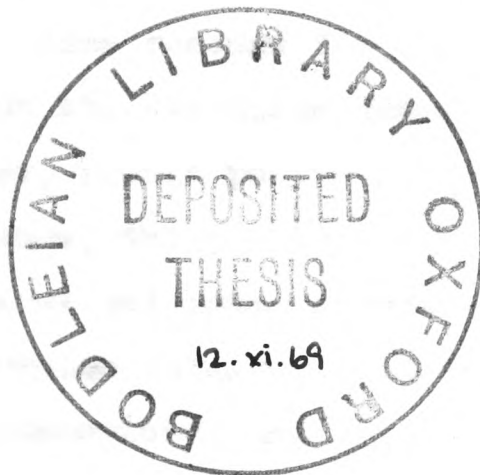


Thesis
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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to deal with two problems, the relation between central and local government, and who decides policy at the local level, through the medium of a study of a major local authority service, housing, as provided in four Lincolnshire towns, Cleethorpes, Grimsby, Lincoln, and Scunthorpe, between 1919 and 1959.

The problem of the relationship between central and local government is that there are two traditions regarding the purpose of local government, giving different answers to the problem of who should prevail when central and local government conflict on policy. One tradition sees local authorities as an administrative device for the provision of national services at a local level. The other tradition sees local authorities as independent bodies with their own rights and duties. According to the first view, local authorities should not have any independent policies; while, according to the second, they should, and be prepared to settle differences with central government only by negotiation between equals. Both traditions continue though to the present, but there is no clear answer as to which does, or should, prevail. Some reasons for the persistence of the confusions can be offered, but the situation seems inherently liable to open conflict. However, though policy views do differ, public conflict is very rare. Hence, the problem is to see how public policy conflict is avoided by central and local government.

This first problem involves a study in detail of a number of individual local authorities and one local service, the four Lincolnshire authorities and housing being chosen. This case study approach lends itself easily to the study of the second problem, of who determines local policy. Within the scope of the case studies, the general

problem can receive but limited answers, yet some light can be shed. The formal system of Councils, Committees, Chairmen, and Parties can be supplemented by considering outside pressures, the role of the individual Councillor and the Official - though the peculiar position of housing adds a further problem. Who amidst these elements of the local political scene makes the local decisions on housing policy?

The two problems are investigated through the four town case studies, prefaced by an exposition of national housing policies 1919-1959, in which the first date marks the beginning of serious local and national involvement with housing, and the second a point of pause in the development of housing policies. The factors most emphasised about national policy are its close relation to political party interest, the rapidity and frequency of policy changes due to economic circumstances and changes in Governments, and the broad ignorance of any real facts of the situation. The effects of national policies on local policies are traced in the case studies and distinctive local attitudes to housing policy brought out. Cleethorpes, from the first, disliked housebuilding; Grimsby disliked slum clearance; Lincoln anticipated national pressures for both housebuilding and slum clearance with schemes respectively in 1914 and 1928, and continued committed to a vigorous housebuilding policy; while Scunthorpe provides the case of an authority responding to local needs as well as national policy with great energy. In terms of who controlled local housing policy, it is concluded that in Cleethorpes, it was broadly the Committee, in Grimsby, Chairmen and Parties, and in Lincoln and Scunthorpe, a general consensus between Councils, Committees and Parties. A chapter is appended on minor local housing policies, that is, the quality of housing, the selection and allocation of tenants, and rents, but here too the emphasis is on Councils and Committees.

In re-examining the problem of central-local relations in the conclusions, it is argued that the method employed by central government in controlling local authorities played a critical part in reducing the visibility of conflict on policy matters, even when conflict was vigorous. Control of policy is not achieved by the use of major weapons, like the power to act in default of a local authority, but by an indirect approach of threats and the use of powers to sanction particular local projects. This avoids public conflict and leaves obscure the battle in a fog of disputed detail.

Such methods have their disadvantages. It is, firstly, biased towards curtailing rather than stimulating local activity, even though the latter is what national policy requires. Secondly, it is a control of detail in order to control policy, which means that national government is naturally overstretched and local authorities resentful. Thirdly, it fails to alter local attitudes in any way over a long period - it fails to be educative. These disadvantages are accepted because the relationship is not entirely intolerable, it gives some advantages to participants and it is quite flexible in action.

But, it is argued, the disadvantages are so great that some effort should be made to overcome them. It is proposed that a new kind of Inspectorate would overcome the disadvantages of the present system of control. The case is argued for housing first of all, and then for all local services. The Inspectorate would take the Central Department's control function by checking on local authorities performance of national policies and using publicity rather than devious controls to obtain local cooperation with national policy. Some disadvantages of such a proposal are noted and an attempt made to turn them into advantages is getting away from the problems of the present system.

The problem of who decides policy at the local level is found to be answered by looking at the obvious political elements, Councils, Committees, Chairmen and Parties. Of limited importance are outside pressure groups, individual councillors and officials. The powers and limitations of these 'actors' on the local political scene are examined both in relation to housing and to other services. The stress laid in some studies on the role of the Official is found to be less than convincing, and another argument, on the unimportance of local parties, is also dismissed. It is concluded that the obvious 'political' elements are the ones which determine local policies, though it is noted that the technical state of a local service might determine to some extent the kinds of role that all local political actors can play.

This emphasis on the political is reinforced by some reflections on comparing towns. The effect of different political styles is discussed, and the reasons for differences between towns in policies is considered. It is concluded that it is the differences in political elements that explain these, and it is pointed out, in final conclusion, that local councils do have choices in their situations and local politics does make a difference to what happens to a town.

HOUSING POLICY IN FOUR LINCOLNSHIRE TOWNS 1919-1959

"It is a test of capacity; it is also a test of democracy. Will the local councils rise to their opportunity and justify the trust which has been placed in them?"

'Housing' No. 3, 16 August, 1919.

HOUSING POLICY IN FOUR LINCOLNSHIRE TOWNS 1919-1959

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ABBREVIATIONS

Authorities

LGB	Local Government Board
M of H	Ministry of Health
MLGP	Ministry of Local Government & Planning
MHLG	Ministry of Housing & Local Government
CBC	Cleethorpes Borough Council
CUDC	Cleethorpes Urban District Council
GTC	Grimsby Town Council
LCC	Lincoln City Council
SBC	Scunthorpe Borough Council
SFUDC	Scunthorpe & Frodingham Urban District Council

Committees

HC	Housing Committee
HPC	Housing and Planning Committee
HTPC	Housing and Town Planning Committee

Person

MOH	Medical Officer of Health
-----	---------------------------

Organizations

AMC	Association of Municipal Corporations
BTE	Building Trades Employers' (Association)
MBA	Master Builders' Association
VSCC	Voluntary Slum Clearance Committee

Act

SDAA	Small Dwelling Acquisition Act
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Newspapers

GT	Grimsby Telegraph
GET	Grimsby Evening Telegraph

ABBREVIATIONS (Continued)

GN	Grimsby News
LL	Lincoln Leader
LLC	Lincoln Leader and Chronicle
LC	Lincoln Chronicle
LS	Lincolnshire Star
SFS	Scunthorpe and Frodingham Star

(i) Central and Local Government

This study is interested in two problems, the relationship between central and local government, and who makes decisions at the local level. The medium chosen is a study of a single major service, housing, in four local authorities. Central-local relations are observed in the application of housing policies, and the controlling powers in local affairs observed in how local decisions on housing policy are reached.

The first concern, the relation between central and local government involves the dual traditions of the purpose of local government. One tradition views local government as an administrative device for the provision of national services within a given area, a field administrative agency in which the relation between local authorities and central government is that of agent and principal. The other tradition sees local government as a system of local independent bodies, each having its own rights and duties, in which the relationship between the two elements is that of partnership. This is the difference between seeing the relationship as either A or B:-

A: Central Government

Local Government

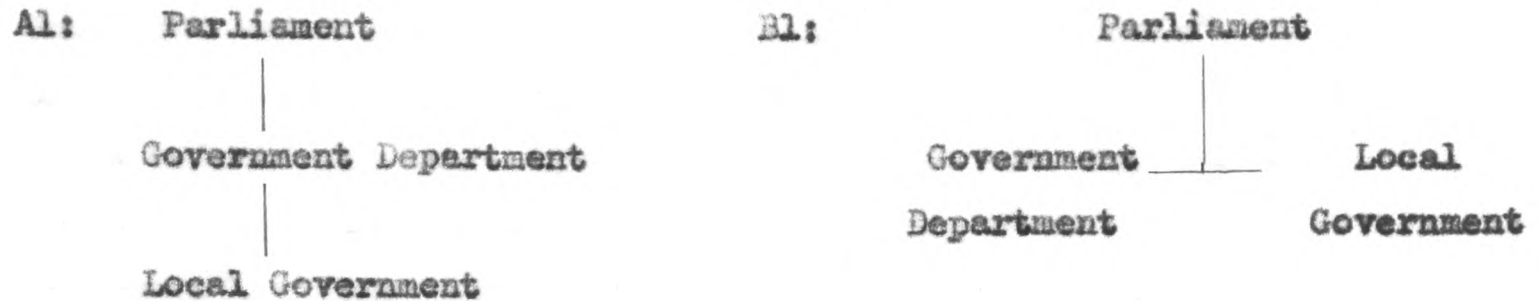
B:

Central
Government

Local
Government

These very simple models can be refined so as to take account of sub elements. Thus, Central Government can be split into

Parliament and Government Departments. No-one now would wish to dispute the supremacy of Parliament, but the relationship will remain the same:-



In Al the relationship is still that of principal and agent and in Bl that of partnership.

There has never been any settlement about which tradition, which model, is the preferred one. Both have been employed and both continue to be used. There is no agreement about which tradition either does, or should, prevail. The law provides no guidance: only in minor matters is there a principal and agent relationship and there are no cases of joint legal responsibility or partnership. There is no agreement between the parties concerned: local authorities naturally prefer the model of partnership, while central departments incline to the view that local authorities are agents requiring supervision.

Academic commentators and Departmental Committees are no clearer, though they have their preferences. D. N. Chester in 'Central and Local Government' calls both of the above kinds of view "extreme", yet insists that both Government Departments and local authorities are under Parliament, defends local government as a democratic institution and urges on central government the acceptance of "certain basic attitudes" favouring local government. (1)

The West Midland Group in 'Local Government and Central Control' adopt very much the same position. They argue that "The Government should make up its mind on the administrative tasks for which local authorities should be responsible" and urge stronger controls on the details of local financial activity, while maintaining that "the authority should have freedom in spending both its own rates and the money received from the Exchequer". Thus their desire to see local authorities as agents is tempered by an equal desire to see them keep their independence. (2)

J.A.G. Griffith in "Central Departments and Local Authorities" puts the emphasis the other way round. He sees a conflict in central and local interests, dismisses the notion of partnership in his "Introduction", argues in "General Conclusions" that Government Departments are stronger and more important and concludes that the relationship is determined by "What the departments decide are their necessary functions". However, his support for model A1 is tempered by an insistence that in the relationship cooperation prevails - "The public dispute is therefore largely superficial while the private cooperation is fundamental". Moreover, he describes three types of Government Department attitudes to local authorities: laissez-faire, regulatory and promotional. The first accords with model B1, the others to model A1. Griffith's implication in his discussion of the varieties of attitude however is that authorities have some area of freedom. But since he finds laissez-faire administratively unsatisfactory, the point is rather confused. As befits a study expressly claiming to have "tried to avoid any credal or dogmatic approach to the problem", the final position is less than clear. (3).

Government Committees of Inquiry offer no more guidance. The Local Government Manpower Committee used as a general approach the recognition that "the local authorities are responsible bodies competent to discharge their own functions and that, though they may be the statutory bodies through which Government policy is given effect and operates to a large extent with Government money, they exercise their responsibilities in their own right, not ordinarily as agents of Government Departments". But this placed the burden on what is "ordinarily" the case, not elsewhere considered in detail, unless the recommendations of the Committee are examined, whereupon it is obvious that the Committee thought that local authorities were very frequently just agents.⁽⁴⁾

The Maude Committee on the Management of Local Government is equally obscure. In paragraph 252 of their report, local authorities are placed firmly under the supremacy of Parliament, but by paragraph 266 Parliament has been amalgamated with Government Departments to make Central Government. This naturally leads in paragraph 273 to a complaint about local governments' status as "a subsidiary instrument of public administration", and to exhortations that this should cease in the committee's conclusions.⁽⁵⁾

This confusion is, of course, a reflection of actual practice. And there are good reasons why this is so. In the first place, though a Government Department may prefer a clear principal and agent relationship, it realises that to have it might endanger its traditional role of governing, controlling and inspecting, towards a much more vulnerable and politically visible one of actively being responsible for the operation of a service on the ground.

An agent can be identified with the principal and the distinction between the two becomes blurred. The Department finds itself being held responsible for running the schools, building the houses and emptying the dustbins. Equally, local authorities may prefer to be independent and only in partnership with central government, but they have no desire to be cut off from a source of additional wealth, or end by being proudly independent, but bereft of powers.

Secondly, both Government Departments and local authorities may wish to use the alternative model at times. They have their preference but a Government Department can resist a disliked policy imposed by Parliament or Ministers by a reference to the independence of local authorities, and local authorities can excuse performance of unwelcome or disliked activities by emphasizing that they are but agents in this of mistaken national policy. Thus, the participants in this conflict have no strong reasons for seeking an early settlement of their dispute.

(ii) A Problem in Central - Local Relations

Though it is possible to explain the persistence of the confusion on central-local relations, a real problem remains. National Governments are obviously entitled to determine national policy and Government Departments are expected to see that national policy is carried out. But, if the policy is to be carried on through local authorities, the assumption must be that local authorities are merely agents of central government in carrying out that policy. Yet local authorities are not agents. In the nature of their role as executants, they can divert from national policy and be either reluctant to carry out that policy or be eager to pursue a policy of their own. Even so, central government must insist that, unless

local circumstances differ from the national to the extent that the policy is irrelevant, national policy must be performed by the reluctant authority.

There is thus on policy matters an inherent potentiality for conflict between central and local government which, in the absence of any settlement as to which model of the relationship is to be followed, would appear incapable of resolution. Both positions are supported by one of the traditions, the central government by the principal and agent model, local government by the model of partnership. Without a rule, derived from a fundamental constitutional change in the relationship, which can settle the matter, it is difficult to see how conflict can be avoided.

This is especially the case since both the solutions usually offered to eliminate central-local conflict are irrelevant to the problem. The first is a call for revised attitudes towards the problem, which usually takes the form of a call for a 'belief' in local government. Griffith derides this - "The use of the word reflects the religious fervour with which some people seek to invest the whole matter" - but misses the point. In the absence of any formal rule, reliance has to be placed on the intangibles of attitudes, beliefs, and so on, in the hope of establishing certain modes of tolerable behaviour. But this is not a solution applicable to the case of the dissident local authority, only a partial solution for the whole of central-local relations. A call for a change of attitudes is not likely to be efficacious in the midst of a policy conflict.⁽⁶⁾

The second solution is to make a distinction between 'policy', which is central government's affair, and 'administration', or 'management', which is local government's. Both the Local Government Manpower Committee and the Maud Committee on the Management of Local Government use such a distinction, (the latter uses it within the local authority to divide the functions of Councillors from those of Officials), D. N. Chester rather liked it, the West Midland Group accept it, and though J.A.G. Griffith at first refutes the notion, he does decide in the end that Departments make policy and local authorities administer. (7)

The distinction however is not at all satisfactory. In the first place, as has been frequently pointed out, it is very difficult to make in practice, especially when 'policy' is not just promulgated, but controlled in detail and inspected after performance. It is then impossible to determine with certainty whether a detail is just an administrative detail or an essential detail of an existing or potential policy. Secondly, even if the distinction were made, it would only mean that local authorities were after all agents of central government. It is impossible to see any notion of 'partnership' in the process of the Government making orders setting policy and local authorities carrying out those orders.

So the inherent potentiality for conflict exists and it is difficult to conceive of an arrangement for preventing it. Yet here a real mystery is reached, because public conflict between the two is very rare indeed. Spectacular cases like the Poplar Guardians or Coventry's Civil Defence occur, but the real significance of these cases is in their rarity. But with such an

uncertain situation, and in an era of positive government, and when many local authorities are controlled by the party in opposition in Parliament, it might be expected that overt conflicts would be frequent. It is therefore worth considering the relationship between Government policy and the responses of individual local authorities in detail to see how open conflict is averted in policy matters.

Though it would be interesting to study all local authority functions involving a discernible central government policy and to study every local authority involved, both are impracticable. Since there are neither 'representative' local functions nor 'typical' authorities, a choice was made of one service and four local authorities.

Housing was the service chosen. It is both a major local function and national policy on it has been very changeable - it being one of the few services in which it is possible to properly substitute private enterprise for public efforts - so there were a larger number of opportunities for disagreement. Moreover, despite national policies existing, local authorities have had long periods of wide discretion in interpretation and action. Policy conflict when the Government wanted specific actions could therefore be very sharp and incapable of resolution. To see policy over as long a period as possible was desirable. 1919 marked the start of special national and local involvement with housing and is a suitable beginning. 1959 marks a point of pause in the development of national housing policies and it had the added advantage, so far as gaining access to material was concerned,

of avoiding the possibility of involvement in more recent political disputes in the local authorities studied.

The four authorities chosen were Lincolnshire towns, Cleethorpes, Grimsby, Lincoln and Scunthorpe. Four was an estimate of the balance between superfluity and insufficiency in illustrative material. Towns were chosen in a deliberate attempt to restrict the scope of the study and leave aside the peculiarities of rural housing provision and the possible differences in political attitudes between town and country. The four were not chosen at random, or with any stratification principle in mind, since there was no knowledge of which factors about a town might be important. They were towns I knew a little about already, having lived all my life near Scunthorpe. Though they are all in Lincolnshire the factor of 'Lincolnshireness' was of no significance since their policies do not affect each other nor are they similar in attitude simply because they are in the same country and equally remote from London.

(iii) Who Decided Local Housing Policy?

The case study approach to the problem of conflict on local housing policy lends itself to the pursuit of a second problem: who makes policy decisions at the local level? This is the general problem, but the evidence will be only from housing policy in four towns. This means a number of problems are not fully touched upon.

To begin with, there are only four towns involved. It is easy to talk about local government as if it were a uniform system and forget the large number of councils involved, each with some special mode of behaviour. Within such a large number, extreme forms of political activity can be discovered, and no generalization can ever do justice to the possibilities that further investigation may discover in other authorities.

Since only housing policy is dealt with, two other problems are left outstanding. The first is that suggested by J. Stanyer and implicit in the research done for the Maud Committee, that County Councils are a special sub system of local politics, very different from towns, especially County Boroughs. County Councils have only the smallest of housing functions and they are not represented in this study. The second problem is the possibility, suggested by recent work in organization theory, that the technical state of a service alters the kinds of associable political activity, so a study of education would produce very different results from one on housing. This is not fully within the scope of this study, though a few comments on it will be offered.

The general problem is derived in part from the long debate in American political and social studies of 'who governs?'. Such an apparently simple question has led in these studies to profound matters of both methodology and ideology being raised. Some of these reflect a specific American intellectual climate and concern for the nature of democracy. Others relate to the comparatively greater significance of the 'local' in American affairs and the decentralized nature of American government. What remains is the awkward problem of the nature of 'decisions', which in these studies is settled by considering them as the responses of local councils in following or ignoring central government policies, that is, they can occur by default as well as by deliberation.

The formal decision-takers in British local government are the Council and the relevant Committee. Political parties claim to control councils and committees and to direct policy towards the fulfilment of their electoral programmes. In doing so, they appoint important party

figures to the chairmanship of committees, recognising the common belief that one of the critical elements in policy-making is the committee chairman through his role as public expositor of policy and link-man with the other elements in local government. In addition to these relatively formal elements in local politics, folklore adds the role of particular local pressure groups and individual councillors, while some observers add the Official.

The addition of the Official is not just a recognition of the importance of his expertise. M. Harrison and A. Norton, in research for the Maud Committee, surveyed the opinions of clerks and found that in nearly two-thirds Officials were said to make a significant contribution to the initiation of policies, though it is made clear that initiation was far from being dictation in any authority: "Even where the initiative lies with the Officers, they often work through either Chairmen, or Committees, or both". D. Peschek and J. Brand in studies of local education policies emphasize the role of the Chief Education Officer and the absence of political party or committee influence. Finally, J. M. Lee on Cheshire is quite clear that the system is dominated by Officials: "It is better to regard the system of County Government as a body of professional people, placed together in a large office at County Hall, who can call upon the services of representatives of all places throughout the area which they administer"⁽⁸⁾.

Now the interesting factor about housing is that there is no single Official for the whole service, and hence no professional ideology such as Education and Medical Officers possess. Nor is there any recognised expertise for a service which breaks so readily into separate activities: building and housing management, and, within management, finance, repairs, and welfare work are all

separable. Without a unified service, each Official speaks only for the part important for him. Moreover, housing is a very 'political' service which reduces the scope for an Official to offer 'expert' advice.

In this situation, does the addition of the Official to the list of important elements in local-decision-making apply to housing? And which element is overall the most important? Within the limits and possibilities outlined above, it is hoped to cast some light on these questions as well as the more general one of who decides local policy?

(iv) A Definition and Explanations

However, before engaging in the studies, there are three matters to be dealt with, one definitional and two of explanation.

The definitional problem is to determine the meaning of 'housing policy'. It is quite possible to devise a comprehensive view of housing policy which should have been the Government's concern, but of which only a few items actually appeared. Such a bench-mark has its attractions, but a more restricted view is taken, bearing more resemblance to events 1919-59.

A national housing policy which could involve local authorities could be one of, or a combination from:-

- a) A reform of the sanitary or health conditions of existing houses, including, if necessary, their demolition;
- b) Building new houses for letting by local authorities either (i) for the needs of the general public or (ii) for the special needs of a few, including those from cleared slums; and
- c) The encouragement of the private housing sector, both in building and house ownership.

There is also a small group of topics on which at times there was national interest, but nothing so consistent that it could be called major policy, and for which local authorities, following policy (b) had to devise their own solutions:-

- (1) the quality of housing provided,
- (2) the selection and allocation of tenants; and
- (3) rents.

The first explanation necessary involves the problem of whether to use a measure of 'housing need' in studying the towns and in making possible comparisons between them. This was not done because the statistical evidence was in many instances defective or non-existent. But beyond the practical problem, there are other problems too. 'Housing need' cannot be separated from notions of 'housing standards', and both were in continual dispute. It was also soon apparent from historical evidence that there was no simple relation between the 'facts' of housing need, perception of those facts and actions subsequently undertaken. When Councillors and Officials interviewed were sceptical of the value of such measures, it seemed extremely artificial to use a special device in situations where the participants could not or would not have recognised its usefulness.

The second matter needing explanation is the controls that central government has over local authorities, and it is largely derived from Chapters III and IV of D. N. Chester's 'Central and Local Government'.

Controls are necessary because the national government is responsible for (1) the running of the national economy and (2) for ensuring that no service provided by a local authority falls

below a national minimum standards. The general objects of control are (1) to stimulate or curtail local activities, or (2) to achieve good standards of financial or administrative practice,

The methods available to a central government enable it (1) to know what is happening; (2) to tell local authorities of national views; and (3) to provide a sanction, punishment or other coercive action. The methods themselves are:-

(A) Judicial Control:-

- (1) The rule of ultra vires; and
- (2) Injunctions and orders of mandamus, prohibition and certiorari.

(B) Administrative Control:-

- (1) Default powers;
- (2) Directions;
- (3) Issue of Regulations and other forms of Delegated Legislation;
- (4) District Audit;
- (5) Inspection;
- (6) Licensing of work to be done;
- (7) Approval of schemes and proposals;
- (8) Approval of borrowing money;
- (9) Controls on use of grants and subsidies;
- (10) Approval of bye-laws;
- (11) Powers on Officials;
- (12) Appeals and Adjudications from local decisions;
- (13) Collection and Publication of Statistics;
- (14) Guidance and Advice, especially circulars.

These may seem very extensive and exhaustive, but it is worth pointing out that the existence of a power does not necessarily lead to its use in practice.

(v) The Study Outlined

The problems then that this study investigates are

- (i) the working of the relationship between central and local government in housing policies of four towns; and
- (ii) who decides such policy at the local level.

The arrangement of the study is: Chapter 2 describes national policy during the period 1919-59: the following four chapters are case studies of the four towns in alphabetical order over the same period; there follows a chapter on special minor policies; and then a chapter attempting some conclusions.

The style of the chapters on national policy and on the towns is mainly narrative with some analysis. No effort has been made to document every statement made, for this would have been much too formal. Most statements are derived from official papers, minute books and newspapers of the time. Details are given only for direct quotations, unusual statistics or material from special sources.

- (1) D. H. Chester, *Central and Local Government*, p.325, 341.
- (2) West Midland Group: *Local Government and Central Control*, p.4-5.
- (3) J.A.G. Griffith: *Central Departments and Local Authorities* reference to p. 18, 506, 515, 518; quotations p.563, 506, 507.
- (4) *First Report of the Local Government Manpower Committee* Appendix I, III. See Also: West Midland Group, *op.cit.* p.250.
- (5) Maud Committee on the Management of Local Government Report P. 273.
- (6) Griffith *op.cit.* p. 507.
- (7) *Local Government Manpower Committee op.cit.*, Maud Committee Chapters 3 and 4; Chester *op.cit.*, p.348 - 50; West Midland Group *op. cit.* Forword and Chapter IX; Griffith *op.cit.* p. 507, 536-42, 563-64.

- (8) M. Harrison and A. Horton: Maud Committee on the Management of Local Government Vol. V, p. 196-97.
- D. Peschek and J. Brand: Policies and Politics in Secondary Education, p. 67, 108.
- J. M. Lee: Social Leaders and Public Persons, p. 214.

CHAPTER II

NATIONAL POLICY

(i) The Sanitary Policy to 1914

The impetus to housing policy in the nineteenth century was from morality; after godliness, of course, comes cleanliness, and so it was the health and sanitary problems that attracted attention. The working class was held to be 'demoralized' by poor housing and insanitary conditions, and the remedy for this lay in legislation to prevent dangers to health.

In the 1840's, Liverpool led other local authorities in obtaining powers to prevent insanitary conditions and from then onward national legislation followed and made powers generally available for dealing with problems. The Public Health Act 1848 instituted local boards of health. The Torrens Acts 1868-82 allowed local authorities to deal with the single insanitary or obstructive house. The Cross Acts 1875-82 dealt with whole insanitary areas by improvement schemes. Rehousing was allowed to displaced inhabitants. The Public Health Act 1875 created health codes under which action could also be undertaken.

When the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor 1884-85 considered the situation, its recommendations were mainly with sanitary matters, though other policies were mentioned. These were the helping of housing societies and encouraging of owner-occupation of houses, and also support for proposals to halt the drift from the land by allowing rural authorities to provide houses and allotments. The idea of local authorities providing accommodation was not new. Shaftesbury's 'Labouring Classes'

Lodging-Houses Act 1851 allowed parishes to create a commission to provide accommodation, but the procedure was too complex. The Royal Commission sought to have this simplified and the Act given a chance to show its possibilities.

The housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 was mainly a codifying Act, Part I replacing Cross, and Part II Torrens, while including a Part III allowing urban authorities to build for the needs of the 'working classes'. The 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act simplified the procedures for this, but was, especially in its town planning sections, envisaged as being a health measure. Building for letting was mainly restricted to the activities of Liverpool and London County Council before 1914.

The national government was very reluctant to encourage local authorities to build. The prevailing view was that of the responsible Department, the Local Government Board (LGB) Report for 1912-13 (which was repeated in the next two Reports word for word) that "private enterprise has always been, and, so far as can be foreseen, will continue to be the main source of the provision of houses for the working class" and only when this failed should an authority act itself. The Board added that it could "readily" understand fears that public building would kill private enterprise from the fact that local authorities had provided 15,000 of a housing stock of 5,528,000! (1)

There was some modification of this position allowed. The problems of the Irish rural poor led to the Irish Labourers' Cottage Acts, especially that of 1906, and the granting of national and local subsidy for the provision of new cottages. The plight

of the rural English received sympathy from Committees in 1906 and 1913, but when the Conservatives 1912-13 took up housing as a political theme, and introduced five Bills, the Liberal government was provoked into a proposal for 120,000 rural cottages for small holders, teachers, police and roadmen. (2)

As for helping owner-occupation, there was the Small Dwellings Acquisition Act (SDAA) 1899 which allowed local authorities to make loans to persons for buying their own homes, but its existence does not appear to have been noticed by many authorities.

Thus, national policy before 1914 expected local authorities to concentrate on sanitary tasks: it was more a health than a housing policy. Private enterprise was seen as managing very well in building for letting and owner-occupation and national policy was that it should not be offered the discouragement of local authority intervention.

(ii) Crisis 1914-19

The war saw the central government willing to accept more responsibility for housing. Two Housing Acts were passed in 1914. One allowed the Government to build for its own purposes, the other allowed the Government to give subsidies for building "in anticipation of possible unemployment". It was not used, but the principle of a general subsidy was established. (3)

With housebuilding ceasing during the war, rents rose and resistance to this kind of profiteering led, in Glasgow, to rioting. A special investigation was made, and the first Rent and Mortgage Restriction Act nationally imposed in 1915 to hold rents at July 1914 levels. The Government had now intervened in the private sector.

As the war progressed, the greater became the unsatisfied demand for housing. A general crisis in housing was perceived. The LGB sought information in a cautious circular of 28 July, 1917, in which, said the Board, "We invited those authorities who were of the opinion that there was a housing need in their area, and desired to share in the financial assistance...to furnish us with certain information as to the needs of their districts with a view to our further consideration of this important matter upon a more definite basis. We added that we were fully conscious that the complete solution of the housing problem is not likely to be accomplished except with the cooperation of private enterprise..." Though no specific financial aid was offered, over 1000 of 1806 authorities were willing to carry out a scheme: a firm response. (4)

The Government was also receiving responses from Committees set up to inquire into the problem. The Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland reported in September 1917 with both Majority and Minority Reports agreed that housebuilding after the war would need subsidy. They disagreed on how this should be done: the Majority held that it must be the central and local authorities who acted; the Minority held that private enterprise should be aided. In October 1917 the Salisbury Committee on the Emergency Housing Problem excluded as "impossible" public subsidy to private enterprise and urged that local authorities act as agents for national policy during an emergency period, closely superintended by Regional Housing Commissioners. (5)

Other Committees reported during 1918 with a variety of arguments in favour of a house building policy in which subsidy would be essential, for private enterprise could not manage unaided. Though the Conservatives in the Coalition Government favoured aid to private enterprise, the Liberals insisted that local authorities were the means whereby action would be undertaken.

The Treasury produced proposals for subsidy. These were communicated to local authorities in a circular of 18 March, 1918. They would build houses, collect rents and receive a national subsidy of 75% of the annual loss for seven years, when the houses would be valued and a final settlement made. As a special concession, the maximum local rate subsidy in poor agricultural districts would be restricted to the product of a penny in the £ rate. The LGB, which issued the circular felt obliged to add that this was an emergency measure only and for the provision of houses where there was a shortage which "will not be met by any form of enterprise". This was hardly enthusiastic, but then the war was not yet over. (6)

When it was, and the Armistice duly celebrated, off went another circular on 14 November, 1918: "The question of housing, apart from its vital relation to public health, must now be regarded as of extreme urgency, in view of the cessation of hostilities and the problems which would arise in connection with demobilisation and the setting free of labour and materials for civil purposes. It is therefore essential that immediate steps be taken to submit all housing schemes to the Board at the

earliest possible date, and that every endeavour should be made to push on with their preparation". The circular mentioned that the LGB would exercise "generously" the terms of financial assistance - but did not define "generously".⁽⁷⁾

The response to this new urgency disappointed the LGB - of 1806 authorities, only 450 had schemes and only 100,000 houses were promised. The trouble was of course the uncertain financial situation: "The Municipal Corporations Association and a number of individual authorities complained of the uncertainty as to the extent of the liability which would be incurred by local authorities and pressed for a declaration that in no case should the burden to be borne by the local authority exceed the produce of a rate of 1d in the £". The authorities wished to avoid the uncertainties of a percentage like 25% as their share of the subsidy burden and wanted a more definite sum.⁽⁸⁾

Into this deadlock was brought Dr. Addison as President of L.C.B., from his success as Minister for Reconstruction. Addison was prepared to take seriously the Coalition Government's pledges for the post war period and the need for 'homes for heroes' and was filled with vigour and enthusiasm despite his colleagues' doubts. He solved the housing finance problem by allowing the penny rate proposal. This meant that the Exchequer was committed to a total amount of subsidy which could not be calculated until the houses were completed and let - an almost open-ended commitment - while the local authorities knew the extent of their liability. A 6 February 1919 circular

gave the details of a two year building programme and said that subsidy would be given to March 1927 when the whole scheme would be reviewed. Regional Housing Commissioners would act as local representatives of the LGB to supervise and sanction schemes.

"The Government and the Country are looking to the Local Authorities to start at once upon the housing schemes which are rightly regarded as forming one of the most urgent and essential parts of the whole programme of Reconstruction".⁽⁹⁾

National policy appeared to have given local authorities the sole responsibility for solving the housing problem by building for general needs in the emergency period. But this was modified as the Government decided to encourage private enterprise too. In March 1919, Public Utility Societies, that is, societies for low-cost and low-dividend housing mainly backed by industrial firms, were to be subsidised as well. Moreover, during the summer of 1919 as the Housing, Town Planning etc. Bill which put these proposals into legislative form, went through Parliament there were strong criticisms that not enough was being done to help private enterprise. This led to a second Act of 1919, the Housing (Additional Powers) Act which enabled private builders to get up to £150 (later £260) subsidy per house. Local authorities were used as agents in the distribution of this subsidy. National policy had thus become equally favourable to both public and private enterprise in solving the crisis, but the pressure was still on local authorities to do their part.

(iii) Jeremiah's Field 1919-22

In the Government journal 'Housing' for 25 October, 1920, the Rev. Patten's sermon on Jeremiah Chapter 32 was quoted with approval. The imprisoned Jeremiah purchased a field while Israel was in

national danger, and such confidence was commended. Unfortunately, between 1919 and 1922, the Government itself lost such courage.

Nationally, the Housing Scheme ran into problems from the beginning. It had far from the looked for military precision. Everything became a problem: finance, labour, materials. During 1920, the scheme staggered forward fitfully, amid the acrimony of the harassed and perplexed. Addison (from the June 1919 reorganization, Minister of Health) saw his hopes of a great programme dashed and his personal position in the Coalition Government undermined by Conservative attacks on the scheme and the expense the Exchequer was incurring.

Under criticism, Addison weakened. 'Housing' 3 January, 1921 envisaged a hopeful New Year. In March 1921 Addison agreed to limit the scheme to 250,000 houses until a review in June 1922: 'Housing' became a monthly instead of a fortnightly. In April, Addison moved in a general reshuffle from the Ministry of Health (M. of H.) to a Ministry without Portfolio. The new Minister, Sir Alfred Mond, said in May that housing expenditure must be cut and on 14 July he announced the suspension of the scheme at the current contract level. Addison resigned and later joined the Labour Party. 'Housing' ceased publication. (10)

The obligation on local authorities to act, so stressed by Addison was abandoned by Mond: "Default powers rightly included in the Act would not be used to compel local authorities to carry out various schemes". The national scheme was technically only 'suspended' until March 1922, but it was in fact abandoned: "Local Authorities should not therefore incur further commitments... except with the express sanction of the Minister". In March 1922 the whole business was formally wound up along with the Regional

Commissioner system.⁽¹¹⁾

Thus ended the heroic age of national housing policy, using the local authorities as agents of a great national effort.

(iv) Private and Public Enterprise 1922-24

However, the problems the 1919 Act had intended to cure with its innovation of local authority building with Government subsidy were not solved by ending local authority activity. By any standards there remained a shortage of houses and a building industry incapable of handling the problem itself. But the attitude of the Coalition was that of Mond, who said "I hope that further State intervention in any form will not be required and that the building industry will return to its former economic basis", and there the matter rested.⁽¹²⁾

The new Conservative Government of 1922 and the new Minister, Griffith-Boscawen, believed this analysis, but there were pressures from local authorities and their associations for a new subsidy to ease the great need for housing. The subsidy proposed was for a fixed annual sum per house built - a method that, with controls on the number of houses built, could yield predictable amounts of subsidy to be granted. Griffith-Boscawen himself also had to get into Parliament at a bye-election. Housing became an issue in this; his 'safe' seat failed to return him, and in those psephologically unsophisticated days it was held that the public wanted a new housing policy.

The new Minister, Neville Chamberlain, was more interested in slum clearance by local authorities, a sanitary policy, than in their housebuilding, as his Committee on Unhealthy Areas 1920-21

had shown. But an Act to give public subsidy was needed and displaced his own Unhealthy Areas Bill.

The Housing etc. Act 1923 however was designed to assist private enterprise. Local authorities were to get assistance of up to £6 p.a. per house for 20 years in order to distribute either as (a) lump sum grants to builders of houses, (b) payments of some Building Society charges, or (c) in rate refunds. Unsubsidized methods of helping private enterprise were also commended, such as loans to builders, Guarantees to Building Societies to lend over the usual 75% to applicants, the use of an extended S.D.A.A. scheme of loans for house purchase, and conversion of existing houses. Local authorities were not to build for themselves under the Act unless they could convince the Ministry that private enterprise in their area could not cope. The Ministry hoped that as a result of the Act "At no distant date the erection of houses for the working classes will be carried out as it has been in the past without the necessity for expenditure from either national or local funds".⁽¹³⁾

Local authorities thus became Government agents for the distribution of subsidy and were encouraged to endeavours of their own to help private enterprise and owner-occupation. However, the initial impact of the Act disappointed the Ministry. Chamberlain, promoted to the Exchequer, left Joynson Hicks to plead plaintively in a January 1924 circular for more action: "...up to the present full advantage has not been taken by local authorities of their powers of assisting the provision of houses...many local authorities have limited themselves to the adoption of a scheme for the grant of subsidy...May I urge upon all local authorities the importance of making the fullest possible use of their powers."⁽¹⁴⁾

Something more was evidently needed, and with the new Labour Government from late January 1924 and Wheatley as Minister of Health, it was produced. Wheatley embarked on an elaborate round of consultations with the building industry and local authority associations. The Nicholls Committee produced a scheme for the expansion of the building industry over a 15 year period with controls on labour and materials supply. The Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1924 made available a subsidy of £9 p.a. per house for 40 years (£12.10s. for rural areas), the local authority to make a rate contribution of £4. 10s. p.a. for the same period.

It was deliberately intended that only local authorities should be attracted by this since the accommodation to be provided was for letting only and the complex rules for the 'appropriate normal rent' to be charged excluded profit factors. National policy now allowed local authorities to build for the general needs of the working class.

But the 1923 Act was left in operation, having the function of stimulating the private sector, and its life was extended from the original 1925 to 1939 - the period of the 1929 Act's operation. It was settled that the subsidy level of both Acts would be reconsidered every two years. Local authorities were allowed, by relaxing the rules, to build under the 1923 Act if they did not wish to give a rate subsidy.

Local authorities therefore were faced with two policies which were regarded as complementary, but which could be regarded as opposed. While the Labour Government clearly gave primacy to the use of the 1924 Act and authorities building, the Conservative Government after November 1924, with Chamberlain (passed over for Churchill for the Exchequer,) back as Minister of Health, dismantled the great machinery

created after the Nicholls Committee and re-emphasised the importance of encouraging the private sector.

(v) Towards a New Programme 1925-30

National policy in the later 1920's continued the dual themes of local authority building and the encouragement of private enterprise. In December 1926 the subsidies were reviewed and reduced. Houses completed before 1 October 1927 would get the original subsidy; after then, subsidy under the 1923 Act would fall from £6 to £4, and for the 1924 Act from £9 to £7. 10s. (with the rate contribution cut to £3. 15s.). There was little attempt to hide the fact that at the 1928 review subsidies would be again reduced, or ended. In the circular informing authorities of the cuts it was urged that local building efforts should be for the benefit of "the less well paid workers", and by an alteration of the eligibility rules for the 1923 Act this was ensured for that Act. National policy was thus for the first time trying to suggest that housing subsidy was not for general distribution, but for the poor alone. (15)

The real immediate effect of subsidy change was to start a boom in local authority building to take advantage of the higher subsidy before October 1927. Buried in the Annual Report of the M. of H. for 1926-27 was a hint of Chamberlain's personal preference. A slum clearance programme was suggested as the next step as the general housing situation improved. The hint was not followed up as Chamberlain and the M. of H. were caught up in reforms of local government, but it reflected a strand of thinking which suggested that the sanitary policy of slum clearance was being neglected. (16)

At the end of 1928 the review of subsidy fell due again. To prevent a repeat of the 1927 boom in 1929 the M. of H. tried to get finished by 30 September 1928, but protests caused this idea to be abandoned. The appropriate Order was approved by the Commons in December 1928: houses completed before 1 October 1929 would get the current subsidy, and after that date, 1923 Act subsidy would cease entirely and the 1929 Act subsidy would be reduced to £6. Local Authorities were again pointed to a policy of building only for the poor. Thus, the main method of encouraging private enterprise - by subsidy - was to be abandoned.

The new Labour Government in June 1929 did not change this, but duly re-emphasised the importance of the 1929 Act by revoking the December 1926 Order and letting the subsidy remain at the 1926 level. The object, said the informative circular, was "to stabilize for a further period the conditions under which houses are provided under the Act of 1924", and though the needs of the poor were duly noted, the emphasis was much more obviously simply on building by local authorities. (17)

The desirability of doing something about the slums became a necessity when the Court of Appeal in 1929 construed the plain sense of existing legislation to mean such great planning effort that the small schemes allowed by the M. of H. during the 1920's would have ended altogether. Greenwood, the Labour Minister of Health, therefore introduced legislation to cover this and expanded the opportunity so provided into starting a new sanitary programme. This linked slum clearance with the building of replacement houses. The 1930 Housing Act introduced simpler procedures and a new subsidy of £2. 5s. p.a. per person displaced in urban areas with a local rate contribution

of £3. 5s. p.a. per house for 40 years. Not everyone displaced had to be rehoused but the authority still got the subsidy for use in the new housing.

There was no notion of a conflict between this and the continuing 1924 Act: "The Minister desires to urge on local authorities the importance of working to a definite plan which will coordinate the needs of clearance and rehousing under the Act of 1930 with the ordinary building of new houses with the assistance under the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1924. These two Acts are parts of a single policy and are intended to be worked in combination..."⁽¹⁸⁾

The intention was to provide cheap houses for letting, and differential rents were urged as an administrative possibility on the grounds that subsidy should go to the needy only for so long as they needed it. In order to discover the size of the slum problem, a survey was to be made and every authority over 20,000 in population had to prepare a 5 year programme and revise it every 5 years. Thus the new programme of 1930 envisaged not merely parallel, complementary policies but also forward planning to ensure it all fitted together coherently.

(vi) The New Sanitary Policy 1931-35

However, as in 1921, the grand scheme was destroyed by financial considerations. The May Committee Majority Report on National Expenditure 1931 as part of its review held that "There is a serious danger of the nation, gradually and without forethought, finding itself committed to the principle that a man's wages are not normally intended to pay fully for his housing," and urged a cut of £2. 10s. in the 1924 Act subsidy and proportionately in the 1930 Act too.⁽¹⁹⁾

Housing was only a minor part of the crisis in 1931 which led to the formation of the National Government on 25 August 1931. Chamberlain returned briefly to the M. of H. before moving on to the Exchequer again and it fell to Sir Evelyn Young, to urge economy on local authorities. His circular on 12 January 1932, after consultation with the local authority associations, suggested, on housing, that authorities concentrated on small cheap houses for the "more poorly paid workers" and so leave all the rest to private enterprise to act without subsidy.⁽²⁰⁾

The Ray Committee on Local Expenditure, composed of representatives of the local authority Associations in response to a plea by Chamberlain that they decide the cuts, not the Government, urged in October 1932 the abolition of the 1924 Act subsidy forthwith. This it was hoped would have the psychological effect of inducing private enterprise to build for general needs. If private enterprise failed local authorities would have to act, but "we cannot think however that private enterprise if given the opportunity will fail to grasp it". In the meantime local authorities could build for letting, apart from slum clearance work, only without subsidy.⁽²¹⁾

This proposal was acted upon in the 1933 Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, which cut dead at December 1932 all proposals for subsidised building under the 1924 Act. Local attentions were turned to a new emphasis on the slum clearance programme, which had, with all the confusions 1930-33, lagged quite considerably. A circular of 6 April 1933 urged authorities

to action: "Present economic conditions are favourable to a vigorous campaign of slum clearance...It is a strictly limited problem; and is reasonable both as to the cost and the time required for its solution". A new survey of clearance needs was required and the programme planned for 1933-38. A circular of 22 May 1933 also encouraged authorities to aid private enterprise, especially with a new Guarantees to Building Societies scheme, which was designed to aid the construction of houses for letting, now underwritten by the Government. (22)

Policy was now very clearly one that private enterprise should build houses, encouraged where possible or necessary by local authorities, who themselves would concentrate on the sanitary task of slum clearance. The next programme announced by the Government emphasised this concentration on the sanitary. This was announced in March 1934: "The first stage of the Government's housing policy was based on the principle that slums should no longer be tolerated. The second stage about to be initiated is based on the principle that overcrowding should no longer be tolerated". An overcrowding standard was devised and local authorities were to survey their areas and overcrowding was to be abated, becoming an offence after a certain appointed date. This proposal found legal form in the 1935 Housing Act. Subsidy for this work was allowed only in a small number of special cases. The Act also tidied up a large number of administrative problems, mainly in favour of property owners in clearance areas. (23)

(vii) Steady Progress 1935-39

Progress in the work of slum clearance and overcrowding abatement was described in the M. of H. Reports for 1936-37 and 1937-38 as

"steady". This was the work which the Government wished to see performed. The Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1938 abolished the peculiar differences between the two parts of the sanitary policy in provision of subsidy, by fixing a new subsidy of £5. 10s. p.a. per house for 40 years with a rate contribution of £2. 15s. to last until 1942, and so the programme went on. For slum clearance, this meant slightly worse terms so there was a rush towards the end of 1938 to get housing starts and obtain the old subsidy. Moreover, the Ministry brought as much pressure as it could for the completion of the 5 year programmes, which, it had to be admitted, had not solved the problem. (24)

The 1938 Act also introduced a £10 p.a. per house general subsidy to encourage local authority housing in rural areas. This was justified by reference to rural poverty and the special pressures on rural accommodation by town dwellers, but a similar analysis of poverty and pressures was not considered for the urban areas.

