the master stroke of Britain's greatest imperial statesmen";<sup>36</sup> British occupation of the zone was central to the whole imperial achievement of the last seventy or eighty years.

What follows is an attempt to sketch the life-cycle of the group, that "semipermanent cluster of 30 to 50,"<sup>37</sup> which adhered most ardently to this "old doctrine."

The nucleus of the group was established as early as 1952, in direct response to the Egyptian military revolution. The initiative was taken by Major Harry Legge-Bourke,<sup>Ⓢ</sup> a back-bencher with some reputation as an independent-minded right-wing critic of Britain's foreign and imperial policies. Legge-Bourke confided to Julian Amery his deep concern that the Government might succumb to nationalist demands for the evacuation of British troops. Shortly afterwards Amery convened at his father's home a meeting of MPs with similar views. With Captain Waterhouse, Amery

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35 1953 Conference Report, p. 32.

36 Paul Johnson, The Suez War (Greenberg, New York, 1957). p. 10, quoted in Christoph, op. cit., p. 94.

37 Christoph, op. cit., p. 95. As in the case of the preference lobby, the register of House of Commons Motions provided a good indication of the group's numerical strength. In December 1953<sup>41</sup> Conservatives supported a Motion urging the Government to suspend the treaty negotiations with Egypt.

assumed informal leadership of a campaign to hold the Government to a tough Egyptian policy.<sup>38</sup>

It soon became plain, however, that the Government did intend to abandon the base. Sir Anthony Eden, then Foreign Secretary, was rightly identified by the group as the chief architect of the withdrawal policy, and was made the target of public attacks as well as private representations. At the 1953 party conference Eden was strongly criticised by the group's spokesmen, probably in the hope that constituency opinion might be mobilised against the leadership. But at this stage, with the retreat from Suez not yet a reality and its consequences not yet apparent, the conference proved amenable to Eden's argument that the evacuation would in no way endanger British interests, and the group's offensive petered out.

A more dramatic protest was registered in the following July, when the Government presented the actual agreement with Egypt for Parliament's approval. Questioning both the military and the political premises of the original decision, Waterhouse, Amery and Hinchingsbrooke deplored the Government's attitude of appeasement to a petty dictator and, more fundamentally, its apparent loss of the will to rule.<sup>39</sup> Legge-Bourke had already resigned the party whip in protest against the withdrawal policy; now, at the end of the debate, 25 of the group joined him in voting against the agreement. But although this was a major break in party discipline, it had no effect on the Government's position since virtually all the Opposition MPs refrained from voting.<sup>40</sup> No less committed than the Government to a policy of evacuation, the Opposition parties could hardly vote with the Suez group; they had no objection, however, to abstaining as a means

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38 On these origins see speech by Legge-Bourke, HCD vol. 570 cols. 629-30 (16 May 1957).

39 HCD vol. 531 cols. 737-45 (Waterhouse), 771-82 (Amery), 796-801 (Hinchingsbrooke) (29 July 1954).

40 Christoph (op. cit., p. 93) and Epstein (op. cit., p. 43) both imply that the Opposition parties abstained in toto. In fact a few Opposition MPs, including Fenner Brockway, Emrys Hughes and John McGovern from the Labour Party and Clement Davies and Jo Grimond from the Liberal Party, voted with the Conservative majority.

of highlighting the dissension on the Conservative benches.

The group's failure in 1954 was thought by some to close the episode. In October The Times could comment that "the Suez group in the House of Commons never had a chance of being more than an irritant minority."<sup>41</sup> Not only was its effectiveness discounted: it was also relegated to the past tense. The group's leaders thought differently. In the July debate Amery had acknowledged the loss of the battle but not the war, and had prophesied that the group's effort might in fact mark "the beginning of a return to...faith in Britain's imperial mission and destiny."<sup>42</sup> At the 1954 party conference the group again subjected Eden to attack; though ineffectual as a censure, this move at least ensured that the party at large would not forget what issues were involved. And in 1955 fifteen of the group's members formed the Expanding Commonwealth Group, in the general cause of keeping the "imperial mission and destiny" actively before the party's notice.

Nasser's seizure of the canal in July 1956 naturally brought the group fully back to life. Epstein has lucidly summarised the group's reaction to an event which it saw as a total vindication of its earlier protests:

"The consequences of the 1954 agreement, in the Suez group's perspective, were evident when Nasser seized the canal... That Nasser could defy Britain and the West generally by nationalising the canal was proof that only with the presence of military force in the area could Britain influence Middle Eastern policies and events. To maintain this influence generally, not just to reassert control of the canal, it was necessary to seize the present opportunity of reoccupying Suez. Thus the old Suez group favoured a forceful policy... It made sense from its point of view, based as it was on the assumption that Britain could and should maintain its imperial influence. The Suez group, at least, was willing to fight in behalf of that influence."<sup>43</sup>

Nor was the group deterred by the probability that any fighting would have to be done without American support, since American hostility was assumed as a matter of course. According to Amery the United States had

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41 Editorial, The Times, 7 Oct. 1954.

42 HCD vol. 531 col. 782 (29 July 1954).

43 Epstein, op. cit., pp. 44-5.

"done us enough harm in the Middle East already. We must make it clear to them that if they will not or cannot join us, then we will go ahead without them. It will not be the first time. Our life is at stake, and we can do no other."<sup>44</sup>

At no stage did Eden publicly express the Government's own view in terms like these. When, after three months of fruitless negotiations, the Government did use force, its action was justified not as a reassertion of British authority but as a police exercise, an intervention in the name of peace-keeping. Nor was Eden really prepared to defy the United States, either in public statements or clandestine decision-making. The enormous American pressure which was exerted immediately the British operation began in late October came as a surprise to him, and was a crucial factor in the collapse of the operation.

But this is to anticipate. The present point is that the Suez group's publicly stated arguments were not merely different from Eden's but also provided, within their own terms, a stronger case for military action. For three months the group pressed these arguments on the leadership. In the same period it sought to influence the party in general to bring pressure to bear, with the direct aim of stiffening the leadership's nerve. Its efforts reached a climax at the party conference in mid-October. And on this occasion conference provided a climate totally favourable to its views. The leadership proposed a cautious motion endorsing the Government's efforts to reach a "just solution." Waterhouse and Amery thereupon moved an amendment specifying that the solution should be "designed to ensure international control of the canal." Both speakers openly stressed that such an objective could be attained only by the use of force, and that Britain should have no qualms about going ahead without American backing.<sup>45</sup> Their speeches were strong not only in the course advocated but in the language used. To Waterhouse, for example, Nasser was a "miniature Mussolini"; when a delegate referred to Dulles, the American Secretary of State, as the nigger in the woodpile, Waterhouse responded "there are lots of niggers about." Such phrases went down well in what was clearly a fervent gathering. The one speaker to counsel

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44 HCD vol. 557 col. 1701 (2 Aug. 1956).

45 1956 Conference Report, pp. 31-2.

restraint, William Yates, a young MP known for his pro-Arab views, was booed from the platform. Frequent interjections by members of the League of Empire Loyalists contributed to the excitement. In the event the Waterhouse amendment was carried by the mass meeting with Yates the sole dissident.<sup>46</sup>

This was the group's high point. Its success at the conference probably did not play any necessary part in "nerving" Eden, since the basic decision to use force had already been taken by the time conference met.<sup>47</sup> But it can certainly be said that after the conference the party leadership knew that there would be enthusiastic rank and file support for any strong action against Egypt, and that failure to wrest control of the canal from Egypt without an attempt at strong action would be unpopular in the party.

Thereafter the group's position weakened. No amount of support from the party ranks could sustain it once military operations against Egypt had been tried and proven disastrous. The Government's failure to reinstate British authority left the group with nothing to advocate except the counsel of despair - that Britain, in the name of principle, should thenceforth undertake a self-sacrificial boycott of the canal.<sup>48</sup> And when in May 1957 the new Macmillan Government committed Britain to use of the canal on Nasser's terms there was nothing the group - or at least eight of its most dedicated members - could do except put self-sacrifice into practice by resigning the party whip.<sup>49</sup> In doing so this cove of "Suez rebels" received at first the notable support of Lord Salisbury.<sup>50</sup>

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46 The Times's report of this conference debate effectively conveys its atmosphere. The Times, 12 Oct. 1956.

47 See e.g. Hugh Thomas, The Suez War (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), Ch. V. Thomas gives a brief but interesting account of the party conference from the leadership's point of view: ibid., pp. 102-3.

48 See e.g. speech by Waterhouse, HCD vol. 556 col. 1356 (14 March 1957).

49 Seven of the "Suez rebels" are named in Appendix I; the eighth was Sir Victor Raikes, who with L.S. Amery had led the final struggle against GATT at the 1954 party conference.

50 See e.g. speeches by Salisbury, HLD vol. 203 col. 637 (14 May 1957) and 1155-8 (23 May 1957).

One of the great figures of the party, Salisbury had resigned two months earlier both from the Cabinet and from the leadership of the party in the <sup>House of</sup> Lords, in protest against Macmillan's "soft" line on Cyprus - a motivation basically similar to that of the rebels. These gestures, however, failed to embarrass the leadership, and in the ensuing months Salisbury and the Suez rebels were to prove uninfluential as independent critics of the Government's policies in Cyprus and elsewhere. By June 1958 all six of the Suez rebels still in Parliament - following the precedent of the original defector, Legge-Bourke, who had left the Suez group in 1954 - had been driven by the imperative of political survival to rejoin the party.

However much Conservatives in general regretted the passing of Britain's imperial strength, most of the party's parliamentary members were prepared to assume that it was inevitable. The residual imperialists refused to make any such assumption. In campaigning as they did, however, they failed to revitalise the party's imperial spirit; they succeeded only in isolating themselves from the bulk of their party colleagues.

#### (ii) Colonial Political Advance

Concerning the policy of advancing dependent territories towards self-government, the party in the fifties generally presented a picture of harmony. The broad policy statements which the leadership issued from time to time were accepted without controversy and even - in most cases - without comment. Party gatherings listened docilely as first Lyttelton and later Lennox-Boyd explained that "all parties" agreed on fundamentals, and that the major problem was to judge the appropriate pace of political change. "We must try and pursue the golden mean, heedless of the clatter and criticism of extremists, whether of those who wish to live in the 19th century, or of those who wish to live in the 22nd," Lyttelton told the 1953 party conference, and five years later Lennox-Boyd in his turn rejected the advice of "the too fast and the too slow schools."<sup>51</sup> In more positive terms, the elements of the approved

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51 1953 Conference Report, p. 64; Alan Lennox-Boyd, Imperium et Libertas (CPC, 1958), pp. 8-9.

policy received an entirely typical expression in the party's 1955 election manifesto:

"The British Commonwealth and Empire is the greatest force for peace and progress in the world today... We uphold the principle of racial partnership, as exemplified in the new Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. We shall work to raise living standards and to guide colonial peoples along the road to self-government within the framework of the Commonwealth and Empire. We shall do all we can to insulate these problems from the heat of party conflict."<sup>52</sup>

Yet the apparent contentment with which the party accepted official policy requires analysis. Harmony in political parties is always conditional; what, then, were the conditions of harmony in this instance?

Superficially it might be said that the leadership's statements were couched in such conventional rhetoric as to be unexceptionable from almost any point of view. But our concern is somewhat deeper. Harmony prevailed not only with regard to broad policy statements but also, for the most part, with regard to the Government's actual policy record. And there were undeniably elements in the party which might have been expected to become disaffected by aspects of the policy record.

These elements existed chiefly to the right of the party leadership. During the fifties no MP or group of MPs consistently expressed views more liberal or "advanced" than the official party line. Certainly there were isolated instances of liberal deviation. In February 1953, for example, "a small group of Government back-benchers" was reported to be unhappy about the federation scheme and likely to abstain from voting on the subject.<sup>53</sup> In the event, however, there were no Conservative abstentions. In 1956 an informal faction, about equal in size to the Suez group, was tacitly opposed to Eden's Suez policy; ten of its members, the best known being Anthony Nutting, Sir Edward Boyle, Robert Boothby and Nigel Nicolson, became in due course publicly identified as anti-Suez critics, most of them suffering at the hands of their constituency parties in consequence. But this faction was quite unorganised and lacking in leadership; its members

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<sup>52</sup> The Times, 30 April 1955.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 25 Feb. 1953.

"barely knew each other's identity."<sup>54</sup> It could not really be described, therefore, as a significant intra-party pressure group counteracting the Suez group. Moreover, none of its members was primarily interested in imperial policy as such; their protests related chiefly to the use of force as an instrument of foreign policy. A third isolated instance of liberal deviation occurred in 1959, when Enoch Powell, temporarily a back-bencher, made a speech forcefully criticising the party leadership over the Hola Camp episode.<sup>55</sup> But it could not be said that any of these incidents represented a continuing strand of critical liberal opinion on colonial affairs.

By contrast, a consistent strand of opinion certainly existed on the right. As in Stanley's day, those who gave expression to it included many of the colonial specialists. The following statements on different aspects of colonial policy were not isolated deviations, but typical of views regularly expressed during the fifties. First, Salisbury addressing the Primrose League in 1953:

"There are, I believe, two prior necessities for any successful administration of our colonial Empire. First, we must ourselves believe not only in its essential value to the world but in its permanency. For us, [it]...must always be something built to last: and if we in this country are sound at the core, so it will be, so far as anyone can look ahead. And, secondly, and most important,..we must maintain the position of the Crown as the peak of the whole edifice. That indeed is quite vital to the survival both of the Commonwealth and the colonial Empire."<sup>56</sup>

Second, Sir John Barlow addressing the House of Commons in 1955 on the subject of British government expenditure on development and welfare in colonies:

"The proper thing would have been to lend the money rather than to give it as outright gifts... It would be only just that, after a period of years when the country concerned is greatly enriched by

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54 Nigel Nicolson, People and Parliament (Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1958), p. 117. Other discussions of the anti-Suez critics and the setbacks which most of them experienced in their political careers include Epstein, op. cit., pp. 97-122, and Leon D. Epstein, "British MPs and Their Local Parties: the Suez Cases," American Political Science Review Vol. LIV No. 2 (June 1960), pp. 374-90.

55 HCD vol. 610 cols. 232-7 (27 July 1959).

56 Lord Salisbury, Commonwealth and Empire (CPC for CCC, Commonwealth Series No. 1, 1953), p. 13.

that expenditure, it should recompense us."<sup>57</sup>

And third, Brigadier Ralph Rayner MP addressing the Empire Day supper of a local Conservative Association in 1954:

"As a nation we have always been guided by conscience, but in recent years, as far as our Empire is concerned, our conscience has become overdeveloped. Slippery speeches in the House of Commons have so misled public opinion that the Government has often been afraid to act with vigour, or even to support its representatives on the spot. Now that sort of foolishness will lose us much more of the Empire if we are not careful... It makes an administration weak where it should be firm, and kind where it should be harsh in the final interest of all."<sup>58</sup>

These statements may be permitted to speak for themselves. Suffice it that a "too fast school", in Lennox-Boyd's phrase, existed, and that it included many of the people with a particular interest in this field of policy. In so far as any section of the party had to be reconciled to the pace and methods of the Government's devolutionary policy it was this one. How then was conciliation achieved?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that Government and Opposition were so markedly at odds on aspects of colonial policy. One consequence of the breakdown of the bi-partisan approach, especially in the early fifties, was that potential differences between the Conservative leadership and traditionalist back-benchers remained undeveloped since all sections of the party accepted the need to unite against a hostile Opposition. Throughout the political conflicts of 1952 and 1953 the Conservative Party, unlike Labour, maintained in public a virtual unanimity of opinion on the issues at stake and total unanimity in the division lobbies. Back-benchers also combined in using procedural technique to shield the Colonial Secretary from the Opposition:

"Question Time lasts only an hour, so if it seems that the hecklers are planning to bombard the Colonial Secretary with awkward Questions that day, the best method of protecting him is to try and crowd them out. A sudden passion for information about television services and the school building programme seizes Tory members... Up spring the back-benchers with their supplementaries. And Mr. Lyttelton's turn never comes."<sup>59</sup>

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57 HCD vol. 536 col. 1605 (7 Feb. 1955).

58 Manchester Guardian, 25 May 1954. Tense changed.

59 Kenya Weekly News, 30 Jan. 1953.

Understandably, Conservative counter-attacks were aimed particularly at Labour's left-wing activists - "the Brockwayites". The Conservative Commonwealth Council's pamphlet Colonial Rule: Enemies and Obligations, published in 1955, summarised views often voiced in the House. Left-wing ideas were deplored for their intrinsic failings, for example the notion of a time-table for self-government - "in the very idea of a time-table there is a negative attitude towards colonial rule - as if it were a stopgap, to be got rid of at the earliest opportunity";<sup>60</sup> but they were deplored even more for their presumed repercussions overseas. The African resistance to federation was commonly attributed by Conservatives to the inflammatory effect of Labour speeches. More generally, the Council's pamphlet observed:

"Each wild speech or destructive piece of writing receives exceptional attention in the dependencies themselves, and provides ready material for our assailants abroad, as we appear to stand condemned out of 'progressive' British mouths. Our representatives at the United Nations often have to listen, on colonial matters, to quotations by Iron Curtain colleagues from a so-called 'distinguished British politician.'"<sup>60</sup>

But the existence of this ideological gulf between the "distinguished politician" and his colleagues, on one hand, and the Conservative Party, on the other, was not the central reason for the party's high degree of internal unity. Central reasons must be sought in the substance of policy. And here it is useful to recall the distinction suggested in Chapter V between the areas of colonial policy as perceived by Conservatives. Briefly: devolution was fully and unequivocally acceptable only with regard to those territories plainly destined for self-rule under indigeneous governments. With regard to two other major types of territory - the "kith and kin" colonies and the "fortress" colonies - it was normally thought of as unacceptable to most Conservatives, or acceptable only on condition that the Government did not depart dramatically from traditional goals and attitudes.

Lyttelton, in first addressing the back-bench Commonwealth Affairs Committee in 1951, is reported to have announced forcibly that "dominion

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<sup>60</sup> Colonial Rule: Enemies and Obligations, p. 22.

over palm and pine is gone," with a thump on the table to underline the last word.<sup>61</sup> None of his listeners demurred; probably, though, most of them took it for granted that the trees he had in mind grew chiefly in the first of the three types of colony.

(a) The "Indigenous" Colonies

In the fifties the Gold Coast provided the leading example of this type: "leading" in the quite literal sense of approaching more rapidly than any others towards independence, and "leading" too in the degree to which its progress was scrutinised and discussed in Britain. Within the Conservative Party it was accepted that the British Government was no longer in a position to "impose" any particular pace of advancement on the Gold Coast. Even most of those who regarded the current pace as excessively fast did recognise that the Government had little choice, and must needs make a virtue of necessity. Those few who argued in the Commonwealth Affairs Committee that the Government should attempt to force a slowdown, in the interest of "orderly" progress, had no answer to the counter-argument that such a policy would be much more likely to jeopardise stability than to preserve it. For in the Gold Coast of the fifties such a policy could be implemented only by force, and though the Government could use force to maintain basic law and order it could not do so actually to run an "advanced" colony. Lyttelton's own view, fully formed by the early fifties, bears repeating: "We do not have the force to govern without...consent... With modern communications, the consent has to be engaged by open and candid discussion of policy."<sup>62</sup> In practice then the party specialists in the Commonwealth Affairs Committee seldom went so far as to urge a steadying of the pace in the Gold Coast; rather they confined themselves to expressing the hope that the Gold Coast politicians would develop a wholly responsible, even "Westminster", approach to politics while there was yet time. Thus the rise of Kofi Busia's National Liberation

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61 Interview with Sayers. Interviews with Lord Chandos, Lord Boyd and Sayers provided a basic source for the argument of the next three paragraphs.

62 Chandos, Memoirs, p. 352.

Movement in the mid fifties drew from some Conservatives the thoroughly British response encapsulated in this comment in Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs:

"It is not by breakaways and territorial fragmentation that opponents of a government in power should seek to get their way, but by fighting the government as a nation-wide party and finally throwing it out. In short, what is wanted in the Gold Coast, and other colonies, is a proper understanding of the party system."<sup>63</sup>

There were, as it happened, some attempts by Nkrumahist politicians in the colony, and Labour politicians at home, to link the rise of the NLM with the divide-and-rule tactics of British business interests and Conservative politicians. Brockway, for one, implied in an article that "British capitalist circles associated with the mining, gold and other enterprises" were supporting the NLM,<sup>64</sup> with the aim of delaying self-rule and thereby protecting their investments against Nkrumah's depredations. Immediate representations by the interests concerned, however, educed from Brockway an "unqualified withdrawal" of his statement,<sup>65</sup> and for its part the Conservative Party had no difficulty in demonstrating its formal neutrality in the affair: the Commonwealth Affairs Committee had indeed heard Busia present his separatist case, but it had conscientiously "balanced" him against the Gold Coast's Commissioner in London. Undoubtedly there were anxieties about the future of British business interests in the territory, yet there is no reason to assume that at this stage any Conservative politicians would have therefore sought to halt the devolution process; nor any reason to question the sincerity of the Committee's official view that the differences in the Gold Coast "should be thrashed out in the Gold Coast by those whom they concern."<sup>65</sup>

For even the traditional Conservatives generally believed by now that whatever stakes the British possessed in the Gold Coast - be they economic, strategic or emotional - were simply not great enough to justify the effort and cost of seeking to retain political control. And once this

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63 CCA, Dec. 1954, p. 7.

64 New Statesman, 12 Nov. 1955.

65 CCA, Dec. 1955, p. 11.

was accepted it followed that the same point of view, mutatis mutandis, must eventually apply to all other territories which fell in the same broad category. In no such territory did Britain possess interests great enough to outweigh its interest in withdrawal. Hence the task of guiding indigenous colonies to self-rule at some (still unspecified) future date was not just a matter of "our mission", or of nurturing the imperial "family", although such sentiments were still frequently heard.<sup>66</sup> It was also a policy in Britain's evident national interest.

It is questionable, however, whether traditional Conservatives would have been so complaisant had they been able to foresee the chain-reaction effect of Ghanaian independence on nationalist movements in East and Central Africa.<sup>67</sup> For in these territories they judged the stakes to be great indeed.

(b) The "Kith and Kin" Colonies

What was at stake in the major territories of East and Central Africa was, essentially, the position of the resident Europeans. Though the long-term objective could be - and was - variously described as the maintenance of "British influence" or "sound and responsible leadership" in Africa, the basic need, and the very condition of such influence and leadership, was to preserve the accumulated powers and privileges of settler communities.

The so-called "settler lobby" in the Conservative Party was not to become visibly and urgently active until the early sixties, the period in which the interests it had at heart first came under serious threat from British ministers as well as from African nationalists.<sup>68</sup> In the fifties its members were no less firm in their views but were generally more subdued in their activities. They could be heard in parliamentary debates, for

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66 Both these traditional notions - "mission" and "family" - were invoked by Lord Salisbury in his Primrose League address: op.cit., pp. 15, 9. And Lennox-Boyd assured the 1955 party conference that "the British Colonial Empire is not breaking up, it is growing up." 1955 Conference Report, p. 32.

67 According to Horowitz, "some of the right-wing Tories later regarded their indifference to the independence of Ghana as a tactical mistake on their part." Attitudes of British Conservatives towards Decolonization, p. 37.

68 See below, Ch. XI.

example the series which preceded federation, offering their defences of the settler position; F.M. Bennett spoke typically when he argued, in March 1952, that press and Parliament seemed obsessed with the Africans and that it was time someone showed concern for protecting the Europeans.<sup>69</sup> Or they could be noted, in the same period, lending their support to the London Committee of the United Central Africa Association, a group founded with Sir Godfrey Huggins's blessing in order to promote the cause of federation; this committee's publicists, as one historian has pointed out, quite consciously "limited their appeal to persons of moderate or right-wing sympathies, making no attempt to adjust their phraseology for left-wing consumption."<sup>70</sup> Throughout the post-war period many could also be found involved in the work of the Joint East and Central Africa Board: for example Alport, Baldwin, Bennett, Braine, Dodds-Parker, Hopkinson, Ponsonby, Russell, Vaughan-Morgan and Wall, all firm defenders of settler interests, all served at various stages as executive members of the Board (and in some cases as its chairman).<sup>71</sup> And this is worth noting if only because the Board provided a classic instance of a professedly non-political organisation which was nevertheless deeply committed to a particular political attitude. It was an attitude plainly restated each year in the Board's official report:

"The object of the Board's policy is to maintain and strengthen British influence in Africa. This must involve...the maintenance and safeguarding of the interests of trading and settler communities which bear such grave responsibilities for the peaceful progress of Africa in the years to come...[The Board] is able, through its contacts with Parliament, the radio and the Press to play an increasing part in counteracting those corrosive and ill-informed views which have caused so much damage to British interests in Africa during the last decade... The dangerous forces to which the

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69 HCD vol. 497 col. 262 (4 March 1952). See also remarks by Sir Richard Grimston and F.W. Harris in the same debate, and by Archer Baldwin in the debate of 29 April 1952, HCD vol. 499.

