

**RECRUITMENT OF LIBERALS
INTO THE CONSERVATIVE
PARTY,
c. 1906-1935**

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Dedicated to Richard Martin Cott

12. 3. 1945 – 1. 2. 1989

Never forgotten

The approval for the award of this doctoral degree was
finally received on the anniversary of his seventieth
birthday.

Abstract

Consideration of recruitment of Liberal politicians into the Conservative party, in the first third of the twentieth century, is an important but under-explored aspect of the political realignment which saw the demise of the Liberal party and the rise of a new duopoly between the Conservative and Labour parties. A specific and detailed investigation of the phenomenon is necessary.

This study provides an opportunity to appreciate the nature of how individual Liberal politicians reacted to changing political circumstances with the weakening of the Liberal party. It examines a range of relevant factors – both of a long-term and immediate nature – and undertakes comparative analysis of the careers of the relevant politicians, including not only prominent politicians but also less well-known ones to assist in ensuring that the topic avoids being merely a study of high politics.

All findings point to a diverse range of issues which influenced political thinking about party allegiances, but broadly these relate to the growth of a shared political agenda, between Liberals and Conservatives. Some Liberals wanted positively to coalesce with Conservatives, forming relationships, both in Parliament and in the constituencies, which eventually brought them inside the Conservative party or close to it, whilst others, by contrast, almost fell into working with the Conservatives due to political pressures over time. All seemed to suffer some level of disaffection from the Liberal party, which was therefore a key ingredient in hastening their change of party.

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Introduction

The recruitment of Liberal Members of Parliament (MPs) into the Conservative party is an important element in the understanding of Liberal party disintegration and general political realignment in the first third of the twentieth century; however, it is one area of concern which has been under-explored. In certain regards, it is understandable why this should be so, since studies of societal change, the rise of mass democracy and the decline of the Liberal party – both as a party in Parliament and in the constituencies – might seem to have provided adequate coverage of all the major issues. However, lacking in these studies has been a sense of the strain Liberal politicians themselves placed on the Liberal party and the wider party system, both individually and collectively, through changes to their party associations. Changes in party from Liberal to other parties (both Labour and Conservative) were a major occurrence in the period, so the importance of Liberal recruits in the political changes cannot be under-estimated.

At a microscopic level, one of the important aspects of examining the recruits is to be able to glean what affected them personally, with opportunities not only to examine the influence of, or reaction to, the major political issues of the day, but also to factor in more personal issues in how they furthered the prospects of Liberal decline and how unique personality characteristics impacted their decisions about party loyalties. This helps to appreciate the party system itself in a more personal way, with such unique factors being a corrective to any abstract view of the party system as simply representative of currents of opinion; indeed, it can be seen that politicians have very personal associations with party, not just those associated with particular political beliefs, but also loyalties to individuals or groups of people, or self-interest in seeking political office, as examples.

The case of Liberal recruits to the Conservative party, in particular, presents an opportunity to consider unique aspects of the party system. In the early twentieth century, the system of political parties was fluid, with currents of opinion moving across and between all three; the lines between party were blurred, and it becomes difficult to appreciate changes of

political association fully in the context therefore of formal changes in political loyalties, making recruitment a fascinating topic for historical consideration. It is interesting, for example, to see that many Liberal recruits did not see attempts to build cross-party connections with Conservatives in the period before their recruitment as a discontinuity with their Liberal associations; indeed, many thought that these were perfectly consistent. Working with the Conservatives was often deemed to be patriotic and a necessary reaction to the development of mass democracy and the challenges posed electorally to the party system. This situation was not unique. Since the late Victorian era politicians had tried to adapt the existing parliamentary system to a new electorate brought into being by extended franchise arrangements, seeking to build consensus between political parties to appeal to the electorate and prevent the rise of extremes; a number of Liberal recruits can be seen as a new generation of politicians imbued with these Victorian perspectives, albeit set in an early twentieth century context.

The neglect of Liberal recruitment is demonstrated in their only being a handful of studies available. The most detailed and compelling is Alun Wyburn-Powell's recently published work.¹ Wyburn-Powell's investigations take a longer-range assessment – considering a century of developments (1910-2010) – and his research examines recruitment to both the Conservative and Labour parties.² The publication is a phenomenal achievement, taking understanding of general issues in Liberal recruitment much further than was hitherto possible, placing it, at last, more centrally in the debates about realignment and Liberal party decline. However, there is still room for more specific and detailed examination of recruitment to the

¹ Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Defections and the Liberal Party, 1910-2010* (Manchester & New York, 2012). The published research relates to material presented for Powell's University of Leicester Ph.D. thesis. Also see Alun Wyburn-Powell, 'Defectors and the Liberal Party since December 1910', Unpublished University of Leicester Ph.D. thesis (2010).

² Wyburn-Powell's is not the only study which covers recruitment into the Labour party. An older study exists – Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour - The British Labour Party, 1914-1931*, (New York, 1963). There is also a recent short journal article – John Shepherd, 'The Flight from the Liberal Party – Liberals Who Joined Labour, 1914-1931', *Journal of Liberal History* 67 (2010), 24-34.

Conservative party from the early part of the twentieth century up to 1935. Wyburn-Powell's broad study does not enable him to provide sufficiently detailed coverage of the Liberal recruits in the period, or of the context of the party system in which they played a role.

More specific coverage of the period is justified not only for reason of understanding of a neglected historical topic but also for a secondary consideration, lying in current interest in Liberal and Conservatives relations as a result of the creation of the Coalition government in 2010. A study such as this might well assist in understanding the historical context in which these relations can be viewed.

Overall, this introductory chapter will focus on two elements. The first section will seek to consolidate existing appreciation of the topic of Liberal to Conservative recruitment through examination of a range of research with both direct associations with the issue, as well as wider research which creates a context for it, to ensure the focus is sufficiently holistic. The latter suggestion includes the need for assessment of relevant material referring to socio-political and cultural phenomena, political beliefs, and Liberal party politics. It is intended that this section will highlight critical findings and offer a view about gaps in assessment and the scope for further research. The second part of the chapter will set out the parameters for enquiry in this study, building on points made in this introductory section about the importance of Liberal recruitment and its place in appreciation of the party system and Liberal party decline. It will consider the methodology and sources to be examined and provide some details of the format of the discussion, particularly in terms of the balance of the discussion in its focus both on drawing together collective experience and also to discuss specific individual experience.

I

In beginning the examination of relevant existing research, a useful starting point lies in consideration of sources referring to the broad rise of class as a

determinant of party allegiance on an electoral level, and to comment upon the breakdown of traditional voting alignment along religious lines, as a result of the rise of collective working-class consciousness and the solidification of support of that section of society behind the Labour party. Linked to this is relevant work focusing on the growth of collective middle-class consciousness, which helped to solidify support behind a modernised Conservative party.³ All such research points to the devastating impact class had on the Liberal party, tracing how it negatively affected socio-political structures associated with Liberal party support and electoral performance, and provides some vital context for the changes in allegiance of politicians relevant to this study.

Some historians, including Keith Laybourn, Jack Reynolds and Ross McKibbin, have pointed to the consolidation of working-class interests in the workplace and local communities, which fostered a separate identity, pushing the working-class towards the Labour party and away from support for the Liberals in their representation of nonconformist interests.⁴ This process began in the later nineteenth century and was largely complete before the First World War, although it has been suggested that Labour's

³ Chris Cook, *The Age of Alignment – Electoral Politics in Britain* (London & Basingstoke, 1975); George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (New York, 1935); Barry Doyle, 'Urban Liberalism and the 'Lost Generation': politics and middle class culture in Norwich, 1900-1935', *Historical Journal*, 38, 2 (1995), 617-634; David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party* (Basingstoke & New York, 2004); Keith Laybourn & Jack Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour, 1890-1918* (New York, 1984); Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-1924* (Oxford, 1974); Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class - Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford, 1990); Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain*, (London & Basingstoke, 1979); David Powell, *British Politics, 1910-35 - The Crisis of the Party System* (Abingdon, 2004); David Powell, 'The Decline of the Liberal Party', *History Review* (2009), 45-50; Michael Savage, *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics - the Labour Movement in Preston* (Cambridge, 1990); Geoffrey Trodd, 'Political change and the working class in Blackburn and Burnley, 1880-1914', Unpublished University of Lancaster Ph.D. thesis (1978).

⁴ Laybourn, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*; McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*; Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society*; Powell, 'The Decline', 45.

electoral strength was held back by the narrow nature of the electoral franchise until 1918.⁵ This version of events is, however, challenged by other historians who point to the narrowness of seeing the Liberal party merely as the party of nonconformity. Peter Clarke, Duncan Tanner, Neil Blewett, Roy Douglas, David Powell and David Dutton have pointed to the Liberal party's adaptation to class politics, even providing examples of Labour party weakness and decline in the period, and thus casting doubt on the idea that the franchise restriction held back Labour's strength.⁶ These, and some other commentators, point to more gradual erosion of Liberal party support and a less uniform process of Labour party growth, with Liberal party working-class strength sometimes manifesting itself well into the inter-war period.⁷ Moreover, older political traditions have been shown to have survived the arrival of class politics, casting doubt on some of the electoral strength of class as a factor in electoral alignment and the extent of its contribution to Liberal party decline.⁸

⁵ Laybourn, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*; Henry Matthew, Ross McKibbin & J. A. Kay, 'The franchise factor in the rise of the Labour party', *English Historical Review* 91 (1976), 723-752; McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*; Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society*. These positions may well have drawn from Dangerfield's earlier study in the suggestion that the Liberal party's political strength was undermined before 1914; see Dangerfield, *Strange Death*.

⁶ Peter Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1971); Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1990); Duncan Tanner, 'Election statistics and the rise of the Labour party, 1906-1931', *Historical Journal* 34 (1991), 893-908; Neil Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties and the People: The General Elections of 1910* (London, 1972), pp. 408-9; Roy Douglas, 'Labour in decline, 1910-1914' cit. Kenneth Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London, 1974), p. 125; Powell, *British Politics*, pp. 3-4; Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party*, p. 42.

⁷ See David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain: Forces Shaping Electoral Choice* (New York, 1969), p. 250; Michael Childs, 'Labour Grows Up': The Electoral System, Political Generations and British Politics, 1890-1929', *Twentieth Century British History* 62 (1995), 123-145; D. H. Close, 'The Realignment of the British Electorate in 1931', *History* 67 (1982), 404; Cook, *The Age of Alignment*, pp. 340-343.

⁸ For general coverage see Cook, *The Age of Alignment*, pp. 340-343. For pre-war examples refer to Geoffrey Bernstein, 'Liberalism and the Progressive Alliance in the Constituencies,

Consideration of Liberal decline in relation to the Conservative party has taken a similar route, albeit largely focused on the period after the First World War. Research by McKibbin, Barry Doyle and David Jarvis, in particular, reveals the existence of a kind of ‘middle-class ideology’, in which the Conservative party forged an electoral cohort based on emphasis of protection of property rights, deflation and anti-collectivism.⁹ Such

1900-1914: Three Case Studies’, *Historical Journal*, 26 3 (1983), 617-640; David Clark, *Colne Valley - From Radicalism to Socialism* (London, 1981), p. 3, pp. 17-20, 154; Nicholas Cott, ‘Liberal and Labour politics in three Lancastrian towns: Burnley, Stockport and Warrington, c. 1905-1912’, Unpublished University of Liverpool M.A. (1997), pp. 8-10, 57-69; David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906* (Manchester 1993), pp. 226-227; Laybourn, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour* pp. 1-10, 46, 81-88, 120-124, 148-168; Pat Thane, ‘Labour and local politics: radicalism, democracy and social reform 1880-1914’, cit. Eugenio Biagini & Alastair Reid (ed.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 188; Joan Smith, ‘Labour tradition in Glasgow and Liverpool’, *History Workshop Journal* 17 (1984), 39; Trodd ‘Political change’, pp. 340-341, p. 363; Savage, *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics*, pp. 138-143, 151; Kenneth Wald, *Crosses on the Ballet: Patterns of British Voter Alignment since 1885* (Guildford, 1983), pp. 211-213; P. J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: a Political and Social History of Liverpool, 1868-1939* (Liverpool, 1981), pp. 199, 243. Other studies, such as Laybourn, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour* pp. 1-10, 46, 81-88, 120-124, 148-168, and Tanner, *Political Change*, have been connected with the class argument, but these too acknowledge that there were some legacies of tradition. For the existence of traditional politics into the later post-war period see Chris Cook, ‘A Stranger Death of Liberal England’ in A. J. P. Taylor, *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (New York, 1971), pp. 287-316; Close ‘The realignment’, 393-404; A. Michael Dawson, ‘Politics in Devon and Cornwall, 1900-1931’, Unpublished University of London LSE Ph.D. thesis (1991), p. 2; A. Michael Dawson, ‘Liberalism in Devon and Cornwall: ‘The old-time religion’’, *Historical Journal* 38 2 (1995), 425-437; Garry Tregidga, *The Liberal Party in South West Britain Since 1918 – Political Decline, Dormancy and Rebirth* (Exeter, 2000).

⁹ McKibbin, *Ideologies*; David Jarvis, ‘The shaping of Conservative electoral hegemony, 1918-1939’, in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (ed.), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain Since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 131-152; Barry M. Doyle, ‘A conflict of interest? The local and national dimensions of middle class Liberalism, 1900-1935’, *Parliamentary History* (1998), 131-140; Doyle, ‘Urban Liberalism’, 617-634. Also see Andrew Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Oxford, 1991) for confirmation

studies stress how this middle-class consciousness was partly a reaction against working-class identity consolidation and also concerns about Labour socialism. The Liberal party, it has been claimed, lost middle-class supporters because of this development, and therefore it provides a reason to help understand the eclipse of the party's electoral fortunes in more predominantly middle-class areas with some history of Liberal party voting strength.¹⁰ However, as with the rise of the Labour party, this change has sometimes been seen as gradual and lacking in uniformity, and, importantly, a significant minority of middle-class former Liberal voters do not appear to have been particularly prone to identification with the Conservative party, even by the 1930s.¹¹ Middle-class opinion has been shown to be rather varied in its party inclinations, with a significant proportion of it actually remaining with the Liberal party where the Liberals continued to be an important electoral force. As in the case of more predominantly working-class areas this has been linked to the survival of older traditions of voter alignment, but perhaps not entirely, since the Liberal party appears to have been able to adapt itself to emphasis on specific middle-class concerns and delay, or even prevent decline, in relation to the Conservative party in some cases by so doing.

The relationship of these debates to recruitment of Liberal politicians into the Conservative party is not clearly established in these studies but it is important to understand what links there might have been to such socio-political and cultural developments since it seems nonsensical to suppose that recruits were isolated from them. With this mind the research of both W. L. Guttsman and Martin Wiener provide some potential possibilities.

With regard to the idea of the consolidation of middle-class support behind the Conservative party, this has been shown to be paralleled in

of the rise of Conservative fortunes after 1929 being related to its purchase of the Liberal vote due to the emphasis on economy, which appealed to middle class tax-payers.

¹⁰ Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924* (London, 1971), pp. 415-429; Cook, *The Age of Alignment*, (London, 1975); Powell, *British Politics*, p. 7.

¹¹ Cook, 'A Stranger Death of Liberal England', pp. 287-316; Close 'The realignment of the British electorate', 393-404; Dawson 'Liberalism in Devon and Cornwall', 425-437; Tregidga, *The Liberal Party*.

Parliament with Guttsman's detailed study of the social make-up of the House of Commons.¹² He reveals that, after 1916, middle-class MPs tended to lean to the right with his examination revealing increasing representation of the middle-class professions and entrepreneurs amongst the Conservative party ranks. His research is a reminder of the retention of Liberal middle-class interests in the Liberal party, with the shrinking party becoming more middle-class in its composition, not unlike its electoral base.¹³ The research might be used to confirm that there were effectively two bourgeois interest parties, and with both representing similar interests it is a means to account for why Liberals ended up in the Conservative party as the Conservative entitlement to represent these interests grew with Liberal party decline. However, whilst there may be some value in such perspectives, there are objections; indeed, it is not really clear that Guttsman's research relates to the electoral issues of class much at all, since the research undertaken tends to link consolidation of the middle-class interest in the Conservative party with self-interested aspirations of higher social status rather than some ideology of middle-class values. It may be true that the decline of the Liberal party encouraged middle-class politicians to choose a party more likely to achieve better personal social standing, but this is a different argument.