By mid-1939 it was clear that a war was imminent and a circular of 28 July told local authorities of the need for evacuation schemes and preparation of billets. Five days after the declaration of war, on 8 September, authorities were told to stop building work unless it was very advanced and to concentrate efforts on action under two new Acts to deal with war damage to buildings. The steady progress of 1935-39 ceased as war brought its own problems.

(viii) Summary to 1939

National policy on the housing duties of local authorities from 1914 to 1939 came full circle - from a sanitary policy, through encouraging building for letting and the encouragement of the private sector, to a sanitary policy once again. Even the peculiar regard for the rural problem remained the same.

Reduced to tabular terms:-

No Policy: 1914-18

Sanitary Policy: To 1914; 1930-33 (joint); 1933-39

Building Policy: 1919-21; 1924-33 (joint)

Encouragement of Private Sector: 1923-29.

Building for letting started in 1919 for general needs, the emphasis changing only after 1926 to the needs of the poorer workers, and, after, 1933, when local authorities could build without subsidy, there was no guidance at all. It is a myth that council houses were 'originally' intended only for the poor. This point is expanded in Chapter 7.

The encouragement of the private sector was only a major policy matter when there was a subsidy to be distributed. Otherwise there was a mild pressure to use SDAA and Guarantees to Building Societies, but these were hardly major concerns of national policy, especially since the Building Societies were able to deal with the owner-occupier side of housing without much Government assistance in formal terms.

(ix) Preparing for a Post-War Programme 1939-45

War meant for local authorities concentration on tasks other than housing: "This war could not have been carried through on the Home Front without the help of the local authorities". But as in 1914-18 there was a problem to be solved in housing after the war. In March 1942, with defeat clearly not imminent, meetings of the Central Housing Advisory Committee restarted and appointed sub-committees on post-war needs and problems. In March 1943, local authorities

were instructed to prepare a housing programme for the first year after the war, and in February 1944 schemes for site preparation were begun, with the allied appointment of Regional Officers of the M. of H. to superintend schemes. (25)

Policy, however, was not settled, until March 1944 when the Minister of Health, Willink, declared that the Government would introduce legislation to extend the 1938 Act subsidies to building for general needs and that the post-war programme would be 100,000 houses in the first year of peace and 200,000 in the second. The Housing (Temporary Provisions) Act gave effect to this. As an additional device temporary prefabricated buildings were produced for placing on existing sites. Allocations of these to local authorities started in August 1944, but it soon became apparent that a great use of these would be uneconomic and in March 1945 this ceased.

The Government's full policy was not announced until the February 1945 White Paper on Housing. It envisaged the same two year programme as in 1944 but foresaw "A continuous programme of new building" to ensure that every family wanting separate accommodation got it and the slums and overcrowding were to be abolished. This meant a building policy for as long as foreseeable, but, as befitted a Conservative-dominated Coalition, it would be done by both public and private agencies and both would get subsidy. (26)

In April 1945, a start was made by allowing local authorities to seek tenders for building contracts, and in June a system of local authority licensing of private enterprise building work was devised. Hopes were high for a successful post war programme.

(x) The Plan in Progress 1945-51

The Labour Government, with Aneurin Bevan as Minister of Health, came into office in July 1945. It was committed to a balanced and expanding programme of building. But its belief that the controls it exercised were sufficient for this purpose was mistaken. The programme did get out of hand and though total break-down was avoided and the scheme was not abandoned as in 1919-21, total success was not achieved.

The government also believed in priority for building for letting. Private enterprise was not to be encouraged by subsidy and it was suggested to local authorities that they restrict the issue of private building licenses to a quarter of their own building total. The subsidy level was fixed in the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946 at £16. 10s. p.a. for 60 years in urban areas with a rate contribution of £5. 10s. The subsidy was backdated in effect to 1944 and provision was made for extra subsidy for rural areas and special cases. The 60 year period was to become standard from then onwards. Though annual subsidy revision was allowed for, it continued unchanged until 1952.

During late 1945 and early 1946, the M. of H. encouraged local authorities to get as many houses in contract as possible to act as growth points in a national revival of building effort. However, this led to more houses being contracted for than could be finished, so towards the end of 1946 attention switched to a 'Finish the Houses' campaign. The 'Housing Programme for 1947' published in January 1947 explained that there would be cuts in

approval of contracts while regional conferences would allocate the estimated 240,000 house completions of 1947 to particular authorities, besides allocating future programmes. These conferences met in February and March but their allocation hopes were spoilt by the effects of the exceptionally severe winter. By May it was admitted that, with materials in such short supply, the 'balanced' programme would need to concentrate on an even smaller number of completions and future contracts would need to be restricted. The year 1947 ended with the housing part of 'Capital Investment in 1948' plan restricting efforts to the completion of existing contracts until a review of progress in June 1948.

Thus, though policy had remained constantly one of building by local authorities, the exact level of effort sought varied over the first two years of the peace. This situation was to continue until the fall of the Labour Government in 1951.

The review of policy in June 1948 was contained in the 'Housing Return to 31 March 1948'. It had an air of optimism that new contracts could be let and a slum clearance programme incorporated. Many restrictions were eased or ended during the year, though the crucial one on allocation of total house building in an authorities' area remained and a 1/5 maximum rule imposed on the proportion to be devoted to private licensed building. Completions during 1948 were very high and a bigger programme of house starts for 1949 was envisaged. The Housing Act of 1949 looked to a future in which large scale slum clearance, conversions, and improvements to property were possible. The SDAA cost limits were raised and a new scheme for advances made.

Finally, existing practice was legitimated by ending the formal legal restriction on local authorities since 1890 to provide housing for 'the working classes' only.

However, the 1949 programme itself was beset in the general deterioration of economic conditions. September 1949 saw devaluation and in October economy measures hit housing too - a £35 million cut, or 12½% cut in total numbers, which was mainly directed against the private sector. In November the issue of private building licenses was suspended. In February 1950 they were reintroduced at the lower level of 1/10 total allocation to an authority. The February elections returned Labour to office again, and in April 1950 the programme was restored to mid-1949 levels and allocations to the private sector, and the Government promised a stabilization of housing activity for 1950, 1951 and 1952 at this level.

At least there were hopes for a really balanced long-term programme. The only other change was one at the top. The reorganization of Ministries brought housing under the new Ministry of Local Government and Planning (MLGP) under Dalton in January 1951.

(xi) '300,000 Houses' 1951-54

In the October 1951 elections the Conservatives were returned, pledged to produce 300,000 houses a year. That is, to continue the building policy, but do it better. Macmillan became Minister and the MLGP significantly renamed 'Housing and Local Government' (MHLG). The policy was one of maximising housing output whatever the cost, the balanced programme was abandoned in favour of the hope that the burst of effort would raise the balance to a higher level of annual output. But it was essentially a political point that was to be made. Ostensibly, the method of increasing production was to free private enterprise from restrictions. But, in fact, the

bulk of the increase came through letting local authorities build to their utmost, allocations became 'targets' and the subsidy was increased in February 1952 to £26. 14s. with a rate contribution of £8. 18s. in urban areas. The other method was to insist on a cut in standards to build a smaller kind of house so that the same quantity of materials produced more houses.

Private enterprise was of course freed: from January 1952, authorities could allocate half their allocation to private building; from January 1953 all under 1000 sq. ft. were automatically licensed, from January 1954 all under 1500 sq. ft., and in November 1954 the Defence Regulation under which licensing was possible was allowed to lapse. But local authorities were also freed - allocations ended in June 1953. The official emphasis however was on private enterprise and its contribution: "The Government have made it clear that it is their general policy to encourage home ownership".⁽²⁷⁾

The building boom had its success: the Great Britain figure for 1953 was over 300,000 and in 1954 this was achieved for England and Wales alone. The political point of triumph had been made and, with private enterprise now restored, national housing policy could be directed to something more congenial to Conservatives.

(xii) A New Sanitary Policy 1954-59

The White Paper 'Houses - The Next Step' of November 1953 announced the new policy. It involved three parts: a new slum clearance programme and measures for the improvement of old houses; a lightening of the subsidy burden, implicitly by

ending the general needs subsidy, and, as the White Paper said, continuing "to promote, by all possible means, the building of new houses for owner-occupation"; and a reorganization of the private rented sector by allowing rent increases. The role of local authorities was to switch from housebuilding for general needs, to building only for special groups and within a new programme of sanitary action.⁽²⁸⁾

This vision was to be the basis for policy in the remaining 1950's. In March 1954 authorities were told to start making preparations for a 5 year slum clearance programme; in April they were urged to use their powers under the 1949 Act to improve and convert houses; and in May to help owner-occupation by advances or guarantees to Building Society, so that they "will be better able to concentrate on it (slum clearance) if other agencies can be persuaded to make a growing contribution to the satisfaction of other housing needs..." In the June review of subsidy it was announced that after 1st April 1955 it would fall from £26. 14s. to £22. 1s. p.a. (rate contribution 27. 7s) and proportionately in other subsidies. In August the Housing Repairs and Rent Act 1954 came into force extending grants for improvement and conversion. By December authorities were encouraged to start on slum clearance ahead of legislative requirement to do so in mid-1955.⁽²⁹⁾

Thus was the programme launched in 1954. During 1955 slum clearance programmes were formulated and accepted by the Ministry, and in September a new scheme for Guarantees to Building Societies was launched. But the new emphasis was on financial economy. In October 1955 as part of the Little Budget, authorities were driven out into the open market for their loans, and in November the

Housing Subsidies Bill, which became law in March 1956, was introduced. This envisaged the abolition of the general needs subsidy though it was to be kept at £10 p.a. for a period, while slum clearance remained at £22 ls, while other special categories of need were created including one for the urgent needs of industry of £24 p.a. These subsidies were to apply to houses after 3 November 1955. At the same time the fixed contributions from the rates to the Housing Account were abolished, enabling authorities to cease rate subsidies for their housing and so, it was claimed, bringing reality to housing finance.

This policy emphasis continued throughout 1956 and 1957. In December 1956, the £10 p.a. general needs subsidy was abolished, except for old person and one-bedroom housing, though a nominal 1s p.a. was maintained to enable the special subsidies which were technically supplementary, to continue. A discretionary subsidy was available if total rents in an authorities' housing were twice its gross rateable value - again an attempt to get realistic rent policies. For the privately rented sector, of which a large part had been controlled since 1915, with various endeavours to abolish the controls, the Rent Act of 1957 allowed decontrol and rent increases geared to rateable value again. The Act was very controversial and the hopes of its efficacy were not grounded on any available facts.

This virtually completed the legislative side of the new policy and it was marked by the end of the last Regional Offices in 1958. However, in 1959 the weakest part of the 1953 proposals

was amended. The discretionary grant system for house improvements was turned into a mandatory standard grants system for the provision of five amenities - bath, hot water, washbasin, W.C., and foodstore. This was linked to a scheme for Exchequer loans to Building Societies to enable them to make loans for the purchase of pre 1919 houses in the House Purchase and Housing Act of 1959.

During this period there were, of course, the usual economic fluctuations and, opposed to Labour practice of letting these fall on the private sector, the Conservatives let them fall on local authority building. There were cuts in early 1956 and late 1957 in this way.

Thus, by 1960 the change of policy was complete. Local authorities had been turned away from general to special needs provision in housebuilding, at least as far as the encouragement of subsidy could manage, and were expected to be carrying out a sanitary policy with some aid to private enterprise and home-ownership. In fact, the 5 year slum clearance programme by 1959-60 had failed to achieve its targets, and the Social Survey Report on 'The Housing Situation in 1960' was to reveal that a 'housing problem', however defined, still existed. Housing policy would have to continue.

(xiii) Summary 1939-59

National housing policy over this period again did a full circle from expecting local authorities to concentrate on sanitary tasks, through building houses, and back to sanitary

tasks again. In tabular terms:-

No Policy: 1939-44

Sanitary Policy: 1954-59

Building Policy: 1944-54

Encouragement of Private Sector: 1951-59

The building policy was for general needs until 1954, there was a reduced emphasis 1954-56 and thereafter local authorities received no subsidy for this, but only for the special needs and in connection with slum clearance.

The encouragement of the private sector by local authorities was a fairly muted policy being mainly a matter of advances and Guarantees to Building Societies. However, in overall terms housing policy under Labour favoured local authorities, under the Conservatives it favoured private enterprise.

One other factor needs to be noted here. Before 1939 housing was not an established part of local responsibilities apart from its sanitary implications. By 1959 it was established simply because houses had been built in great numbers in the 1945-54 period. In 1914 local authorities owned less than 0.1% of the country's housing stock, by 1939 it was about 11%, and by 1960 it was over 25%. By 1959 it was inconceivable that publicly owned housing would ever cease to be part of the country's housing situation.

(xiv) General Considerations

(1) One of the plainest factors in national policy is the effect of party interest. The Conservatives favour private enterprise to build houses for sale and, if possible, letting too, while

local authorities concentrate on the sanitary aspects of housing policy, with some encouragement where necessary to private development and home-ownership. In emergency periods local authorities have a building responsibility, but this was only after the wars. The national policy sought is one similar to the pre 1914 situation. The Labour Party, on the other hand, while agreeing that local authorities must have a sanitary policy, considers this to be only part of a total housing policy. Building for general letting is deemed a natural local authority activity, as is the encouragement of home ownership. It is a much more comprehensive view of both national and local responsibilities.

(2) The rapidity with which policy changes is very marked. It is not merely a matter of switching between different kinds of policy, but of the strength with which a policy is pursued as housing is affected by more general economic circumstances. Taking these into account, since 1919 there are changes about every other year in peacetime. This, and the continued operation of the Labour-Conservative split on the functions to be performed by the local authorities means that at the highest level there is uncertainty as to what is to happen next. Housing is not a stable or established service whose future can be predicted easily.

(3) It is important to remember that during the period under consideration national decisions on housing were taken in the midst of considerable ignorance of the facts of the situation either nationally, or even in any given locality. Committees on housing topics relied more on guesses than good evidence:

information from Ministries was filled with elementary statistical fallacies and misinterpretations; and debates in Parliament reached abysmal levels of clarity, accuracy, or intelligence. That housing was charged with deep national political emotions and was subject to sharp policy fluctuations did not aid confidence that national policy had rational justification.

The effect of these factors on the central-local relationship is to emphasize the possibilities of central-local disputes because of national political considerations, the effects of uncertainty, and the problems of adjustment to policy change, and the prospect of simply challenging the rationality of national policy, quite apart from the problem of its local applicability. They all lead to a complex kind of relationship in the detail of housing policy.

1. LGB Report 1912-13 Part II p.xxxiv, xxxvi
By 1914-15 it had gone up to 20,000 out of 5,652,000.
Schemes for 1914 were 50% up on 1913 but were still only 4407 houses out of annual production of 60-100,000.
2. LGB Report 1913-14 Part II p.15
3. LGB Report 1914-15 Part II p.5.
4. LGB Report 1917-18 Part II, p.29.
5. Salisbury Committee on the Emergency Housing Problem
"Private Enterprise".
6. Clarke J.J.: The Housing Problem p.463-6 P.17
7. LGB Report 1918-19 Part II Appendix p. 173-4.
8. Ibid. p. 80 and Circular 6 February 1919 P.2.

9. LGB Report 1918-19 Part II Appendix p. 175-9 P.12.
10. 800,000 houses was the estimated requirement of the Survey Returns under the 1919 Act.
11. 'Housing' No.45 May 1921 and M. of H. Circular 222 25 July 1921.
12. 151 House of Commons Debates Col. 1471 9 March, 1922.
13. M. of H. Circular 388 27 Apr. 1923
14. M. of H. Circular 471 17 Jan. 1924.
15. M. of H. Circular 755 1 Jan. 1927.
16. M. of H. Report 1926-27 p. xix
17. M. of H. Circular 1024 3 Aug. 1929.
18. M. of H. Circular 1138 19 Aug. 1930.
19. May Committee on National Expenditure Majority Report P.471.
20. M. of H. Circular 1238 12 Jan. 1932.
21. Ray Committee on Local Expenditure p.69 P.99.
22. M. of H. Circular 1331 6 Apr. 1933. P2, 3.

The assumption of a 'strictly limited problem' had no basis in fact, had not been made in 1930 and was eventually admitted wrong in 1939. Then in M. of H. Report 1938-39 p.81 it was admitted a "continuing process".

23. M. of H. Report 1933-34 p. 143
24. M. of H. Reports 1936-37 p. 110, 1937-38 p. 97.
25. M. of H. Summary Report 1941-42 p. 15.
26. Ministry of Reconstruction 'Housing' Feb. 1945 P.6
27. MHLG Circular 64/52 26 Aug. 1952 P.3
28. MHLG 'Houses-The Next Step' Nov. 1953. P.7.
29. MHLG Circular 42/54 4 May 1954. P.4.

Appendix

(1) Houses Built in England and Wales 1919-39

(1) <u>Year ending</u> <u>30 Sept.</u>	(2) <u>Local</u> <u>Authority</u>	(3) <u>Private</u>	(4) <u>Total</u>
1919-20	3,502	} 73,099	} 210,228
1921	47,651		
1922	85,976		
1923	25,241	53,497	78,738
1924	14,544	94,947	109,491
1925	32,090	126,936	159,026
1926	61,402	136,182	197,584
1927	113,274	159,955	273,229
1928	59,220	107,195	166,415
1929	60,367	143,076	203,443
1930	52,017	109,682	161,699
1931	63,288	131,656	194,944
1932	68,490	133,486	201,976
1933	49,213	169,100	218,313
1934	53,342	260,327	313,669
1935	43,345	275,299	318,644
1936	64,874	274,654	339,528
1937	71,339	265,795	337,134
1938	88,330	252,548	340,878
1939	78,952	201,616	280,568

Source: Cullingworth J.B.: Housing and Local Government p.28.

(2) Houses Built in England and Wales 1945-60

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<u>Year</u>	<u>Local Authority</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Total</u>
1945-6	21,878	30,657	52,535
1947	87,915	39,626	127,541
1948	175,213	31,346	206,559
1949	147,092	24,688	171,780
1950	145,784	26,576	172,360
1951	150,497	21,406	171,903
1952	176,897	32,078	208,975
1953	218,703	60,528	279,231
1954	220,924	88,028	308,952
1955	173,392	109,934	283,326
1956	149,139	119,585	268,724
1957	145,711	122,942	268,653
1958	117,438	124,087	241,525
1959	102,905	146,476	249,381
1960	107,126	162,100	269,226

Source: Cullingworth J.B.: Housing and Local Government p.52.

CHAPTER III

CLEETHORPES

1. Introduction

(i) Local History

Cleethorpes is an agglomeration of tiny settlements on the coast away from the parish settlement at Clee (which, with the parish Church, is in Grimsby), the main ones being Fore Thorpe (Hole, Hoole, Owle - thence the local inhabitants 'Owlets'), Upper Thorpe (Itterby), Thrunscoc, Beaconsthorpe (founded 1834) and New Cleethorpes. The Thorpes of Clee had a little fishing, agriculture, and oyster beds (virtually dead by 1914). By the 1850's, the 'Meggies' as the locals called themselves from some obscure derivation, were 'taking-in' visitors. In 1863 the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway was persuaded to run a spur line from Grimsby and help build up the town as a holiday centre. The Railway Company laid out pleasure grounds and took over the Pier from failed local enterprise in the 1880's.

The town prospered in this way, and the settlements were linked up, until after the First World War, when the Railway Company seemed incapable of continuing in the grand old fashion and the promotional functions passed to the Council. The Council started as Cleethorpe Local Board in 1873, became Cleethorpe-with-Thrunscoc U.D.C. in 1894, became Cleethorpes U.D.C. in 1915, and after extensions in 1922 and 1927, the District became a Borough in 1936.

The Council was preoccupied with the holiday trade; it completed a major sewage scheme in 1916, bought 215 acres of land for Recreation Grounds in 1920 and in 1928 with its Local Act

bought the Pier etc. from the L.N.E.R., as it had then become. This was despite the southward growth of Grimsby after 1890 which made northern Cleethorpes a dormitory suburb, besides raising the population to a much higher level. Only in the 1960s were other developments encouraged. The tone of local propaganda has changed little since 1914 when the local Guide maintained:

"Breezy, bright and bracing, well-drained, clean-swept by the ozone-laden breezes of the wild North Sea, Cleethorpes is an ideal resort wherein to spend a cheering, restful, health-giving, summer holiday".⁽¹⁾

(ii) Local Politics

Political control of Cleethorpes was in the hands of Independents to 1949 and since then in a Conservative-Independent alliance. The Independents were, and are, largely Conservative in sympathies. However, political control can be moderated by a weak party system and the distribution of Council patronage, especially Committee Chairmanships to minority groups. This last was characteristic of Cleethorpes until 1950, while the party system has always been weak. From 1873 until 1936 party identification by candidates at local elections was irregular and changeable. Only in the 1950's was there an identifiable party system: Independents prized their independence, Labour was either too small, or incapable of organization, and the Conservatives emerged as a result of national party call and only in 1956 after pressure from the M.P. and Agent were group meetings held. However, the Independents and Conservatives shared a common ideology of

respect for an encouragement of private enterprise, and the need to provide a pleasant enough town to attract visitors for holidays.

The Council in Cleethorpes has always been small - 15 for 1913-36 and 20 after 1936. Passions, both of friendship and hatred, run deep in such small numbers. There is an attempted norm of decorum in the conduct of civic affairs and the strong hold of local Methodism - until the late 1950's over 70% of the Council was Methodist - gave a certain backing of piety to this. However, this is combined with a respect for those who 'spoke their minds' fearlessly - and at length. This gave scope for a brand of demagogic individualistic irresponsibility by members like Alf Bannister, George Moody and Frank Broddle. To the extent to which a council should provide circuses as well as bread, Cleethorpes could always manage a show with such performers. But the bombast had little effect on decisions. Council and Committee meetings could be grandly disorderly, but business went on as usual.

The local political system was frequently described by local inhabitants as rule by senior members, mainly Committee Chairmen, in conclave. I suspect that on many ordinary matters this was how a majority was concocted, but, on 'policy' matters, the common ideology rather than frequent meetings for social intercourse - which were merely reinforcing - was more relevant. Certainly Committee Chairmen have never been dominant figures, they 'chair' discussions and do not seek to impose their views on fellow Councillors. In general, thoughts not men are the lively aspect of decisions in Cleethorpes.

2. Housing Policy

(iii) To 1914

Housing policy in Cleethorpes was dominated by the obsessions of local citizens to present Cleethorpes as a clean and healthy holiday resort. The town depended on this for its existence and the Board and Council from 1873 concerned itself with ensuring that these were local attributes. There were a set of rigorous byelaws and they were firmly enforced. The strict building bye-laws were sometimes modified to suit builders' individual needs but these were never of the kind to permit the creation of future slums.⁽²⁾ The effort to keep Cleethorpes clean had an additional advantage. When, in 1908, Grimsby endeavoured to incorporate part of the town, the local Inquiry turned into a debate on the relative sanitary arrangements of the two towns. Grimsby, being revealed as outstandingly insanitary, in contrast to Cleethorpes' clean bill of health, failed in its attempted incorporation and the sanitary efforts of Cleethorpes proved to have political advantage too.

Cleethorpes, as a result of this attempt by Grimsby, was very conscious of the need to keep up in sanitary and related matters. So when, in April 1913, the Grimsby Sanitary and Building Plans Committee proposed that it become a Town Planning Committee as well with power to plan the west of Grimsby and negotiate with Grimsby R.D.C., Cleethorpes, to the east, took sharp note and in May 1913 despatched three Councillors and the Surveyor to a conference in Bradford on Town Planning to learn more of its implications. In March 1914

the Grimsby Committee formed a Town Planning sub Committee: in April, Cleethorpes formed a full Committee and sent Councillors to be educated at a Conference in Hull; and by June, both authorities were objecting to the other attempting to have planning schemes for areas of themselves. It was pure local rivalry unattached to the merits of the business. A scheme for joint consultation of the two committees was devised, but not acted upon and both lapsed in 1915 as the war was not over by Christmas.

(iv) Making a Start 1914-19

Cleethorpes during the war experienced little housing difficulty since as a holiday resort it had quite an amount of surplus accommodation. The LGB circular of 28 July 1917 seeking information was originally seen as being irrelevant to the towns' situation. But at the September Council meeting, G.S. Watkinson, the Chairman of the dormant Town Planning Committee, wondered whether it was wise to be so abrupt, and the Council passed a resolution favouring the lifting of restrictions on private enterprise. (3)

This view enabled the Council to ignore the 18 March 1918 circular with the initial financial proposals for a housing scheme. But the 14 November 1918 circular calling for immediate action led the council to some response. The Town Planning Committee was revived as the Housing and Town Planning Committee (HTPC) and the Council took the opportunity to ask for the prompt release of a builder-Councillor from the Army to help advise on a scheme. Watkinson, a fish merchant and dull pious fellow, became Chairman of the new committee. It thought in terms of a cautious 50 house scheme.

But by the time the committee saw an LGB Inspector in January 1919, its main concern was the financial problems. He reassured them slightly, and they thought of building 200 houses in the emergency situation - to "bridge over the period which must elapse before private enterprise will be able to supply the demand for housing accommodation within the District" - though insisting that rate liability be only the penny rate, "the District is not in a position to bear any greater burden".⁽⁴⁾

Cleethorpes, was in fact, deeply distrustful of the whole housing business. Some thought the Government was forcing local authorities to act because of wild election promises in 1918; many wanted to "wait and see"; the strongest supporter, Watkinson, could commend it only on the ground that if they did not act the LGB would use default powers. The Council's Chairman, Moody, summed up the January 1919 Council meeting when approval of a 200 house scheme was given, when he "thought it would be unwise on the part of the Council to reject the scheme at the moment. No harm would be done, and after all, their suggestion might be rejected".⁽⁵⁾

(v) Reluctantly into Housebuilding 1919-21

To the disappointment of many Councillors, the LGB accepted the 200 house scheme. The HTPC then had to seek land for their house building and this provided an unsought delaying factor. The only suitable land was owned by Sidney Sussex College whose estimate of its worth was ridiculously high. The District Valuer attempted negotiations on the Council's behalf and by September 1919 had failed to get any concessions from the

College. At this point, the Regional Housing Commissioner for the East Midlands (which covered all Lincolnshire), Major Douglas Wood, intervened to suggest compulsory purchase. Horrified at the idea, the Council and the College promptly chose arbitration.

The Regional Housing Commissioners were a device suggested by the Salisbury in 1917 and adopted by Addison in February 1919. Formally they were decentralised parts of the LGB (after June 1919, M. of H.) to deal promptly with sanctions for schemes and for the dispensing of advice to authorities inexperienced in housing matters. But they were also intended to act as stimulators of local action, since it was felt nationally that many authorities would not act unless forced.

Wood's stimulatory role was to be needed in Cleethorpes. Since land had not been obtained quickly, the Council had developed an even greater distaste for housing. Watkinson accurately "complained of the unfavourable and unsympathetic attitude adopted towards the committee (HTPC)". The council refused to delegate powers to HTPC in July 1919, attacked it in September for accepting 'middle class' standards of housing by following the M. of H's insistence on 12 houses to the acre (instead of the local standard of 20), and, finally, in October, rejected a prepared 134 house scheme. Watkinson felt obliged to play his trump: he invited Wood to a special Council meeting to explain the default position, and the scheme scraped through the Council 7-6 with one abstention and one hostile 'absent-on-business'. Even though the M. of H. did allow 20 to the acre

eventually, the Council felt it had been forced into a scheme it did not want and which bore little relation to the actual needs of those without houses.⁽⁶⁾

This resentment was fanned by inordinate stimulation by the Government. The survey of housing required by the first 1919 Act put local needs at 943, saying that 500 would be needed if a new dock were built at Grimsby, and 200 were expected from private enterprise. In February 1920, the M. of H. insisted, by letter, that Cleethorpes build the original scheme of 200, not the existing scheme of 134. This was reasonable, but Wood in March 1920 insisted that Cleethorpes build all 943, despite the fact that the new dock was not then in prospect. With weary scepticism, Cleethorpes agreed to this proposal, but it was so unrealistic that it was never again mentioned.

However, Cleethorpes was committed to a building policy. But then the contracts provided problems. Cleethorpes was formally negotiating with the Cleethorpes section of the Grimsby and District Master Builders' Association (MBA), but Major Wood was the main participant. Cleethorpes argued with him to keep up the quality of houses provided, while the MBA fought Wood on prices. All was eventually settled: the MBA allocated the building work so that all its members were occupied, and the Council helped by banning some luxury building (with the temporary powers contained in the second 1919 Act) and arranging the postponement of more. Progress was steady: houses were let in small batches through 1921, and, by layout changes, totalled 136. The very smallness of the scheme enabled prompt completion when all details were settled and the MBA appears to have assessed the capabilities of its members in allocating work very well.

This local success did not prevent Cleethorpes from making some fuss about housing. This was done by supporting other local authority resolutions on the financial aspects of the scheme. During 1920 resolutions from Llanelly, Shoreditch, and Torquay were supported. Locally however, Cleethorpes had little difficulty, being small enough to get loans from the Public Works Loan Board and being one of the few authorities to have its issue of Housing Bonds (a means of local finance introduced in the second 1919 Act), some £25,000 in all, taken up before the M. of H. ended the issue in March 1922.

The resentment at the whole business was evident in July 1921. Then W. F. George, a worthy and persistent railway clerk, the new HTPC Chairman, since Watkinson was defeated in the May elections in a fluctuation common to Cleethorpes' personality politics, announced the end of the national scheme and its local application. He hoped that in view of the 400 outstanding applicants, private enterprise would take over. Councillor Bannister however summed up the general feeling: "He thought every Councillor was willing to help to the best of his ability to provide houses, but when they got a Government such as they had and who made such a muddle of the whole business, then no-one could blame the Council. He was quite satisfied that they at Cleethorpes had done the best for the people under the circumstances (Hear, Hear)". In December 1921, Bannister proposed the view that finally sealed the Council's version of 1919-21 - "nobody agreed to Dr. Addison's schemes but the people required houses and the Council had either to build them or let the Government do it and then saddle the council with half the cost". (7)

Thus the M. of H. got its way in Cleethorpes despite local opposition through the threat of default powers and the work of the Housing Commissioner. That this produced some houses at the expense of creating a clear and bitter resentment in Councillors is evident. The relationship was strained, but, from the M. of H. point of view, justifiably, since otherwise Cleethorpes would not have built at all.

(vi) A New Local Housing Policy 1922-25

Despite the end of the scheme, there were still details to be finally settled and, until Wood's post was abolished in March 1922, there was a continuing battle between him and Cleethorpes. Wood's job was now to exclude as many expenses as possible from inclusion in the scheme so as to limit the national liability for subsidy and persuade Cleethorpes to opt for a fixed annual subsidy rather than the 'actual' losses on the scheme each year. Cleethorpes resisted but eventually agreement was reached.

The Council's policy in the new situation was believed by Chairman George and Watkinson - who had returned to the Council in April 1922 - to be necessarily one of house-building since they estimated a need for 700 houses in Cleethorpes. Their colleagues in HTPC however totally disagreed with the proposal to continue building and in April 1922 came out in favour of subsidies to builders. In May they suggested a 10 year suspension of rates and taxes on new buildings - a method reputedly successful in New York. Watkinson persuaded the Council in June to reject this and vote 6-5 in favour of a

revival of the 1919 Act. The M. of H., of course, resisted this proposal and it was not pursued further. HTPC again returned to the New York scheme in November and the Council again rejected it. There was a feeling that something should be done but no clear notion of what.

In December 1922 an individual applied to use the 1899 SDAA scheme. The Town Clerk, Barker, reported in April 1923 that he could see no objections to its use and in May HTPC decided that it should be adopted locally especially with the extensions foreshadowed in the 1923 Bill. The 1923 Act on subsidies for builders was also welcomed by the Council, though George said it favoured the middle classes and Watkinson dismissed it as Conservative camouflage. In August 1923 both SDAA - with up to 90% advances - and the lump sum subsidy of £75 - as £6 p.a. for 20 years became - were introduced.

By October 1923 both schemes were in operation, which was quite a feat given the reservations of some Councillors on the security of SDAA loans and the dangers of subsidizing anything. But for the majority of HTPC and the Council the two schemes fulfilled their desire to do something practical about the housing problem. Of course, neither scheme cost the rates anything, and this was quite important since Cleethorpes was beginning its long crisis with non payment of rates and consequent financial weakness. This was not aided by endeavouring to collect the rates cheaply with a part-time collector.

The 1924 Act involved rate expenditure, but its consideration was dogged more by accident than thought. Its consideration was initially deferred to a special HTPC in September 1924,

but the weather was so inclement that the few who attended felt bound not to act precipitously. Another date was chosen - and had to be abandoned because of the General Election. In January 1925, George argued that 500 houses were needed and the Act should be used. The Council was sceptical. Within HTPC the matter was settled by a report on the Act by Barker. A precise and pedantic man, he emphasised the peculiarities of the rent fixing rules and the need for a rate contribution. This mildly unfavourable review settled the matter, and the Council and HTPC, despite George's protests, considered SDAA and the 1923 Act lump sum grants, 'its' housing policy. It was helping private enterprise and doing its duty in housing in that way. In January 1925 the proposal that Guarantees to Building Society should be made was rejected: enough was being done.

This meant ensuring that the 1923 Act worked properly. The M. of H., in an attempt to prevent luxury building with the aid of a subsidy, had a regulation permitting a maximum all-in cost of £600. In March 1925, Cleethorpes protested that because local landlords insisted on high land charges this limit should be raised. A number of similar local protests brought the M. of H. to accept a limit of £650 in April 1925. Cleethorpes still considered this too low and in October a joint deputation of councillors and builders went to London, but failed to get any change. The council's interest was not entirely to ensure housebuilding continuing but to counter fears that a low quality of house would be built because of the rule.

This concern for quality was very important for Cleethorpes at the time. It fitted their traditional preoccupation with the

image of a healthy resort, but also reflected the fact that the Council was pressing the M. of H. at the time to permit very strict building bye-laws. The M. of H. resisted these and Cleethorpes was only to get its own way by putting in clauses in its own Act of 1928, which allowed the buying of Pier and Gardens from the Railway Company. The Council was also trying to keep the local norm of 20 houses to the acre, because it enabled better layouts and cheaper houses, despite M. of H. insistence on 12. The compromise reached was 15 to the acre.

Thus, during this period, Cleethorpes achieved a policy of assisting private enterprise that was locally satisfactory even if it did ignore national pressures. Though there was a minority in favour of using the 1924 Act, accident and dislike combined to ensure it was not a real local issue, and because national policy allowed authorities the choice of 1923 or 1924 Act there were no repercussions from the M. of H. on this.

(vii) Towards an Impasse 1925-32

Policy was now firmly established in Cleethorpes: aid to private enterprise and the administration of the housing estate. Suggestions that the Council's 136 houses be sold off were scrutinised in June 1925 and found to have no advantage to the Council. Though George kept grumbling that needs were greater than efforts made and the Council should renew building, the Council followed Bannister in the belief that "they could not interfere with the builders who knew their own business best".⁽⁸⁾

Encouraging private enterprise continued steadily. With the 1923 Act, the time extensions to builders in 1927 to complete in order to qualify for the larger subsidy were generous - as indeed they had to be since, like most other authorities, agreements to

grant subsidy ran ahead of formal M. of H. sanction or even the application for it, a practice apparently not discouraged by the M. of H. The new subsidy level of 1926 made lump sum grants £50. The M. of H. also imposed a new maximum cost rate of £550. Cleethorpes, with other authorities, naturally protested, but the M. of H. this time was resistant to pressures for revision. In January 1928 HTPC decided it preferred to encourage building by private enterprise at the maximum density allowed by the M. of H, 15 houses to the acre, to their own planning proposal of 12 in the projected Town Plan and altered their scheme in March to allow this. With the other part of policy, SDAA, there was steady business. When repayments on a number fell behind in 1927 the Clerk was instructed "not to unduly press for payment of such arrears".⁽⁹⁾

However, the ending of 1923 Act subsidies left HTPC almost without a function. George was encouraged to revive his efforts in favour of the 1924 Act (Watkinson had left the Council in 1926 on becoming bankrupt). But George was taking the year 1928-29 as Chairman of the Council and he had to act through his successor to the HTPC Chair, Jacob Prior, who was amiable enough to try it. In November 1928 it was suggested that Cleethorpes use the 1924 Act; Barter again reported, stressing the rent peculiarities - thus revealing his ignorance of practices elsewhere; and consideration was deferred.

In April 1929, George moved to the Finance Committee Chairmanship and a local builder, F. Skelton, became HTPC Chairman. The local economic situation was desperate at the time - 11% of the rates remained uncollected (this led to the appointment of a full-time Collector in 1930) and despite the easy attitude

on SDAA, sales of defaulters' houses had to begin. It was felt that a housing scheme would keep the local building industry in work and keep local men employed. The council was in a mood to listen to George.

Thus, in July 1929, Barter was told to seek land for a 150 house scheme - but found no landowner willing to sell. However, by December, HTPC had an informal promise for land purchase and were ready to act. But they did wish to build at the local standard of 15 to the acre, and in February 1930 the M. of H. officially said it would sanction nothing over 12. This was interpreted locally as a change in M. of H. internal policy on the advent of the Labour Government since there had been no trouble over 15 before. Having got so far only to be discouraged, HTPC promptly dropped the whole scheme.

In the meantime, the slack in HTPC meetings was taken up by the prospect of using the 1930 Act. The M.O.H. was responsible for the survey of local needs and he eventually reported in January 1931. It was a tribute to years of effort to keep Cleethorpes clean - though many needed repair, only 11 houses needed demolition, 9 in a Clearance Area and 2 individual cases.

By the time this had been digested, interest in building had again been created as a possible aid to local problems. In April 1931, an M. of H. Inspector considering Cleethorpes 1930 Act proposals suggested the resuscitation of the 1924 Act proposals. HTPC accepted this and building at 12 to the acre. But again landowners were unwilling to release land, no informal understandings could be reached, the Council would not employ compulsory purchase for fear of ruining for ever relations with the landowners, and by March 1932 it was plain that nothing could be done. This provoked many bitter remarks about "unpatriotic

landowners", especially directed against Sidney Sussex College. The delay also upset the slum clearance scheme, for though the two individual houses were cleared by agreement with the owners, the 9 remained, and there was still no land for the building of replacements.⁽¹⁰⁾

The local financial situation remained desperate and this eroded the basis of HTPC's last remaining support for private enterprise - the SDAA scheme. Loans were not made over 80% of valuation, which meant that Building Societies were better than the Council since they had more generous ideas of 'value', and the use of the scheme dropped rapidly. But the financial situation had an indirect impact in that George as Chairman of Finance Committee was far too preoccupied to press for a housing policy, and though Skelton left the Council in 1931, the new HTPC Chairman, W. H. Haywood, a simple drug-store owner, was not the man to press anything.⁽¹¹⁾

Thus, over the period 1925-32, policy in Cleethorpes reached a total impasse. The local policy of encouraging private enterprise was no longer practicable or possible, and building for local needs or for slum clearance appeared impossible also, given local assumptions about not upsetting landowners and the minority position of those who believed in a housing policy at all. There was however, little trouble with the M. of H. during the period since the M. of H. was not pressing for action. Indeed, its main effect on the local policy was to prevent activity.

(viii) Deadlock and Debility 1932-39

The 9 slum houses still needed clearing. HTPC did not know quite what to do about them, since, without land, they could not build. Moreover, the attempt to get the owners to

clear them, so the Council itself had no liability for rehousing, failed. The Sanitary, Buildings and Sewage Committee eventually forced the pace by declaring the houses a Clearance Area and insisting, in November 1932, to HTPC that the building of 6 houses take place, such being the number required by the M. of H. approved scale for rehousing.

HTPC under this pressure decided to exploit the aid it had given local builders in getting the M. of H. to agree to high density development (after 1931 this was again acceptable to the M. of H.). One firm offered a piece of land for the 6 houses. Unfortunately, a definite price for this could not be settled, so nothing was in progress when the 6 April 1933 circular came round urging the sanitary programme.

The HTPC Chairmanship had now passed to R.E. Dove, a mild, gentle bicycle dealer, but this did not increase the efforts being made. During 1933 the price of land remained under negotiation and HTPC tried to have a higher quality of house than the M. of H. would sanction. But, with the continuous sarcasm at HTPC's lack of speed from the Sanitary etc. Committee, all this was settled at the end of December 1933.

But, of course, HTPC still had not got the land even though the price was fixed, and they had omitted to seek official M. of H. sanction for their scheme. Since the owners of the 9 were prepared to dispute that they were slums a local Inquiry had to be held in January 1934. It was distinguished by the vigorous attack by the owners' solicitor, Collinson, a Grimsby Conservative Councillor, on this "legalized robbery and confiscation", but the M. of H. was not impressed. Even so, sanction was not obtained for clearance until

March. That still left the land to be acquired. The site offered by the builder turned out to have legal complications attached to determining the precise ownership, and after much delay in seeking clarity on this, it was decided to seek another site. Again, as in 1931-32, no landowner would sell and the Council would not use compulsory purchase despite M. of H. urging because it was considered akin to robbery itself.⁽¹²⁾

As a last resort, a direct appeal was made to Sidney Sussex College in June 1935. The College took advantage of the Council's plight to wrest concessions on housing density and alteration of parts of the Town Plan which involved 12 houses to the acre. Not until May 1936 was the purchase settled.

The saga, however, was not yet over. HTPC sought to get the 6 house scheme underweigh before the new Borough of Cleethorpes Council took over in November 1936. But the M. of H. refused to accept any of the tenders submitted, and despite lengthy negotiations with the lowest tenderer he refused to come within the Ministry's maximum. In February 1937 the 6 went out to tender again. The lowest was still above the M. of H's. figure, but, in total despair, the M. of H. gave way and building started. The owners of the 9 properties gradually cleared them of their inhabitants.

But, the owners cleared faster than the new houses went up, so in 1938 when it was time to allocate the 6 houses, only 2 families had not found accommodation elsewhere and both of these refused the new accommodation. All 6 were allocated to those on the general waiting list for Council houses. So the Cleethorpes part of a great national effort came to its farcical conclusion.

Despite the saga of the 6 houses, HTPC had very little to do during this period except superintend the estate and prepare the grand Town Plan. HTPC turned down opportunities to develop new local policies. In July 1933, despite the interest of local builders, it refused to start a Scheme of Guarantees to Building Societies, and in July 1934 a Hawarden R.D.C. resolution urging a Government subsidy for local authorities' building to let was not supported, "the conditions prevailing in this district are not the same as those referred to in the resolution"; a proposition for which no evidence was given. (13)

HTPC did not even get the overcrowding abatement work. That was firmly taken in hand by the Sanitary etc. Committee. The Overcrowding Survey results were available in December 1935 - 34 private cases and 3 in Council houses. These were all dealt with by shifting families about as a result of the Sanitary Inspector's contacts. There was never any question of building. A small number of cases persisted because overcrowding was a temporary phenomenon when fishermen and merchant seamen were at home, but these seemed insoluble. The problems of seaside resorts were allowed for in the 1935 Act and the Council could license houses to be overcrowded slightly by visitors during the summer season. This the Council did for the summer of 1936 and thereafter, and insisted on strict adherence to the rules by boarding-house keepers.

It was not surprising therefore that in the new Borough in November 1936, HTPC was felt to be redundant. HTPC and the more vigorous Sanitary etc. Committee were merged to form a Health Committee under the Chairmanship of the ex-Sanitary

Committee chairman, E. Houghton. It also seemed reasonable to do this since the two Committees had in the past met on the same evening and had some overlap in membership. However, during 1936-37, Councillors grew dissatisfied with the length of meetings, so in November 1937 a new Housing and Planning Committee (HPC) was formed. J. Harvey, an inoffensive dairyman, became Chairman and HPC drifted along with minutiae. In the 5 year programme of capital expenditure in November 1938 15 houses were envisaged as likely for clearance, but no preparatory work was done before the war came and disrupted the routine of a dormant Committee.

Cleethorpes' inactivity was however in line with national housing policy - to concentrate on slum clearance. Though the saga of the 6 houses hardly amounts to 'concentration', the fundamental cause of deadlock, the refusal to compulsorily purchase land, was part of general Conservative concern for the rights of property as some of the clauses of the 1935 Act exemplify. It is also worth noting that the actions of the M. of H. itself also added to delays as well.

(ix) Wartime Planning 1939-45

During the war 64 houses were destroyed and many damaged in Cleethorpes. ⁽¹⁴⁾ HPC did its best in superintending reaccommodation and repairs, and had very little else to do. In November 1942, E.F. Marklew, the son of a leading Grimsby Labour councillor, an insurance agent and one of the two Cleethorpes Labour Councillors at the time, became Chairman of HPC. He was talented and well-suited to manage the forthcoming housing programme. However, he was a Labour man with a difference

he believed in the virtues of private enterprise and owner-occupation as much as the rest of the Council.

When the M. of H. circular on the post-war programme came round in April 1943, a start on a scheme was at once made. In June, the Surveyor, Pye, suggested that they should aim to see 136 houses (a symbolic figure) built for every year of the war, but, as he shared the Council's view that "the ideal citizen should own his own house and home", he proposed that the Council should plan to build only 120 houses of the total. The rest would be built by private enterprise for sale. This was completely acceptable to the Council.⁽¹⁵⁾

But overshadowing the housing scheme in HPC's interest at first was Cleethorpes' bitter opposition to the Town and Country planning schemes of the appropriate Ministry which involved regional groupings. Cleethorpes objected to being linked in this with Grimsby, both for the dangers of possible incorporation and because Cleethorpes already had an approved Town Plan they had no wish to have disturbed by a hostile neighbour. The Council refused to send representatives to meetings of the proposed groupings in 1943, and in February 1944 sought to join the East Lines. group not the North Lines. group where Grimsby was to be found. The proposals for group preparation of housing sites involved the same principle and Cleethorpes refused to participate. By the end of the war it was plain that on planning Cleethorpes would be forced by Ministerial Order into the North Lines. group.