70 L.H. Gann, A History of Northern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1953 (Chatto and Windus, 1964), p. 418. For an example of the Committee's approach see the passage quoted by the Labour MP Sir Leslie Plummer, HCD vol. 504 col. 835 (27 July 1952). The Committee's Vice-Presidents included two senior Conservative party figures in L.S. Amery and Lord Altrincham (a former minister and, before that, Governor of Kenya).

71 See Appendix I. But concerning one maverick in this group see note 73 below.

British position in Africa is exposed must be defeated, so that the peaceful progress and welfare of all races in the African territories can continue uninterrupted and Britain's great mission therein be fulfilled."<sup>72</sup>

It would be difficult to find a clearer statement of the traditional Conservative attitude.

The reason why the settler lobby remained subdued in the fifties was simply that it had no quarrel with current policy. Concerning Kenya, a number of interested Conservatives had in 1952 put on record their conviction that the Government must "maintain the guarantees with regard to European settlement in the Highlands which have been given by successive Governments in the past."<sup>73</sup> And all through the fifties, the era first of Mau Mau and later of astute political manoeuvring by Africans for greater representation in the Legislative Council, the Government did indeed maintain these guarantees. Concerning Central Africa, the Government was thoroughly committed - indeed, as Sir Roy Welensky was often to point out, it was pledged - to support the federal "experiment in partnership." But in this

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72 JECAB, e.g. Annual Report for 1956, pp. 6-7. It is fair to note that the polemical last sentence was deleted from the 1957 report (published early in 1958) and did not reappear; also that the Board maintained its non-party status by keeping places for two Labour MPs on its executive. But as in the forties (see above, Ch. V, note 73) the Labour MPs concerned were hardly representative of the majority of their party. Charles Hobson and William Coldrick, who served on the Board from the early fifties until both lost their parliamentary seats in 1959, were both staunch federationists.

73 Amendment to EDM No. 97 of 1951-2 session, 7 July 1952. The amendment was sponsored by Alport, Dodds-Parker and Baldwin; others of the 19 signatories included P.M. Bennett, F.W. Harris, Sir Edward Keeling, Angus Maude, Brigadier Rayner and John Vaughan-Morgan. It may be noted that Alport, for one, veered away from this traditional view as his career advanced. In a speech at the end of 1954 he disowned the view expressed in his own EDM by announcing that "the idea of a European reserve such as is represented by the White Highlands is a political and economic anachronism today. Tomorrow, it may very well be a positive liability to the European community." HCD vol. 535 col. 2788 (22 Dec. 1954). In 1961, after four years as a minister in the Commonwealth Relations Office, he went to Rhodesia as British High Commissioner and played an active part in arranging the Federation's demise. Although he had always been, in his own words, "a strong supporter of federation," he was "not convinced of the soundness of the policies which the Federal Government had followed," and accordingly hoped for a "middle" solution rather than a "black" or "white" one. Lord Alport, The Sudden Assignment (Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), pp. 24-5.

instance it was "partnership" as the European community understood the term. In 1957 the Commonwealth Secretary, Lord Home, told the Joint East and Central Africa Board's Council that "every effort should be made to steer [the African] away from [nationalism's] extreme forms towards partnership. Complete success would only follow when Europeans and Africans felt themselves equally Rhodesians."<sup>74</sup> That this apparently "neutral" view in fact corresponded with the pro-settler attitude can be demonstrated simply by substituting "the European" for "the African" and, say, "Zambians" for "Rhodesians" - thereby producing a statement completely different in political implication but characteristic enough of the kind of views then being expressed, in opposition to settler arguments, by African nationalist leaders such as Nkumbula and Kaunda. The point is that Lord Home's was typical of the statements issuing from ministerial level in the fifties, and reflected a view to which no traditional Conservative could possibly take exception.

But at this point an important question arises. Granted that the settler lobby rested content because government policy did not appear to deviate from traditional principles, it needs to be asked: to what extent did policy take the form it did because of the existence of the settler lobby?

A good deal has been written about the ways in which the British Government's freedom of manoeuvre in East and Central Africa was circumscribed by the inherent contradictions of British policy, by the pledges to the European communities on one hand and, on the other, by the Colonial Office principle of majority rule prior to self-government.<sup>75</sup> By contrast there has been very little speculation about the extent to which pressures from the Conservative back benches might further have limited the Government's freedom. In fact, both Lyttelton and Lennox-Boyd have said that governmental planning for East and Central Africa was always inhibited by the prospect that any change which might appear to weaken the settlers' position would precipitate fierce reactions from the back benches. Even in negotiating his relatively undramatic modifications in the Kenyan Constitution in 1954, Lyttelton had to

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74 JECAB, Annual Report for 1957, p. 12.

75 For a recent discussion see W.P. Kirkman, Unscrambling an Empire: A Critique of British Colonial Policy 1956-1966 (Chatto and Windus, 1966), esp.

contend with strong pressures from Conservatives with settler connections, and, indeed, negotiate with them as well as with the Kenyan politicians. To maintain intra-party harmony, he had to accept their right to make demands of the type "If you must have another African in the Executive Council, don't make him Minister for x." And Lennox-Boyd, who had to contend with similar pressures in the later fifties, frankly (and charmingly) confessed when interviewed that he was still unable to understand why back-bench MPs who had been so uncompromising in his day gave in "so meekly" to Macleod in 1960-1.<sup>76</sup>

In short, neither Lyttelton nor Lennox-Boyd really confronted the crucial problem in the plural societies of East and Central Africa. It was left to their successors to choose between the conflicting priorities of settler control and majority rule, and to make a virtue of necessity in these territories as had already been done in the Gold Coast and elsewhere. But so long as the problem was not confronted, the effect was to preserve a situation in which the European communities appeared to have the upper hand in local politics. And the very fact that the Colonial Secretaries of the fifties chose not to attempt any basic change in the imbalance of power may be attributed in some ~~small~~ degree to the inhibiting presence of the party's settler lobby.

(c) The "Fortress" Colonies

We turn finally to the third type of territory, of which the main examples, reading across the map, were Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Aden and Singapore. The stake in these territories, as the common designation "fortress" suggests, was basically a strategic one. And the essence of the traditional Conservative view was that such territories could not hope for independence, less because of their smallness - though that was relevant - than because of their strategic importance. It was for strategic reasons, Henry Hopkinson told the House in July 1954, that Cyprus could never expect self-government. For traditional Conservatives these strategic reasons were relevant not just to Britain but to the whole Commonwealth. Their view

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76 Interviews with Lord Chandos and Lord Boyd.

was well expressed in the Conservative Commonwealth Council's main publication on the subject, The Smaller Territories. Written by Sir Hilary Blood, a former colonial governor, this pamphlet appeared early in 1958 when the Cyprus crisis was at its height. "In the case of the smaller territories," it was observed, "there can, a priori, be no question of journey towards sovereign government." The principal reason, with regard to the fortress colonies at least, was that

"if the Commonwealth is to exist, it must exist by trade... [the fortress-colonies] are places which are serving the purposes of the Commonwealth as a whole... It seems obvious that some closer relationship between the fortress-colonies and the Commonwealth is urgently called for. The idea of the functional rather than of the constitutional development of such places is one which might be pursued, on the analogy of the functional operations of local-government bodies in this country."<sup>77</sup>

In other words, because the presence of British forces in these territories was vital for the defence of the Commonwealth's "purposes", especially its trade arrangements, Britain could not afford the risk of granting independence lest the position of the military bases be jeopardised. It was a view which still fell into place in the wider dream of imperial integration. More widely still, the fortress colonies could be seen as vital to the defence of the whole "free world". Serving the Commonwealth's purposes blended with the internationalist aim of containing Communism - a point we will take up later.

In its details this view was similar to the traditional view on Suez, with the relevant difference that the fortress colonies, unlike Suez, were legally British territories. Possession in this case was ten-tenths of the law. It followed that there need be no fears of any forced withdrawal as there had been from Suez in 1954. Hopkinson's celebrated closing of the door to Cypriot independence, it has often been suggested, was meant primarily to reassure traditional Conservatives on this very point. For he made his statement shortly after the signing of the evacuation treaty with Egypt and on the day before this treaty was to be debated in the House; and as the Observer's political correspondent pointed out some years later,

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77 Sir Hilary Blood, The Smaller Territories: Problems and Future (CFC for CCC, Commonwealth Series No. 4, February 1958), pp. 15-6.

"the suspicion will always remain that it was intended to appease the Suez rebels - that the 'never' was not the result of a calm appraisal of the situation in Cyprus, but was deliberately put in for party reasons."<sup>78</sup>

In view of this it is interesting to note the development of the Government's Cyprus policy, and the traditional-Conservative reaction to it, in the later fifties.

As the decade passed the British position in Cyprus became increasingly difficult. The civil and military presence of a colonial power was resented as an obstacle to their political goals by both the majority Greek and minority Turkish communities. These goals, respectively union with Greece and partition of the island, were in themselves irreconcilable, and the pursuit of them served only to intensify the already powerful hostility between Greeks and Turks. As from 1955 the island's various tensions increasingly found expression in terrorism, both between the communities and against the British, with the Greek Cypriot organisation EOKA playing the major part. "In relation to the furious factions of Greek and Turk," as one account had it, Britain "drifted into a state of well-meaning but ignominious helplessness."<sup>79</sup> By mid-1957 the Macmillan Government had taken the important decision to scale down, though not to abandon, the military bases; the main base for the area, having earlier been moved from Suez to Cyprus, would now be relocated in the much more stable territory of post-Mau Mau Kenya. This was intended not only as a strategic decision but also as a necessary step on the path to a Cyprus settlement. In June 1958, after much diplomatic effort, the Government announced its proposals. Drafted chiefly by the Governor of Cyprus, Sir Hugh Foot, the British plan provided for a seven-year tridominium under which Britain, Greece and Turkey would share responsibility for major governmental functions while the two Cypriot communities carried out lesser functions through communal councils. The principal object was simply to win a respite in which a more enduring solution might be devised. But the proposal was shortlived since the Greek Government refused to accept it. Instead the Greek and Turkish Governments, acting over the heads of their Cypriot clients, negotiated a draft agreement

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<sup>78</sup> Observer, 29 June 1958.

<sup>79</sup> World Events: The Annual Register of the Year 1959 (Penguin, 1960), p. 7.

in February 1959. The British Government willingly - and the Cypriot political leaders less willingly - endorsed the agreement, and after further negotiations independence under a bi-national government was achieved in August 1960. Britain retained sovereignty over two relatively minor military bases.<sup>80</sup>

The significance of all this for Conservative domestic politics was that the Government's successive decisions could be represented as a departure from the traditional position in a colony where Britain's stake was thought to be extremely high. Never before had the Government actually contemplated weakening its position in a fortress colony. In effect, one of the two innermost keeps of traditional policy was suffering its first breach. The chief condition of intra-party harmony, that the leadership cleave to certain attitudes with regard to certain types of territory, was in this instance no longer being met. What was the extent and the import of the resultant disharmony?

In simple numerical terms the extent is difficult to gauge. Though the outspoken critics of the leadership's Cyprus policy were clearly on view there was never any clear indication - such as a relevant House of Commons motion - of their depth of support in the party. But it may be noted that the outspoken critics were much the same set of men who had led the attacks on the Government's Suez withdrawals; and it may be presumed, therefore, that the Government now had to deal with the hard core, at least, of the old Suez group.

Press and Opposition had been speculating about Conservative disunity over Cyprus for some time before Lord Salisbury's resignation, but it was this event which brought the tough-line point of view clearly into the open. Salisbury resigned in March 1957 because Cabinet had decided to release the Greek Cypriot leader Archbishop Makarios from detention, even though the Archbishop had made only the most conditional denunciation of EOKA terrorism. In his published letter of resignation Salisbury issued a denunciation of his former colleagues rather stronger than Makarios's of his. By releasing the Archbishop, Salisbury argued, the Cabinet had undermined Britain's Middle

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<sup>80</sup> The details of the settlement are set out in Cmd. 1093, Cyprus (HMSO, July 1960).

East position and gone a long way towards surrendering the initiative in the Cyprus dispute.<sup>81</sup> Two months later the Government's capitulation to Nasser over the use of the Suez canal impelled the "Suez rebels" to resign the party whip. In doing so they freed themselves from any remaining restraints on their role as public critics of the Government's overseas policies, and because the Cyprus crisis involved issues similar to the issues of Suez it was this matter on which they spoke and wrote most frequently in 1957-8.

At times they were concerned simply to stiffen the Government's spine. In February 1958, for example, alarmed at current reports that Macmillan was considering a plan to allow independence after ten years' internal self-government, the "rebels" issued a press statement urging the Government to affirm its "determination to retain British sovereignty over Cyprus and to restore law and order," and to "rule out as completely unacceptable in present circumstances...the fixing of a date for the grant of self-determination."<sup>82</sup> At other times their aim was to point out the customary sinister influence behind British policy: the Government was being pushed to abandon the island, Patrick Maitland told a United Nations Association meeting, by "American pressure."<sup>83</sup> Normally, though, their concern was to elucidate the reasons for staying. One reason, as Maitland expressed it in a different medium, was to reinsure Greeks and Turks against each other, "which in fact means against some British abdication of sovereignty"; unable to resist relating the situation to his Expanding Commonwealth idea, he went on to argue that if Britain were to stay, "the Cyprus problem could be made the point for an expansion of Commonwealth influence rather than a contraction of British power."<sup>84</sup> But the broadest

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81 "I gravely fear," Salisbury wrote to Macmillan, "we shall have a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads...The initiative will, I believe, pass more and more to him: and he will be able to edge us along from point to point." The Times, 30 March 1957.

82 Daily Telegraph, 6 Feb. 1958.

83 Scotsman, 13 July 1957.

84 Letter to the Sunday Times, 9 Feb. 1958.

argument was couched usually in Cold-War terms. Salisbury himself presented it thus: if Britain dealt with Makarios, Turkey would become bitter and tend towards neutralism. But this would be disastrous since Turkey was the main link between NATO and the Baghdad Pact: "It would remove the main barrier to Soviet infiltration throughout the Middle East."<sup>85</sup> Patrick Wall, an ardent member of the Suez group and supporter of the Suez rebels, more than once argued similarly with the addition of a remarkable interpretation of the Turkish viewpoint on Cyprus. Turkey, he wrote in mid-1958, did not wish Cyprus to unite with Greece for fear that "an island only forty miles from her coast could become dominated by Communism."<sup>86</sup> Interestingly, the group was quite well-disposed towards the Government's tridominium plan of June 1958 - so much so that John Biggs-Davison, for one, later argued that if the other parties to the plan proved recalcitrant Britain's most honourable course would be to "enforce" it "without delay".<sup>87</sup> But the group's approval depended entirely on assurances from the Government that Britain would retain control of its bases even after the seven-year tridominium period, and would also continue to "share" sovereignty over the island for some time. If sharing sovereignty for a finite period was clearly different from the group's proposal that Britain should remain indefinitely as colonial authority, at least it was preferable to an early and complete abandonment of sovereignty.<sup>88</sup>

This, roughly, was the extent of the disharmony. But its import is quite another question. In fact the Cyprus rebels' influence was negligible. Certainly there might have been indirect and unintended influence elsewhere; the Observer commented in May 1958 on the danger that "the Tory Cyprus rebels will needlessly provoke and further embitter Archbishop Makarios whose increasing moderation in recent months has

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85 Letter to The Times, 7 Jan. 1958.

86 Letters to The Times, 3 Dec. 1957 and 28 June 1958.

87 Letter to the Daily Telegraph, 26 Sept. 1958.

88 See Wall's letter of 28 June 1958 and also press reports of the meeting of the 1922 committee at which ministers first revealed details of the plan to back-benchers. By comparison with "Hinchingbrooke's group," the rest of the party was variously quoted as allowing the plan "an encouraging preliminary canter" (Daily Telegraph, 20 June 1958) and giving it "an enthusiastic reception" (Manchester Guardian, 20 June 1958).

become one of the more hopeful factors in the situation."<sup>89</sup> But within the party and in relation to leadership policy, they made less impact than even Government leaders had expected.<sup>90</sup> In August 1957 the rebels could threaten, in a letter to Lennox-Boyd, that if the Government really intended to scale down the bases a "big number" of MPs would refuse to support it in future.<sup>91</sup> By February 1958 they were reduced to the unimpressive bargaining position of offering to rejoin the party, as a "dramatic gesture of solidarity," on condition that the Government undertake to stand firm on Cyprus.<sup>92</sup> By June 1958 all the rebels still in Parliament had resumed the whip anyway, motivated not by any leadership concessions on policy but by considerations of political survival. It was the group, in fact, which made the concession in its acceptance of the tridominium plan. And when the Government eventually abandoned all previous standpoints and accepted the Graeco-Turkish plan of February 1959, with its clear implication of full independence for Cyprus within a year or so, the old Suez group appeared to have no defiance left. Its members did not even abstain from the relevant parliamentary vote.<sup>93</sup>

This further collapse of the residual-imperialist position provided a good indication of the distance the party had travelled in the space of a few years. In 1951 Churchill had taken office with no intention of presiding over the dissolution of the British Empire. Perhaps dominion over palm and pine was gone, but this did not imply any signal for rapid British retreat; in all except a very few favoured territories self-government was still thought to lie decades in the future. By 1959 several of the major indigenous territories had been brought much closer to full independence

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89 Observer, 25 May 1958.

90 Interview with Lord Boyd.

91 Daily Herald, 3 Aug. 1957.

92 Suez rebel Lawrence Turner reported in The Times, 15 Feb. 1958.

93 HCD vol. 602 cols. 757-60 (19 March 1959). Mildly critical remarks were offered by Viscount Lambton (cols. 681-5) and Maitland (cols. 714-22); both of these, however, went into the division lobby (along with Biggs-Davison, Fell and Wall) to approve the Government's motion.

than the politicians of 1951 could possibly have anticipated. Further, the Cyprus affair had shown that the Government could, after all, depart with impunity from the ways of party tradition in at least one of the two kinds of colonial situation involving high British stakes. For when it came to the point the bulk of the party proved willing to support its leaders in this departure, as it had earlier supported - for example - the departure from imperial preference. The conditions of intra-party harmony on colonial policy were thus shown to have become considerably less stringent by the end of the decade than might have been expected at its beginning.

In effect these developments meant that the party's traditional sense of involvement with the colonial Empire had become steadily narrower until it was by now focused overwhelmingly on the fortunes of European settlerdom. This, by far the most important redoubt of traditional policy from the Conservative point of view, was also the only one which remained unassaulted by the party's own leaders. Few of the politicians of 1959, in their turn, could have anticipated that the assault on this last redoubt would come as soon as it did.

## CHAPTER IX

## LABOUR, 1954-9: ORGANISATION AND POLICY FORMATION

"Political parties resolve colonial problems in different terms... The Labour approach is not a matter of prejudice and inverted racial feeling but of its own philosophy."

Arthur Creech Jones in a letter to The Times, 17 April 1957.

After the conflicts of the early fifties came a time of regrouping and re-thinking among Labour's colonial activists. The appointment of a new Commonwealth Officer in 1954 initiated a period of growth and change in the party's central organs. In the same year the establishment of the Movement for Colonial Freedom had a distinct energising effect in the party at large, while in some respects deepening the fissures between the party's factions. And by the end of the year, conscious of the need for a re-definition of attitudes, the party leadership had embarked upon an exhaustive revision of Labour colonial policy that was to spread over three full years. In this chapter we will review these developments.

### 1. Central Organisation

In Transport House the key figure as from 1954 was John Hatch. Farmer had resigned from the post of Commonwealth Officer in mid-year. Marjorie Nicholson was considered for the succession but decided that she did not wish to be tied formally to Transport House. With the influential support of Rita Hinden, Hatch applied and was appointed.<sup>1</sup> A former university lecturer, he had lived for two years in South Africa and had served for the last few months as assistant director of the Africa Bureau; his assets included a sharp mind and undoubted organisational flair.

During the next few years the activities and influence of the Commonwealth section steadily expanded. In various ways Hatch was able to tighten the links with the TUC's Commonwealth sub-committee and the Fabian Colonial Bureau, and to develop personal acquaintanceships at the

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with John Hatch.

Colonial Office. He organised regular fringe meetings at party conferences. As a research worker he was deeply involved in the party's effort to reframe its general policies for colonies. Visits by colonial political leaders to the party head office became more frequent, and Hatch in return made several overseas journeys. Some of these matters will be taken up later; here we need only note two organisational coups whose success owed a good deal to Hatch.

The first was the Commonwealth Socialist Conference of May-June 1957, held at Beatrice Webb House in Dorking. This conference differed significantly from earlier gatherings of Commonwealth Labour parties in that invitations were extended to parties in the newest dominions and in territories still dependent. In the event there were some forty delegates from twenty organisations in seventeen countries. The British Labour leadership was powerfully represented, with Gaitskell, Griffiths, Bevan, Callaghan and Gordon Walker all taking part; among the colonial delegates were several of the increasingly prominent nationalist leaders such as Kaunda and Nkumbula of Northern Rhodesia and Kambona of Tanganyika. The conference <sup>was</sup> ~~appears to have been~~ a success, free of tensions and marked by good argumentative exchanges. At its conclusion delegates were able to unite behind a number of more or less radical resolutions, declaring for example that "grave risks would be involved if the Government delayed the liberation of subject peoples" and condemning anew, after some years of relative Labour quiet on the issue, the creation of the Federation.<sup>2</sup> Its more enduring legacies included the grounding of certain delegates in the principles of party organisation on the Labour model, the establishment of a "Commonwealth Association" of Labour and allied organisations, and, rather later, the publication of Commonwealth, a quarterly journal circulating chiefly within the Association.

The second organisational success was the creation of a separate Commonwealth Department at Transport House alongside the existing Home and International Departments. Hatch had consistently sought this goal in

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2 Manchester Guardian, 7 June 1957; NEC report in 1957 Conference Report, p. 28.

spite of resistance from the International Department and from Gaitskell himself, who was for some time unconvinced that there was any administrative need for it. Under the combined pressure of Hatch, the Fabians and a succession of front-bench colonial affairs spokesmen, however, the party leadership at length succumbed. Probably decisive was the argument that the party seemed to be within a year or two of gaining office and that more preparatory work on Commonwealth and colonial affairs was necessary if only because, as Venture put it, "the British government has much more freedom for executive action in Commonwealth affairs than in international affairs."<sup>3</sup> The new department began life in April 1958; in practice the change meant that Hatch's staff was expanded from two to four and that he no longer had to work through the International Department in negotiating administrative and financial matters with the leadership.<sup>4</sup>

Actually there was never any real doubt about the leadership's concern. Attlee, for his part, had shown a career-long interest in the Asian Empire-Commonwealth and had played a leading part in the area's political transformation; quite late in his tenure of the party leadership he had demonstrated this interest yet again by inaugurating and becoming president of the British Asian Socialist Fellowship, an organisation linking the party with a number of Asian parties and groups.<sup>5</sup> The change of leader in November 1955 seemed at first unpropitious from the point of view of the colonial activists, since by contrast with his predecessor Gaitskell had no personal experience of, nor special interest in, Commonwealth and colonial matters. But his appointments to the post of shadow Colonial Secretary ensured that he could not be accused of downgrading its importance. Within three months of gaining the leadership, and immediately following

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3 Venture, June 1958, p. 9.

4 Hatch left the department in 1961. In 1963 it was re-absorbed into the International Department. In Hatch's opinion this reversion made administrative sense, for the termination of colonial rule had put an end to its main work and its main usefulness. (Interview).

5 BASF was inaugurated in July 1953. In March 1956 it broadened its membership and was re-named British-Asian and Overseas Socialist Fellowship; eventually the name was pruned down to British Overseas Socialist Fellowship. Attlee's presidency was honorific. Accounts of the fellowship's activities will be found in the annual NEC reports published in the party's Conference Reports.

Griffiths's elevation to the position of deputy leader, Gaitskell appointed his rival Aneurin Bevan to the post. This was a politically astute move in that it served to muzzle Bevan on domestic affairs,<sup>6</sup> but it was more than this: it was also a clear guarantee that colonial affairs would be treated as a high-priority subject at the party's top level. A year later the guarantee was renewed when Bevan was succeeded by James Callaghan, one of the ablest of the party's rising younger men. Meanwhile Gaitskell himself, thanks in large measure to the influence of his brother Arthur, was becoming perceptibly more involved in "frican affairs; this development reached its culmination in the stormy session of 1959, when for the first time Gaitskell assumed full leadership of Labour's parliamentary attack on the Central African issue.<sup>7</sup>

We may note too the growing emphasis on colonial affairs at the party's annual conferences. By contrast with the practices of former years, those responsible for organisation were consistently generous in the allocation of time to the subject. It is interesting to observe the remarkable change of editorial tone in Venture, hitherto the party's sternest critic in this matter:

"Over the past ten years or so we have used many words and much space in criticising those who organise the party's annual conference for their neglect of the colonial peoples... This year we intend to make no such criticism. During the past four conferences more time has been devoted to colonial policy than in any series of party conferences in living history - probably since the Labour Party was born."<sup>8</sup>

Admittedly this new trend owed much more to initiatives from the centre than to demands from the mass movement. Save in 1956, when 48 local parties and

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6. See the article by Peter Lyne in Christian Science Monitor, 15 Feb. 1956.