Further doubt is cast on middle-class ideological identification with the Conservative party when considering the research of Wiener.¹⁴ Wiener's study of political culture shows that the Conservative party, even after 1918, was rather antagonistic to middle-class business interests, particularly due to representation of concerns in society about the excesses of capitalism, prejudices against industrialism, and ideals of a pre-industrial and landed aristocratic variety. Nonetheless, there is a class argument to consider, although one rather different to that which has been explored so far. Wiener

¹² W. L. Guttsman, *The British Political Elite*, (London, 1968), p. 94.

¹³ Guttsman, *The British Political Elite*, p. 97. Also see Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 14-16 whose own social profiling of Liberal MPs confirms this point.

¹⁴ Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 96-100, 127-154.

shows that businessmen – including Liberal ones – were keen to improve their social standing by assimilation into the social sphere of the older landed establishment by purchasing country estates, and becoming rentiers, so at least, in part, abandoning their trades, and perhaps also their political affiliations in support of a Conservative party more properly representative of their new interests. However, the situation was more complex since many retained business interests, becoming more as ‘gentlemen-industrialists’, as termed by Wiener, holding directorships but playing little role in company affairs outside the boardroom. A number of the Liberal recruits can be associated with this ‘gentlemanly’ approach to capitalism, and it may be that there was something about Conservative politics which made it attractive to such interests, not least the more managerial and technocratic approach to government that the party adopted, modelled, to a large degree, on boardroom management. This suggests that whilst ‘gentrification’ of some middle-class Liberals might have brought them closer to the Conservatives, it was not necessarily the traditional landed aspect that was central to it.

Another series of issues relevant to the topic concerns the long-standing debate to do with the polarisation of ideological perspectives between left and right in politics. In the first instance, at least, this relates to issues discussed in narratives of Liberal politics, such as those of Trevor Wilson and Michael Freedon, and, to some extent, of also Paul Adelman, David Dutton and David Powell.¹⁵ Such studies consider the enormous tensions within the Liberal party from wartime and into the post-war period as division lines developed between interventionist and socialistic left-wing perspectives, on the one hand, and individualist and anti-socialist right-wing perspectives, on the other. They point, firstly, to Liberal party decline, due to the difficulties these divisions had in enabling the party to present a coherent electoral brand, and secondly, to disaffection and disillusion

¹⁵ Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935* (London, 1966); Michael Freedon, *Liberalism Divided – A Study of British Political Thought, 1914-1939* (Oxford, 1986); Paul Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party, 1910-1931* (London & New York, 1995); Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party*, Powell, *British Politics*.

amongst the Liberal MPs, who eventually sought to join the Conservative and Labour parties when their party proved incapable of satisfying either ideological perspective.¹⁶

This narrative is somewhat reflected in studies commenting on specific Liberals who wished to formulate closer relations with the Conservatives aimed at resisting socialism. Such Liberals were eventually recruited into the Conservative party when the Liberal party seemed to be aligning itself closer to the left from 1924 onwards due to support for the 1924 Labour government, and pursuit of state-interventionist policies in the years following.¹⁷ However, there is only limited evidence; it can only really be gleaned from research concerning a handful of Liberal recruits. A reading of wider research, although still rather limited in detail, suggests that the pursuit of anti-socialist political ideas could be opportunistic, and even disingenuous. Anti-socialism emerges from the research appearing more like a form of political posturing to assist in offering a separate political position from Labour, where distinction was required, largely for electoral purposes, and particularly aimed at retaining the support of the middle-classes at election time. These ideas gain credence when one considers research showing how Liberal recruits' positions oscillated over time with anti-socialism only being one of a number of ways of appealing to the electorate, moving between various political positions, including total distinction from left and right politics, as well as leaning either to the left or

¹⁶ At this point also refer to Michael Bentley, 'The Liberal Response to Socialism, 1918-29' cit. Kenneth Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Response to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London, 1974), pp. 42-73; Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party*, p. 98; Vernon Bogdanor, 'Historical Perspectives on the Liberal Democrats. The Liberal Democrat Dilemma in Historical Perspective', *The Political Quarterly* 78 1 (2007), 11-20.

¹⁷ Martin Gilbert, *Churchill – A Life* (London, 2000), p. 456; Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill* (London, 1974), pp. 255-7, 287; Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill – Rivals for Greatness* (London, 2008), p. 245; Geoffrey M. Bayliss 'The Outsider: Aspects of the Political Career of Alfred Mond, First Lord Melchett (1868-1930)', Unpublished University of Wales Ph.D. thesis (1969), pp. 128, 577-580, 586; John Campbell, *Lloyd George - The Goat in the Wilderness* (London, 1977), pp. 99-101; Bentley, 'The Liberal Response to Socialism', p. 63.

right at different times.¹⁸ An appearance of distinction from left and right was a political position that continued into the 1930s, being evident even amongst recruits to the Liberal National party, with recent research showing that they were not particularly eager to position themselves close to the Conservative party, as has been claimed in past; indeed, they were conscious of the need to protect an independent Liberal position and were then rather an obstacle to any such development.¹⁹

Overall, commitment to the new politics of the right was rather lacking amongst recruits; however, this is not to say that recruitment could not be linked to it in any way at all. It is appreciated that many Liberals who pursued anti-socialism were locked into constituency arrangements with Conservatives through electoral compacts, so it seems reasonable to suppose that this might have assisted in drawing some of them at least away from Liberal politics, especially where studies have pointed to enthusiasm in

¹⁸ Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front, 1900-1955* (London, 1992), p. 228; John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory – A Political Biography* (London, 1993), p. 385; Roy Jenkins, *Churchill* (London, 2001), p. 377; J. Graham Jones, ‘Sir Alfred Mond, Carmarthenshire and the Green Book’, *Welsh History Review* Vol. 19 3 (1999), 492; Michael Bentley, ‘Liberal Politics and the Grey Conspiracy of 1921’, *Historical Journal* 20 2 (1977), 461-478; David Dutton, *Simon – a Political Biography* (London, 1992), pp. 63, 85-90; Jonathan Wallace, ‘The political career of Walter Runciman. 1st Viscount Runciman of Doxford (1870-1949)’, Unpublished University of Newcastle Ph.D. thesis (1995), p. 304, 310-314, 326-329; Wilson, *The Downfall*, pp. 321, 331, 346.

¹⁹ Nicholas Cott, ‘Tory cuckoos in the Liberal nest? The case of the Liberal Nationals: a re-evaluation’, *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 25 (1999-2000), 24-31; Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895-1970* (London, 1971), p. 253; David Dutton, ‘William Mabane and Huddersfield Politics, 1931-47: ‘By Any Other Names a Liberal’’, *Northern History* XLIII 1 (2006), 131-133; David Dutton, ‘Liberal Nationalism and the decline of the British Liberal Party: Three Case Studies’ *Canadian Journal of History* (2007), 440-461; Dutton, *Liberals in Schism* (London, 2008); Graham Goodlad, ‘Communications – The Liberal Nationals, 1931-1940: The Problems of a Party in ‘Partnership Government’’, *Historical Journal* 38 1 (1995), 139; Robert Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929-1931* (London, 1967), p. 385; Wilson, *The Downfall*, pp. 380-381; Wyburn-Powell, *Clement Davies*, p. 53, Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 2, 149.

doing so.²⁰ However, not all such Liberal recruits were enthusiasts and it does seem unsatisfactory to suggest that what, in the manner described in this sub-section of the chapter at least, amounted to a fairly superficial connection between Liberal and Conservative could, in itself, have contributed to changes of allegiance; thus, the relationship is one to investigate further.

The difficulties in ideological explanations may be amongst the reasons why in Wyburn-Powell's recent examination of recruitment pays little attention to ideologies in explanations, and from this perspective he may have a point. But such suggestions should not be used to entirely reject the possibility that recruitment could be linked to any form of political ideas and beliefs; some research does draw attention to possibilities which have not been much considered in this context but do seem valid. Amongst such possibilities is the research of Martin Pugh and Geoffrey Searle who have presented a potential philosophical or intellectual emphasis guiding political outlook in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which may have conditioned ideas about party. Their research points to patriotic, pragmatic and managerial approaches which assisted in informing attitudes towards policy matters and forging political identity. Some of the ideas at least link to the view of Wiener about the growth of interest in technocratic government, with the managerial emphasis noted appearing to share commonalities.²¹ Moreover, their perspectives point to negative views existing about the party system itself, with distaste for party tribalism and a conception of the virtues of inter-party cooperation.

With regards to Pugh's work, of interest is his reference to what he defines as the 'centrist tradition' which was characterised by a patriotic approach to defence, foreign affairs and imperial questions, and a pragmatic managerial approach to the general conducting of government, rooted in the politics of the latter part of the nineteenth century, but with on-going

²⁰ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 98-111, 131-137.

²¹ Wiener, *English Culture*, p. 96.

relevance into the twentieth.²² Pugh's examination of this outlook brings him to a view that advocates of this type of politics were poor party loyalists, with a sense that it contributed to party indiscipline, and even schisms and defections. The discussion of these issues is rather lacking in broad assessment of the individuals involved, but Pugh does provide some useful material for consideration of Lloyd George and, perhaps of more direct interest to this study, Winston Churchill, whom he shows to be conditioned by these centrist attitudes, even going so far as to suggest that Churchill's moves between the Conservative and Liberal parties related to this thinking. Thus, in this way, Pugh has begun to set out an intellectual rationale for recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative party, although a much broader assessment of a range of individuals is needed if general importance is to be attached to this research; obviously, one should not assume that one individual is representative of the wider body.²³

To some degree, the essence of Pugh's perspective is duplicated in the research of Searle, with a similar patriotic, pragmatic and managerial perspective, often antagonistic towards party loyalties observed; but, in other regards, Searle's study is different, chiefly in that he presents this perspective within a wider body of political thinking which aimed at the creation of a 'National Government' – a 'quest' for National Government, as he boldly puts it – involving politicians from all political parties who shared common views about how governmental affairs should be run.²⁴ In terms of issues relevant to this study, Searle shows how some Liberals were amongst the most enthusiastic advocates of this type of politics influencing the direction of the Liberal party in terms of pre-war social policy, as it moved away from traditional Liberal partisan concerns, and in the national

²² Martin Pugh, 'Left in the Centre? Lloyd George and the Centrist Tradition in British Politics' in Judith Loades (ed.) *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George* (Bangor, 1991), pp. 17-27; Martin Pugh, *Lloyd George* (London & New York, 1988).

²³ Indeed; even Pugh himself has suggested that Churchill was an untypical recruit; see Martin Pugh, 'Churchill's Strange Brew', *History Today* 61 5 (2011), 33-36.

²⁴ Geoffrey Searle, *Country Before Party – Coalition and the Idea of 'National Government' in Modern Britain, 1885-1987* (London, 1995), pp. 53-63, 69-77, 103-104, 121-127.

reconstruction of the post-war Coalition period. Building on the previous research of Robert Scally and Colin Matthew, Searle provides an intellectual basis for this political thinking, rooted in the patriotic and cross-party imperialist movements of the late nineteenth century, particularly ‘National Efficiency’ and ‘Liberal-Imperialism’, but remodelled for a twentieth century context.²⁵

Searle’s detection of the survival of attributes of an essential nineteenth century perspective has implications for this study. Part of the impetus for these original movements was fear of the stratification of electoral politics around the issue of class and the movement of parties to embrace it in the interests of mass democracy and electoral competition.²⁶ National interests needed to be properly represented with disdain for narrow party interests. Politicians sought to work across party to build coalitions of interest, whilst others – thinking here of those within the Liberal Unionist party which has been understood as connected to this perspective – sought to break away from political parties to work with others when their existing party was deemed to be negating the national concerns. This can all be compared to what Searle discusses about Liberal advocates of National Government in the twentieth century. They were less closely ‘Liberal’ in a narrow partisan sense, and more prepared to make arrangements with Conservatives when interests ‘above’ party politics could forge cooperation; it can be most clearly demonstrated in support for the ‘fusion’ of the Liberal and Conservative parties, widely debated between 1919 and 1922. Importantly, Searle reveals that there was actually a coming together of thinking between the two parties rather than a move of Liberals into the Conservative camp *per se*, with Conservative advocates of National Government, also not unlike in the nineteenth century, being committed to

²⁵ H. C. G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists. The Ideas and Politics of a Post Gladstonian Elite* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 102, 120, 166, 244; Robert Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition: The Politics of Social Imperialism, 1900-1918* (Princeton, 1975), pp. 97, 277, 347-349.

²⁶ Jonathan Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830-1886* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 101-102; Ian Cawood, *The Liberal Unionist Party – A History* (London & New York, 2010), pp. 242-252.

building cross-party consensus. Indeed, he seems to suggest that Conservatives and Liberals were creating fresh territory, somewhere between their two parties. All this has implications for understanding the position of Liberals leaving the party in order to work with the Conservatives, some of whom seem to have been likely sympathisers of the idea of National Government. However, there is a difficulty in drawing too many conclusions from Searle's research given that beyond consideration of Lloyd George and Churchill, his research does not engage very closely with Liberal opinion, and so the specific possibility that some Liberal recruits were motivated by a definite desire for National Government is very under-developed.²⁷ Nonetheless, there are signs that Searle's research may have relevance with other sources alluding to some of the same suggestions.²⁸ One of the chief studies, that of Powell, has drawn attention to the connection of such politics to the disruption of the party system and the new duopoly between Labour and the Conservatives; an implication is that if Liberal recruits widely pursued National Government this would reduce the possibility of them being seen as converts to a straightforward Conservative party cause.²⁹

There is also what might be described as more straightforward or immediate evidence of convergence of Liberal and Conservative politics from within the party system itself. This convergence can be demonstrated, even before the First World War, with actual benefit to the Liberal party, with research showing wide business interests, professional middle-class and former 'progressive' 'One Nation' Conservative opinion becoming attracted by a new Liberal agenda of imperialistic attitudes to foreign affairs, wide domestic reform through government intervention, protection

²⁷ Searle, *Country Before Party*, pp. 120-127.

²⁸ Paul Readman, 'The Liberal Party and Patriotism in Early Twentieth Century Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 12 No. 3 (2001), 269-302; Addison, *Churchill*, pp. 22, 53, 61, 88, 107, 202; Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 40; Pelling, *Churchill*, pp. 70, 104-105, 141-142, 245; Michael Bentley, 'Liberal Politics and the Grey Conspiracy', 461-478; Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 310-314; Bayliss 'The Outsider', pp. 28, 70, 82, 273, 280, 299-302, 341.

²⁹ Powell, *British Politics*, pp. 193-198.

of economic interests, and avoidance of class politics.³⁰ After the War, it can be seen that it was not dissimilar perspectives which drew Liberal politicians closer to the Conservatives, with the party's move into similar political territory. Some research begins to draw attention to the relationship of these developments to changes of party, with a sense that what made the Liberal party attractive in the pre-war period now made the Conservative party similarly attractive in the post-war, with Liberals being recruited into the Conservative party.³¹

In showing how political ideas brought Liberals into the political sphere of the Conservative party there is a critical figure in Stanley Baldwin. Much research concentrates on Baldwin's 'New Conservatism' which appeared as a moderate 'One Nation' and even 'liberal' perspective, balancing economic and social interests at home to avoid class conflict, whilst offering a foreign policy outlook which was patriotic in its defence of empire.³² There are some interesting variants of perspective, with Wiener emphasising Baldwin's favouring of regulation of the economy and industry to avoid the worst excesses of industrial capitalism.³³ Robert Blake's study takes a similar view, but characterises Baldwin's policy as a nascent form of

³⁰ Geoffrey Searle, 'The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business', *English Historical Review*, 98 388 (1983), 29-60; Bayliss 'The Outsider', p. 45; Wallace 'Walter Runciman', p. 32; Martin Farr, *Reginald McKenna – Financier Among Statesmen, 1863-1916* (New York & Abingdon, 2008), pp. 46, 72; Charmley, *Churchill*, p. 34; Gilbert, *Churchill*, pp. 144-184; Jenkins, *Churchill*, pp. 79-88; Pelling, *Churchill*, pp. 78-85; Keith Robbins, *Churchill* (London & New York, 1992), p. 33.