For the housing scheme, the problem was, as usual, obtaining land. Not merely were local landowners difficult but a conflict

of Ministries upset plans. Representatives of the H. of H. and Ministry of Town and Country Planning agreed on a site in May 1944: by October the Ministry of Education and the local Rural Land Utilization Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture had disapproved, and HPC were forced to seek another site. The Council's wrath was expressed by E. Houghton: "Local people knew local conditions and progress would be quicker if left in their hands".⁽¹⁶⁾

Relations with Ministries were very poor and they were not assisted by insistence on planning for a lower quality of housing than the Council felt appropriate (this led Cleethorpes to reject all kinds of temporary and non-traditional houses), and a refusal to let Cleethorpes in its layout for the 120 conform to its own Town Plan. All this was after all in connection with a building policy which the Council did not believe in, though it was willing to do its duty and provide some houses. It was not surprising then that the Council welcomed "with satisfaction" in July 1945 the news of the licensing of private building after the war.⁽¹⁷⁾

In housing policy, Cleethorpes had followed the Government's views in seeing a major role for private enterprise in the post war programme. It was willing to do its necessary duty, but would have liked to have done the work in its own way. The threat of regionalism in planning matters was met by outright opposition and the application of the last sanction, the Ministerial Order, to obtain conformity with national policy in this matter, which had some bearing on housing but meant to Cleethorpes a matter of survival.

(x) Smooth Progress 1945-47

In late 1945 the problems of housebuilding in Cleethorpes seemed almost insoluble: sites were unobtainable, materials looked as they might be too, and the Council was smarting from being forced into the North Lines. planning region and feeling uncooperative with a Labour Government. It was only when representatives brought news of the address that Minister of Health, Bevan, had delivered to a Conference in Nottingham on 8 December 1945 that HPC felt that efforts would be worthwhile since they were convinced that Bevan meant business and problems would be solved. The effort was made locally and by early 1946 all was going well.

Cleethorpes arranged with the Cleethorpes branch of the Grimsby and District Building Trades' Employers' Association (BTE) that the BTE would take the housebuilding contract and allocate the work to individual builders. Though the Regional Office of the M. of H., which as in 1919-22 was operating as a decentralized arm of the Ministry, refused the original high tenders, reductions were made and by July 1946, 72 houses were in contract and work under weigh. Negotiations between the Council, BTE and Regional Office were started for another 100 and contracts were let in January 1947. Progress was very good indeed for the BTE made accurate assessments of its members' capabilities. The first 6 houses were in fact let in November 1946 - though the allegation was made that they were really incomplete and that the letting was just a ploy to show up Grimsby (which had problems with its housing and had just submitted a proposal to the Local Government Boundary Commission to incorporate Cleethorpes).⁽¹⁸⁾

Cleethorpes' smooth progress in distinction to chaos elsewhere was reflected in the Regional Conferences of 1947 which permitted Cleethorpes to continue uninterrupted throughout the year. Its target completion was 150 and this was almost achieved. More houses were put in contract and extra land obtained. All was going well and for a period it seemed as if the Council rather enjoyed a housebuilding policy and was endeavouring to clear its waiting list of 1500 applicants for houses. The town also managed to give a little aid to private enterprise by reintroducing SDAA in June 1946, though there were few applicants initially.

But, though local progress was smooth enough, Marklew, the HPC Chairman, was personally not so fortunate. Between November 1946 and January 1947 he was under Conservative attacks for being both Chairman and a Council house tenant (a tenancy of long-standing), and when these were rebuffed, he found himself under attack from the larger Labour group. They criticised his Council house rent policy, the scope of the SDAA Scheme, and urged the need for a local Rent Tribunal. Marklew refused to give way and the party withdrew its endorsement of him as a candidate.⁽¹⁹⁾ He therefore stood as an Independent in November 1947 and won. So 1947 in the end marked a triumph for him and his Committee.

(xi) Discontents 1948-51

However, after this excellent start the Council in 1948 began to reflect its Conservative-Independent membership and exhibit a dislike of the national policy they had tolerated so far because it had been an emergency period. The dislike was

fanned by disputes with the M. of H. on the acceptability of certain tenders and the need to use compulsory purchase orders to obtain the land necessary to continue building. In March 1948, in line with a national campaign by builders and Conservatives, the council supported a resolution urging the M. of H. to free private enterprise. When local conferences were held in May 1948, Cleethorpes pleaded for the granting of more private licenses. Cleethorpes was allocated 50 extra houses - 10 to private license - but argued that all should be used for private work. This particular move was partly a result of support for a political cause, partly awkwardness at M. of H.'s refusal to allow Cleethorpes' preference in house types, and partly a desire to let private enterprise pay for the sewerage of the area necessary for the next big council scheme. This was ignored by the Ministry and Cleethorpes accepted gracefully, having some cause for celebration in the winding up of the North Lincs. Planning Committee in June 1948, which had, as Cleethorpes hoped, done nothing.

Discontent with national policy emerged again in March 1949 when Cleethorpes again pressed to be allowed to grant more private licenses than the 30 out of their 1949 allocation of 150 houses. It failed, of course, though this time partly because though the Council was enthusiastic, HPC had other disputes on land and layout with the M. of H. which it did not wish to jeopardise. Nevertheless, there was continued support for private enterprise: the 1949 Act and better facilities for advances for house purchase were promptly adopted, and in contracts the Council continued to distribute the work evenly between

builders, despite the end of the BTE as a negotiating body when the largest local firm tried to take all the work for itself, to "ensure a fair distribution of work".⁽²⁰⁾

The 1950 programme was a reduced one of 120 with only 12 to private license. Councillors were incensed and Marklew was very moderate in saying only that "private enterprise should be allowed to come in as soon as possible". The June 1950 increase to 1/5 in private licenses was very welcome. Progress in building, as throughout this period, continued well despite some delays through the non-availability of materials.⁽²¹⁾

Cleethorpes' allocation for 1951 was 120 again - 24 to private license. A motion on this in December 1950 urging "provision to be made for those who do not wish to reside in Housing Estates and those who desire to purchase houses of their own", won general support, but nothing was done in view of the Government's general attitude. In April 1951 HPC congratulated itself on having completed 500 houses since the war without recourse to the horrors of temporary or factory-built houses, but there was a clear tinge of regret that private enterprise had not done it all instead.⁽²²⁾

Marklew personally drew some consolation from the progress made when he was defeated by a Conservative builder in the May 1951 elections. The Chairmanship of HPC fell to J. Mawer, a Conservative and ship's manager, who simply kept the Committee at its policy of building the numbers allocated without enthusiasm for the enterprise. Cleethorpes Council was clearly opposed to national policy but restricted itself to verbal

protest and did not do battle with the M. of H. except in the details of costs and quality of housing provided.

(xii) Reluctance 1952-54

Cleethorpes got no increased programme for 1952 immediately. The first impact of the new building policy of the Conservative government was the insistence on the new smaller house which HPC and the Council detested, but which were accepted reluctantly as the MHLG made it plain that sanction would not be given to any of better quality. HPC was also reluctant to act itself on the great building programme proposed. There was hesitant talk of building 400 houses 1953-54, but the increased allocations of 1952, 20 in February, 40 in June, all went to private licensing, and in September licenses were offered to Council tenants.

The May 1952 local elections saw the defeat of Mawer, and the new Chairman of HPC was J. O. Oslear, Conservative, fish merchant and caterer, conscientious and capable, who firmly believed in private enterprise. Under him initially, HPC spent more time in endeavouring to destroy Lindsey County Council's planners' exercises in transforming the face of Cleethorpes than in considering housing proposals. But the national requirement of a large housebuilding programme could not be evaded for ever. MHLG pressed through the Regional Office for a 180 house scheme to be in contract by August 1953, so HPC called in the BTE again to handle the big programme which was seen as totalling 500 houses in 3 years. Oslear explained local reluctance to be involved in all this boost for housing statistics, arguing in February 1953 that "subsidized housing was getting out of hand" and "It is high

time that the whole question of subsidized building was taken up with the Ministry".⁽²³⁾

Cleethorpes did not in fact do so, but throughout 1953 HPC showed marked reluctance to press on with schemes. There were delays in negotiations with the BTE to get their costs within MHLG limits, and local builders were slow in completions and were not hurried by the Council into doing better. In November 1953 HPC planned only 90 new house starts in 1954 - a reflection both of the size of existing contracted programmes and a perception that national pressure for local authority building was easing.

In January 1954, 9 acres of land were returned to local builders and new schemes envisaged merely tidied up estate layouts. HPC made no efforts to speed completions of BTE contracts except towards the end of the year to ensure the subsidy was obtained. Quiet satisfaction was to be privately found amongst Councillors at the end of the housing boom. They felt they had done their little bit towards the Conservative Government's efforts and now they could stop the whole business which had bothered them since 1945. Their reluctance to act had of course not brought any repercussions from the MHLG since it had taken quiet and undetectable forms of resistance.

(xiii) Satisfaction 1954-59

Even with the end of housebuilding, Cleethorpes was not entirely satisfied with the new national policy. Improvement grants had never been given, since HPC preferred to make loans for the purpose, and though the Ministry urged a reconsideration in June 1954, there was no change until a more satisfactory scheme was devised in July 1956. However, guarantees to Building Societies were adopted in July 1954 and advances under SDAA and the 1949 Act

were extended. In this way private enterprise was indirectly encouraged. A more direct encouragement was in persuading private enterprise building to develop some Council owned land.

Local building efforts tailed off. The building programme for 1955 was 44 houses and 22 flats. In March 1955, the 1000th post war council house was opened and Chairman Oslear said that another 50 houses would see the end of local demand for houses to let. Even so, no building programme was prepared for 1956 because of uncertainty about subsidy levels. Nor was there any real evidence for the assessment of 50 houses: it was an arbitrary guess. Building work became restricted to the provision of garages at economic rents and the provision of old people's accommodation. This last ran into such frivolous design objections by the MHLG in June 1956 that appeal was made to the local M.P. who sorted out the dispute of aesthetic tastes.

Slum clearance work went to the Health Committee to superintend, HPC merely providing the houses necessary. The initial estimate in August 1955 was for 113 (later 133) houses to be dealt with in 10 years. MHLG however protested that such a small programme could be dealt with in 5 years. The Health Committee resisted this notion since none of the houses in the programme was, given Cleethorpes' traditional cleanliness, a serious danger to health. MHLG accepted this local opinion in February 1956 and the programme went on steadily.

Thus Cleethorpes was entirely in accord with national policy. But there were some who felt that this was inadequate. Some Conservatives wanted to contract out of housing altogether and sell off the council houses to tenants. Oslear in October 1956 said tht few tenants were interested, but pressure continued and

in November he was reduced to arguing that such a policy would be unfair "while we have a long list of people with an urgent demand". But acting on this need was deemed impossible by a majority of HPC which in January 1957 decided that "the building of Council houses be restricted to the number required for the rehousing of persons from clearance areas" (ignoring in this provision for the old). Even so, at the same time, Council opinion was tested by supporting a Chesterfield resolution deploring Government policy and urging a general needs subsidy. In Council this resolution was supported by Labour, some Independents and the HPC Conservatives led by Oslear, but the 'regular' Conservatives insisted on no deviation from Government policy and it failed 8-7. This settled the matter locally, there was to be no housebuilding apart from that ordained in national policy. (24)

HPC relapsed into routine administration supervision of the minimal policy it now had, aid for private enterprise, housing those from slums and the old, and managing the Council's Housing Estates. It made one critical decision in June 1958 when in reviewing rents it was decided to follow the 1956 Act and relieve the rates of the burden of subsidizing rents. Rents were raised and put on the commended gross rateable value basis.

Meanwhile, the Health Committee got on very well with its slum clearance programme. There were some delays incurred by some MHLG decisions at local Inquiries, but these were balanced by some success in getting owners to close houses on tenancy termination and so avoiding Council obligation to rehouse.

The Committee did in fact carry out its 10 year programme in 5 years, but this was in part the result of long term programmes ignoring the susceptibility of bad housing to improvement efforts. Thus, it was explained in February 1960 that 26 of the original 113 were so improved as to require no action, while 13 not in the early proposals at all were so neglected that they had to be dealt with.

Thus during 1954-59 Cleethorpes carefully followed national policy in all respects and found it satisfactory to do so apart from a little dissent by HPC in 1956-57. The Council and Committee did after all share the interests and prejudices of the Government whose policy they followed.

3. Conclusion

(xiv) Cleethorpes' Housing Policy 1919-59

Cleethorpes' preferred housing policy remained constant over the whole period. This was, to carry out whatever necessary on the sanitary side, to encourage private enterprise and owner-occupation, and to avoid involvement in building for letting. It was essentially a policy of minimum effort by the Council except on sanitary matters. However, in response to national policy, building was undertaken 1919-21 and 1945-54 without enthusiasm.

The pursuit of this local vision of housing policy brought conflict with central authority only once, in 1919 (omitting the planning issue of 1945 as a different case). This case was solved by the Regional Commissioner and the threat of the use default powers. Much more usual was verbal complaint, calculated indifference and an attitude of distaste. The

central-local relationship worked, with some acrimony at times, but the Government got its way in policy matters, very largely because it was the national Government to which some loyalty had to be paid. When it did so in policies the Council disliked the Council thought of itself as a Government agent, but policy was 'theirs' when it agreed with local views. For its part, Cleethorpes was always willing to draw the Ministry's attention to peculiar local circumstances - the concern for quality and cleanliness, the cost limits of the 1923 Act, and the nature of the local slum problem 1955-56 - in order to have the application of National policy adjusted to local needs.

The effect of national policy was to give Cleethorpes its housing estates. If left to a free choice, the town would have done no more than a token scheme 1945-47 and some old people's accommodation in the 1950's. Local encouragement of private enterprise and the sanitary policy were carried on without national pressure needing to be exerted. National policy got from Cleethorpes what it wanted when it wanted it, but failed to change local perceptions of the nature of the housing 'problem'.

These perceptions were determined, as all discussions of Cleethorpes policy show, by the groups, the 'Council' or the 'Committee'. For housing policy, a group attitude determined policy. This in Cleethorpes has always been Independent and Conservative and one of their stock ideas has been the sanctity and value of private enterprise. No other party, group or individual was able to change this. Chairmen tried, Watkinson and George did, Marklew would have done, Oslear partly did, but

without success. Totally absent from policy making were individual Councillors, Council Officials, apart from official reports, and non-Council organizations. The locus of power in housing matters in Cleethorpes can be found in the political opinions of Independents and Conservatives. The consistency of policy in Cleethorpes can be attributed to the continued exercise of power by this group in the period.

1. Guide to Cleethorpes 1914 p.3
2. See GN 20 June 1913, 22 May 1914.
3. GN 21 Sept. 1917
4. CUDC HTPC 13 Jan. 1919.
5. GN 20 Dec. 1918, 17 Jan. 1919.
6. GN 18 July, 19 Sept. 17, 24 Oct. 1919.
7. GN 22 July, 23 Dec. 1921. The 'half the cost' was an exaggeration.
8. GN 21 Jan. 1927.
9. CUDC HTPC 9 Mar. 1927.
10. GN 18 Mar. 1932.
11. See CUDC Finance and General Purposes Committee Sub-Committee Nov. 1931.
12. GN 19 Jan. 1934.
13. CUDC Finance and General Purposes Committee 12 July 1934
14. GN 15 Feb. 1946.
15. CBC Orders etc. Report 3 June 1943.
16. GN 24 Nov. 1944.
17. CBC HPC 11 July 1945.
18. GN 18 Oct. 1946.
19. GET 30 Aug. 1947.
20. CBC HPC 8 Dec. 1949.
21. GN 17 Feb. 1950
22. CBC HPC 3 Jan. 1952.
23. GET 19 Feb. 1953.
24. GET 22 Nov. 1956, CBC HPC 3 Jan. 1957.

Appendix

(1) Population

(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1801	284	1861	1,230	1921	28,160
1811	375	1871	1,768	1931	28,621
1821	406	1881	2,840	1939	27,142
1831	497	1891	4,306	1951	29,557
1841	803	1901	12,578	1961	32,700
1851	839	1911	21,417		

Source: Census Reports, except 1939 National Registration,
(unadjusted by boundary changes)

(2) Houses Built 1919-60

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<u>Year</u> <u>(Jan-Dec)</u>	<u>Council</u>	<u>Private</u> <u>with subsidy</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Total</u>
1919			0	0
1920	136	} Not Available	9	9
1921	136		14	150
1922			80	80
1923			121	121
1924		56	48	104
1925		135	17	152
1926		116	32	148
1927		108	36	144
1928		65	25	90
1929		107	82	189

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1930			162	162
1931			147	147
1932			115	115
1933			193	193
1934			171	171
1935			141	141
1936			110	110
1937	6		73	79
1938			51	51
1939			82	82
1940			9	9
1941-5			0	0
1946	40		41	81
1947	92		40	132
1948	99		16	115
1949	130		34	164
1950	110		11	121
1951	112		25	137
1952	108		28	136
1953	104		92	196
1954	200		43	243
1955	64		47	111
1956	18		106	124
1957	0		149	149
1958	75		171	246
1959	32		217	249
1960	76		162	238

Source: 1919-45 Engineers' Reports
1945-60 Housing Returns
1960

(3) (i) Aid to Private Ownership 1924-53

(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
<u>Year</u>	<u>S.D.A.A.</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>S.D.A.A.</u>
<u>(Jan-Dec)</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>(Jan-Dec)</u>	<u>Number</u>
1924	42	1939	1
1925	44	1940	0
1926	39	1941	1
1927	25	1942	1
1928	20	1943	0
1929	17	1944	0
1930	1	1945	0
1931	4	1946	1
1932	5	1947	10
1933	4	1948	7
1934	6	1949	5
1935	4	1950	11
1936	4	1951	4
1937	6	1952	0
1938	3	1953	4

(ii) Aid to Private Owners 1954-60

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<u>Year</u>	<u>SDAA</u>	<u>1949 Act</u>	<u>Guaran-</u>	<u>Improve-</u>	<u>Improvement</u>
<u>Jan-Dec</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Advances</u>	<u>tees to</u>	<u>ment</u>	<u>Grants</u>
			<u>B.Socs.</u>	<u>Loans</u>	
1954	6	} 83	2	} 14	
1955	18		5		
1956	26		6		
1957	66	112	25	10	19
1958	89	108	27	18	32
1959	53	108	42	34	35
1960	31	109	40	20	33

Source: Files of Authority - (3) and (5) Returns to MHLG (2), (4), (6) Personal Compilation.

CHAPTER IV

GRIMSBY

1. Introduction

(i) Local History

Grimsby enjoyed medieval prosperity from fishing, general sea-born trade and acting as a local market town, and obtained a Charter in 1202. But the town declined after this period and the population obtained in its reduced circumstances merely a reputation for quirkiness and rapacity in the election of its two M.P's (see Pepys Diary 28 Sept. 1667). The Grimsby Haven Company tried with a new dock in 1801 to restore trade, and Capt. Harris M.P. had a large cordage works 1831-33, but all such efforts failed. Salvation came through the arrival of the Railway in 1848.

The Railway Company attracted fishing smacks, especially from Barking, to Grimsby to use the new dock facilities and rapid rail transit to markets that were provided. Timber importing, a new graving dock and other industries associated with fisheries, were established and the town grew rapidly. The peculiar institution of the local Freemen, whose property rights in the town centre were guaranteed in the 1849 Grimsby Pastures Act (not modified until 1949) also prospered with the town.

Grimsby is not, however, the best site for docks for anything other than the fishing trade, since it is not on the deep water channel. The Alexandra Dock was mistakenly completed in 1880 for general trade, but, fortunately, fish continued to be popular and catches increased with the introduction of steam trawling after 1891. The deep port project was revived

in the 1900's and, despite Grimsby protests, was located on the deep water channel up-river at Immingham. This dock was completed in 1912 but not until recent times has its potential been exploited, and it did not develop as Grimsby's rival. Even so, Grimsby, though extended in 1889 and 1928 has always sought to incorporate Immingham and the southward extension of the town in Cleethorpes into a Greater Grimsby.

The town's heavy dependence upon the fishing industry brought problems to the town in the inter-war years when the trade declined, though a new fish dock was completed in 1934. The town suffered severe unemployment and in the 1930's lost population to more prosperous areas.

After the Second World War, the situation changed, largely through the activities of the Council in developing industrial estates, where quick-frozen food works and chemical industries brought a new prosperity to the town which had lost its obsession with fish by then.

(ii) Local Politics

Political control of Grimsby 1914-60 can be tabulated thus:

1914-35	Conservative,
1935-45	Conservative and Liberal,
1945-49	Labour,
1949-53	Municipal Group (mainly Conservative and Liberal),
1953-60	Labour

From 1919 there was a tacit anti-Labour alliance amongst other groups, though this did not prevent disputes with the alliance between Conservatives, Liberals and Independents. The party systems in Grimsby have always been weak. Parties internally resemble more coalitions of personal factions around the leading figures of Chairmen of potential

Chairmen than anything else. The conflict between parties is bedevilled by loose discipline in the ascending order of likelihood of voting, verbal support, and attendance. Chairmanships themselves, were allocated to minority parties, mainly within the alliance, to 1945, and from 1949 by an agreement using a weighted points system so that the minority party has a few minor offices. The Council in Grimsby has always been large - 48 1906-27, 56 since 1928, which in itself has not aided cohesion.

The local political tradition was one of corruption in local affairs, and even when this ended, after 1914, civic affairs remained very lively. Civic decorum is a notion impossible for most local Councillors to comprehend, even less to follow. Irresponsible personal and political behaviour is the normal thing in local affairs. The anonymous "N.S.E. West" in a cynically humorous work outlined the characteristic political style:

"The Freedom-of-the-Seas argument, in which - by ancient custom - positive assertion is followed by flat contradiction, climaxed by personal abuse, is, of course, not permitted in the clubs of Boodleburgh (Grimsby)..."

"We are self-governed, self-made, and self-conscious." (1)

It is tempting to see this style as a product of the social life of the fishing industry, but the style was the same in the 18th century before the fishing came. So did the peculiar local love of Freemasonry with an emphasis on the mysteries of the craft - a self made religion. The whole style hints of a rather unsure society in which agreement is not easily achieved amidst a populace eager to express individuality.

The local political system since 1900 has been dominated by Committee Chairmen, their quirks and prejudices, their passions and interests. They determine policy and it is left to the Officials, who are themselves autocratic potentates in their Departments, to carry out the policies in detail. Though party passions run deep and do reflect major social cleavages, they, like other political elements, are too disorganised to alter the system established and found satisfactory to most participants.

2. Housing Policy

(iii) To 1914

The sanitary housing policy in Grimsby, like all public health matters, was at odds with customary local attitudes. The MOH Simpson revealed in his Report for 1909 that local social views were against him. In justifying his work he wrote " The term Public Health would seem to give the impression that it is the welfare of the community as a whole which it seeks to benefit, while the fact that, the whole community being made up of individuals, whatever makes for the good of the whole of necessity must likewise benefit each individual member, appears to be lost sight of."

(2) The results of this wilful disinterest were apparent in the local Inquiry into Grimsby's attempt to incorporate part of Cleethorpes in 1908, in which Grimsby failed largely through the shockingly insanitary state of the town there revealed. (3) Nothing at all was done before 1914 to alleviate the particular

problems made apparent then; even less did it increase local interest in sanitary affairs.

The town's interest in Town Planning did not contradict this, since it was largely the latter's possibility for embarrassing or taking-over neighbours, especially Cleethorpes, that interested Councillors. The Chairman of the Sanitary and Building Plans Committee and the Engineer went to Conferences in London in 1910 and 1912 on the 1909 Act. In April, 1913, the Committee proposed that it be invested with town planning powers and plan the west of the town - a disguised move that Cleethorpes, to the east, did not fall for.

In September, 1913, the first full-time Town Clerk, Jackson, was appointed from Salford, partly because of his special knowledge of town planning procedure, and in March 1914, the Sanitary etc. Committee formed a Town Planning sub-Committee. (4) This forced Cleethorpes into appointing a full Town Planning Committee and by July 1914 both authorities were at odds attempting to plan parts of the others' area. The war brought a premature end to a potentially interesting conflict and both authorities lost interest in 1915.

If the town had little interest in sanitary affairs, it had no interest in having a housebuilding policy of its own. This was perhaps a little surprising since the town had quite considerable estates (quite how extensive it is impossible to discover, since records were kept so badly in the 19th century - perhaps deliberately - that leases fell in without the corporation being aware of the fact). However, it was preferred to lease this land to builders and the Sanitary etc. Committee with

the superintending Estates Committee ignored some of the erections there produced which contravened even the inadequate local building bye-laws. (5)

A Councillor Collins tried to interest the Council in a Municipal Lodging House in 1905, but without success. The Grimsby I.L.P. in 1909 came in deputation to the Estates Committee to urge a housing scheme. The Committee Chairman, R. Johnson, was reported: "This is not a burning question in Grimsby today and he pointed to the way individual builders had catered for the public. He saw no reason why the Corporation should become speculative builders. If there were any question of the public not being catered for in the future then he would go in for Municipal building." That settled the issue in Grimsby.(6)

Grimsby's housing policy before the war then was an inadequate sanitary effort, and a belief that local builders were managing quite well building houses, and nothing need be done by the Council itself, except ensure increased corporate income by seeing Corporation land utilized.

(iv) Richard Johnson 1914-22

In Grimsby no housing problem was perceived during the early days of the war. Disquiet at possible post-war problems was aired in 1916, but not until the receipt of the 28th July 1917 LGB circular, enquiring whether the authority was interested in producing houses with the aid of a subsidy, was anything done. The Sanitary etc. Committee appointed a sub-Committee on Housing in September 1917 and this was supported at full Council on the grounds that "they would be doing the right thing in making preparations beforehand". (7)

This sub-Committee fell under the Chairmanship of Richard Johnson, whose personality was to dominate housing policy in Grimsby until 1929. Johnson was a Liberal, a joiner by trade and estate agent by profession, who had been on the Council 1899-1912, including being Chairman of the Estates Committee during the development of the Corporation Estates and the coming of the I.L.P. deputation. Energetic and experienced, he supported a housing policy in part because there was a need for such a policy, but in equal part because it was to be his method of restoring his political fortunes.

Johnson was faced with the problem of persuading a Conservative Council of the need for a housing policy. They were prepared to give him some latitude, since if the scheme failed, they would bear no odium, and if it succeeded, they could take the credit, but not quite the amount he felt he needed to succeed. His solution was to pursue two policies: one for the benefit of the Council and the Public; the other, his own for which the only evidence was the sub-Committee minutes. Now in Grimsby, sub-Committees unlike Committees were not open to the press, so with the cooperation of friendly fellow Councillors the activities of the sub-Committee could escape scrutiny.

Thus, while the sub-Committee estimated immediate needs at 450-500, the public statement was of a modest 100. (8) And, by January 1918, while the sub-Committee was negotiating for land, Johnson was persuading the Council to reply to the LGB that Grimsby would build 200 houses if necessary in the emergency situation. The Council reluctantly agreed, "subject to the financial

assistance rendered by the Government being satisfactory to the Council". (9)

Johnson himself shared the financial fears of the Council. So, when the 18th March 1918 circular proposing that authorities bear 25% of the loss on a housing scheme, Johnson led consideration of it at the Sanitary etc. Committee with support for a resolution from Bradford protesting at the uncertainty of these terms, and had added a clause "That this Council are further of the opinion that the housing of the working classes is a great national question and that the actual yearly loss on any scheme or any loss on capital should be borne by the Treasury" which the Council accepted as well. The sub-Committee - now united with the defunct town planning sub-Committee - considered in July 1918 a Report of a Conference of Lancashire and Yorkshire authorities urging the penny rate limit to local liabilities, agreed to it, as did the Council later. (10)

Such a view brought an LGB Inspector to explain Government thinking to the sub-Committee in early November 1918, but Johnson reassured him of Grimsby's interest in housing and used the meeting to get provisional acceptance of a 400 house scheme with the sites already chosen, though he omitted to mention that the Council had no knowledge of all this yet. (11) By December, with national policy after the circular of 14th November 1918 being definitely on his side, he was ready to present the Council with his real ambitious hope: the 400 was but a "fleabite" and 1000 houses would be needed. The Council gave limited approval "without binding the Corporation to erect such houses until the scheme receives the formal approval of the Council and the financial assistance of the Government

is satisfactory." (12)

The Council Conservatives were beginning to be restive about the scheme and Johnson's handling of it. At the January 1919 Council meeting there was a great body of criticism that Johnson only managed to silence by arguing that unless housing schemes were carried out there was a danger of bloody revolution from the homeless demobilized. (13) Even so, some critics spotted a weakness in Johnson's plans - now fixed for 304 houses on 4 sites - in that he had ignored the Town Planning mystique that had become a dogma since he had been on the Estates Committee. He proposed building at 20-22 houses to the acre and not at the sacred 12. Sure enough, the Regional Commissioner for the LGB, Wood, argued that instead of exploiting small parcels of land at high density, Grimsby should develop a large garden suburb at modern standards. He refused to sanction the other schemes and "suggested" a 1200 house scheme (estimated needs now being 1100). (14)

This meant that all Johnson's careful preparatory work went to waste. In April 1919 he exploded with indignation that "It appeared to him that they were subject to the caprice of a department, the personnel of which was continually changing, to the disadvantage of local authorities," (i.e. the verbal promises of November 1918 by the LGB Inspector were not honoured by Commissioner Wood). He attacked the new scheme as "middle class housing", but reluctantly favoured it even at the expense of his own projects because Grimsby needed a scheme of some kind. (15)

The Council felt some sympathy with him and sent a deputation to London to support his case. It failed, though one of the smaller sites was developed in the

end. But the Council Conservatives also wanted Johnson to take responsibility for the scheme. In April 1919 the sub-Committee began to report directly to the Council, and in July it was made a full Housing Committee (HC), so Johnson who became Chairman of the new Committee could be isolated. He bitterly remarked "whoever held the position was not likely to enhance his reputation." He started to replan the Grimsby housing scheme again. (16)

Johnson negotiated with the local Master Builders' Association (MBA) and the local Architects' Association for the possible use of their services. The land for the big scheme requested by the Ministry - 128 acres in the Laceby Road - was obtained after a direct personal appeal by the Mayor to the Owner, Lord Yarborough. Finance was considered a major problem still and Johnson led support for a Derby resolution in September 1919 complaining of the general financial situation. As the difficulties of the big scheme became apparent, all sides of the Council, from Conservative to the sole Labour member, became ready to exonerate Johnson personally from any failings of the scheme. Moreover it was apparent that the Ministry was having its own way with all housing schemes. The final scheme for Grimsby, for 988 houses with 200 as a first installment, was passed by the Council in October 1919, Johnson having received personal assurances of its acceptability.

But, for the second time, Johnson was to be disappointed. A letter from the M of H of 17th December 1919 rejected the scheme as "inadequate"

and disallowed the installment and insisted that all 988 be built at once. Johnson, in a fury, suggested to the Council, which was half-inclined to agree, "that the Grimsby housing scheme be abandoned lock, stock and barrel, and that they throw the whole responsibility on the Ministry of Health and hang the consequences". Having been calmed by the sympathy from all, he was persuaded to continue and hoped "If we are left alone, we shall be getting on with building early in the New Year". (17)

From then onwards, Johnson lost interest in the grand scheme and tried to minimise its impact, while attempting to provide a quiet life for himself. Grimsby did of course agree with the M of H to carry out the building of 988 houses in 3 years, but in its actual agreements with the MBA and the Architects thought only in terms of 300. And realizing perhaps the impracticability of the effort, the M of H did not press for the 988 during 1920. Moreover, though there was a survey of local housing needs under the 1919 Act, Johnson suppressed the results. The original survey in October 1919 showed an estimated need of 1500 houses, but a new survey in July and August indicated that 2000 was a more likely figure. Such an estimate would have allowed pressure on Grimsby for an even greater formal scheme, and despite requests by the M of H and sarcastic public comments in the Government journal 'Housing' in December 1920 and January 1921, it was not returned. In May 1921 Commissioner Wood asked directly for it and HC took no action.

On the actual details of the scheme during 1920

and 1921, Johnson was content to leave it entirely to Wood to negotiate on costs with the MBA. He intervened only to ensure that the contracts which were agreed were fulfilled by the MBA, and that the MBA got a 'fair' profit for its efforts, i.e. 15%. When, in the negotiation of contracts, Johnson took a lofty view of the situation, coolly talked of 300 houses being enough (i.e. his original scheme and the number agreed with the MBA and the Architects) - though only 174 were then in contract - and refused to help Wood break the power of the MBA by seeking outside tenderers.

Johnson used his time to consolidate his power as Chairman of HC. From the first, in August 1919, the press was excluded and HC gave only reports not minutes to the Council. From March 1920 HC met at times chosen by Johnson alone and though in November 1920 minutes had to be presented to the Council they were only synopses of its affairs. Johnson in this way had a free hand and so had fulfilled his political ambition, but he remained impotent to do anything with the power since the Grimsby housing scheme was not his, but the Government's creation.

The progress of the scheme was very poor. There were great delays because materials were not available, there were shortages of skilled labour, and the MBA failed to allocate houses wisely to builders, so completions were very uneven. The financial side of the affair was just as chaotic. The Finance Committee sought to issue £300,000 of local Housing Bonds, made vast publicity efforts and even exploited the local connection with Addison (born at Hogathorpe). Addison came to speak at a mass meeting on 21st April 1920 and performed very badly, including getting all his local references wrong. (18) The Bonds were a failure - only $\frac{1}{3}$ subscribed by December 1920 and during 1921 the Finance Committee had to borrow elsewhere at high interest rates.

In such circumstances, the 25th July 1921 circular, telling of the abandonment of the Housing Scheme, might have been welcomed. But, perversely, Johnson saw an opportunity to make the scheme 'his' again, and promptly wrote the the Minister "requesting his approval to the erection of a further number of houses on the Laceby Road site". He sought sufficient to get his cherished 300, but the M of H would sanction, as a special favour, only 50, making a total of 224. The details and specification for these were disputed with Wood for almost a year and not until after Wood's post was abolished in March 1922 was M of H sanction given to contracts of all 50 with a non-Grimsby builder. (19)

Though in March 1922, the HC recorded its "high appreciation for the efforts of the Housing Commissioner's Department", Johnson's retrospective view was a more accurate reflection of feelings: "He had never been in love with the scheme (presumably, as revised) and was not proud of his association with it." This was not surprising since Grimsby produced less than a third more houses than neighbouring Cleethorpes with a population three times greater and after having a great deal more original enthusiasm. (20)

In terms of housing policy in the period, Grimsby had been willing through the energies and persuasiveness of Johnson to have a realistic housebuilding policy. But Johnson was twice disillusioned by what were, in policy terms, trivial objections on detail - density and the difference between an installment and a plan - produced by the Ministry. As a result, Johnson lost interest in the business and revived only when the Ministry itself had determined to withdraw from the

housebuilding policy. The case is a simple one of excess central zeal producing hostility amongst those very local elements which could lead to policy success.

(v) Johnson Relaxes 1922-29

There was a lot of work after the official end of the housing scheme in tidying up the details. The MBA had sufficient political weight to stop by May 1922 the exercise of penalty clauses for non-completion of work within the time allowed, and to silence criticisms of the work done by deflecting attacks onto the one outside builder for his poor workmanship. More importantly the MBA had been guaranteed a 300 house scheme and they wanted compensation for work undone. This claim was settled in March 1924. The Architects had been on the same basis, but they were more obdurate and their claims were not settled until 1928. Settling the details of final costs with the M of H for the Laceby Road site - now called Nunsthorpe - provided endless occasions for dispute as well, given the conflicting interests of the two parties.

Johnson still wanted to keep building, if only to get to the 300, avoid compensation payments and get his original number. But, though he tried in October 1922 and January 1923, the M of H refused to allow subsidy for any scheme. The 1923 Act he looked on with initial disfavour. A Cardiff resolution condemning the 20 year period as too short was supported and Johnson in aggrieved tones said that the Act favoured private enterprise rather than the Council. The Council itself however thought the Act was just right, despite the 200

year period. At a Conference of Lincolnshire authorities in Lincoln in July 1923 to discuss the Act, the Grimsby Town Clerk, Jackson, said his Council favoured private enterprise. Johnson realized he had to work within the tolerance of his colleagues.

In August, 1923, HC decided to distribute the 1923 Act £75 lump sum grants but insisted, despite furious MBA protests, on very rigorous amenity conditions on the kinds of house to receive subsidy. Johnson was sceptical of the Act's value even to private enterprise: "the Committee were absolutely convinced that the time was far distant when private enterprise would provide the necessary houses", and in January 1924 came out against SDAA for the encouragement of private enterprise - "it was all very well for the Ministry of Health to ask them to carry out this Act but they were taking no risk". The 1923 Act however could also be used for Council building. In October 1923 the General Purposes Committee gave HC general permission to build 105 houses. In March 1924, Johnson got the Council and the M of H (which, under Labour, did not require rigorous proof of need to build) to accept 52 houses as a first installment of the 105 - the decisive fact to the Council being that it cost the rates nothing. (21)

With the 1924 Act, Johnson was very cautious especially since it did involve a charge on the rates. The Town Clerk was asked to report on the Act in September 1924, but Johnson did not call any meetings to discuss the Report and when in December he was asked in Council to define the Committee's attitude, he was non-committal. He argued that of a waiting list of 800 only 150 were "desirable" and that HC was considering building only 55-56 under either the 1923 or 1924 Acts. By January 1925, Johnson had however made up his mind. He propose

that 55 be built by the Council under the 1923 Act and at an MBA dinner attacked the 1924 Act as "a millstone on taxpayers' necks". The decision was very popular with the Council. (22)

Grimsby now had a dual policy of building a little for itself and helping private enterprise with lump sum grants. In connection with the latter, in March 1925 a deputation was sent to London to urge a change of the M of H's cost limit regulation from £600 overall to £550 excluding the cost of land - a particular local problem. The M of H, after many petitions of this kind, raised the overall limit to £650. But HC was not to be tempted into other activity to help private enterprise and nothing was done about SDAA or Guarantees to Building Societies.

At this point, Johnson fell ill. From June 1925 to January 1926 there were no meetings of HC, except a brief, formal one in November, 1925, since meetings were held at Johnson's summoning. This stopped all proposals from coming forward. When Johnson returned he proposed a further scheme to build under the 1923 Act for 34 houses. At the Council meeting in March 1926 this proposal met with the counter proposal for 100 houses under the 1924 Act from the now powerful Labour group. Johnson got Labour to withdraw their opposition to the 34 with a promise to consider the 100 in HC, though adding ominously that "it was £4:10s. out of the pockets of the ratepayers" for every home under the 1924 Act. (23)

Johnson, by not calling meetings of HC in the afternoon when Labour members could attend, avoided such a discussion of the 1924 Act and in December 1926 produced a scheme for building another 64 houses under the 1923 Act. The Labour group recognised his adroitness and pressed him only to make

the houses small, so as to reduce rents - and this was done. Throughout 1927-29 small schemes using the 1923 Act were begun despite occasional Labour protests and the revelation in September 1927 that this did cost the rates something, because of the cost of borrowing money.

Johnson began to think of retirement in these years. HC met infrequently and transacted little business beyond the small building projects, the lump sum grants scheme administration and estate matters. He decided to go in October 1929 with the end of the 1923 Act, his last HC again considered the 1924 Act as a possible policy - and did nothing. At his last Council meeting he was praised for his efforts since 1919 - 224 houses built under the 1919 and 239 under the 1923 Acts - and in reply presented himself as a man totally opposed to subsidies who had done his best in the circumstances of his times. He could have given himself a much more interesting encomium.

Policy during his relaxed administration 1922-23 had been very limited and cautious - acting as Government agents in the distribution of the £75 and later £50 lump sum grants, and some building at no expense to the rates. This was a minor effort to alleviate the demand for houses to let in the town, though the size of the problem was deliberately minimised. At his retirement with the end of the 1923 Act, Grimsby had no definite housing policy whatsoever.

(vi) Benjamin Rushforth 1929-33

The new Chairman of HC was Benjamin Rushforth, a company director of a building materials supply firm. He had virtually created the MBA in Grimsby, had been Secretary of it at the time of the 1919 scheme, and was influential in its successor, the Building Trades Employers' Association (BTE). Being a

Conservative, his colleagues expected him to follow closely their lack of interest in housing matters. This he did.

In May 1930, the T.B. After-Care Sub Committee of the Health Committee - a body including influential and respected outsiders as well as Councillors - urged action in the building of houses for those in bad conditions and the MOH added his support. Rushforth had done nothing to develop any local housing policy so far, and was very conciliatory and told the Council in July "The Committee had no desire to ~~burke~~ the building of houses as they all recognized that they were necessary". But he did not wish to use the 1924 Act for the purpose and so awaited the new 1930 Act. Even so, by December 1930, HC was still only "seriously considering" a scheme(24)

The survey of slum clearance needs under the 1930 Act was done in January 1931 and the MOH reported that 175 houses were needed and 140 would be demolished. Rushforth, to be on the safe side, insisted that these be spread over 5 years of building. The Labour group suspected that the MOH's figures were politically influenced and insisted that 100 houses be begun at once as part of a total programme of 250 houses. The Labour attack was led by the brilliant, but erratic, Ernest Marklew, who included an attack on Rushforth's personal dilatoriness. Rushforth, whose business career had sheltered him from such attacks, offered to resign

and argued that he delayed only to keep the final cost down. Since he then went two months without calling HC to decide anything, Marklew again attacked him at the April 1931 Council meeting. It had no immediate effect.

The Conservative group could see no 'needs' in housing, and great political disadvantage if they appeared to accept Labour proposals. But Rushforth knew he could not delay for ever and in July proposed the 100 house scheme that Labour had suggested, and won the miserable and reluctant consent of his friends by posing the threat that unless they did so "the Government would step in and do it for them".⁽²⁵⁾

Preparations for this 100 under the 1930 Act were commenced in September 1931, but with the national crisis, the fall of Labour, and the economy-mindedness of the National Government, delay was again possible and Rushforth carefully omitted to call any HC meetings until February 1932 except a brief one in November 1931 to have himself re-elected Chairman. The cause of delay he claimed was M. of H. insistence on a smaller house size - a dispute that was allowed to continue until May 1932 when tenders went out. By this time, Rushforth had a genuine cause for delay - he was ill. His colleagues naturally prevented anything of importance happening during his absences and while the 100 were being built HC stuck to minutiae of business.

The Health Committee, where Labour members won Liberal support, took over housing policy. In October 1932 they appointed a sub Committee to meet the BTE on the building of

more houses to let. The B.T.E. turned out to be more interested in the relaxation of building bye-laws and housing density rules than in using the 1924 Act for themselves or in general building for letting. Rushforth came to some meetings both as Councillor and member of the BTE, but discussions broke down in February 1933 and housing policy returned to HC.

There the minutiae of business lifted a moment for the letting of the 100 houses. Though intended to be under the 1930 Act, they were, without announcement, switched to the 1924 Act. The reasons for this change cannot now be discovered, but hostility to housing those from the slums was among them. In December 1932, 28 slum houses were taken over by the Estates Committee, but when, in April 1933, this Committee sought to clear them, HC refused to house the occupants. All 100 were allocated to those on the general applications list.

To be absolutely consistent in having no particular policy, HC rejected a scheme for Guarantees to Building Societies in July 1933, despite local builders' interest. In August 1933 Rushforth died. The Council paid tribute to his memory and "characteristic zeal". They could not have been referring to his tenure of the HC Chairmanship. He had inherited no set of local policies and left none, and throughout national policy had been ignored, especially in slum clearance. This had not provoked Ministerial wrath simply because the Ministry had no means of knowing, or if they had, of stimulating an authority determined on minimal action. (26)

(vii) Henry Weldrick 1933-39

The slums could not be ignored for ever, and especially not in 1933 when national policy again determined that action on this was necessary. In Grimsby, the Health Committee again took up housing. In September 1933 it formulated a slum clearance programme remarkably similar to the one urged by Marklev and the Labour group in 1931 - 250 houses to be built and 370 to be demolished. (27)

The Minister of Health, Young, visiting Grimsby at the time sanctioned the scheme and to Labour fury said it was sufficient when they considered it barely adequate. At any rate, the MOH, Stevens, did not believe Ministerial thinking that slum clearance as a limited short-term problem. He pointed out that there is "no finality in any slum clearance scheme", but Councillors paid no attention. By December 1933, the Health Committee felt it could not wait for HC action for ever and considered building the necessary houses itself. (28)

HC had by this time a new Chairman, Henry Weldrick, a pleasant and quite indecisive man, a plumber by trade and a Liberal by politics. The Conservative group, to ensure his conformity, gave him Edwin Rudkin, a tough, nasty, Conservative builder, as his Vice-Chairman. Weldrick and HC were sufficiently unwilling to see all their functions disappear that they first of all regularized themselves. Fixed times for meetings were introduced, and on afternoon time chosen to stop some Labour Councillors attending. And by February 1934, HC had got slum clearance as its responsibility.

The Health Committee had decided on an initial 100 house scheme. HC adopted this, but despite the obvious need for it, and the fact that the Development Committee wanted the slum clearance area site for new industrial works, Rudkin attacked the project in February 1934 with what was to be his standard argument - the number of empty houses in the town. As became equally usual, Labour led by Marklew destroyed the argument by pointing out the rent which was being asked for this accommodation. Even though the Council accepted the scheme, Rudkin continued his opposition. He had one special reason. The Health Committee had insisted on no more than 12 houses to the acre in recent building schemes, builders were incensed and Rudkin's attacks on housebuilding prevented slum clearance and so upset the Health Committee.