7. See especially HCD vol. 609 cols. 1283-1301 (22 July 1959). Arthur Gaitskell steered clear of British party politics but was deeply concerned with problems of colonial economic development; he had founded and directed the Gezira scheme in the Sudan and was a member of the Colonial Development Corporation. The view that he came to be "Hugh's conscience on Africa" was expressed by several of the people interviewed by the writer. A reference to Arthur "prodding" Hugh into action over Central Africa will be found in Manchester Guardian, 31 May 1957.

8. Venture, Nov. 1957, p. 1.

organisations submitted resolutions, there was little tangible evidence that the grass-roots party felt the sense of involvement which had permeated the leadership.<sup>9</sup> By the 1958 conference, though, Venture at least was convinced that even this situation was changing:

"The significance of the colonial flavour in this year's conference is that it was spontaneous... Resolutions on colonial matters were as few as previously... [but] this time it was the colonial issues themselves, particularly the latest dangerous situation in Cyprus, the very grave menace of racial prejudice, and the challenge of Central Africa, which thrust themselves on conference's time... Not so long ago it was impossible to find time at conference for such a matter as the Federation... Today there would have been protests if the party's attitudes and policies towards outstanding colonial issues had not been given time."<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Peripheral Groups

Outside Parliament the party's main peripheral groups, the Fabian Colonial Bureau and the Movement for Colonial Freedom, treated each other distantly while performing many similar functions. Each sought, inter alia, to provide facilities and introductions for colonials in London; to provide briefs and questions for MPs, to communicate with ministers and officials, to influence the climate of political opinion; and, arising from these activities, to affect government decisions. But the two bodies were very different in organisation, in membership, in techniques, and in their relations with the party.

By the mid-fifties the Fabian Colonial Bureau was some five years past its high tide of influence with the Colonial Office and there were signs that it was no longer the power it had been among Labour MPs. In 1955 the Bureau's private discussion meetings for MPs were discontinued because of poor attendances. In 1957 Members' attendances at Bureau functions were so sparse that the Bureau, in order to make its presence apparent, was moved to seek joint meetings with the colonial affairs subject group immediately after the group's weekly sessions.<sup>11</sup> The situation was not

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9 On the difficulty of arousing interest at constituency level see the exchange of letters between Eric Moonman and John Hatch in Venture, Feb. 1958, p. 9. and March 1958, p. 8.

10 Ibid., Nov. 1958, p. 1.

11 FCB Minutes of Meeting of Working Committee (henceforth MMWC), 30 Oct. 1957.

improved by an acknowledged deterioration, as from early 1955, in the service of providing MPs with Questions, even though this decline was not due to any slackening of effort by the Bureau but simply reflected "the inadequacy of the Bureau's typing and secretarial potential."<sup>12</sup>

During these years the Bureau's links with the parliamentarians depended heavily upon the old faithfuls, the handful of MPs who regularly attended meetings of the Bureau's committees: Creech Jones, Reginald Sorensen, James Johnson, Eirene White and two or three others.

Organisationally too there were signs of malaise. In the early fifties the Bureau's Advisory Committee had a paper membership of 32. Among these, however, some were consistently too busy elsewhere to attend meetings, some had lived past their most useful years and a few were simply less active than they might have been. Meetings became less frequent, with a consequent increase in the burden of work carried by the secretary and the office staff. In 1954 a remedy was sought in the creation of a much smaller Working Committee. Its members included Creech Jones as chairman; Lord Faringdon, chairman of the Advisory Committee; Carol Johnson, secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party; W.T. Rodgers, general secretary of the Fabian Society; Hatch, the Labour Commonwealth Officer; the MPs Sorensen, Johnson and Mrs. White; Rita Hinden; and as secretary, first Marjorie Nicholson and subsequently Lady Hilda Selwyn-Clarke.<sup>13</sup> This innovation was clearly intended to institutionalise the Bureau's effective hard-core group. The Working Committee would meet more often than the Advisory Committee and take the important decisions; the Advisory Committee would exist chiefly to provide assistance in research projects and would be very little involved in

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12 FCB Minutes of Meeting of Advisory Committee (henceforth MMAC), 13 March 1957. Compare the guarded comment in the Bureau's annual report for 1956: "It has not been possible to maintain parliamentary work on the scale the Bureau would wish." Venture, May 1957, p. 8.

13 Miss Nicholson transferred in March 1955 to a post in the colonial section of the TUC. Lady Selwyn-Clarke, the third woman in succession to serve as secretary of the Bureau, was the wife of a retired Governor and had worked in the Bureau since 1949. Rita Hinden, when interviewed, recalled a remark by a Conservative MP to the effect that "every time the ladies of the Fabian Colonial Bureau drop their knitting another colony gets a new constitution."

policy matters.

But even this arrangement was not very successful. The new Working Committee was as irregular and infrequent in its meetings as the Advisory Committee had been, while the latter virtually ceased to perform any corporate functions. By contrast with the situation in the forties, when monthly meetings had been the rule, the Working Committee met three times in 1955 and the Advisory Committee once. Late in 1956 the Fabian Society executive conveyed through Rodgers its concern at the situation.<sup>14</sup> But not until 1959 was another procedural overhaul attempted. In a series of discussions the hard-core members finally decided to pursue the 1954 reform to its rational conclusion. The Advisory Committee would be downgraded to the status of Advisory Panel, whose members could expect to be consulted individually but could not expect to share in any decision-making; and the Working Committee would draft several new younger members and would aim to meet at two-monthly intervals in order to coincide with Fabian Society executive meetings. One or two protests were heard from the ranks of the Advisory Committee, but the change was effected and in June 1959 the new Working Committee, about twenty strong, began meeting with Creech Jones in the chair and Faringdon and Sorensen as vice-chairman.<sup>15</sup> This arrangement did prove successful - mainly, perhaps, because of the infusion of young blood.

It would be wrong, however, to deduce from this account that the Bureau's output of work was smaller and qualitatively poorer in the later fifties than in earlier years. Paradoxically, fewer meetings and fewer contacts with parliamentarians indicated that a situation which the Bureau had always sought had come to pass: a more widespread concern with colonial affairs. If only because there were many more organisations at work in the field and more colonial meetings under different sponsorship for MPs to attend, there was naturally a reduced dependence upon the Bureau. The one respect in which the Bureau remained unapproached in energy and standards by any other

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14 FCB-MMWC, 21 Nov. 1956.

15 Ibid., 19 March, 9 April and 8 June 1959; FCB annual report for 1959, Venture, Feb. 1960, p. 9.

body was as a research unit. The Bureau's annual reports provided recurrent evidence of the quantity of documentation produced and the range of subject-matter: franchises in East Africa, bulk purchase schemes, the Federation's Constitutional Amendment Act of 1957 ("in line with the Bureau's traditional role of watchdog for African interests"<sup>16</sup>). And it was in this capacity that the Bureau remained indispensable to the Labour Party.

Formal liaison with the party organisation was maintained chiefly through Hatch, who after 1954 was simultaneously the party's Commonwealth Officer, secretary of the NEC Commonwealth sub-committee, a member of the Bureau's Working Committee and a member of the editorial board of Venture. Though the relationship was not always easy at the personal level, there being occasional friction between Hatch and some committee members over, for example, Venture's editorial policy,<sup>17</sup> the liaison was generally effective. The Bureau contributed its expertise, chiefly in the form of papers on current issues for circulation among the party's policy committees, the NEC sub-committee and the colonial subject group.<sup>18</sup> It also contributed Venture, which continued to sell moderately well in the Labour movement in spite of occasional editorial fears that its level might be "too difficult for the average rank and file member."<sup>19</sup> From the Labour Party side came official blessing and fairly regular financial contributions, beginning with a gift of £300 in 1952, for the Bureau's work. In 1956 the TUC decided to supplement the Labour Party grant with its own annual grant of £100;<sup>20</sup> there may have been a link between this decision and Marjorie Nicholson's move from Bureau to Congress in the previous year.

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16 Annual report for 1957 in Venture, May 1958, p. 9.

17 See for example Hatch's letter and the editor's reply concerning Venture's line on current politics in Northern Rhodesia. ibid., March 1959, pp. 8-9.

18 FCB-MMWC, 15 Feb. 1956, contains a report of a relevant discussion on "dovetailing the work of the Bureau in some aspects with that of the Commonwealth Office."

19 Selwyn-Clarke to Hatch, 24 Feb. 1956 (FCB papers).

20 FCB-MMWC, 1 May 1956.

In sum: the Bureau, if past the peak of influence it had enjoyed in the days of Labour government and its own virtual monopoly of its chosen field, remained as useful as ever in its capacity as research organisation. Consequently, while commanding no great membership in the party rank and file, it retained close relations with the party's executive leadership. And while constitutionally independent of the party it enjoyed the privileges of formal affiliation, not least the privilege of receiving financial assistance.

In all these respects the position of the Movement for Colonial Freedom was completely different. Created in 1954, the Movement had no tradition of influence behind it; it functioned less as a research body than as a crusade; it commanded considerable support in the rank and file and rather less at party leadership level; and it was not an affiliated body. Such a list of attributes might seem to indicate a neat demarcation between Bureau and Movement, with the two bodies organised in essentially complementary ways. But there was still scope for clashes between them, as certain incidents in the later fifties made clear. These we will presently consider; first it is necessary to discuss the Movement's distinctive characteristics in the early years of its existence.

The MCP was created at an opportune time. Coming near the end of the Lyttelton era, its drive "to rally public opinion in favour of a change in colonial policy" was well designed to mobilise many individuals and organisations previously uninvolved in colonial issues. The Movement's membership grew rapidly, and its publicists were frequently to point out its size and the scale of its activities. In London there was, in Fenner Brockway's disarming words, "a splendid organisation which could bring twenty thousand people to Trafalgar Square on any urgent issue."<sup>21</sup> There were eight large standing committees, each with an MP as chairman, which met regularly to consider the affairs of groups of territories, and, distributed about the country, some fifteen area councils.<sup>22</sup> Altogether

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21 Fenner Brockway, Outside the Right, p. 168.

22 Ibid., The "area councils" worked to some extent in competition with the Africa Bureau's regional "Africa Councils". It was alleged by one of the Movement's critics that some area councils maintained themselves by showing "a parasitic interest" in, and seeking to gain control of, the Africa Councils. CCC, Colonial Rule: Enemies and Obligations. p. 25.

the Movement in the later fifties claimed the support of over a hundred Labour MPs and half a dozen peers, of numerous clergymen, academics and performing and creative artists among a total of about six hundred individual members. The affiliation of fifteen national trade unions and about 820 local trade union, cooperative and Labour Party organisations added an affiliated membership of some three million people.<sup>23</sup>

The great bulk of this latter membership, of course, existed only on paper. Many trade unions and other organisations were classified as affiliated bodies on the say-so of executive leaders who did not attempt to demonstrate that their followers were active participants in the Movement. As for the hundred MPs, the precise degree of their involvement was not always clear: in some publications they were described as "active members", in others - and on the Movement's stationery - as "sponsors".<sup>24</sup> But it is evident from the record that the majority was certainly active enough to ask parliamentary Questions on the Movement's behalf. In its first two years the Movement's MPs raised more than 1,900 colonial matters either by Questions or by approaches to ministers,<sup>25</sup> far outstripping in quantity the earlier efforts of the Fabians. Indubitably active were such well-known Members as Wedgwood Benn, John Stonehouse and Anthony Greenwood, all of whom served in executive capacities at various stages.

The Movement's general philosophy embodied attitudes inherited more or less unchanged from earlier generations of Labour radicals. The internationalist ideal, the moral detestation of "exploitation" in any form, the view of colonialism as an extension of domestic capitalism, the conception of colonial policy in terms of a series of liberation struggles: all these

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23 Brockway, loc. cit.; Kenneth Kaunda, Dominion Status for Central Africa? (Union of Democratic Control - MCF, 1958), back cover.

24 Compare T. Fox-Pitt, Handbook for Federal Politicians (MCF, 1956), back cover, and Kaunda, loc. cit.

25 Fox-Pitt, loc. cit. Among other fruits of this activity was a striking display, at a Central Hall rally in June 1956, of posters enumerating the tolls of killed, imprisoned, detained, flogged and manacled in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, British Guiana and Cyprus. All the figures had been derived from answers to Questions. Daily Worker, 9 June 1956.

elements had existed in the pre-war party and among the post-war founders of the Congress of Peoples against Imperialism, and duly found expression, as we saw in Chapter VII, in the list of objects promulgated at its foundation by the MCP. On the topic of central concern here - the progress of colonies towards independence - the following is an exceptionally clear statement of the Movement's attitude. It is part of a letter from the Movement's secretary, Patricia Rushton, to Lady Selwyn-Clarke, written in 1956.

"So many of the 'solutions' to colonial problems put forward, even by the Labour Party, are based on the African and other colonial people accepting something less than 'democracy on the basis of equality of basic individual political rights for all people whatever their colour, race, sex, creed or social status.' Even where this is offered it is so far in the future that the pressures from below - from the most oppressed classes within the colonies - will not permit the 'moderates' to accept the time limits apparently so far considered essential by British and settler governments.

As I see it our job on the M.C.P. is to bring home to the Labour Party, through their branches, and so through their M.P.s, the fact that even they are offering too little, too late. I feel that it is a race between the Labour Party accepting and promising and putting into effect a more progressive policy (as surely a Socialist Party should) and a complete loss of confidence by the colonial people in all British government. If the 'moderates' don't get enough, soon enough, they will be pushed aside by their own 'extremists'. And if that happens the majority of the people will almost always support their own 'extremists' rather than 'pro-British' moderates. And by 'enough soon enough' I mean what the colonial people think 'enough', not what the British Government does! Our only real difference with the Labour Party is 'how much how soon?'"<sup>26</sup>

The determination to identify with and to argue from the colonial peoples' point of view, and the unqualified commitment to egalitarian democracy for colonies in the very near future: these were the MCP's most characteristic principles. That they were fully operative, providing a consistent guide to action, may be observed in almost any of the Movement's public statements and activities, from the "World Conference for Colonial Liberation" which it convened in 1955<sup>27</sup> to the "message of sympathy to colonial peoples" which it issued after the 1959 election: "The record in colonial affairs of the last Tory Government...should have damned it in the minds of all people who cherish

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26 Rushton to Selwyn-Clarke, 3 July 1956 (FCB papers). The passage "democracy... status" was quoted from a letter by Tom Mboya in the preceding Sunday's Observer.

27 News Chronicle, 5 Sept. 1955.

liberty... Together we are the victims of imperialism...together we work to speed its end."<sup>28</sup>

How did the "moderate" colonial specialists and the Labour leadership regard the Movement's activities? The moderates, for their part, were coolly disposed. Well aware that the Movement commanded a good deal of support among colonial nationalists, the activists of the Fabian Colonial Bureau nevertheless disliked the whole atmosphere of the MCF's operations.<sup>29</sup> Formally the two groups maintained contact chiefly by the exchange of literature. Beyond that point cooperation did not extend: to the Movement's recurrent invitations to undertake joint projects<sup>30</sup> the Bureau tendered the customary stiff response that it was "precluded from joint activities with bodies not officially linked with the Labour Party."<sup>31</sup> In their private capacity, any Bureau members who so desired were permitted to work with the MCF. But in adopting this principle in 1956<sup>32</sup> the Bureau was simply recognising realities, since various individuals - for example Ritchie Calder and John Rankin, MP - were already combining membership of the Bureau's Advisory Committee with sponsorship of the Movement, while at least one MP - Wedgwood Benn - was prominent and active in both contexts.

The attitude of the Labour leadership, for its part, was governed by several factors. It was clear that the MCF could not be treated as simply another pressure group on the party's left-wing fringe. In so far as the Movement sought "to bring home to the Labour Party [leaders]...that even they are offering too little, too late," those leaders had to bear in mind the fact that the Movement enjoyed the sponsorship of something like half the

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28 Daily Worker, 23 Oct. 1959.

29 The epithets typically used by Central African white politicians to describe the Fabians - irresponsible, impractical, long-haired - were in turn applied by the Fabians, if only in private, to the activists of the Movement. Interview with Rita Hinden.

30 E.g. letters from MCF to FCB of 3 July 1956 and 26 Feb. 1958 (FCB papers).

31 It may be noted that this formula accommodated BAOSF (see above, note 5) and the TUC. With these bodies the Bureau did work cooperatively; see for example BAOSF to FCB, 24 Oct. 1956, and Lady Selwyn-Clarke's reply (FCB papers). Ironically Fenner Brockway, who had regarded the formation of BAOSF as an attempt by the Labour Party "to outdo the Movement" (Outside the Right, p. 168), became its chairman in 1959.

32 FCB-MMWC, 21 Nov. 1956.

party's back-benchers. More than that: although the highest command, Gaitskell and Griffiths, shunned contact with the Movement, at least two of the second-echelon men, Bevan and Wilson, were themselves among the sponsors. For a body which remained unaffiliated to the party (since its officers insisted that membership should not be confined to Labour Party members), this represented a very extensive overlap. It was also, for the Movement, tantamount to a guarantee that the party executive would not attempt to proscribe it; although the Movement was careful to reinsure its position further in this respect by refusing membership to any organisations already proscribed by the party.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless there were occasions when the party executive was embarrassed by the Movement's activities to an acute degree. One such occasion arose in 1956 when the Ashanti politician Joseph Appiah, apparently acting in his capacity as a member of MCF, made a speech bitterly attacking Labour's colonial policy. Brockway was summoned before the party secretary, Morgan Phillips. The word "proscription" was invoked, and on the Movement's behalf Brockway was obliged to disclaim any responsibility for Appiah's speech.<sup>34</sup> But much more significant than this was a series of incidents arising from the Movement's attitude towards political developments in South-East Asia. In September 1956 the MCF wrote to Lennox-Boyd concerning a number of deportations and detentions without trial in Singapore. Then and later, the Movement countered the argument that the victims of these measures were Communists by declaring that "it is precisely because the MCF believes in basic human rights that in contrast with the methods of totalitarian dictatorships, we oppose the setting aside of civil liberties in order to crush political opponents."<sup>35</sup> A second letter to the Colonial Secretary demanded an independent inquiry into allegations of ill-treatment of detainees. A third, sent in March 1958 to the Prime Minister of Malaya and to the Commonwealth Relations Secretary, Lord Home, over the signatures of 33 Labour MPs and two peers, demanded the withdrawal of British troops

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33 The Communist Party, for example, was keen to affiliate but was firmly rebuffed. Interview with <sup>L</sup> Brockway.

34 Interview with <sup>L</sup> Brockway.

35 Letter by Brockway in Venture, Oct. 1958, p. 8.

from Malaya. In this letter it was argued that the conflict with Malayan Communists was "internal", and that if the Malayan Government was "not prepared to negotiate the termination of hostilities, the dependence on our troops should end."<sup>35</sup>

There were two related reasons why these communications, well publicised as they were in both Britain and South-East Asia, were embarrassing to the Labour leaders. First, according to the governments concerned, all the decisions and activities criticised by the MCF were the responsibility not of the British Government but of elected governments in the territories; that is, the governments of Lim Yew Hock in Singapore and Tunku Abdul Rahman in Malaya, with both of which the Labour Party maintained fraternal relations. Second, because so many well-known Labour politicians were associated with it, the Movement was widely regarded in Malaya and Singapore (though not by the governments concerned) as a Labour Party organ whose views reflected official party policy. In these circumstances the Labour leaders, represented by Bevan in 1956 and by Callaghan and Griffiths in 1958, were quick to issue repudiations of the Movement's views. But by mid-1958 demands for stronger measures against the Movement were being heard insistently: from the Malayan Government and from the socialist People's Action Party of Singapore, from several members of the NEC, from the General Council of the TUC, and from the Fabian Colonial Bureau, acting principally as middleman for the Singapore party.<sup>36</sup>

As a result a sub-committee of the NEC's Commonwealth committee was enjoined to inquire into the Movement's activities. The sub-committee's

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<sup>36</sup> According to the Bureau's secretary, the Bureau "had no desire to get into this fight." Selwyn-Clarke to Margaret Cole, 12 Sept. 1958 (FCB papers). Under pressure from the People's Action Party, however, the Bureau had entered the fight vigorously enough. Venture for July 1958 featured an extremely strong editorial arguing that the MCF's attitudes towards South-East Asia were influenced by "a small group of Malaysians in London who are now represented on the MCF's South-East Asia Committee... [and who] have for years been the helpers and trail-blazers of the Malayan Communist Party." The ensuing correspondence in Venture was spirited. It included a rejoinder by Brockway (Oct. 1958, p. 8), a letter from Lee Kuan Yew, at that time secretary-general of the PAP (Nov., p. 7), and a letter from a European member of the Singapore legislature (Dec., pp. 5, 8) which included this startling judgment of Brockway: "He still unconsciously accepts the old imperial myth of white superiority. He cannot believe that leaders in Malaya know what they are doing."

report, submitted to the parent body in September 1958, went into considerable detail and pointed out that "unless disciplinary action is taken such incidents can be expected to recur."<sup>37</sup> Word reached the press that the report would be considered by the Commonwealth committee shortly after the forthcoming party conference, and that the MCF's officers would be summoned to give an account of themselves. Some found a Gilbertian flavour in this procedure, since in effect such Commonwealth committee members as Bevan (the chairman), Mrs. Castle, Driberg and Greenwood were being asked to pass judgment on an organisation with which they were connected as sponsors. "They will probably have to request themselves," the Sunday Times commented, "...to dissociate themselves from its activities."<sup>38</sup>

It soon became clear, however, that the Movement's leaders were not in unbearably hot water with Transport House. This was deducible from the fact that members of the NEC spoke under the Movement's banner a week before the party conference was due to assemble. Brockway himself issued statements to the effect that the MCF had differed with the party on matters of principle only twice in four years, that in general the Movement supported Labour's colonial policy and was doing all it could to "gain public support" for the party.<sup>39</sup> And in the event the leadership chose to play down the affair so far that the MCF's reprimand was not only gentle but unpublicised. The sole official report of the encounter was the terse statement, appearing a year later, that "discussions have been held with the officers of the Movement for Colonial Freedom in order to ensure that there is no misunderstanding of the party's colonial policy, particularly in overseas territories."<sup>40</sup>

The mildness of the rebuke owed something to the leadership's desire to tread cautiously among the party factions in what was assumed to be a pre-election year. But more important was an awareness that the Movement

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37 Soref and Greig, The Puppeteers, p. 42.

38 Sunday Times, 21 Sept. 1958.

39 See The Times and Daily Telegraph for 22 Sept. 1958; Daily Telegraph and Daily Worker for 23 Sept. 1958.

40 NEC report in 1959 Conference Report, p. 37.

did perform useful functions from the leadership's point of view. The MCF might have angered colonial leaders on a few occasions, but in general it enjoyed colonial support; as Brockway was justifiably to claim, "the strength of the MCF lay in the confidence and affection which the national movements of Africa and other colonial territories gave it."<sup>21</sup> Thus the Labour leadership could have it both ways, tacitly acknowledging the MCF connection in favourable circumstances and disclaiming formal ties at moments of embarrassment. Moreover, the Movement clearly served a valuable purpose "as a sort of clearing-house for a mixture of liberal and left-wing views on self-government for the colonies and equality for the colonial peoples."<sup>41</sup> From the leadership's point of view, the existence of such an outlet for left-wing campaigning on politico-moral issues was well worth the price of occasional public departures by MPs from the official party line.

### 3. The Search for a Policy

Intra-party differences had not prevented the search for a coherent and distinctive Labour policy on colonial affairs. They might, however, have delayed it, for it was a long-drawn process. In the early years of opposition there had been no real attempt to reformulate general policy. Party lines in the major debates, as we saw in Chapter VI, were conceived mainly as responses to governmental decisions and actions. This approach was sufficient, perhaps, when there was a concrete issue at hand, but not necessarily when debate ranged more widely - a lesson drawn by some from the relative failure of the censure of December 1953. Labour was in any case a party traditionally dedicated to arguing, defining and publishing its policies when in opposition, and by 1954 there was broad agreement among the interested elements of the party that this lacuna should be filled.

The initiative was taken, appropriately, by members of the NEC's Commonwealth sub-committee. Led by Griffiths and assisted by Farmer in the last months of his tenure, this group produced a 1,500-word outline statement entitled "From Colonies to Commonwealth." The statement was

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41 The Times, 22 Sept. 1958.

released to the press in August 1954; a few weeks later it was presented to the party conference by Arthur Skeffington MP, a member of the group, and was endorsed virtually without demur.