³¹ Stuart Ball, 'The Conservative Party, the Role of the State and the Politics of Protection, c. 1918-1932', *History* 96 323 (2011), 280-303; Bayliss 'The Outsider', p. 591; Charmley, *Churchill*, p. 190; Dutton, *Liberals in Schism*, p. 44; Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 463.

³² Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party – From Peel to Major* (London, 1997), pp. 205-229; Alan Clark, *The Tories – Conservatives and the Nation-State, 1922-1997* (London, 1998), pp. 31-91; Cawood, *The Liberal Unionists*, pp. 249-252; Robin Harris, *The Conservatives – A History* (London, 2011), pp. 291-325; John Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-1940* (London, 1978) pp. 118, 133, 186-206, 327; Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 129, 167-171, 179, 182, 271; Wiener, *English Culture*, pp. 100-109.

³³ Wiener, *English Culture*, pp. 100-109.

‘interventionist capitalism’ in which added to economic control was an interest in social welfare provision.³⁴ Thus, Wiener and Blake reveal a position immediate to contemporary concerns, with deterioration of faith in *laissez faire* and the desire for more state intervention featuring strongly in general views about reconstruction of the economy and society in the inter-war years.

In examination of the attraction of Baldwin emphasis has been placed on the underlying values which shaped his politics. Blake suggests that he embodied the views of the nation, confirming an impression that he was actually ‘above party’, representing higher ideals in politics.³⁵ For Ian Cawood, Baldwin’s values were shaped by actual legacy of involvement of Conservative party’s with Liberals themselves during the period of their turn of the century alliance with the Liberal Unionists; Baldwin, he suggests, was personally taking forward a Liberal Unionist ethic of representing the ‘whole national community’.³⁶ Perspectives about personal ethics are developed in detail by Philip Williamson, who examines a moral, ethical, democratic, and business-like underpinning which shaped Baldwin’s perspectives and imbued thinking behind his vision of Conservative politics.³⁷ Williamson shows how he stressed the need for a managerial or technocratic approach to the running of political affairs, greatly influenced by his own professional business background, with emphasis placed in responding to a moral national interest as opposed to a narrow and unethical self-interest which he believed had crept into political affairs.³⁸ He favoured a ‘social contract’: there were rights and responsibilities of people in the country towards the nation and the local community and the government had obligations to maintain sound finance whilst ensuring that there was sufficient social spending to assist the working-classes. The values can be seen to be quite middle-class in orientation, which may well have

³⁴ Blake, *Conservative Party*, p. 229. Also see Ball, ‘Conservative Party’, 280-303.

³⁵ Blake, *Conservative Party*, p. 216.

³⁶ Cawood, *The Liberal Unionist party*, p. 259.

³⁷ Williamson, *Baldwin*, pp. 103, 170-171, 179-275.

³⁸ For the connection to technocracy also see Wiener, *English Culture*, p. 96.

strengthened influence over middle-class politicians, whilst his appeals to the national interest might have influenced politicians wanting some form of the idea of National Government, although Baldwin's position seemed more to turn the Conservative party into a 'national party' rather than to build cross-party combinations. Moreover, Williamson's discussion of values is set greatly in the context of the language used to describe them. He, not unlike a number of current historians, has put great emphasis on how language and rhetoric can be used to purchase influence and there may be some merit in suggesting that Baldwin's successful remoulding of his party was not only because of values but also how they were articulated.³⁹

The research focusing on Baldwin does, however, risk exaggerating his appeal to Liberals; it can be seen that there were some constraints on his ability to purchase their support. Despite his close proximity to some of their values his perspective was quite alien to Liberals in certain ways, with research highlighting the more authoritarian, paternalistic and even traditional 'Tory' nature of aspects of his idea for social and economic intervention by the state.⁴⁰ Furthermore, alongside Baldwin's inclusive politics was a seemingly contradictory strategy to pursue anti-socialism as a means to appeal to 'villa Tories' and to crush the Liberal politics.⁴¹ Some of these issues may explain why studies point to recruits' desire to retain their Liberal separateness, even as they appeared on a trajectory towards alliance with Conservatives, and this must be borne in mind in further assessment of Baldwin's influence in this study.⁴²

One more area for consideration is the relationship of recruitment to factors within the Liberal party, particularly in terms of the influence of the party

³⁹ Richard Toye & Julie Gottlieb (ed.), *Making Reputations – Power, Persuasion and the Individual in Modern British Politics* (New York, 2005); Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*.

⁴⁰ Ball, 'Conservative Party', 285; Blake, *Conservative Party*, p. 229; Wiener, *English Culture*, pp. 98-101.

⁴¹ Blake, *Conservative Party*, p. 229; Dutton, *Liberals in Schism*, pp. 63-64, 74; E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism – Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 114-135.

⁴² Especially see Dutton, *Liberals in Schism*, pp. 63-64, 74.

leadership and the policies. There has been a lot of assessment of the divisions in the Liberal party due to policy and as a result of the conflict between supporters of Lloyd George and Asquith, but in terms of how these issues affected political allegiance there is far less detail, with only Wyburn-Powell's study really providing a sense of wide understanding through comparative assessment of number of cases.⁴³

In the sources available, attention is drawn to Lloyd George as the most crucial factor. He emerges as a divisive figure, being central in the various party splits and he became widely reproached for his political conduct, both in his dealings with colleagues and in pursuit of his political interests.⁴⁴ Research shows evidence that negative sentiment towards him created disaffection, some of which can be seen to relate to changes in party. In this regard, an obvious point lies in concern about Lloyd George's move towards Labour and his adoption of more left-leaning policies and rhetoric.⁴⁵ However, more significant was personal animosity which coloured views about him and involvement with the Liberal party. Sometimes animosity arose out of policy issues, particularly where disagreement appeared to see Lloyd George turn on those who were critical of him, with evidence of his attempts to suppress their influence within the party, which left them disillusioned; however, wider points emerge which

⁴³ Michael Bentley, *The Liberal Mind, 1914-1929* (Cambridge, 1977); George Bernstein, 'Yorkshire Liberalism during the First World War', *Historical Journal* 32 (1) (1989), 107-129; Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party*, pp. 3, 68-98; Roy Douglas, 'The background to the 'Coupon' election arrangements', *English Historical Review*, 86, 339 (1971), 318-336; Michael Hart, 'The decline of the Liberal Party in Parliament and in the constituencies', Unpublished University of Oxford D.Phil. (1982); John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict 1915-1918* (New Haven & London, 1992); Trevor Wilson, 'The Coupon and the British General Election', *Journal of Modern History*, 36, (1964), 28-42; Wilson, *The Downfall*, pp. 87, 149, 219, 323-328, 353-354; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 19-21.

⁴⁴ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 193.

⁴⁵ Campbell, *Lloyd George*, pp. 23-25; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p.245; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 19, 105, 119.

relate more directly to feelings about his personal character.⁴⁶ This was no more in evidence than in the use of his Political Fund, which eventually united some former Coalition allies and post-war Asquithian opponents in a similar negative perspective. It is clear from research that he was believed to be acting unethically in utilising the Fund to buy influence, which left other politicians uneasy in working with him. This lack of trust appears significant since it encouraged separation from Lloyd George's leadership, including through internal factionalism and through joint arrangements with Conservatives.⁴⁷ The exact role this distrust played in changes of allegiance is not altogether clear, but there is some indication that it played a direct part.⁴⁸ This idea gathers credibility when considering evidence about the potential role of Baldwin.⁴⁹ Baldwin was a figurehead of anti-Lloyd George feeling in the Conservative party, having emerged as an important critic in the Carlton Club revolt of 1922, and he consolidated his credentials thereafter with continued criticism of Lloyd George's political methods. Baldwin had positioned himself a moderate and more ethical alternative to Lloyd George, and this must have gained attention from disaffected Liberals as well as Conservatives, and even assisted in drawing them out of the Liberal party, particularly those attracted by Baldwin's wider brand of ethical politics, values and rhetoric.

However, despite the evidence, there is a danger of reading too much into the role of Lloyd George. It is clear that he was not unpopular with all Liberal recruits and some sources have alluded to dissatisfaction in Asquith

⁴⁶ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 542; Campbell, *Lloyd George*, pp. 99-102, 128, 210; Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 20-22, 230, 244-246; Dutton, *Liberals in Schism*, pp. 19-39; Campbell, *Lloyd George*, p. 210; Jones, 'Sir Alfred Mond', 501-504; Pelling, *Churchill*, pp. 265-266; Rhodes James, *Churchill*, p. 167; David Roberts, 'Clement Davies and the Liberal Party, 1929-56', Unpublished University of Wales M.A. (1974), pp. 20-23; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 195-229; Wilson, *The Downfall*, pp. 327-8; Wyburn-Powell, *Clement Davies*, pp. 37-49; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 19, 96, 193.

⁴⁷ Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 66-81; Hart 'The decline of the Liberal party', p. 392; Wallace 'Walter Runciman', pp. 201, 281-304; Wilson, *The Downfall*, p. 321.

⁴⁸ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Blake, *Conservative Party*, pp. 208, 227, 230, 236; Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 103, 230.

also, due to his weak leadership and policy agenda, so Lloyd George cannot be seen as the sole leadership figure involved in disaffection of Liberals from their party.⁵⁰ Furthermore, one has to be aware of other issues, separate from the leadership, to do with electoral pressures, personal circumstances and political ambition, which have all been mentioned in the discussion of recruits and the relationships they had with their party.⁵¹ Wyburn-Powell has perhaps produced the clearest assessment although there is plenty of scope for further consideration of these issues as the assessment still is not very detailed.⁵²

Overall, an underlying issue is that much of the research useful for understanding recruitment was not actually constructed with the specific aim of appreciating the reasons for it; a lot of what can be gleaned about it is secondary to some other purpose of the author's enquiry. Such research helps to set recruitment in the context of the background of realignment, class politics and the ideas that shaped political perspectives and it often assists in understanding some of the recruits' immediate motivations, but there are too many uncertainties about the nature of these issues and relying on the material alone would be unsatisfactory; specific and unambiguous comparative assessment of recruitment is needed if the phenomenon is to be understood properly.

With some of these points in mind one is drawn towards Wyburn-Powell's recent study. His most useful and unique contribution has been to establish particular types of politicians who were recruits to other parties, pointing to common cultural, social and occupational backgrounds. For

⁵⁰ Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 37-41, 75-81, 101; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 245-50; Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 35-39; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 193.

⁵¹ Bentley, 'The Grey Conspiracy', 461-478; Max Egremont, *Under Two Flags – The Life of Major-General Sir Edward Spears* (London, 1997), pp. 113-114; David Dutton, 'A Liberal without a Home: the Later Career of Leslie Hore-Belisha', *Journal of Liberal History* 65 (2009-10), 28; Hart, 'The decline of the Liberal party', p. 148; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 240; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 19, 121, 123, 130, 158, 197.

⁵² Russell Deacon, 'Book Review – Defectors and the Liberal Party: 1910-2010 – A Study of Inter-party Relations, by Alun Wyburn-Powell', *Parliamentary Affairs* (2013), 1-5.

instance, Wyburn-Powell, in particular, notes the strong representation of minority religious groups, lawyers, businessmen, members of the armed forces, the wealthy and Eton-educated.⁵³ All this is very significant, particularly when one considers the relationship of the general findings to the specifics of recruitment into the Conservative party in the period of this study, where it is shown that of the forty-five recruits he identifies who moved ‘rightward’ in the period of this study, there seems to be a clear connection between them and the wider number he assesses, so Liberal recruitment becomes one aspect of a wider social phenomenon in movement from the Liberal party.⁵⁴

Wyburn-Powell identifies a number of political characteristics associated with recruitment, largely to do with some of the ideas and internal Liberal party difficulties assessed in the chapter already. This assessment allows him to draw together particular sub-sets of recruits whose recruitment can be seen to relate to immediate circumstances which encouraged the change in party.⁵⁵ Thus, he refers to ‘Bonar-Law supporters’ (those in favour of working with Conservatives but not with Lloyd George), then ‘Fusionists’ (followers of Lloyd George) who wanted fusion of the Liberal party with the Conservative party, ‘Constitutionalists’ (who wanted to avoid triangular political contests), ‘Lloyd George policy objectors’ (but not hostile to Lloyd George), ‘Protection Convert Industrialists (basically business people and technocrats), ‘Faux Fusionists’ (those who used joint Conservative and Liberal labels but were basically Conservatives), and finally, ‘Proto-Liberal Nationals’ (those objecting to working with Labour but distinct from those who were Liberal Nationals after 1933 when the Samuelites joined the Opposition in the Commons). One particular benefit of this categorisation is that it establishes a chronology of recruitment types through to the early 1930s with each type linked to a particular point of

⁵³ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 6-19, 196.

⁵⁴ The figure of forty-five is not one emphasised by Wyburn-Powell, but one which encompasses all the known changes of allegiance in the period of coverage in this study rather than in his own. He refers to fifty-five rightward recruitments in a period from 1918 to 1938; see Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 10.

⁵⁵ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 20-21, 98-158.

time. Also, intertwined with this categorisation, is some valuable commentary about personal circumstances, which perhaps sharpened the resolve to leave the Liberal party; here, bringing into play issues such as future prospects, electoral concerns and relationships with other Liberals already emphasised as motivating factors in this chapter.⁵⁶

However, Wyburn-Powell's assessment still leaves plenty of space for additional enquiry in this study and summarising these is important in completing the assessment in this chapter section. In general, there do seem to be gaps.⁵⁷ One such gap is in assessment of the impact of social background on changes of party. Wyburn-Powell does try to justify why particular backgrounds, such as religious, professional, business and educational, assisted in encouraging changes in party, but whilst his perspective is relevant, it is rather speculative and lacking in detail. It is, of course, difficult to draw exact links between social background and party loyalties but he might well have had more success in sustaining a persuasive argument if, for example, he had tried to link his research to studies explaining social class and cultural associations to political parties.⁵⁸ The various perspectives of Guttsman and Wiener, in particular, have shown that there are a number of factors about the influence of class on allegiance to political parties, and the absence of discussion of these leaves a clear sense that consideration of the social aspects of recruitment remains under-developed.

Furthermore, there only seems to be a partial assessment of factors which shaped recruitment, with an absence of consideration of the medium and longer-term features which shaped such developments. Absent is assessment of the relevance of issues such as ideology and beliefs, including the favouring of National Government and cross-party working, or

⁵⁶ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 19.

⁵⁷ His coverage of so long a period makes it difficult for him to provide sufficient depth of analysis; indeed, at times the presentation seems more like a broad reference guide than a detailed assessment; see Deacon, 'Book Review', 1-5.

⁵⁸ Guttsman, *The British Political Elite*; Wiener, *English Culture*.

consideration of the impact of changes to the Conservative party, including under Baldwin's leadership.

Wyburn-Powell has done much better in his assessment of the immediate issues.⁵⁹ However, his general characterisation of the short-term motivations could be open to debate; for example, in the distinction he draws between Liberal Nationals pre- and post-1933 (due to continuities seen in Liberal National politics over time), in defining a grouping of Lloyd George policy objectors who were not personally hostile to him (when there is evidence that some of them were), and in his dismissal of the so-called Faux Fusionists as really Conservatives (in two of the cases other historians have suggested that they did not really have strong political opinions about any party at all).⁶⁰ It is useful to provide a framework, but such a tightly-defined one is too rigid and open to criticism; one is left wondering if a looser framework would have served better.

Overall there is reason to question the characterisation of Liberal recruits as 'defectors'; Wyburn-Powell defines 'defection' as 'falling away from allegiance to a leader or party'.⁶¹ This may be the customary way to describe changes of party but it may not be the best one here. With some of the evidence collected in this chapter revealing a sense in which changes of party were conditioned by a variety of phenomena connected to the longer-term realignment of politics, the use of the term seems rather problematic, and that is why in all the discussion in this chapter 'recruit' or 'recruitment' has been utilised; these alternative terms refer simply to the mechanics of the change rather than implying some kind of political discontinuity.

II

This investigation of Liberal recruitment into the Conservative party will examine a broad time-period, from c.1906 until 1935. The focus on this

⁵⁹ See above, p. 23.

⁶⁰ Dutton, 'A Liberal without a Home', 28; Egremont, *Under Two Flags*, pp. 113-114; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 21.