The July 1934 Council meeting made apparent the local opinions on housing. A resolution by Hawarden R.D.C. in favour of renewed Government subsidies for local authority general purpose housing was brought to the Council by Weldrick, who was mildly in favour. However, Rudkin led Conservative attacks on the theme "subsidies are socialism gone mad". Marklew demolished this by pointing out how willing they'd been to accept 1923 Act subsidies, and another Labour member caused a riot in the Council by suggesting that builders be disqualified from voting on the matter. The resolution lost 19-13. The debate was symbolic of Labour opposition, the divisions within the Conservative-Liberal alliance, and the bitterness of Conservative factionalism. Even had Weldrick had a

mind to frame a policy acceptable to all, he would have found it very difficult in such an environment. (29)

Slum clearance work went very slowly. The Health Committee made Clearance areas, though at local Inquiries Conservative attacks continued through Conservative Councillor and Solicitor, Collinson, who usually alleged unspecified "ulterior motives" to all proposals. (30)

The more serious delays were through the building programme. The 100 scheme could find no contractor competent enough to undertake it, and when one was found after a long search, in July 1935, the Conservatives stopped the contract because he was not on the King's Roll (an undertaking to employ disabled ex-servicement). In July, through the instigation of the new MOH., Kerr, who could see no point in providing houses at Nunsthorpe where none of the slum area people wished to be, the 100 was cut to 40. To the Labour group however this was final proof that the Conservatives were engaged in a "deliberate policy of delay and obstruction". Marklew prepared to give precise details, but the Liberal Mayor decided to protect his allies and Weldrick and ordered Marklew to cease. Chaos and uproar ensued and the details will never now be known, though since Marklew was scrupulous about such things they certainly existed. As for the 40, the M. of H. refused sanction to a series of high tenders and not until October 1935 was a contract arranged. (31)

Besides chaos in slum clearance, HC had to deal with a major problem in lettings of houses on the Council Estates. Having built under the 1919 and 1923 Acts except for the 100 completed in 1933, rents were very high. At a time when building costs were low and the local economic situation

very poor, it was difficult to relet houses. By March 1935, 49 of 427 houses on the Nunsthorpe Estate were empty and even the wealthiest applicant on the Council's list would have paid 15% of his income in rent. They seemed to be unlettable so a Deputation went off to London and persuaded the M. of H. in April 1935 to allow rents to be cut by 2/- per week to enable lettings to be possible. The lesson was that the Council should have used the 1924 Act, but all the Conservatives drew from the episode was reinforcement for their conviction that housebuilding by the Council was wrong. (32)

Thus, when the Government introduced overcrowding as the next item of policy, Grimsby was not quite ready to accept responsibility. HC was too confused to want responsibility for the Overcrowding Survey and associated work, and, for the Health Committee, MOH Kerr made it plain it could only interrupt existing slum clearance work. He was eager to give it all to HC and so force it to have a Housing Manager instead of relying on their Committee Clerk to do all the work of administration and the Health Department for all technical assistance. It might even ensure that some houses were produced. In January 1936 Kerr got HC to accept the Overcrowding work and in February the idea of a Housing Manager. As a consequence, the results of the Overcrowding Survey - 202 overcrowded in the official returns, though 232 in their own - led to no immediate action. But later on in 1936 it became clear that, even with a Housing Manager, HC would not do the work of abating overcrowding, so the Health Committee took over unofficially and did the work until the war of rearranging

overcrowded families into less crowded accommodation. (33)

HC continued its dilatory ways. Almost nothing was done about building to allow slum clearance to take place. In April 1936, Greenwood, the Labour ex-Minister of Health, bitterly criticised Grimsby's slowness while on a visit to the town. The local press sought to refute this, but only served to reveal that of the amended programme for 446 demolitions 1933-38, only 89 were even in Clearance Areas. The MOH apparently could see no point in pressing for the making of slum Clearance Areas when there was no prospect of them being cleared because there were no replacement houses to go to for the inhabitants. When, in July 1936, a 50 houses building scheme was sanctioned, the MOH and Health Committee got down to more work very quickly. (34)

Thus, when HC supported a Newport resolution in January 1937 urging the Government to extend subsidies beyond 1938, it was well based on local lack of progress. For, though by then most of the 446 were in Clearance Areas, only half had been dealt with. In March 1937; another 50 houses were put in contract despite Conservative opposition in both HC and Health Committee. The general level of debate remained generally lower than this brief example:-

Ald. Thornton, "Slums be hanged! That is all you think about. There are no slums in George Street and New Street'.

'Have you been to see it?' queried Ald. Beeson.

'No,' replied Alderman Thornton." (35)

There was so little enthusiasm that in February 1938 the M. of H. had to suggest proceeding to the building of the next 50 houses. This made in the end 201 under the 1930 Act - higher than the 175 of 1931 but below the 250 of 1933. By September 1938 HC were prepared to put only 50 houses in the 5 year plan of capital expenditure, and stuck to this figure though the Council referred it back after Labour insistence. The Council itself was far more interested, of course, in the proposal for a new Municipal Office.

HC had by this time failed in the only campaign that had aroused it to enthusiasm: the assessment of Council houses. In December 1934, the Council had decided to allow compounding for rates by owners of houses of less than £13 p.a. rateable value. The interest of HC in this was that as landlords for the Council Estate they too could claim the compounding allowance and so reduce the rents - an important local need. But the Rating Committee would not keep assessments below £13. HC in 1935 sought evidence from other towns and discovered a range of £8 to £18 for a 3 bedroomed non-parlour house, but most were below £13. In 1936 the Rating Committee fixed the assessment of the 40 new 1930 Act houses at £14 - a level which ensured rates per week equalled the 3/9 rent and put the houses out of the range of the really poor. There is no doubt that it was deliberate political obstruction. HC fought for a change but neither the Council nor any outside agency proved of assistance and by mid-1938 it was plain the cause was lost.

1939 saw the attempt to get the last 50 houses - to fulfil the 1933-38 programme - agreed 'in principle'. It came to the Council in July and Rudkin made his usual speech opposing on the grounds of the numbers of empty houses in the town and the need to keep the rates down. Others alleged that houses did not go to people from clearance areas - not surprisingly in view of the costs involved. The proposal was rejected, perhaps symbolically since slum clearance or any other kind of housing policy had for some while not been 'in principle' acceptable to the Council.

Thus Grimsby came to 1939 without having solved its slum problem because opinion on the Council disliked both the work itself and the building of houses to permit the work. This slowness could not be checked by the M. of H. since its powers were not designed to speed efforts but to prevent activities occurring. Grimsby chose a slow and sedate pace for its activities in housing and was untroubled in its choice.

(viii) Planning 1939-45

HC during the war was reduced to the impotence of checking on rent collection and the cultivation of gardens. In the circumstances, the continuing publication of synopsis minutes only seemed irrelevant and from November 1940 full minutes came to the Council. The interesting part of wartime housing work - war damage repair was entrusted to a special committee, so little was HC's capacity in the matter regarded. There was plenty for the special committee to do - 570 houses were destroyed, 250 seriously damaged and 12,745 needed repairs. (36)

HC, in an endeavour to find something useful to do at its meetings, resuscitated the old assessment of Council houses question when given an opportunity by a proposal to collect the rates with the rents in 1942. The Rating Committee had equally little to do in wartime and so a brisk battle, on assessment methods, took place. In February 1943 a joint meeting of both Committees decided to leave it to the Chief Valuation Officer, which did lead to some reductions.

The possibility of a post-war programme in March 1943 led to the submission of reports from Officials and in May a scheme for 1000 houses in the first year of the peace - 300 council, 700 by private enterprise. Nothing more was done on this matter except to look at experimental houses. However, in February 1944, HC was pressed by the Officials into seeing that national policy was poised for an early start in housing. A sub committee started a search for suitable sites, and priorities were reversed - of the 1000, 700 were to be built by the Council. By April 1944, decisions had been taken to have two large site and to begin negotiations on possible terms with the BTE.

The sites, though acceptable to the M. of H., were not acceptable to the Planning and Agriculture Ministries and all had to be changed. The Regional Officer tried to persuade Grimsby to lead a group of authorities in the large-scale preparation of sites, but Grimsby wished to be left alone. Negotiations with the BTE were unable to get far in the uncertainty. Amid all this was one pleasant surprise. In August 1944 Grimsby applied for 500 temporary houses. It was

not that HC either liked them or expected so many but, as Weldrick said, "Grimsby should state its claim". The surprise was that Grimsby got this number in the allocation. (37)

After some dispute with the Rural Land Utilization Officer, a site for the 500 was obtained, but not until June 1945 was the contract for siteworks let - to Mitchell Engineering of Peterborough. The delay was typical of the genteel inefficiency of HC, but it was not the delay which disturbed the Council, but the fact that the contract had gone to a non-Grimsby firm. Weldrick fended this off by referring to the M. of H's insistence that the lowest tender be accepted. But in August 1945 Weldrick went further and sought a quotation from Laing's for 100 concrete 'Easiform' houses after negotiations with the BTE had again proved fruitless. The Conservative group was furious and enunciated the doctrine of local patriotism that they were to employ ad nauseam from then onwards. In the words of Councillor Green, "The Corporation...should do all it could to support local traders and industry by spending its money with them". The Conservatives failed to convince the whole Council since Weldrick said the BTE's offer to build 200 houses a year was quite inadequate with a waiting list of 1600 for houses already compiled. (38)

At this point of turmoil, the Borough elections of November 1945 occurred, Labour won and Weldrick lost his Chair to Matthew Larmour who was to dominate Grimsby's housing policy for the next two decades.

(ix) Matthew Larmour 1945-49

Matthew Larmour was a foreman pattern-maker and had, as with Johnson in 1916, been brought into the Council in

1940 to fill a vacancy. His wife had been a Labour Councillor since 1936. A Belfast man, he was, and is, loquacious, charming, and utterly ruthless. Officials liked his decisiveness and within a slackly organised Labour group he wielded great power through the strength of his personality.

Larmour was, with the local and national Labour movement, committed to making a great housing effort. Yet the situation he faced in 1945 was not very promising. There was an obvious need to begin with for a new broom to reorganise the system and poke at old assumptions made by the previous Council. The main expression of this was in help for the private sector - SDAA was successfully adopted in 1946. But there were difficulties with the Council's own projects: Mitchell Engineering had labour troubles; negotiations with the BTE continued stormy as the 100 Laing houses were taken and a Louth firm got a 51 house brick contract; temporary houses were slow in arriving, and obtaining land was a slow process. In April 1946, after a winter of much effort and little success, Larmour explained the problems and said that, in the circumstances, their high hopes were "doomed to disappointment". He felt obliged in May 1946 to point out that houses take time to complete and begged "Judge us in two years' time". But with over 3400 applicants something had to be settled soon. (39)

Fresh negotiations were begun with the BTE and a small contract for 12 houses let, but further progress was hampered by the BTE's lack of reality - it was prepared to claim it

could build 720 houses a year. Nevertheless a contract for 282 houses for completion in 1947 was let to the BTE, which it reallocated to 29 different builders. Resort was had again to Laing's - another 130 concrete houses. But of the expected 500 temporary houses Grimsby got only 234 in the end. 1946 was not a good year in Grimsby and Larmour felt no optimism for 1947, since he expected materials to be in short supply and contracts would not be completed on time.

In fact 1947 was even worse than expected because of the terrible winter. In March 1947 the Zonal Conference allocated 460 completions to Grimsby for the year and 500 for contract in 1948. In the end under 300 were completed in 1947. By October 1947, 4008 applicants were on the lists and only 400 homes had been completed since the war. Larmour admitted all had been a failure - "I have nothing to be proud of, in the attempt to solve the housing problem...". The local failure could be attributed to the local impact of national misfortune, accentuated by the late start in local building because the Council and the BTE could not agree terms. (40)

The lack of progress was, of course, blamed on Larmour personally. These culminated in a savage debate in January 1948 on a questionnaire sent out by the new Housing Manager requesting information on incomes from tenants. Allegations were made of "Gestapo methods" and other general abuse, until Weldrick pointed out that the questionnaire was 28 years old and had been in continuous use. Facts do not, of course,

prevent attacks, the motivation for which lay more in Labour being in office at all than in their actions. The Conservatives were also loyal spokesmen in the Council for the BTE, which yet again could reach no agreement with the Council and in February 1948 dramatically threatened "revolt" if they did not get contracts or more private licenses to stave off bankruptcy. This particular protest fizzled out before it could be integrated into the national campaign to free builders from restrictions later in that year. ⁽⁴¹⁾

1948 was the year Larmour had asked to be judged on in 1946. In the event, no-one was able to revive his request against him. Houses were completed during the year at great speed and in September the 1000th post war house was opened. The housing list was revised and shown in April 1948 to be only 2110 - a much more plausible target for efforts. Contracts were let to builders willing to break with the BTE and there was sufficient confidence in progress in this to stop taking concrete houses from Laings. In October 1948, the clearance of bomb damaged areas was confidently undertaken to add to the small amount of slum clearance work HC had done since December 1947. HC even tried a ploy of its own devising - trying to convert the M. of H. and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to the view that Grimsby as a fishing area deserved the same preferential treatment as agricultural districts. The Ministries refused this delightful attempt in February 1948.

The programme for 1949 was confidently expected to take the same easy course of progress. Grimsby was allocated

400 houses for the year - 80 to private license. As usual there were difficulties with the BTE: on private license, the method of issue and the rules on maximum cost per sq. ft.; and in Council housing, no agreement could be reached, so Laings were again approached. It was also calculated that, as the builders were short of skilled labour, concrete construction needed far less of it than brick, and so house production would be higher in Grimsby with Laings involved. Though Larmour was confident of progress, the local electorate was discontented with Labour rule and Labour's majority was lost in the May 1949 elections. The Municipal Group - a coalition of Conservatives, Liberals and Independents - came to power and Larmour lost his chair.

Thus policy in Grimsby 1945-49 under Larmour had been in accord with national policy in its efforts for housebuilding. Even a little necessary slum clearance not in national policy had been done, and something had been given the private sector in SDAA. Though the policy had not been an entire success, the Council was, through the combination of national pressure and Larmour's drive, committed to a housing policy of some kind.

(x) Ronald Danby 1949-53

Ronald Danby, the new Chairman of HC, was a clerk, a long-standing Council house tenant, organiser of good works around the Nunsthorpe Community Centre, personally charming and quite indecisive. He was most influenced by the person he last talked with. Larmour, though displaced from official position, continued to call on Officials, kept a firm grasp of events and trends, and virtually ran the day-to-day business of HC as usual. His powerful personality also enabled him to

have personal ascendancy over Danby and influence his thinking. The Labour group recognised this situation, feared the imposition of a tougher and vicious Chairman, and gave Danby as much support as it could. The limits of this influence and support were the ideological tenets of the Municipal Group to which Danby had allegiance.

The Municipal Group though formed in February 1947 simply as an anti-Labour coalition and as a method of returning some to office, had a collection of simple nostrums which held them together ideologically. However, 'party' discipline was almost negligible, so there was no sure method to carry through these nostrums on all occasions. In housing these showed up very quickly: it was hoped to do without compulsory purchase orders, despite a serious shortage of building land; the alleged social scandal of allowing married couples without children to share houses ended - despite this being the only way such couples could get accommodation at all; the BTE was promised a revision of the maximum cost rules on private licensed work, and there was talk of a big building programme; an extra allowance of private licenses was asked for - and refused by the M. of H.; and, finally, the press were allowed into HC meetings - with the only consequence that certain members got cheap and easy publicity for their prejudices.

However, after a summer of euphoria, the facts had to be faced, especially on housebuilding. The Engineer, Oldfield, doubted both the building capacity and administrative ability of the BTE group. Danby was convinced by the wealth

of Oldfield's arguments and in October 1949 announced a scheme for 238 concrete houses. He claimed that "private builders had failed the town" and said "It is high time we disregarded local partisanship and got on with the job of building houses as quickly as we possibly can". Such views attacked not only the cherished dogmas of the BTE but also those of the Municipal Group.⁽⁴²⁾

The BTE attacked Danby's views. He retaliated by pointing out the extraordinary delays and incompetence displayed on their 282 house contract of 1946, even though he did admit a preference for "Grimsby houses built by Grimsby builders for Grimsby people". Municipal Group Councillors tried to mend the breach - but merely exposed themselves to Larmour's ready and savage wit. A BTE delegation came to HC in November, the press were excluded, and they offered to build 300 houses a year. HC was openly sceptical. But somehow Danby was persuaded behind the scenes. At the end of November he implicitly withdrew his remarks.⁽⁴³⁾

In December 1949, the BTE publicly offered to build 489 houses in a year (that is, more in public than offered in private) which was unrealistic since the 1950 allocation was only 340 for Grimsby. The proposal went to a special HC meeting where it was accepted in principle and the 238 scheme abandoned. Danby, defeated, covered up with a stern warning to the BTE - "If you fail, you will not only receive criticism from this Committee, but the condemnation of the whole town".⁽⁴⁴⁾ As a result of this episode, Danby's local standing sagged.

It was totally ended by the allocation of a Council house to his daughter in January 1950. Protests and allegations were made on this to which Danby did not, and, presumably could not, reply. (45)

The BTE was very pleased at its success in getting the private license cost limits raised and in February 1950 a contract was signed for 306 houses. But the problems of Grimsby still remained: in July 1950, compulsory purchase orders had to be made again for land acquisition; in September applications totalled 3587 and, to the MOH's concern, 791 were in overcrowded conditions; and in October, Danby quarrelled in public with colleagues on allocations policy, and Oldfield pointed out that progress in the year had been slower than would have otherwise been the case if concrete construction had been used for some houses. This last position so worried the BTE that a special deputation was sent to HC in November to keep all-brick instead of some concrete for 1951. At the same time, the height of some local fantasies was reached when Danby was persuaded to apply for twice the 1950 allocation for 1951 - that is, 680 houses. Larmour was so sharp on this piece of politicking at the Council meeting that Danby complained that politics was being introduced into housing!

Housing policy under Danby from this point began to be wildly erratic and inconsistent with any known set of views. In December 1950 it was decided that of the official 1951 programme of 350 only 1/10 instead of the still-allowed 1/5 would go to private license. There was also a refusal to increase the cost rates on private license work. In these decisions hostile to the BTE, Danby may have been influenced by the Kalson case, a

local scandal in which there was gross overspending on building a licensed house, with the connivence of a Municipal Group Councillor, which earned all participants heavy fines. In January 1951, the request for a double allocation was officially refused by the M. of H. The Municipal Group took the opportunity to blame all local housing failures on the Labour Government, but Danby admitted other problems too, and Oldfield was trapped by Labour members into admitting that concrete houses would help Grimsby's position. Danby unsuccessfully tried at the time to refute this, but was soon thinking the same himself and in June told the local Conservatives that the BTE could never, at the most optimistic build, more than 350 houses in a year. Even so, the 1952 programme was again all brick construction, with Danby amiably saying, "We are trying to provide continuous work for the local bricklayers", which was not much of a point when concrete houses used few bricklayers and the objective was to provide more houses than local industry unaided could manage. He also argued that concrete houses were of low quality, but in October and November the quality of the 1952 allocation of 350 was, by MLGP request, cut sharply. (46)

The drift of policy came to a new crisis in early 1952. The revised applications register stood at 3080 and the MOH was insistant that something be done for overcrowded families, "Which are on the increase". Firm action was needed, but all the Municipal Group wanted was to see the revival of the private sector in accord with the new national policy of the Conservative Government. The extra allocation of 50 houses in February 1952 was split evenly between Council and private license, for as a leading Councillor put it, "As a Council they

should support the policy of a property-owning democracy". In March 1952 HC asked for another extra allocation for private license - and got another 50. The whole business backfired sharply when a 23 house clearance scheme had to be done quickly and there were no houses available for rehousing. In desperation, Grimsby HC contacted Cleethorpes HPC to help out - the only communication ever between the Committees - but were refused. (47)

In the May 1952 elections, Labour gained 5 seats and though the Municipal Group still held office, it was disintegrating and hardly expected to survive the next elections. Danby had no idea of what he should do, and in the absence of thought or ideology, he listened to Oldfield and Larmour (who had already found themselves in broad agreement on what should be done). Thus Oldfield got a non-traditional building programme started with the technical support of the MHLG Regional Officer that the BTE alone could not satisfy Grimsby's needs. By November 1952 Laings were promised 150 houses a year for 3 years. (48) Oldfield and Larmour cooperated on the establishment of a direct labour building department as the next stage of freeing themselves from dependence on the BTE. In June 1952 4 houses were to be built by this department as an 'experiment!' - the label merely being one to confuse Danby's party colleagues. Danby was allowed to go ahead with a project of his own. Following a proposal by Macmillan that Council houses be sold to sitting tenants, one Grimsby tenant applied in August 1952. Danby used his casting vote in September to see the project through, but until the tenants were circularized

on the project no more could be done. There were such delays on this that the suspicion that the Housing Department was not interested can be maintained.

The allocation to Grimsby for 1953 was 550 - 115 to private license. The BTE could see its position being eroded by Laing's and Direct Labour and brought pressure on Municipal Group Councillors to exclude concrete construction. In September 1952 the Labour Group tabled a censure motion in the Council on this. The Council sent the motion to HC, and there only Danby's casting vote prevented its passage. The incident provoked a furious row in which a Labour Councillor alleged that Municipal Group Councillors had only become Councillors in order to obtain contracts. Though many Councillors were associated with Council contracts and a formal investigation was held, both parties agreed to suppress the whole matter. The bitterness caused by this however was kept up by the frustrations resulting from the refusal of Lindsey County Council to schedule in planning proposals for housing purposes any of the sites which Grimsby would shortly need for housing but were as yet unincorporated. This forced HC to buy up all remaining building land inside "the urban fence" by compulsory purchase, which was anathema to the radical Conservatives. (49)

Danby, caught between Oldfield, Larmour, the Labour Group, the Municipal Group, and the BTE decided in May 1953 to retire from the Council, irrespective of the political fortune of the elections, and complained that the "original spirit" had gone and the Municipal Group become dominated by Conservatives. Labour duly gained control of the Council later in May 1953 and Larmour returned as Chairman. (50)

Danby's time as Chairman of HC had been marked by confusion and indecisiveness. While national policy had continued with the notion of a big building programme and developed into the Conservative proposals of 1951-52, Grimsby policy had been affected more by the appeasement of the local builders and the working out of other Dogmas, than in building as many houses as possible. There was no consistent alternative policy in the thought of the Municipal Group: there was no great effort to encourage private enterprise, nor was there any enthusiasm for early slum clearance. Priorities were not identified or followed locally, but instead there was a vague drift in the general direction of national housing policy.

(xi) Larmour Again 1953-59

Larmour was Chairman of HC and was to be the decisive influence in Grimsby's housing policy. This is despite the apparent fact that F. G. Gardner, a dock inspector and Labour Aldermanic worthy, was Chairman 1956-58 while Larmour chaired another Committee. Larmour continued as Deputy Chairman and performed all the functions of Chairman, notably in public relations until he returned as Chairman in May 1958.

Larmour believed still in a big building programme and quick completions. Experience indicated that neither was possible from the BTE and an effort was made to take them off the local scene. The 1954 'target' allocation was 450: 200 went straight to Laings, another 51 to the direct labour department, and the rest put up for outside tender. Initially, no suitable contractor was found and negotiations were briefly

conducted with the BTE in March 1954, but then a Nottingham contractor was found to take the rest of the brick-built programme on. Larmour's attitude was welcomed by the Regional Office especially in using concrete construction so widely.⁽⁵¹⁾ The same kind of programme was followed for the 1955 programme, of the target 400, 200 went to Laings, and the Conservatives plaintive plea was "Why bring in outside contractors?"⁽⁵²⁾

It was not that the Labour Group was hostile to private enterprise. It favoured SDAA in 1946, the use of the 1949 Act for advances from 1952, Guarantees to Building Societies in 1954, Improvement grants from 1950 and Standard grants in 1959. But the party group saw the needs of those waiting for a house to rent as its priority. To do this meant building on the large scale preferably using big outside contractors and a large direct labour department.

There was however, the slight hampering matter of slum clearance. Labour wished to do as much as was necessary, but felt that building for general needs took priority: those who had not got homes at all should get one before those who had a poor one got a better one. However, some slum clearance effort was also useful in releasing "potential industrial sites". This had been decided in July 1953, so when 'Houses - The Next Step' announced the new national policy, Grimsby could claim to be already at work. While Labour did not like slum clearance because it upset general building for letting, the Conservatives were equally unenthusiastic for class reasons.⁽⁵³⁾

This was evident from the start in the local programme. The total plan was grand - 1995 houses to be dealt with, 1383 to be demolished. But the first proposals in August 1955 outraged the people concerned, who objected to being called 'slum dwellers'. The Conservative group on the Council (the old Municipal Group was in eclipse and was finally absorbed into the Conservatives in February 1957) supported their protests. There were delays as a result and the Labour group discovered that taking the slum clearance programme very slowly would not incur local political disadvantage.

This was very satisfying since concentration on building brought such excellent results: 1001 houses were built by the Council in 1954 and 1955. The January 1956 programme envisaged for 1956 and 1957 more of the same kind of effort, but this vision was dislocated by the Government's economy measures. In February 1956, the Finance Committee cut HC's proposals. This cut fell mainly in the brick-built part of the programme since there were long term commitments to Unity Structures, the concrete housing suppliers who had supplanted Laings as the favoured group. The local Joint Council for the Building Industry - both unions and employees - objected and came in deputation to HC in April 1956 to argue that this would produce local unemployment and disturb the training of apprentices. HC promised to reconsider the situation later. Another blow to their vision was that, though Lindsey County Council and Grimsby R.D.C. had agreed to let Grimsby have 370 acres of building land for incorporation within the Borough, with the tacit understanding

that Grimsby would not press for other or later boundary revisions, MHLG, after an Inquiry, preferred to consider the land of great agricultural value, and in December 1956 refused to let it be used for building. The vision of the big programme at the end of 1956 was but a shadow of the thoughts of the January.

In the meantime, slum clearance had lagged considerably: the October 1956 proposal was for the 1956-57 programme merely to catch up with incomplete 1955-56 schemes. There were two practical problems involved. Rehousing could not be done on cleared sites at once, yet, because of the peculiarities of fish dock work, by which, at that time, men had to live within walking distance of the docks, there was nowhere for clearance area people to go - least of all to the housing estates on the outskirts of town. The other problem was that because Grimsby had no great stock of pre-1939 housing to cushion the rises in rent levels, rents for new houses were genuinely beyond the means of the very poor from bad conditions. But, in HC's view the 'real' local need was still the provision of new housing for letting. It was a fairly moral point of view, but it was at odds with the Government's assessment of the matter. (54)

However, with the ending of the general needs subsidy, slum clearance became more important officially. Moreover, after representations from the town, County Council and R.D.C. during 1957, the MHLG allowed the outside land to be zoned for housing so paving the way for its incorporation in 1959

and allowing Grimsby to envisage a large housebuilding programme. During 1957 efforts were apparently turned to slum clearance. But the MHLG soon spotted that all was not well. In February 1958 it threatened to stop paying subsidy on houses in excess of those allocated to families rehoused from slum areas. HC disingenuously argued that this was the result of the need to build houses before a family moved, therefore statistics would always appear thus, and there were in addition a number of cases where HC refused to rehouse because families had gone deliberately into clearance areas to obtain priority letting of a Council house. MHLG was insistent on change and so HC formally recorded in March 1958 that "the whole of the building programme was for slum clearance purposes".⁽⁵⁵⁾

Larmour in August 1958 announced that no new applicant for general needs housing would stand a chance unless waiting four years. With a concentration on slum clearance this was a very necessary step, but Larmour made it clear at the September 1958 Council meeting that he did not like the situation and the Conservative Group agreed that it would be best if slum clearance were left until the needs of others for housing were satisfied.

But even the hope that slum clearance could be undertaken was doomed, because early possession of the new land was denied and sites could not be prepared before 1962. There was thus an immediate shortage of land and a sharp cut in the possible programme 1960-62 and some care for 1958-60. It all resulted from the MHLG decision in 1956 to favour the agricultural interest and not Grimsby's future

housing needs. The trouble with the situation however, to some Labour Councillors was not that it upset the slum clearance programme, but it made the direct Labour building department face extinction with so little work to be done. In September 1959, Larmour proposed that it become like a private firm and build to private order. The BTE objected and obtained a shelving of the proposal to 1960. In the May 1960 elections the Conservatives gained equality of numbers with Labour and the proposal expired.

Thus, the decade ended on a despondent note: no big building and no slum clearance. In March 1960 it was reported that only 780 of the 1995 total programme of houses had been dealt with. Some of this failure is explicable in terms of the practical problems involved, but just as much depended on HC's priority for general needs provision. This can be illustrated by the fact that 64% of all lettings of houses 1955-61 went to the general needs application list. In this way Grimsby deviated quite consciously from the path determined by national policy if not, after March 1958, in formal expression, then at least in actions. (56)

The MHLG had no official method of determining this and so could not intervene, and, by its own policy choices on building land, made the local situation much worse. But perhaps the most important thing in local terms in this period was the fact that a housing policy agreed to by almost all in the Council was at last settled. Even to

have a housing policy was a distinct improvement on the situation of the 1930's, and once the need for a policy is admitted then the advantages of a comprehensive view can be cited.

3. Conclusion

(xii) Grimsby's Housing Policy 1919-59

The nature of housing policy in Grimsby was determined by the operations and whims of Chairmen. These could be confused (Danby), weak (Weldrick), changeable (Johnson), or strong and idle (Rushforth), or strong and effective (Larmour). As a snap generalization: policy followed personality. No other institutional force mattered very much. The 'Council' or 'Committee' were sometimes more than cyphers in the hands of Chairmen, but not often. The Officials were not policy-makers except in the peculiar circumstances of Oldfield 1952-53. The influence of political parties was to put ideological barriers to certain kinds of activity, housebuilding for the Conservatives, mindless support for the private sector for Labour. Parties were however generally so disorganised as to fail to act as checks on Chairmen, or even to clarify issues sufficiently so that there were clear policy alternatives presented. The drift away from slum clearance in the 1950's was allowed by Labour, but condoned by the Conservatives. The influence of the non-Council organizations of MBA and BTE was considerable, as supplier of a service, when their service was important for the operation of a housebuilding policy. But it could be broken, and Larmour and Labour after 1953 did so by finding other suppliers

and creating a direct Labour department.

Local housing policy had a kind of consistency throughout the period. There was a strong dislike of any sanitary policy ;- no particular enthusiasm in encouraging the private sector, though Labour thought of it as part of overall policy; and a strong attachment to housebuilding only by individuals or Labour Councillors - with the acquiescence of the Conservatives in the 1950's. However, there is also a lack of clarity about local policy. It is not just that Chairmen could be unpredictable, but that there is a general evasiveness about policy. This is not surprising since such a large part of national policy 1919-50 was to do with sanitary affairs in which the town exhibited its distaste by silently ignoring national policy requirement. The local political style favoured loud and forthright talk but it is notably lacking in explaining local housing policy.

This lack of clarity meant that though Grimsby did ignore large parts of national policy - the need for a big 1919 scheme, the use of the 1924 Act, and slum clearance - only once, in 1958, did conflict on Grimsby's evasions and technique of studied indifference occur. Grimsby did not indulge in spectacular defiance of national policy: it preferred to ignore it. The Ministry essentially lacked techniques for checking this, and even if it knew what was occurring, its sanctions were too crude, and to challenge Grimsby would simply lead to endless disputation on the nature of the facts of the matter.

The impact of national policy on Grimsby to 1939 was to produce a few houses with rents out of the range of the poor who needed them, and to restore Johnson to local political prominence. From 1939 to 1959 the impact was to produce a large number of houses for general letting and enable Larmour to become one of the town's key political figures. The second was probably more in line with what national policy intended than the former.

1. 'West, N.S.E.': What's in Grimsby? p.23, 29.
2. Grimsby MOH Report 1909 p.9.
3. See 'Local Government Board Inquiry - County Borough of Grimsby Incorporation Scheme' 1908 Grimsby.
4. GN 26 Sept. 1913.
5. GTC Estates Committee 17 Dec. 1909 and Sanitary and Building Plans Committee (SBPC) 12 May 1912.
6. GN 23 Feb. 1909.
7. GN 14 Sept. 1917.
8. GTC SBPC sub committee minutes Housing 26 Nov. 1917;
GTC SBPC 11 Feb. 1917.
9. GTC 11 Feb. 1917.
10. GTC SBPC 15 Apr. 1918.
11. GTC SBPC sub committee minutes Housing 9 Nov. 1918.
12. GN 13 Dec. 1918, GTC 23 Dec. 1918
13. GN 17 Jan. 1919.
14. GTC 28 Apr. 1919.

15. GN 2 May 1919.
16. GN 29 Aug. 1919
17. GTC HC Sub Committee Minutes 19 Dec. 1919 and GN 24 Dec. 1919.
18. GN 23 Apr. 1920.
19. GTC HC 29 July 1921.
20. GTC HC Sub Committee Minutes 28 Mar. 1922; GT 29 Oct. 1929.
21. GN 1 Feb. 1924.
22. GN 24 Dec. 1924, 16 Jan. 1925
23. GT 23 Mar. 1926.
24. GN 1 Aug. 5 Dec. 1930.
25. GN 31 July 1931.
26. GTC 28 Aug. 1933.
27. The MOH Report for 1933 had 280 and 424, and added that 1150 living in apartments would not be dealt with at all in 5 years.
28. GN 15 Sept. 1933.
29. GN 27 July 1934.
30. GN 4 Jan. 1935.
31. GTC Housing Files (Misc) MOH Report 14 Feb. 1936;
GN 2 Aug. 1935.
32. GTC Housing Files (Misc) Report of Deputation April. 1935.
33. GTC Housing Files (Misc) MOH Report 14 Feb. 1936.
34. GN 9 Apr. 1936.
35. GN 12 Mar. 1937.
36. MOH Report 1945 p.33 and GTC War Damage Committee 7 May 1945.
37. GN 29 Sept. 1944.
38. GN 28 Sept. 1945.

39. GN 26 Apr., 31 May 1946.
40. GN 31 Oct. 1947.
41. GN 30 Jan. 1948; GET 28 Feb. 1948.
42. Source: J.V. Oldfield; GTC Housing Files (Misc) Memo Oldfield to Heeler 16 June 1949; GET 25 Oct. 1949 and GN 28 Oct. 1949.
43. GET 9 Nov. 1949; GTC HC 14 Nov. 1949; GET 29 Nov. 1949.
44. GET 14 Dec. 1949 See Also: GET 28 Oct., 3, 9, 11, 15 Nov., 8 Dec., 1949 and GN 9, 16, 30 Dec. 1949.
45. GET 30 Jan., 2, 3, Feb., 1950.
46. GET 24 July 1951 and GN 27 July 1951.
47. GTC HC 14 Feb. 1952; GET 22 Feb., 1952.
48. GTC Housing File 10/74 Oldfield Memo 29 May 1952.
49. GTC HC 4 Dec. 1952.
50. GET 12 May 1953.
51. GTC HC 10 Nov. 1953.
52. GNP 19 Nov. 1954.
53. GTC HC 10 Nov. 1953.
54. GTC Housing Files 10/106 Flinders to Housing Committee 18 Feb. 1957, HC 20 Feb. 1957.
55. GTC Housing Files 10/106 Heeler to Gardner 1 Mar. 1958, 10/74/2 Memorandum of meeting 11 Feb. 1958; HC 5 Mar. 1958.
56. GTC HC 9 Mar. 1960; Housing Files 10/74/2 Flinders Memo 6 June 1961.

Appendix

(1) Population

(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1801	1524	1861	11067	1921	83600
1811	2747	1871	26502	1931	92458
1821	3064	1881	45351	1939	85186
1831	4048	1891	51934	1951	94557
1841	3688	1901	63138	1961	96712
1851	8638	1911	74659		

Source: Census Reports, except 1939 National Registration (unadjusted by boundary changes).

(2) Houses Built 1919-60

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<u>Year</u>	<u>Council</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>(Jan- Dec)</u>		<u>with subsidy</u>		
1919			1	1
1920		15	31	46
1921	174	7	28	209
1922	26	28	26	80
1923	24	0	75	99
1924	32	101	68	201
1925	65	90	57	212

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1926	44	104	85	233
1827	64	129	75	268
1928	34	274(1)	119	427
1929	0	252(1)	218	470
1930	0		325	325
1931	0		365	365
1932	0		472	472
1933	100		912	1012
1934	0		847	847
1935	0		625	625
1936	740	} (151)		370
1937	42		264	306
1938	750			325
1939	719			262
1940-45		NOT AVAILABLE		
1946	273 (2)		77	350
1947	168		113	281
1948	443		53	496
1949	187		34	221
1950	311 (3)		85	396
1951	389		40	429
1952	406		54	460
1953	327		180	507
1954	523		292	815
1955	478		401	879
1956	375		239	614
1957	174		193	367
1958	447		219	666
1959	136		249	385
1960	93		182	275

Source: 1919-39 Grimsby News annual reviews of local industry.

1946-60 Housing Returns.

- (1) Includes those in newly incorporated area
- (2) Includes 234 temporary houses
- (3) Includes 20 from a Housing Association

(3) Aid to Private Owners 1946-60

(1) <u>Year</u> (Apr.- Mar.)	(2) <u>S.D.A.A.</u> <u>Number</u>	(3) <u>1949 Act</u> <u>Advances</u>	(4) <u>Guarantees</u> <u>to B.Socs.</u>	(5) <u>Improvement</u> <u>Grants</u>
1946-47	25			
1947-48	65			
1948-49	21			
1949-50	53			
1950-51	65			
1951-52	61			4
1952-53	12	27		15
1953-54		56		9
1954-55		104	15	15
1955-56		95	14	18
1956-57		71	1	14
1957-58		82	11	6
1958-59		104	15	14
1959-60		59	22	12

Source: Grimsby Borough Treasurer's Office.

CHAPTER V

LINCOLN

1. Introduction

(i) Local History

"Lincoln may properly claim to rank as one of the most ancient cities in the kingdom. Its history goes back to the days of the early Britons when it was a fortified camp, or town. There are abundant traces of successive occupations of the Romans, Danes, and Normans. The remains of the Roman city 'Lindum Colonia' are particularly fine..."

"Lincoln is the country town of the second largest county in England. Famous as a Cathedral city...The first of many Royal Charters was granted in 1154 and the first Mayor appointed in 1206".⁽¹⁾

By the 19th Century the city had become clearly divided in two - 'uphill' where the cathedral stood and the cathedral 'set' led county-oriented lives, and 'downhill' where the merchants and artisans lived and worked. During the century, the city developed rapidly on the basis of a number of firms producing machinery, especially agricultural implements, with a growing export trade. 'Downhill' became rich and prosperous and its leaders the social equals of 'Uphill'.

The First World War brought prosperity with great munitions work, but after the war their manufacture ceased, the demand for agricultural implements fell (especially with the closing of the vast Russian market), and, like

Grimsby, Lincoln suffered the consequences of being a single industry town. After the Second War, prosperity re-emerged as diversification of products took place on a strong and specialized engineering base. The old social divisions became more social myths than descriptions of a reality.

(ii) Local Politics

Political control in Lincoln 1914-60 can be set out in tabular form, thus:-

1914-20 Liberal

1920-27 Liberal and Conservative

1927-33, 1937-45, 1947-56 Independent and Conservative

1933-37, 1945-47, 1956-60 Labour

The only abrupt changes to the system have been in changes to and from Labour - the evolution from Liberal to Independent and Conservative was peaceful and hardly noted locally. The Independents were very largely old Liberal or unenthusiastic Conservative in political sympathy, but they also shared a great deal in their opinions with the Labour group. Even so the party system has always been very clearly established in Lincoln. In the 19th century it was a battle between Liberals and Conservatives, the Liberals being in control after 1866. In this century it is mainly Labour versus non-Labour. The non-Labour side was disorganised in the period 1919-33 because of the uncertain allegiances of Liberals, but from then onwards there was harmony

between Independents and Conservatives. Even in a small Council - 24 to 1920, 28 thereafter - party discipline was very tight, and party voting customary. But this emphasis on party must not overshadow the extent to which Lincoln's political life has been dominated by a general agreement on the nature of the interests of the city.

This is encouraged by the political style of the city: civic decorum and a strong moralistic flavour. The customary language is found in all sorts of literature, but all the recurrent themes are in this passage from a pamphlet on a voluntary slum clearance scheme:-

"Lincoln has thus provided an example of a new and practical method of dealing with the slum problem which is open to the examination of all interested, and the results are such to encourage emulation in any other town where consciences have been aroused to the evils of bad housing, and public spirit is sufficiently in force to make the requisite voluntary effort."⁽²⁾

The free churches and the liberal tradition are the fount of this moralizing. This leads to political arguments in the city being discussions of principle rather than party points. The characteristic figures exemplify the local style: Francis Hill, Congregationalist, ex-Liberal, leader of Independents and Conservatives, mild, progressive, devoted to the politics of agreement; and Charles Snook, "the Gauleiter of the Left"⁽³⁾, a prim Methodist lay-preacher

with a tendency to humbug, devoted to righteousness and the cooperation of all to eliminate evil. Though political opponents, their similarities are more important than their differences.

The political life of Lincoln is dominated by this common and accepted ideology and agreement on what is to be done with definite issues. Yet there are differences of emphasis between the parties, and the Chairmen of Committees vary in their abilities and forcefulness in getting Party and Council support for their schemes. Over this century the powers of the Chairman have declined, they are not so dominating in 1960 as they were in 1914, and the turning point was perhaps 1945 when Chairmen from the minority party were no longer appointed. But the 20th century political style for Lincoln has been mild progressivism, and though local politicians, especially Independents, talk more of men than ideologies, the men they think the Council needs are entirely progressivist in view. This is the 'character' of local politics.

2. Housing Policy

(iii) To 1914: "Genesis

Lincoln in the 19th century was far removed from interest in sanitary matters. The Conservatives who ran the town grew too interested in the business and adopted the 1858 Local Government Act. The electorate put the Liberals in after 1866 in order not to produce a proper sewage scheme. Only the exercise of legal sanctions in the Courts by the Government got Lincoln to adopt a minimal scheme.⁽⁴⁾ The part-time MOH, Harrison, spent half a century warning of the dangers of epidemics and was justified in 1904-5 with a typhoid epidemic

which left 131 dead. The Council was forced into a much greater concern for sanitary affairs and found a new water supply 22 miles away as the beginning of a genuine concern to improve the city and its reputation.

As for housing, Lincoln had few utterly appalling slums: the new full-time MOH, Coleman, thought Lincoln had no real slums at all. This was locally disputed, but it was all a matter of definition.⁽⁵⁾ The Council's bye-laws were not very strong but they were kept tolerably well. Lincoln had some corporate land, but though in 1895-96 Councillor Udale had a scheme for both building on this land and clearing the most notorious slum area, the Drapery, the Council did not like it, a Local Government Board (LGB) Inspector advised against and the land was sold for private building.⁽⁶⁾

Lincoln appeared to be in no desperate straits, and yet the new interest in the city and its services was to lead to Lincoln developing a housing policy of its own before 1914. The origins of this were in the activities of a Public Welfare Committee composed of "clergy and ministers of several denominations, laymen of various political beliefs, and ladies with experience amongst poorer citizens" led by the radical Dean of Lincoln, T.C. Fry.⁽⁷⁾

Convinced of the need for "building and the wise employment of the Town Planning Act by the City Authorities", they sent a letter in June 1912 to the Building and Improvement Committee, which took no action. However, the Sanitary Inspector, Crawshaw, in his Report for 1911, published in July 1912, revealed, apparently in all innocence, that of 2676 houses inspected only 268 were at

rentals less than 4/- per week and said "More houses are required in Lincoln at a rental about 5/- per week, but it is very difficult to find a site where houses can be built at this rental near to the various works." (8)

This evidence gave the Public Welfare Committee a new incentive to act. With care, the move was timed. A letter was sent again to the Building and Improvement Committee on 27 September 1912 so that it could come before the October Committee meeting, that is, the last meeting before the November municipal elections. It contained the threat that since the 1909 Act allowed citizen representation to the LGB to force local authorities into action, they were prepared to do so, but hoped for the "City Council's own good sense". The Committee responded by proposing just before the elections that a town planning scheme be considered after the elections. In these, a Conservative who favoured housing and town planning comfortably beat a sitting Liberal Councillor. (9)

The Public Welfare Committee, fearing that the Council would not act, had already drawn the LGB's attention to Crawshaw's Report, and meetings were organised so that other local societies could pass resolutions for transmission to the LGB. Thus involved, the LGB sent these to the Council seeking comments, so forcing it to some kind of decision.

The Council was unwilling to act. Its idea of good town planning was not the planners' 12 houses to the acre but 30, a figure forced on a local landlord in April 1912, in return for a promise not to apply the 1909 Act to his

estate.⁽¹⁰⁾ Besides, there was a problem in discerning what was desired of them. The Public Welfare Committee and its supporters were arguing for two things - a town planning scheme to create a healthy environment, and a housebuilding scheme to cover Crawshaw's point. On this last, progressive Liberal Councillors had an alternative proposal - cheap motor transport to open up new building tracts.

However, Alderman Pratt, the Chairman of the Building and Improvement Committee, was both old and sick (he was to die in mid-1913) and he interpreted an LGB letter of 16 December 1912 asking if the Council had considered building under the 1890 Act, not, as it was, a standard LGB response to pressures from local citizens, but as a prompting to action. He proposed the creation of a special Housing and Town Planning Committee (HTPC) composed of 4 members each from his own and the Health Committee, and the Council accepted this in January 1913. Pratt noted "It committed the Council to nothing".⁽¹¹⁾

The HTPC met under the Chairmanship of the Mayor, Ald. Wallis (a supporter of Udale in 1895-96) but promptly turned itself into a Committee to consider the city boundaries, using town planning as a means of bringing pressure on the neighbouring Branston R.D.C. But public pressure for action still existed. The MOH, Coleman, in his 1912 Report in June 1913 supported Crawshaw.⁽¹²⁾ In local bye-elections in May and June 1913, a Liberal pro-planner won a seat from

the Conservatives, and R.A. Taylor (later M.P. for Lincoln), a 'Socialist', beat a Liberal builder and anti-planner, to mark the start of Labour politics on the Lincoln Council.

Taylor pressed forward in October 1913 a scheme devised by the Lincoln Trades and Labour Council for building on what remained of Council land at 25 houses to the acre with rents at 5/- to 5/6d. The proposal found favour only with the newly elected Liberal, the rest of the Liberals becoming instantly converted to 12 to the acre, and the Conservatives opposed on principle. Taylor was however co-opted onto the HTPC. There he found that the Surveyor, McBriar, had devised an alternative housebuilding scheme on the same land.

At this point, with the new municipal year in November 1913, the ambitious Chairman of the Finance Committee intervened. C. H. Newsum, with the backing of his Committee, had HTPC reorganised with 2 each from Finance, Health, Buildings, Highways and Council in Committee with himself as Chairman. A grander scheme than either Taylor's or McBriar's was prepared - a proposal for 900 houses was leaked to the Liberal press in January 1914. Doubtars were scourged with the fact that local industrialists were in favour and that the LGB was being annoyed by the Lincoln Guardians giving relief because of a lack of accommodation. In the Spring of 1914 the scheme was revealed at public meetings - 67½ acres 'up the hill' to be bought for a housing scheme. The

city proved its need in May 1914 to an LGB local Inquiary with impressive statistics of a shortage of cheap accommodation that no-one had expected to exist and so got consent to borrow the money for the purchase of the land.