It was a statement intentionally limited to the adumbration of admirable goals, with no attempt made to explore their more difficult implications. There was, for example, a "reaffirmation" that in all colonies "the interests of the inhabitants must be paramount" - a statement which, by omitting any such qualifying term as "indigenous" before "inhabitants", was a good deal less explicit than its model, the Devonshire declaration of 1923. Concerning the smallest territories it was simply, and vaguely, stated that "special arrangements will have to be worked out, in agreement with their people, for association with Britain in the Commonwealth." Most importantly, it was stressed that the aim for colonies was not just self-government but "democratic self-government." Transfers of power should be made "in each case to an established system of democratic government," not least in plural societies where "Labour works towards genuine partnership based on racial equality." But nothing was said on the central problem - the practical forms which democracy and racial equality should take in plural societies. If democracy were to find its political expression on the egalitarian basis of one-man-one-vote, what kind of future could be offered for the racial minorities - in particular the Europeans and Asians of Africa? Alternatively, if equality were somehow to be established between communities rather than individuals, how could this be reconciled with the majoritarian features of democracy?<sup>42</sup>

By virtue of its generality, in short, the statement was unexceptionable. The Times, perhaps recalling the passion of recent parliamentary clashes between Lyttelton and the Opposition, remarked that it could have been issued by any party, with only an emphasis on trade unions, cooperative societies and the Colonial Development Corporation to "mark it out as a Labour document." While welcoming the similarity between Labour objectives and the Government's, since it gave "great strength to Great Britain as a trustee of colonial peoples," The Times nevertheless pointed out that if an

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<sup>42</sup> The statement appears as Appendix VIII in 1954 Conference Report, pp. 199-200.

due course Hatch, who had taken on as an early responsibility the task of analysing the replies, was indeed able to report that readers had few new ideas to offer. On economic matters the replies were "very thin", on political matters - again - generally unexceptionable. Only in reply to the key question "should we insist on democratic self-government before handing over power?" was there some departure from conventional formulations. To judge by Hatch's report, plenty of scepticism was expressed about the feasibility of "safeguards" for minorities, or weak majorities. One respondent summed up most views thus:

"Where power is passing to a majority it is legitimate to take chances and a risk that it may be abused and misapplied. Where power is passing to a minority every effort should be made to limit and delay the movement."<sup>48</sup>

The Venture readership presumably included, among other elements, the most informed and interested section of the Labour movement. If doubts had been felt about the value of canvassing opinions therein, how much more must they have arisen about the value of consulting the movement at large. This was, however, the next step. In March 1955 Transport House published Facing Facts in the Colonies, a pamphlet written by Hatch and consisting mainly of questions for consideration by local parties. Designed, as Hatch later wrote, to provide for "realistic" discussion,<sup>49</sup> the pamphlet was true to the realities of its subject in being uncompromisingly difficult. Fundamental issues of principle were raised at every turn; for example:

"Should the decision [about Seretse's repatriation] be taken after consultations with the other people likely to be adversely affected, for example the people of the other Protectorates and Africans in South Africa, or should it be taken solely on principle? In any case, what is the principle involved? Is it that the wishes of the tribe themselves must be binding, that the chieftainship system should be upheld, or simply the principle of racial equality, and the right of individuals to marry according to their choice?"<sup>50</sup>

Whether or not because of its complexity, the pamphlet failed

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48 Hatch in Venture, Nov. 1954, p. 5.

49 Letter in Venture, March 1958, p. 8.

50 Facing Facts in the Colonies (International Department, the Labour Party, 1955), p. 12.

spectacularly in its purpose. In spite of much effort and travel among the local parties by Hatch, only one local party out of over six hundred responded to the extent of sending its views in writing to Transport House.<sup>49</sup> This experience was strikingly similar to that of the Conservative leadership in 1947:<sup>51</sup> an outcome which cast an ironic hindsight on the pamphlet's confident assertion that "in sharp contrast to the Tories, we in the Labour Party are specially sensitive to the needs and aspirations of colonial peoples."<sup>52</sup> Venture concluded, reasonably enough:

"It would appear that at present the vast majority of the Labour Movement believes that the problems of colonial policy are better dealt with by a few experts at the centre in touch with colonial opinion than democratically discussed throughout the movement. There may be something in this assumption, but only provided that whatever is produced by the experts is submitted to and discussed by the party's representatives at Annual Conference."<sup>53</sup>

We may turn, then, to what was produced by the experts. In October 1955 the NEC Commonwealth sub-committee set up four "working parties" to draft reports on the plural societies, economic aid, the smaller territories and colour discrimination.<sup>54</sup> All but the last of these reports duly appeared as a series of official policy documents, published in 1956-7 and endorsed by the party conferences of those years. The first, The Plural Society, was concerned with the central issue of the political and constitutional future in multi-racial territories. The second, Economic Aid, dealt principally with the mechanics of development corporations, commodity bulk purchase agreements and aid through United Nations agencies.<sup>55</sup> The third, The Smaller Territories, concentrated on the constitutional future of the thirty or so smallest colonies. Different solutions for different cases were suggested: federation (the Gambia and Sierra Leone), integration

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51 See above, pp. 227-8.

52 Morgan Phillips, introduction to Facing Facts, p. 3.

53 Venture, Nov. 1955, p. 7.

54 NEC report, 1956 Conference Report, p. 23.

55 The drafting committee for Economic Aid comprised Wilfred Burke MP, Barbara Castle MP, Cyril Dumbleton, Ray Gunter, Anthony Greenwood MP, Hilary Marquand MP, John Strachey MP and T.F. Betts (assistant secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau). Reviews of the pamphlet may be found in Venture, July 1957 pp. 3-4, and in the editorial columns of (among other papers) the Daily Telegraph and Manchester Guardian.

(Malta with Britain, possibly Cyprus with Greece), and for the rest, a kind of "dominion status" on request by the territories themselves. It was hoped that such territories would choose to leave their defence and foreign affairs in old-Commonwealth hands, but no compulsion was to be exercised. What was advocated, essentially, was a kind of voluntary dyarchy.<sup>56</sup>

But it was the first of the three which was regarded within the party as the most significant and which aroused the widest interest. And for our purposes it is the only one which need be considered in any detail.

The drafting committee was a strong one, representing high-level expertise and a judicious balance of the party's elements. Creech Jones, Hinden and Brockway were the coopted members; the most prominent and active of the NEC representatives were Griffiths, Driberg and Mrs. Castle; and Hatch was responsible for research. Their document, published in June 1956 and endorsed by conference in October, marked Labour's official arrival at a position which most of the party's interested members had unofficially advocated for some years: a commitment to egalitarian democracy for plural societies.

"We believe that it is only in a socialist society that all will be able to live more abundantly; and that genuinely socialist societies will be developed only in a framework of free political democracy... The principles of democracy are no less valid in the plural societies than in any other type of society. These principles arise from the fundamental belief that all human beings have equal personal rights. In a democracy such rights cannot be dependent on colour, race, religion, ability, experience, influence, education, wealth or power... The peculiar problem of the plural society is not whether, but how, it should become fully democratic."

Arguing from these premises, the document's authors criticised the various experiments in partnership and multi-racialism currently in train on the grounds that they stressed "racial difference rather than human identity." Labour's aim, by contrast, was

"to encourage the peoples concerned...to forget race and colour and

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56 The drafting committee comprised R.H.S. Crossman MP, James Johnson MP, W. Tallon, Sir Lynn Ungood-Thomas MP and Patrick Gordon Walker MP. A review appeared in Venture, September 1957, pp. 11-12. One off-the-record comment is of interest: "dominion status for the smaller territories on request is a concession to the irresponsible left-wing of the Labour Party." Selwyn-Clarke to K.E. Robinson, n.d. 1958 (FCB papers).

to think and act as human beings... this withering away of racial consciousness will itself be the truest safeguard of racial minorities."

It was an avowedly optimistic aim. The statement acknowledged that in practice it was "very far" from attainment and that "prejudice, fear and economic selfishness provide difficult foundations to build on." In order to help make "racial considerations disappear from politics," there would need to be a lengthy period of social and economic reforms in such matters as education, industrial employment, health services and immigration. The next Labour government would direct the colonial authorities "to remove all administrative and statutory discriminations," except, for the time being, "those expressly designed to protect under-privileged racial groups."<sup>57</sup>

As for the central problem of political representation, the statement recognised that democracy could take diverse institutional forms; consensual democracy, for example, was no less valid a form than majoritarian democracy on the Westminster pattern. The conclusion in principle was that "ultimately, the people of each of the colonial territories have the right to determine which particular form of constitution...best suits their own requirements," and that the best instrument for devising a constitution would be an assembly elected "by universal adult suffrage, on the principle of 'one person one vote.'"<sup>58</sup> Thus the problem was passed on to the colonial peoples themselves. For its part, Labour could only suggest the lines of constitutional progress in the transitional period from the race-conscious present to the colour-blind future: first, "parity" among racial groups (the consummation of the partnership idea), and thence via complicated electoral devices to a comprehensive common roll. In conclusion, Britain must retain final control until all forms of discrimination were outlawed and the conditions for the establishment of full democracy were seen to exist.<sup>59</sup>

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57 The quoted statements are taken in sequence from Labour's Colonial Policy, One: The Plural Society (the Labour Party, 1956), pp. 29-42.

58 Ibid., p. 34. The idea of democratically-chosen constitutional assemblies was a long-enduring theme in some Labour quarters; see above, pp. 162-3.

59 Ibid., pp. 35-9, 46.

The presentation of this document to party conference was largely an occasion for self-congratulation, for this was, according to Driberg, "the first time that any British political party has ever attempted seriously to tackle this problem."<sup>60</sup> But the document's sponsors, well aware of its idealistic tone, were also careful to insist on the need for a realistic appreciation of just what the next Labour government was being pledged to do, and against what obstacles - including the powerful resistance of many of those directly affected by the policy.<sup>61</sup> There was also the customary stress on the long time-scale envisaged; on the qualifications and interim arrangements as opposed to the "ultimate" goal.

Yet it could have been no great cause for surprise that most people regarded the advocacy of egalitarian democracy as the statement's vital feature. Whatever the conditions and qualifications offered, it was a fair general conclusion that Labour was now committed to a goal scarcely distinguishable from that of indigenous nationalists in the plural societies: political power in indigenous hands, with no greater safeguard for immigrant minorities than a putative loss of racial consciousness among all concerned. Nor was the insistence upon the long term necessarily acceptable at face value. The word "ultimate" had already suffered blows enough in the course of post-war colonial policy; its value in a Labour policy statement thus seemed, at least to Labour's opponents, to be dubious indeed.

Accordingly the document underwent strong criticism in the settler press, and was "even awarded the accolade" of an attack by the Prime Minister of South Africa.<sup>62</sup> In Britain Conservative MPs and the conservative press likewise singled out the advocacy of full democracy for comment. "If this were a practical solution, the problem itself would not exist," remarked the Sunday Times; and the Daily Telegraph added a gloss concerning the

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60 1956 Conference Report, p. 155.

61 Ibid., pp. 155-6 (Driberg), 167-8 (Brockway), 168, 170 (Griffiths). As Brockway put it, "In Kenya today even the moderate white settlers are opposing the proposals which are made in this report."

62 Driberg, ibid., p. 155.

assertion that the people of each territory had a right to decide its own constitution: "Has it? On what grounds? Certainly not those of experience."<sup>63</sup>

It was in fact fairly evident that Labour had committed itself to a programme which, however laudable in principle, was vulnerable to the damning charge of impracticability - both because it was so obviously unacceptable to the current wielders of power in many plural societies and, more broadly, because of its extremely optimistic premises about human behaviour. It is of interest, therefore, in concluding this chapter, to assess how firmly party spokesmen in the next few years stood by the party's declaration with regard to the plural society of greatest practical concern - Central Africa.

The party in fact went to some lengths to publicise its position. In June 1957 a parliamentary debate on racial policy in East and Central Africa was mounted at Labour's request, largely because Labour speakers wished to air the proposals contained in The Plural Society. In November a debate on the Federal Constitution was put to similar use.<sup>64</sup> Some of the resulting publicity was perhaps counter-productive, for there were indications that traditional differences between left and right still existed in spite of the cooperative effort involved in the document's creation. In the November debate, for example, Mrs. Castle spoke as if full democracy could be realised within a few years whereas James Johnson and Austen Albu reckoned it to be the remotest of objectives and stressed the need for heavily qualified franchises for the time being.<sup>65</sup>

But such discrepancies across the benches were not particularly important. Rather more so were the premeditated statements issued from time to time by the leadership. In July 1957, for example, Venture

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63 Sunday Times, 22 July 1956; Daily Telegraph, 23 July 1956. For some remarks by Conservative MPs see HCD vol. 571 cols. 1121 (Archer Baldwin), 1135 (Bernard Braine), 1210-1 (Cuthbert Alport) (4 June 1957).

64 Manchester Guardian, 31 May 1957; Callaghan, HCD vol. 571 cols. 1103-4 (4 June 1957); Mrs. Castle, ibid., vol. 578 cols. 893-4 (25 Nov. 1957).

65 Ibid., cols. 893-6 (Mrs. Castle, with replies), 903-4 (Albu), 915 (Johnson).

published an authoritative article by Sir Lynn Ungoed-Thomas MP and John Hatch. Their declared aim was to reconcile the principles outlined in The Plural Society with Attlee's often quoted and never repudiated statement of 1953 "that if this [federation] becomes the law of the land it is the duty of all of us to try and make it work to the best of our ability."<sup>66</sup> Briefly, it was argued that there was no contradiction between the two:

"In pledging itself to try to make federation successful if it became law, the Labour Party was, in fact, aiming to use all its influence in order to lead the federal state towards a completely democratic structure in which all its inhabitants would have equal political rights regardless of race or colour."

To this end a Labour government "would use what constitutional powers it has in the Federation much more actively than has been done by Conservative governments."<sup>67</sup>

In the next two years the NEC issued official statements in response to political developments in Central Africa - certain federal legislation in 1958 and the Nyasaland disturbances in 1959 - and argued in each case in terms virtually identical to those of The Plural Society. What was needed was "an unequivocal statement that the objective of the Federation is complete democracy and equal rights for every citizen," along with a revision of the federal franchise to ensure "genuine" African representation and the progressive elimination of racial discrimination in industry, education and social relations.<sup>68</sup> Upon occasion it was further stated, both by the NEC and by such parliamentary leaders as Griffiths and Callaghan, that as far as Labour was concerned two of the policy options in Central Africa - "amalgamation" and "dominion status" - were absolutely ruled out unless the great majority of all inhabitants expressed a desire for them.<sup>69</sup>

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66 See above, p. 270.

67 Sir L. Ungoed-Thomas and John Hatch, "The Labour Party and Central Africa: Political and Constitutional Position," Venture, July 1957, pp. 5, 6.

68 NEC statements (min.) of 28 March 1958 and 29 March 1959.

69 See for example NEC statement of 28 March 1958; Griffiths on amalgamation, HCD vol. 578 cols. 918-9 (25 Nov. 1957); and Callaghan on dominion status, 1958 Conference Report, p. 242.

The reason was, again, one given its definitive official expression in The Plural Society - that no final decision on the constitutional future of plural societies should be taken until representatives chosen by universal suffrage were able to take it for themselves.

So far so consistent. In all these statements, however, one plank was intriguingly absent from the Labour platform. The missing plank was labelled Right of Secession. It was the very one which African political leaders in Central Africa declared themselves most anxious to see in place; its absence was therefore curious, for these were the very people whom Labour sought most earnestly to assist. The reason for its omission was outlined by Ungeod-Thomas and Hatch.

"Politics is the art of the possible, and in British constitutional practice certain things are not possible. Once a degree of power has been deliberately transferred into other hands it can only be withdrawn in exceptional circumstances. Unless the Federation were to be involved in an extreme crisis it is highly improbable that any future Labour Government would be in a position to restore the pre-1953 situation, however much its members might like to do so. It is imperative, therefore, that the situation be reviewed realistically so that the African leaders and their organisations can apply their energies to a policy which has some hope of success."<sup>70</sup>

The policy recommended was that of "developing the Northern Rhodesian and Nyasaland Constitutions so as to represent more justly the inhabitants of those two territories."<sup>71</sup>

This was a remarkably cautious estimate of the possibilities. Apparently the only means available to a Labour government in pursuit of the ideals of The Plural Society were, to re-quote Ungeod-Thomas and Hatch's circumspect phrases, "all its influence" and "what constitutional powers it has in the Federation." Labour's official attitude on this matter probably cost it some esteem among Africans at the time. One Nyasaland African MLC typically argued that Ungeod-Thomas and Hatch

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<sup>70</sup> Op. cit., p. 6. This passage was more than once quoted approvingly by Conservatives as an indication of incipient "responsibility" in the Labour Party; see for example CCA, July 1957, p. 12, and Lennox-Boyd's speech in the debate on the Devlin report, HCD vol. 609 col. 1407 (22 July 1959).

<sup>71</sup> Op. cit., p. 6.

"call our demand for secession... 'unrealistic', but they add ...that it would be possible if 'the Federation were to be involved in an extreme crisis.' This statement seems to me to reveal not only the contradictions inherent in an attempt to rationalise a bad scheme, but also a lack of principle. If Labour knows that the Central African Federation scheme is bad and in its first four years has been drifting into a form of apartheid, why wait for a crisis before secession can be considered?"<sup>72</sup>

Whatever Labour's motive, however, it should be recorded that the events of February and March 1959 brought about a reversal of the party's official view on secession. Possibly the Nyasaland disturbances fitted the party's notion of "an extreme crisis"; at any rate, in the debate on the Devlin report three months before the general election, Gaitskell invested his authority as prospective Prime Minister in this important statement of the Labour attitude:

"The only ultimate principle which is possible in the political field is that in these territories eventually the constitutions and the governments based upon them must rest upon the foundation of one man one vote... we should make it plain that the agenda of the [federal review] conference will not be so circumscribed as to rule out discussion of the continuance of federation itself... for if we accept that consent must be the basis, for my part I cannot see how, ultimately, the right of secession can be denied."<sup>73</sup>

It was later reported, moreover, that in anticipation of an election victory Gaitskell was planning the movement of British troops to the two northern territories as a prelude to negotiating a political détente with Southern Rhodesia.<sup>74</sup> In these circumstances the old left-right differences on matters of timing in African policy no longer seemed very relevant.

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72 M.W.K. Chiume MLC, "Nyasaland and the Federation". Venture, Nov. 1957, p. 10. See also letters by Chiume, ibid., March 1958, pp. 8-9, and D.S.G. Chirwa, ibid., Nov. 1958, p. 7.

73 HCD vol. 609 cols. 1292, 1300 (22 July 1959). Hatch, too unreservedly conceded the right of secession in an election-eve article in Venture, Oct. 1959, p. 2.

74 Keatley, Politics of Partnership, p. 496.

## CHAPTER X

## THE OPPOSITION'S PART IN COLONIAL POLICY

"I think it inevitable that an emerging nationalism, an emerging people, tend to look to a party whose policy is in measure pledged to change, as against a party who, in its name at least, is pledged to conserve."

Reginald Paget MP, HCD vol. 569 col. 691 (6 May 1957).

Attitudinising is to be expected of Labour in opposition. But what of the party's capacity to affect the course of events, to make its mark on official government policy?

In a brief but important article referring mainly to the later fifties, Hatch has stated his belief that "during these vital years in the history of the British Empire, the Opposition played a unique and significant role in forming colonial policy."<sup>1</sup> It is a claim of central concern for this study; the present chapter, therefore, attempts to assess it.

#### 1. Hatch's Tripod

In amplification of his point, Hatch argues as follows.

"The attitude of the official Opposition is one of the factors that has to be considered in determining any aspect of government policy. I believe that it is a weightier consideration when colonial policy is being decided than in any other branch of government business, and this for a simple reason. Colonial leaders who either have a grievance or are simply anxious to end their dependent status and achieve independence naturally turn to the Opposition at Westminster for help. They see the Opposition attacking the Government and therefore consider it as a natural ally... Whatever the political colour of the Government in office, the Opposition is in a position to represent colonial grievances, advise colonial leaders on attitudes towards government decisions, and sometimes mediate between these representatives and British ministers."

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all quoted passages attributed to Hatch in this chapter are taken from his article "The Opposition's Part in Colonial Policy," The Listener, 25 April 1963, pp. 701-3.

In short, Labour was able to play the "unique and significant role" which Hatch claims for it because of its special links with "colonial leaders"; and these links were formed because colonial leaders anxious to achieve independence turned "naturally" to the Opposition of the day.

At first sight this appears to be a plausible argument. During the fifties many colonial leaders did turn to the Opposition for all the purposes mentioned. Yet on closer consideration something seems to be lacking. It seems almost perverse modesty on Hatch's part to maintain that Labour's "political colour" was unimportant by comparison with its opposition status in the establishment of links with colonial leaders. At the time, the factor of political colour was much more frequently and heavily stressed by those involved. Paget's remark cited above was of a piece with innumerable statements by Labour speakers in which the party was depicted as the "natural" ally of indigenous colonial leaders - not because it was out of power, but because it was a party of anti-imperialist convictions and humanitarian conscience; a party which knew how it felt to speak for the underprivileged in dealings with paternalist authority; a party whose policy preferences, as epitomised for example in The Plural Society, came close to the declared aims of many a colonial nationalist. Moreover - and this is the significant point - it is clear enough that a good many indigenous colonial leaders wholly or partly shared this somewhat idealised view of the party, and were anxious to form links accordingly. The point has been discussed more than once in earlier chapters and needs no further iteration here. But its validity may be further demonstrated by an approach from a different angle. Among the most important of "colonial leaders" in the later fifties were the European politicians of the African settler colonies. It is indisputable that these leaders, no less than indigenous leaders, had "grievances" and were "anxious to end their dependent status". But with these men the Labour Party's relationships were anything but special; instances do not exactly spring to mind of European leaders turning "naturally" to Labour for advice and mediation in the fifties. And it is surely apparent that this coolness was due in large measure to the distinctive characteristics and policies of the Labour Party - in short, its political colour.

Thus Hatch's argument appears doubly misleading. First, the fact that many colonial nationalists developed a rapprochement with the Labour Party did not depend solely, or even mainly, upon Labour's status as Opposition but rather upon their beliefs about Labour as a party. Second, Hatch's use of the blanket term "colonial leaders" obscures the fact that many of the most important such leaders were Europeans who, similarly acting on their beliefs about Labour, tended to avoid the party altogether in their search for political allies in Britain.

Let us, however, accept the valid point which does emerge from Hatch's argument: that certain colonial leaders, mostly indigenous, did maintain "special" relationships with the Labour Party. The question is whether this point is strong enough to support the rather weighty conclusion that Labour "played a unique and significant role in forming colonial policy". Hatch clearly believes it does, and expresses the point in this analogy:

"Colonial policy can be imagined standing on a tripod. Government, opposition and colonial opinion are represented by the three legs. If all three legs are balanced in support of a policy progress is smooth. If any one of them is out of line, trouble usually follows."

Now this analogy is intriguing but, at least on the basis of the argument provided by Hatch, it does seem to overstate the Opposition's role. Granted, Labour's sympathy and active support for certain colonial leaders did give both those leaders and the Government a stake in seeking good relations with the party. The colonial leaders' stake was that Labour's advice, mediation and efforts at representation were valuable to them. The Government's stake was that Labour's activities might well help to determine whether its own plans for colonies were accepted or resisted by the people concerned. Its desire for a compliant opposition party was in fact repeatedly demonstrated in the later fifties; scarcely a colonial debate passed without a renewal of Conservative requests for Labour participation in a "fully bi-partisan" colonial policy.<sup>2</sup> To grant this, however, is still to fall well short of the estimate of Labour's importance implicit in

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<sup>2</sup> For example in 1957, HCD vol. 569 cols. 690-1 (C.W. Armstrong, 6 May); vol. 571 cols. 1115-6 (Archer Baldwin, 4 June); vol. 578 cols. 820 and 911-2 (Alport and F.M. Bennett, 25 Nov.).

the tripod metaphor. The point about a tripod is that all three legs are equally indispensable; if any leg were removed the formation as a whole could not perform its function. But in terms of colonial policy-making it is quite conceivable that in some situations the "leg" constituted by the British Opposition was dispensable. If the major participants in policy-making - government and the leading colonial groups - were all in agreement or were willing to compromise, then there was no necessary reason why the Opposition should be involved or even consulted. In respect of such situations Hatch's analogy is misleading.

This is not to say that Labour had no ability at all to make an impact on policy formation. It is in fact arguable - and it will be argued below - that Labour's potential influence, at least, was quite large. All that is being suggested here is that the argument cannot be sustained on the kind of evidence which Hatch adduces; something more than a comment on "natural" links between colonial leaders and Opposition is required.

The crucial additional factor is simply this: Labour was not just the Opposition but also a reasonably credible alternative government. It is a matter of record that the party's prospects of winning the next election, as measured by opinion surveys and by-election results, did seem consistently good from late in 1955 until early in 1959.<sup>3</sup> There was a fairly general assumption that Labour would duly come to power; and once this factor is appreciated it becomes possible to understand the various ways in which Labour could attempt to influence colonial policy.