⁶¹ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 2.

period is significant in electoral terms, between the highpoint of Liberal ascendancy, in 1906, and the early twentieth century nadir of the 1935 election. It is a period of transition between the old Liberal and Conservative duopoly and the new Labour and Conservative duopoly which replaced it. It has previously been stated that the realignment of politics is of major significance to this study, so the focus of the time-period is justified in these terms. With regards to these dates, it is also important to emphasise that this period was one of crisis to the political system, with a series of challenges to its integrity, described by David Powell as the ‘crisis of adaptation’ as it struggled to accommodate social and political change and the impact of the First World War.⁶² One aspect of this crisis, for Powell, and one that can be accepted here, was the challenge posed by the survival of the Liberal party and the instability it created for the party system. It can be seen that Liberal recruits are important to consider in this context, since their political activities – including involvement in intra-party conflict and building relations with other parties – were aspects affecting the smooth functioning of the political system and the emergence of the new duopoly. Of course, these points need to be set in the context of recruits actually helping to confirm the eventual stability created by the new duopoly through their eventual more formal associations with the Conservatives, but the points reveal the number dimensions in which these recruits’ contributions to the politics can be viewed.

In emphasising the issues, it should be pointed out that the first twentieth century Liberal recruitments into the Conservative party did not actually occur until 1918 but the longer-term antecedents – not just in terms of connection to realignment – but also in the political careers of the recruits themselves can be seen in a decade or more before in the cases of those with long careers. The discussion will start even before 1906 in the cases of two Liberal recruits who originally started out as Conservatives, since it is useful to compare their previous experience of change in party with their later one.⁶³

⁶² Powell, *British Politics*, pp. 192-198.

⁶³ This will be seen in assessment of the position of Churchill and Frederick Guest.

In investigation of the reasons for Liberal recruitment a particularly intelligent appreciation of the primary sources and how to utilise them is necessary. It could be very easy to neglect sources which offer a significant contribution to understanding of the topic, as a lot of the evidence available comes as records of personality, behaviour, intrigue, gossip, preoccupations, and values, recorded in various forms of personal correspondence or in accounts of meetings and speeches, which might not, at first glance, seem to provide the most accurate, robust, or dependable sources of evidence. However, such evidence is critical since it can record the underlying human sentiments associated with political disaffection and change of party; indeed, changes of party, are not just about particular events but are also connected to human interactions and behaviours that lie behind them. Moreover, there is a semantical emphasis used in the language which is of historical significance; as Williamson, Toye and others have made clear, it is often not so much what is said but how it is said that is important, and examination of the detail of the language will assist appreciation of the nuances of feelings or emotions.⁶⁴ Furthermore, examination of language also assists the task of understanding particular influences of values or rhetoric; for instance, to assess the association with the rhetoric of Baldwin which Williamson mentions in the context of influencing positive perceptions of his Conservative politics and negative perceptions of Lloyd George.

All this kind of evidence emerges strongly in collections of personal papers, including letters, diaries and journal entries, which are amongst the major primary sources for the investigation. Such sources contain invaluable informal or private thoughts to be shared amongst friends, family and various political contacts and there is much in this material to appreciate the position of Liberal recruits in their affiliation to political parties. For examination of many of the recruits there are surviving collections of personal papers, which, in some cases, are extremely comprehensive, providing substantial opportunities for recovering personal information

⁶⁴ See above, pp. 16-17.

relevant to the topic.⁶⁵ Such collections often provide substantial details about the major issues of concern to them in political affairs, relationships with other politicians, and their political affiliations over time; the fact the papers are so immediate and personal to the individual concerned often enables a high level of understanding of the underlying personality traits and values of the person, often reflected in the language of the correspondence. However, it is not only through these personal collections that understanding can be derived; collections of papers by people with both personal and political connections to the recruits are also significant; some of these papers are available as published collections of correspondence.⁶⁶ These papers are particularly important in providing evidence of how contemporary figures viewed the recruits, with important perspectives on their personalities and their political choices over time. Such sources are those often most rich in references to behaviour, gossip, intrigue, personal and political conflicts involving recruits, particularly where the evidence comes from private journals and diaries.

Furthermore, in terms of more public sources there are records of speeches. Many of these can be found in surviving newspaper records and in House of Commons debates. Such records can be seen as particularly noteworthy in their recording of rhetoric, political values, ideas and electoral concerns. Political speeches are noted for their tendency to place on public record various messages about people and party, but they also contain unwitting testimony, particularly about underlying anxieties, such as electoral concerns. The evidence contained in these speeches is especially important in examination of some of the less prominent recruits or those

⁶⁵ The most comprehensive and useful surviving personal collections include those of Churchill, Alfred Mond, Walter Runciman, and John Simon.

⁶⁶ Personal collections examined include the papers of Asquith, Balfour, Baldwin, Lloyd George, Herbert Samuel, Archibald Sinclair and Rufus Isaacs. There are helpful published collections of diary entries, journals and letters, such as those of Bonar Law, Baldwin, Violet Bonham Carter, Austen Chamberlain, Charles Hobhouse, Churchill, J. A. Pease, C. P. Scott, Lord Riddell, Asquith and Lloyd George.

with few or no surviving personal papers.⁶⁷ Reliance on sources of speeches and other public records is, however, a disadvantage as they lack the deeper sophistication of private correspondence, and this means that some recruits emerge from the assessment seeming much less understood on a more personal level than other individuals who were regularly discussed in private communication.

All these sources have other uses too, not least to assist in understanding chronology and narrative about recruitment but other sources need to be considered for appreciation of more factual issues. In this regard, newspapers and periodicals are critical. National newspapers, including *The Times* newspaper which is used substantially in this study, can be utilised to understand a wider narrative behind the circumstances in which Liberal recruits found themselves. The Liberal periodicals, including *The Liberal Monthly*, *Liberal Magazine* and *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, are particularly worth highlighting, since they provide detailed information about the party disputes and the connection of some of the recruits to them. They also discuss party allegiances, passing judgement on circumstances in which some of the Liberal recruits changed party. However, of course, such sources are not completely factual; these accounts can be highly partisan, selective, speculative and rich in political innuendo, which is a good means of understanding some of the politics around the events, but it means one should be cautious about making assumptions about their reliability.

Specific reference should be made to the contribution of regional and local newspapers. They share some of the same benefits and drawbacks of their national equivalents, but they have a particular role in helping to uncover the circumstances affecting, in particular, some of the less prominent recruits. Local newspapers help to understand the dimensions of local electoral politics, such as local pressures which conditioned electoral

⁶⁷ They have been particularly useful for assessment of the Liberals specifically examined in the overview chapter (see below, pp. 32-36 for explanation of the structure of the chapters) and in the chapters to specific individuals, most particularly Hilton Young; the chapter on him has more or less been entirely constructed with the use of these type of sources.

fortunes and shaped sentiments about political allegiances which lie below the radar of national issues. This unique function of local newspapers is particularly strong at election time, with a lot of information to be gleaned about the character of election campaigns, and, in particular, the relationships between Liberals and Conservatives.

Overall, there are, of course, limited opportunities for use of oral evidence in a study such as this, due to passage of time; nonetheless, this study has been fortunate in obtaining information from an interview with John Grigg, son of Edward Grigg, before his death in 2001. His son's own interest in politics and history meant the responses obtained from the interview were particularly valuable, being rich in appreciation of understanding of the broader context of his father's perspectives.⁶⁸ Some of the evidence helps to provide a very personal dimension to the political outlook of his father.⁶⁹

Overall, the discussion will be constructed around a series of case studies of recruits aimed at best understanding the unique and collective experiences and how they link to Liberal decline and realignment in the period. Focus on case studies is important to understand the situations affecting Liberal recruits more personally and to avoid generalisations. In order to achieve a suitable assessment, the discussion will begin with a large overview chapter exploring in comparative form the major issues related to the topic, identifying, in particular, collective understanding of the nature of relations with other Liberals and Conservatives over time and also the way these recruits connected to the political system, particularly in terms of their involvement in political work in Parliament and local constituency politics. The chapter will examine some of the characteristics associated with

⁶⁸ John Grigg was an historical author whose works have included a four-volume biography of Lloyd George left incomplete at his death.

⁶⁹ The only disadvantage was a tendency to try to portray an overtly positive impression, particularly in relation to his father's imperialism and racial perspectives, shaped by service in the British Empire, including the governorship of Kenya. The desire to influence the perspective of the interviewer is, of course, one of the disadvantages of oral testimony generally.

recruitment, developing ideas about connections of social background and personality to recruitment. Subsequent chapters will focus on individuals, profiling some of the most significant recruits in detail. A benefit here is to ensure sufficient coverage of the important personal aspects to recruitment, with more emphasis here placed on the minutiae of individual circumstances, relationships to other politicians and personality characteristics.

There are potential objections to this structure of the discussion, however. In presenting the case studies, one might normally expect each to be structured in a similar way, with chapter sub-sections dealing with similar issues or time-periods between the chapters. However, it has not been possible to present the chapters in this way due to the differences of chronology and issues in individuals' involvement in politics and the timing of the change in political allegiance. Moreover, a more thematic approach to the whole structure might have been an alternative, focusing the discussion around major ideas or characteristics associated with recruitment as opposed to case studies of individual recruits. There are merits in thematic assessment and it is intended that the large overview chapter will highlight the main characteristics in more thematic form (with different sections examining the major characteristics or themes in recruitment), but the personal nature of some of the recruits' situations means that there is a danger of neglecting unique circumstances without some specific profiling of individuals elsewhere.

This study has taken a different approach to that of Wyburn-Powell in the character of its assessment and selection of case studies. Rather than seeking to examine briefly all the 'rightward' recruits, to ensure more in depth coverage, it focuses on a much smaller number, selected due to understanding of the chronology of recruitment, different sectional interests within the Liberal party, the desire to assess both major and minor figures, and the suitability of available evidence. Of the thirty-six recruits to the Conservative party, noted by Wyburn-Powell, this study focuses in on the cases of seven of them, with four of them being the subjects of specific

chapters.⁷⁰ It will also examine a number of Liberal Nationals. Wyburn-Powell's account of these Liberals is, however, not straightforward; he does not refer to many of them in his table of 'defectors' because of his distinction between those who he suggests 'deliberately' broke from the Liberal party and those who did not.⁷¹ However, as it is disputable that there is any such clear distinction in the party ranks, this study will select from the full number. There were forty-six Liberal Nationals elected between 1931 and 1935, according to the data of F. W. S. Craig, and this study will make reference to around ten of them in total, with two in detail.⁷²

It will be seen that this study concentrates some of its assessment on Liberal recruits involved in politics within the Northeast of England, particularly in the cases of Liberal Nationals; the reason for this was partly a practical one, as it had originally been intended that this study might have a discrete regional focus, but it suits the purposes of the study, as it has become, in helping understanding the issues from a local constituency perspective. It is important to make reference to local electoral campaigns to test out the influence of political ideas or electoral strategies, such as anti-socialism.

⁷⁰ For the full list, see Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 23. This study will examine the cases of Churchill, Hamar Greenwood, Edward Grigg, Frederick Guest, Alfred Mond, Hilton Young and Edward Spears, with some specific chapters looking discretely at Churchill, Guest, Mond and Young. The investigation will also focus upon Reginald McKenna, who did not formally join the Conservative but he was a close political friend of Baldwin's in the years after the First World War.

⁷¹ Wyburn-Powell identifies Sir John Simon, Sir Robert Hutchinson and Ernest Brown as his deliberate 'defectors' in 1931, and adds three others in the period between 1931 and 1935 (Joseph Hunter, Joseph Maclay and George Morrison); see Wyburn-Powell, *Defectors*, pp. 9-10, 23-4, 149, 157-158.

⁷² Some of the references are only brief ones. The ten are: Sir Robert Aske, Sir Godfrey Collins, Aaron Curry, John Dickie, Arthur Harbord, Leslie Hore-Belisha, Ian Macpherson, William McKeag, Walter Runciman and Simon. Runciman and Simon will be referred to in specific profile chapters. An eleventh is included in Robert Bernays, who was closely aligned to Baldwin, although he did not become a Liberal National until 1936; see Wyburn-Powell, *Defectors*, p. 158.

In terms of how the investigation specifically examines the issues of recruitment, this is best summarised by providing an outline of the nature of the coverage in each chapter. It is also a possible place to provide additional reasoning for understanding the choice of case studies and to highlight some of the broad points raised through the research:

Chapter One: The Liberal Recruits. This overview chapter in exploring the major characteristics, will begin with an examining the social and cultural issues, building on ideas discussed in research concerning the social profiling of recruits. It will then go on to consider the role of electoral pressures resulting from the politics of realignment, and the level of significance of ideas and beliefs, particularly in light of evidence of convergence of Liberal and Conservative thinking, and factors internal to the Liberal party to do with dissatisfaction about political direction and personal political influence.

Efforts have been made in this chapter to ensure that the focus is not confined to high politics, with a particular emphasis on issues emerging from constituencies and on lesser-known individuals.⁷³ In achieving this broader assessment prominence had been given to examination of Hamar Greenwood, Edward Grigg and Edward Spears as recruits to the Conservatives, and a number of Liberal Nationals including Sir Robert Aske, Sir Godfrey Collins, Aaron Curry, John Dickie, Arthur Harbord, Leslie Hore-Belisha, Ian Macpherson and William McKeag. It has also been an opportunity to profile Reginald McKenna, whose political friendship with Baldwin eventually brought him into the Conservative political camp.

In terms of some of the broad findings of the chapter, it will be shown that much of the decision-making about party was a reaction to circumstance, particularly in the convergence of Liberal and Conservative party ideas and in the need to address local electoral pressures, with national and constituency dimensions both playing a role here. A clear sense of

⁷³ Due to the nature of the chapter as an overview of the issues it will be seen that it is sometimes necessarily to allude to some of the case studies' experiences too as it is difficult to isolate them from aspects of the issues being discussed, although detail will be left to the case study chapters.

public duty will be revealed, showing some relevance of tendencies towards patriotism in decision-making, as well as acceptance of the necessity for a *bloc* of opinion to be assembled with Conservatives and Liberals working together, as promoted by Baldwin. Some Liberals can be shown to have possessed long-term support for the idea of a national government, with closer arrangements with the Conservatives actually being seen as perfectly consistent with Liberal politics. Decisions were also influenced by perceptions of the Liberal party, not just electorally, but also due to sentiments about the leadership of the party, with a definite sense that Lloyd George pushed Liberals out. Personal prospects were also clearly important for more prominent Liberals who were frustrated by missing out on positions of influence at a high political level.

The relevance of a reaction to political events as an explanation is confirmed by assessment of a number of issues which have been seen to have caused Liberals to reassess political loyalties over time. The specific factors can broadly be seen to be:

- Pre-War controversies over social reform and military spending and political quarrels within the Cabinet;
- The wartime split between Asquith and Lloyd George, and the political fallout of the ‘coupon’ election arrangements of 1918;
- Post-War flirtation with Conservatives and conceptions of ‘fusion’ between elements of both parties until 1923, which left a legacy of good relations between some Liberals and Conservatives;
- The decision to vote Labour into office in 1924 which positioned the Liberal party close to Labour and went against the spirit of some Liberal constituency election promises;
- Post-1924 concessions to socialism in terms of Liberal policies on land and the General Strike and particular conflict with Lloyd George over these issues;
- The morality of Lloyd George’s Political Fund and controversy of the election *debacle* of 1924, where the Liberal rout was blamed, by some, on Lloyd George;

- For his allies, the retirement of Asquith from politics in 1926 (and death in 1928), removing a link with a by-gone era of Liberal party strength and leaving Lloyd George as *de facto* Liberal chief;
- The perceived ineffectiveness and unprincipled behaviour of the leadership of the Liberal party in Parliament, 1929-1930, and perceived weakness of Liberalism in the country, leading to discussion of pacts with the Conservative party and intended resignations at the next election;
- The impact of the onset of the National Government in 1931;
- The ‘crossing of the floor’ of the Samuelite Liberals and the effective isolation of the Liberal Nationals from what might be described imperfectly as the Liberal ‘mainstream’.

Not all of these issues were directly related to specific departures from the party, but reactions point to a sense that a series of issues over time challenged continuing involvement with the Liberal party. The point is perhaps best illustrated with reference to Liberals with very long political careers who faced a series of challenges to their involvement in Liberal politics over time which gradually eroded their sense of belonging to the Liberal party.

Another point emerges in that a number of the individuals concerned were quite single-minded, disliked and ill-suited to involvement in party activity, witnessed through public disagreements over policy and tendencies towards oppositional tactics and sectional partisanship. This is quite an important factor to develop further since it confirms the existence of a personality type, which was prone to party disloyalty.