But, in the meantime, Newsam had resigned from the Council on the grounds of lacking time for all the work: rumour had it that his wife required him for her social ambitions.⁽¹³⁾ He had however got the scheme moving: the LGB agreed to the whole building proposal - and then the war came and stopped everything in August 1914.

This sudden emergence of Lincoln as a local authority committed to a housing policy is explicable by reference to the broad moral assent in the city to the idea of 'better' housing, the existence of an objective shortage of low rent accommodation, and the skills of a local pressure group in giving this the status of a local issue. Thence, the accident of Ald. Pratt's misunderstanding and the sponsorship of the powerful Newsam committed Lincoln to action. The role of the central government in this was simply to hold the ring between local contestants and let Lincoln build if it could prove its case.

(iv) Frustration 1914-19

Munitions work during the war brought a great increase in the population of Lincoln as the works took on more labour, without any increase in the amount of accommodation available. The overcrowding of existing accommodation gave rise to serious health problems and a sharp concern for the future. HTPC, having gradually abandoned the Committee secondment system and

become like other committees, was willing to act but could not see quite what it could do. The Labour group of two Councillors and outside Labour bodies were very concerned and in November 1916, Taylor persuaded HTPC to collect factual evidence on the overcrowding. HTPC arranged a Conference of the Council, local firms, the Employment Exchange and an LGB Inspector in December 1916 to discuss this and the needs of munition workers, but nothing resulted either from this or from the firms' own pressures on the Ministry of Munitions. The Mayor and the Chairman of HTPC, C. T. Parker, was obliged in January 1917 to appeal in the local press for people to give accommodation for lodgers temporarily since the Council could not yet do anything. Even so the Labour group continued to insist that something should be done.

The LGB circular of 28 July 1917, asking after Council's interest in housing after the war, came as a relief to HTPC. It reported on 4 October in reply that the population had gone up permanently 5,000 and that the housing shortage was at least 1500 and going up by 300 houses per year. It offered to carry out the 1914 scheme or anything else the LGB would authorise with a subsidy, and some preparatory work was set in hand.

Labour however still wanted more effort and began to cooperate with the local Employers' Association to concert action aimed, as a mass meeting in November 1917 showed, more at the Government than the Council. The Ministry of Munitions was induced to offer 150-200 concrete temporary houses, but this was unacceptable to local opinion which wanted brick construction and felt that to fight for it would not delay the obtaining of the houses. Labour, the Employers and the Council formed an official Council Committee, the Housing Advisory Committee to

deal with the Ministry of Munitions. Such local unanimity led the Ministry to propose in January 1918 the construction of 300 brick houses on the Council's site, to be built by the Ministry but taken over at the end of the war by the Council. With still no likelihood of immediate building, bickering on the exact terms and the quality of building took place between the Ministry and the Committee until June 1918.

The 18 March 1918 circular on possible financial assistance of 75% of the loss was duly considered, but since the City was going to build anyway the terms came in for no special consideration. There were some Conservative protests at the way local policy was developing, with the accurate observation that the running was being made by "the pressure brought by the Independent Labour Party in collusion with one of the large works" (i.e. Ruston's), but there was a general acceptance of the notion that the Council would have to act. Council policy was formally defined in October 1918 "subject to satisfactory financial arrangements being made with the Government, the Corporation undertake, as the necessity arises, to provide adequate housing accommodation for the working class population of the city". (14)

Meanwhile, 200 houses for the Ministry of Munitions were started, and there was a beginning made by a Housing Association backed by leaders of Ruston's for a whole Garden Suburb of, it was hoped, 1800 houses at Swanpool, owned and administered by the scheme's inhabitants. This fulfilled the democratic sentiments of much of Lincoln

society and won wide support. But both schemes ran into problems with labour, materials, and finance.

So, while the Council welcomed the Government's post-Armistice insistence on the need to proceed with housing schemes, they felt they could do little beyond the initial roadworks for their own scheme. Delay at least kept off pressure for labour and materials from the other two schemes. This induced a mood of great frustration in the Council, as this dialogue from the Council shows:-

"Ald. White: What is the remedy?

Coun. Scorer: I am not suggesting a remedy.

Ald. White: It is all very well stating the facts with which we are conversant. How are we to remedy it? You have given careful study to the matter; perhaps you will give the information asked for.

Coun. Scorer: You are the spending committee, it is for you to suggest. I am not suggesting; I am criticising".⁽¹⁵⁾

The Council continued in this mood of frustration throughout the Spring and Summer of 1919. HTPC and the Housing Advisory Committee worried about the financing of the scheme and cautiously suggested a start on 25-50 houses as part of a total possible programme, in the circumstances, of 380. The continued shortage of materials and skilled labour for the Ministry of Munitions and Swanpool schemes along with a strike of building workers during the summer convinced the Council that they should proceed with caution. The lack of progress was reviewed in October 1919 when a local industrialist

accused the Council of inaction. Chairman Parker denied it and subsequent discussion revealed that no-one knew what, if anything, should be done to remedy the situation.

Some Government encouragement or explanation of what should be done would have been useful. But all that Lincoln received was discouragement. Minister Addison rejected the 380 house scheme as inadequate in view of the local assessment of needs as 3635 and gave the Council 14 days from 6 December 1919 to think again. In vain did a Council deputation see Addison in person to explain the practical problems. He was adamant and only relented so far as to allow Lincoln until mid-January to submit a new scheme. The focus of Addison's concern clearly being formal proposals not possible ones, the Council consulted the local Master Builders' Association (MBA) and on the basis of their claim to be able to build 600 houses a year (twice as many as in any year since 1900), the Council offered another 1500 to their 380. It was probably an entirely fraudulent offer but it kept the Ministry of Health (M. of H.) happy. Even so, the refusal to accept the 380 made it legally impossible for the Council to contract for the first 50, so another delay was imposed.

Lincoln from 1914 to 1919 offered the case of a local authority ready to build at all times, with a considerable and recognized local problem to be solved, but which could get absolutely no practical assistance from the Government. The drift of national policy was not translated into the practical consequences that could have enabled Lincoln to

get on with a housing scheme ahead of authorities less committed to housebuilding in principle.

(v) Endeavour, 1920-22

Lincoln was still not aided by the M. of H's attitude. In January 1920, HTPC were forced, by threat of dire possible consequences if nothing were done, to buy some dilapidated Army hospital huts for housing purposes. HTPC knew they were quite unsuitable for this and quietly disposed of the best to the Education Committee and the rest as shacks to builders. Negotiations with the MBA by the Council had the Regional Housing Commissioner, Major Wood, as a participant, and though grandiose plans for housebuilding were discussed, Wood systematically prevented the making of contracts because of the high tenders involved. Even so, the Council made some progress: an Architect, A. Hill, from Banbury was appointed in April 1920 to superintend the scheme, and starts on house footings were made ahead of sanction to build.

Finance was another problem. The Finance Committee sought to issue £500,000 in Bonds, but after a grand launching in May 1920, it was plain that not a fifth would be subscribed eventually and in June the Committee switched to finance by stock issue. They were fortunate to get early M. of H. sanction for this and get ahead of other local authorities in the queue. Until the stock issue was sanctioned the Finance Committee prevented HTPC from incurring too great commitments in building schemes.

In the meantime, the Swanpool housing venture crasedd with few houses built, officially closing in the Autumn

amid bitterness that the Council had not rescued it. Though the Council did negotiate the possibility of doing this, it had the reasonable excuse of its own uncertain financial position, and suspicious that the site was too far from the city centre and parts of the land were not well-drained. The Swanpool company eventually sold off plots of land and the tenants became owner-occupiers.

There were other matters for concern too. A materials shortage was locally very evident and in June 1920 HTPC protested to the Government about the lack of suitable national controls on materials. Moreover there was a fear of incipient labour trouble. A Building Guild of workmen in a Cooperative sought to have a contract as well as the MBA and obtained the support of the Labour group and the local clergy in this. HTPC did not think they could be any cheaper than the MBA, but negotiated with them. The whole business eventually fell through but it provided a temporary source of anxiety.

The final worry was the fact that in November 1920 Lincoln was to take over the neighbouring Bracebridge U.D.C. and its flagging housing scheme. This scheme started with a perception both of local need and its usefulness in showing the vigour of the authority in resisting Lincoln's wooing. The leading figures in the formulation of the scheme in 1917 were Coun. Nowell and the Surveyor Baynes. By 1919, they had both the land and a scheme for 100 houses but by the local Inquiry by the LGB into the take-over proposal in May 1919, Nowell had decided to support Lincoln and Baynes was promised the job of Clerk of Works to the scheme - now only 38 houses.

Lincoln succeeded at the Inquiry, but for the housing scheme there still remained the problem of obtaining finance for a scheme by an authority due for extinction. To Lincoln's relief, the Public Works Loan Board stepped in and the scheme financed without adding to Lincoln's burdens, and Bracebridge U.D.C.'s last act was to choose the tenants for the houses from Bracebridge applicants. HTPC honoured these allocations.

The size of the problem was fortunately less than the original estimate of 3635 in 1919. A survey completed in 1920 showed 1143 families desiring accommodation and 184 clear cases of overcrowding. But even with this smaller figure, HTPC knew that it could not provide anything like that number of houses. In September 1920 however, there was a breakthrough in the negotiations and terms for 102 were agreed with the MBA and Wood. From then the Superintending Architect Hill encouraged by Chairman Parker pushed ahead with schemes faster than Wood gave firm consent. By November, 183 starts had been made, 28 entirely on Hill's word alone. By January 1921, 230 were started but not until May was authorization for the whole of this number received.

But despite the excellence of this start, no sooner had one set of problems been by-passed than others emerged. By early 1921 the post war boom was over, local unemployment rose rapidly and Wood began to insist that rents for the new houses be fixed at the highest possible level to minimize the losses to the Exchequer. In June 1921, HTPC resurveyed the 1143 families of the 1920 survey and found only 75 able

to pay the rents fixed for houses at St. Giles (as the big estate became known as a result of a newspaper competition in November 1920) which were from 10/- to 12/- per week. 473 wanted rents from 7/6d to 8/6d. This was the evidence HTPC needed to press for reductions. They also sought to build another 100 houses but both rent reduction and the new houses came to the Ministry after the issue of the July circular 'suspending' the scheme. They were refused and Lincoln seemed stuck again.

Protests and visits by Chairman Parker to London where he argued the value of a housing scheme to aid local employment were at first fruitless, but in October, 50, and in November another 25 houses were authorized for Lincoln specifically to aid employment in the city. By December 1921 all 234 at St. Giles and the 38 at Bracebridge were complete, but for the last 74 (as the scheme became) there were long and tedious negotiations with Wood on permissible costs and qualities. The last 24 were not settled until May 1922 after Wood's post had been abolished and after Parker had negotiated personally the tenderer to within M. of H. limits. Thus, in a way Lincoln did do fairly well - they had planned on 380 and managed 346 in all, but it was less than intended or possible and the Council fully realized that there was a vast unsatisfied demand for cheap housing for renting.

As for the Ministry of Munitions' (now Office of Works) 200 houses, these were completed in 1920 and the allocation of them entrusted to a special Committee

(one each from the Office, HTPC, Education Committee, local War Pensions Committee, Employers, Labour and an added Woman Councillor). The Housing Advisory Committee was disbanded. The tenants of the houses were very dissatisfied with the high rents and faulty workmanship in the houses and conducted a rent strike May-November 1921 in protest. The Council in 1922 refused to take up their option to undertake the management of the houses, and they were later sold to a property company which resold in the late 1920's to sitting tenants.

The Council and HTPC in Lincoln during this period had mixed boldness in getting on with schemes with caution against the dangers of finance, materials and labour troubles. They endeavoured to do their best when they saw an opportunity of doing so, and, through Parker, had fought for the extra allocations that made the efforts under the 1919 Act so respectable a total. The Council had been interested in building before the national scheme and they were still convinced that something should be done since there was still a demand for housing, as there had been in 1914, even if national policy gave no encouragement.

(vi) The Making of Local Policies 1922-25

Parker and HTPC in 1922 felt that after the official close of the 1919 scheme there was no immediate prospect of continuing building and turned their attention to town planning matters. The increased Labour group however argued that housebuilding cut local unemployment - then standing at 5000 - and that it was essentially no

different from the rest of the public works projects undertaken at this time, and the houses were certainly needed. Though other Councillors were sympathetic to this view, in December 1922 it was decided that there should be no building without the assistance of a subsidy.

But someone (possibly the Architect, Hill) had seen a loophole that would allow Lincoln to build with subsidy. The M. of H. had got the Treasury to allocate £200,000 as a fund for distribution in grants to authorities clearing slums. Quickly a scheme for clearing 130 slum houses in the Drapery district and rehousing in St. Giles was devised and Lincoln applied for and got a 50% grant on expenditure. By March 1923, this scheme was under weigh.

The 1923 Act was welcomed in Lincoln not so much for its aid to private enterprise, but because it would make possible subsidised building. To justify a Council building scheme a survey was conducted, which revealed 170 cases of overcrowding and 826 families desiring a house - 670 of whom wanted rents under 10/- per week. This was sufficient evidence for the M. of H. to allow building.

As for the aid to private enterprise, the local MBA claimed that it was not worth their while to build cheap houses unless to the basic £75 grant, £25 for a parlour and £15 for a non-parlour house were added from the rates. Parker and HTPC were willing to accept this in September 1923 to see the houses built, but the Labour members of

the Council were violently opposed. The matter was postponed until after the Municipal Elections in November. Labour increased its representation from 6 to 9 Councillors and felt that their view should prevail.

However, the Chairmanship of HTPC also changed: Parker moved to the Watch Committee and the new Chairman was G. Robson, an engineer and local industrialist, the younger brother of P.W. Robson, who had done much to organise local firms support for the council in housing matters from 1914 to 19. He was a Conservative, aloof and paternalistic. He supported compromise with Labour, as the arrangements in November - which let Labour obtain three minor Chairmanships - showed, but he was determined that private enterprise be given a chance.

He drove the rate subsidy addition proposal through the Council in early January 1924, attaching strong amenity restrictions on the kind of houses to be built and especially favouring semi-detached building - for 'blocks' the £100 was reduced to £90 and the £90 to £80. He also put a limit of 150 on the number for the year, the same number as the Council proposed building. Labour argued for a Council house programme of 200 and the use of a direct labour building force to ensure the easing of local unemployment, and there was overall a clear divergence between the parties on what kind of policy ought to be preferred:-

Snook (Labour): "...in his opinion the mass of people did not want to buy houses - they wanted them to rent".

Wallis (Liberal): "There was a far larger number

of working men in his opinion who wished to buy their own house than some seemed to think".⁽¹⁶⁾

Local policy was thus a compromise between the joint housebuilding and aid to private enterprise view of the non-Labour group and the Labour group view that the main effort should be in Council building. But more important than the total compromise was that all were agreed that building was part of local policy. For their part, the Liberals and Conservatives added in January 1924 the adoption of SDAA and advances up to 90% as an extra assistance to the private sector, while Labour still sought the adoption of a direct Labour scheme.

Robson and the majority were unwilling to commit themselves to such a project; but in April 1924 the tenders for the first 50 Council houses came in. Baggott, the new Engineer, jokingly said 'we could build cheaper ourselves'; on the basis of some previous building experience. The Labour group promptly invited him to address a party group meeting on this. This, in the 1920's was not such a dramatic step as it was later to be viewed - officials felt they had a duty to explain matters. Baggott explained how a direct labour building scheme could be made practicable; Labour interested Robson in the proposal and found he and other Councillors were willing to listen since they felt that local builders were over-playing their case by not being content with a rate subsidy, but wanting more by inflated tendering.⁽¹⁷⁾

By June 1924, HTPC passed a 10 house experimental scheme, but found the Council so sympathetic that in July it became 50. With a Labour Government in power there was no delay in Ministerial sanction, and the scheme was begun. As one result, Architect Hill was redundant, since the scheme was Baggott's responsibility, and he graciously resigned. The other result was that the Liberals and Conservatives felt that Labour confidence had to be dented - so the local Cooperative Society was denied 1923 Act subsidy for its building schemes by operating the local rule that subsidy should go to 'persons', to exclude corporate personality.

The 1924 Act meant for Lincoln only the switching of the direct labour 50 and another 39 agreed with a private contractor, from the 1923 Act to it. There was no resistance to the idea of a rate subsidy for Council building since this simply put such efforts on a level with the 1923 Act subsidies. The result of all this building effort was a gratifyingly high level of local building. Moreover the 'appropriate normal rent' of the new houses was fixed at very low levels and justified a demand for a 6d per week cut in 1919 house rents - a concession allowed by the M. of H. in April 1925.

The Drapery clearance and building was held up because the M. of H. refused to sanction any of the tenders put forward. Labour suggested the use of direct labour, HTPC accepted, but the M. of H., now under the Conservatives, argued that final costs on the 50 direct labour had been too high to justify this. This had been the result of a

rise in local materials prices and the desire of direct labour workmen to do a good job and ensure future work. Robson, who at this point could have killed of the direct labour scheme, got the agreement of the workmen to hold costs steady and arranged for other building work while the Drapery replacement building went to private contractors. Robson persuaded the M. of H. that all was well with direct labour in Lincoln and so schemes went on. Robson appears to have been strongly influenced by the beginning of the revelations concerning the poor quality of the MBA's building work on the 1919 houses since he was determined to have a high quality of Council house. (18)

Robson was now very clear what local policy should be. In November 1925 he determined on an expansion of the 1923 Act to include block applications (so including the Lincoln Cooperative Society), a systematic 90% SDAA loan, and a Council building scheme of 106 houses. Labour attacked this 'package' as being biased to the middle class interest, but Robson explained his view, "the Committee had determined that by direct labour or contract building they would build as many houses as they could" and "he looked to this scheme (1923 Act) not to interfere with but to supplement the Council's housing programme". (19)

However, the Finance Committee Chair became vacant and Robson was a natural choice for filling it. He moved in January 1926 and was replaced at HTPC by T. Nowell - the man behind the 1919 Bracebridge scheme. Labour objected strongly to this: Nowell was known, as a joiner and jobbing

builder, to be opposed to direct labour and the use of the 1924 Act; and the HTPC chair by private arrangement should have come to the Labour group. There was a furious row at the February Council meeting, but negotiations behind the scenes reached a compromise. A Labour Councillor got another major Chair, Nowell kept HTPC, but apparently assurances were given that his personal views would not be allowed to affect policy.

Thus the policy evolved in the past three years was secured and Lincoln's distinctive set of policies kept in being. The policies bore some resemblances to national policy but bore the strong local features of a determination to have a Council housebuilding programme, the extra rate subsidy for the 1923 Act and the use of direct labour - all the result of local needs and local pressures from the MBA and Labour group. Only the question of direct labour had led to difficulties with the M. of H. The characteristics of Lincoln's policies now established were to persist.

(vii) Progress and a new local Policy 1926-29

Nowell made no obvious moves to dismantle agreed policies or do anything very new, especially when there was strong local pressure for more to be done in housing. The MOH reported in July 1926 that Lincoln needed 1000 houses. In September, the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee urged more effort to alleviate the housing conditions of the town. All Nowell did however was push HTPC into considering a possible scheme for selling off the

1919 houses, and he carefully dissociated himself from the direct Labour scheme by letting Baggott and Robson negotiate various details with the M. of H.

If he had been holding on for changes after the November 1926 elections, he was unfortunate. Labour became strong enough to force Robson as Mayor to use his casting vote to keep non-Labour Aldermen in office. This political situation ended all consideration of selling houses. Labour in January 1927 fought against the continuation of the extra rate subsidy with the national subsidy revision for the 1923 Act. However, all that happened was that the rate subsidy was reduced in proportion to the national reduction from £75 to £50; £17 (semi-detached) and £10 (blocks) for parlour houses; and £10 and £3 for non-parlour. In February 1927 a scheme was devised to please all - the direct labour department would build houses to order and in lieu of lump sum grants the buyers would get a free site while the Council collected the subsidy. This proved both popular and profitable. Overall housing policy was agreed: municipal building, Robson told the local Rotary Club in September 1927, would never cease.

But despite the steady progress of the 1923 and 1924 Acts locally there was local pressure developing to do something more about slum clearance. Councillors began to speak in favour of it and by mid-1927 Nowell felt bound to pledge action. In December 1927 a Conference of representatives of HTPC, Health of Hospitals, and Maternity and Child Welfare Committees met to discuss slum clearance proposals. It was left to HTPC to devise

a scheme. The Council was eager to act, but there were serious doubts as to whether the rents could be kept low enough for slum cleared families - of the 130 Drapery scheme only 3 families could afford the rents of the new houses provided.

This problem was solved by outside assistance. Baggott told a meeting of members of Newland Congregational Church about the problem. They "felt that it was a matter for unified effort by all Christian people". They contacted Bishop Swayne, who called a public meeting on 7 June 1928, attended by every local notable. The scheme devised as a result of this meeting was based on a much smaller effort at Shrewsbury and was for the raising of money to make a cash grant of £70 per house to the Council so that rents could be 6/6 per week, inclusive of rates, after all the 1924 Act subsidies were taken into account. This would be within the means of the poorest. For each house built the Council promised faithfully to demolish a slum house. 50 houses was the original target.⁽²⁰⁾

The Council promptly accepted this aid from the Committee set up to administer the scheme, the Voluntary Slum Clearance Committee (VSCC). The M. of H. sanctioned the scheme in December 1928 after some delay while subsidy revision was considered. HTPC had earlier, when the M. of H. had pressed for completions by September 1928 decided that the local rate subsidy would cease then and the extension to 1929 of the 1923 Act did not lead them to change their minds on this, with the prospect of slum clearance work before them.

The VSCC collected money by monster campaigns. There was lots of free press publicity, virtually everyone in Lincoln supported, and it was all a great success. Much of the work was done by the rising hope of the young Liberals, J.W.F. Hill, a local solicitor. There were some clashes over the administration of the scheme between HTPC and VSCC but these were settled in January 1929 by adding Councillors to the VSCC, and making it an official Council Committee to superintend allocation of the houses for 20 years. (It did in fact last to 1939). By May 1929, the scheme had become one of 76 houses - £5320 raised - and while there were hopes of making it 100 houses the remaining money, £470, was spent on providing furniture etc. to the cleared families.

The scheme did not entirely avoid political controversy. It had been originally intended that direct labour should build, but after Treasurer Burgess in October 1928 showed a difference of £9 per house annual average contract to the disadvantage of direct labour, it was shared with private contractors. Labour accused Burgess of helping their opponants with these figures for the November elections, and when all was eventually sorted out, direct labour had a £4 advantage. Even so, Lincoln was continuing to build as much as possible under the 1924 Act, both with direct labour at St. Giles and private contract on the new Shellingthorpe site in the south of the city.

Thus by 1929, Lincoln had, ahead of national policy, developed a slum clearance policy in conjunction with housebuilding for general needs. Lincoln had also continued for as long as possible the stimulation to private enterprise of the 1923 Act. This rather comprehensive view of the local housing situation - all possible policies at once - led to neither opposition nor interest from the central government.

(viii) Development 1929-35

During 1929-30 schemes went on steadily with small disputes about the precise role of direct labour and one of the periodic battles with the Lincoln Brick Co. (To prevent it exploiting a local monopoly, HTPC sought outside tenders from time to time). Robson, to the sincere regret of supporters of housing policies, left the Council in June 1930. Though pressure of work was his excuse, it was known that his firm was on the verge of collapse.

As soon as the draft 1930 Bill was known, proposals for action were made: national policy had at last caught up with local enthusiasm. Ahead of the Bill's passage it was settled that 100 houses should be built each year of the 5 year programme. In November 1930, the possible obstructiveness of Howell was averted by putting him on the prestigious Watch Committee, and, as arranged earlier, Labour had the gift of the HTPC Chairmanship, and it went to C.E. Snook, a boot shop manager. With him the programme became one of 100 houses p.a. under the 1930 Act and 40 p.a. under the 1924 Act, with a new estate at Boutham in the south of the city to be obtained.

The total needs of the city were found in December 1930 to be, curiously, 500 houses with 450 houses to be demolished. Such a neat fit with the maximum building programme that HTPC could envisage would also remove all the current slums. The first clearance areas were declared in January 1931 and during 1931 progress was rapid - especially after March when the Council urged HTPC to build at 200 p.a. to help alleviate local unemployment.

When the economic crisis came, the Labour group argued against taking economy measures locally. Such boldness won over some of the Independents and in October 1931 it was hoped that though "window-dressing" would of course take place, policies and programmes would be unchanged. The M. of H. in November asked Lincoln to stop using direct labour, but the Council refused - that much was saved. But Labour could not manage to keep a majority for this policy.⁽²¹⁾

Snook was unseated at the November 1931 elections and C. H. Doughty, a worthy railway clerk, was Labour's nominee as HTPC Chairman until Snook returned in an April 1932 bye-election. In his absence, Labour lost their influence and a voluble faction of the Majority Group, led by J.W. Preston and A. E. Brunning, convinced the more moderate Councillors of their own side that more economy should be a local policy in line with the national demand. This faction had simple themes, such as slum clearance being a "vicious attack on property owners" and direct labour a "dice loaded against contractors". Their position was splendidly portrayed by Labour Alderman J.W. Rayment: they "thought that economy could be effected by spending no money and providing no work and that someone would bring prosperity to the country."⁽²²⁾

In January and February 1932 a slum clearance scheme for 82 houses was forced through only after invoking the Council's standing order against the continuous reintroduction of business. The M. of H. insisted that Lincoln show local need before being allowed to continue using the 1924 Act. HTPC undertook a survey which showed a suitable level of need, but the Council itself disregarded it and delayed a 40 house scheme to the end of 1932. The slum clearance programme was disturbed and 23 of the 82 houses had to be used for general needs accommodation. Labour saw the projected 140 houses a year of 1930 slipping away and made suitable political protest, while 'Christian people at St. Giles' urged the moral need to continue slum clearance work. But all to no avail.

The Winter of 1932-33 continued in much the same fashion with a lagging slum clearance programme, the 40 house scheme undertaken without subsidy on the insistence of the M. of H., and Labour frustration alleviated only by the creation of a proper Housing Department as one of the innovations of G. H. Banwell, the new Town Clerk. The April 1933 circular announcing the end of 1924 Act subsidies and the renewal of slum clearance effort however resolved the nature of local policy. As a sign of the new relaxed national policy the 40 house scheme was allowed by the M. of H. retrospectively to rank for subsidy. Lincoln responded by proposing a grand slum clearance effort - to build 455 houses and demolish 666 by 1938 - which Snook recognised, as national policy did not, that "even this programme does not solve all our problems". This was also now locally more possible - from February 1933 HTPC undertook full responsibility for

slum clearance instead of sharing it in joint committee meetings with the Health and Hospitals Committee.⁽²³⁾

Labour gained control of the Council in November 1933 with the casting vote of the Labour Mayor. Snook moved on to the Finance Committee chair. Labour, who operated a strict party group system that made the personality of the chairman of minor importance, put J. E. Fordham in as chairman. Fordham, a commercial traveller and commission agent, was totally unstimulating but he would continue policy. With the advent of Labour control and the change in national policy the Prestor and Brunning faction was eclipsed. Moreover there was now a majority of non-Labour Councillors who found their views detestable. In fact the political commentator of a local paper said of slum clearance in February 1934, "Nothing matters so much as getting rid of the slums. On this the City Council are in complete agreement: so much so that the matter is beyond dispute".⁽²⁴⁾

Under Labour control, direct labour building was restored to full activity and only building for sale again being prevented by the M. of H's general attitude; discussions were held with local builders on the possible use of Guarantees to Building Societies, but the builders lost interest; slum clearance went on apace though HTPC did not feel it had got properly started again until January 1935; and the need for houses for rent was satisfied by the construction of 50 non-subsidy houses as a beginning of a programme to cover this aspect of local policy. Non-subsidy building was not a policy questioned at all locally. Even when the faction looked

meddlesome again in the summer of 1934 it was on slum clearance. Fordham cured it temporarily by taking Brunning on a tour of the slums: Brunning remained silent until 1935. During 1935 itself there was more clearance and building both for it and for general needs. Direct labour completed its 1000th house.

Thus after an interval, Lincoln had returned to the policy as it had been established in 1929 - house building for general needs, though now non-subsidy, and for slum clearance, though now subsidised, with some general help for the private sector. This had not led to any dispute with national policy since when national policy was at its most economy-minded, the locals were the same.

(ix) Problems of Progress 1935-39

Though slum clearance was a well-established local policy, Lincoln were very unenthusiastic about the abatement of overcrowding work urged by Government policy. The survey was reluctantly undertaken in December 1935 and support was given to a Gateshead resolution asking for financial aid towards the cost of doing it. As Snook explained in February 1936, it cost a 1d. rate and it told them nothing they had not already ascertained, and Lincoln knew overcrowding was a problem anyway. There proved to be 190 cases in the private sector and 50 in Council houses. HTPC dealt with the latter internally and used the 1930 Act to build houses to abate the statutorily overcrowded, though since some families required 5 and 6 bedroom

houses and these had a very limited reletting appeal some awkward cases were not dealt with either promptly or effectively.

Slum clearance itself proved to have problems after 1936. The new clauses to ensure the rights of property owners in the 1935 Act allowed slum area owners to delay clearance progress very considerably by exhausting all their legal remedies. Demolition work in Lincoln lagged sharply behind new building. Even more annoying the demolition of an authority's own property did not rank for subsidy - so Drapery houses bought in anticipation of slum clearance schemes were denied subsidy. Lincoln protested itself and through the Association of Municipal Corporations (AMC) found it was a common plight. The M. of H. eventually relented on this point.

If overcrowding and slum clearance work lagged, building did not. There was an obvious and growing demand for houses for rent - a January 1937 revision of the applications register found 1951 applicants and it soon went over 2000. 'Ordinary' lettings, as HTPC saw it, must continue to have a place in Lincoln's policy. The M. of H. however felt differently and in May 1937 held up non-subsidy schemes and insisted that more be done in slum clearance. Of the 666 programme - upped now to 746 - only 452 had been demolished. HTPC saw the point

but were still concerned at keeping up non-subsidy building. The 5 year plan was modified in July 1937 to the demolition of 857, and the building of 698 for slum clearance, 69 for overcrowding abatement and 445 for non-subsidy general letting. Accurately, the Chairman of HTPC during Fordham's Mayoralty 1936-37, a lugubrious brass turner and Labour councillor, J. J. Leamy, argued that it was "an honest endeavour to try and get more houses built".⁽²⁵⁾

This put the emphasis of local policy where it now really rested - on building work. Some of this is explicable in terms of the local problems involved, but there was a noticeable drop in enthusiasm for slum clearance by Liberals as the worst slums were already swept away. Even a Liberal newspaper's political commentator, 'X-Ray' (Herbert Green) - began to have his doubts in public.⁽²⁶⁾ Everyone supported building but there was much less interest in the Sanitary policy. The position did not change with Labour's loss of control of the Council in November 1937 to the Independents and Conservatives - J.W.F. Hill replaced Snook as Chairman of Finance Committee, there were other chairmanship changes, but Housing Committee (HC), as HTPC now became, remained a Labour fief under a A. Tuck, a tough pacifist motor-body builder.

For Tuck and HC the first problem was to get slum clearance work completed, not because of the inherent need, but to ensure that houses built would

get the subsidy. They also started a great rush of building to get more ready for subsidy during 1938 - a process which exhausted the Council's existing land resources and forced in December 1938 a revision of the 5 year programme again. The 1938 Act reassured HC and interest switched again to general needs provision. During 1939, HC tried to influence the AMC to press the Government to produce a general needs subsidy. The local situation still required such efforts - there were 1623 applicants outstanding in July 1939. However, the war put an end to such pressure and Lincoln looked to the problems brought by war.

As a result of progress 1936-39 Lincoln had made a great contribution to slum clearance and to housebuilding for general needs. The emphasis had tended to be on building rather than slum clearance but a vast amount of clearance was in fact done. To the last Lincoln wanted its broader policy view to be adopted nationally but the M. of H. would not accept that more than slum clearance was a proper object of local activities and kept Lincoln to such objectives. Lincoln's comprehensive view of housing continued to assist the private sector in the continuing use of SDAA advances, though this aroused little interest in the Council since it was just another local service.

(x) Planning to Continue 1939-45

Tuck had resigned as a result of inner-party conflict in April 1939 and Fordham returned as Chairman of HC. He, with HC, was reluctant at first to accept that the war altered anything. They wished to continue building

and were only dissuaded by the M. of H. explaining the practical problems and that all built would receive no subsidy. However, by May 1940, the local works, again engaged in munitions manufacture, found that their efforts were being hampered by their new workers not finding accommodation, so HC tried again. The M. of H. was again adamant and sullenly HC took to billeting in shops and offices as the only expedients.

In 1941 as part of Town Clerk Banwell's reorganisation scheme - never fully implemented - the HC took over estate duties from the Finance Committee. While it gave HC something else to do besides keep tenants happy and the little bit of war damage work - only 39 houses were destroyed in the war - it was not as practical as it seemed, and in 1943 it went back to Finance Committee.

In December 1942, HC asked the Engineer, Adlington, to prepare a housing scheme for the first year after the war. HC was impatient for action and by the time the March 1943 circular arrived, suggesting that a first year's programme be prepared, they had a 341 house scheme ready for instant despatch along with a request to be allowed to restart SDAA loans. Adlington personally went further: convinced of the need for better Council houses he conducted a random sample survey of 195 tenants on what they wanted in houses. The results revealed a strong preference for middle-class

standards - french windows, back porches and spare bedrooms. This survey simply strengthened HC's already high preference for good quality housing.⁽²⁷⁾

Though the M. of H. refused to allow SDAA loans again, HC decided to get ready for housebuilding. In December 1943 the applications register was revised and local interest in future housing appeased by creating a Housing Advisory Committee and so averting demands for cooption. Local workmen and builders were already encouraging HC to press the Government for some action and this HC willingly did. In March 1944, HC welcomed the prospect of advance preparation of housing sites, but saw no virtue in the attendant creation of Regional Officers of the M. of H. to superintend schemes, and, in April, an agreement was reached on advance work between Lincoln and smaller South Lines. authorities. HC was however sure that prefabricated dwellings would have to be obtained. There were heated local disputes on the types to have, in which the Advisory Committee joined (though the Council by refusing it money to go to exhibitions, destroyed its effectiveness). In September 1944, 250 prefabricated houses were asked for. Applications for houses at this point were 1054.

The M. of H. allowed Lincoln 150 temporary houses and in January 1945 the first 100 of a type very different from that requested arrived. Sites

for the brick building programme were obtained; in April 1945 Gleasons of Sheffield got the siteworks preparation contract for Lincoln and the other South Lincs. authorities; and in July the local Building Trades Employers' Association (BTE) - a successor to the MBA - was called in to discuss contracts. The only misfortune was that the M. of H. continued to refuse Lincoln permission to restart SDAA loans - an act of local policy that had by this time become symbolic of local endeavour. In all, HC felt that after such efforts as it had so far made to be ready for the post war programme, progress should be smooth. Their efforts had been earlier and more eager than national policy and, it was felt, should be rewarded by early success.

(xi) Problems 1945-47

However, the hopes of swift and easy progress were doomed to disappointment. HC in 1945 became stuck with unenvisaged problems: the unreality of the BTE in contract negotiation; a desperate shortage of staff; a dislike of the 150 temporary houses, and a determination to have no more; a battle with the M. of H. on the type of house to be built (the M. of H. insisting that Lincoln build 3 bedroomed types when local demand was for 2 bedroomed - so when the houses were eventually allocated in January 1947 the Council had to bear the obloquy of 'underfilling' its houses); and, since Labour returned to local power in November 1945, a demand for direct labour to be reinstated which

Fordham, who continued as Chairman, felt to be premature. HC hoped in all optimism to build 2000 houses 1946-49 and Snook hoped for more: "We must build to the limit". But it was not to be. (28)

The first big contract for 268 houses went to Gleasons of Sheffield in January 1946 because their tender was so much lower than the BTE's. The M. of H. cut the quality standards of these houses but HC were appeased by being allowed to restart SDAA loans. The second big contract for 116 houses again had to go to Gleasons. Applications were pouring in at a rate of 100 per month and in May 1946 HC reluctantly agreed to the clearance of 86 houses in an area condemned, but not cleared, in 1939. It was an additional burden.

In June 1946 the BTE came to beg for work and it was decided in July that they could have a contract for 50 houses while the revived direct labour department did 20 houses. But BTE prices were so far in excess of what the M. of H. would sanction that they were unacceptable. The BTE promptly retaliated by objecting to Gleasons letting their men work overtime, got local industrial support and so Gleasons lost men to those areas where overtime was paid, and progress on the 268 houses declined rapidly. In September 1946 applications topped the 3000 mark; squatters took over unoccupied War Department property - and HC sympathetically laid

on some minimum services; and there were problems with licensing private work. HC hired off the work to a special committee, which was generous in issuing them, to keep the BTE happy and at work, and possibly went over the 'recommended' 4:1 ratio public to private building work. With all this chaos, HC was driven to expedients from October to December: ex-Aerodrome huts were obtained for temporary dwellings; aluminium houses were sought but not obtained; and small builders willing to break with the BTE were negotiated with - a process more frustrating than productive of houses.

The local weekly, in a moralizing editorial in January 1947, praised HC efforts and condemned the BTE for its attitude and suggested it was activated by "political considerations". Progress in housing continued to be painfully slow. At the Zonal Conference in February, Lincoln had to face the fact that though there were 520 houses locally in progress, both Council and private, little was being done on most of them. It was hoped to complete 350 houses in the year and put another 340 in contract. The bad winter made this hope rather implausible and in the summer of 1947 HC were forced to expedients again, especially recruiting labour from Grimsby and Worksop to increase local effectiveness. The BTE could still not be tempted into using its full talents on behalf of the city and HC toyed with the idea of letting direct labour build for ordinary sale and so undermine the

BTE position. This was prevented by the M. of H's attitude, but this did not stop the BTE petulently winding up the very successful apprentice training scheme they had operated with the Council. The M. of H. itself posed problems for HC: it threatened not to allow Lincoln to obtain an airfield site for its temporary huts unless Lincoln accepted squatters from the neighbouring North Kesteven RDC onto its housing list. (29)

To try and get more effort into housing matters, Adlington and HC agreed that an Architect - directed Housing Department be created to supervise building schemes alone. P. F. Burrige was appointed in July 1947 and took charge of the building progress. He suggested using concrete Wates houses - but found that none were available. The Lincoln Cooperative Society was found to be willing to build for the Council, but the M. of H. in line with its national policy refused to allow a new contract to be made while so much housing was half completed. HC therefore decided to cut down Gleeson's contracts to make room for local builders.

At this point, the November elections occurred. Fordham retired from the Council anyway after long service, but the Independents and Conservatives gained control of the Council after the elections. They put R.E.M. Coombes, an Architect by profession and a very solid and competent man into the HC Chair - a situation that was to lead to some professional problems in his relations with Burrige, though nothing untoward happened. Coombes could, with Burrige, do little to remedy the local situation at once,

though they were spared the trouble of cutting Gleasons contract, for Gleasons from somewhere obtained Wates houses, imported more labour and made a dramatic increase in productivity. Even so, of the anticipated 350 completions for the year, less than half this number were produced. Lincoln were thus reduced to putting only 212 houses in contract in 1948, on the principle that to those authorities who were doing well should go the reward of high future allocations, while the completion of some 463 already in contract was expected during the year.

All in all the years 1945-47 had been very depressing ones for Lincoln. Blaming the HC would be unfair and it was not done locally. Difficulties were simply attributed to the failings of labour and materials, of contractors, and the inability to get the BTE to utilize its resources in the local Council building effort instead of in private licensed work. Lincoln followed national policy and its overall failure in these years.

(xii) Successes 1948-54

HC under Coombes, and with different political control of the Council, felt it right to try to obtain some agreement with the BTE. In January 1948, HC joined the BTE "for information purposes", which, being employers of direct labour, they were entitled to do. Such a symbolic gesture did not however improve relations - especially when the direct labour department proved willing to cut costs and capture contracts the BTE should have got, as happened in April with a 52 house contract. In May, F. R. Eccleshare,

a small local builder started a 'Let the Builders Build' campaign locally. It was aimed more at convincing the central government than the Council that more private licenses should be issued. HC had some sympathy with this objective and in July allocated 1/5 of its remaining allocation for the year to license when the rule was nationally allowed. (30)

HC was still determined to get some agreement with the BTE. In September 1948, HC preferred the third lowest tender for an 82 house contract from a local firm to two outsiders, one Gleasons'. The Regional Officer intervened to point out that there was not much justification for this when the local firm had also made errors in its tender. The contract went to Gleasons and they, with direct labour, continued to be the main providers of houses for the Council. The allocation for 1949 for Lincoln was 300: 60 went to private license, 80 were allocated to direct labour and the BTE were brought in to take the 160 - but no terms could be agreed despite long negotiations.

However, in February 1949 a group of very small local builders composing the local Federation of Master Builders, not connected with the BTC, led by Eccleshare, took a 42 house contract. They got another contract at the end of 1949 and thereafter Eccleshare was to tender alone without allies. He personally considered the BTE attitude to building for the Council and its profit margins almost immoral ("anyone trying for over 10% isn't

doing the country any good"). He was quite willing to break the 'ring' against the council and HC joyously welcomed his attitude. Because he was to prove he could do a good job at a fair price, HC treated him as an equal of the direct labour department in ensuring continuity of work for him to keep costs down. (31)

Coombes retired from the Council and HC Chair in May 1949. He was succeeded by W.A. Hughes, an Independent, manager of a coal merchants firm, a tough-minded and excellent administrator. He inherited a position of some difficulty. Lincoln had problems still, for though completions had been good in 1948, applications were still over 2700, there was no agreement with the BTE and Eccleshare had not yet shown his potential, and the M. of H. was worried at the local situation.

In June 1949, the Regional Officer explained to two HC meetings, the second one attended by the BTE, that he would not sanction a Gleeson 46 house contract because, though lower than BTE offers, it was still too high, and that something would have to be done about the very high cost levels prevailing in Lincoln. The builders offered as reasons for local high costs, inexperience in contracting, the use of outsiders, rigid contract specifications and low local labour productivity. The contract was readvertised - and Gleesons won it again along with another 65 house contract. The high profit margins were not discussed, but were obvious to all participants.

Hughes decided there was nothing to be done except expand the direct labour department to be able to build 200 houses per year. If, as he said, "several employers had said it was not their business to commit financial suicide", this was one solution - and the council agreed. There were other partial solutions too. Making use of the fact that Lincoln contained export-oriented industries, HC obtained Board of Trade and Ministry of Supply support for an application for 100 aluminium bungalows for key workers for these firms. The other solution, it was being realized, was to keep Eccleshare at work building for the council. (32)

The 1950 allocation was 250, allocated initially as 25 to private license, 180 to direct labour and 45 to contract. The cut in allocation from 300 to 250 was without official explanation though it was probably related to Lincoln's high cost building and slow rate of completion. Hughes was very bitter about it: "We cannot build housing estates in a piecemeal fashion". Gambling on a change of policy or of Government as a result of the forthcoming national elections, HC in January 1950 decided to go ahead and build 300 anyway and get M. of H. consent later. Eccleshare got a larger contract. (33)

This increased programme was put up for consent in June 1950. The M. of H. refused to sanction it, and Lincoln deployed all the resources at its disposal including the use of M.P.s and deputations to get consent. Two compromise face-saving devices were found to tidy up the affair - using again the export industries argument, Lincoln got an extra allocation of 100 houses for 1950 - 80 council houses for key workers for these industries and 20 to private license; and the Council was permitted to put in contract ahead of

time part of the 1951 allocation. Thus of this allocation of 270, 70 were in contract by December 1950. Lincoln was just determined to build all it could now it had found out how to do so.

There was, of course, no satisfaction with the number 270 itself. By devious calculation, it was reckoned that this should be increased by 74. This argument was used in July 1951, but the Regional Officer intimated that not merely was this unacceptable but that Lincoln's allocation for 1952 would be smaller still. This eventuality was intensely disliked, especially since it would disturb the by now continuous building efforts of direct labour and Eccleshare for the Council. Pressure was again deployed and in September consent was given to a scheme whereby Lincoln got an extra allocation of 20 for 1951 and were allowed to start 54 in advance of the 1952 allocation - thus Lincoln got the 74. Progress in building was now very good indeed.

Hughes in opening the 1000th post-war house in Lincoln in January 1951 reflected on progress and the achievement so far. He said it represented "patient industry, struggles against adversity, disappointments, shortages of labour and materials and 'an abundance of the Ministry of Health'". As an assessment of the problems faced, it lacked one factor: Lincoln's determination to build. For, since 1948, Lincoln had got over its problems, not in the way expected of an Independent - Conservative Council by favouring private enterprise, but by direct labour, outside contractors and eventually encouraging a local break-away builder. It had

also overcome the limitations of national policy by ignoring bans and fighting to reverse decisions when the fact of achievement was accomplished. (34)

The new Conservative Government's eagerness to boost building efforts were, of course, most welcome to Lincoln. The 1952 allocation was 300 and as usual 1/5 was to go to private licensed work. However, the Labour group were upset at the result of the national elections and in December 1951 opposed this, much to Hughes' surprise, since he said this was the first party split on policy during his Chairmanship. Both sides soon united in opposing the new types of houses proposed by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG). Only when the new Architect, Alexander (Burridge went to Southend in 1951) showed how standards could be kept in some special new designs and Hughes argued that "we have got to be realistic", was a major clash with the MHLG averted. (35)

MHLG sweetened the pill of the new houses by allowing Lincoln another 100 allocation in March 1952 and another 106 in July. By September 1952, the Regional Officer was calling for a great building effort, and by November this was defined as having 600 houses in contract by August 1953. Lincoln was pleased at all this, but had to let most of the new allocations go to private enterprise, though with 2927 applicants in July 1952, it was tempting not to do so. But with Eccleshare and direct labour already fully committed,

though expanding rapidly with the large programme envisaged, the BTE quite unlikely to help, and concrete houses already being included in programmes, there was little else to do. Moreover, there was a problem connected with land - at this rate of building there was only enough left for 4-5 years building. The Finance Committee in November 1952 considered boundary extension the only solution and started negotiations with Kesteven County Council for some agreement on this. HC itself prudently considered the use of high flats.