Briefly, it could attempt to do so by aligning itself with one side or the other in cases where the major participants in policy formation were seriously at odds. If, firstly, the Opposition associated itself with the Government's policy preference, then in theory the colonial disputants would be encouraged to come to terms with the Government on the understanding that they could hope for no better terms from the next Labour administration. If, secondly, the Opposition aligned itself with the colonial leadership against the Government, then in theory the colonial leadership would be

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<sup>3</sup> D.E. Butler and Richard Rose, The British General Election of 1959 (Macmillan, 1960), p. 40 and Appendix VI.

encouraged to resist government policy in anticipation of a better deal from Labour; as a result the Government might be forced to modify its own policy and move closer to the colonial leadership's position.

There was a third possibility. In a number of important cases the factor which Hatch calls "colonial opinion" could not reasonably be thought of as a single "leg" of a tripod. During the fifties there was often a situation of profound cleavage between one major colonial group or set of groups, which appeared to stand on the threshold of full governmental power, and another, usually of different race or tribe, which felt itself threatened with total exclusion from power. Europeans as against Africans in Central Africa provide only the most obvious example; others would include Nkrumahists as against the NLM and allied groups in the Gold Coast, Indians as against Negroes in British Guiana, and Hausa-Fulani and Ibo as against Yoruba in Nigerian federal politics. In such situations a species of "opposition" existed in the colony such that four legs rather than three - with at least one of them almost invariably out of line - would have to be taken into account in any assessment of "progress". If the Opposition aligned itself with the colonial "opposition" in such a case, then in theory it would be giving notice that the colony's power balance would be altered by the next Labour government - which, once again, might have the effect of forcing modifications in current policy.

These were the main possibilities in theory. How far did Labour seek in practice to intervene in these ways, and with what success? Let us consider some cases.

## 2. Labour Interventions

### (i) Pro-Government

The Conservatives' "bi-partisan" overtures to Labour in the later fifties generally met with a wary and sceptical response. The party appeared to believe that Labour would be better advised tactically to maintain a position independent of Government; and that in any event, tactics apart, Labour policy for certain major territories must inevitably stand at some remove from Conservative policy. It was Creech Jones, that veteran of the bi-partisan forties, who most frequently expressed this belief:

"There are differences in long and short-term policy which cannot be reconciled. Each of the political parties has its distinctive philosophy... This is as true in colonial matters as in domestic ... Divergences of view in these human affairs are inevitable and to plaster them over does not solve them."<sup>4</sup>

It was only natural that Opposition MPs who believed this should assume that "bi-partisan policy" would mean, in cases of doubt, government policy, and should therefore reject the prospect of implication-by-association therein.

It was nevertheless true that on a good many colonial matters - even some supposedly controversial ones - Labour's official policy was indistinguishable from Conservative. Further, the party made it clear to colonial leaders that this was so, and that such influence as it possessed would be exercised on the side of moderation. To quote Paget again: "it may be that a greater responsibility lies on this side not to encourage them to an advance which might be disastrous for their countries if it is too fast."<sup>5</sup> Here are some random, unremarkable but illustrative examples.

First: in the Gold Coast of the mid-fifties, Nkrumah's governing Convention Peoples Party found itself opposed with growing vigour by a loose coalition of urban middle-class elements, older nationalists, Ashanti separatists and others. After the failure of an attempted constitutional conference among ruling and oppositionist elements in March 1956, Lennox-Boyd intimated to Nkrumah that he saw no alternative but to call a general election. Nkrumah, who had been anticipating independence in the lifetime of the current assembly, felt unable to accept this proposal and despatched his closest lieutenant, Kojo Botsio, to London to argue the point with the Secretary of State. Lennox-Boyd proved adamant; Botsio thereupon turned to the Labour Party. The gist of the advice he received was that in Labour's view it was essential to protect minority rights in the Gold Coast, and that Nkrumah should accept the need for an election.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Letter to The Times, 17 April 1957. See also Creech Jones's letter to The Times of 12 May 1955 and his remarks in Parliament, HCD vol. 522 col. 1722 (14 May 1956) and vol. 569 cols. 748-9 (6 May 1957).

5 Paget, loc. cit.

6 Dennis Austin, Politics in Ghana 1946-1960, pp. 304-9; Nkrumah, Autobiography, pp. 244-53; and John Hatch, A History of Postwar Africa (Andre Deutsch, 1st edn., 1965), pp. 176-8.

Second: late in 1957 Lennox-Boyd imposed a new constitution on Kenya against the resistance of the African elected members led by Oginga Odinga and Tom Mboya. These members announced that they would boycott the constitution's new provisions. In this situation James Griffiths chose publicly to welcome the Lennox-Boyd constitution on behalf of the Labour Party and to declare his hope that Africans might give it a fair trial.<sup>7</sup>

A third example may be recalled from the previous chapter. Prior to 1959 the Labour leadership was concurring with the Government that secession was not a real possibility in the Central African federation, and was advising Nyasaland African leaders, among others, to this effect.

In each of these cases the effect of Labour's declaration that it had no immediate quarrel with the government view was to deny to the nationalists concerned the option of resisting the Secretary of State on the grounds that Labour would offer them a better deal. This was presumably a factor to be taken into account by the nationalists in planning their tactics.

But it was nothing more than that. It would be quite wrong to overestimate the effects in practice of this particular kind of intervention. For Ghanaian, Kenyan and Nyasaland African leaders alike, the overriding purpose was to accelerate their country's movement towards independence under African rule. Nkrumah bowed to Lennox-Boyd's insistence upon an election primarily because on that issue, and at that point in time, submission rather than resistance seemed the best way to hasten independence. In the Kenyan and Central African examples precisely the reverse seemed true in African eyes: resistance appeared a better tactic than submission in the quest for further concessions. Hence the only effect of Griffiths's counsel of moderation was to draw from Odinga the retort that his group had "never acted on the instructions of the British Labour Party or anyone else." British MPs might have their views but so had he, and he felt "very strongly" about the constitution.<sup>8</sup> And writing from Nyasaland, M.W.K. Chiume sharply

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7 HCD vol. 582 col. 1006 (18 Feb. 1958). Lennox-Boyd's confrontation with the Africans is described in Mboya, Freedom and After, pp. 120-1, and Bennett, Kenya: A Political History, pp. 141-2.

8 Quoted in CCA, March 1958, p. 12.

reminded the party that "it cannot appreciate the gravity of the issues at stake to the same extent as we Africans... the Labour Party's attitude to the federation is not the be-all and the end-all of our struggle for freedom."<sup>9</sup>

The moral would seem to be that in situations where nationalist leaders were entirely dedicated to the hastening of independence on their terms, Labour's advice was acceptable only to the extent that it clearly contributed to the same end. If Labour instead appeared to close ranks with the Government, then the question of which party would form the next government simply became irrelevant in nationalist eyes; the struggle would continue just the same. Thus our earlier point about the effects in theory of a pro-government intervention by Labour needs to be modified. In practice such interventions on the side of "moderation" were more than likely to prove counter-productive, possibly to the extent of weakening whatever special links existed between nationalists and party leadership.

(ii) Anti-Government: the Repatriation of Seretse Khama

This is a leading case for our discussion because of the sheer confidence of Labour claims to have exerted decisive influence. Hatch and Wedgwood Benn among individuals, and Venture and the Daily Herald among journals, have all declared without reservation that the Government's 1956 decision to allow Seretse Khama to return to Bechuanaland was the result of Labour Party pressure. "The two-year effort of the party to put things right in Bechuanaland," announced Venture, "has been crowned with the success of jostling the Government into reversing its policy... The Seretse issue shows how the Labour Movement can change history, even whilst in opposition." The Herald described the Government's "surrender" as being more particularly "a personal triumph for burly John Hatch"; Benn too allotted principal credit to Hatch.<sup>10</sup>

Broadly, Labour's version of the story ran thus. Originally the

9 M.W.K. Chiume, "Nyasaland and the Federation", Venture, Nov. 1957, p. 10.

10 Venture, Nov. 1956, p. 1; Daily Herald, 25 Sept. 1956; Benn, letter to Observer, 7 Oct. 1956; Hatch, "The Opposition's Part in Colonial Policy", p. 702, and History of Postwar Africa, pp. 233-4.

Attlee Government had banished Seretse from Bechuanaland for five years, promising a review at the end of that period. Two years later, in 1952, the Conservatives decided that in the interests of unity among the Bamangwato Seretse could never return until another chief had been chosen and become securely established.

Towards the end of the five-year period the issue came to life again in the Labour Party. During 1954 Brockway, Benn and other NCF MPs lobbied the front bench and asked parliamentary Questions. In Transport House Hatch, as the incoming Commonwealth Officer, resolved that his first major task should be to erase what then appeared as the outstanding blot on the Labour Government's colonial record. The wheels began turning; when Brockway raised the issue at the 1954 party conference he was assured by Griffiths that the matter was indeed being considered by the NEC and that a "review" would be undertaken.<sup>11</sup>

The main element in the review was a two-month tour of Africa which Hatch undertook, with the Government's approval and assistance, in mid-1955. The NEC had already interviewed Seretse; while in Africa Hatch gathered opinions and evidence from the other main parties concerned and the Bamangwato generally. He reported back to the NEC that no-one in the tribe regarded the chieftainship issue as settled, and that the pervading uncertainty was hindering the Bamangwatos' economic, political and social development. All elements in the tribe wanted Seretse to return. There were still disagreements about the position of his wife and children, but most elements were prepared to accept them as the price of having Seretse back. Hatch concluded that the Government's present policy was futile because the assumption that the tribe could be persuaded to settle down under another chief was false. He therefore recommended that the Government convene a conference of all interested parties in the hope of achieving a new formula for tribal unity. This must include Seretse's return, though not necessarily as chief.<sup>12</sup>

The NEC accepted Hatch's conclusions. Later, at party conference

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11 Interviews with Brockway and Hatch; 1954 Conference Report, pp. 132, 137.

12 The fullest published account of Hatch's inquiry and conclusions is in his book New From Africa (Dennis Dobson, 1956), pp. 66-76.

with Seretse and Ruth present (and dramatically spotlit at the key moment) so did the mass party.<sup>13</sup> But the real task was to persuade the Government. This Hatch, Griffiths and other members of the NEC's Commonwealth sub-committee sought to do in an interview with the Commonwealth Relations Secretary and his advisers in August 1955. They failed. Lord Home decided that the Government could not accept the idea of a conference because the tribe was beginning to settle down and further discussion could only stir up old jealousies and bitterness. The Labour leadership, as Griffiths reported to the 1955 conference, had therefore to consider what fresh approach might be used.<sup>14</sup>

The answer, in effect, was to seek to undermine the Government's position by exploiting Labour's own role as potential government. In August 1956 a parliamentary opportunity arose. Gordon Walker, who had been the minister responsible for exiling Seretse, proclaimed to an almost empty House that the next Labour government would definitely repatriate him. In Gordon Walker's confident view, "this is now really bound to come; the Government are not the only factor in this."<sup>15</sup>

Come it did. Within six weeks the Government announced that Seretse, Ruth and their children were to be allowed to return to Bechuanaland.

Now it is the very crux of Labour's claim in this matter that Gordon Walker's statement and the Government's policy change were cause and effect. As Hatch put it, the consequence of the statement was that the tribe felt "directly encouraged in its refusal to elect another chief. As the Government's policy depended entirely on persuading it to do so, the policy had to be changed." Here, on this view, was a classic example of the second of the three opposition tactics outlined above. The Opposition had forced a government policy change simply by aligning itself, in its capacity as a future government, with a colonial interest opposed to current policy.

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13 NEC press release, Manchester Guardian, 28 July 1955; 1955 Conference Report, p. 186.

14 Manchester Guardian, 10 Aug. 1955; Griffiths, 1955 Conference Report, pp. 185-6.

15 HCD vol. 557 col. 1529 (1 Aug. 1956).

But just how valid was this view? It has been disputed with some force by leading members and associates of the Africa Bureau, themselves participants in the affair. Mary Benson, for example, has written of some Labour members' "unseemly jostling...to take credit" which they did not deserve; and the Observer's columnist Pendennis described the Labour-inspired account in the Herald as a "shabby bit of gamesmanship" which made "an unfortunately appropriate ending of the party's connection with Seretse Khama."<sup>16</sup> Yet if these strictures had any basis, the question remains: to whom, if not the Labour Party, should the real credit be given?

There is no need to go into the question at length, for there is in fact substantial evidence that Labour's activity was only one of several elements involved in reaching a solution. Tshekedi Khama himself was in London from July to September 1956. He had come not "under Labour Party pressure", as the Herald had it, but on his own initiative, and had indeed told Hatch quite explicitly that it "would be wrong and may be fatal" for him to join hands with Labour against the Government.<sup>17</sup> During his visit a long series of meetings took place: between him and Seretse; between the two of them and sundry advisers and mediators, the most prominent being Tshekedi's old allies Clement Davies and Michael Scott; and between the two of them and Lord Home at the Commonwealth Relations Office.<sup>18</sup> In the process an agreement was evolved. Its essence was that Seretse would renounce all claim to the chieftainship as Tshekedi had done three years earlier; for its part the Government would abandon its efforts to establish another chief. Seretse and Tshekedi would both be free to re-enter Bechuanaland's public life on condition that they support the existing Native Authority in a republican system of government.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama, p. 275; Observer, 30 Sept. 1956. Pendennis in this case was probably Colin Legum. See also Michael Scott, letter to The Times, 28 Sept. 1956.

17 Daily Herald, loc. cit.; Scott, op. cit.; Benson, op. cit., p. 270.

18 Benson, op. cit., p. 271.

19 Daily Telegraph, 27 Sept. 1956.

The pro-Labour account of events was leaked to the Herald and other papers one day before this solution was officially announced. Scott at once took Labour to task in a letter to The Times, concluding that "it would be a pity if this case were not put on record as an example of an achievement made possible in Africa in spite of party political differences here."<sup>20</sup> And Seretse addressed his first two letters of thanks to Lord Home and Clement Davies; not till a fortnight later did he write to thank Griffiths and his colleagues "for the part you have played in bringing about a settlement."<sup>21</sup>

It does seem clear that credit for the solution should be much more widely apportioned than the pro-Labour accounts would have it. Undoubtedly the party deserved credit for re-opening, thoroughly investigating and publicising the case during the two years 1954-6; in so doing it helped, as the Guardian expressed it, to create "a situation in which it was possible for the Government to say 'Yes' and hard to say 'No'."<sup>22</sup> But the claim to sole credit - motivated, perhaps, by the strength of the party's desire to "erase the blot" - does not stand up.

This was obviously a prize exhibit in the gallery of Labour's claims to have influenced colonial policy. The fact that this of all claims turns out to be questionable provides reinforcement for our earlier tentative conclusion: that although the possibilities of influence were large in theory, there were often in practice complicating factors which reduced Labour's impact on policy.

### (iii) Labour and Cyprus

For our next example we may turn to the Mediterranean. Two island colonies, Malta and Cyprus, were for different reasons much in the news in the later fifties, and Labour's colonial activists found themselves deeply involved in the problems of both.

The case of Malta need not be dwelt on since it is not instructive

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20 Scott, op. cit.

21 Manchester Guardian, 27 Sept. 1956; Observer, 7 Oct. 1956; The Times, 10 Oct. 1956.

22 Manchester Guardian editorial, 27 Sept. 1956.

for our purpose. It is true that Labour specialists virtually adopted as their own the proposal, made by an all-party commission in 1955, to integrate Malta into the British Isles in order to alleviate the island's economic difficulties. For three years several Labour members worked wholeheartedly in the characteristic Opposition roles of advising a colonial leader (Dom Mintoff, Malta's Labour Prime Minister) and mediating between colonial leadership and British Government. The integration idea met, however, with precious little enthusiasm in official and Conservative Party circles, and suspicion enough even in the Labour Party; and when eventually negotiations grounded on the rock of Mintoff's demands for greater subsidies, it was as if the whole episode had never occurred. Government policy towards Malta was unchanged and integration disappeared, in Hatch's phrase, "into history's dustbin."

But the Cyprus issue does throw light on our general question of how far the Opposition, qua potential government, could hope to influence colonial policy. At different times Labour adopted each of the principal tactics available to it by moving first towards the colonial leadership's side, then towards the Government's. And in this case Labour's manoeuvres did have an important effect upon the attitudes of major participants, including Makarios himself.

From 1954 until 1958 Labour's official attitude towards Cyprus was markedly different from the Government's. At the 1954 party conference, two months after Hopkinson's "never", Driberg accepted on behalf of the NEC a resolution which deplored government policy and urged the party to oppose it on all occasions. He argued that Cyprus should be allowed to enter upon a period of self-government after which Cypriots could choose between independence in the Commonwealth or union with Greece. The Turkish minority should of course be given safeguards, but it could be hoped that "goodwill" would suffice to protect Turkish interests. Britain should not encounter great difficulty in retaining the use of military bases, but in any event Cyprus was of decreasing strategic relevance in the nuclear age.<sup>23</sup>

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23 1954 Conference Report, pp. 140-1.

From time to time in the next few years variations on this theme were heard. Given the complexity of the issues it was inevitable that some intra-party disagreements should emerge. The extremes of opinion were expressed by Philip Noel-Baker, the party's most ardent philhellene and a lifelong proponent of Enosis, and Reginald Paget, who shared the Suez group's conviction that Britain must stay in Cyprus and also its preoccupation with Turkish interests.<sup>24</sup> But the view outlined by Driberg in 1954 was to remain as the broad basis of the party's official attitude. The policy pamphlet The Smaller Territories, published in June 1957, placed it firmly on record that "the fact that a territory is of great strategic importance does not affect the right of self-determination." And at the 1957 party conference Mrs. Castle, speaking for the NEC, stated that the party leadership would "endeavour to complete this freedom operation for the people of Cyprus during the lifetime of the next Labour Government."<sup>25</sup>

Hence, while the EOKA campaign by violence rose in intensity through the mid fifties, and while the Government was reduced to a virtual dependence upon military measures and emergency regulations to contain the situation, Labour leaders could continue to argue that negotiations towards self-government remained necessary and possible.<sup>26</sup> And in visits to Nicosia, Athens and Ankara Labour MPs - among them Francis Noel-Baker, Mrs. Castle, Brockway and Lena Jeger<sup>27</sup> - regularly offered themselves as intermediaries with the aim of hastening official talks.

Now the point of interest here is that the circumstances provided

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24 See for example Noel-Baker, 1954 Conference Report, pp. 139-40; Paget, HCD vol. 552 cols. 1668-72 (14 May 1956).

25 1957 Conference Report, p. 196. For earlier reassertions of Labour policy see for example Creech Jones, HCD vol. 540 col. 1982-5 (5 May 1955), and Griffiths, vol. 547 cols. 46-7 (5 Dec. 1955).

26 See e.g. the Opposition's censure motion, ibid., vol. 550 col. 387 (14 March 1956).

27 Brockway was also active through the MCF, which maintained links with several radical Cypriot organisations in Britain. See for example Daily Worker, 24 March 1958. Mrs. Jeger's interest in Cyprus was sometimes related, by Conservatives, to the fact that her marginal London constituency included a population of 2,000 Greek Cypriots. See for example CCA, June 1955, p. 11.

Labour with an unusually clear opportunity to impinge upon policy-making. Whereas the Government felt obliged to seek an impartial conciliation among all interests, and thereby severely restricted its own freedom of manoeuvre, Labour was free to take initiatives and, in effect, to align itself with the most dominant interest involved: the Greek-Cypriot interest. Labour leaders would not have thus baldly stated their position, but what mattered was that the interested parties understood it thus. To the Turkish minority, Labour's plan of majority self-government followed by self-determination was "tantamount to giving the Greeks a free hand in promoting Enosis"; consequently Labour's future advent to power was a development to be feared.<sup>28</sup> But to the Greek and Greek-Cypriot leaders, whatever proposals might be put forward by the Conservatives were already outbid by Labour. Hence, "while waiting for Labour to come to power," the Greeks were "unlikely to be tempted by any offers within the scope of Tory policy."<sup>29</sup> This, at any rate, was the attitude periodically restated "with complete frankness" (as the Telegraph put it) by such leading Greek-Cypriot spokesmen as Dr. Dervis, Mayor of Nicosia.<sup>30</sup> And its prevalence certainly made the Government's load no lighter - as Lennox-Boyd, with comparable frankness, periodically told the House of Commons.<sup>31</sup>

In short, the effect of Labour taking the position it did was to put extreme pressure on the Government to modify its policy in the direction of majority self-government for Cyprus. Thus Lena Jeger commented on the accusation that as a result of Mrs. Castle's pledge, the Greeks would rather wait for Labour than deal with the Conservatives: "But this has always been the case. The answer is for the present Government to reopen negotiations with the Cypriot people on a self-governing constitution, linked with a guarantee of self-determination."<sup>32</sup> Clearly, so long as the

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28 The Times, 1 Dec. 1957, reporting Turkish press reactions to the NEC's most recent statement on Cyprus.

29 Observer, 3 Nov. 1957; see also Daily Telegraph editorial, 29 Oct. 1957.

30 Daily Telegraph editorial, 16 July 1957.

31 See e.g. his reference to Mrs. Castle's conference pledge, HCD vol. 579 col. 184 (3 Dec. 1957).

32 Letter to Observer, 10 Nov. 1957.

Government refused utterly to yield to Greek-Cypriot demands there could be no solution at all; and this was a measure of the strength of Labour's position.

In 1958, however, three major parties - Government, Opposition and Greek-Cypriot leadership - all modified their attitudes in a complex set of moves and counter-moves. These made a fascinating prelude to the settlement finally reached in February 1959, and the Opposition's role in them is well worth analysing.

Two main factors underlay Labour's shifts of position. One was the promulgation in June 1958 of the Macmillan-Foot plan (discussed in Chapter VIII above). The idea of a seven-year tridominium stood a very long way from Labour's declared policy. Labour leaders nevertheless felt obliged to consider it seriously, chiefly because the Greek and Turkish leaders themselves had undertaken to do so. As long as it seemed possible that the plan would prove acceptable to these leaders it would have been irresponsible of Labour to jeopardise the plan's chances - or so Gaitskell, Bevan and Callaghan were reported to have advised their back-bench followers.<sup>33</sup> In the event the parliamentary debate on the plan was marked by a studied moderation on Labour's part. There was some criticism of details (which the Government certainly heeded, to judge by its subsequent modifications in the plan<sup>34</sup>). But the plan's basic purpose - to provide for a diplomatic holding operation - was given the Opposition's approval. It was Richard Crossman who stated most candidly how large a shift this had represented:

"The change that we have made as a party - a change which has involved some of us in a terrible struggle - is to admit that so much has the situation degenerated in Cyprus in the last six years that the idea of a determined period of self-government followed by self-determination must temporarily be abandoned."<sup>35</sup>

And it was the Telegraph which most perceptively assessed the impact of Labour's move on the situation in Cyprus. Labour's change of attitude

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33 Detailed reports of Labour's "private" deliberations on the plan may be found in Daily Telegraph, 20 and 24 June 1958; Manchester Guardian, 23 June 1958; The Times, 25 June 1958.

34 Daily Telegraph, 19 Sept. 1958.

35 HCD vol. 590 col. 696 (26 June 1958).

meant that

"the Greeks, if they reject the plan, will have only a small and uninfluential minority of Her Majesty's alternative governing party to whom they can look for support... But against this, the Turks would be well advised to note that the Labour Party leadership...could easily be provoked into adopting once again their indiscriminating support of the Greek claims. In other words, the price of intransigence on either side would be high in terms of its effect on the British Labour Party."<sup>36</sup>

The second factor impelling a Labour shift was the very apparent hardening of British public opinion against EOKA, and by association against the Greek-Cypriot case generally. During 1958 EOKA terrorism remained at a high pitch; and as Hatch later commented,

"when public opinion is enraged by violence against British forces it is well nigh impossible to expect Members of Parliament, with the feelings of their constituents to consider...to declare that the deaths of Cypriots in Famagusta...[are] as deplorable as those of Britishers caused by EOKA."

Labour sensitivity to this factor was naturally heightened in a pre-election year, and the truth of Hatch's remark was well demonstrated in the year's closing months. Mrs. Castle, on a visit to the island, stated that British soldiers were being "permitted and even encouraged by the authorities" to be "unnecessarily tough." At this, Labour's leaders promptly issued a disclaimer which amounted to a public rebuke to Mrs. Castle, then vice-chairman of the party.<sup>37</sup> Not content with this, Gaitskell later issued in Parliament a categorical pledge of Labour support for the British forces - an action clearly designed to expunge the memory of Mrs. Castle's strictures.<sup>38</sup>

In September Archbishop Makarios too yielded ground. In an interview in Athens, he told Mrs. Castle that if Britain abandoned the Macmillan-Foot plan he would no longer demand Enosis but would accept a period of self-government followed by independence under United Nations auspices. This was his first important concession in the whole dispute. The considerations

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36 Daily Telegraph editorial, 27th June 1958.