Chapter Two: Winston Churchill. Churchill is the most scrutinised British politician of the twentieth century and much about his involvement in British politics is well known, but the circumstances of his decision-making about where his political allegiances should lie have not been thoroughly considered. There are strong practical grounds for the selection of Churchill for specific investigation concerning the massive amount of personal correspondence contained in the Chartwell Trust collection as well

as material in a range of other collections of manuscripts, diaries and journals.

Overall the chapter will build on views that Churchill's commitment to the Liberal party was lacking in partisan sentiment and it was clear that he viewed it more as a vehicle to pursue his 'One Nation' and imperialist type of politics. Churchill felt strongly that the Liberal party in the post-war period should define a course which meant closer working arrangements with Conservatives, and it was the realisation that this would not happen which caused disenchantment with his chief ally, Lloyd George, and the party as a whole; nonetheless, he did not desert Liberals who shared his perspective and sought to work to secure an arrangement to enable them to survive with a separate identity within the Conservative party. Churchill's ambition was also an important factor in changes in party, and he had always sought to identify positions which would give him most influence; over a long period of time he had seen his ambitions thwarted within the Liberal party. The tensions in this respect can be traced back even to his earlier career, with many controversies involving Churchill being identified in his pre-war positions on social and military expenditure.

Chapter Three: Alfred Mond. Given his public stature and the importance of Mond to Liberal politics, his contribution to a study such as this can be seen to be highly relevant. There has been very little consideration of Mond as a figure in political history, despite his significance in British politics, and there is plenty of scope for additional enquiry to consider his political allegiances and his place in the politics of realignment. A range of primary sources exist. Of greatest importance is Mond's collection of personal papers which are particularly useful for the period immediately adjacent to his departure from the Liberal party (archived at the British Museum). Other collections are also important; Mond was a regular correspondent with key political associates, chiefly David Lloyd George and Sir Rufus Isaacs (Lord Reading), so much about his politics can be yielded from the Lloyd George and Reading papers.

Mond was an industrialist and a keen supporter of the imperialistic and technocratic approach to government of Lloyd George, but after the fall of the Coalition Mond became disillusioned with him. By 1924 he was in

disagreement over land policy, which eventually led him to resign from the party. Mond's recruitment into the Conservative party can partly be seen in the context of this, but there is evidence which points to his self-interest in negotiations for a peerage. It is interesting that Mond would have joined the Conservative party since he was one of the main proponents of Liberal reunion in 1923, and had been quite antagonistic towards Conservatives, despite collusion with them at a constituency level.

Chapter Four: Hilton Young / Chapter Five: Frederick Guest. These chapters focus on two less scrutinised politicians, but ones who are particularly important in profiling recruits to the Conservative party. Unfortunately, neither Young nor Guest has left extensive collections of papers, although there are a range of references to them in other collections. Young produced a collection of memoirs which although not providing much to help to appreciate his party allegiance do inform some understanding of his character.

Young was a journalist by training, and amongst those professionals attracted by the 'new' Liberal politics of the Edwardian period, but he did not get elected until 1915. The War left him with a sense of patriotism, and following it, he fell in with Lloyd George, perhaps to support a leader who seemed to best represent the post-war patriotic forces in the country as opposed to his championing of Liberal politics. Young lost his seat in 1923, but he returned to Parliament in 1924 with Conservative support, following his pledge to support a Baldwin Government. Disagreement over policy direction, largely resulting from the compromise with the Conservatives, led to his resignation from the Liberal party in 1926, and a few months later he joined the Conservative party.

Research shows that Guest, not unlike his cousin, Winston Churchill, had joined the Liberal party amid the controversy over tariff reform. He supported Lloyd George, becoming his chief whip under the Coalition, and became embroiled in both the intra-party troubles, particularly concerning the 'sale of honours' and the establishment of the controversial Political Fund, and inter-party negotiations with the Conservatives. During the Coalition years, he was an advocate of 'fusion' between the Conservative and Liberal parties, pledging support to Bonar

Law as well as to Lloyd George. Following Liberal reunion Guest became dissatisfied with Liberal party policy, arguing for closer working relations with the Conservatives in opposing socialism. After 1924, he worked in opposition to the Liberal leadership by offering general support for Baldwin's government. The latter position was damaging to his prospects as a Liberal MP and, consequently, he was deposed as an 'official' Liberal candidate in his constituency. Following his exclusion from Liberal politics, Guest indicated his intention to join the Conservative party, seemingly because his desire to secure a plural Liberal and Conservative union had been thwarted.

Chapter Six: John Simon. Simon is the first of two detailed case studies of recruits to the Liberal National party.

The sources for consideration of the political career of Simon are extensive. A large collection of personal papers exists and there are also useful references to Simon in collections of other politicians, which give real insight into events and Simon's character. His autobiography is useful in appreciating his motivation although there are particular signs of embellishment conditioned by the passing of time. Surprisingly perhaps, there have been few political studies of Simon, with only one comprehensive political biography (that of Dutton) available.

Research shows that Simon's position in Liberal politics had been one of falling too far between different sections of the party to be clearly identified with any individuals or factions, which left him seeming rather a detached figure for much of his career. Despite rapid promotion in the pre-war period, his career stalled as wartime choices and difficulties in being re-elected to Parliament after 1918 prevented him from gaining the political influence he sought until he became leader of the Liberal National grouping in 1931. Simon held very difficult relations with Lloyd George, due to the sense that he stood in the way of his political progression to high office. His difficulties did not make him a supporter of Asquith. He was more of a 'free agent', showing little inclination towards partisan Asquithian resistance to Lloyd George. Simon had been opposed to inter party cooperation with the Conservatives, but his emphasis on constitutional interests, largely due to his legal background in the mid-1920s, saw some links develop to Baldwin.

Simon was not well-liked by parliamentarians generally, as he was regarded as too nakedly ambitious and disingenuous; this did not encourage support from the Conservatives or Liberals, and even in the period after the creation of the National Government he struggled to motivate support amongst members of his own Liberal National grouping.

Chapter 7: Walter Runciman. A second important case study of a Liberal recruit to the Liberal National party is Walter Runciman.

There is a doctoral thesis which provides a detailed general assessment of Runciman's career as a whole (by Jonathan Wallace), with some good coverage of his political outlook. However, there is still much to do in understanding the detail of his political perspective, and to appreciate it within the framework of the politics of realignment. Primary sources for Runciman's politics are substantial. A huge collection of correspondence has been deposited in the Robinson Library, Special Collections (Newcastle upon Tyne). There is much commentary on Runciman in journals and diaries which helps considerably to build appreciation of his personality.

Runciman's significance for this study lies in his wide-ranging career in Liberal politics, having spent over thirty years in active political involvement by the 1930s, and helping to shape the fortunes of the Liberal party through that period. Important was his prominent role in the resistance to Lloyd George and the means in which he tried to circumvent his influence through internal party mechanisms, and his periodic desire to work with figures outside the Liberal party, eventually leading him into good relations with Ramsay MacDonald and to be a key member of the National Government. Runciman was a shipping magnate and MacDonald's technocratic perspective mirrored his desire for a non-partisan business-like approach to government. Research demonstrates that Runciman showed very little interest in working with the Conservative party as a discrete political body, despite attractions to individual Conservatives, and this prevented a movement into a Conservative-dominated political circle until well into the 1930s. In the 1920s, it seemed that Runciman, not unlike Simon, had ambitions to lead the Liberal party, and some confidence in this respect possibly prevented a serious look at removing himself from Liberal politics altogether.

Runciman was very significant for the early years of the National Government, being an important architect of the system of Protectionism which was introduced; for him, Protection remained a short-term tactic, and he saw his role as a constraint on Conservative inclination towards more tariff barriers, so his was a liberalising influence on the government.

Conclusion: The conclusion will consolidate understanding of the general arguments from the substantive opening chapter and unique insights determined from the case studies. Above all, it will place the central issues in the context of realignment of politics, revealing that Liberals' change in party was affected by the challenges facing the party system in a period of political and electoral change with the arrival of class politics and the weakening electoral position of the Liberal party; Liberal recruits, it will be shown tried to adapt themselves to new political circumstances but, in so doing, were brought closer to the Conservative party.

One factor to be drawn out will be to show that party boundaries were not static and political thinking and events pushed politicians between parties and into other ones when circumstances made this favourable; hence, the Liberals assessed in this study will be shown to be not completely wedded to party structures and organisations but rather more keen to develop alternative structures and join with Conservative organisation when circumstances made this appropriate. Despite a large number of Liberals moving into Conservative circles, often because of the influence of Baldwin, it will be concluded that there was not necessarily a great movement of opinion towards a recognisable Conservative perspective or intention to cooperate with Conservatives permanently, with decisions conditioned by immediate circumstances. Nevertheless, some Liberals conceived of politics without an independent Liberal party, sometimes based on views held over many years connected to a legacy of Victorian approach to non-partisanship which continued to hold influence, albeit reconstituted for a different political age.

There will be a few conclusions drawn about the relevance of internal politics. The evidence of Lloyd George's central role in destabilising involvement of Liberals within their party needs to be set against other evidence in assessment of personal gain in changing party;

Liberals whose ambitions for office and political influence were uncertain had the capacity to act self-interestedly, irrespective of Lloyd George's supposed offences. In certain cases, there was enticement to join the Conservative party by Conservatives who flattered recruits' egos.

The conclusion will return to some of the methodological issues, pointing out, in particular, the overall utility of the case study approach in yielding important understanding of both collective and unique issues in political recruitment. It will be considered that utilising it has contributed to much better understanding of the place of recruitment in an understanding of Liberal party decline and general realignment of politics. There will also be points made about the good fortune in the availability of evidence, with approaches to assessment of it, including from the point of view of examination of messages in the language, being seen to be particularly significant in being able to draw out important ideas and arguments.

Chapter One: The Liberal Recruits

An important starting place in examining Liberal recruitment is with consideration of the collective social and cultural profiles of Liberal recruits as these provide some context for appreciation of political allegiances. In assessment, what emerges is strong representation of the middle-classes.¹ This middle-class contingent consisted of businessmen, such as the industrialist, Alfred Mond, Walter Runciman, son of a shipping magnate, and also Godfrey Collins, a publisher.² There were also other professionals, with trained lawyers, in particular, seeming well represented. John Simon was perhaps the most recognisable, but added to this were Ian Macpherson, Geoffrey Shakespeare, Leslie Hore-Belisha, Clement Davies, Hamar Greenwood and Reginald McKenna.³ Other professionals within this group included Edward Grigg, whose substantive career was in colonial administration, and Hilton Young, a distinguished journalist.⁴

¹ W. L. Guttsman, *The British Political Elite* (London, 1968), pp. 88-92, 94-97, 169-189; Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 96-154; Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Defections and the Liberal Party, 1910-2010* (Manchester & New York, 2012), pp. 13-19.

² Frank Greenaway, 'Mond family', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 11 August 2011); Martin Pugh, 'Runciman, Walter', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 7 April 2009); Morrice McCrae, 'Collins, Sir Godfrey Pattison', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 5 March 2010). Collins was a founder of the Collins publishing enterprise. Runciman played a role in his father's firm before going into politics.

³ David Dutton, *Simon – A Political Biography of Sir John Simon* (London, 1992), p. 9; G. A. Waters, 'Macpherson, (James) Ian', rev. Marc Brodie, www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 5 March 2010); Mark Pottle, 'Shakespeare, Sir Geoffrey Hithersay', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 5 March 2010); Keith Robbins, 'Belisha, (Isaac) Leslie Hore-Belisha', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 5 March 2010); Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Clement Davies – Liberal Leader* (London, 2003); Martin F. Seedorf, 'Greenwood, Hamar', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 18 June, 2009); Don Cregier, 'McKenna, Reginald', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 18 June 2009).

⁴ Wayland Kennet, 'Young, (Edward) Hilton', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 12 March 2010). He had been on the editorial team of both *The Morning Post* and *The Economist* before military pursuits and his election to Parliament; Kenneth Rose, 'Grigg, Edward

The recruits were often associated with religious and other minority groups in society. Both Mond and Edward Spears (formerly ‘Spiers’) were of Jewish-German *émigré* stock, whilst Leslie Hore-Belisha was a Sephardic Jew.⁵ There were a number of nonconformists including Runciman, who was a Wesleyan Methodist, Simon, who was the son of a Welsh Congregationalist minister, Shakespeare, who was the son of a Baptist minister, Clement Davies, and McKenna, who became a Congregationalist, following a conversion from Catholicism.⁶ The presence of nonconformists is significant since it shows that recruitment affected the Liberal party’s activist core, with such politicians having formed part of the backbone of traditional Liberal support.

In one sense, it is not very surprising that representation came from such Liberals as the post-war Liberal party has been characterised by its middle-class professionals and minority groups, but it does seem to point to the relevance of the findings of Guttsman and Wiener in relation to the reasons for Liberal recruitment to do with the desire to improve social standing and because of common ideas and values.⁷ In relation to social standing, certainly some of these Liberals would have needed to overcome social prejudice – on account of race, religion and occupational background – to be accepted by a political elite still dominated by land-owning patricians. It is hard to gauge the extent to which any sense of social inferiority shaped changes of party allegiances directly, but there are indications it may have done where politicians seemed very aware of their standing, such as in the cases of three of the recruits of Jewish origin; indeed, it is well-known that Jews were widely discriminated against in elite

William Macleay’, www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 19 June 2009). Grigg had started out as a journalist working for *The Times*. He eventually became Governor of Kenya.

⁵ For Spears see Max Egremont, ‘Spears, Sir Edward Louis’, www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 12 March 2010).

⁶ On Shakespeare also see Barry M. Doyle, ‘Urban Liberalism and the ‘Lost Generation’: Politics and Middle-Class Culture in Norwich, 1900-1935’, *Historical Journal* 38 2 (1995), 631.

⁷ Guttsman, *The British Political Elite*, pp. 88-92, 94-97, 169-189; Wiener, *English Culture*, pp. 96-154.

social and political circles in the period.⁸ For instance, Spears had changed the spelling of his name to win social acceptance, and whilst this was not anything to do with party affiliations *per se* it does raise possibilities that someone who would do this might conceivably change party allegiance for similar reasons. There was also Hore-Belisha. David Dutton claims that he was not at all interested in political parties, simply seeing them as ‘a way of getting things done while furthering his own interests and ambitions’, which might provide evidence of his desire to move between parties to increase his standing.⁹ And finally, there was also Mond; he accepted Baldwin’s nomination for a peerage, in part to gain acceptability at an elite level.¹⁰

In relation to the second point about ideas and values, there was certainly a possibility that middle-class Liberal recruits were influenced in their political affiliations by the shift in focus of the Conservative party, especially under Baldwin, to emphasise business ethics and interests, particularly the emphasis on technocratic and managerial approaches to governmental affairs, the protection of financial interests and moderate social reform which kept taxes low whilst at the same time conciliating the working-class with the intention to stem the rise of socialism.¹¹ Liberal recruits often emphasised these same points, which suggests that they, not unlike the middle-class electorate as a whole, were being drawn towards Baldwin’s middle-class agenda, particularly as the Conservative party seemed able to represent these values more effectively than the Liberal party. It certainly creates a context for Liberal and Conservative joint working and, in some cases, even the movement out of the Liberal party completely.

⁸ For confirmation see Wiener, *English Culture*, p. 107. A trawl through a range of private contemporary correspondence, some of which will be mentioned later in this thesis, can also illustrate this point.

⁹ The implications of Dutton’s points are much wider than just in terms of social standing but they do help to illustrate the point. See David Dutton, ‘A Liberal without a Home: the Later Career of Leslie Hore-Belisha’, *Journal of Liberal History* 65 (2009-10), 28.

¹⁰ This was only part of the reasoning, of course. However, for the circumstances around Mond’s peerage and discrimination against him due to his race see below, pp. 124-153.

¹¹ See above, pp. 3-18.

It is useful to speculate as to the relationship of these developments in middle-class thinking to the characteristics of the nonconformist Liberals who became linked to Conservatives. There were traditional distinctions of this group from Conservatives, but in the post-war situation some of the values being espoused by the Conservative party in representation of middle-class interests, must not have seemed too far removed from those of nonconformist Liberals, particularly in emphasis of fiscal restraint and self-help and this may partly account for the development.¹² It is useful to note, however, that a number of such Liberals became Liberal Nationals rather than Conservatives, which suggests that their older associations were not entirely put aside when it came to their choices about their party affiliations; being Liberal Nationals illustrated continuing awareness of their separateness from Conservatives.