Building progress during 1951 and 1952 had been very good, but 1953 was quite outstanding - 636 houses were built in the year. As a result of this the Health Committee from February 1953 began to press for a renewed slum clearance effort, which HC resisted since there was such a great demand still for housing and policy was to build until the general needs situation had eased. Another problem was that the Regional Office began to argue that Lincoln was overcommitted in building efforts. The non-traditional parts of the programme were refused sanction in July 1953 and, after discussions, it was made clear in October that the encouragement to build in 1952 was being eased off - presumably in line with the forthcoming 'Houses - The Next Step'. Lincoln was allowed only 350 houses for 1954 and the great achievement of 1953 was to be made exceptional. (36)

HC in November 1953 decided to keep on building. Irrespective of MHLG pressures, in order to keep the newly expanded building forces intact and hoping for a successful appeal for an extra allocation later or a relaxation of

national policy to sanctify their choice. So there should be no mistake about this MHLG were told of Lincoln's intention. Hughes put the case firmly "the Council did not take kindly to the restrictions which were to be placed upon them", and Rayment, the Labour spokesman on housing said HC was united "On the main purpose of the Committee, which is to meet the need for houses in the city". (37)

HC considered the building for 1953 to have been "magnificent results" in January 1954 and in February HC asked MHLG for an extra allocation of 300 houses. Opportunity was also taken to protest at the low general needs subsidy envisaged in the future. The request had no success nor even had the suggestion that Lincoln be allowed to build as an early start to the slum clearance programme scheduled for the next year. Continuous pressure by deputations and letters of protest was kept on MHLG - without success. (38)

The determination to continue housebuilding remained. Hughes was beaten in the May 1954 elections and the new HC chairman was Dr. C. A. Lillicrap, a local physician, Independent and a forceful and domineering character, who maintained the same view of the local policy. In December 1954, he said "he could not answer for the national policy, but only for Lincoln, where they were building as many houses as they were permitted to". This had been made apparent in October when HC asked for a 700 house allocation for 1955 - 500 for general needs. In November, MHLG offered 250 at which the Town Clerk

was instructed to send "a strong protest to the Ministry against the meagre and totally inadequate number of houses which the Council could build in 1955". This protest brought MHLG to offer "verbally" that if Lincoln put 100 in contract before the end of 1954 it could count as part of the 1954 allocation. So, rather belatedly, official sanction was obtained for the extra building already undertaken earlier in the year. It was quite apparent that in 1955 HC would be again trying for an increased allocation. (39)

The period 1948-54 had seen Lincoln solving its problems and being ready to build to the utmost, while national policy fluctuated in the amount it had been willing to allow Lincoln to build. Lincoln had avoided this problem by ignoring national decisions and going ahead - a situation the Ministry found both difficult and presumably very embarrassing to control.

(xiii) Reluctance 1954-59

HC was most unwilling to follow the Government's desire to switch policy objectives. The Independents and Conservatives agreed with the Labour group that HC's function was to build houses for general letting. The Health Committee was however insistent that something be done about slum clearance and was willing to undertake this programme itself. HC was naturally unwilling to let the Health Committee take over a function HC had had in 1939, even if HC did not particularly want to do any slum clearance. The Finance Committee adjudicated and in

February 1954 gave responsibility to HC and by the summer all was more or less amicably settled. The assistance to private enterprise part of the Government's proposals posed no problems: Lincoln had always liked SDAA, the 1949 Act for advances and Improvement Grants was used from the Act's passage, and in June 1954 HC decided not to have Guarantees to Building Societies - a decision confirmed in September after MHLG pressure to reconsider the matter - on the grounds that their Advances scheme was better value to applicants.

The slum clearance programme envisaged in September 1954 was that 900 houses would need to be dealt with eventually, but only 400 in the 5 year programme. In June 1955 this was made officially 470 to be demolished in 5 years. HC started off on this work quite well, but was much more interested in building for general needs, and, ahead of national pressure, for the needs of the old. In February 1955, HC tried to get a larger allocation for the year, and failed. HC tried again in June in conjunction with the slum clearance proposals - and got only an extra allocation for Air Ministry key workers. HC tried again in August and was told by the Regional Officer that national policy had turned from housebuilding to building for industrial and educational needs. Even so, after various special allocations the 1955 total allocation was 328 rather than the initial 250. But the Council was very dissatisfied and so in October 1955 there was a concerted attack by all against the Government's attitude. It rankled especially that having been told "the sky was

the limit" they should be reduced so soon, and especially when a few years at the 1953-54 rate of building would see the end of their 2000 strong waiting list.⁽⁴⁰⁾

HC had been reduced to building garages to help keep local building forces intact, but even this prospect was dimmed by national economy measures and the proposed Housing Subsidies Bill in November 1955. The Council was uniformly hostile to this and Lillcrap announced the agreed policy, "there was going to be a temptation to build more houses for slum clearance because of the greater subsidy, but he was certain they would safeguard in all justice the interests of those on the waiting list".⁽⁴¹⁾

The programme proposed in February 1956 for the year was a defiant 404 houses split evenly between Eccleshare and the direct labour department. MHLG made no protest. The Finance Committee queried in March 1956 whether, in view of the high interest rates prevailing, advances should continue to be made. HC replied that these "fulfilled a very urgent and public need and it would be a very retrograde step if it were decided to cease making advances". Thus Lincoln was endeavouring to keep to its traditional policy: building, some slum clearance, and aid for the private ownership of houses. This did not alter, since the parties were

agreed on housing policy, when Labour gained control in May 1956 (though Labour had only half the seats until gaining an overall majority in 1957, Lillicrap as Mayor refused to use his casting vote, as a matter of principle, to save the Independents and Conservatives). Ald. J. W. Rayment, a fitter and shrewd long-serving Labour member, who had been on the Housing Committee since 1923, became Chairman. He had seen too many changes of Government policy to take any seriously, but he was naturally cautious. (42)

In June 1956, HC planned to build 300 houses in 1957. The MHLG in August insisted that all these be for slum clearance. The Council protested in all ways and urged the claims of justice to the general needs waiting list, but without avail. The foresight of building 404 in 1956 was rewarded since the general needs subsidy was abolished at the end of 1956. HC felt that it had no option but to follow national policy. 300 houses a year for 1957 and 1958 was the new proposal, 100 each for slum clearance, clearing the old 1940's hutments, and for the old - all of which bore some subsidy. But the Council was adamant that some effort be made for those on the general list and added 50 non-subsidy houses to the programme. The Council shared Rayment's view that "the Government are doing their utmost to stop building" but felt the need to take symbolic counter action. (43)

The cut from 404 to 350 in total programme was absorbed by Eccleshare, not direct labour - a policy

decision to protect a Council service none disputed. The decision to continue building brought to a head the local crisis of land shortage. Fortunately Lincoln managed to obtain the agreement of Kesteven County Council that the City should take over a large tract of land at Skellingthorpe - a procedure which evaded the need for a Local Inquiry and should enable Lincoln to get the land in 1958. The land had no agricultural value whatever and the MHLG did not appear interested.

In November 1957, the 1958 programme was settled at Rayment's cautious insistence at 300 houses - 20 only non-subsidy. Rayment preferred to have subsidized houses for first letting to keep rents down. But, in December, the Council insisted on the same as 1957, 350 with 50 non-subsidy. Rayment at HC got round this by keeping the programme at 350 but having 20 non-subsidy again, while 50 houses got the £24 industrial subsidy from the MHLG for the urgent needs of the Central Electricity Generating Board. With all this building, slum clearance had not been forgotten - after two years 245 of the 470 condemned houses were cleared.

MHLG was, however, not disposed to accept such a level of housebuilding in Lincoln. In February 1958, only 200 of the 350 were approved and there emerged also a reluctance to approve any project involving the direct labour department. HC protested vigorously against the cut which made the programme "totally inadequate to ensure satisfactory future planning and continuity of building" and the direct labour department prepared to switch to school building and

building for sale direct to the public (an idea of Rayment's which derived from his memory of the 1927-30 'free-site' scheme). MHLG fortunately relented in April, allowed a programme of 288 houses, and direct labour got contracts. (44)

Rayment let the Chairmanship of HC go to the young G.C. Elsey in June 1958. Elsey, a charge-hand fitter, though inclined to bold and overlong speeches, was a capable successor. But he and HC were still faced by a capricious Government Department. For, though the building programme had been saved, MHLG in June lopped 300 acres off the land agreed for transfer from Kesteven to the City and insisted that the date of transfer be 1959. The first had a minor justification in protecting a large landowner's interest, the second had nothing to excuse it. Moreover, in December 1958, MHLG made extra difficulties on the use of compulsory purchase orders in the area to be acquired.

This ominous development was averted by 1959 being an election year. MHLG grew quite mild towards October. HC intended to build 350 houses but MHLG intimated that they could have more and HC proposed 463, all of which were sanctioned by July 1959. This was taking advantage of the situation, but it did exhaust most of the available land and HC proposals for 1960 were initially only 244 houses. But with 2078 applicants in December 1959 still on the waiting list, HC still felt obliged to supply this public demand by a housebuilding policy.

The slum clearance programme during all this time had not been held back - all 470 houses in the programme were demolished by the end of 1960 and the HC considered the whole showed "excellent results". Though at times progress had lagged and rehousing went awry, the Officials kept up the pace. HC's interests were, in order, building, advances, grants for ~~improvements~~^{mpf} improvements, and slum clearance. But all policy objectives were achieved anyway, even if the quantity of building achieved disappointed HC. There was a simple and agreed policy to continue with more of the same. (45)

Lincoln during this period had not liked national policy, for though the city had carried out slum clearance, the improvement of old houses, and encouraged home ownership, it had wanted, and made symbolic attempts to keep, building for general needs. It was for the Council a matter of 'justice'. The MHLG did not always stop this, but was capable of a fairly unpredictable career of encouragement, warning, leniency, and irrelevant interference. Lincoln endeavoured to continue a systematic policy, despite such discouragement and made the most of national policy fluctuation, such as that of 1959, to continue in what were by now traditional ways.

3. Conclusion

(xiv) Lincoln's Housing Policy 1919-59

Housing policy in Lincoln early found a local style. There was an early commitment to build houses for fairly general needs, a desire to help private enterprise, and

a determination to do something about the slums. The building and slum clearance programmes were initiated with general public support and throughout the period there was a unanimity in the Council between the parties on the value of local housing policies, upset only temporarily 1931-33 by political dispute and in 1953-54 by a reluctance to start slum clearance, since there was a general preference for building before clearance. This local view of policy continued despite the fluctuations of national policy. The impact of national policy on Lincoln was to reinforce existing developments: the building innovation of 1919 had been foreshadowed in 1914, the slum clearance of 1930 by 1922 and 1928-29. It was not the case that without national pressure little would have been done in Lincoln for, without national discouragement, Lincoln could sometimes have done more. Even so, building continued without Government encouragement 1933-39 and 1957-59 and the reintroduction of SDAA was fought for 1943-46.

National pressures for action in line with Lincoln's own comprehensive housing policy were followed: it was pressure to stop certain policies that caused problems. Since Lincoln was an authority intent on doing something this was most easily done by the use of powers to sanction local activities, which Lincoln was at times prepared to ignore and present a fait accompli to the Ministry. Lincoln exhibits the characteristics in ~~that they could have more and HC~~ conflict with the Ministry of a

progressive and innovating local authority faced by a not particularly comprehending superior authority. The conflict is not spectacular or resolved in dramatic ways, but it is profound as the local authority tries to go its own way, while the Ministry appears, because of its view of national policy, not to be in touch with the detailed needs of areas it is supposed to superintend.

The internal politics of housing in Lincoln were very muted. There was fundamental agreement between the parties and policies had genuine public support. The local political system was open enough to allow the pressures of the Public Welfare Committee and VSCC, besides allowing for the creation of Advisory Committees in two wars to represent local interests, a part in Council activities. The two pressure groups mobilized the city's other leaders, the public notables of the moral world, and had an influence on policy. From the 1920's housing was agreed by the parties as being a non-contentious issue. In the early days, the drive and energy of Chairmen was of value to local policy: Newsum, Robson, and Parker (who by being Mayor 1914-19 as well as HTPC Chairman ensured that housing policy be seen as part of the City's interest) made important contributions. After them Chairmen could alter details as Rayment did in 1958, but they no longer made policy since this was devised by party and the notion of the city's interests. Neither individual Councillors nor officials had much relevance for the making of policy though, of course, the skills of Engineers Baggott and Adlington and Architects Burridge and Alexander ensured in

good part the success of Lincoln's policies. Non-Council organizations apart from the moral pressure groups were not important. The MBA and BTE attempts to benefit from local policy were both defeated by the use of direct labour and the use of contractors willing to act for the Council. Being open to the 'moralizers' simply indicates that the Council was responsive to 'public' opinions, for in the end it was the massive local support for local housing policies which enabled the Council to continue. Housing policy in Lincoln was more influenced by this than by the actions of individuals or institutions and had its apotheosis in the way general needs provision in the 1950's was seen as being 'just'. Common notions, not men, matter most.

1. Municipal Yearbook (London) 1914 and 1956 'Lincoln'.
2. Anon. 'A Notable Experiment in Slum Clearance at Lincoln 1928-29'.
3. Source: C.A. Lillcrap
4. Hebb H.K.: Sanitary Inspector's Journal August 1899 p.59-62.
5. Lincoln Urban Sanitary Authority Report 1909, p.24, 1911 p.25 and LL 2 Nov. 1912.
6. LL 13 Oct. 1928.

7. LL 12 Oct. 1912.
8. LCC Building and Improvement Committee 12 June 1912; Lincoln Urban Sanitary Authority Report 1911 p.23 (LL 27 July 1912 got the figures wrong).
9. LL 12 Oct. 1912.
10. LL 6 Apr. 1912.
11. LL 11 Jan. 1913.
12. Lincoln Urban Sanitary Authority Report 1912 p.36.
13. Source: J. W. F. Hill.
14. LL 3 Aug. 1918; LCC HTPC 18 Oct. 1918.
15. LL 15 Feb. 1919.
16. LL 5 Jan. 1924.
17. Source: J. W. Rayment.
18. Sources: J. W. Rayment, G. Deer.
19. LL 5 Dec. 1925.
20. Anon. 'A Notable Experiment in Slum Clearance at Lincoln 1928-29'.
21. LCL 10 Oct. 1931.
22. LCL 10 Dec. 1932; 11 Feb. 1933; 8 Oct. 1932.
23. LCL 8 Aug. 1933.
24. LCL 10 Feb. 1934.
25. LCL 7 Aug. 1937.
26. LCL 7 Aug. 1937, 2 Apr. 1938.
27. Letter of A. Adlington 17 Apr. 1967, LCC HC 6 May 1943, LC 17 July 1943.
28. LC 15 Dec. 1945.
29. LC 11 Jan. 1947.
30. LCC HC 7 Jan. 1948; on Eccleshare LC 29 May, 19 June 1948.
31. Source: F. R. Eccleshare.
32. LC 6 Aug. 1949.

33. LC 7 Jan. 1950.
34. LC 13 Jan. 1951.
35. LC 9 Feb. 1952.
36. LCC 'Note' of 8 Oct. 1953 in HC minutes for
4 Nov. 1953.
37. LC 4, 11 Dec. 1953.
38. LCC HC 6 Jan. 1954.
39. LC 17 Dec. 1954; LCC HC 10, 30 Nov. 1954.
40. LC 7 Oct. 1955.
41. LC 16 Dec. 1955.
42. LCC HC 28 Mar. 1956.
43. LC 14 Dec. 1956.
44. LCC HC 19 Feb. 1958.
45. LCC HC 8 Mar. 1960.

Appendix

(1) Population

(1) <u>Year</u>	(2) <u>Number</u>	(1) <u>Year</u>	(2) <u>Number</u>	(1) <u>Year</u>	(2) <u>Number</u>
1801	7,197	1861	20,999	1921	66,042
1811	8,599	1871	26,766	1931	66,243
1821	9,989	1881	37,313	1939	64,764
1831	11,217	1891	41,491	1951	69,401
1841	13,799	1901	48,784	1961	77,077
1851	17,536	1911	57,285		

Source: Census Reports, except 1939 National Registration, (unadjusted by boundary changes).

(2) (i) Houses Built 1918-40

(1) <u>Year</u> <u>(Apr-Mar)</u>	(2) <u>Council</u>	(3) <u>Private</u> <u>with sub-</u> <u>sidy</u>	(4) <u>Private</u>	(5) <u>Total</u>
1918-19			0	0
1919-20		} Not Avail.	24 (1)	24
1920-21			194 (1)	194
1921-22	225		95 (1)	320
1922-23	75		19	94
1923-24	0		24	24
1924-25	0	} (180)	87	87
1925-26	46		78	124
1926-27	127		114	241
1927-28	175	131	12	318

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1928-29	156	151	24	295
1929-30	287	178	30	495
1930-31	94		28	122
1931-32	138		49	187
1932-33	80		41	121
1933-34	84		66	150
1934-35	88		84	172
1935-36	168		62	230
1936-37	191		89	280
1937-38	136		93	229
1938-39	410		141	551
1939-40	Not Available			

(ii) Houses Built 1946-60

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<u>Year</u>	<u>Council</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>(Jan-Dec)</u>			
1946	160 (2)	43	203
1947	122	52	174
1948	296	18	314
1949	240	67	307
1950	300	36	336
1951	339	56	395
1952	317	80	397
1953	458	178	636
1954	589	150	739

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1955	395	178	573
1956	303	198	501
1957	387	179	566
1958	310	110	420
1959	289	180	469
1960	308	195	503

Source: 1919-39 City Health Reports, with 1919-22 City Engineers' Reports; 1946-60 Housing Returns

(1) Includes 200 Ministry of Munitions, and subsidized Swanpool Scheme.

(2) Includes 150 temporary houses.

(3) Aid to Private Owners 1924-60

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<u>Year</u> (Jan- Dec)	<u>SDBA</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>1949 Act</u> <u>Advances</u>	<u>'Free Site'</u> <u>Scheme</u>	<u>Improvement</u> <u>Grants</u>
1924	72			
1925	25			
1926	26			
1927	63		36	
1928	14		33	
1929	} 245 (approx).		17	
1930			6	
...				
1941				
<u>(Apr-Mar)</u>				
1946-47	19			
1947-48	46			

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1948-49	16			
1949-50	26			
1950-51	28			4
1951-52	70			3
1952-53	43			3
1953-54	33		(Jan-Dec)	6
1954-55	63	1	1954	22
1955-56	81	15	1955	60
1956-57	50	10	1956	78
1957-58	1	21	1957	64
1958-59	19	6	1958	61
1959-60	28	11	1959	96
			1960	3

Source: Lincoln Treasurer's Department and
Personal Compilation from files

CHAPTER VI

SCUNTHORPE

1. Introduction

(i) Local History

Until 1859 what is now 'Scunthorpe' was five small villages managing tolerably well on poor agricultural land. Then Rowland Winn discovered (or re-discovered, the Romans had known) ironstone in the area. First an extraction industry, then ironworks, and then, after 1890, steelworks developed. The whole area grew, but the extent in each village varied with the attitude of the local landowners. Winn developed Frodingham as a company town (in partial pursuit of his political ambitions); Beauchamp had Brumby as a workers' suburb; the Sheffields kept Crosby free and untainted of industry until the end of the 19th century; but Scunthorpe and Ashby were not 'closed' parishes and, while the other three were restricted in their commercial activities by their landowners, these two grew quickly. Scunthorpe was the more central and its growth was the greater. It had a Local Board in 1890, while in 1894 the local government structure for the area became two U.D.C.s, Scunthorpe, and Brumby and Frodingham, and two parishes in Brigg R.D.C., Ashby and Crosby.

Local political and social life at this time was dominated by the landowners and Ironmasters as leaders of local industry. Scunthorpe as the leading village slowly developed a life of its own and wished to amalgamate the 'Ironstone' area villages. An attempt was made in 1903-4, but was beaten off with support from local notables. Not

until 1919 were the five villages amalgamated as the Scunthorpe and Frodingham U.D.C. (shedding some areas that would remain agricultural in the foreseeable future). The hostilities between the old villages continued in small ways until 1939.

'Scunthorpe' grew all the time. There was a big expansion during the 1914-18 war, a small decline in the 1920's, with the general fall in trade, and renewed expansion from the 1930's. From then on, Scunthorpe never looked back in expanding and treating life in the grand style - the 'Klondyke' of Lincolnshire as envious neighbours called it. All the while the Council, which became that of the Borough of Scunthorpe in 1936, sought with growing success not merely to foster a coherent civic life, but also to attract other industries. The town was brash, confident and always getting bigger: no history, but a success.

(ii) Local Politics

Before the amalgamation of 1919, local politics was a little disorganised. Councillors were elected with party labels, or with acknowledged support from political clubs, but party disputes were negligible since either the affairs to be administered gave rise to few opportunities for dispute, or the issue was so important for the growth or survival of the district that all Councillors were united in their views. Both Scunthorpe U.D.C. and Crosby Parish had Labour minority groups, but they were more a

collection of individuals than a tightly organised group.

After amalgamation the pattern of political control has been:-

1919-36	Independent
1936-45	Independent and Conservative
1945 - to date	Labour

The Independents contained a wide variety of possible and sometimes conflicting political views but they were held together by the dominance of a few individual members and a common anti-Labour sentiment. The Independents both within themselves and in alliance with the Conservatives had a very weak party system and allowed Chairmen of Committees to come from the Labour group if they had outstanding talent. The Labour group in Scunthorpe operated a rigid party system in its own favour gradually squeezing them out of office and decision-making (not that they had anything to contribute). The system 1945-60 was run by senior party members who held Chairmanships of Committees but who were open to the sharp constraint of party group meetings where criticism is quite uninhibited - something which did not appear in full Council. Committees are kept closed to the press, and, by repute, both encourage wide discussion and business-like efficiency. On policy issues there was scope for individual Chairmen until 1945, thereafter it was a matter of party opinion. On all issues of a minor kind, there has been a convention of Chairmen letting Committees come to a consensus.

The local political style was, before 1919, a little flamboyant with a tolerance for 'characters' acting out their parts. But after 1919 there is a self-conscious attempt to attain civic dignity, which was encouraged by the Borough status of 1936 and the continued growth of the town and the prospect of becoming a very important place indeed. Civic dignity and decorum become a means of indicating a local patriotism and an awareness that the town must avoid identification as yet another rough, dirty, northern town. Scenes in the Council and Committees are very rare and infrequently political in origin. The strong trade union element in the local Labour movement also ensured a certain practical tenour in the town's affairs. Dignity and efficiency are the hallmarks of Scunthorpe life in politics as well as social life.

2. Housing Policy

(iii) To 1914

The constituent parts of Scunthorpe had very little trouble with the adoption of sanitary rules in housing. The main resistance came from those who still, quite accurately at first, thought of themselves as being in the countryside, and ought therefore to be allowed to continue in traditional ways. The Ironmasters, with enlightened paternalism, built a large number of excellent quality houses for their workers (the only one of the Lincolnshire towns where this was the case) and, because of the late development of the area, it benefitted from the higher standards prevailing at the end of the century. The local competition of the villages also ensured that minimum standards of public health were exceeded.

The only houses it was possible to treat as slums were ancient farmworkers' cottages. With the town growing steadily, building work was adequately performed by local builders, who produced standard tracts of good quality terrace housing. There was however, a fairly standard local tradition of overcrowding and subletting, since provision of accommodation did not always keep pace with the influx of population.

The only local problem seen was connected with future growth. There was some enthusiasm in two Scunthorpe UDC Councillors - Read, a sweet manufacturer, and Quibell, a builder, Labour man (and later M.P. for the area) - for a proper town plan following the 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act. It was inspired by a desire to see Scunthorpe as a garden town as it expanded. In October 1910 they got themselves, with the UDC Chairman, off to a Conference in London on Town Planning and reported back in favour of a Committee to prepare a scheme in conjunction with Brumby and Frodingham U.D.C. and Crosby Parish Council. This was accepted in December. The other authorities were willing to come to a meeting and the Local Government Board (LGB) was contacted to send an expert. He did not come, but a meeting was held in February 1911. It was without result, though they had to tell the LGB that it was still under consideration. Through Read's enthusiasm another meeting was convened in January 1913, but again without result. There were two reasons for this: the sheer difficulty of convincing everyone of the need for such a scheme, and the political fact that despite Read's

idealism, the other Councils feared a renewal of Scunthorpe's attempt to amalgamate the district and saw that town planning could be a weapon in this attempt. The episode illustrates more the problems of cooperation in the area than the problems of local housing. However, the early ventilation of the idea of town planning ensured that Councillors were aware of its possibilities, and, in the amalgamated area, the policy followed was to be one of creating a 20th century garden city.⁽¹⁾

(iv) Struggles for a Local Policy 1914-19

The 'Scunthorpe' area during the war saw the massive expansion of the local works by the Ironmasters to meet munition demands, a flood of new workers into the town, and the creation of serious health problems with the consequent overcrowding. In May 1916, six Scunthorpe U.D.C. Councillors resigned in a vain attempt to deprive the Council of a quorum and so prevent the licensing of buildings to take more people than sanitary sense would allow. The local M.O.H.s were very concerned and rather angry at the way their Councils were prepared to help the local firms in their difficulties by allowing this. However, in July 1917, Crosby Parish Council was moved to protest "against the action of the Government in sending such large numbers of workpeople into the district without making adequate provision for their accommodation and welfare".⁽²⁾

The LGB circular of 28 July 1917 offering possible subsidy for housebuilding after the war, had a different

impact in each part of the district. Scunthorpe U.D.C's Health Committee at once sought land, prepared a scheme for 335 houses, and told the LGB that they wanted 500 houses immediately and another 500 after the war. The Brumby and Frodingham U.D.C's Building and Sanitary Committee promptly said housing was all the responsibility of private enterprise. In Ashby and Crosby all had to be left to the uninterested Brigg R.D.C.

The views of the Councils were not entirely relevant since the Ironmasters had decided to intervene. They had convened a Conference of themselves, Scunthorpe, Brumby and Frodingham, and Brigg R.D.C. on 16 April, 1917 and said their works expansion schemes would increase the local population by 30-40,000 in the next few years and that they needed local cooperation to facilitate this. A joint Committee was set up. This met on 21 November, 1917 when it appeared that 3-4,000 houses would be needed, some 2,000 in the next 18 months. The Ironmasters were proposing to build themselves and needed local assistance only to provide services and sanction layouts. Meanwhile they sought to get subsidy for this from the LGB.

Scunthorpe's reaction to this was characteristic - "this Council is willing to do all in its power to provide municipal facilities" for the housebuilding. But Brumby and Frodingham saw clearly that such an expansion could only mean the eventual amalgamation of the area and were cautious: "the Ironmasters should do the work and not

look to the various Councils to do it". They then exploited the Ironmasters' desire for excellent town planning by insisting on quality and, like the Ironmasters, consulting experts like Abercrombie, and using the results during 1918 to delay progress. Such behaviour settled the Ironmasters in favour of the district's amalgamation, for in 1903-4 they had been unenthusiastic.⁽³⁾

The LGB circular of 18 March 1918 offering terms of financial assistance for post war housing aroused little interest in the district at this stage, Scunthorpe collected some statistics and Brumby and Frodingham invited an LGB Inspector to come and see for himself. Both authorities felt bound to follow the Ironmasters' lead. Yet the Ironmasters were unwilling to proceed themselves since the amount of subsidy they would receive from the Government was uncertain. The authorities simply joined the Ironmasters in pressing the needs of the district on the LGB and Ministry of Munitions. Implicitly over all hung the possibility of amalgamation - no authority wished to weaken its position with errors on a housing scheme.

But the amalgamation was pressed ahead with all recognizing its inevitability. The Order was to be finally made in March 1919 for a new Council to begin in October 1919. With the Armistice and the new Government emphasis on Authorities having a housing scheme, Brumby and Frodingham tried to strengthen its bargaining position by saying that local needs were for 2000 houses. But the Council was negotiating with one of the firms to do all the necessary building and so avoid involving the Council. Scunthorpe

was interested but "the general opinion was that the present Council should not tackle a scheme of municipal housing", for, as was said in another context, it was "not right for a dying council to mortgage the ratepayers' money for another Council to square off". Both authorities were concerned with the local situation and petitioned all to do something, though still relaying on the Ironmasters to get on with their proposals. Thus, between November 1918 and February 1919, nothing was done.⁽⁴⁾

On 13 February 1919 the joint Committee or Conference met again and the Ironmasters brought forward their new proposals. They were less ambitious than in 1917 but still envisaged 2000 houses in 4 years and 4000 in 8-10 years. The Ironmasters exonerated the authorities from all charges of delay and said they would do the whole scheme themselves. But still nothing happened as there was no agreement in the Ironmasters' negotiations with the Ministries for subsidy.

Scunthorpe began to feel that something should be done in general preparation for a housing scheme and in April 1919 created a Housing Committee under D.J.K. Quibell, who had pressed for the town plan in 1910, to consider the matter with representatives of Brumby & Frodingham. That Council agreed to this provided Ashby and Crosby were brought in and no expense was incurred. The joint Housing Committee (HC) met, Quibell became Chairman, Ashby and Crosby were brought in, and the Ironmasters

pressed for information on their progress. A new Conference was convened for 28 May 1919, with Major Wood, the Regional Housing Commissioner of the LGB to be present.⁽⁵⁾

At this meeting, the Ironmasters' spokesman, Hopkins, shocked Councillors by declaring that despite all the negotiations, the Ironmasters were not going to get a direct subsidy for their scheme (national policy then favouring subsidy only to Public Utility Societies), they would however build a few houses, but "the local authorities would have to undertake a housing scheme". To help in this, the Ironmasters offered their land and layout plans at cost. Hopkins, attacked the LGB attitude which had led to this situation, and Major Wood offered no justification for it. The dazed Councillors accepted land for a 1000 house scheme, and their Councils later confirmed, though concerned at problems of raising money for a scheme in an amalgamated area of unknown financial probity.⁽⁶⁾

This initial doubt widened when the Scunthorpe Chairman, Wass, heard Addison, the Minister, in London during June: "he did not seem to know where the money was to come from, although much was expected in future from the Victory Loan...". The Councils' discontent with the Government and Ministries - "officialdom and red tape" - besides the Ironmasters - "the Ironmasters wanted the houses, so let them build them" - allied to a prolonged strike of local bricklayers, and the desire to

wait for the new Council to make the decisions, indicated that nothing would be done for some time.⁽⁷⁾

However, Quibell and the HC took the matter into their own hands and played an independent role. Land and an Architect to superintend the housing scheme were sought and a large number of matters settled in tentative agreements. This independent effort to get things moving was eventually challenged by the Crosby group which on 6 September, 1919 denounced the Minutes (kept by the Scunthorpe U.D.C. Clerk) as inaccurate and alleged that the HC had gone beyond its brief to 'prepare' a scheme and was 'adopting' one. Scunthorpe and Brumby & Frodingham held a joint meeting on 8 September to criticise Quibell and HC, but it had no effect. The problem was compounded by the forthcoming elections for the new local Council in which Quibell and the Labour group were trying to make housing an issue.

The results of the election in late September shattered Quibell's hopes in this. It was an electoral disaster for Labour, Quibell himself was not elected and only two Labour men got in. This result could have been expected from the April 1919 local elections when Labour had also lost heavily. The whole housing scheme prepared by HC was left to the disposal of the new Council, whose attitude was calculated by the local press to be against housing schemes and extravagance.

The circumstances of the Ironstone district were so peculiar at this time so that it is not surprising to find

odd things happening. The difficulties of the new district were added to by national policy which excluded the well-founded Ironmasters scheme. It is difficult to see why an exception could not have been made of the Ironstone district's case. The Ironmasters were not interested in a Public Utility Society, since it meant them giving financial aid without the possibility of exercising control, and the decision at the national level later in 1919 to allow subsidy direct to private enterprise came too late to affect their plan to have only modest schemes of their own.

(v) James Henderson 1919-24

The new Scunthorpe and Frodingham U.D.C. (hereafter called 'Scunthorpe') in October 1919 created a Housing Committee (HC). Long, a local mines manager, was temporary Chairman while a scheme was devised - 100 houses, divided between sites in Crosby and Scunthorpe (later increased to 74 and 68), and the big 1000 house scheme at Brumby inherited from the Ironmasters. But it was James Henderson, the manager of the Frodingham works, who became Chairman of HC in November. Henderson was both tough and vigorous, and he felt a personal obligation to see a housing scheme through, having been involved in the earlier abortive Ironmasters' scheme. It was his determination that was to see the scheme completed.

For many on the Council a housing scheme was necessary only because the Ministry of Health (M. of H.) had default powers, and they were determined not to have a repetition of Quibell's handling of HC. Though, in November, Henderson explained that they needed at least 3550 houses, there was much reluctance to sanction schemes. A partial

delaying tactic was to force Henderson to use the ex-Scunthorpe surveyor, Heap, as architect. Architects were in fact one of the big problems of the 1919-22 scheme, with their outrageous fees and lack of administrative ability, but this was not the way out, and in December HC and Heap insisted on proper staffing.

The clash between Henderson and the opposition came to a head in February 1920 on a vote, ostensibly accepting M. of H. assurances that the penny rate would be the whole burden on the rates of the scheme but in fact on the principle of having a scheme at all. The vote was 11-6 in favour and that quietened the opposition. In February too the first contract was let to Wilburns of Doncaster, since local builders had neither the experience individually or the ability to combine effectively to undertake such big contracts. In March Wilburns got the second contract too.

Finance was not in the end much of a problem for Scunthorpe. Though in July 1920 HC warned the M. of H. that their programme would not be fulfilled unless finance were certain, Scunthorpe came within the Public Works Loan Board limits. This was just as well, for the attempt to issue Bonds for £250,000 failed - only £16,745 being subscribed by September 1922.

The problems of the Scunthorpe housing scheme were quite simple. The land at Brumby could not be obtained from one of the Ironmasters' companies at a reasonable price, there was a shortage of building materials, and,

by October, Wilburns were being delayed by a shortage of skilled labour. The land shortage was solved by the purchase of 92 acres in Crosby from the Sheffield family, who were thanked for their assistance in making the sale. By August 1920 Lehanes of Darley Dale had a contract there for 150 houses, and only Major Wood prevented it from being 240 in early 1921. To overcome the labour problem, Wood suggested the use of concrete houses. HC were reluctant but included 18 in the extended contract for Lehanes - and were relieved when Wood refused all this contract. By November 1920 anyway the local works were in difficulties as the post-war boom ended. The Council wanted local builders to get contracts, but this proved impossible.

Henderson, on 29 December 1920, admitted local difficulties, but looked forward to completing 700 houses by 1922 even though there were already 1000 applicants. But in January 1921, Wood intervened and upset progress: he stopped a site works contract and insisted on the use of direct labour for it, insisted that the Council try to buy the Brumby land again, threatened to surcharge the Council if costs rose, and repudiated a verbal undertaking to sanction a major sewer for the housing scheme. Disputing that collection of crude threats and gestures took up some time.

This intervention also came at an awkward time for Henderson. The Council's 'economists' were being

critical again, and the Labour group, totally misreading the national situation, insisted that, since the scheme was to go on to 1922, there was no point in having expensive contracts in 1921. On 29 March 1921, the Council rejected a 250 house contract to a big outside firm. Henderson got the HC to call an extraordinary Council meeting on 11 April and there delivered a fiery speech arguing that needs were great, and demanded to know whether it was the Council's policy to increase unemployment by a determination to hold down prices. "If that was the case he would decline to associate himself with them". An amended scheme for 225 (later 226) houses was passed.⁽⁸⁾

Having defeated Council opposition, Henderson was faced with a mass of unsettled problems with Wood and the M. of H. in which progress was being held up. Henderson went to London with Spencer, his Labour right-hand man, and saw Ministry officials. Their visit unfortunately coincided with the 14 July 1921 speech by the Minister, Mond, calling a halt to the scheme nationally, and Scunthorpe obtained no concessions, even on the grounds that it was a growing town.

All that was left was the completing of the 518 houses in contract and settling the accounts of the Architects and builders. The Architects sought compensation for the schemes not being as large as promised and the builders were in dispute with the Council and M. of H. on the items they should have included in the houses. The business took up much time, and in August 1922 ex-Housing Commissioner Wood was called in

as a private person for advice, but even so the Architects were not settled until 1926 and the builders 1925 and 1929.

In the meantime there was great local bitterness as unemployment grew, the financial position of the town became shakier as rates were not paid and minor strikes occurred. The small Labour group sought in March 1922 to keep a housebuilding programme using direct labour as a partial cure to local unemployment and as an extension to other public works activities with the same objective. The Council however was not willing to do this. In April 1922 HC was amalgamated with Town Planning, Parks and Recreation Grounds to become what was usually called the Housing and Town Planning Committee (HTPC). It was a kind of symbolic end to the housing scheme.

Henderson, even so, wished to continue housebuilding efforts: in May 1922 a 90 house non-subsidy scheme was proposed. The Council accepted this, but the M. of H. would allow it only as a 20 house scheme, and then the Architects deliberately delayed putting it out to tender as a ploy in their negotiations with the Council. The scheme was abandoned. The financial situation of the Council was by this time acute. Expenditures had been undertaken on the assumption of continued prosperity and the prompt payment of rates. A Mr. Donald, a Barrister and ex-Town Clerk, and specialist in local authority organization problems, was called in to consider the situation. His report in September 1922 revealed the overstaffing and featherbedding resulting from the amalgamation. Reorganization was necessary. The final blow was the refusal of the

Council's Bankers to extend the overdraft. In an atmosphere of crisis, Henderson wisely kept HTPC from anything other than minor matters until May 1923.

Then he brought forward a 35 house building scheme in anticipation of the 1923 Act. This passed through the Council easily since there was a common opinion that with 5-600 applicants outstanding something should be done, though there were doubts on whether the Council itself should build. Henderson therefore waited until the subsidy to private enterprise was settled. This was done in August with HTPC deciding to use only the lump sum grant of £75, with rigorous amenity conditions. Then this and the 35 house scheme were brought as a 'package' to the Council. But, with the Bankers again being difficult, the housebuilding part was deferred for 6 months while the lump sum subsidy was approved. The Labour group were very annoyed at this and sought support from outside organisations, especially of the clergy, but the Council remained unmoved at their resolutions and protests.

Henderson was by this time tired of the whole business. His own views were ignored, his supporters were weak and the Council was dominated by the 'economist'. From October 1923 to April 1924, HTPC merely supervised the 1923 Act subsidies, refused to adopt a Guarantees to Building Societies scheme, and finally got Council house rates collected with the rents. The only triumph was the prevention of a project for a large cemetery

in the north of the town, expenditure on which would have precluded a housing scheme. Henderson used moral arguments in opposition, but Spencer, his unofficial deputy, was more effective in pointing out that it was allong way for the southern (Ashby) dead to travel.

In April 1924, Henderson did not stand for re-election. His vigour from 1919 to 1921 gave Scunthorpe its housing scheme despite the attacks of critics; his preference for large contractors had ensured the completion of 518 houses; and this was a very substantial number in comparison with other towns, besides being, in conjunction with the works' schemes a substantial contribution to solving the local housing problem. Not merely had Henderson overcome local opposition, he had done his best against the vagaries of the M. of H., especially Wood's intervention of January 1921. Yet when he retired from the Council it must have appeared that there was no one to follow his lead. Certainly the Council thought so, for HTPC was restored to being merely a Housing Committee (HC) again, with the intention of keeping it at work merely on tenancy matters.

(vi) Towards a Local Policy 1924-29

The new Chairman of HC was Arthur Spencer, a lift engine driver, of some ability, but, as a Labour Councillor, of little weight in the affairs of the

Independent Council. He had been Henderson's unofficial deputy from 1920 and was determined to carry through the same kind of policy. He sought at once to persuade the Council to use the 1924 Act. In May 1924 he pointed out that the 1923 Act had not led to an upsurge of building, a point that was supported by the MOH in July, and the Health Committee began to press for some action to prevent health dangers. In August, Spencer said that the immediate needs of the town were for 400 houses and in September proposed the building of 200 houses to be spread over two years. He argued that municipal housing had come to stay even if the Council did not think so. The Council was in a bad temper because two Councillors had had to resign from the Council for receiving 1923 Act subsidies. They had been re-elected unopposed, but the Council was annoyed. It accepted a modest scheme for 25 houses under the 1924 Act, which Spencer bitterly described as a "fleabite".⁽⁹⁾

HC soon got down to obtaining tenders for the 25 and the Council relented a little and made it 30 houses in November. In December 1924 the Council asked HC to consider SDAA loans to help private enterprise a little more. HC rejected this proposal in favour of Guarantees to Building Societies, which did not involve the raising of money. Spencer made a valiant effort to link this proposal to one for another 100 houses under the 1924 Act in March 1925, but the Council was not interested.

Spencer was obviously too awkward a character for the Independents to tolerate any longer as Chairman, and in May 1925, he was replaced by H.A. Jackson - one of the Councillors who had had to resign for receiving subsidies. Jackson was a builder and odd-job man, devoid of personality and able to settle HC into being devoted to the minutiae of the building of the 30 houses, the Guarantee scheme, and tenancy matters. The 1924 Act appeared to have been buried.

Jackson's slumbers were however disturbed by a letter in February 1926 from Henderson, in his capacity as works manager, telling him of proposed works expansions. With heavy irony, Henderson wrote "Your Council will no doubt have under consideration the question of housing and they will possibly desire to make some provision for the increase in population which we have foreshadowed".⁽¹⁰⁾

Stung, Jackson had a scheme for 68 houses prepared with 30 as a first installment, and had the Clerk write to Henderson "that they were not prepared to go further at the present time". The scheme was however delayed by the prospect of subsidy revision and not until September 1926 could the Council get any assurance on this. Then HC decided to have the 30 go out for tender but to have the roadworks etc. for the full 68 to be done at the same time.⁽¹¹⁾

At the 2 October 1926 Council meeting, the 'economists', worried by Scunthorpe's continued financial problem - £100,000 had recently had to be borrowed to get a working balance - tried to block the scheme. While Jackson remained quite silent, Spencer argued the case for building and pointed out that "the Housing Committee wanted a fair crack of the whip" in expenditure. He won and by December all 68 were in contract. (12)

The Labour group had a clear alternative policy they wanted pursued locally - Council building without any aid to private enterprise. But, not until April 1927, when, with the addition of three new Councillors, did they attain a size sufficient to give importance to their voice in voting power. To their intense satisfaction, the Guarantees to Building Societies scheme came to an end in July 1927 after a limited success. The Building Societies were tired of the Council's undervaluation and the Council was tired of paying out quite large sums on defaulters. In December 1927, the group attacked the continued use of the 1923 Act and argued that with 700 applicants for housing for rent the Council should build as many houses as it gave 1923 Act subsidy for. In February 1928 they proposed obtaining more land and a 30 house building scheme. HC made this 70 as part of electioneering for the April elections. However, in these Jackson lost to a Labour woman, and the new HC Chairman, A. Farthing, a kindly-disposed, but business-like clothier, proposed a compromise 50 houses.

However, in August 1928, the M. of H. refused sanction to this scheme and urged "a conservative financial policy" on Scunthorpe. The Council was furious at this interference and a deputation to London persuaded the M. of H. to change its mind. In February 1929, HC decided on another 30 houses and in July another 26, if they could get subsidy - which they did. At the end of 1929 HC had returned to a building policy. It was in small, modest, batches but it was a clear policy, after August 1928 having solid support from the Council. It was recognised that, although 1015 lump sum subsidies had been granted using the 1923 Act, it had not solved the local housing problem. (13)

Thus the period saw the adoption of a local house-building policy in the face of M. of H. discouragement, and by 1929 it was in line with national policy as commended by the Labour Government - the use of the 1924 Act for housebuilding for letting.

(vii) The Development of Policy 1930-39

Though HC proposed to continue building houses, it had almost no land available. HC sought to buy more but the landowners were either unwilling or asking very high prices. It was very frustrating since the Engineer in June 1930 showed that costs on their 204 1924 Act houses had fallen all the time and that at current costs really cheap rents were at last a possibility. Spencer, who took over as Chairman of HC while Farthing did his stint as Chairman of the Council 1930-31 was very critical

of the local landowners and in this he was supported by the local press. In August 1930 it urged upon them "local patriotism" if only "for the sake of the children". But it was not until January 1931 that land was obtained - a whole years' delay - and HC decided that its policy would be to build 100 p.a. for 5 years. The first contract for 100 was let in March 1931 - thus there had been nearly two years between contracts. (14)

Because of these delays, HC was slow to consider the 1930 Act and in the meantime the Health Committee had started to deal with it. This seemed natural enough since the MOH, who had to conduct the initial survey, never attended HC meetings. By December 1930, the Health Committee had decided on the demolition of 73 individual houses, mostly old farm cottages in the south, at Ashby. HC was rather reluctant to build the replacement houses since they would have to be in Ashby and away from the Council's main estate in Crosby. Moreover, there was an emotional feeling that HC's function was to house the 800 or so general needs applicants and not undertake a sanitary policy. Thus nothing was done immediately in 1931, and, by the time HC would have been considering it, the country was in the midst of its economic crisis. The Council's own Economy Committee in October 1931 decided that Council house building should cease for 12 months. Farthing, restored to the HC Chair, and HC

did not dissent since it was quite apparent that this was a temporary check to a developing policy.

Well before the 12 months were up, HC were seeking to start work again. Once all the 1931 scheme of 100 had been occupied in May 1932, plans were made for another 50 houses. It was the r-ight time psychologically to do this since the local press was fulminating against a "landlords' ramp" to keep rents high locally. The proposal for the 50 led the local building unions to propose the use of direct labour and for the MOH to press the needs of the old and single persons. The former was ignored and Farthing told the latter that the M. of H. did not favour such efforts. HC's view of policy at this point did not include the building of the 73 slum clearance houses needed, for in March 1932 it had been decided that the Health Committee was closer to these matters and that it would build and manage these houses separately. Thus Scunthorpe had two policies now, a house building one under HC, and one of slum clearance under the Health Committee. (15)

The scheme for the 50 houses was delayed. Two local works closed down briefly and increased local unemployment, so that letting would have been difficult. Moreover, the M. of H. required to be convinced that there was a real local 'need' for such houses. The ancient applications register of 1923-32 totalling 2983 was revised and 1407 found to be the number of 'real' applicants - a figure cut down to 340 by HC insisting that only those living in rooms had a 'real' need. This

convinced the M. of H. but they could not be persuaded that Scunthorpe also wanted good quality houses. The dispute over this added extra delay and then no contractor could be found to undertake the work until May 1933.