37 Daily Telegraph, 22 Sept. 1958; Manchester Guardian, 25 Sept. 1958.

38 HCD vol. 595 col. 390 (12 Nov. 1958); Daily Telegraph, 13 Nov. 1958.

which motivated him were set out in a letter to the EOKA leader General Grivas. America's full support of British policy and the fear that the British Government, if further thwarted, would incline towards a partitionist solution were both mentioned. But from the point of view of this analysis it is of greater interest to note the impact on Makarios of the Labour-Conservative convergence in Britain.

"As you will have read in the newspapers I yesterday made a statement to Mrs. Barbara Castle, the MP, by which I virtually created a new situation... Although this new line could possibly be described as a retreat, it is what the situation, if coldly appraised, requires.

My latest information is extremely disheartening... British public opinion has turned very considerably against us, and the British Press, including that of the Labour Party, even when not attacking us, carefully avoids any kind of publication which would damage the prestige of British troops, because of the strength of public opinion.

Barbara Castle and others among the Labour Party declared that they could not oppose the British plan unless the Archbishop offered something new which would be favourably received under the conditions at present prevailing in England... I cannot now forecast the consequences, but they cannot be bad."<sup>39</sup>

There was, in brief, a consistent sensitivity among the Cypriot leaders to the attitudes of the Labour Opposition in Britain; and there can be no doubt that Makarios's concession, when it came, was motivated in large part by the Opposition's prior movement towards the middle ground of British opinion.

At the time the Government rejected Makarios's offer on the grounds that a "period of calm" was required before final decisions were taken.<sup>40</sup> Yet within five months the settlement had been reached. And though in its details it followed lines jointly proposed by the Greek and Turkish governments, its essential basis was the one proposed by Makarios in September. Thus there is good reason to accept, in this case, Labour's claim to influence. Wielding at first a kind of veto power over the chances of progress on the Government's initial terms, the Opposition

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39 Makarios to Grivas, quoted in Charles Foley (ed.), The Memoirs of General Grivas (Longmans, 1964), p. 163.

40 Ibid., p. 164.

later entered upon a course of "active cooperation" (Hatch's phrase) with the Government; and this was one of the several necessary preludes to the eventual resolution.

One more case remains to be considered before any further conclusions are attempted.

(iv) Labour and the African Wind of Change

Our final case is a very general one. It concerns the overall movement in the Government's Africa policy following the pivotal year 1959.

According to Iain Macleod, it is wrong to assume that a single major decision set British policy on a new course after the 1959 election. But that there was such a movement is undeniable. It can clearly be seen in the contrast between Macleod's policies in multi-racial Africa and those of his two predecessors, and particularly in the vital concessions which Macleod made to Kenyan Africans in February 1960, to Nyasaland Africans in the summer of 1960, and to Northern Rhodesian Africans in 1961. "By these years [1960-1]," Macleod has written, "we will be judged."<sup>41</sup>

This study is concerned with the period immediately prior to the policy movement. It is not, therefore, concerned to explore in detail the ways in which Macmillan and Macleod grasped the nettle of decolonisation in settler territories. It simply stands by the assertion that this was when the decisive shift in British policy came about. But some of the many strands which led towards 1960-1 do require consideration in the context of this chapter. And the first is the strand of Labour efforts before 1959 to force just such a movement in policy as did take place after 1959.

What Labour did, essentially, was to exploit the third of the three techniques of intervention available to it - that is, alignment with an "opposition" element inside the colonial territory. By associating itself with the Africans who sought power as against the Europeans who held it, Labour was giving notice that it would attempt, when in office, to turn the

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41 Iain Macleod, "Britain's Future Policy in Africa", Weekend Telegraph, 12 March 1965.

existing power structure on its head. This was not the whole truth about Labour's position - as we have seen earlier, there were times when the party's leading figures insisted on their solicitude for European interests - but this was certainly Labour's position as generally understood and acted upon by other parties. The point may be simply illustrated with the words of Kenneth Kaunda, reminiscing in 1967: "We used to almost sleep by the radio each time there was a General Election in Britain, praying and hoping that the Labour Party would be returned to power."<sup>42</sup>

The question is whether Labour's activity in the fifties, and the subsequent shift of Conservative policy along the lines advocated by Labour, were in any degree cause and effect. The ubiquitous Hatch, for one, comes close to asserting a direct causal relationship: "Without Labour's constant, and not always popular, campaign on this issue [colonial freedom] during the fifties, it's doubtful if the Tories would ever have scented the post-1959 wind of change."<sup>43</sup> With particular reference to the federation, Mrs. Castle is even more dogmatic: "If it [the Government] was eventually forced to the right solution it was because a vigilant Labour Opposition egged it on."<sup>44</sup>

It was stated above that this question cannot be fully explored within the bounds of the present study. But it requires no deep exploration to conclude that of all Labour's claims to influence this one seems the most excessive. It is worth quoting at length Macleod's own account of the factors which shaped his attitudes as incoming Colonial Secretary:

"The logic of the transfer of power in West Africa meant that it must come swiftly in East and steadily in Central Africa. Independence once given to the African in the Gold Coast could not for long be denied to his brother in Kenya, and in particular it could not long be delayed only because of the presence of

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42 Kaunda went on to observe that now, thanks to the Wilson Government's handling of the Rhodesian issue, it was "very much the end of a love affair" Observer, 5 Nov. 1967.

43 Written under the nom de plume of Flavus, New Statesman, 6 Dec. 1963, pp. 822-3.

44 Review of Welensky's 4,000 Days, ibid., 29 May 1964, p. 852.

European settlers...

The situation in autumn, 1959, was grim. A massive emergency in Kenya, emergency in Nyasaland, serious trouble in Malta and in Northern Rhodesia. I think any Secretary of State would have decided that there was little time left in Africa to devise solutions... For myself, some months before the election, and before of course I had any idea that I would become Secretary of State, I had convinced myself that for all the manifest dangers of moving quickly in Africa, the dangers of being too slow were greater.

Perhaps the tragedy of Hola Camp, even more than the 'murder plot' emergency in Nyasaland, was decisive... [Michael Blundell] records that in May 1959 he met me for the first time in London: 'Iain Macleod questioned me closely on the incident, and I think it probably re-emphasised in his mind the feeling that the time for substantial changes in Kenya was overdue.' This is correct...

The alternative policy of course was to announce our determination to stay - and to use force to do so. Only the blind thought we could achieve this... With all our might, and an immense deployment of first-class troops, we could not subdue the small island of Cyprus."<sup>41</sup>

All this was written with the benefit of five years' hindsight. As an account of the shaping of attitudes it nevertheless has the tone of authenticity. In particular it is fair to conclude that Macleod's views arose from an independent assessment of trends and events rather than as a response to promptings from the Opposition. This in spite of the fact (which, no doubt, Hatch and Mrs. Castle had in mind) that the conclusions Macleod reached were essentially those which Labour had reached some years earlier.

None of this, however, is meant to suggest that domestic politics had no relevance to the timing of the new liberalism in Conservative policy. To indicate its very considerable relevance we must briefly take up another strand, since the most directly relevant politics were the internal politics of the Conservative Party.

Let us recapitulate. The responsibility for colonial policy in the later fifties lay with a minister who was, quite plainly, far from anxious to expedite African takeovers in Kenya and Central Africa. As late as January 1959 Lennox-Boyd believed that independence would not come even to Uganda and Tanganyika before about 1970; as for Kenya, the earliest likely date was about 1975.<sup>45</sup> On the benches behind him the majority of the most

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45 See above, p. 38.

interested Members were still strongly sympathetic towards the European leaders of British Africa.

Now it is extremely likely that Macmillan, like Macleod, had by the later fifties reached conclusions on Africa policy rather more liberal than those of Lennox-Boyd and his back-bench supporters.<sup>46</sup> But in the circumstances Macmillan had no real opportunity to give expression to them. In 1958, for example, the immediate task was to carry the party with him on Cyprus policy without reopening the wounds of Suez; to have attempted any liberal departures on Kenya or Rhodesia in the same year would surely have involved too great a risk with the party, especially since Africa seemed generally peaceful, and settler rule generally successful, at the time. In 1959 came the eruption in Nyasaland, the deaths at Hola, a crisis in Northern Rhodesia and the Devlin Report. Each of these events struck its blow against the old policies and, on the face of it, made clearer the need for a fresh approach. But by 1959 new domestic considerations were relevant. It was election year. The Opposition was exploiting these issues with great energy and demanding Lennox-Boyd's resignation. In this situation any departure from established positions would have looked to the party and the voters like an ignominious surrender, a plain admission of culpability. So far from yielding ground, the Macmillan cabinet rejected the Devlin Report's main condemnatory passages and gave Lennox-Boyd solid support in the House.

The election, however, brought a significant transformation in the party. Lennox-Boyd retired from the Government (as Macmillan had known he would). Macleod was ready and even anxious to take on the Colonial Secretaryship. The party gained a large group of new young members who were interested in Africa and provided a strong counterweight to the older traditionalists. In addition Macmillan enjoyed, for the first time, the vast authority in his party of a leader who had just won a major electoral victory. There was, in short, no longer any sufficient intra-party reason to postpone major changes in Africa policy. These duly took place. To be sure, there were still some loud growls from the back benches

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46 Hints to this effect may be found in some of the relevant memoirs: e.g. Welensky's 4,000 Days, p. 101, and Blundell's So Rough a Wind, p. 263. But the leading discussion is Horowitz, Attitudes of British Conservatives towards Decolonization, pp. 58-9, 61-79, 421-2.

and at least one vigorous faction fight:<sup>47</sup> but the leadership's calculation that the internal balance of forces now leaned towards liberalisation proved to be correct.

The relevance of Labour activity to the timing of the Conservative policy shift is much more difficult to assess. So far we have simply dismissed the cause-and-effect claims of Hatch and Mrs. Castle as excessive. We have not dismissed Labour's efforts out of hand, and it would be wrong to do so merely because some leading figures have shown an over-zealous partisanship. The following is therefore offered as a tentative judgment of Labour's contribution.

In the fifties, the Labour Party generally worked on the assumption that it was not enough merely to try to sway governmental attitudes. In terms of hard politics, the main factor which delayed the tilting of the power-balance towards Africans in the plural societies was that the Africans themselves did not yet deploy sufficient political skills and power of organisation to be taken seriously. Once these qualities were seen to exist then official attitudes would necessarily swing nearer to Labour's. In this respect the party's most significant activity was not its canvassing of politico-moral arguments on the Africans' behalf but its efforts in practice to boost the development of African political power. Informal tutelage in the principles of mass party organisation,<sup>48</sup> tactical advice on dealings with government officials, assistance in the drafting of programmes and negotiating positions: in ways like these the party was better placed and better able than any other metropolitan body to impart useful knowledge and foster usable skills. This is certainly not to attribute so large a phenomenon as the rapid growth of African power in the later fifties to any cause external to Africa. Obviously that growth was essentially an ingenerate process, and the roles of external bodies like the Labour Party were no more than auxiliary. Nevertheless, it was just because the Labour

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47 Discussed below, p. 424.

48 E.g. Kenneth Kaunda, the leader whose "love affair" with the Labour Party was cited earlier, received just such tutelage for a period after the Commonwealth Socialist Conference in 1957.

Party had supplemented moral support with practical support in the kinds of ways mentioned that it could fairly claim to have contributed to the change of political climate within which the new Conservative Government proved willing to make vital concessions to African political demands.

The case studies in this chapter have shown how difficult it is to assess the impact in practice of various types of Opposition intervention, however clearcut the possibilities might seem in theory. For an intervention to be clearly effective, many other circumstances had to fall into a concomitant pattern: as they did, for example, in Cyprus at an important stage in 1958, as they did not in the Gold Coast in 1956 and as they mainly did not - or not so neatly as some Labour members claimed - in the case of Seretse. Yet our conclusion concerning Labour's role in the approach to the African wind of change may well be adapted to suit the chapter as a whole. Though it was seldom, if ever, able to force dramatic and visible changes in government policy, Labour was consistently able, in practical ways, to affect the political climate within which both government and colonial leaders had to operate. More particularly, by throwing its weight to one side or the other it could often affect the demands and responses made by each side in the main policy-making dialogue. And this is as near as it is reasonable to come towards accepting the tripod metaphor with which we began.

## CONCLUSIONS

## CHAPTER XI

## POSTSCRIPT AND RETROSPECT

"Nationalist politicians...are disappointed that Labour conceded less than they expected: and surprised that Conservatism conceded so much."

Editorial, The Times, 12 May 1955.

1. A Postscript: After 1959

Because the Government was seen to be making fundamentally different decisions on the central issues after 1959, the domestic debate on colonial affairs moved its ground and began to change in character.

Decisions were different in two main respects. Firstly, gradualism was virtually abandoned as an assumption of policy. Nigeria, which gained independence in October 1960, was the last major example of a territory arriving at its goal on the "classic" Gold Coast pattern - that is, in fairly close accord with a schedule painstakingly devised and argued about over a period of several years. Cyprus, preceding it by six weeks, was the first example of a territory reaching independence within a couple of years of the total collapse of British plans for its long-term constitutional evolution. Thereafter almost all territories followed the pattern of Cyprus. Tanganyika, for example, which in 1959 had been regarded as still a decade or more from independence, reached it in 1961; Uganda in 1962. This change in emphasis, from planned and gradual evolution under British tutelage to independence as soon as was politically practicable, indicated plainly that only one major criterion was now thought relevant to the timing of independence. Such criteria as harmony among ethnic groups, economic viability, a developed infrastructure of voluntary organisations and demonstrably stable political institutions, so often stressed by politicians and Colonial Office in the past, were now scarcely heard of. All that really mattered was that an indigenous political elite, with some degree of local support, should exist and be willing to take over.

Secondly, and as a very special case of this general point, Macleod began the process of transferring power from European to African hands in Kenya and Central Africa. This we have frequently remarked already; suffice it here that the last sanctum of traditional Conservative policy was thus assailed.

How then did the domestic political debate change in character? It changed, firstly, in the sense that the Macmillan-Macleod approach brought the Government to a position barely distinguishable from that which sections of the Opposition had been advocating since at least the early fifties, and the Opposition as a whole since at least the middle and later fifties. "The central principle of colonial policy is now broadly agreed between the leaders of all parties, allowing a remarkable degree of national, or bi-partisan, approach to be accepted in meeting the residual problems of 'imperialism'"<sup>1</sup> - this kind of judgment, so often heard in the forties and so little heard in the fifties, could now at last be revived and restated with plausibility and conviction.

But it changed in another way. Whatever might be said about relative harmony across the front benches, intra-party conflict remained: only its locus had moved. By contrast with the early fifties, the early sixties found the Labour Party united on colonial policy and the Conservative Party experiencing internal tension. Did the new trends represent political expediency or political wisdom? A shameful capitulation to American pressure or an exercise in courage and imagination? A perfidious selling-out of kith and kin, or a belated awakening to realities? However the question was phrased, the party was divided over it. Macleod himself believed his approach to be not only "wise" but "morally right";<sup>2</sup> in this belief he was actively supported by many of the seventy or so newly-elected Conservative back-benchers. But the traditionalist rump understandably felt an anger and a distress that was epitomised in the redoubtable Lord Salisbury's attack on Macleod as a man "too clever by half."

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1 Hatch, "The Opposition's Part in Colonial Policy", p.703.

2 Blundell, op.cit., p.271.

The full story of the party's internal conflicts over Kenya and Central Africa in the early sixties has yet to be made public.<sup>3</sup> But the main formal test of power between the two sides has been well documented.<sup>4</sup> An Early Day Motion condemning Macleod's plans for greater African representation in the Northern Rhodesian legislature was tabled in February 1961 by Robin Turton, an ex-minister whose son had emigrated to Rhodesia. Timed to coincide with the convening of a Northern Rhodesian constitutional conference in London, it amounted to a "thus far and no farther" ultimatum from back bench to front. Such familiar right-wing names as Paul Williams, Anthony Fell, John Biggs-Davison, F.M. Bennett and Patrick Wall were soon added to Turton's. But support for the motion was by no means confined to the traditional Empire men; after two weeks the motion bore the signatures of 102 Members, representing over a third of the party's back-bench membership. This was almost certainly a much greater proportion than Macleod and Macmillan had bargained for. But the motion provoked in its turn some vigorous counter-lobbying by a group of liberal MPs led by Humphry Berkeley, Christopher Chataway and Nigel Fisher, their efforts being discreetly supplemented by the party whips. Fifteen names were withdrawn from Turton's motion and the liberals eventually tabled a rival motion which rallied some forty signatures - not many, but enough to keep the revolt from spreading. Macleod proceeded with his plan for Northern Rhodesia and met with no further effective resistance from within the party.<sup>5</sup>

The consequence of rapid decolonisation was the equally rapid emergence of a "new Commonwealth"; and for a time after 1960 it appeared that Labour was taking over the traditionally Conservative role of Commonwealth party.

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3 There is, however, a careful discussion in Horowitz, op.cit., Chs. II and III, esp. pp.114-23, 171-4. Among published works the best source is Keatley's lively and journalistic discussion of the 'Rhodesia Lobby' in The Politics of Partnership, pp.446-65.

4 The Times, 10, 15, 22, 24, 25 Feb. 1961; Keatley, op.cit., pp.455-7; Ronald Butt, The Power of Parliament, p.232; also Horowitz, op.cit., pp.105-7.

5 There is, however, reason to believe Butt's assertion that "this episode did Macleod's subsequent ministerial career much harm" (Butt, loc.cit.; see also Horowitz, op.cit., pp.83, 155-6, 424-5). Macleod was removed from the Colonial Secretaryship eight months later, served from 1961 to 1963 as Leader of the House, and declined ministerial office under that old federationist, Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

For the sense of identity with the old Empire-Commonwealth which Conservatives had felt was now finding a counterpart on the Labour side, as the nationalist movements with which Labour had enjoyed association in the fifties became, one by one, governing regimes in new Commonwealth states. This new configuration was well demonstrated in 1962 when many Labour speakers took the Commonwealth's part in opposition to the Conservative Government's efforts to enter the European Economic Community. Yet a number of incidents, most notably the affair of Chief Enahoro in 1963, suggested that in its last few years of opposition the Labour Party was becoming less clear about the attitudes it should adopt towards the internal regimes of the new states.<sup>6</sup> On this subject there were occasional glimmerings of the old left-right differences. Left-wing speakers and writers sometimes expressed scorn for the moderates' continued equating of "socialist cooperation" with the "civilising mission", and their continuing hope for "an economic Commonwealth with strong British traditions which can make a significant contribution to the defence of the 'free world'."<sup>7</sup> Moderates were reluctant to echo the uncritical admiration sometimes expressed by the left for charismatic "African-socialist" leaders, showing instead an anxiety for the survival of responsible parliamentarism in new states.<sup>8</sup>

Even before Labour acceded to power in October 1964, however, it had become apparent that there was little prospect of any section of the party being able to influence the course of events in new states. In this respect the new disagreements were much more academic than those of the colonial era, when the existence of metropolitan powers and responsibilities had made such influence possible. In any event it is clear enough that "Commonwealth"

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6 Labour opposed the Government's decision to extradite Enahoro from England to face justice at the hands of his political enemies in Nigeria. See Georges Fischer, "Attitudes Travailleuses à l'Égard des États Nouveaux" (mimeo., Fondation National des Sciences Politiques, Paris, 1963), pp.51-4.

7 Phrases quoted from Ioan Davies's comments on John Strachey's The End of Empire (1959), Rita Hinden's Principles of Socialism: Africa and Asia (1961), and Patrick Gordon Walker's The Commonwealth (1962), in New Left Review, Dec. 1963, pp.89-90.

8 See for example Rita Hinden's review of Brockway's African Socialism (1963), in Encounter, March 1964, pp.74-6.

problems, perhaps with the residual exception of Rhodesia, will not again preoccupy British politicians of either main party so deeply as did "colonial" problems in the fifties.

## 2. A Retrospect: Colonial Affairs in British Politics

It was suggested in the Introduction that the period between 1945 and 1959 could be seen as a bridge between two different worlds: a world in which the colonial Empire and its corollary, the imperial mission, could still appear as durable, if peripheral, facts of British political life, and a world in which a Conservative government, well aware of the special interests that would suffer, could nevertheless give priority to the speediest practicable withdrawal from colonies. In the very broadest terms this transition was the consequence of two complementary forces over which Britain had little control. On one side Britain's own decline as a world power; on the other, the remarkable post-war rise of aggressive national consciousness in colonial dependencies everywhere.

This study, however, has not attempted to deal in the very broadest terms. It has concentrated on the microcosm of British politics; more particularly, on the activities of the major political parties and certain pressure groups within that area of British political activity having the Colonial Office and Parliament as its focal points. Within these limits the study has proceeded on two levels of inquiry. It has sought to discuss the ways in which colonial problems were dealt with in the course of domestic politics, showing how changes in the pattern of domestic activity were related to changes in the character of colonial issues over the period. And it has sought to assess, where possible, the impact of domestic political activity on governmental policy. It is time now to attempt a summary of the argument on both these levels.

In considering first the course of domestic politics, it is well to begin by restating a point that is often overlooked. If the major parties are judged solely by the records of their leaders in office, it is not very apparent that there was any great contention between them over colonial issues. Chapter I showed that governmental policies in several fields were substantially similar before and after the 1951 election. With regard to the African nationalist movements, neither side could do much more than try to

keep abreast of the chain reaction which began in the Gold Coast in the later forties and passed through almost every colony. With regard to European settlers, the record shows that a Labour government set the machinery moving towards federation, a version of which the Conservatives duly established. When colonial crises became exceptionally severe both sides resorted to repressive measures: Labour in Palestine and Malaya no less than Conservatives in Kenya and Cyprus. The Conservatives carried on with Labour's main experiment in state enterprise, the Colonial Development Corporation. Indeed, as The Times remarked in 1955, it would be just as easy, if not more so,

"to point out variations in interpretation of colonial policy by individual Ministers, as by parties. For instance, Mr. Creech Jones set his face against Central African Federation, Mr. Griffiths initiated it; Mr. Lyttelton deposed the Kabaka, Mr. Lennox-Boyd is trying to get him back."<sup>9</sup>

We have not, however, sought to judge the parties' approaches to colonial issues solely by the records of the parties' leaders in office. We have attempted a vision which includes followers as well as leaders, out of office as well as in; and it is in this broader framework that the growth of political controversy on colonial issues becomes visible. In particular it becomes possible to set against the apparent continuity of many policy lines at ministerial level the clear record of conflicts between the parties in their roles as Government and Opposition, especially after 1951.

Now it might be argued that the mere fact of this contrast, the apparent concord of parties succeeding each other in office as against the discord between parties qua Government and Opposition, is scarcely a matter for comment. It is after all a fairly normal pattern of behaviour in a two-party parliamentary system, reflecting the inevitable constraints upon any party in office as against the relative freedom of manoeuvre of any party in opposition. But the whole point here is that colonial affairs was not supposed to be a "normal" field of policy. It had long been the

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9 Editorial, The Times, 12 May 1955.

conventional wisdom that in making policy for dependent peoples, the very first necessity was bi-partisan accord at home; nothing was more important, in the interests of the colonial peoples themselves, than that the whole subject should be elevated above the fortunes of British election results. Essentially, what happened in the period we have been concerned with was a conspicuous departure from this well-established conventional wisdom, even though exhortations to stand by it were almost ceaselessly heard.<sup>10</sup> So our question remains: why?

Briefly, the answer which this study has sought to bring out is as follows. The bi-partisan ideal was always surrounded by a good deal of myth. In practice it was never really accepted by the parties as a binding principle; rather it rested always on a highly conditional basis. The war years and the immediate post-war period were something of a heyday for the bi-partisan approach, but for several reasons these were exceptional years. The approach was bound to break down once new kinds of issues had undermined the old "conditions" of inter-party harmony, and this they did as from the early fifties. A reconciliation between the parties on the key issues could not really take place until "conditions" once again permitted, and this did not begin to happen until the lessons of that stormy decade had been well absorbed by both sides.

To elaborate. In the forties it was an easy matter to sum up what colonial policy was all about. The aim was to lead the colonies towards eventual self-government within the Empire. Britain as trustee would take the necessary initiatives and work to reconcile conflicts of interest. Political responsibility would be instilled in carefully graduated stages. The metropolis accepted a large measure of financial and administrative responsibility for schemes of economic and social development. Settler enterprise was to be supported, chiefly for economic reasons. Self-government would come only when colonies were clearly in a position to sustain

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<sup>10</sup> In earlier chapters we noted many examples of such exhortations addressed by government members to the Opposition. But they issued also from leader-writers (e.g. The Times, 13 April 1957, and Telegraph, 16 July 1957); authors (e.g. Colin Legum, Must We Lose Africa? (1954), pp.221-3); and assorted dignitaries (e.g. presidential address to the London Chamber of Commerce, reported in The Times, 8 May 1957).

it, economically as well as politically. On all these important points the parties seemed to be in agreement.