Another characteristic of Liberal recruits was the tendency for them to possess close connections to the established social and political elite. In terms of education, Churchill, the Guests, Grigg, Shakespeare and Simon were all educated privately, and then there were those who held Oxbridge degrees (including Robert Bernays, Grigg, McKenna, Runciman, Shakespeare and Simon). There were also those with professional or vocational connections to the elite, including Grigg, with his background in colonial administration, or through military service, such as Grigg again (a Grenadier guard), Winston Churchill, Frederick Guest and Edward Spears (army officers), Collins (a Lieutenant-Colonel) and Young (a decorated naval reservist). Churchill and the Guests were perhaps distinctive, being from aristocratic and landed patrician backgrounds, and, of course, having previously been Conservatives, but their presence affirms the relevance of the characteristic.¹³ Involvement with the elite no doubt manifested itself in conditioning in cultural values, namely patriotism, with the desire to offer service to the nation and to promote and safeguard the interests of the

¹² Stephen Koss, 'Wesleyanism and Empire', *Historical Journal*, 18 1 (1975), 105-118.

¹³ By 'the Guests' the reference is to Frederick and Oscar who are both mentioned in Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 98-100.

empire.¹⁴ On a political level, the implications were towards seeking alignment with others of a similar mind, which accounts for the emphasis on cross-party working to defend the patriotic interests ‘above party’ and the desire for alignment with a party that emphasised and articulated these values most ardently, which in the period after the War, at least, was the Conservative party.¹⁵ There were a number of recruits whose major motivations included patriotism and loyalty to the empire, no doubt influenced by such elitist connections (definitely in the cases of Churchill, Guest, Grigg, Young and Runciman, it can be shown). However, involvement in parliamentary politics itself is of significance since it enabled politicians, with access to political institutions and the centres of constitutional power, to become imbued with the culture and values of the elite, irrespective of their previous background.¹⁶ This may explain why such values seem significant in political affiliations of Liberal recruits on a more general level as opposed to those with past close social connections to the elite.

¹⁴ There is discussion in empire history about the influence of empire on cultural thinking at an elite level, which provides a useful context; in particular see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism – How the British Saw Their Empire* (London, 2001); Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, Oxford University Press (Oxford, 2004); Peter Marshall, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1996); Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books (New York, 1979); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books (New York, 1993).

¹⁵ See above, pp. 10-12. Also see Stuart Ball, ‘The Conservative Party, the Role of the State and the Politics of Protection, c. 1918-1932’, *History* 96 323 (2011), 292; Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party – From Peel to Major* (London, 1997), pp. 110, 121-122; Alan Clark, *The Tories – Conservatives and the Nation State, 1922-1997* (London, 1998), pp. 35, 107; Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 262-275. It should be remembered that patriotism was not always associated with the Conservative party. Martin Pugh’s assessment of Conservative recruits to Labour points to a sense in which it actually drew some politicians leftwards; see Martin Pugh, ‘“Class traitors”: Conservative recruits to Labour, 1900-1930’, *English Historical Review* 113 450 (1998), 40-59.

¹⁶ Wyburn-Powell’s point that recruits often had long political careers or experience of ministerial office helps to illustrate this position; see Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, pp. 17-18.

I

One of the most complex aspects of Liberal recruitment to the Conservative party was the relationship of the phenomenon to electoral politics, and particularly the fault-lines between left and right. In this regard, there is a need to build on discussion which has shown that movement of recruits towards the right in politics, through pursuit of anti-socialism in electoral campaigning, was not necessarily conceived of in this way.¹⁷ Anti-socialism did tend to emphasise connections of Liberals to Conservatives, particularly due to its associations with the preoccupations and values of the middle-class, but pursuit of it was often more a negative, superficial and disingenuous campaigning tactic, motivated by need of creating clear electoral space from Labour, as opposed to a clear and genuine exposition of political principles. Many of the Liberal recruits stood in constituencies where their strongest challenge came from the Labour party, so demonstration of separation was very important. Nevertheless, anti-socialist campaigning saw a number of Liberals appearing like Conservatives through its pursuit, particularly where it led to the occurrence of political compacts, and it can actually be associated with changes of party, so it is a very critical issue for examination.

Broadly, anti-socialist campaigning amongst Liberal recruits held a number of factors in common: firstly, the exploitation of middle-class grievances and anxieties about Labour and socialist politics; secondly, attempts to undermine the foundation of socialism's social and industrial policy; and finally, a critique of the values of socialism, with references to ethical, moral and patriotic shortcomings. In all cases, there was very little intellectual substance to the criticisms, with attacks on socialism appearing rather clichéd or stereotyped.

In terms of the middle-class dimension, it can be seen that there were various attempts to project a negative sentiment about socialism's likely

¹⁷ See above, pp. 7-10.

negation of the rule of law and curtailment of political and economic freedom. There was also a desire to raise fears of high public expenditure and taxation. All, or some of these points, were addressed in political literature and in newspaper reports, depending on the nature of the local campaign, under warnings of the ‘socialist menace’ or some similarly coined phrase, as a rhetoric designed to entice voters to support the ‘anti-socialist’ Liberal candidates.¹⁸ As to some specific examples, Grigg, for instance, in one campaign spoke of the intention of the Labour party to declare ‘war to the knife against private enterprise’, whilst the County Durham Liberal, Aaron Curry, tried to exacerbate fears that Labour’s possible nationalisation programme would ‘increased the National Debt’; he also claimed that an elected Labour government would be ‘the stepping stone towards the creation of the Socialist State’, clearly trying to link voting Labour with extreme forms of socialism.¹⁹ Anti-socialism of the latter sort reached its zenith in 1924, amid the controversy of the Zinoviev Letter, with Grigg, in particular, making much electoral capital out of it in numerous references to the government’s supposed surrender to extreme socialism.²⁰ But it continued well after in the shadow of the General Strike, with Curry using his Wallsend by-election platform (July 1926) for placing suspicion on the

¹⁸ Report, Edward Grigg speech, *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 13 November 1922; Edward Grigg Election Address, Oldham 1922 & 1924 cit. Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1010; Edward Grigg, Published statement, *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 27 October 1924; Edward Grigg, Election advertisement, *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 28 October 1924; Election report, *Wellingborough Post & District Advertiser*, 1 November 1922; Report, G. Shakespeare speech, *Wellingborough Post & District Advertiser*, 8 November 1922; Report, Hamar Greenwood speech, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 28 October 1922; Reports, Aaron C. Curry speeches, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 28 November 1923, 1 December 1923, *Newcastle Daily Journal & North Star*, 14 July 1926; Report, Robert Aske speech, *Newcastle Chronicle*, 28 October 1924.

¹⁹ Edward Grigg Election Address, Oldham 1922, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1010; Report, Aaron C. Curry speeches, *North Mail & Newcastle Chronicle*, 1 December 1923, *Newcastle Daily Journal & North Star*, 14 July 1926.

²⁰ Reports, Edward Grigg speeches, *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 22 October 1924, 27 October 1924, 28 October 1924; Edward Grigg Election Address, Oldham 1924, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1010.

industrial power of the unions in seeking a socialist state which would involve the overthrow of the country's constitutional order.²¹

Reference to socialism's impact on industrial and social policy was chiefly directed at raising fears of a rise in industrial unemployment and the lowering of wages with a direct appeal to the working-class voters.²² These judgements on socialism evolved into direct criticism of the Labour party itself, following experience of Labour in power, after 1924, where such anti-socialist Liberals tried to convince electors that alleged failures in policy were the result of Labour's socialism. Macpherson, for example, in his 1924 re-election campaign offered criticism of the Labour record on unemployment and housing problems.²³ Robert Bernays, furthermore, poked fun at Labour's record on unemployment; Labour had 'arrived in the signal box' but had 'no idea which lever to pull to put the trains carrying the unemployed on the right track for prosperity'.²⁴

Appeals across the classes reveal evidence of a sense in which voters needed to be made aware of weaknesses of socialism's ethical and moral dimensions, its lack of patriotism and its sectional partisanship, using a strong attacking rhetoric. In his Wellingborough election campaign of 1924, for example, Shakespeare claimed that socialism was an affront to 'man's own personality and individuality'.²⁵ Grigg and the Newcastle MP, Robert Aske, appealed directly to the public to voice their anger against an unpatriotic socialism, which would 'destroy our national unity and undermine all patriotism', whilst Greenwood suggested Labour should be

²¹ Report, Aaron C. Curry speech, *Newcastle Daily Journal & North Star*, 13 July 1926.

²² Edward Grigg Election Address, Oldham 1922, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1010; Report, Geoffrey Shakespeare speech, *Wellingborough Post & District Advertiser*, 8 November 1922; Report, John P. Dickie speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 17 November 1923; Reports, George Lambert speeches, *The Times*, 18 February 1930, 5 June 1930.

²³ Ian Macpherson, Election address, *The Inverness Courier and General Advertiser*, 21 October 1924.

²⁴ Robert Bernays article, *Liberal Forward*, October 1929.

²⁵ Report, Geoffrey Shakespeare speech, *Wellingborough Post & District Advertiser*, 8 November 1922. Also see Report, Aaron C. Curry speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 28 November 1923.

condemned for presenting a class policy which was ‘morally bad’.²⁶ The latter point was also conveyed by County Durham Liberal, John Dickie, who posed an ethical critique of Labour’s class policy, claiming that this, and the related association with the trade unions, was actually an affront to political representation itself; in fact ‘their [Labour’s] avowed aim was not to advance the interests of the whole community, but to [advance] the interests of a particular trade union to whose funds they owed their return’.²⁷

The limits to the pursuit of anti-socialism also point to superficiality and disingenuousness. This can be seen, firstly, through evidence that anti-socialism could be put aside in favour of a left-leaning electoral position when this seemed more beneficial. Some of the future recruits seemed to wish to placate or even cooperate with Labour at times; for instance, Dickie explained that Labour had a ‘constitutional right to take office’ whilst Lambert said that he wanted the chance to ‘work with Moderate Labour’.²⁸ Labour activists were not all to be distrusted as extreme socialists, it seems. On policy matters too there were inconsistencies. Aske had been one of the most assiduous anti-socialists, but, by 1929, he seemed very comfortable with Lloyd George’s socialistic loan-financed unemployment scheme: ‘no better way’, he said, ‘could be found of spending public money.’²⁹ And most surprisingly of all was Greenwood, who, despite a supposed overwhelming post-war hostility to Labour and socialism, expressed views in favour of nationalisation of the railways and the mines.³⁰

²⁶ Report, Edward Grigg speech, *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 13 November 1922; Report, Robert Aske speech, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 1 December 1923; Report, Hamar Greenwood speech, *Sunderland Echo*, 23 November 1923.

²⁷ Report, John P. Dickie speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 4 December 1923.

²⁸ Report, John P. Dickie speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 16 October 1924; Report, George Lambert speech, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 25 October 1924.

²⁹ Report, Robert Aske speech, *Newcastle Daily Journal & North Star*, 18 May 1929.

³⁰ Report, Hamar Greenwood speeches, *Sunderland Echo*, 12 December 1918, 1 November 1922.

Limits to the importance of anti-socialism were also defined by its role as part of a desire for equidistance between both other parties on an electoral level. The character of the equidistance tended to provide variations on a narrative that Liberals were moderate, responsible, trustworthy and fair to all, in contrast to all their opponents – Labour and Conservative alike. At the most hyperbolic level, there were colourful metaphors to entice voters to observe a complete separation from the other two parties. Thomas Magnay’s Blaydon campaign, in 1929, for example, provided his electorate with a metaphor of ‘three political shops’ in which the Conservatives were accused of having nothing to ‘supply the needs of the unemployed’ whilst, at the Labour shop, customers were asked to only choose from ‘nationalisation, or Guild socialism, Syndicalism, or other Redism.’³¹ It was only at the Liberal shop where the ‘goods were ready to wear, and at the right price.’ Here an anti-socialist strategy sat alongside an anti-Conservative one, where Conservatives were presented as uncaring and dismissive of the needs of those in distressed circumstances. On a deeper electoral level, this equidistance was also about circumventing the rise of class politics, encouraging harmony between the classes, with Conservatives as well as Labour being derided in this respect. ‘The Liberal Party’, said Durham Liberal, William McKeag, ‘believed in cooperation between employer and employed’, whilst Curry put this in very inclusive terms in his claim that ‘Liberals stood for industrial emancipation and sought to bring the workers into partnership with the owners, giving them an effective voice, not only in the management, but the distribution also of the profits’.³² Curry’s position is a fascinating one since his anti-Conservative perspective was very developed. He suggested that Conservative policy failures in stimulating trade, employment and a more equal distribution of wealth were linked to the rise of social discontent and the General Strike.³³

³¹ Report, Thomas Magnay speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 May 1929.

³² Report, William McKeag speech, *Durham Chronicle*, 27 September 1924; Report, Aaron C. Curry speech, *Newcastle Daily Journal & North Star*, 13 July 1926.

³³ Aaron C. Curry speeches, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 7 July 1926, *Newcastle Daily Journal & North Star*, 13 July 1926.

Some equidistance strategies seemed rather retrospective in character. Lambert, Shakespeare, and Norfolk Liberal, Arthur Harbord, for example, pointed to how ‘the Liberal party stood between revolution on the one hand and reaction on the other’.³⁴ There were clearly good reasons electorally for Liberals to present this kind of approach given that for some constituencies the older political controversies still carried electoral weight. Harbord contested elections in Great Yarmouth, a Norfolk coastal fishing town, with a weak Labour vote through the 1920s.³⁵ This enabled him to position the Liberal party almost completely as an old-fashioned Gladstonian party, very separate from the other parties, with mention of industrial relations seeming less in evidence than the old cries of ‘peace, retrenchment and reform’, even as late as 1929.³⁶ Lambert was similarly positioned in South Molton, Devon. He presented himself as an old fashioned Radical, although adapting himself to his contemporary age, being both anti-Conservative and anti-extreme socialist.³⁷ Part of Lambert’s approach appeared to be to stop any haemorrhaging of moderate support to Labour and to stem a drift towards class politics, which accounts for his direct appeal to moderate working-class opinion in many of his election campaigns. Interestingly, he tried to outflank the left in the legitimacy of opposition to the Conservatives, so acutely so that by 1929 he was appealing

³⁴ Report, George Lambert speech, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 11 May 1929; Report, Geoffrey Shakespeare, *Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph*, 9 November 1922; Arthur Harbord Election Address, *The Yarmouth Independent*, 25 October 1924.

³⁵ Labour did not even contest the election in 1923. See Election Report, *The Yarmouth Independent, Gorleston Times and Flegg Journal*, 24 November 1923.

³⁶ Arthur Harbord speech, *The Yarmouth Independent*, 11 November 1922; Election Report, *Yarmouth & Gorleston Times*, 11 November 1922; Arthur Harbord, Election Address 1923, *The Yarmouth Independent*, 1 December 1923; Arthur Harbord, Election Address 1924, *The Yarmouth Independent*, 25 October 1924; Arthur Harbord speech, *The Yarmouth Independent*, 18 May 1929.

³⁷ Report, George Lambert speech, *Manchester Guardian*, 19 March 1920; Reports, George Lambert speeches, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 25 October 1924, 11 May 1929, 18 May 1929; A. Michael Dawson, ‘Politics in Devon and Cornwall, 1900-1931’, Unpublished University of London (LSE) Ph.D. (1991), p. 322.

for some tactical voting on the part of Labour-leaning voters, publicly claiming that ‘every vote for the Labour candidate would be a vote of security for Mr. Baldwin’ although he maintained his distance from socialism by his opposition to Labour’s spending commitments, tax policies and the record on unemployment.³⁸ Dwelling on Lambert further, it can be seen that he even tried to outflank the Conservatives on the right as well; the Conservative party being insufficiently patriotic and moderate and too partisan.³⁹ He pointed to Conservative irresponsibility on taxation and bureaucratic waste and, in 1929, compared the abolition of the Boards of Guardians to ‘the worst type of socialism’.⁴⁰ Collectively, all this revealed evidence of a sophisticated electoral tactic, mixing traditional Liberal perspectives about state interference with more recent concerns of the middle-class.