The abolition of the 1924 Act subsidy in 1933 aroused local protest and support was given to a resolution of condemnation of the Government from Eastleigh U.D.C. on this in March 1933. Farthing did not support this resolution and he appears to have begun to believe that it was time to wind up local building efforts. The new Guarantees to Building Societies scheme of the Government was welcomed and M. of H. consent obtained to the issue of 250 of these. However, the local Building Trades Employers' Association (BTE) objected to the proposed maximum cost of £330 for a 3 bedroomed house and demanded £380. HC refused to allow this and the Labour group; were doubtful about the whole business and asked about SDAA. Farthing, misled by Clerk Auld, believed the Act did not exist and said so in July 1933.⁽¹⁶⁾ The Guarantee scheme was not a success, no proposal was successfully made, for local builders were more interested in sales than building for rent.

There was local pressure on Farthing to continue building without subsidy. The Editor of the local paper attacked him for "marking time" in January 1934

and there were similar criticisms in the Council. Farthing obliged in March 1934 by producing another 50 house scheme, but warned that the M. of H. would not like it. Sure enough, in May 1934, the M. of H. insisted on receiving a deputation from Scunthorpe and privately made it plain that Scunthorpe could not have its 50 houses unless local builders were allowed £360 for a 3 bedroomed house in the Guarantee scheme. Told of this in Council, Spencer exclaimed "That is nothing short of a threat to the Council", to which Farthing replied, "You can take it that way: that is what it amounts to".⁽¹⁷⁾

The Council faced with this 'suggestion' agreed, got the 50 houses approved, but the new Guarantee scheme proved no more attractive to builders, and was used only in a 36 house scheme. In December 1934, the HC became aware at last of SDAA by someone writing to ask about it. This was ignored, but in January 1935 the applicant, encouraged by the Editor of the local paper, persisted.⁽¹⁸⁾ Seeing the failure of Guarantees, HC in March 1935 agreed to an SDAA scheme for advances and linked it with another proposal for building non-subsidy houses. The Council welcomed these proposals but there was much criticism of Farthing personally for not having considered SDAA before and for lacking boldness in non-subsidy building.

This was too much for Farthing who felt he was doing his best in the face of considerable difficulties with the

M. of H. He did not stand for re-election in April 1935, the second HC Chairman to be driven to this, though in this case there was some merit in the criticisms. The Chairmanship passed to one of the critics, P. Hassall, a sample passer and Labour Councillor. Under Hassall, HC decided to let SDAA be used by those who wished to transfer from other high interest mortgages to it and this, with ordinary applications, ensured its runaway success as a scheme. The Finance Committee made a desperate effort to stop it in June 1935, but failed. The SDAA scheme covered middle-class housing - 58 of the first 97 were over £450 in cost as compared with £300 for the standard Council house. But for Hassall and HC, SDAA paralleled the need to build more Council houses; it was a joint policy of aiding the private sector and fulfilling the need for rented accommodation. Local industry had also revived by this time and considerable new investment in capital equipment and the re-expansion of the works was envisaged, so large Council housing projects were envisaged.

Meanwhile, of course, the Health Committee had been dealing with slum clearance. In October 1932 it had a 12 house scheme for Ashby, but delays imposed by the M. of H. in disputing details held it up until May 1933. The renewed slum clearance drive of 1933 by the Government led the Health Committee to reconsider

the whole of their programme. Having discovered that the clearance of the wooden shacks in Scunthorpe's shanty town would qualify for subsidy the local programme became one for the clearance of 82 'houses'. In January 1935, 24 houses were started and in November another 26 were projected - but HC offered enough land at Crosby for 34, and so in January 1936 this was accepted. Thus 70 houses were built for the Health Committee in its programme. They were managed separately for the Committee by HC's Estate Agent. The splitting of policy between two Committees worked admirably: there was no anguish about alternative priorities, no Committee conflict, and all the slums came down and the inhabitants went into new houses.

The Overcrowding Survey naturally went to the Health Committee. The results, in early 1936, indicated 157 cases in the private sector and 18 in Council houses. Most cases were solved by reshuffling people between houses, but the building of 30 houses was deemed necessary. The Health Committee was beginning to doubt whether housing was really part of its function and in June 1936 tried to pass this building over to HC. But the Chairman of HC for the dead period April to November 1936 when the new Borough of Scunthorpe would come into being complete with new elections for all Councillors, was Mrs. C. Ginns. A Labour Councillor, she took over from Hassall

for this brief period, and, considering that the sanitary policy should remain with the Health Committee, had the matter shelved for the new Council.

Farthing had returned to the Council in April 1936, having made election addresses in support of private enterprise. But he made no protest against the continued HC non-subsidy building and in July 1936 another 50 houses went into contract. With the new Council in November 1936, he was elected again and became Chairman of HC once more. He slipped back into the old routines easily enough: more land was sought and a 66 house scheme prepared. This scheme was rejected in May 1937 by the M. of H. on the grounds that they were not doing enough for slum clearance. HC therefore got the Health Committee to certify that slum clearance in the town was all completed and the 66 were for the abatement of overcrowding - thus solving the outstanding matter from 1936 in this. The M. of H. accepted this position. The incident however precipitated a reconsideration of the problem of responsibility for the sanitary housing policy. A joint HC - Health Committee meeting in July 1937 settled that it should all go to HC and in December the 70 slum clearance houses of the Health Committee were transferred too. Land for the 66 was obtained in September 1937, but the M. of H. refused to sanction its use for anything unless the overcrowding work was completed, so this scheme was added again the 30 houses

and this went out to contract in April 1938. The M. of H. was simply preventing Scunthorpe continuing non-subsidy building during its efforts to get the sanitary policy completed.

In November 1937 Farthing lost the Chairmanship of HC. His slowness of approach continued to disturb colleagues and his tones of injured martyrdom when criticised so annoyed them they decided he was expendable. The new Chairman was Richard O'Dowd, Irishman, steel-worker, Labour, staunch Trade Unionist, a man of great ability, charm and ruthlessness. He was to keep the Chair until 1955 except for his Mayoral year 1945-46. His talents were obvious to all, even to the Independent-Conservatives who ran the Council, but he had to be cautious in his use of the Chairmanship in an atmosphere of growing party conflict.

O'Dowd's main contribution was in the 5 Year Plan of capital expenditure in September 1938. It was made a clear policy decision that 100 houses a year should be built, and there were no dissentient voices. Otherwise O'Dowd finished off the 96 houses in contract, tidied up the remaining parts of the slum clearance programme, and, wary of the prospect of war, started only a 30 house scheme in 1939. It was a modest bit of work, yet the most important thing was that housebuilding was such a firmly established local policy by this time.

During the 1930's, Scunthorpe had developed a local policy: the use of SDAA to encourage private ownership; building non-subsidy houses; and slum clearance and overcrowding abatement work, undertaken locally without demur. The M. of H's contribution to this had been to dislocate building non-subsidy houses, and the urging of Guarantees to Building Societies against the better judgement of the local authority. Otherwise, Scunthorpe had dealt with its housing work in very much an approved fashion.

(viii) Wartime Preparations 1939-45

The 30 houses in hand at the outbreak of war had special arrangements for completion made for them at first, but the M. of H. suspended these in January 1940. O'Dowd and HC realized that there was little to be done locally about housing and though HC met monthly there was little business to transact at first except keep an eye on allotments and the cultivation of gardens. Scunthorpe had hardly any air raids during the war and was not troubled by war damage, though it was a more important strategic target than Grimsby because of the iron and steel industry. The agricultural bias of HC's interest was accentuated by being amalgamated with the Parks Committee between June 1941 and November 1945. Efforts that would otherwise have gone into housebuilding were channelled into such achievements as having in May 1942 1066 or 1188 tenants of Council houses with fully cultivated gardens.

The March 1943 circular from the M. of H. on the post-war housing programme brought HC to propose a 251 house scheme for the first year after the war and to seek land for the housing programme of subsequent years. A Conservative-Independent faction attempted to get HC to agree to a policy of building for sale to ex-servicemen, but this was rejected. O'Dowd realistically explained the problems that would affect post-war housing, but argued that plans would have to be made early on to solve the great anticipated demand locally. He personally hoped for a contribution from private enterprise, but his Labour colleagues were quite clear that only massive Council house building would suffice.

HC sought to obtain land, but since they had enough for the 251, the M. of H. was reluctant to let them go beyond this first years' programme, despite the current cheapness of land. HC chafed at this shortsightedness, but not until February 1944 did O'Dowd see a way out. The Ministry of Works was talking in terms of advance preparation of sites for a two year programme, and this was pointed out to the M. of H. Despite the official pronouncement that there was to be a 2 year programme nationally for 300,000 houses, the M. of H. still refused Scunthorpe permission to buy land - and, moreover, the Rural Land Utilization Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture refused to allow any of the possible sites to be used for housebuilding.

O'Dowd was furious, called the announcement of the 2 year building programme "window-dressing" and said he was tired of Government methods: "Sometimes his Committee would receive a circular or a government pronouncement which made them think they were getting somewhere. Then another announcement would come making the position as vague as ever". This was especially annoying since HC wished to get on with the work of building, conscious that the local works had expanded again during the war and this was a permanent shift of the iron and steel industry to the locality. (19)

The advance preparation of housing sites was discussed at Lincoln in March and April 1944, the second meeting being called by Scunthorpe itself in order to get some cooperation between authorities on this. But nothing resulted and HC still did not have the sites required anyway. The new Town Clerk, Ervington, personally got M. of H. consent to one site in June 1944, but this permission was withdrawn in September. HC was then prepared to buy land out of revenue and so circumvent the M. of H., but the Council would not sanction this extreme step.

100 temporary houses were applied for in October 1944 though HC did not like any of the types available and the request was more to indicate Scunthorpe's seriousness in its housing proposals. The applications list stood at 726 and was rising steadily. O'Dowd and

HC wanted some action and prepared to take a gamble on the experimental Bryant house. It was agreed that Bryants should build a pair and Scunthorpe take 500 if these were successful.

Though the problems over obtaining land were settled with Ministry consent in January 1945, the Bryant house scheme was delayed because the M. of H. preferred to support a larger scale experiment elsewhere. Nevertheless what could be done was: the local BTE was assured that they "would be given every consideration" in the future programme, on apprentice training scheme agreed in principle and a siteworks contract agreed with a local contractor. In April 1945 the Council agreed that housing should be the first post-war priority, before such pet local projects as a new sewage works and cemetery extensions. (20)

But O'Dowd was not optimistic about the success of post-war schemes. He had foreseen the problems in 1943 and subsequent experience merely confirmed it. At the end of July 1945, he pointed out there had been "plenty of circulars but no action" by the Government and this had misled many into believing that all was well when it was not. It was thus with cautious realism that Scunthorpe was ready for the post-war programme. (21)

(ix) Problems 1945-47

O'Dowd was correct in his pessimism. There was to be no quick solution to the housing problem. HC faced a desperate shortage of staff - solved in part by getting the early release from the services of a local private

architect willing to work for them - the abandonment of the Bryant house project, the attempts to obtain steel and other non-traditional types of housing, which all failed, and the need to restore local builders to activity. This was done by the generous issue of licenses for private building.

In November 1945, Labour gained control of the Council. O'Dowd was now secure against political interference, but he took the year 1945-46 as Mayor and C. Newlove, a rolling-mill stocktaker, and careful, intelligent, Labour Councillor took the Chair for the year. Labour locally as well as nationally wanted to get on with housebuilding.

In January 1946, a 124 house scheme went out to tender in small groups. Because of staff shortages, this was without bills of quantities, which the local BTE warned would prove unwise, besides which the groups envisaged were still too large for small builders such as they were. The BTE met HC with the Regional Officer and agreement was reached on smaller groups, but this did not prevent the tenders being intolerably high. Negotiations did not reduce the tenders except with one builder for 8 houses, and in March 1946 HC gambled by giving all the remaining 116 houses to one builder prepared to break "the ring". Additional pressure was brought on the BTE by cutting the issue

of private licenses. Accurately, the Labour group maintained that the BTE was "ganging up" on them and that they would not tolerate it.⁽²²⁾

Labour supporters, especially the Trades and Labour Council, favoured the creation of a direct labour department to break the deadlock. HC was sceptical that it could do much in the short term and it might ruin relations with the BTE, but referred the matter to a sub committee. This visited the Edmonton Borough department and was favourably impressed. Especially impressed was Pittwood, the Chairman of the Finance Committee, who guided the proposal for a direct labour scheme through the Council in September 1946. Even so, HC showed no urgency in doing anything about the proposal.

HC were being realistic. They wanted houses, and so far all it had to show was the 100 temporary houses recently delivered. The contrast with the good progress of privately licensed work was painful. The next schemes went out to tender with bills of quantities prepared, but BTE prices were still far too high. They were reduced after lengthy and detailed negotiations between the Council, BTE and Regional Office. The SDAA scheme operating before the war was restored to show that Labour did believe in private ownership. But HC was doomed to frustration. The gamble with the builder of the 116 failed when he got into difficulties, and the final blow came when the local builders could no longer agree amongst themselves

to put forward joint proposals.⁽²³⁾ In desperation to get some building done, HC applied for 350 steel houses.

When O'Dowd returned as Chairman of HC in November 1946, the local housing scene was filled with problems. Even labour and materials shortages were becoming apparent. As an expedient, flat-roofed houses were built to save on materials (the proper roofs were added later). But with a strike in January 1947 by building workers over piecework and other matters and the great snows of winter, local progress was almost negligible.

In this misery of incompleteness, the town found relief in the entertainment of an appeal against a compulsory purchase order. The Council wished to put steel houses in a prominent site next to a quiet private estate. The young Q. Hogg, Q.C. represented varieties of local protest against this, in the course of his doing a lot of work of this kind at the time and getting well-known for it. He provided a great deal of good fun in a hard winter, though his side lost.

Only in April 1947 did the 350 steel houses get final approval. As a result of the Zonal Conferences, 260 houses were allocated to Scunthorpe for completion in 1947, but only 142 were to be in fact completed. Local progress was very slow indeed. Private licensing was stopped for a period to enable some progress to be made, and as another expedient 150 aluminium bungalows

were obtained in October. The Labour faction's pressure for the use of direct labour was still regarded by HC as irrelevant: slowness was caused by a general labour shortage, not the unwillingness of local building organizations to work. 1947 was filled with frustrations for O'Dowd and HC, but O'Dowd, having foreseen all this felt confident that 1948 would be much better, since so many houses were due for completion then. A waiting list of 2,500 could look forward to better things.

(xi) The Building Programme 1948-54

O'Dowd's optimism was fully justified: in 1948 Scunthorpe did better than any other town over 50,000 population in persons per houses completed since the war. By this index, Scunthorpe continued to be in the first three places until 1954. This continued progress was the result of O'Dowd and the HC keeping up the pressure for extra allocations of houses to Scunthorpe, justified by the needs of an expanding town, and success in combining local and outside builders in maximizing production of houses.

In February 1948, the M. of H. refused a Scunthorpe request to be allowed to put more houses in contract because of the great number locally due to be completed that year. But O'Dowd and Town Clerk, Errington, saw the Regional Officer of the M. of H. and convinced him that the sanctioning of another 100 houses would be correct policy. There was pressure within the Labour group to make all this 100 direct labour. A Town Bill

containing a large number of useful clauses for the development of civic life had just been rejected in a Town Poll. To introduce direct labour was seen as a kind of revenge by some councillors. Fortunately, the M. of H. did not favour such a large initial scheme. So direct labour, now reluctantly accepted by HC as inevitable, was begun with a small scheme for 16 old people's bungalows. The 100 were allocated to local builders on the Engineer's assessment of their abilities. Local builders had little choice in this. The cutting of the issue of private licenses and the compulsory purchase by the Council of all quickly developable land had brought them to recognise the need for cooperation with the Council, and besides, the Engineer was very fair.

In May 1948 another allocation of 50 houses was obtained from the Regional Officer after HC had got an Ironmasters' estimate that the need of the works' labour force was for 1500 houses immediately or 350 a year for 5 years. To increase production, non-traditional houses were again sought, but without success. In August 1948 one of the works (Appleby-Frodingham) told the Council they had been offered aluminium bungalows for their needs. A deputation promptly went off to see that this deal was conducted properly through the Council, and by October this

was agreed. As a result, Scunthorpe got an extra allocation of 188 Spooner brick-clad houses as another contribution to local needs.

During 1948 two other problems were resolved. Agreement was reached on the contribution of the East Midland Housing Association so that it could build up to 50 houses to let with Council assistance. This agreement took up so much time and effort that it could only be justified on the grounds that the Association was composed of Co-operative Societies. The other problem resolved was the Santon Slum Clearance area. This had been condemned in 1939 but not demolished because of the war, and subsequently the general housing shortage. The local Communist Party helped the local inhabitants to protest, the Health Committee thought something should be done too, and though the M. of H. tried to object on the grounds that such work was not essential, they were persuaded otherwise and the houses were cleared and the inhabitants rehoused.

The 1949 allocation to Scunthorpe was 350 houses. By July 1949, 146 of these had gone to Wimpeys for 'no-fines' type of non-traditional building. This was a method of increasing local production which was not at odds with the interests of the local builders, all of whom were kept busy with contracts. The direct labour department, which the HC had decided should be kept

on small projects, kept at work on old people's bungalows. An extra 250 (later 150) aluminium bungalows were obtained in July 1949. The 1950 allocation was again 350 houses and was allocated between private license, local builders and Wimpeys. The local builders made known their preference for "private enterprise" but they knew they were being well treated by the Council. As the Engineer reported in February 1950 - "A number of small builders ... would shortly be requiring further work to maintain continuity of employment, and authority is requested to negotiate prices with these builders for small contracts..." Policy was clear in being a determination to build as much as possible. (24)

This did not preclude a desire to keep the quality of building as high as possible. Despite the argument that smaller houses would increase production deployed by the Government in 1950, and the fact that the local waiting list in November 1950 topped 3000, it was not believed by anyone locally that cuts in quality were either necessary or well-founded. Scunthorpe fought to keep up the quality of houses built without much success. However, in keeping up the rate of building there was some achievement. In September 1950, HC got 24 of the 1951 allocation of 375 started in advance as a method of keeping up the flow of work. By June 1951 it was plain that more than 375 could be started in the year and HC sought an extra allocation of 250 to

keep up the pace of local effort. The Ministry of Local Government and Planning refused to sanction this, but HC gambling perhaps on a policy change after the national elections decided in September 1951 to start as many as possible of a 292 house scheme. Scunthorpe's allocation for 1952 was 400, but the new Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG), under the Conservatives granted another 50 to rank officially as part of the 1951 programme to cover the early starts made by Scunthorpe during that year. There was great local satisfaction with the increased allocation from 350 to 400, but it was tempered by a strong dislike of the new cuts in the quality of houses insisted on by the Government. All the Council joined in the condemnation of the Government for doing this and it was bitterly pointed out that only 4 of the 20 recommended houseplans came within the standards laid down by the Dudley Committee in 1944.

The local unanimity that housebuilding should continue to be the main policy was given two local twists. One was the considerable local demand for a proper caravan site for those who actually preferred this way of life or who tired of being on the waiting list for a Council house. The Health Committee sought to provide this and after battles with the Ministries on obscure planning matters obtained

permission to go ahead with this local service in 1951. The other twist was that the local Conservatives believed "there should be in all equity a subsidy given for the erection of private houses". The Labour Council was only too delighted to pass this on to the Conservative Government in March 1952, but, surprisingly, the MHLG was not amused and coolly rejected the suggestion. (25)

The Conservative Government's determination to have a great housebuilding effort was well supported at the local level. Completions had been enormous since 1948, but local plans envisaged keeping to the established building rate of 600 houses a year. In June 1952 the MHLG were willing to sanction 560 Council houses with 140 to private license for 1953 and said that this "should be regarded as part of an expanded programme and not as a sudden effort which might result in a smaller number of houses being built in 1954". (26)

With such exertion urged upon them for 1953, Scunthorpe could not see why the 1952 programme could not be larger and after much negotiation with the Regional Office a total of 600 was allowed for the year. HC was however quite aware of the inconsistency of Government policy - housebuilding was encouraged, but neither the building of factories nor schools was allowed thus preventing proper and successful area planning.

Scunthorpe's estimate of building so much in 1953 was in fact an over optimistic estimate of the capacities of local firms and the outsiders brought in. In June 1953,

the MHLG insisted on the rephrasing of the programme and the 1959 programme was made only 450 houses in October 1953. HC saw the sense of this and accepted without any demur other than to ensure that all local builders were occupied as a result. Progress during 1954 was however, very good, so HC asked for the restoration of the 600 for 1955. In December 1954, MHLG intimated that Scunthorpe would not be allowed so much, but as a devious trick to cover Scunthorpe's special case, it was allowed another 100 houses to rank officially as part of the 1954 allocation. The town got an allocation for 1955 of 350 houses, so 'real' building was 450 again.

To an HC so entirely committed to building, the events of 1953-54 which nationally slowed down the housebuilding effort were not at all welcome. In November 1954, O'Dowd used again the special case argument for Scunthorpe that it should continue as before: "He hoped that the Ministry would be generous because Scunthorpe was in a different position from many other towns. They had very few slums and he did not anticipate any great demand for improvements. The only solution for the town was more new houses". How well Scunthorpe could keep this with a doubtful MHLG was problematical. (27)

(xi) Progress 1954-59

There were no particular objections to the new Government policies as such, only a feeling that they were rather irrelevant to Scunthorpe's needs. Slum

clearance could only be a small programme, improvement grants were available, but there was little scope for their use, and as for encouraging private ownership of houses, the council continued to believe in the use of SDAA as opposed to Guarantees to Building Societies. On SDAA, O'Dowd had said in 1952 that "I think the Committee have served a highly useful purpose in making it possible for an individual to own a house". But the town desired to build houses. This, however, was to be subject to the attitudes of the MHLG over the period. (28)

Slum clearance plans were decided by the Health Committee. Depending on the source used, 73, 76 or 56 houses were to be demolished in the 5 year programme though 655 (later 668) were envisaged in a 15 year period. But, in January 1956, the MHLG told the Health Committee who took responsibility for the programme that "in view of the Council's post-war achievements in new house building, the Minister was not, on present information, prepared to approve the Council's section 1 proposals", and insisted on all 668 being done. The Health Committee held a joint meeting with HC and agreed that 175 - 200 houses were all that should be cleared in 5 years. The MHLG was not convinced and in September 1956 again insisted on more action. The Health Committee ignored this and MHLG, either unwilling to press the point or at last enlightened as to the real situation, did no more. (29)

O'Dowd still wanted to get on with house building. In May 1955, when asked when Scunthorpe would have finished its building programme, he said "If Scunthorpe were a static town, one could estimate approximately when it would have housed all the inhabitants, but when it was growing at the rate of 1,000 a year, it was difficult to know what the demand would be". He retired from the Council in 1955, and Newlove, the Chairman of 1945-46 and regular Deputy Chairman took over with exactly the same view of the policy which ought to be pursued. (30)

1955 was a year of steady progress at first, lightened by the singular case in April of a pharmacist in a council shop and flat paying the rate subsidy of £5:10:0d. per year himself. But as the Government's economic measures evolved HC realised there was going to be difficulty. In November HC got an extra 50 houses in allocation but noted that the draft Housing Subsidies Bill would jeopardize their cherished building programme. While HC contacted the local steel works to enlist their support for Scunthorpe's application for the £24 p.a. industrial subsidy, the Finance Committee deployed the argument to MHLG that Scunthorpe's special position entitled it to avoid most of the cuts in capital expenditure. The Mayor, Albans, announced the hoped-for policy: "the housing programme will be continued at the same rate as it has in the past ten years." (31)

The steelworks were, however, not sympathetic to the Council. The Council wished to attract other new

industries, and the steelworks did not wish this at all. In 1954 the manager of the largest works said there should be no expansion of other industries in Scunthorpe "until the labour shortage in the steelworks had been overcome". This was repeated in March 1955 by another spokesman for local industry, that it would be the "wrong policy to press for new industries in Scunthorpe at a time when there was a shortage of manpower which could limit the expansion of the steel industry". The council was naturally hostile to such a paternal attitude. As Moore, the rising next-generation Labour leader, put it "The main burden of this authority today is to satisfy the needs of the steel industry. And what does the industry do in return - it pays only a quarter of the rates at the present time". (32)

The works were not prepared to make great efforts to support the application for industrial subsidy, though some wanted houses for key workers. In February 1956 HC recognised that the attempt had failed at that time. Meanwhile, with Scunthorpe being forced with other authorities to borrow in the open market, the SDAA scheme got into difficulties and HC switched to the use of Guarantees to Building Societies, which would be used less and required no capital expenditure. During the summer of 1956, a new effort to get the industrial subsidy was made. Scunthorpe argued that "we are a new town, but have not been treated as such", but was opposed by the MHLG arguing that Scunthorpe

as a wealthy steel town, did not need subsidy. But again nothing resulted. (33)

Building progress during 1956 had been 504 council houses built. But with the end of subsidy, high interest rates, and a dispute with the planning authority, Lindsey County Council, on the sites for future building schemes (the County having no appreciation of Scunthorpe's position), it was proposed in January 1957 that the 1957 building be only 208 houses. This cut in projects fell mainly on the local builders who, though they protested, were subdued by the accuracy of Newlove's observations that "we have tried to help the builders and keep them happy building houses". HC concentrated on slum clearance work and an expansion of the provision of old peoples accommodation the council had always been interested in. (34)

However, during early 1957, the County Council accepted that Scunthorpe's growth was inevitable and gave way on sites to be used for future building. HC in June 1957 planned to build 400 houses a year for 3 years. But in January 1958 MHLG allowed only 200 of the 1958 400. HC waited until July 1958 and then applied for the remaining 200 with the addition of 69 one-bedroomed flats. For 1959 Scunthorpe again got its 400 in the summer after some delays. Progress was very steady during 1958 and 1959 and the Council grew more ambitious. In November 1958 an attempt was made to attract Birmingham overspill; in February 1959, with slum clearance virtually completed, a start was

made on the redevelopment of the older areas of the town; and later in 1959 a renewed effort was made to get the industrial subsidy. This was officially refused in February 1960 and not until 1961, when the works were intended to be greatly expanded, was this subsidy obtained.

The 1960 programme was for 400 houses again, for, though the waiting list was comparatively small - about 2,000, - and even childless couples were only waiting 21 months before getting a house, the influx of people into the town required a steady rate of building. As Atkinson, the Housing Manager, put it in 1961 "As fast as applicants were rehoused from one end of the list, fresh applications were being added at the other." Scunthorpe's insistence on building was ideological, but also a simple reflection of the local situation. (35)

Scunthorpe managed very well after 1954 to continue its housebuilding policy. Of course it had a special case, even if not one that deserved the industrial subsidy. Slum clearance work and the small amount of encouragement necessary to the private sector were all done too. It was in all a very satisfactory continuation of local policy within an unfavourable national policy.

3. Conclusion

(xii) Scunthorpe's Housing Policy 1919-59

From the first Scunthorpe was interested in a house building policy. With Henderson's firm leadership a fair success was achieved with the 1919 scheme, and though there were doubts and delays, by 1939 it was part of accepted local views that the Council should build Council houses. The need was continually evident and, once the policy was established it seemed only sensible

to fulfil the local demand in some way. Whatever help the private sector wanted was given, and the little slum clearance work necessary in a new town was done without difficulty,

Open conflict with national policy was averted, though local frustration with Ministry misunderstandings of Scunthorpe's peculiarities was sometimes very intense, and, as with O'Dowd in 1944, there was anger about the misdirection of national policy. There were occasions when the Ministry forced Scunthorpe into a particular line of conduct, but the town did not fight nor did it deliberately decide to ignore national policy. There was tension, but not battles: it was a prolonged cold war. The impact of national policy was to ensure that the slum clearance and overcrowding abatement were done, matters for which there was no local initiative or eagerness, and it started the 1919 scheme, after which Scunthorpe was committed to a building policy, especially after 1926.

The politics of housing in Scunthorpe shows the importance of Henderson as Chairman in the establishment of the 1919 scheme and also as a private individual, though his communication of the works' expansion in 1926 being the immediate cause of renewed local building. Thereafter, the building policy was maintained through party agreement, though pressed mainly by the Labour group, with some variation in effort depending upon the whim of the Chairman. The whole cause of housing policy in Scunthorpe can be explained by reference to Chairmen, party group opinions, and the common feelings of the Committee or Council. Individual Councillors, Officials and outside bodies did not have any influence on events.

Even the local builders were unable to combine effectively to bring pressure on the Council. Housing policy in Scunthorpe could be accounted one of the major achievements of the authority since 1919 and the success could be fairly attributed in the end to the whole Committee and the Council.

1. See SFS 5, 19 Feb. 1960 for some details of Read's schemes.
2. Crosby Parish Council, 7th July 1917
3. Scunthorpe U.D.C. 21st November 1917: Brumby and Frodingham U.D.C. General Purposes Committee, 18th October 1917.
4. LS 18th January, 22nd February 1919.
5. The minutes of the joint HC are in Scunthorpe U.D.C. Committee minutes, but reports of proceedings are in other authority minutes too.
6. LS 31st May 1919. Accounts of the meeting are in all but the Ashby minutes.
7. LS 21st June, 23rd August 1919
8. SFS 16th April 1921
9. SFS 27th September 1924
10. SFS 27th February 1926
11. SFUDC HC 24th March 1926
12. SFS 2nd October 1926
13. SFUDC Other Committees 14th August 1928
14. SFS 2nd August 1930
15. SFS 7th May 1932
16. SFS 29th July 1933

17. SFS 27th January, 2nd June 1934
18. Source: W.E. Plowright
19. SFS 1st April 1944
20. SBC HC 19th March 1945
21. SFS 28th July 1945
22. SFS 2nd, 30th March 1946
23. SFS 21st September 1946
24. SFS 25th March 1950; SBC HC 13th February 1950
25. SFS 1st March 1952
26. SBC HC 9th June 1952
27. SFS 26th November 1954
28. SFS 2nd August 1952
29. SBC Health Committee 4th July 1955: MOH Report for 1955: Slum Clearance (England and Wales) 1955; Health Committee 6th February 1956
30. SFS 13th May 1955
31. SFS 16th November 1955
32. SFS 1st May 1954, 25th March, 2nd December, 1955.
"A quarter of the rates" means a quarter of their rate assessment.
33. SFS 25th May, 8th June, 1956
34. SFS 29th March 1957
35. SFS 30th June 1961

Appendix

(i) Population

(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1801	742	1861	1,413	1921	27,359
1811	734	1871	2,422	1931	33,761
1821	840	1881	5,758	1939	45,702
1831	977	1891	7,554	1951	54,255
1841	1,130	1901	11,167	1961	67,324
1851	1,245	1911	19,677		

Source: Census reports except 1939 National Registration
1801-1911 approximate population within area
made Urban District in 1919.

(ii) Houses Built 1919-60

<u>Year</u>	<u>Council</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Total</u>
(Jan- Dec.)		with Subsidy		
1919	0)	Not available	Not available
1920	74	(Local works	179	253
1921	285)total	172	457
1922	159) 346)	26	185
1923	0	(Apr-Mar)	59	59
1924	0	1924-5	106	147
1925	20	1925-6	148	277

(ii) continued...

<u>Year</u> (Jan- Dec.)	<u>Council</u>	<u>Private</u> <u>with</u> <u>Subsidy</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Total</u>
1926	10	1926-7 219	170	180
1927	68	1927-8 170	206	274
1928	0	1928-9 124	135	135
1929	80	1929-30 248	221	301
1930	26		257	283
1931	32		149	181
1932	68		202	270
1933	50		377	427
1934	12		605	617
1935	42		917	959
1936	82		607	689
1937	68		690	758
1938	50		723	773
1939	62		587	649
1940-45				Nil
1946	114 (1)		770	178
1947	123		15	142
1948	671 (2)		0	671
1949	373		206	399
1950	639		49	688
1951	527		81	608
1952	355 (3)		81	436
1953	520 (4)		146	666
1954	460		166	726
1955	417		212	629
1956	504		168	672

(ii) continued...

<u>Year</u> (Jan- Dec.)	<u>Council</u>	<u>Private</u> <u>with</u> <u>Subsidy</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Total</u>
1957	316		152	468
1958	328		152	480
1959	299		163	462
1960	318		249	567

Sources: 1920-39 Local Authority Files.
1946-60 Housing Returns

(The latter ^{vary} from locally kept figures, especially for 1950, 491 Council houses.)

- (1) Includes 100 Temporary Bungalows
- (2) Includes 150 Aluminium Bungalows
- (3) Includes 30 Housing Association houses
- (4) Includes 12 Housing Association houses

(iii) Aid to Private Owners 1925-60

<u>Year</u> (Apr-Mar)	<u>SDAA</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>Guarantees</u> <u>to B. Soes.</u>	<u>1958 Act</u> <u>Advances</u>	<u>Improvement</u> <u>Grants</u>
1925-26		56		
1926-27		32		
1927-28		4		
.....				

(iii) continued...

<u>(1)</u> <u>Year</u> <u>(Apr-Mar)</u>	<u>(2)</u> <u>SDAA</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>(3)</u> <u>Guarantees</u> <u>to B. Socs.</u>	<u>(4)</u> <u>1958 Act</u> <u>Advances</u>	<u>(5)</u> <u>Improvement</u> <u>Grants</u>
1934-35		36		
1935-36	113			
1936-37	195			
1937-38	187			
1938-39	113			
1939-40	36			
1940-41	1			
1941-45		Nil - not available		
1945-46	0			
1946-47	24			
1947-48	19			
1948-49	6			
1949-50	11			
1950-51	18			
1951-52	47			
1952-53	31			
1953-54	26			
1954-55	74			1
1955-56	94	10		5
1956-57		2		10
1957-58		8		19
1958-59		1		18
1959-60		2	81	28

Source: Scunthorpe Council Departments, except Column (3). Personal compilation from Minute Books.

CHAPTER VII

MINOR POLICY

1. The Quality of Housing

(1) National Policy

The 'quality' of housing is not easily defined, especially considering all the variability that builders are capable of, but the standards laid down by the Government for housing can be taken as a basis. Governments were interested first of all in the health aspects of housing standards, but later became interested in the provision of certain amenities and equipment, such as baths, heating and storage space. Government policies have been to fix minimum standards for health reasons which applied to all houses, both minimum and maximum (within cost limits) standards for local authority housing where subsidy has been involved, and also to have recommended, aspirational standards for housing. For it was early recognised that the higher the quality of current housebuilding the less likely was early obsolescence, with increased national wealth and changing social habits. At any given time, the minimum legal, or permitted, standards for local authority housing are higher than for the private sector, as a token of this appreciation.

Housing standards in this sense have risen greatly since the 1890's, when Governments first became involved. Miss Hole's article, "Housing Standards and Social Trends" shows this very

clearly and also indicates the kind of standards involved. One of the most important, and early measured, is a space standard, the amount of floor area or living room, which can act as an index of overall standards since changes in this affect so many other possibilities in the provision of amenities. Thus in the following discussion, standards of quality refer most readily to space standards as an indicator of the variability of other standards. (1)

For there is a major problem with having higher standards in housing - it costs so much more than staying at the same level. So it is that while it may be desired to have high standards such hopes can be wrecked upon the financial implications. Thus, in the 1919 scheme it was hoped to establish permanently new high standards of housing based upon the recommendations of the Tudor Walters Committee of 1918 but the cost of such improvements saw the M of H choose lower standards as a practical alternative. But having once declined from such heights as were found with the amenities of the earliest 1919 scheme houses, there was only a slow recovery before 1939. The regulations for 1923 Act houses were very low and the standards set for slum clearance houses in the 1930's were deplorable. While officially it was hoped that better housing would emerge, in practice lower standards were laid down and enforced by the Ministry's powers over individual projects.

During and immediately after the Second World War, there was a new hope for better housing with the standards

set by the Dudley Committee on the Design of Dwellings 1944 and the Housing Manuals of 1944 and 1949. Despite early difficulties these standards were adhered to and not until after 1950 was there a decline. The Reports of the Girdwood Committee 1948, 1950 and 1952, and the Government pressure for the adoption of the 'Peoples House' brought a new decline in standards, both recommended and enforced, that was not to be halted until after the Report of the Parker Morris Committee on 'Houses for Today and Tomorrow' in 1961. Again it was a matter of financial considerations leading to a balance being struck between progress and cost. Once such a balance has been struck Governments are not easily roused again to concern for the quality of housing, especially now that it is not a matter of public health at all.

(ii) Local Policies

This disinterest by the Government was not matched by the Lincolnshire authorities. They have a long history of greater concern for this than the supervising Ministry. Their experience 1919-22 simply set a pattern for the future. Then, all four sought higher standards than the M of H would accept. Grimsby and Scunthorpe allied with other local authorities to raise the height of ceilings, have wider roads and better fitments. Lincoln sought to provide both gas and electricity, when the M of H would sanction the provision of only one, and to build the then more-needed parlour houses in greater quantity. All the authorities suffered from the M of H allowing wood floors to be directly laid over concrete, so that they rotted and

had to be expensively replaced. This convinced authorities that the M of H was not interested in quality.

This was confirmed for them by the minimum regulations of the 1923 Act: all insisted on a larger size of house and stronger amenity conditions. In the 1930's they all opposed the small size of house insisted on by the M of H without effect. Added to this they all had their private battles with the M of H: Cleethorpes on the bye-laws 1926-28, Grimsby and Scunthorpe on the final settlement of 1919 scheme, house fittings, and Lincoln in 1933 ignored the District Auditor's insistence that tenants should do more of the repair work. Lincoln of course, having been so badly let down by its MBA in the 1919 scheme, had a very high concern for quality, and both in rent-fixing, where repairs and maintenance were a high proportion of the expenses to be met, and in the use of the direct labour building force to ensure quality showed this attitude.

All the authorities sought to keep up their own standards: they put in hot water systems, gas and electricity, kept up the appearance of estates by banning overhead cables, keeping gardens cultivated, and ensuring that maintenance on houses was done. Lincoln and Scunthorpe, having the largest estates, were able to develop more comprehensive attitudes about quality than Cleethorpes or Grimsby, whose estates remained small.

After the War, the same concern for quality was again evident in all the authorities. There was a unanimous dislike of temporary housing except as an expedient and to great love of non-traditional building methods except as methods of raising local housing

production. All objected at various times to imposed cuts in the quality of housing which the Ministry enforced through its powers on finance, subsidy and project sanction. The major outcry was 1950-53 when the Girdwood Committee recommendations were being implemented. Protests were long and sustained: minute books are filled with the complaint that the diminution in the quality of housing made a mockery of all that the new housing programme was supposed to stand for. The argument that cuts were necessary to increase production was nowhere believed in these authorities, for though officials used it at times, they did not feel obliged to believe it. Quite spontaneously, in formal interview and conversation with me, Councillors and officials expressed disgust at the whole business. It was not a party matter: it was seen more as a matter of morality, for the provision of good quality housing was more a sacred duty than an item of business.

In other matters too, the authorities worked hard to get the best for their large new estates. Efforts were made to get a better mix of housing types than the usual mass of 3 bedrooomed accomodation, and the Ministry was sometimes, as with Lincoln in 1946, not helpful in this. Sheds, garages and shops were all provided on new estates, community centres too where the old urban centre was very distant, and a careful watch was kept on the layout of estates. Lincoln did best in this, taking the 1951 Housing Medal for the East Midlands for its Hartsholme Estate.

In maintenance work, authorities continued their keen interest, though more and more relying upon the

professional concern of officials for 'their' estates to see that all was well. This identifies a second line of concern for the quality of local housing. If the Council and Committee should lag in interest, the officials will continue, but this was not the case in the Lincolnshire authorities whole interest remained high in this important matter.

2. Selection and Allocation of Tenants

(iii) National Policy

National policy was always interested in who was to get Council houses, but very wary about defining how precisely local authorities should conduct this business. It was suggested that preference be given to ex-servicemen and those with large families for the 1919 scheme, but the 1919 Act continued the phrase from the 1890 Act about the houses being for the 'working classes'. There was never any serious attempt to define this and tenant selection was to be guided more by the subsidy provisions of the particular Acts - 1923 and 1924, general needs: 1930, those in slums: and 1935, the overcrowded. After 1926 there was some effort to point authorities to the needs of the poorer paid workers and Section 85 of the 1936 Act said "The authority shall secure that in the selection of their tenants a reasonable preference is given to persons who are occupying insanitary or overcrowded houses, have large families, or are living under unsatisfactory conditions. (2)

But even this leaves too many gaps: what is

'reasonable preference'?, which, within the list, are the priorities to apply - other things being equal, the large family before the overcrowded, or vice versa?; and, of course, there is no mention of the one element, rent which can make or break such pious hopes. What was happening then was the issue of hopeful appeals from the Ministry without sanction and without serious advocacy of the proposals. Given the assumption that Council housing was undifferentiated in quality, there was no advice given about the allocation of tenants to particular houses before 1939.

During the War, in view of likely post-war demand for housing, policy was envisaged as ignoring even the requirement to be for the 'working classes' and the 1949 Act merely regularized what had become practice in the matter. For, as the memorandum on Temporary Accommodation in 1944 said, 'The outstanding factor will be that the family are without a house and such families may be of all types.' The Balfour Committee on Management of Housing Estates in 1945 confirmed this view and discussed as a selection criterion points systems whereby allocating sufficient points for various qualities or disabilities gained allocation of a house. The Committee was aware of the problem of 'weighting' such points, but insisted that local residence should not rank too highly. In any case there should be publicity on the principles used and impartiality in selection. (3)

The Gibson Committee on Selection of Tenants, Transfers and Exchanges 1949 gave similar advice and

noted the large number of categories the Ministry itself had commended for priority housing in allocation from ex-servicemen to midwives. It also produced a points scheme of its own. In the 1950's however there was under the Conservatives a new emphasis on 'needs' being the basis of selection. The Brooke Committee on Transfers, Exchanges and Rents linked 'need' to rent differentiation as policy and this remained the Conservative emphasis, though 'need' was not clearly defined.

Now in all this, it is important to notice what National policy has not been in tenant selection. It is not the case that 'One of the primary purposes of local authority housing has always been the provisions of low rent housing for lower income groups' as the National Board for Prices and Incomes currently believes. Leaving aside the 'low rent housing' part, the only period in which low income groups have been even mentioned as among possible candidates for selection was from 1926 to 1933. Council houses have been built for either the most general of needs, the absence of any suitable accommodation by the applicant or the most specific of cases, being in a slum or overcrowded. New directions of policy are better recognised as such and not given a mythical tradition.

(4)

(iv) Policy in Cleethorpes

Cleethorpes 1919-22 used two criteria for tenant selection: ex-servicemen or war-widowed; and local householder who had lost tenancy through war service of some kind. A needs scale 'A' to 'D' then

applied. However, all who wanted houses in A, B and part C got them through refusals of offers of houses by those in group A because of the high rents chargeable. This entirely excluded the needs of large families. From then onwards until 1946, Cleethorpes was, except for the addition of 6 houses in 1937, in the peculiar position of having a fixed housing stock. Applications for houses outnumbered relets and since the applications list was infrequently revised, after 1923 the Committee allocated after interviewing applicants. Policy was neatly expressed in the refusal to the British Legion in 1924 to give preference to ex-servicemen, 'consideration is given to cases that are considered the most necessitous, due regard being had to the ability of the applicants to pay the rent of such houses.' (5)

After 1945 Cleethorpes used a points scheme derived from scheme B of the 1945 Balfour Committee Report. It was modified in 1947 and 1951, the latter instance being after a woman Councillor proposed an entire alternative system. It weighted every relevant factor, including some local oddities, like living in a 'strained atmosphere', but concentrated in the main upon ex-service, number of children and length of time since application. Applicants near the top of the points list were interviewed by the full Committee which considered, as elsewhere, reports on medical and moral matters as well. There was little preference for Cleethorpes born people. As with all other systems, the date of application became by

1952 an 'index of need' in its own right. Waiting for a home constituted a special kind of psychological suffering.

As the building of houses for general letting ceased, there was an effort to switch to slum clearance and the provision of accommodation for the old. It was locally held that the 1951-54 effort had satisfied the local demand for housing for letting, but, while after 1956, there were only some 300 applicants at any time and a very high 'wastage' of these at every revision of the applications list, the extent to which this was the result of potential applicants being aware, or being informed of, the Council's policies was not considered a relevant fact. If the Council had desired to discover a demand it could undoubtedly have been found. As it was, relets on the old points system supplemented by interviews dealt with the most serious cases of 'need' of any kind.

In allocations policy, Cleethorpes showed extreme reluctance to accept that any category, including its own officials, should have any formal priority in obtaining a Council house. If a policy did exist in the collective wisdom of the Committee, it certainly was not very apparent. Equally, Cleethorpes never bothered to segregate the 'respectable' from the 'unrespectable' on its estates, though the Committee Clerk, who was responsible for almost all administrative work in housing, did avoid very awkward cases.

(v) Policy in Grimsby

Grimsby used a seven category system based on war-service and local residence as its criteria in 1919-22 for tenant selection. A sub-committee allocated the houses, wherein a third criterion was employed, ability to pay. Thus the local Police and Cleansing Department got men accommodated because they could guarantee rent payments, the rent levels being very high indeed.

During the 1920's an applications register was used as a basis though it was infrequently revised, and had soon to be supplemented by interview and reports including those from the police. Having a Constabulary of one's own helped in this matter of checking on potential immoralities. Houses were allocated to those 'desirable' and able to pay the high rents. Sometimes, quite wealthy applicants got houses if a quick letting would avoid a loss of rent income. (6)

While, during the 1930's there was national pressure to clear the slums, the Committee was very reluctant to give houses to such people. There was an evident distaste for the whole business, but when there were worthy families moved, removal expenses etc., were paid. There was a preference for those in ordinary need, if they could afford the rents.

After 1945 Grimsby used a sub-committee using interviews as its main test of eligibility. Between 1945-47 this was done from application lists of Grimsby ex-service, non-Grimsby ex-service and

Grimsby civilian, with preference in that order. From 1947 to 1960 a 'merit' system of 'allocating percentages' - a type of points system - was used. This started using the same criteria as 1945-47, ex-service and Grimsby residence, but grew more refined in the 1950's, ending up with a strong preference for Grimsby residence and length of time on the waiting list. The system had some political advantage in that, since the sub-committee allocated the 'percentages', Councillors eager to do the best for their friends could be fobbed off with an objective test, while the small sub-committee chose according to its own moral sensitivities.