Yet the analysis of the period undertaken in Chapters IV and V revealed an apparent paradox. Against the bi-partisan tenor of parliamentary discourse had to be set the fact that in terms of traditions, ideas and self-images the parties were strikingly different. On the Labour side two main streams had coexisted - a stream of radical, internationalist and "liberationist" sentiment, and a liberal-humanitarian stream, canalised in the forties by the Fabian Colonial Bureau, which expressed itself chiefly in a practical concentration upon the injustices of colonial administration and a wariness of settlers' political ambitions. The element common to both streams was a sense of Labour's moral superiority, an image of Labour as the "non-imperialist" party of the oppressed." On the Conservative side too there were two main streams. There was still a powerful and prideful imperialist tradition, distinguished by a firm belief in the Empire's durability and by residual schemes for economic unification surviving as legacies from fin de siècle Conservatism. Beside it, and of more recent origin, there flowed a current of moderate liberalism, characterised certainly by some "traditional" attitudes - concerning, for example, the need for settlers to wield not only economic but also political power - but nevertheless realistic about imperial economics and the inevitability of decolonisation. The broad image of their party common to both elements was that of the "party of Empire", the party uniquely fitted by historical experience to understand the problems of Empire and how to deal with them. Beneath the parties' overt agreement on some commodiously-phrased objectives, in short, lay some very different attitudes.

That a substantially bi-partisan approach could exist in spite of these differences may be explained in terms of three related factors. Firstly, during most of that decade - from 1942 to 1950 - the two men with principal party responsibility for colonial affairs were Oliver Stanley and Arthur Creech Jones. If any men represented the point at which their respective parties' liberal-moderate streams flowed nearest, these two did. Inter-party harmony was to some degree the reflection of their mutual respect and cooperativeness.

Secondly, the left of the Labour Party and the right of the Conservative Party, from whom dissonance might well have been expected, were more or less neutralised in this period. The Labour left, quite simply, was not particularly interested; it lacked leaders knowledgeable in colonial affairs and was far more concerned with domestic issues. By contrast, the Conservative right did not lack members who were concerned with "imperial" problems and, moreover, felt themselves out of sympathy with the apparent trend towards imperial fission. However they made no sustained attempt to translate their concern into active parliamentary opposition, and this could be attributed in fair measure to the high political skill of Stanley in containing them.

But there was a further reason. If the different ideas and attitudes of the parties did not come much to light in the immediate post-war period it was largely because there were very few concrete issues capable of bringing them out. Certainly the old optimistic assumptions were dented somewhat by the events in the Gold Coast; but there were few other "crises," the problem of power distribution in plural societies did not come to a head, and there seemed no good reason to doubt that the broad objectives would, eventually, be achieved painlessly enough. Thus there was no party conflict for most of the period simply because there were no specific issues which, in the Opposition's collective opinion, really merited it.

Towards the end of Labour's term in office, though, the situation began to change. Issues which the Opposition judged to be worth exploiting on party lines did arise. And as they did, so the conditional basis of the bi-partisan approach became evident. Divisions were forced on several matters: the quasi-colonial issue of groundnuts, the Government's misfortunes with Gambian poultry and its handling of the cases of the two Khamas. Then in 1951, at the height of an election campaign, Griffiths announced that a change of government could do nothing but harm to the cause of colonial progress. In these ways some of the myth which enshrouded the bi-partisan ideal was already being dispelled.

There followed the years of crises. Within the framework of traditional policy, it appeared, the virtually unanticipated eruption of Mau Mau could occur; the crypto-communist ministry of British Guiana could come to power; EOKA terrorism could break out; and elsewhere, in many lesser ways, the burgeoning of nationalism could severely strain the fabric of colonial

law and order. Was it then still reasonable to assume that Britain could go on setting the rules? Was gradualism sufficient? Could Britain still hope to reconcile sharply conflicting interests within the old, all-embracing formulae of trusteeship?

Few people were prepared to regard the government of the day as solely to blame for these crises, since their roots clearly stretched well back into history. But the Opposition, at least, felt itself entitled to judge the Government by the ways in which it responded to the new situation, by the extent to which it was willing to modify the old assumptions. In fact the Government's response was marked by flexibility in dealing, for example, with the West African pace-setters, but by a good deal of inflexibility elsewhere. The remedy for "disorder" had first and foremost to be military. Colonies relevant to British strategic planning must still expect to remain British indefinitely. And in settler colonies stability and economic progress were to be bought by entrusting the Europeans, more than ever before, with the levers of political power.

It was basically because of the Government's inflexibility in these respects that the bi-partisan approach became a thing of the past. What Labour's leaders might have done had they been in office was beside the point; as was argued in Chapter VI, the party in opposition had no alternative but to deplore policies which appeared to express so faithfully the priorities of the traditional Conservative stream. By contrast with the forties, in brief, this was an era when concrete issues were indeed capable of bringing out the latent differences in party attitudes.

Federation, above all, polarised the parties, and in the circumstances it would have been naive to expect anything else. For the way in which the plan was developed and implemented brought into sharper focus than any previous issue the fundamental relationships between race and political power, and virtually imposed on the parties the duty of choosing to support the claims of one race against the other. It followed from the whole patterns of ideas and beliefs in the two parties that they should align themselves with different races.

But this was not all. If Conservatives generally found it easy to unite behind current policy, the issues of these years produced further complications within the party-group cluster on the Labour side. Since the

Seretse Khama case in 1950, the left had been finding cause to concern itself anew with colonial affairs. In the early fifties a series of pressure groups was formed, offering outlets for moral crusading well to the left of the official party line. Thus the traditional radical stream flowed with increasing strength, and among the rank and file it did so partly at the expense of the traditional moderate stream. The Movement for Colonial Freedom, unlike its antecedent groups, had come to stay. In over-simplified terms, the Labour movement found itself divided into an "economics first" school - those who still felt that ripeness for self-government should be measured by economic as well as political factors - and a "politics first" school - those who felt that political readiness alone was sufficient, and that in any case economic growth was unlikely to occur until after "liberation" had been achieved.

What happened between the mid-fifties and the end of the decade, in essence, was that both parties moved relatively to the left of their earlier positions such that something rather like this "politics first-economics first" dispute was projected onto the larger inter-party battle. In the Labour Party a version of the politics-first belief became ascendant in the course of the long-drawn process of policy reformulation discussed in Chapter IX. This did not entail an unconditional acceptance by the leadership of the whole radical syndrome, and there was plenty of evidence that the leading colonial nationalists, to whose demands Labour's attitudes were increasingly geared, did not yet consider the party "advanced" enough. Yet in committing itself to transfer power to Africans in plural societies, in moving from a conservative to a radical estimate of the possibilities of British intervention in Central Africa, in declaring that strategic considerations were irrelevant to the question of self-rule in such territories as Cyprus, the Labour leadership was still far enough in advance of the Government to be able to demand policy changes with its old self-image intact.

But Conservative policy was not in fact as static as Labour seemed sometimes to think. Under the pressure of events, the process of retreating from one traditional stronghold to the next was well under way by the end of the decade. The residual-imperialist rump had been isolated and left ineffective in the conflicts over economic unification and the 1954 Suez

withdrawal (though the subsequent Suez invasion brought a brief revival of glory). And in 1958-9 one of the most firmly drawn of Conservative lines was crossed when the Government publicly abandoned, in effect, its belief in the military necessity of hanging on to Cyprus - and did so with no significant party disturbances. By 1959 only the most fervently held of the old commitments remained: the commitment to stand by the settlers. Ostensibly this commitment was still being justified in terms of the territories' long-term economic interest. Yet the African outbursts of 1959 were making it more than ever apparent that the real issue was that of distribution of political power among the races in the near future. This had always been the main issue underlying the parties' polarisation, and it stood now as the only real barrier against the establishment of broad inter-party agreement.

The 1959 election, as we have seen, effectively marked the end of the period. A new generation came to prominence in the Conservative Party. There developed an internal conflict analogous to that already fought and won in the Labour movement. The result was a victory for men whose policy was essentially that of the Labour leadership. The final line was crossed, and the basis was laid for a reversion to the bi-partisan approach.

The central colonial issues in this period, then, were as authentically divisive as any issues in British politics. Those ministers, dignitaries and writers who continued to argue, right through the fifties, that a bi-partisan approach remained necessary and possible, as if domestic political conflict on colonial issues were somehow false and contrived, were simply failing to appreciate this reality.

We are led to our second level of inquiry: how far did domestic political activity affect the course of policy? What, out of all the sound and fury of party and group exchanges, made an impact on what the Government actually did? It was acknowledged at the outset of this study that such a question can never be answered with certainty; yet no study of this kind can be complete without at least attempting an answer.

In fact we have, in this inquiry, come across few examples of obvious and direct influence on policy-making. And it should be said, if it is not already apparent, that this need hardly be a cause for surprise. The central relationship within which the themes and priorities of policy were defined was always that continuous and more or less private dialogue between British Government (principally represented by the Secretary of State and the Governors) and colonial political leaders. Only one body of people was consistently in a favourable position to influence this dialogue - the government officials, whose role we briefly considered in Chapter II; so close was their position, indeed, that it would doubtless be more realistic to regard them as direct participants in the dialogue behind their official guise as "advisers."<sup>11</sup> By comparison domestic parties and pressure groups were only some among the numerous bodies which sought to impinge on the central relationship from a distance.

We have nevertheless seen that influence was intermittently possible when the circumstances were right. Let us recapitulate certain points about pressure groups, opposition party and governing party respectively.

Most domestic groups which sought to influence the government on colonial matters lacked the normal means of exerting pressure, in that there was seldom any compelling electoral or economic or administrative reason why the government should do as they suggested. Their only real weapons were their special relationships, if any, with decision-makers and their expertise, if any, on their subject. Yet the period we have studied yields at least one quite striking example of the sustained efficacy of these weapons: that of the Fabian Colonial Bureau in the years 1945-50. And if this is only one example, it should not thereby be assumed that all the other activities of groups were so much wasted effort. It needs saying that direct and visible impact on specific policy matters was not the only goal that most groups set themselves, and hence not the only criterion of their success. The liberal and radical groups we ~~have~~ discussed in Chapters IV, VII and IX almost all undertook such tasks

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<sup>11</sup> Much of Lee's Colonial Development and Good Government can be seen as an extended development of this point.

as mobilising sections of the community, playing host to colonial leaders and acting as their advisers and intermediaries in negotiations with policy-makers. In view of the fact that most of the colonial interests whose lobbying these groups assisted were, in the end, extremely successful in their lobbying, there is no reason to doubt that such group activities were of some consequence for policy-making - diffuse, indirect and unmeasurable consequence, but no less real for that.

For its part, the opposition party retained always the potential ability to influence the course of policy by exploiting its role as a future government. Though not itself a participant in the policy-making dialogue, it could hope to affect the participants' demands and responses in conflict situations by aligning itself either on the government side (in "bi-partisan" areas of policy) or the side of some colonial interest (in "partisan" areas). Often, of course, there were complicating factors which prevented this device from working in practice as neatly as in theory. Yet this does not alter the general point made in Chapter X - that given suitable circumstances the device could and did work.<sup>12</sup> And once again the point refers not only to immediately observable pressures on specific issues, such as Cyprus and Seretse; no less it refers to such more general and diffuse matters as the overall tempo of the Conservative approach to the wind of change. As was suggested earlier, it is fair to conclude that Labour's efforts to augment the political power of the interests it supported in plural societies must have played a real, if minor, part in bringing about the changed political climate to which the Conservatives eventually responded.

And finally, the governing party. Here our point must be made in the most general terms of all. One of the enduring preoccupations of political

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12 It is interesting to note a revival of the device in current politics. Early in 1968 the Conservative Party, acting as "the next Government", was reported to be considering terms for a settlement of the Rhodesia dispute much more favourable to Mr. Smith than Mr. Wilson's terms. At the time it seemed clear that this new "breakdown of bi-partisan policy" must further strengthen Mr. Smith's already strong position vis à vis Mr. Wilson. For in anticipation of a better deal from the Conservatives he had no incentive at all to settle with Labour - unless, of course, Mr. Wilson outbid the Conservatives with even more favourable terms.

science is the analysis of power relations within parties; usually the principal task is to reconcile the widely-accepted notion of parties as oligarchies, in which organisational and policy-making power is concentrated at the top, with the corpus of evidence which fails to fit this stereotype - evidence, in particular, of back-bench influence on policy-making in parliamentary systems. It is common enough in such systems to observe a supposedly oligarchic leadership forced to offer policy concessions in order to buy off back-bench protests which might have endangered the party's parliamentary or electoral position. And often the process is more subtle than this. Though the leadership appears to be making policy autonomously, in fact its procedures are governed by the law of anticipated reactions; when back-bench members appear meekly to accept leadership policy, it is often because the leadership has noted their views in advance and made allowance for them in policy formation. Ample evidence of these processes at work in the British context has recently been provided by Butt's The Power of Parliament. And it is in terms of these processes that the influence of the government back benches on colonial policy may be appreciated.

Admittedly, very little such influence was exerted in the Labour period. But this was because very few back-benchers felt strongly about the subject, and most of those who did were prepared to channel their efforts through the Fabian Colonial Bureau. In the Conservative period, by contrast, there were quite obviously some strong feelings among back-benchers. If the party remained united on colonial policy in the fifties, it was chiefly because the Government generally stayed within the bounds that the party thought appropriate. In cases where the Government did give a lead away from tradition - as on imperial preference, the Suez withdrawal, and eventually Cyprus - it could do so only because it well knew that the great majority of back-bench members were by then ready to support it, and that those who opposed could safely be represented as a small minority of extremists. On the absolutely central issue of the settler colonies, however, the opposing faction was not so small; and the leadership's

awareness of the latent strength of the <sup>party's</sup> settler lobby was certainly high among the factors which prevented rash policy departures. Not until after 1959 did the composition and attitudes of the intra-party majority alter enough to allow new bounds to be set for policy towards these areas. In this instance, it may be said that influence was no less real for being latent and constraining rather than manifest and activist.

It is apposite to recall, in conclusion, the "quasi-constitutional argument" outlined in Chapter III. The Secretary of State for Colonies was unusually placed among British ministers in that he had no formal constitutional responsibility to the people over whose fortunes he presided. Therefore, it was often argued, a special duty fell upon those to whom he did have responsibility - the British Parliament and electorate - to fill this constitutional vacuum by acting on behalf of colonial peoples and their interests. In this study we have discussed the manner in which various members of Parliament and the electorate carried out their presumed duty in an important phase of Britain's colonial history. Their devotion to this duty, as they variously interpreted it, deserves to be remembered with admiration.

APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

These notes are not intended to provide complete career profiles. For the most part they refer only to activities attributable to an interest in colonial affairs.

A list of sources and a key to the abbreviations used will be found at the end of this appendix.

- ALPORT, Cuthbert J.M. (Lord Alport 1961). Born 1912. Con. MP 1950-61. Party: director Con. Political Centre 1945-50; sec CAC 1950-1 and v-chn 1951-2. Government: minister 1955-61, including Under-Sec for Cwth Relations 1957-9, Minister of State for Cwth Relations 1959-61; British High Commissioner in Central African Federation 1961-3. Other: mbr exec JECAB, and chn 1953-5. Emissary from Wilson Government to Rhodesia 1967. Three books on Africa.
- AMERY, Julian. Born 1919, son of L.S. Amery. Con. MP 1950-66. Party: mbr CAC; mbr ECG; Suez defector 1954. Government: minister 1957-64, including Under Sec for Colonies 1958-60. Other: business interests in Central Africa. Biographer of Joseph Chamberlain.
- BALDWIN, Archer E. (Kt 1958). 1883-1966. Con. MP 1945-59. Party: chn East and Central Africa group, CAC; dep chn East and Central Africa group, CCC, 1953-5. Other: mbr exec JECAB, and chn 1952-3, 1955-6, and v-chn 1953-5, 1956-7. Property in Kenya.
- BENNETT, Frederic M. (Kt 1964). Born 1918. Con MP 1951- . Party: mbr CAC. Other: advocate in High Court of S. Rhodesia 1947-50. Mbr exec JECAB. Business interests in South Africa, West Indies.
- BEVAN, Aneurin. 1897-1960. Lab. MP 1929-60. Party: Opposition spokesman on colonies 1956-7; chn CCA group 1956-7; chn NEC Cwth sub-committee 1956-60. Government: minister 1945-51. Other: sponsor MCF.
- BIGGS-DAVISON, John A. Born 1918. Con. MP 1955- . Party: External Affairs section, Con. Research Dept., 1950-5; mbr CAC 1955- ; mbr exec CCC 1953- ; v-chn ECG; Suez rebel 1957-8. Other: Indian and Pakistani Civil Services 1942-8. Mbr exec Cwth and Empire Industries Assn.
- BRAINE, Bernard R. Born 1914. Con. MP 1950- . Party: v-chn CAC 1952-60; mbr ECG. Government: minister 1960-4, including Under-Sec for Cwth Relations 1961-2. Other: v-chn Junior Imperial League 1937-45. Mbr exec Cwth and Empire Industries Assn. Mbr exec JECAB 1957- . Chn BCPO 1958-60. Mbr General Council CPA 1962- , and dep chn (UK branch) 1964-6, treasurer (UK branch) 1966- .

- BROCKWAY, A. Fenner (Lord Brockway 1964). Born 1888. Lab. MP 1929-31, 1950-64. Party: mbr CCA group; colonial expert, "Keep Left" group. Other: Founder British Centre against Imperialism and chn 1942-7; co-founder CPI and chn 1948-54; co-organiser Kenya Land Petition 1950-3; co-founder Central Africa Committee and mbr 1952-3; co-founder Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama and chn 1952-4; co-founder British Guiana Assn and mbr 1953-4; co-founder MCP and chn 1954; chn British Overseas Socialist Fellowship 1959-. Numerous books and pamphlets on colonial affairs.
- CALLAGHAN, L. James. Born 1912. Lab. MP 1945-. Party: Opposition spokesman on colonies 1957-61; chn CCA group 1957-61; mbr NEC Cwth sub-committee 1957-60 and chn 1960-2. Government: minister 1947-51 and 1964-. Other: sponsor MCF (withdrew name 1957); mbr FCB Advisory Committee 1954-8.
- CASTLE, Mrs. Barbara. Born 1911. Lab. MP 1945-. Party: mbr CCA group; mbr NEC Cwth sub-committee 1950-2, 1953-62; party chn 1958-9. Government: minister 1964-, including Minister for Overseas Development 1964-5. Other: sponsor and mbr MCP.
- CRADDOCK, G. Beresford (Kt 1960). Born 1898. Con. MP 1950-. Party: mbr CAC 1950-; mbr DCG; dep chn East and Central Africa group, CCC, 1955-6. Other: businessman in India and Africa 1921-39. Mbr exec Cwth and Empire Industries Assn.
- CREECH JONES, Arthur. 1891-1964. Lab MP 1935-50, 1954-64. Party: mbr Imperial Advisory Committee and chn 1944-5; mbr CCA group 1954-64. Government: mbr Colonial Office education advisory committee 1936-45; v-chn Higher Education Commission in West Africa 1943-4; Under Sec for Colonies 1945-6, Colonial Sec 1946-50. Other: chn Friends of Africa - 1945. Mbr TUC colonial labour advisory committee - 1945. Mbr exec Anti-Slavery Society 1938-54 and v-pres 1954-64. Co-founder FCB and chn 1940-5; mbr Advisory Committee 1951-8, chn Working Committee 1954-3, chn Fabian Cwth Bureau 1958-63. Mbr council Royal African Society 1950-4. V-pres Royal Cwth Society 1950-64. Mbr exec Africa Bureau 1952-64. Treasurer CPA 1962-4. Editor Fabian Colonial Essays; numerous articles and pamphlets on colonial affairs.
- DODDS-PARKER, A. Douglas. Born 1909. Con. MP 1945-59, 1964-. Party: sec CAC 1945-51; chn CAC 1951-4; mbr exec CCC 1953-, v-chn 1959-62, chn 1962-4. Government: minister 1953-7, including Under-Sec for Cwth Relations 1954-5. Other: Sudan Political Service 1930-9. Chn BEPO 1947-50. Mbr exec JECAB and chn 1947-50. Mbr exec Cwth and Empire Industries Assn. Business interests in Central Africa.
- DRIBERG, Thomas E.N. Born 1905. Lab. MP 1942-55, 1959-. Party: mbr CCA group and chn 1965-6; mbr NEC Cwth sub-committee 1949-62. Other: mbr FCB Advisory Committee 1950-4. Sponsor and mbr MCP 1954-.

- DUGDALE, John. 1905-63. Lab. MP 1941-63. Party: mbr CCA group. Government: minister 1945-51, including Minister of State for Colonies 1950-1. Other: mbr FCB Advisory Committee 1951-8 and Fabian Cwth Bureau 1958-63.
- FARINGDON, Lord. Born 1902. Labour peer. Party: mbr CCA group and chn 1945-51; chn Imperial Advisory Committee 1945-50. Government: mbr Colonial Office social welfare advisory committee 1947-52; mbr Colonial Economic Development Council 1948-51. Other: mbr PCB 1940-50, chn Advisory Committee 1950-8, mbr Working Committee 1954-8, joint v-chn Fabian Cwth Bureau 1958-63, v-chn Fabian International and Cwth Bureau 1963- .
- FELL, Anthony. Born 1914. Con. MP 1951-66. Party: mbr CAC; mbr ECG; Suez defector 1954; Suez rebel 1957-8.
- FLETCHER, Walter (Kt 1953). 1892-1956. Con. MP 1945-55. Party: chn Far East group CAC; dep chn Far East group CCC. Other: businessman in East Africa 1918-24; business interest in Malayan rubber.
- GAMBANS, L. David (Bart 1955). 1895-1957. Party: sec CAC 1945-50, and v-chn 1950-1. Government: minister 1951-5. Other: in Colonial Service, Malaya, 1920-34.
- GREENIDGE, Charles W.W. West Indian, born 1889. Many government and legal offices in West Indies 1919-36; Solicitor-General Nigeria 1936-41. Sec Anti-Slavery Society 1941-56 and director 1957- . Mbr FCB Advisory Committee 1941-58. Sec Labour Party Imperial Advisory Committee 1946-50. NLC Barbados 1958-62.
- GREENWOOD, Anthony W.J. Born 1911. Lab. MP 1946- . Party: mbr CCA group; mbr NEC Cwth sub-committee 1954-5, 1956-9. Government: minister 1964- , including Colonial Sec 1964-5, Minister for Overseas Development 1965-6. Other: sponsor MCF and mbr exec, including treasurer 1961-2.
- GRIFFITHS, James. Born 1890. Lab. MP 1936- . Party: Opposition spokesman on colonies 1951-6; mbr CCA group and chn 1951-6; mbr NEC Cwth sub-committee 1948-9, 1950-9. Government: minister 1945-51 and 1964-6, including Colonial Sec 1950-1. Other: mbr FCB Advisory Committee 1951-8.
- HALE, C. Leslie. Born 1902. Lab. MP 1945-68. Party: CCA group. Other: treasurer CPI (UK branch) 1948-54. Co-founder Central Africa Committee and chn 1952-3. Sponsor and mbr MCF 1954-.
- HALL, George H. (Lord Hall 1946). 1881-1965. Lab. MP 1922-46. Government: minister 1929-31, and 1940-51, including Under-Sec for Colonies 1940-2, Colonial Sec 1945-6.

HATCH, John. Born 1917. Lecturer and research fellow in African studies, Glasgow University, -1953. Assistant director Africa Bureau 1953-4. Labour Party Cwth Officer 1954-61; sec NEC Cwth sub-committee 1954-61, director Cwth Department 1958-61. Mbr FCB Advisory Committee and Working Committee 1954-8, mbr Fabian Cwth Bureau 1958-62. Director extra-mural studies, Sierra Leone University, 1961-3. Cwth correspondent, New Statesman. Director African studies, Southern University Texas, 1965-. Numerous books and articles on Africa.

HINCHINGBROOKE, Lord (Earl of Sandwich 1962-4, Victor Montagu 1964-). Born 1906. Con. MP 1941-62. Party: mbr CAC; mbr ECG; Suez defector 1954; Suez rebel 1957-8. Other: pres Anti-Common Market League, 1962-.

HINDEN, Dr. Rita. South African. Pre-war doctoral research in Palestine. Co-founder FCB 1940; sec 1940-50; hon. assistant sec 1950-4, mbr Advisory Committee and mbr Working Committee to 1958, mbr Fabian Cwth Bureau 1958-61. Mbr Colonial Economic Development Council 1948-51; mbr British Guiana Constitutional Commission, 1950-1. Sometime staff writer on colonial affairs, Economist. Mbr exec Africa Bureau, 1958-. Numerous books and articles on colonial affairs.