Generally, the lack of consistency about being anti-socialist and criticisms of Conservatives were not interpreted encouragingly by Conservatives, who tended to view Liberal tactics as cynical and this led to much cross-party conflict as opposed to the *rapprochement* that consistency in pursuit of anti-socialism might have secured. Aske was opposed by a Conservative candidate in 1924 having been amongst the supposed ‘anti-socialist’ Liberals who had then voted Labour into office.⁴¹ Shakespeare was condemned for his general warmness to Labour. In Norwich, in 1929, a Conservative candidate concluded that Shakespeare and the Norwich Liberals could never again count on gaining Conservatives votes on account of their campaigning to appeal to Labour voters.⁴²

³⁸ Report, George Lambert speech, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 25 May 1929.

³⁹ George Lambert speech, 18 January 1924, HC Debates Vol. 169 1924 col. 469; Reports, George Lambert speeches, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 18 October 1924, 25 October 1924.

⁴⁰ Report, George Lambert speech, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 18 May 1929.

⁴¹ Election report, *Newcastle Chronicle*, 15 October 1924.

⁴² Election report, *The Norfolk Chronicle*, 7 June 1929.

However, whilst the significance of anti-socialism does have its limits, there are examples of where the pursuit of it did impact on political affiliations since it encouraged a view that long-term or permanent cooperation against Labour should be propagated, for example, in the cases of both Greenwood and Grigg. With regards to Greenwood, it can be seen that he was a consistent advocate of compact arrangements with the Conservatives from 1918, viewing that relationships built at Westminster level, between the Lloyd George Liberals and Conservatives, should be propagated in the constituencies. This was his view of politics in his own constituency of Sunderland, but it was not one seemingly shared by many others there and he eventually lost his interest in the constituency as a result.⁴³ He wanted to see a political union of two forces, Liberal and Conservative, positioned in opposition to socialism, so in 1924, he deserted Sunderland, joining Churchill in his pursuit of a new Constitutionalist force, made up of Liberals and Conservatives, putting himself forward for a vacancy at Walthamstow East.⁴⁴ However, he ended up appearing more like an uncommitted Conservative since he only managed to obtain the backing of local Conservatives for his candidature; the Liberals had their own candidate lined up.⁴⁵ His campaign, furthermore, positioned him actually against the Liberal candidate, especially in his claim that: ‘Anti-socialists [were] beginning to see clearly that a vote for the Liberal is wasted’, so it was unclear what the Liberal aspect to his positioning alongside the Conservatives was intended to be.⁴⁶ Not all anti-socialists standing on a Constitutionalist platform were seen as antagonistic to the Liberal party, and indeed, in the months after the election, with the collapse of the Constitutionalist party, some of them were enticed to sit on the Liberal benches. Greenwood’s actions meant that he was separated from the Liberal

⁴³ Reports, Hamar Greenwood speeches, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 7 December 1918, 13 April 1920, 28 October 1922, *Sunderland Echo*, 14 December 1918; Election reports, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 9 December 1918, 5 April 1920.

⁴⁴ Also see Election reports, *The Times*, 11 October 1924, 15 October 1924.

⁴⁵ Report, *The Times*, 15 October 1924.

⁴⁶ Report, Hamar Greenwood. Greenwood speech, *Evening Standard*, 28 October 1924.

party; he would now have to either sit as an independent or reconcile himself to the Conservatives and he took the latter option.⁴⁷

Grigg's perspective was similar to Greenwood's in wanting to 'consolidate the anti-Socialist forces throughout the country'.⁴⁸ Much of his efforts were part of a wider project than a simple electoral one, but the idea he came up with for a renewed 'Liberal-Unionist' grouping was based on a reality he saw that the Liberal party would have to choose to position itself quite separate from socialism or face being absorbed by it.⁴⁹ Grigg's idea was to enable a body of Liberals to remain Liberal but sufficiently anti-socialist to remain relevant. In all of this, working in partnership with the Conservatives was desirable and he looked to seek electoral compromises with them to secure anti-socialist unity. This seemed very similar to the Constitutionalist party idea of Churchill's, but there was little support for Grigg's position from inside the Liberal parliamentary party and this left him ever more reliant on Conservatives who encouraged his developing views. Eventually he was nominated by the Leeds Central Conservative Association as a candidate, with an agreement that he might be able to fight on a 'Liberal-Unionist' ticket for Leeds Central in 1931.⁵⁰ In electoral terms

⁴⁷ Report, *The Times*, 17 December 1924.

⁴⁸ Edward Grigg to A. Bailey, 4 January 1923, 24 January 1923, 9 April 1923, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1000; Edward Grigg to John Simon, 14 May 1923, 15 May 1923, 17 May 1923, 28 May 1923, 31 May 1923, 6 June 1923, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001; Election report, *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 21 November 1923, Election report, *Oldham Evening Standard*, 22 November 1922, Edward Grigg to A. Bailey, 3 January 1924, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001.

⁴⁹ Edward Grigg to Lord Younger, 30 March 1926, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1002; Report, *The Times* 4 March 1931; Edward Grigg to T. Brooke, 19 March 1931, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1003; Edward Grigg to J. D. Birchall, 28 March 1931, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1003.

⁵⁰ Report, *The Times*, 23 February 1931; Edward Grigg to J. D. Birchall, 28 March 1931, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1003; Edward Grigg to Neville Chamberlain, 28 March 1931, 23 April 1931, 10 June 1931, 17 June 1931, 26 June 1931, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1003. Interestingly, the only definite support seemed to come from the future recruit, John Dickie, since he sent a letter to Grigg in support of what he was doing although there is no evidence of any active cooperation with him; see John P. Dickie to Edward Grigg, 10 June 1931, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1003.

this made him effectively a Conservative, not unlike Greenwood, without any evidence of particular support from Liberal politicians in Leeds or elsewhere. Grigg, of course, never got the opportunity to stand in the constituency due to the establishment of the National Government and his agreement to stand aside in favour of the sitting 'National' Labour member, but it would be interesting to speculate whether he would, in any case, have been able to stand on the Liberal-Unionist ticket if there had been no National Government given that prominent Conservatives, like Neville Chamberlain, remained unconvinced that this would bring about a greater cooperation with supposedly committed anti-socialist Liberals.⁵¹ Anti-socialism definitely seemed to have drawn Grigg into the Conservative camp in the sense that the act of allowing himself to be endorsed by a Conservative association on anti-socialist grounds showed it to have become more important than retaining a separate Liberal appeal. Like Greenwood, Grigg may not have intended this appearance but this was the reality, and from this perspective it appears that this is something which Grigg was soon to recognise, since he soon abandoned even the prefix of 'Liberal', contesting the Altrincham by-election as a straightforward Conservative candidate in 1933.

For both Greenwood and Grigg there was a certain amount of choice in their pursuit of their strategies of anti-socialism, irrespective of the nature of the intended outcome. For other Liberals, however, the pursuit of an anti-socialist strategy was arguably forced upon them. A very good example of this emerges from consideration of the position of Aske in Newcastle East; Aske was very affected by the weakness of Liberals in triangular electoral contests in the period. He first contested the constituency in 1923, without Conservative opposition, which enabled him to win, but only by a narrow margin.⁵² From then on, he faced uncertainty over his electoral position, being entirely reliant on Conservative non-intervention for any electoral success, with his defeat in 1924 in a three-way fight, providing good

⁵¹ Report, *The Times*, 17 October 1931.

⁵² Aske scored 52.3 per cent of the vote to Arthur Henderson's 47.7 per cent.

evidence.⁵³ In 1929, he tried to distance himself from anti-socialism to some extent, wishing to avoid being forced into a compact with the Conservatives; he wanted a strategy to appeal to left-leaning voters, as his support for Lloyd George's unemployment scheme is partly evidence of.⁵⁴ His electoral distance from the Conservatives was not unnoticed, and he was lucky that a very poor showing by the Conservatives in 1924, discouraged a Conservative intervention in 1929, with a decision not to oppose him, even so, only being made at a late stage.⁵⁵ As for 1931, the Conservatives threatened to fight the election again; having even selected a candidate to stand on a 'National' ticket in opposition to Aske, and it was only his eventual positioning in fully supporting the National Government, as a Liberal National, that prevented it.⁵⁶ He took some time to decide to align himself with the Liberal Nationals and this raises questions about whether he would have preferred to have contested the election as a Samuelite.⁵⁷ Electoral interest perhaps played a part here since standing as a Samuelite would certainly have ensured his defeat, as the Conservatives would surely have carried out their threat to field a candidate in such conditions. Circumstances had shaped his position, although he may not have felt that he was being drawn into a conventional anti-socialist compromise with Conservatives due to the creation of the National Government. This latter point is strengthened by the sense, post-1931, that he still wished to avoid an active anti-socialist strategy, judging from his positioning as an internal opponent of the government.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, not unlike other Liberal

⁵³ Aske's poll slumped to 45.1 per cent, just 1.3 per cent behind Labour, but the intervention of a Conservative scoring 8.5 per cent was crucial in his defeat.

⁵⁴ Reports, Robert Aske speeches, *Newcastle Daily Journal & North Star*, 17 May 1929, 18 May 1929. It was a possible calculation that the best way of being elected would be by appealing to moderates on the left given the paucity of voters inclined towards the Conservatives.

⁵⁵ Election report, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 13 May 1929.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1931.

⁵⁷ For a parallel case see David Dutton, 'William Mabane and Huddersfield Politics, 1931-47: 'By Any Other Name a Liberal'', *Northern History* XLIII 1 (2006), 137-153. Aske's position would not seem dissimilar to that of other Liberal Nationals in general.

⁵⁸ This situation will be considered in more detail the next section of the chapter.

Nationals whose positions were similar, Aske continued to pursue the electoral compromise aspect to anti-socialism into 1935, which underlines the sense that he had become absorbed into a Conservative *bloc*, although he had not been fully assimilated within it.⁵⁹

II

The convergence of Liberal and Conservative politics related to wide common perspectives on a range of political issues and left some Liberals considering that there were no fundamental differences of broad political outlook. This was particularly true in relation to Liberals who joined the Conservative party itself, such as Churchill, Young and Guest, who are discussed in the case study chapters, but also in relation to others, such as Grigg and Greenwood. In reflecting on this situation generally it can be surmised that the catalyst was in pre-war and First World War policy-making, which brought to the fore the common interests in attitudes towards world and domestic affairs, separate from old party grievances, creating a sense in which the two parties – or, more particularly, individuals within them – could cooperate with each other.⁶⁰ Indeed, issues such national insurance and pressure for pursuit of more aggressive military interests in the pre-war era, as well as the need for mobilisation of the country for the war effort, particularly in the context of the debate about compulsion, revealed that there were issues of high importance, that required patriotic, non-partisan and more managerial solutions, in many senses opening the way for more permanent connections between Liberals and Conservatives in the years after 1918 in pursuit of mutually important issues. However, whilst the War and the years before it might have been crucial to assist the timing of a shift in the nature of Liberal and Conservative relations, the attitudes which conditioned these feelings, to a certain extent, need to be put in a more complex setting. In making this point, the noted identification of a

⁵⁹ David Dutton, *Liberals in Schism* (London, 2008), p. 76.

⁶⁰ The influence of the war is critical in the positions of Churchill and Mond; see chapters below.

longer-term philosophical influence on cooperation between parties, much in the mould of the patriotic, imperialist and managerial approaches of an earlier generation of politicians, becomes significant, particularly in its agenda for the establishment of a national government ‘above party’ interests.⁶¹

The relevance of the national government idea seems to be borne out from examination of the positions of Liberal recruits, whose political outlooks seem reminiscent of statesmen of the later nineteenth century in various respects, including Churchill, Guest, Mond, Runciman, Grigg, and even Lambert.⁶² There was an inclination amongst this group towards the need to free Parliament from the constraints of party politics, to implement policy in a more professional and pragmatic way, and to pursue unashamedly imperialist and patriotic approaches to politics. Not all views coincided exactly, such as in Mond’s and Churchill’s differences over Free Trade or Churchill and Runciman’s over war strategy, but the essence of the perspective was the same in that all were arguing for their case on similar imperialist and patriotic managerial grounds.⁶³ And there was a sense of

⁶¹ Note that ‘national government’ is used rather than capitalised form of Geoffrey Searle’s ‘National Government’ to recognise that the agenda was often about the form of government as opposed to a detailed policy agenda and also to differentiate it from the actual National Government from 1931.

⁶² See various examples from the chapters below on Churchill, Mond and Runciman. For Lambert see Report, *The South Molton Gazette, Devon & Somerset Chronicle, and the West of England Advertiser*, 29 September 1900. Mond, Runciman and Lambert held connections to the Liberal Imperialist movement of the later century, whilst Churchill and Guest have been seen to have held connections to the politic of One Nation Conservatism, which was rooted in some similar perspectives.

⁶³ For details of the characteristics as a whole see chapters below on: Churchill, in his views on social and international policy before the War, favouring of compulsion, move towards imperial preference; Mond, see his favouring of welfare provision before 1914, his views in favour of conscription and imperial preference, and Keynesian planning and intervention from the mid-1920s; Guest, in war-time views; Runciman, in his defence of a limited war, and in his favouring a professional and managerial government in the midst of the 1931 crisis. It is interesting to see various aspects of state intervention being recommended; such intervention could be a patriotic managerial tool for government policy provided that it did not hinder business or other private interests.

them wanting to secure these ends through mutual cooperation with members of other parties, by seeking to work with a range of politicians, most often linking Liberals and Conservatives; Conservatives being most likely to be similarly minded in relation to a shared understanding of the objectives of government policy and to be sympathetic to Liberal recruits' patriotic notions of national government. This latter point underlines the extent to which national government brought Liberal advocates and Conservatives into proximity. But there was a further point of interest too, since it can be seen that favouring national government actually encouraged Liberals to look at more formal means to cooperate with Conservatives, and even to seek integration into the Conservative party itself.⁶⁴ Advocates of national government needed a party, in a party system, to which they could be linked, and whilst there had been a sense before 1918 that the Liberal party offered that opportunity, it was towards the post-war Conservative party that they looked after that time; the party appearing almost itself as a national party, especially under the moderate and patriotic policy of Baldwin.⁶⁵

In thinking about Liberal recruits who appear to reflect the profile of some of the perspectives mentioned so far, Grigg emerges as an important example. His political aspirations seemed very much linked to his professional connection to the empire and his pre-existing interest in the politics of Joseph Chamberlain and Liberal-Unionism; he seemed to have little interest in the traditional causes of the Liberal party.⁶⁶ Thus, not unlike some of the other Liberal recruits mentioned, it seems that his political outlook placed him firmly at the margins of Liberal politics, even from the outset of his career.⁶⁷ In fact, there is little known of why he actually got

⁶⁴ Churchill's, Guest's and Young's recruitments can be connected very clearly with their pursuit of national government; see chapters below.

⁶⁵ See above, pp. 12-18.

⁶⁶ Nicholas Cott, *Notes of an Interview with John Grigg, son of Edward Grigg* (July 2000). John Grigg claimed that his father had been an actual supporter of the old Liberal Unionist party.

⁶⁷ Churchill and Guest's connections to Unionist politics, albeit of a Conservative nature, provide a useful parallel; see chapters below.

involved with Liberal party politics in the first place, other than that it arose from his admiration for Lloyd George, and a sense that the Liberal party, or at least a Lloyd Georgian section of it, was a vehicle for achieving the political end of creating a national government.⁶⁸

Grigg held a very definite idea from his first entry into parliamentary politics (1922) about what good government should be, focusing his attention on the need for joint working with the Conservatives, trying everything possible, for example, in the months before the end of the Coalition to dissuade Conservatives from disbanding the coalition arrangements, using his professional connections to Conservatives to try and further this end.⁶⁹ He set out in a paper entitled ‘The Objects of National Policy’ detail concerning the type of policy a joint administration might achieve, pointing to the need to revive trade at home and in the empire, as a priority.⁷⁰ He seemed to be establishing the policy grounds for his pluralistic union idea, not dissimilarly to both Churchill and Guest, at this time, playing on the importance of placing ‘country before party’ in political discussions.⁷¹ To Grigg, the old political controversies between the two parties were apparently now ‘out of the field’, with a sense of a clear ability of Liberals and Conservatives to work together on important matters of the day.⁷² A good measure of this was that, in advance of some other Liberals, including Churchill and Guest, but in common with Mond, Grigg favoured

⁶⁸ Cott, *Interview with John Grigg*. John Grigg seemed to view his support for Lloyd George to have originally related to his support for National Insurance in 1911 and then his success in the pursuit of War from 1916 to 1918. Not unlike Churchill, Guest and Young, he was very interested in social reform, as a patriotic cause, which the Edwardian Liberal party seemed to represent most strongly; see chapters below.