The system became very much more formal in the 1950's: 'members' cases' had to be written after 1952; code numbers were used as far as the full Committee were concerned after 1955; and after 1957 interviews were cut down in number and length since selection was more dominated by slum clearance needs and the ability of applicants to pay; and in 1958 an upper limit of £800 p.a. income was placed on those who could receive subsidized rent.

Grimsby deliberately maintained provision for general needs in its housing, despite the Government's wish to see the emphasis on slum clearance and the fact that the high rents charged discouraged many, and it did seriously upset slum clearance programmes. The need was certainly present on a housing list frozen at the 1955-56 level, but the motive for this was more principle than rational calculation.

In allocations policy, Grimsby did make special

allocations to specified categories, including their own officials. Key workers for new or expanding industries were usually housed, though after 1953 the firms were forced to pay the rate subsidy on the houses allocated to their workers to show that they were willing to make some effort themselves.. There was a special allocation to fishermen 1948-49 at the time when Grimsby was arguing for special treatment as a town because of the fishing industry being as vital as the specially favoured agricultural areas. With the special houses put up with Council assistance by the Earl Haig Housing Association, the Committee obtained special rights in selection and allocation. Grimsby was also an authority where there was close liason between the Council and local Estate Agents for the placing of some families in private rented accommodation: a useful supplement to local policies.

The other part of the allocations policy, area segregation, was practised in Grimsby. It was not given great publicity, but it did get into the printed minutes. (7)

The justification for doing so was that, with the slum clearance of the 1950's, the old haunts of prostitutes and others who infest dock areas were being swept away, and the majority of the Committee did not believe that they could be reformed by exposure to the lives of 'good' neighbours.

(vi) Policy in Lincoln

Lincoln started selecting tenants in 1919 on a supposed 'needs' basis from ex-servicemen by a sub-

committee, but very quickly the actual basis became ability to pay the high rents. The 200 Ministry of Munitions houses were allocated to 'key' workers, virtually chosen by the firms themselves, by a special Committee set up by all the interested parties for the purpose. During the 1920's selection was done from the continually revised applications register, the revisions being necessary because of the high rate of local building. There was a tendency to allocate 1919 scheme houses to those who could pay and the others to those in 'need'. 'Need' was a term that became more specific as slum clearance attracted the City's attention. Though there were Labour allegations that St. Giles was a middle class suburb, this was not a result of selection policies but a reflection of the high rents that had to be charged.

The VSCC scheme in Lincoln allocated houses to the cleared families after investigation by both the Council and the VSCC representatives. Until the war the VSCC kept an eye on 'its' 76 houses and ensured that they went to needy applicants. While the VSCC scheme gave Lincoln some experience and a willingness to house people from poor circumstances this enthusiasm dropped notably in the 1930's for people of dubious moral character. There was no discrimination against slum dwellers and the welfare side of housing administration was very much stressed and indicated by the continuance of schemes for the supply of furniture and household equipment derived from VSCC experience.

But Lincoln also continued to house 'ordinary' applicants. After 1936 allocations were made of non-

subsidy houses, one-third each to ordinary applicants, those in rooms and medical or special cases of hardship. This was a deliberate policy decision reflecting local needs for housing and was seen as a parallel to the slum clearance work proceeding at the same time. By 1938 'datal' order of application became the main criterion of eligibility for selection for ordinary lettings - the earlier ones name went down on the list of applicants the sooner one was housed. 'Need' was again expressed in having been prepared to wait for a Council house.

After the war all applications for a house were treated as 'ordinary'. There was a definite refusal to use any points scheme and use was made instead of a list of nine factors, of which health circumstances and datal order of application were the most important as a guide. The selection was done by the Chairman and Deputy-Chairman of the Committee from Officials' reports. The Officials operated a slight censorship of applicants by refusing to give application terms to unsavoury cases. (8) In the early days there was a special effort made to house the ex-servicemen, but attention switched soon to the unhealthily or insanitarily housed. There was a minimum 6 months residence rule and employment inside the city, though residence outside sometimes counted. Lincoln had one peculiarity: the Finance Committee managed the selection and allocation of old people for a group of houses under the Wyatt Bequest and for the, eventually, 29 houses owned by the city for its Officials. This avoided Housing Committee embarrassment and put responsibility on the most senior Council Committee.

The change of national policy 1953-54 brought a necessary change in Lincoln. In July 1954 a special register of new applicants was created restricted to Lincoln residents of 10 years' standing and those in bad conditions. These were to get allocation of houses after the exhaustion of the existing list and the full Committee took over selection and allocation work. This special register was eventually absorbed in December 1956 into the general list. Lincoln continued with a small general needs building programme to satisfy the demands of this list (it stood at 1405 in 1959) but relied mainly on relettings to cope with these applicants. Those with health, overcrowding or problems of old age, obtained preference over all other applicants. The only one item of serious discrimination was the insistence on selecting only British citizens. This agreed policy emerged largely as a result of Chairman Lillcrap's dislike of Eire Irishmen getting benefits in the country without accepting the obligations of citizenship. There was no discrimination in area segregation in Lincoln since the moral attitudes of the Councillors would not countenance such things.

Lincoln did endeavour to help firms in the area by housing their key workers. The industrial subsidy was obtained for the needs of the Central Electricity Generating Board and in 1958 it was agreed that such houses as got this subsidy should be allocated for 10 years by the Board. There was also an endeavour to house within the city all who had their work there. Aid was also given to the housing of all who were in services the Council felt it important to encourage.

But over all there was a fairly balanced view of housing allocation and selection within clearly accepted rules.

(vii) Policy in Scunthorpe

In 1919 Scunthorpe used the criteria of ex-service, ex-householder in the area and overcrowding, with preference in that order. The search then and subsequently was for 'good' tenants, ones with some minimal moral standards, and the ability to pay the rent regularly. Allocation was done by the Agent and Chairman of Housing Committee and then ratified by the full Committee. In the 1930's selection was by rules of having children, being in rooms, and by 1938, length of wait on the infrequently revised application register was the deciding criterion in confused cases. In a growing town this was an accurate index of need - the bulk of applicants were not born in the district so partisan loyalties were irrelevant. As for housing those from slums, Scunthorpe avoided the problem found in other towns of weighing the relative merits of a case of one years' residence in a scheduled slum against a case of many years living in shabby rooms, by the fact that 1930-37 this work was the responsibility of the Health Committee which simply dealt with the problem before it without consideration of the wider housing issues.

From 1945-50 Scunthorpe used a vague points scheme, details of which are now lost. What the scheme essentially did was eliminate the outstanding pre-war list by giving preference to residence and length of

wait. After 1950 the system was one which can only be described as the 'cohort' method - it depended upon the date of application and the number of children only: for example, at the end of 1950, houses were being allocated to 1946, no children, 1947, one child, and 1948, two or more children. (9) The data order method was perfectly suited to a growing town and did reflect the hardships of 'waiting', while the existence of children was seen as highly correlated with other 'needs'. Health grounds modified this rigid pattern. Though officially the whole Committee dealt with the matter, in detail it was done by the Agent or Housing Manager and inspected by the Chairman. Apart from occasional Councillors' cases, that settled the matter - though this did not prevent lengthy discussions on each particular case.

This pattern remained unmodified through the 1950's. Though there was more emphasis on the special cases of the slum cleared and the old, the 'cohort' method was still basic. The demand for houses for letting was very strong, and with the continued influx of new workers the principles of selection needed no modification. Special care, however, was paid in Scunthorpe to making special allocations of houses for the needs of the towns' services, Council staff, professional people, and, after 1949, teachers were offered houses in order to attract them to the town. This could have problems, as getting rid of an unpopular Deputy Town Clerk by not providing housing in 1948 showed, but it did succeed in general. (10) The town also allocated to key workers of expanding firms and got special rights in connection with the assisted

houses of the East Midland Housing Association. Local opinion would not tolerate area segregation and though care was exercised in placing known difficult cases it was never policy to place them in one area or even in one street.

(viii) Commentary

Selection and allocation policy in the four towns varied widely and was related to nothing other than local preference and the need to have some kind of system. It bore very little resemblance to what the Ministry thought national policy should be and even, in one important respect, ignored a principle - that there should be wide publicity on the method of selection employed. In all the towns considerable care was exercised to avoid revealing how selection was managed. There was a very good reason for this: there was no agreed calculus on how it should be done, and wide publicity would have only transferred disputes from inside committees to a wider external debate which, it was recognised, was incapable of resolution since the choices were, in the end, moral ones. However, dissatisfaction with the system was rare and criticisms were mainly directed inside the town at the treatment of individual cases of hardship.

This reflected one simple fact - the absence of a system of corruption. Mishaps did occur, as with Darby and his daughter in Grimsby, and as Quibell in Scunthorpe once said, "they had all tried in good faith to get houses for people they knew". (11) But Councillors did not press poor cases and especially in

Lincoln and Scunthorpe endeavoured to leave more to the officials. There was no systematic corruption that could be attacked, only individual cases of hardship which could be pleaded about in a situation where it was widely believed the Council was doing its best. Even the local peculiarities of Grimsby and Cleethorpes, where to call on a Councillor about one's case was almost a necessity and index of 'need' - "if they don't try, they can't care much" - as one Councillor told me - produced no corruption and the system worked well. The local system was tolerated by local people and Councillors could not be expected to look elsewhere for approval.

This was ensured by the fact that though the Ministry was interested in this item of policy, it had no method whatever of checking on or correcting what a local authority did, unless it was linked to building or slum clearance proposals. Insofar as national policy called for certain considerations in very broad terms, as in section 85 of the 1936 Act, local policies did give 'reasonable preference' to those in difficulties. Insofar as the local authorities could identify 'need' they tried to fulfil it in their policies, but no doubt if national policy had been more explicit in its requirements they would have fallen foul of some part.

3. Rents

(ix) National Policy

The rent rule for the 1919 Act was settled by the determination of the M of H to save the Treasury

from giving too much subsidy until economic rents could be charged in 1927. Rents were fixed as high as possible through the M of H vetting all of them, though there was an appeals procedure in case of dispute to which angry authorities could resort. There was no nonsense about the rents being below the 10/-d. per week that was regarded as the most a skilled man in regular employment could afford, but quite severe cuts were in the end necessary in most authorities' housing to avoid even larger deficits in the housing accounts occurring through the houses being left empty.

There was no rent rule specified for local authority housing under the 1923 Act but under the 1924 Act there was an attempt to return to the rigidity of 1919. The rule was to apply an "appropriate normal rent" calculation based on the prevailing rents for similar houses in August 1914, with additions to cover the expenses of the authority over the rate subsidy maximum. It was hoped by this method to produce cheap rents, but, while the M of H could inspect such rents, after the Labour Government's fall there was no effort to see that the rules were in fact carried out in detail.

The subsidy level with the 1930 Act combined with the lower building costs prevailing then led to the assumption that rents would be within the means of most of the poor. To ensure that the poorest from slum areas could be rehoused, Greenwood, the Labour Minister of Health, recommended that rents be differentiated according to tenants' ability to pay. There was much greater support for this from Conservatives in the

1930's not as an act of social policy, but as an economy measure. There was no serious consideration of the moral practical or administrative problems that this idea poses, nor was account taken of the fact that few tenants could afford to pay more as such a scheme demanded. (12) However, this was not vigorously pressed and Councils were in general only expected to charge rents sufficient to balance their accounts under the various Acts. After 1935 they could amalgamate all their houses into one general Housing Fund and equalize the rents charged for the same type of house built under different Acts.

After the war, national interest in rents was not related in any way to tenants ability to pay. While, before the war, calculations were made as to what the possible rents could be, this ceased afterwards. It was calculated that the 1946 Act subsidy was sufficient to enable urban areas to have weekly rents of 10/-d. and rural areas 7/6d., but with inflation and the operation of rent pools by authorities, this effort was not repeated. Subsidies became indications of a Government's interest in housing, quite unrelated to the rents chargeable. During the 1956 MHLG made a special effort to commend rent differentiation again on the ground that subsidy should only go to those who could not pay. Yet, with the end of compulsory rate subsidies and the lack of any calculation of the effects of the slum clearance subsidy on rent patterns, it was reasonable to suppose that this simply reflected Conservative dislike of Council housing rather than rational estimations. The twice gross rateable value basis for rent fixing was indirectly commended by making the attainment of it a basis

for the discretionary subsidy, and as part of a 'realistic rent' campaign waged by the Government, in the private sector and in Scotland especially. This lack of real involvement in the details of rent policy can be attributed to one factor: real knowledge of the situation may have meant an increase in subsidy from the Exchequer. It was safer not to press too closely a delicate, but confused, situation.

What can be said of national policy is that it did but rarely aim at low rent housing provision. There were hopes for low rents, but policy aimed more at letting national and local subsidies be at a "reasonable" level in terms of economic resources, and having the rents as high as necessary within this. Rent differentiation was commended as a method to mitigate the effects of this by the charging of more from some tenants to subsidise others with lower rents. Thus a Council house tenant could be contributing to lower rents by paying his national taxes, the rates and his rent. This neatly demonstrates the point that low rents were more a matter for local effort than national interest.

(x) Local Policies

The four Lincolnshire authorities fought to keep down rents as much as they could. It was most evident in 1919-22 when all fought Housing Commissioner Wood to get cuts in the rents the M of H considered suitable. They all continued pressure on the M of H until 1935 to have additional cuts in the 1919 scheme houses. Lincoln and Scunthorpe were the most persistent with this and

won some success, particularly exploiting the difference between these rents and the "appropriate normal rents" of the 1924 Act. In 1930, Lincoln forced an Inquiry into the last refusal of the M of H to allow a cut, under the appeals procedure and obtained a 6d. cut. 1923 Act houses in Grimsby and 1924 Act houses elsewhere were attached to the rents authorities must charge to balance their accounts. The "appropriate normal rents" were fixed in rather crude ways to suit local interests and were never queried by the M of H. But building under either Act did not lead to cheap rents. Lincoln had to have the VSCC to get rents down to within the means of the poorest slum dwellers, and Grimsby in 1935 had to obtain permission for an all-round cut to enable houses to be let at all.

The divergent rents possible for similar houses erected under different Acts was most noticeable and disturbing in Lincoln with its greater number of Council houses. In December 1931, Lincoln suggested to the M of H that it be allowed to pool all its accounts to equalize the dissimilarities. The M of H refused in line with its current policy, and Lincoln continued to campaign for this reform, suggesting that the AMC campaign too in 1933. However, when after 1935, rent pooling was possible Lincoln found that it was administratively complex to do and only slowly were anomalies eliminated. The other authorities also after 1935 pooled their accounts under the Acts.

Rent differentiation was practised only in Lincoln and Scunthorpe by means of rent rebates. Lincoln used one for the VSCC and 1930 Act houses using income

and number of children from 1931 as the deciding criteria, and from 1939 "household" income, number of children and house type. Scunthorpe used income and number of children only on the 70 Health Committee houses, and produced a range of rents from 1/6d. to 5/-d. but when the Housing Committee took over this practice ceased.

Cleethorpes and Grimsby fought to keep down rents in another way, by attempting in 1923-33 and 1934-38 respectively to keep down rateable value assessments. Grimsby's campaign was so long because it involved an inter-committee dispute in which political discrimination was evident.

After the war, rents in all the authorities were steadily rising as higher costs prevailed in the new houses and the rent pooling system operated to the disadvantage of the tenants of older houses. However, Lincoln and Scunthorpe, with the largest stock of pre-war housing, could keep average rents down much more than Grimsby and Cleethorpes which had far less. Thus the sins of omission in earlier political decisions were visited upon the towns in a later period. Gradually the scope for such cross-subsidization grew less, and Cleethorpes avoided later increases by simply not building more new houses for general needs. The gross rateable value basis for rent assessment was adopted in all of the towns on the advice of the Treasurers, who liked its simplicity, and they did not stress the link with the discretionary subsidy to Councillors. Adopting this basis, however, reduced still further the scope for cross-subsidization. Lincoln in 1953-58 used a net

rateable value basis as a result of the campaign of an individual Councillor to have one plain basis, but gross value was adopted in 1958. Grimsby adopted it in 1957, Cleethorpes in 1958, but Scunthorpe did not join until 1966-68. The rate subsidy to the housing accounts was abolished only by Cleethorpes in line with national political views. Elsewhere it was maintained at a level the Finance Committee felt it could afford - and this was related to the previous subsidy level. In no town was there a discussion of the arguments involved.

Councils tended to assume that their objective was to keep rents down as low as possible, but not to worry overmuch about the detail. They dreaded the news from the Treasurer that another rent increase was needed, but felt themselves bound to do what was financially necessary. What they did not consider to be a solution to their problem was rent differentiation.

Lincoln abandoned its rebate system in 1946 because family allowances and national assistance had eroded the criteria for the scheme. A rebate scheme was introduced for hardship cases in the switch to gross rateable value in Lincoln, and Grimsby in 1953 offered rebates to need cases. All the authorities were sympathetic to difficult cases of hardship which occurred and were willing to write off rent debts as a partial solution to some families' difficulties. During the 1950's all the authorities considered differential rent schemes. Some Labour Councillors were very interested, but the fact that Conservatives made it a matter of party ideology killed whatever chances it had in Grimsby, Lincoln and Scunthorpe. There were serious administrative problems

involved in running such a scheme and keeping up-to-date with details of tenants' incomes, and these convinced Cleethorpes against adopting differential rents. There were also strong emotions involved: from the Labour side Rayment's "I had the means test in 1932 and don't want any more of it" represented one factor; from the Conservative side, the viewpoint that people lost "to some degree a certain toughness of character through relying on subsidized municipal houses" found in a Scunthorpe paper's editorial, went to the heart of the matter. But there were also, for discerning Labour Councillors, the arguments that housing should not be differentiated from all other goods by being varied in price and ability to pay, and housing should not bear the burden of income redistribution - that should be done more openly. (13)

Authorities also devised over the whole period another method of helping their tenants: collecting rates with the rent. This gave council tenants a great advantage since they paid in installments and in advance so avoiding for the Council the problems of asking for lump sum payments and having arrears to collect. Grimsby and Lincoln did this from the earliest days of their housing estates, Scunthorpe followed in 1924 and only Cleethorpes held aloof believing the moral virtues of tenants paying like all others. In Grimsby the practice was stopped for some houses by the Rating Committee after 1930 in order to improve collections, but it was restored during the war. Cleethorpes started collecting unofficially in the 1950's and it was made official in 1959, by which time however, the real advantage to private tenants was no longer so apparent.

4. Conclusion.

(xi) Minor Policy and its lessons

The three items of national policy considered here, though accurately called minor, do reveal different styles of national approach. In the quality of housing there was a method whereby national control could be exercised; in tenant selection there was no method, so reliance had to be placed on exhortation to control local policies; and in rents there were pious national hopes, but a persistent refusal to define policy closely or be concerned with detail, since that could have involved the granting of perhaps more subsidy than the national exchequer could have afforded. The local authorities in these circumstances endeavoured unsuccessfully to have high quality housing but more successfully ignored parts of national policy on rents and selection. This simply reflected the existence or willingness to use controls. It was unfortunate that controls happened most readily on quality - a detail of policy - and it did not ensure that authorities exceed national minimum standards, but merely left them near such national minima.

The local policies of these items of minor policy is very slight. They are matters decided essentially by the attitudes of Councils and Committees, with individuals with good ideas able to make a decisive contribution to the creation of such attitudes. Officials and Chairmen could take pride in aspects of these policies, but neither they nor outside organisations, had much hand in creating them. On selection and rents

there was general and local satisfaction on what was done and complaints were found in quality, not directed at the local authority, but at the Government for not allowing more to be achieved.

In terms of comparisons between the towns on these items there is little to be learnt. Variations in policy do not relate to any objective physical differences between the towns and policy is in these matters most influenced by the age, size and composition of the existing stock of Council housing. This obviously affects the financial aspect of housing and influences rent policies and the possession of large estates may have an effect in inducing more concern for quality and tenancy matters. But differences are much more attributable to peoples' attitudes than to other kinds of influence.

1. W.V. Hole: 'Housing standards and Social Trends' Urban Studies Vol. 2 No+2 November 1965
2. M of H 'About Housing' 1939 p. 14
3. M of H and Ministry of Works Memorandum 'Temporary Accommodation' 1944 p. 32
4. National Board for Prices and Incomes 'Increases in Rent of local Authority Housing' 1968 p. 2 P.5
5. CUDC. HTPC 14th February 1924
6. GN 24th December 1924; GTC Housing Files (misc.) Overton to Rushforth 21st February 1930
7. GTC HC 9th March 1955, 4th September 1957; see also Housing Files 10/106 Flinders to Housing Committee 18th February 1957.

8. LC 10th June 1950
9. SFS 30th December 1950
10. SBC Finance Committee 16th March 1948
11. SFS 31st May 1930
12. See M of H Report 1932-33 p. 102
13. LC 15th November 1957: SFS 7th November 1958

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

(i) Central and Local Government

In the Introduction the problem was raised of how central-local relations were conducted on policy matters so as to minimise conflict. Conflict is possible because there are two separate traditions and no single accepted model of how the relationship is to be conducted with a rule for settling policy conflicts. Yet, in public practice, there is little visible conflict.

Through the chapters of studies on the four towns, it is clear that there are conflicts between central and local policies. Some are simple matters of confusion and uncertainty, others matters of making a political point and no more, but there are also conflicts about the total nature of the housing policy - the existence of either a slum clearance programme, or of housebuilding for letting - to be pursued, either locally or nationally.

However, national policy is not enforced by exercising major controls, like default, on deviant authorities. Public conflict is averted by the use of an indirect approach, threats, and the use of powers to sanction local schemes. There is also a general inclination by both sides to be well-mannered about their differences and not to publicise their problem. Control is by sanction of detail and private pressure is preferred to public confrontation. The conflict is conducted at a low level in a maze of disputed detail.

Such methods, however, have their disadvantages. They curtail rather than stimulate local activity, so that it is easier to prevent a local authority building than it is to encourage it to do more building. It is very difficult indeed to prevent a local authority doing only the absolute minimum, unless pressure can be brought through the power to sanction projects which the local authority does wish to undertake. This means that the deliberately deceitful and evasive local authority can escape with its deviations, while the progressive, innovative authority promoting projects is easily controlled.

Moreover, because it is a control on detail in order to control policy, conflicts on detail are engendered even if there is agreement on overall policy - as in the disputes on building 1919-21 and 1945-54. The deliberate blurring of a division between policy and administration is essential in this method of controlling policy. As such, it is inconceivable that control of detail could ever be diminished by central government, since this is its real control, even though it has the consequence of frustrating and downgrading local authorities.

The final point about this method is that it is not effective in altering local attitudes, even over a long period. It has ensured the maintenance of slum clearance policies in towns without enthusiasm for the work, and cut down building by ambitious authorities but, while national policy may stimulate, controls certainly have not. Cleethorpes has yet to be convinced of the value of building for letting and Grimsby

of the virtues of a sanctary policy, and this after 40 years of national policies.

Local authorities would endeavour to avoid conflict anyway, but the method of control assists by encouraging defiance by evasion not public stand. This avoids both initial pressure to act and gives little opportunity for further intervention. Thus local authorities can join with central Departments in minimizing conflict at the expense of other values, including efficiency.

Relations with the central government from the local level are as confused as the existence of two traditions of local government would suggest. Members of local authorities switch from seeing the authority as an agent of central government to being an independent body according to the extent of their dislike of the policies laid upon them and the prospects for disputing the policies with the Government. Departments have similar reasons for inconsistency and the method of control itself avoids conflicts which could lead to clarifications. Most of the time there is simply guarded hostility between Central Department and local authority, which is, in a way, a kind of partnership. The relationship does however exist in the context of public opinion. It can respond to those rare occasions when strong national pressure is being exerted for local authorities to act - as in 1919 - when Departments are more willing to threaten the use of major powers, and authorities know they must make a minimal effort, and the relationship approaches that of principal and agent.

This blurred and confused position is of course

tolerated by the participants for the reasons indicated in the Introduction - the defence of the present role of the institutions, the usefulness of the opposite case for each institution, and the masking of conflict situations. But it may be fairly asked whether it should continue to be found acceptable.

(ii) Proposals

The system described above manages to work quite well despite all its imperfections. It is not liable to break down at any moment. It gives something to everyone concerned, avoids problems too difficult to settle easily, and gives a remarkable amount of flexibility in attitudes and practice. But it is not the best that could be devised, and I rather tentatively offer some thoughts on a possible new view of the matter.

One simple solution for the problem may be dismissed at the beginning. It is no use hoping to bring central and local government 'closer together' by giving even more authority to an intervening figure, the Regional Office (except where local political passions demand some form of regional recognition). It is too early to judge on the reconstituted Regional Offices of 1965, though Councillors and Officials interviewed in 1966-67 were not very impressed. But the experience of the Housing Commissioners 1919-22 and Regional Officers 1944-58 indicate that this method has few advantages. The Regional Office becomes an institution in the middle torn by conflicting possibilities. If the Office has a great deal of power, local authorities will appeal to their M.P., or to the Minister directly; if it has too

little, it will be ignored anyway. There is a conflict between the possibility of the Office fighting Departments on behalf of worthy local authorities, or of simply being the Department's mouthpiece. There are even personal problems - in 1921 and 1955 it is clear that officers were embarrassed at having to explain a change in Government policy to authorities they had persuaded into activities related to the earlier policy. All a Regional Office does is add to the complexity of the relationship without clarifying its essential nature. Even as a means of obtaining information, they are redundant, authorities can speak directly for themselves; if Government policy is liked by authorities there is nothing to report, and if it is disliked, there are other methods of protest which will gain the Government's attention.

There are really two problems to be discussed, the proper model for the relationship to follow, and a suitable method of control. They must be dealt with together since it can be taken as a starting point that central government, or 'Parliament', is going to define national policy and somehow superintend the execution of policies by local authorities. However, the discussion can be split between drawing on the experience of housing policy and proposals going a little further.

In the Introduction, it was suggested that the reasons for central control being necessary were (i) the control of the whole national economy, and (ii) the guaranteeing of certain minimum standards in local authorities provision of services. National provision for service should then fix its economic position and also inspect what happens 'on the ground'. But in housing

though national objectives are set which place the service in a total economic context, there has never been any real inspection of results. This is the consequence of two factors. Housing has not been a mandatory local function, so that central government has not been required by Parliament to inspect closely, and also housing authorities are very numerous, so the problem of physical inspection was early on deemed very difficult - as it had been with Health, despite it being a mandatory function. Minimum standards for certain aspects of housing have been established, but housing has never had an Inspectorate overseeing the final results. The Housing Commissioners and Regional Officers did the usual administrative governing and controlling, but they were not in any way Inspectors. Housing has thus been very different from other major services which have had some kind of Inspectorate, the notable examples being Education and Police.

Simple possession of an Inspectorate on the lines of those existing however would not alter central-local relations very significantly. For, just as important as the existence of the Inspectorate, are criteria for judging the performance of local authorities which are publicly known and appreciated. Having an Inspectorate is a great incentive to the defining in detail what standards local authorities should reach, and an incentive to define more precisely the nature of national policy. This would be important for housing, but the critical element is publicity. The 'old' Inspectorates operate in great privacy with standards of judgement either implicit in professional ethics or

otherwise carefully undefined. Indeed their main function is not now to inspect, but to provide a kind of private advisory service. This is admirable in its way, but not entirely what is needed.

The Housing Inspectorate envisaged would not just be checking on standards and acting as confidential adviser, it would be also endeavouring to overcome two of the weaknesses of the present system - the inability to stimulate rather than curtail, and the need to alter local attitudes. The 'old' Inspectorates cannot do this, but publicity and known standards are possible methods the Housing Inspectorate could exploit. National policy can be presented in realistic terms for local pressures and the embarrassment of the local Council to lead to new actions and attitudes. Equally of course, it may expose the inadequacies of national policy, and this is a major point against it. It is also a major point in its favour, though it does mean that the Inspectorate must be independent of the controlling Department.

It is worth adding that this publicity aspect could best be conducted through the method of public inquiry which 'inspectors' of a slightly different kind already conduct in some parts of local administration. The local inquiry format would allow local pressure groups to bring criticisms, with evidence, on local performance. The opportunity of doing this in the towns studied would certainly have led to a greater awareness of the local housing situation by local organizations.

The other advantage of such a system would be

that the third failing of the present system, control of details, could be abandoned too. Once an authority had in the modern fashion, submitted a programme of work to be done and it was approved in the national economic context, it would be free until the public inquiry - which would be periodic both from practical and staffing viewpoints - to do as it chose without being engaged in a running battle to avoid direct controls.

The first difficulty with this proposal would be that the local authority so obviously becomes an agent of central policies and this would be a diminution from the present, admittedly confused, position. Yet the present situation tends strongly towards this position anyway and has the additional disadvantage that it does not give local authorities the redress of due enquiry and exoneration when they are accused of misbehaviour. This proposal would be giving up confusion for a distinct gain in defining lines of responsibility.

The other major difficulty would be that this system tends to assume that there would be a consistent long-term policy on housing, which would be the basis for action by local authorities, and for report by the Inspector. This goes quite against the whole tradition of policy which is short-term, fluctuating and subject to every vagary of economic climate and political sentiment. It would also mean some acceptable final settlement of the respective parts to be played by the public and private sectors in housing. This state of affairs is very desirable, but it is very hopeful to

suggest it will happen easily. It is possible that the introduction of an Inspectorate would itself help to initiate such changes, and it is also worth noting that, if a Government wishes to change national policy the Inspectorate is the best device it could have for ensuring that the new standards are put into practice. This is a problem, but not an impassable obstacle.

The case for this Inspectorate pattern in services other than housing may not be so strong, and there are obvious dangers in generalizing beyond experience and evidence. Yet a general case can be made for such a system in all major local services.

The controls a central government needs to ensure that its policies are carried out are:-

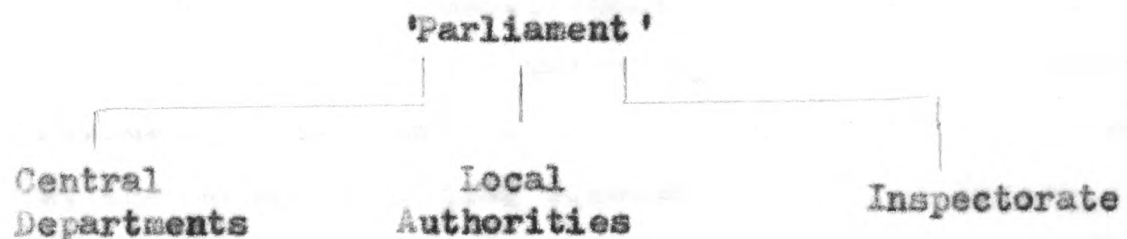
- (1) A judicial control as a final sanction against a reluctant authority;
- (2) A control over local expenditure to check on total national expenditure and expenditures on particular services;
- (3) An inspectoral control to audit the use of government money, and to attend to the maintenance of national minimum standards.

The first already exists: the second is gradually emerging in a planned economy: and the third should exist. These three controls together provide all that is needed to fulfil national responsibilities and interests. The advantages and disadvantages of an Inspectorate have been noted in connection with housing. All that remains is to point out that, assuming not every service would be annually inspected and that only salient features, as defined by central authority, were

under review, it would not be impossible to run such a system even within the present system of local government. The manpower required would certainly not be greater than that required at present.

There are obviously many points unsettled in the proposals outlined, but the object of the proposals is not so much to be positive as to hint at possible alternatives to the present methods, which have both clarity and fulfil the needs of participants as much as the more general 'public interest'.

The model of the relationship between central and local government envisaged in these proposals is very much of this fashion:-



'Parliament' is seen as the supreme political decision-taking body under which the other institutions are to be found. Government Departments are involved in the making of national policy and the formulation of targets for local authorities. They would have no day-to-day dealings with local authorities beyond the transmission and receipt of information and advice. The Inspectorate would be a separate body doing its job without reference to the Departments, except for being informed what national policy was for the period under inspection, and its time would be spent on inspection, report and commentary on local activities. The local authorities are recognised as independent entities

subject to the scrutiny of the Inspectorate, but otherwise free within national policies. Essentially, what is proposed is the liberation of the central Department - local authority relationship by taking away the critical element of control and giving it to a special body, hoping thereby both to make control more useful and effective, and to preserve the absence of conflict without the unfortunate consequences now found. The relationship is reformed by being abolished.

(iii) Who Decided Local Housing Policy?

This question was raised in the Introduction and in the answers discerned in the case studies there are four continuous elements, Chairmen, Committees, Councils and Parties. Of limited importance are outside pressures, individual Councillors and Officials. That is, the formal political elements in the system of local government make the important decisions in housing. They were not rubber stamps for other elements outside, or inside, the system.

This result is subject to all the limitations and reserves expressed in the Introduction, yet the point can be emphasized by detailed consideration of the elements above considered and reflection upon how different it might be with services other than housing - to see whether a generalisation is possible about all local decision-making on policy.

(1) Outside Pressures National pressure groups do not appear on the local scene at all. They concentrate on influencing central government and only by altering an intangible 'climate of opinion' affect local

authorities. There is not much of the local pressure groups either. They came in two forms, those connected with the provision of the service itself - the builders and building workers' unions - and those which exist to press for a policy or a voice in local policy determination. The former are very important when the denial of their services would have important consequences, so the bigger the housebuilding programme the more important the more important they are. Their intention, however, is not so much to influence policy as to ensure that their services are used on their own terms. A Council determined to avoid such pressure can do so and survive if it can find alternative purveyors of the services. Policy pressure groups were found mainly in Lincoln, apart from small organisations pressing for the provision of Community Centres, plots for churches, etc. The two in Lincoln were successful through careful exploitation of their situation; the rest with limited objectives hurried along projects Councils had already planned. Pressures to persuade Councils to coopt members were successful only in Grimsby 1919-39 when a lady Liberal and a lady Conservative were coopted. Councillors naturally resisted the non-elected, though they would, as in Lincoln, employ them in an Advisory body, if not in formal Committee. Thus, the suppliers of services were in the strongest position - and this is likely to occur whatever the service - but they were not very important for determining policy.

A special kind of outside pressure, from other local authorities, should be noted. Though the research design hoped to exclude this, the example of Cleethorpes and Grimsby indicates that contiguity and

some community of interest, do not lead very readily to policy interactions. The main influence of other local authorities was to provide resolutions with which local opinion could be tested, and their examples quoted for or against certain courses of action. In the 1950's, with land and planning matters, County authorities became important as possible limitations on policy choices for County Districts - but this did not then significantly alter local autonomy. This kind of result is to be expected in services where local policies do not overlap - indifference is not such a likely result when an overlap occurs, especially between County and County Districts.

(2) Councillors The individual Councillor was not a notably influential figure. In none of the case studies was an individual Councillor found with great influence derived from his position as Councillor alone. Individuals can be important in other offices, as Committee Chairmen, or within the party group, but not simply as Councillors. No doubt Councils can be found where individuals are influential because of their social position or prestige, though they occupy no formal office, but this is likely to be quite rare. This is the result of the role and self-image of Councillors. Few seem to see themselves as promoters of particular policies. They see themselves more as brokers between electors and officials, as representatives for 'the good of the town' or for some ideology, class or group, or as watchdogs of public money. None of these roles envisages a personal policy on the part of the Councillor. Moreover, Councillors with policies have to negotiate both the formal system of Council and Committee in convincing fellow Councillors, and the

informal interests of Chairmen and Officials. The chances of success are small for anything other than a good idea or project within minor policy and administration, where support can be obtained and the policy not subject to the wearing effect of others' interests. This is not the result of an individual's 'power', but of the quality and presentation of the idea itself. A Councillor can initiate, but he does not have the last word. He is subsidiary to other local elements.

(3) Officials Neither major Council Officials, such as the Clerk, Treasurer, Engineer, Medical Officer or Housing Manager, nor minor subordinates, have very much influence in the determination of local housing policy. Their influence is usually limited to the spheres where their professional advice has weighed heavily and the position of Oldfield in Grimsby 1952-53 is completely atypical.

Part of this is peculiar to housing. As the Introduction explained, there is no single Officer for the whole service, and hence no professional ideology. The broad generalisation made by some writers of the importance of the Official in making policy does not apply to the major service of housing. This does not exclude the possibility of the official being very important in some Councils of types not included in this study, especially County Councils, or in other services, especially Education, from which most of the published examples are taken.

It is however important to note that many studies of the making of local policy fail to define 'policy'. Yet, unless some effort is made to define

what Councillors themselves would also consider to be 'policy' and therefore what they must be interested in, to notice that a large number of matters are settled by Officials is not evidence for them being regarded as masters of the system. Moreover, it is not enough to look at formal procedures of policy-making, wherein an Official may well put forward major proposals. All this indicates is that he is a spokesman, not that the proposal itself has not been affected by Councillors and others beforehand. Officials formulate their policies in the light of Councillors' known attitudes. Nor is it wise to rely too readily on interview or responses from Officials for data - a precaution not always sufficiently noted.

The general case for Official control is not quite as strong as may at first sight appear. A great deal rests on the Education service for examples, and it is possible that this also relates to the differences between boroughs and County Councils, since Education is the major County service. It is possible that Education is peculiar in being a very settled local service between 1944 and 1965, with ideology, scope, organisation and nature of 'need' all being agreed except for a few fringe militants. Officials in this context would take all decisions since they were routine ones in which Councillor interest was limited. I suggest this possibility rather tentatively on the basis of observation of the education service of Grimsby, Lincoln and Lindsey County Council (responsible for provision in Cleethorpes and Scunthorpe). The technical state of a service is a very

possible variable in local politics, even if its influence can only be roughly hinted at here.

(4) The Council This element plays a critical part in policy when almost unanimous, since it then fixes the climate of opinion within which detailed policies can be developed, or which excludes such developments entirely. The Council moreover is the focus for disputes when unanimity is not found, and if these are the only Council debates open to the public, the only showplace for the varying views. On matters of small political weight, the feelings of the Council, or the balance for or against influences the choice of proposals. All that can be expected of Councils, irrespective of service, are supportive or negative attitudes. It cannot be expected to do more unless willing to spend more time over meetings, and take very detailed decisions. These attitudes, however, may be on many issues the major policy decision.

(5) Parties While it is the case that parties or functions have always been present in local government, it is not always the case that they have had coherent policy views. The old Conservative and Liberal parties were coalitions of interests, defending or seeking advantages in the very limited field of local affairs. The Labour party did introduce programmatic party politics into housing as into much else, with a list of changes and innovations it wished to see carried through. This forced opponents to follow suit. Thus local housing policies are greatly influenced by the party political composition of the Council, for not merely is there a local party policy, but local party

members are conscious of national party policy too. This does not override local policy formulation, but it can be appealed to within the party group when considering policy. But, even if the choice of the controlling political party determine the choices of the local authority, it is not necessarily the case that choices are made out of party political interest. The party can be the perceiver of a local situation, that must be dealt with and it can act for 'the town's interest' irrespective of the national party situation. Moreover, there are limits to party control, one of which is local political style, and the other of which is the unwillingness to overthrow the views of a Committee, if Committee members of all parties are almost unanimous, or if the Chairman is a leading party figure.

Incidentally, the case studies do not support the contention of J.G. Bulpitt in 'Party Politics in English Local Government' that "in all the towns studied, party discipline and organisation on the Council were more important for the way they determined the style of local politics rather than for their effect on individual Councillors or the decision-making process". Bulpitt admits that, for housing, "the majority of the important policy decisions affected by party came within this sphere." But his own case studies do not lead to such a sharp downgrading of the influence of parties, and he appears to equate 'policy-making' with the 'decision-making process', so the absence of formal party group policy-making means that party does not affect decisions - an

elementary mistake. Even in terms of the local style of politics, the long historical record, which Bulpitt does not consider, may show consistencies unconnected with party organisation. (1)

(6) Chairmen The Chairman of a Committee is a very important figure being both the expositor of policy and the link man between the Council, the Committee, the Officials, the Party Group and the general public. Yet in the studies, the instances of strong Chairmen, Johnson and Larmour in Grimsby, Newsum, Parker and Robson in Lincoln and Henderson in Scunthorpe - all occur in the days of establishing housing as a local service. Chairmen have anyway become less important this century as they have become less the holders of independent fiefs and more the servants of their parties (2), but it may also be linked with the fact that strong Chairmen are less likely when a local service is well established, as most local services have become since 1900. It would be a two-way process: strong personalities seek a platform for their power, and housing is the means; and housing ~~housing~~ has the potential for such development. Housing would not be exceptional in this. In the past, the public utilities were exploited in this way, and now observation indicates that where Children's or Welfare Committees are well established, at some stage a strong Chairman has been available. Development or general Planning Committees are another favourite platform allowing creative scope for Chairmen to discover the limits of their undefined service. The powers of a Chairman are considerable because of his linking role, and local

political style may emphasise his powers, but some note should be taken of the state of the service being administered and the scope it gives a Chairman to exploit his position.

This is a parallel with the situation hinted at in relation to the power of Officials. The technical state of a service is a very possible variable in local politics, though a much more detailed study is necessary to reveal all its dimensions. It is a constraint that may affect more than the elements noted, Chairmen and Officials, in the roles that can be played in local political activity.

(?) The Committee The Committee is the heart of the English system of local government. It combines all the possibilities of an ad hoc body, appointed just for the service or services it superintends, with the possibilities of seeing its functions in the whole context of Council affairs. A Committee can also generate a life of its own such that the existence of other local services and party loyalties are forgotten. However, in doing so, Committees are like Councils, incapable of going beyond certain broad general attitudes, though again such attitudes can be very potent. The notion of a Committee being 'willing' or 'unwilling' to act is an accurate description, not an admission of an inability to analyse further. The existence of a Committee for a service gives its members some common loyalty and this can have an influence on policy simply through Committee members arguing the case for the service in Council, party group and in public. This is true of all Committees

irrespective of the service being administered. The limitation of Committee strength is the ability to disagree on what should be the policy to be externally presented. If this does not occur, a Committee is very close to getting what it wants.

Thus it is re-emphasised that it is the formal political elements in the system of local government which make the important decisions in housing. They would also appear to be central to all local decision-making on policy. But between Chairmen, Committees, Councils and Parties (in alphabetical order) it is difficult to see which has overall priority. All are important, and in any particular case, all take a vital part in making the policy decision. Which is the most important will vary with the case and, to some extent, local habit.

(iv) Comparing Towns

One of the curiosities of the English system of local government is the enormous amount of variation despite the basic elements of uniformity. The study of any two Councils at once contains elements of a study in comparative government. Though studying four towns with respect to one service, housing, there was no attempt to use a comparative framework, and it is suspected that if one had been employed all that could have been said would have been variations on the theme that in one town X was done, where in another Y. But two comparative questions do contain some interest:-

- (1) What is the nature and influence of a 'local political style'?
- (2) Why are there differences in policy between the towns?

Political style is a very awkward subject. Though a description was given of each of the four Lincolnshire towns, ranging from the Chairman-oriented and disorganised Grimsby to the smooth, consensus and morality dominated Lincoln, and such differences certainly do exist, there are very few privileged observers available to confirm such descriptions. Not that they would necessarily agree with a description, for 'style' is not a one-dimensional variable: all adjectives of affection could be employed with some reason. The very origins of styles are shrouded in deepest mystery, yet as with all club styles, it is taught to newcomers and short of rapid changes in personnel is likely to be stable over great lengths of time.

But local styles exist, though their influence must not be exaggerated. It is a way of doing things, not the thing itself. 'Style' must be distinguished from an accepted local view or policy, for while the latter may change with circumstances, the former, being a pattern of behaviour, is much less flexible and persists. Thus, though styles do differ in the Lincolnshire towns, it is impossible to attribute to these alone anything more than the most general influence on events: it is more froth than substance.

Explanations of the differences between towns have been touched on above with the discounting of 'political style'. Explanations generally fall under four heads: (1) accident; (2) cultural or traditional; (3) the facts; and (4) political factors.

Accident, or the influence of the length of Cleopatra's nose, has its uses at times. For example,

it helps to explain Cleethorpes' slow response to the 1924 Act, because of the storm. But it cannot be said to have appeared as a notable factor in the differences between towns.

Culture, or tradition, has in part been already dismissed insofar as it is a political style, and all that needs to be added is that while it can explain why some policies persist, it is not an explanation of their origins. Thus, it is of relevance to explain the difference between Cleethorpes' disinterest and Lincoln's interest in building houses in the 1950's, but it does not explain such attitudes' origins.

Explanation of differences is largely a matter of facts and politics. But, though it is easy to suppose that all differences arise out of the different local objective facts of needs and resources, these needs, like the number of homeless, or available resources, like land, explain more the differences in the pace of activity - or even, when nothing needs to be done, of inactivity. The 'facts' do not explain everything. nor is it likely that they should, since 'facts' of this kind need to be perceived, and decisions taken on what is to be done as a result of such facts, and this means that facts are mediated through political activity.

It is thus the differences in politics between the towns, in Councils and Committees, Chairmen and Parties that explain the differences in the policies adopted. It explains at any given instant of time why a town has the policies it has and the stock of houses it already possesses. It is political elements

that make for differences between towns.

When this is added to the stress laid on the political and institutional elements in determining policy in the towns, the point to be made in conclusion is simply to emphasise that local Councils do have a choice in determining their situations and that local politics is an important determinant of what happens to a town.

(v) Last Words

This study has considered the working of the relationship between central and local government and the political operations of local authorities in relation to housing in four towns. Suggestions have been made for the revision of the central-local relation, and the importance of the political in determining policies has been stressed.

But there is one other matter to be emphasised. The problems and politics of local government are both important and interesting in their own right. Many points have been raised in this study which have received almost no attention before, for local affairs are a vast and almost unsurveyed field for the study of politics and administration. It is hoped that this study may be a contribution towards clearing some of field for the other studies which are so badly needed.

1. J.G. Bulpitt: Party Politics in English Local Government p. 98, 99, 102
2. See on this G.W. Jones: The Political Structure of the Wolverhampton Borough Council since 1900. Oxford D.Phil thesis 1965 unpublished.

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(f) Interviews

Formal interviews were held with:-

Mr. A. Adlington

Mr. W. Albans

Sir Harold Banwell

Mrs. C. Banks (formerly Mrs. C. Ginns)

Mr. G. Deer and Mrs. O.G. Deer

Mr. F.R. Eccleshare

Sir Francis Hill

Mr. M. Larmour and Mrs. M Larmour

Dr. C.A. Lillicrap

Mr. E.F. Marklew

Mr. C. Newlove

Mr. J.V. Oldfield

Mr. E. Pittwood

Mr. W.E. Plowright

Mr. W.H. Pulling

Mr. J.W. Rayment