HOPKINSON, Henry L. d'A. (Lord Colyton 1956). Born 1902. Con. MP 1950-6. Party: director, Parliamentary Secretariat 1946-8 and Con. Research Dept. 1946-50. Government: minister 1951-5, including Minister of State for Colonies 1952-5. Other: business interests in East, Central and Southern Africa, Malaya. Chn JECAB 1960-5.

HORRABIN, J. Francis. 1883-1962. Lab. MP 1929-31. Co-founder Empire 1938. Mbr and financial supporter FCB; Advisory Committee 1940-5, chn 1945-50. Contributor to Fabian Colonial Essays 1945.

JOHNSON, James. Born 1908. Lab. MP 1950-9, 1964-. Party: mbr CCA group. Other: mbr FCB Advisory Committee 1950-8, Working Committee 1954-8, mbr Fabian Cwth Bureau 1958-9.

LENNOX-BOYD, Alan T. (Lord Boyd 1960), Born 1904. Con. MP 1931-60. Party: v-chn CAC 1950-1 and chn 1951; Opposition spokesman on colonies 1951. Government: minister 1951-9, including Minister of State for Colonies 1951-2, Colonial Sec 1954-9. Other: chn Royal Cwth Society 1961-4.

LYTTLETON, Oliver (Lord Chandos 1954). Born 1893. Con. MP 1940-54. Government: minister 1940-5 and 1951-4, including Colonial Sec 1951-4. Other: pre-war business interest in Malaya.

MACLEOD, Iain N. Born 1913. Con. MP 1950-. Party: Parliamentary Secretariat 1946-8, Con. Research Dept. 1948-50. Government: minister 1952-63, including Colonial Sec 1959-61.

- MAITLAND, Patrick F. Born 1911. Con. MP 1951-9. Party: mbr CAC; founder and chn ECG; Suez defector 1954; Suez rebel 1957-8.
- MAUDE, Angus E.U. Born 1912. Con. MP 1950-8, 1963- . Party: director Con. Political Centre 1951-5; mbr CAC; mbr exec CCC 1953- ; mbr ECG; Suez defector 1954; Suez rebel 1957-8.
- NICHOLSON, Marjorie. Born 1914. Assistant sec PCB 1945-50, sec 1950-5. Mbr TUC colonial section 1955- . Labour candidate at several general elections.
- PONSONBY, Charles E. (Bart 1956). Born 1879. Conl MP 1935-50. Party: mbr CAC. Other: business interests in East and Central Africa. Mbr exec JECAB and chn 1945-7. Mbr exec BEPO. Mbr exec Royal Empire Society and chn 1954-7. Mbr exec Royal African Society and pres 1962- .
- RANKIN, John. Born 1890. Lab. MP 1945-. Party: CCA group. Other: mbr PCB Advisory Committee 1948-58. Sponsor CPI 1948; sponsor MCP 1954.
- ROBINSON, J. Roland (Kt 1954). Born 1907. Con. MP 1931-64. Party: chn West Indies group CAC 1952-4; chn CAC 1954-64; dep chn West Indies group CCC 1953-5; mbr ECG. Other: chn General Council CPA 1961-2; dep chn CPA (UK branch) 1962-4. Business interests in British Guiana.
- RUSSELL, Ronald S. (Kt 1964). Born 1904. Con. MP 1950- . Party: mbr CAC; mbr ECG. Other: research sec Empire Economic Union 1945-51. Editor, British Cwth Yearbook. Sec Parliamentary Committee, Cwth and Empire Industries Assn. Mbr exec JECAB 1960- . Chn BCPO 1960-3, 1964.
- SALISBURY, Lord. Born 1893. Con. MP 1929-41. Government: minister 1940-5 and 1951-7, including Colonial Sec 1942, Dominions sec 1940-2 and 1943-5, Commonwealth Relations Sec 1952. Other: director British South Africa Co 1957-61.
- SAYERS, Gerald P. In Colonial Service, East Africa, 1914-39. Civil servant 1940-4. Con. Central Office 1944; colonial adviser in Parliamentary Secretariat 1945-8, Cwth and Colonial officer in Con. Research Dept. 1948-63.
- SCOTT, Rev. G. Michael. Born 1907. Anglican church postings in India 1935-9, South Africa 1943-50. Co-founder Africa Bureau and director 1952- .
- SKEFFINGTON, Arthur M. Born 1919. Lab. MP 1945-50, 53- . <sup>Government: minister 1969-</sup> Party: mbr CCA gp; mbr NEC Cwth sub-committee 1953-8, 1959-62. Other: mbr PCB Advisory Committee 1949-50.

- SMITHERS, Peter H.B.O. Born 1913. Con. MP 1950-64. Party: sec West Indies group CAC 1950-1 and chn 1951-2; v-chn Con. Overseas Bureau 1952-6 and chn 1956-9. Government: PPS to Minister of State for Colonies 1952-6 and to Colonial Sec 1956-9.
- SORENSEN, Rev. Reginald W. (Lord Sorensen 1964). Born 1891. Lab. MP 1929-31, 1935-64. Party: mbr CCA group. Other: mbr PCB 1940-50, v-chn Advisory Committee 1950-8, mbr Working Committee 1954-8, joint v-chn Fabian Cwth Bureau committee 1958-63. Mbr exec Anti-Slavery Society.
- STANLEY, Oliver F.G. 1896-1950. Con. MP 1924-50. Party: chn CAC and opposition spokesman on colonies 1945-50. Government: minister 1931-45, including Colonial Sec 1942-5.
- STONEHOUSE, John T. Born 1925. Lab MP 1957- . Party: mbr CCA group. Government: minister 1964- , including Under-Sec for Colonies 1966. Other: manager African cooperatives in Uganda 1952-4. Mbr Central Africa Committee 1952-3. Mbr exec MCF 1958-64, including v-chn.
- TILNEY, John D.R.T. Born 1907. Con. MP 1950- . Party: chn Economic Development group CAC 1951-8; dep chn West Africa group CCC 1953-4 and chn 1954-62; mbr ECG; chn West Africa committee 1964- . Government: minister 1962-4, including Under-Sec for Cwth Relations 1962-4, Under-Sec for Colonies 1963-4. Other: business interests in West Africa. Chn Liverpool branch, Royal Cwth Society, 1955-60 and pres 1965- .
- TURNER, H.P. Lawrence. Born 1908. Con. MP 1950-9. Party: mbr CAC; sec ECG; Suez rebel 1957-8.
- VAUGHAN-MORGAN, John K. (Bart 1960). Born 1905. Con. MP 1950- . Party: mbr CAC; dep chn West Indies group CCC 1955-7, 1959- . Government: minister 1957-9. Other: business interests in British Guiana. Mbr exec JECAB 1955- .
- WALL, Patrick H.B. Born 1916. Con. MP 1954- . Party: chn East and Central Africa group CAC 1956-9; v-chn<sup>CAC</sup> 1960- ; chn Mediterranean group CCC 1954- ; dep chn East and Central Africa group CCC 1956- ; mbr ECG; v-chn Con. Overseas Bureau 1963- . Other: mbr exec JECAB 1957- and chn 1965- . Chn Africa Centre 1961-5.
- WATERHOUSE, Charles. Born 1893. Con. MP 1924-45, 1950-7. Party: mbr CAC; Suez defector 1954. Government: minister 1939-45. Other: business interests in East, Central and Southern Africa.
- WEDGWOOD BENN, Anthony N. (Lord Stansgate 1960-3). Born 1925. Lab. MP 1950-60, 1963- . Party: mbr CCA group; mbr NAC Cwth sub-committee 1959-60. Government: minister 1964- . Other: mbr PCB Advisory Committee 1954-63, chn Fabian International and Commonwealth Bureau 1963-4. Sponsor and mbr exec MCF, including treasurer 1954-6.

WHITE, Mrs. Eirene G. Born 1909. Lab. MP 1950- . Party: mbr CCA group: mbr NEC Cwth sub-committee 1948-53, 1958-62. Government: minister 1964-, including Under-Sec for Colonies 1964-6. Other: mbr PCB Advisory Committee 1950-8, Working Committee 1954-8, mbr Fabian Cwth Bureau 1958-64.

WILLIAMS, Paul. Born 1922. Con. MP 1953-64. Party: mbr CAC: mbr ECG: Suez defector 1954; Suez rebel 1957-8; chn Monday Club 1964- .

Note:

(1) The NEC's Commonwealth sub-committee was superseded in 1962 by an Overseas sub-committee in which the categories "foreign" and "Commonwealth" were not distinguished. Hence the use of 1962 as a terminal date in the entries for Callaghan, Castle, Driberg, Skeffington and White.

(2) The Fabian Commonwealth Bureau, which succeeded the Fabian Colonial Bureau in 1958, was itself merged in 1963 with the Fabian International Bureau to form a new body, the Fabian International and Commonwealth Bureau. Hence the various terminologies used in the entries for Creech Jones, Parfington, Greenidge, Griffiths, Hinden, Rankin, Sorensen, Wedgwood, Benn and White.

Key to Abbreviations:

BCPO, BEPO:	British Commonwealth (formerly Empire) Producers Organisation
CAC:	Commonwealth Affairs Committee
CCA:	Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs
CCC:	Conservative Commonwealth Council
Con:	Conservative
CPA:	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPI:	Congress of Peoples against Imperialism
ECG:	Expanding Commonwealth Group
PCB:	Fabian Colonial Bureau
JECAB:	Joint East and Central Africa Board
Lab:	Labour
MCF:	Movement for Colonial Freedom
NEC:	National Executive Committee

Sources:

Dod's Parliamentary Companion

House of Commons Debates

The Times House of Commons

Who's Who

Both, Andrew, The Business Background of Members of Parliament  
(Parliamentary Profiles, 1963).

Miscellaneous additional sources.

## APPENDIX II

## COLONIAL OFFICE EXPENDITURE.

In section (1) of Chapter II the Colonial Office was discussed in terms of organisation, concepts of function and patterns of work. But there is another possible category of discussion, perhaps more striking than any of these as an index of the trend of post-war policy as well as of the Office's role in implementing it. This is the fundamental category of finance. The period of transformation from 1938 to 1947 and the period of peak activity from 1947 to 1959 again, as in Chapter II, provide convenient units for internal comparison.

During the period of transformation, as might be expected, the Office's spending power accumulated and expenditure levels rose.<sup>1</sup> Table I compares net expenditures in 1938-9 with those in the three years 1944-5 to 1946-7.

TABLE I.

	1938-9	1944-5	1945-6	1946-7
Colonial Office	191,478	394,000	590,980	698,752
Colonial Development and Welfare	650,000	3,171,000	4,870,000	9,340,000
Colonial & Middle Eastern Services	4,959,370*	5,350,201 <sup>+</sup>	4,000,971	6,603,554
West African Produce Control Bd.	—	—	3,676,253	5,080,025
Miscellaneous Services (War)	—	—	—	4,698,150
TOTALS	5,800,848 <sup>o</sup>	8,915,201 <sup>x</sup>	13,138,204	26,420,481

\* 1,371,170  
+ 2,800,201  
o 2,212,648  
x 6,365,201

if military expenditure in Palestine is excluded.

These figures require some comment. In the financial year 1938-9, the last full year of peace, the net expenditure of public money on colonial matters totalled £5,800,848. Of this sum Colonial Office administration accounted directly for £191,478; Colonial Development Fund expenditure, channelled to colonial governments under the 1929 Act, for £650,000; and Colonial and Middle Eastern Services for the rest, £4,959,370. Under this latter heading Colonial Services took £632,954, partly spent on grants-in-aid to colonial governments and partly on centrally financed services such as schools of tropical medicine. A much greater amount, £4,326,416, was committed to Middle Eastern Services, and it is noteworthy that out of this the sum of £3,588,200 was spent on military operations precipitated by disturbances in Palestine. This was well over half the total expenditure in all categories combined; subtraction shows, in fact, that spending on all other Colonial and Middle Eastern Services amounted to only £1,371,170, and, in all other categories combined, to £2,212,648. By 1944-5, the last full year of war, total net expenditure had risen to £8,915,201, of which Colonial Office administration had taken £394,000; Colonial Development and Welfare schemes under the 1940 Act, £3,171,000; and Colonial and Middle Eastern Services, £5,350,201. The sum allocated to the maintenance of Palestine's "internal security" in this year was £2,550,000. Spending on all other Colonial and Middle Eastern Services came to £2,800,201, and in all other categories combined, to £6,365,201. In the following year, 1945-6, total net expenditure rose steeply to £13,138,204. Out of this £590,980 was spent on the Colonial Office; £4,870,000 on Development and Welfare, still under the 1940 Act; £4,000,971 on Colonial and Middle Eastern Services - with operations in Palestine no longer included under this head; and the bulky sum of £3,676,253 on meeting liabilities incurred by the West African Produce Control Board which had been set up during the war. In 1946-7 total net expenditure leapt to £26,420,481, signalling the real breakaway from the restrictive grasp of wartime conditions. Of this sum £698,752 was for the Colonial Office; £9,340,000 for Development and Welfare under the 1945 Act - almost twice the amount which had been possible under the previous Act;

£6,603,554 for Colonial and Middle Eastern Services, again with Palestine excluded; £4,698,150 for miscellaneous services arising out of the war, most of which were similar in kind to normal Colonial Services and bore no direct relation to military expenditure; and, finally, a further £5,080,025 for the West African Produce Central Board. A clear idea of the pattern of expansion represented by these figures may be gained by tracing each item horizontally across Table I.

After 1947 the amounts of public money made available to the Colonial Office (both for direct expenditure and for channelling to colonial governments) continued to increase, though at a less dramatic overall rate.<sup>2</sup> But the increase was by no means a steady linear process; there were some quite remarkable fluctuations over the years. Table II will serve to give an impression of the pattern of expenditure in the period, although some of the figures inevitably conceal more than they reveal. The items, denoted in this table by initial letters only, are the same as in Table I, except for OFC - the Overseas Food Corporation.

TABLE II

	1947-8	1948-9	1949-50	1950-1	1951-2	1952-3
CO	731,262	796,591	863,760	861,865	924,845	977,635
CDW	7,510,500	6,260,000	13,303,500	19,150,000	19,450,000	15,000,000
CMES	4,357,459	3,162,906	11,212,432	18,085,780	24,473,597	27,034,801
WAPCB	15,675,000	15,044,510	5,001,010	1,000,000	—	—
OFC	—	—	—	—	3,851,154	1,693,415
MSW	521,300	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	28,795,521	25,264,007	30,380,702	39,097,645	48,699,596	44,705,851

	1953-4	1954-5	1955-6	1956-7	1957-8	1958-9	1959-60
CO	997,319	1,069,660	1,227,128	1,420,725	1,512,233	1,594,600	1,782,542
CDW	17,500,000	17,500,000	18,000,000	17,250,000	18,250,000	19,326,500	26,400,000
CS	23,093,236	42,495,228	29,359,993	24,823,516	26,414,635	28,997,195	24,613,110
OFC	1,112,426	309,010	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	42,702,981	61,373,898	48,587,121	43,494,241	46,176,868	49,918,295	52,795,652

As can be seen, the sum required for the Colonial Office itself began at £731,262 in 1947-8 and increased by a virtually uninterrupted process of incrementation until in 1959-60 it had reached £1,782,542. In other areas of expenditure, however, there were considerable annual variations within the broad pattern of expansion. World shortages of supplies and manpower, as well as Britain's own parlous economic situation, pushed the level of Development and Welfare grants in 1947-8 down to £7,510,000, well below the 1946-7 figure, and down still further to £6,260,000 in 1948-9 - though this second decrease was offset by the creation of the Colonial Development Corporation and the Overseas Food Corporation in the same year. But in 1949-50, as men and materials became more available, the figure more than doubled, reaching well over £13,000,000, and in the following year the Government was able to commit over £19,000,000. From this time on, as the flow of supplies became ample and regular and developmental schemes in many colonies became more firmly based, the level of spending became much steadier.

Another factor contributing to overall annual variations, at least between 1947-8 and 1954-5, was the incidence of ad hoc expenses. The largest of these were the disproportionate sums required to clear the liabilities of the hapless West African Produce Control Board. In 1947-8 this item accounted for £15,675,000 out of a total net expenditure of £28,795,521; in 1948-9 for £15,044,510 out of £25,264,007. In the following year the Board's expenses came more under control, amounting to just over £5,000,000, and they were finally cleared, at the cost of a further £1,000,000, in 1950-1. But a year later the Conservative Government decided to meet the deficits of the Overseas Food Corporation out of public funds, and a new ad hoc item began to make regular appearances in the Colonial Office accounts. These debts, at least, were rather less burdensome: after absorbing nearly £4,000,000 in 1951-2 they fell away until cleared, with a final commitment of £309,010, in 1954-5.

The other main head of expenditure was Colonial Services (as the item Colonial and Middle Eastern Services was renamed in the 1953-4 Estimates). It was possible, at least from 1950-1 onwards, to speak of an "average" annual expenditure on Colonial Services, namely about

£24,000,000 out of an average total net expenditure of about £45,000,000. But the actual figures were prone to oscillate by £5,000,000 or more to either side of this average, and the extremes, over the whole period, were very wide indeed: £3,162,906 in 1948-9 and £42,495,228 in 1954-5. One large factor underlying these variations was the drain imposed by War Compensation grants and loans to Far Eastern territories. These were recurrent items of expenditure from 1950-1, when they amounted to £5,650,000, until 1955-6, when they amounted to £2,200,000; between these two dates they reached a peak of £10,000,000 a year in 1953-4 and 1954-5. Another item, less obtrusive but presumably not less significant in terms of colonial policy in general, appeared regularly in the accounts as from 1950-1 under the rather opaque heading Internal Security (Certain African Territories). The sum so committed began at £1,910,000 rose steadily by annual stages to £3,982,900 in 1955-6, and subsequently fell away by stages to a figure of £1,740,000 for the year 1959-60.

The chief cause of fluctuations in Colonial Services spending, however, was obviously the ebb and flow of colonial crises. Malaya, for example, absorbed £6,000,000 in grants during 1949-50, reached a maximum expensiveness of £8,685,000 in 1952-3, and was still taking nearly £7,000,000 in 1954-5. In that year Kenya became the most expensive colony, absorbing £11,300,000; a year later Kenyan expenses rose to over £12,000,000, almost all of it in direct grant. In 1956-7 it was the turn of Malta, as the recipient of a grant of over £5,000,000, to take the lead. Finally, in each of the three years 1957-8, 1958-9 and 1959-60, Cyprus loomed largest in the accounts by taking nearly £8,000,000 worth of Colonial Services a year.

All of these inflated levels of spending in crisis areas produced distortions in the annual accounts, and need to be deducted if we are to gain a clearer idea of running expenditure on all other Colonial Services. But this is not an easy calculation to attempt, both because it is not always made clear in the official figures how much of the money spent in a crisis area was in fact intended as normal administrative grants-in-aid, and because it is difficult to distinguish ordinary

expenditures from extraordinary expenditures, whether or not disguised by some such formula as "internal security", at the best of times. Accordingly, on the basis of the figures given, one can do no more than attempt rough approximations. What these approximations do indicate is that spending on normal Colonial Services fell into two clear-cut phases, corresponding to the period of economic difficulty up to 1950-1 and the period of easier money and more abundant materials thereafter. In the first period average annual expenditure was about £4,000,000; in the second, about £9,500,000. Variations were relatively small in both periods: between about £3,000,000 and £5,000,000 in the first, and £8,000,000 and £11,000,000 in the second. Perhaps more notable than their long-term steadiness, however, is the fact that these expenditures regularly constituted such a small proportion of total net expenditures, and, indeed, were frequently exceeded by the large amounts spent on operations in crisis areas or the clearance of ad hoc debts. But if the normal Colonial Services figures are taken together with Development and Welfare figures the ratio of planned expenditure to emergency expenditure looks rather better; and on the whole, one could hardly have expected more. It had required a major revolution in attitudes to bring about the rising level of spending power which the Office enjoyed in the fifties, and to have asked it to find even more public money than it was finding already would probably have been asking for more than was financially and politically possible.

## NOTES TO APPENDIX II

1 In this paragraph the figures of expenditure per financial year are taken from Class II of the Civil Estimates for each subsequent year (for example, the source for the 1944-5 figures is the 1945-6 Civil Estimates, Class II, Votes 8 to 11). The term "net" denotes that the effect of deducting Appropriations in Aid from gross totals has been taken into account. No attempt has been made to compare actual expenditures with original Estimates.

In each of the four years discussed a sum was spent on miscellaneous purposes in Trans-Jordan. As this was not a territory within Colonial Office purview the relevant sums have been deducted from the Colonial and Middle Eastern Services figures for each year, and the figures for total expenditures adjusted accordingly.

2 The sources for the figures in the following paragraphs are the Civil Estimates, Class II, for the financial years 1948-9 to 1960-1, covering expenditure in the years from 1947-8 to 1959-60. The comments on method in Note 1 also apply here.

In every year as from 1948-9 a sum was committed towards meeting the liabilities of the former Palestine mandate. In order to present a clearer picture of current expenditure on colonies this sum has been deducted from the figure for Colonial and Middle Eastern Services in each year, and the totals adjusted accordingly.

## APPENDIX III

## PUBLIC OPINION ON COLONIAL AFFAIRS

As yet there has been no scholarly attempt to explore the attitudes of the British public towards colonial questions in the post-1945 era of imperial decline. This is hardly surprising, for precision in such a study would be extremely difficult to attain. While it is possible, for example, to assert confidently that public interest in colonial issues became greater during the fifties, one's confidence rests much more upon impression than upon factual evidence. And the interesting questions are thereby begged. Just how far did public interest extend at different times? If interest did become "greater", was this simply a matter of diffusion from a small educated elite to a larger educated elite - or was it all times more widespread than that? Nor is it readily apparent what kinds of evidence could be adduced. Letters to the press? Viewing figures for television programmes on Africa? Demands made upon the Colonial Office's information service? The opinions of well-placed observers?

Rather better documented is the commonplace that however great public interest in colonial issues might have been, it was never so great as to be a factor in British voting behaviour. In 1959, as never before, the Opposition invested a great proportion of campaign time and energy in an indictment of the Government's colonial record. But according to the opinion polls, the return in electoral dividends was negligible. The electors' concern for their economic well-being, as ever, "came first; foreign affairs came a poor second; colonial and other issues were nowhere."<sup>1</sup> Similarly there is concrete evidence to show that there was seldom any close connection between peoples' views on imperial and colonial matters and the attitudes expressed by the parties for which they voted. In October 1956 Eden could invade Suez with the knowledge,

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<sup>1</sup> Butler and Rose, The British General Election of 1959, p.71.

furnished by the most recent Gallup poll on the subject, that only 47% of Conservative voters would unreservedly approve his action - and that only 54% of Labour voters would disapprove.<sup>2</sup> A few months later Gallup's respondents were asked whether they thought the Government had been right or wrong to release Archbishop Makarios from detention. At the time the parliamentary Labour and Liberal parties both thought the Government right; certain Government Members, most notably Lord Salisbury, did not. But the poll produced this result:<sup>3</sup>

	All Voters	Voting Intention		
		Con	Lab	Lib
Right	33	46	32	31
Wrong	34	36	37	35
Don't know	33	22	31	34

These, however, are extremely random examples, and it remains doubtful whether sufficient survey material exists to sustain comprehensive and accurate generalisations.

Concerning public knowledge about colonies in general, as opposed to interest in particular issues, two fairly large-scale investigations were carried out by the Government's Social Survey unit in 1948 and 1951. What follows is simply a selection of the findings of these two surveys. The only comment that seems necessary is that if evidence were needed of the ignorance of post-war Britain about colonial matters, the respondents of 1948 and 1951 provide it.<sup>4</sup>

<u>1948</u>	<u>1951</u>	
75%	80%	did not know the difference between a dominion and a colony
51%	59%	could not name a single British colony
3%		named the United States as a British colony (and one man named Lincolnshire)

2 Epstein, British Politics in the Suez Crisis, p.142.

3 News Chronicle, 11 April 1957.

4 Sources 1948: G.K. Evens, Public Opinion on Colonial Affairs. A Survey made in May and June 1948 for the Colonial Office (N.S. 119,

<u>1948</u>	<u>1951</u>	
86%	89%	could not name any colony which had recently moved nearer to self-government
66%	41%	either knew or thought that Britain was doing something towards teaching colonial peoples to govern themselves
33%		either knew or thought that colonies did not pay taxes to Britain
79%	88%	could not say how the colonies helped to earn dollars
62%	56%	either knew or thought that the majority of peoples in colonies were coloured
63%		could not name any item of colonial produce and its place of origin.

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Central Office of Information, June 1948), pp.1-16. This survey was conducted among a national sample of 1,921 respondents. Other references to its findings are in Lee, Colonial Development and Good Government, pp.8-9, and Haqqi, Colonial Policy of the Labour Government, p.5n.

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- CCC: Conservative Commonwealth Council  
 COB: Conservative Overseas Bureau  
 CPC: Conservative Political Centre  
 CRD: Conservative Research Department  
 CUCO: Conservative and Unionist Central Office  
 ECG: Expanding Commonwealth Group  
 NUCUA: National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations

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