⁶⁹ Edward Grigg to Arthur Balfour, 5 March 1922, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 999; Balfour Papers GD433/2/1/22; Diary of Leo Amery, 12 March 1922 in John Barnes & David Nicholson (eds.), *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1896-1929*, (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg, 1980), p. 283.

⁷⁰ Edward Grigg unpublished paper, ‘The Objects of National Policy’, dated 6 March 1922, cit. Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 999.

⁷¹ See chapters below on Churchill and Guest; Report, Edward Grigg speeches, *Oldham Evening Standard*, 30 October 1922, *Oldham Evening Chronicle* 13 November 1922.

⁷² Edward Grigg, Election Address Oldham 1922, Grigg Papers MSS Grigg 1010.

imperial preference.⁷³ His favouring of imperial preference did not mean that he was a fully-blown Protectionist, but rather, in line with his political view of what was an appropriate patriotic, pragmatic interventionist response to the need to defend the empire and encourage the growth of trade.⁷⁴

The preparing of the ground for the union of the two parties was established at the expense of relationships that could have been developed with other Liberals around a political agenda, underlining the sense that he was never really connected to them. After having been elected for less than a year, Grigg was already seeking ways to distance himself from Liberals, outside what he regarded as the Lloyd George sphere, due to their supposed lack of commitment to the empire. In a report in the *New York Times*, he offered criticism of the ‘strong prejudice’ against a policy of imperialism within Liberal ranks, a policy which he claimed, in contrast to their supposed view, was for ‘the good of the whole world’ in providing ‘progressive trusteeship’ over ‘backward peoples’.⁷⁵ And not long after, he wrote to Lloyd George to explain explicitly that he could not work with the ‘Wee Frees’ due to their anti-imperialism and ‘dogmatic Free Trade opinions’, which effectively declared him against the reunion of Liberal forces which was to follow soon after, and had even been favoured by the soon-to-be Conservative recruits, but also strongly imperialist Lloyd Georgian Liberals, such as Mond, Churchill and Guest.⁷⁶

After reunion, Grigg initially showed some support for Churchill’s new Constitutionalist force, a large measure of which was because of his

⁷³ See below, pp. 124-153.

⁷⁴ Cott, *Interview with John Grigg*.

⁷⁵ Report, Edward Grigg speech, *New York Times*, 9 September 1923, cit. Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1013. John Grigg pointed to his father’s paternalistic sentiments. He was very much in favour of Chamberlain’s ‘civilising mission’ of the British Empire, and he believed in concessions to national movements when they ‘proved’ they were ‘civilised’; Cott, *Interview with John Grigg*.

⁷⁶ Edward Grigg to David Lloyd George, 9 November 1923, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001; Cott, *Interview with John Grigg*. Also see chapters below on Churchill, Mond and Guest.

acceptance of imperial preference.⁷⁷ However, he became disillusioned with Churchill's position when it became clear to him that the Constitutionalist force was a sort of staging-post in Churchill's journey back into the Conservative party.⁷⁸ He told Churchill: 'Whatever happens, Liberals will not become Conservatives', which was a surprising statement given his own proximity to the Conservatives; but it was perhaps not so much a measure of his own view, it was rather of what he perceived of Liberal opinion more widely which still needed to be persuaded of the case for working closely with Conservatives, as well as reflecting his continuing desire for a pluralistic union between the two forces.⁷⁹ His 1925 resignation from Parliament did not mean that he gave up on the enterprise of bringing Liberals and Conservatives together; on the contrary, he became bolder in displaying his Chamberlainite influences, seeking arrangements for his 'Liberal-Unionist' faction to further these ends.⁸⁰

It was not until 1930 that he called for a formal split of likeminded Liberals from the Liberal party; prior to that it seems he forlornly thought that the whole party would come round to his way of thinking about a political union with the Conservatives. However, after this time the politics within the party must have looked very different with Lloyd George's working arrangements with Labour thwarting any relationship of the party to the Conservatives, and the burgeoning financial crisis seemed to justify a new direction in the national interest. At the centre of the new party, he wished to see a commitment to cooperation with the Conservatives to secure

⁷⁷ Edward Grigg to Vivian Phillipps, 5 March 1924, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001; Cott, *Interview with John Grigg*.

⁷⁸ See below, pp. 92-123.

⁷⁹ Edward Grigg to Winston Churchill, 6 March 1924, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001; Edward Grigg to Lord Younger, 30 March 1926, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1002.

⁸⁰ Edward Grigg to Lionel Hitchins, 6 May 1925, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1002; Edward Grigg to Lord Younger, 30 March 1926, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1002.

a new government to protect British and imperial financial interests, with a scheme for imperial preference at the centre of the government's policy.⁸¹

Grigg remained out of Parliament until 1933 and his return was as a Conservative. He said that he had joined the Conservative party because it now completely represented the outlook on politics which accorded with his own, mentioning the empire and trade issues, and that the Conservative party had become truly a 'national' party in its own right.⁸² In the context of discussion of his political objectives his justification does seem credible; he had little to separate him from Conservatives in outlook, and what is more surprising perhaps is that he remained outside the Conservative party for so long. It seems he had been reluctant to give up on his political union idea which was more in tune with a strategy of pursuing national government than simply joining the Conservatives.

Beyond Grigg, there is evidence of further interest in the establishment of a national government and working with Conservatives, particularly from two Liberals with connections to Churchill – Greenwood and Spears. Greenwood had been Churchill's private secretary, which suggests there was a bond of political friendship between them, no doubt arising from common interests in empire and also 'patriotic' social reform.⁸³ During the War, Greenwood became a supporter of Coalition arrangements under Lloyd George, describing the programme of the Coalition by 1918 as 'a patriotic, progressive and Imperial one', and he mirrored Churchill in his hopes for a pluralistic union of the Liberal and Conservative parties,

⁸¹ Edward Grigg to Lord Islington, 30 June 1930, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg; Report, *The Times*, 4 March 1931.

⁸² Edward Grigg, Election Address Altrincham 1933, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1010. In full Grigg said: 'I joined the Conservative Party [...] because I believe in its principles and because I regard its organisation as the country's greatest safeguard against a return of that type of politics which brought us to the verge of ruin in 1931. The Conservative Party then declared itself a National Party in a new and broader sense. It went into close and loyal comradeship with those great elements in Liberal and Socialist Parties which were equally anxious to put Country above Party and to form a united national front against the danger and depression which were overwhelming us'.

⁸³ Reports, Hamar Greenwood speeches, *Sunderland Echo*, 28 November 1910, 1 December 1910; see below, pp. 92-123.

demonstrated most strongly in his identification with the Constitutionalist party.⁸⁴ In the period from 1918 until 1924, Greenwood demonstrated a degree of separateness from Liberal politics, firstly, by taking a very harsh view on war reparations; then, going on to endorse imperial preference, citing practical and patriotic reasons for rejecting Free Trade; and then, through his involvement in the affairs of Ireland, as the last Chief Secretary, playing an important role in defending British imperial interests there and overseeing the deployment of the controversial ‘Black and Tans’.⁸⁵ As for Spears, he held few connections to Liberal politics, with his initial involvement arising out of the friendship he formed with Churchill and his friend’s influence upon him thereafter.⁸⁶ Like Grigg, he came to politics only in 1922 and did not seem to develop any support for Liberal reunion.⁸⁷ He wished to maintain cooperation with the Conservatives, with evidence of his collusion with Churchill to secure a common patriotic platform with them in 1924, even if, again like Grigg, he opposed Churchill’s move into the Conservative fold that year.⁸⁸

However, the pressure for national government cannot altogether be seen in the uniform way described so far; in fact, there are dangers in over-emphasising the sense in which desires related to a programme of government, separate from party. Support for national government also

⁸⁴ Reports, Hamar Greenwood speeches, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 3 December 1918, 7 December 1918, 28 October 1922, *Evening Standard*, 28 October 1924.

⁸⁵ Reports, Hamar Greenwood speeches, *Sunderland Echo*, 6 December 1918, *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 13 December 1918; Reports, *The Times*, 27 July 1920, October 1, 7, 14 1920, 31 August 1921; Report, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 5 April 1920. Like Churchill, he seems to have returned to Free Trade in 1923, but this was not a sustained feeling and seems to be untypical of the general outlook on fiscal question over a longer period of time; see Report, Hamar Greenwood speech, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 20 November 1923.

⁸⁶ Egremont, ‘Spears’. Spears struck up friendship with Churchill as military colleagues during the First World War. Churchill encouraged his involvement in politics thereafter and influenced his perspectives.

⁸⁷ Edward Spears, Unpublished note on Liberal reunion, 7 December 1922, Spears Papers SPEARS 1/76.

⁸⁸ Report, Edward Spears speech, *Leicester Mail*, 30 October 1922 cit. Spears Papers SPEARS ACC 545 6.

related, in a good number of cases, less to theoretical and more to short-term patriotic reasons concerned with immediate circumstances. This is particularly true of the position of the recruits to the Liberal National party, whose involvement in a political arrangement with the Conservative party in 1931 was motivated by the financial and political crisis. Here, this study focuses on the case of Simon, who for much of his career, had been much more partisan by stressing Liberal political causes than other Liberal recruits mentioned so far, at least up to the later 1920s.⁸⁹ Simon was greatly convinced of the need for cooperation in forming a national government, as a patriotic short-term measure to address the crisis. Of course, he went on to pursue closer links with the Conservatives from 1932, although the reasons for this were largely of an electoral nature – he was greatly concerned that his Liberal faction would not survive without a continuing compact arrangement with Conservatives – and in order to avoid loss of influence within the government, as opposed to a positive view in favour of closer integration. Even if his pursuit of a ‘Liberal-Unionist’ style political union with the Conservatives was not dissimilar in character to that envisaged by Grigg only a couple of years before, there is no real evidence that in any discussions, either with Conservatives or his critical Liberal associates, that there was much in his political outlook which pushed him in this direction.

A further example of this short-termism comes from Runciman. He anticipated some kind of return to independent Liberal politics in the future, despite his close involvement in designing the system of Protection enacted by the government. Runciman had been rather inconsistent in his support for cross-party government throughout his career, having even retreated into Liberal factionalism in the mid-1920s, and a long-term interest in working with Conservatives was lacking, despite his desire to join the Liberal National party, in 1932, at the very time that party leaders was seeking more integration within the Conservative party.⁹⁰ Thus, in many senses, there was a kind of circumstantial character to the integration of Liberal Nationals into the Conservative party *bloc*, which is an interesting consideration in the

⁸⁹ See below, pp. 195-223.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 193-218.

context of their recent rehabilitation as part of a genuine Liberal political force.

The sense of short-term interest in the idea of national government for patriotic reasons is also emphasised in examining a wider body of opinion within the Liberal National grouping; in fact the sense of the need for maintaining Liberal independence was even more certain. There were some Liberal Nationals who, like Simon, got drawn into acceptance of integration within the Conservative party fold, such as Hore-Belisha, and perhaps even Dickie and Magnay, but these individuals seem untypical of the more independent-minded within the party.⁹¹ In character, Liberal Nationals were perhaps amongst the most patriotic of Liberals and supportive of the government as a means to deal with the immediate crisis, but they were partisan, in a Liberal sense, which reflects on the difficulties in their having been seen effectively as Conservatives.

The patriotism of Liberal Nationals was reflected at the outset, with a number of Liberal recruits pointing to the defence of the national interest, with Harbord and Shakespeare being fairly representative in expression of their 'duty to the country' in October 1931.⁹² There was also a genuine sense amongst such Liberals of a need for a joining together of 'experienced men' who could restore the country's fortunes through a business-like, independent and non-partisan approach in the immediate period, thus underlining the temporary nature of the arrangement, even if this looked superficially similar to justifications for working with Conservatives mentioned by Liberals who joined the Conservative party in the period

⁹¹ Leslie Hore-Belisha to Neville Chamberlain, 23 September 1932, Hore-Belisha Papers, HOBE 1/1/88-89; Reports, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 11, 12 April 1934. Dickie and Magnay both got into controversy for their support of a Conservative candidate in the Basingstoke by-election.

⁹² Report, Arthur Harbord speech, *The Yarmouth Independent*, 17 October 1931. Shakespeare said: My watchword [...] is 'Country before party'. We are in for five very difficult years, even if the National Government is returned, and it will require the best brains of all political parties and the co-operation of men and women of all parties if we are to pull through [...]; see Report, Geoffrey Shakespeare speech, *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 October 1931.

before 1931.⁹³ On issues such as tariffs there was also some support for the government's position, although again, this was normally seen as a short-term policy, and support for it was guarded.⁹⁴ Lambert's position is a good case in point. He had supported some form of tariff plan, even as early as November 1930, and, from 1931, this was an essential national policy in order to 'rebuild our temporarily shattered fortunes'.⁹⁵ He was, however, no true convert to Protectionism, publicly voicing his uneasiness in relation to the Ottawa plan of 1932, despite his ultimate support for the measure.⁹⁶ Of course, such views brought him and other colleagues closer to the Conservatives, but this did not mean they had been assimilated within the Conservative fold, despite difficulties this created for them in legitimising their representation of Liberal politics.⁹⁷ And ultimately, tensions emerged over their continuing support for the government, which illustrates the extent of the continuation of partisan feeling and the desire for separation from the Conservatives. There is a sense that some backbench Liberal Nationals wished to present themselves as offering an almost 'independent' position within the government benches; Aske, for instance, spoke of his willingness to oppose the government if it was 'doing things against the interests' of his

⁹³ Report, Robert Aske speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 16 October 1931; Report, Ian Macpherson speech, *The Inverness Courier & General Advertiser*, 16 October 1931.

⁹⁴ Some good general examples exist; see Report, Robert Aske speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 20 October 1931; Report, Arthur Harbord speech, *The Yarmouth Independent*, 17 October 1931; Report, William McKeag speech, *Newcastle Journal*, 12 October 1931; Report William McKeag speech, *Northern Echo*, 11 December 1931 cit. *Cuttings Book belong to the Estate of William McKeag*.

⁹⁵ It appears that Lambert had argued for a ten per cent duty on import manufactures as early as November 1930; see Garry Tregidga, *The Liberal Party in South West Britain Since 1918 – Political Decline, Dormancy and Rebirth* (Exeter, 2000), p. 59. Also see Report, George Lambert speech, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 3 October 1931.

⁹⁶ Report, *The Times*, 30 September 1932.

⁹⁷ Collins found himself in public difficulty, having spoken in favour of Protection in early September 1931 and then seeming to try to distance himself from his own words; see Reports, Godfrey Collins speeches, *The West Coast Courier*, 9 September 1931, 18 September 1931; Report, *The West Coast Courier*, 16 October 1931.

constituents.⁹⁸ And there was concern over various government policies; Macpherson condemned the 1931 National Economy Bill as ‘drastic and illiberal’; McKeag held criticisms of industrial, wages and means testing policies.⁹⁹ Indeed, McKeag grew opposed to the emphasis on Protection, seemingly having even contemplated ‘crossing the floor’ with the Samuelites in 1933, with evidence of discussion with Herbert Samuel directly over the matter.¹⁰⁰ Behind all the objections, it seems McKeag had concerns that the government had forfeited the title of ‘National’, and his reasoning for remaining within the ranks of the Liberal National grouping seemed to be related solely to its position on foreign policy, which was hardly a wide endorsement and reveals something of how close he was to leaving it. It seems that some of these concerns were in light of the drift of the Liberal National leadership towards the Conservatives and lack of a distinctly Liberal position which created a source of tension. This was even recognised by the Chief Whip, Shakespeare, who wrote to Simon seeking assurances that Liberal politics would be asserted within the government with a prophetic fear of ‘ultimate absorption within the Conservative

⁹⁸ Report, Robert Aske speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 5 November 1935; David M. Roberts, ‘Clement Davies and the Liberal Party, 1929-56’, Unpublished University of Wales M.A. (1974), p. 41.

⁹⁹ Ian Macpherson speech, 14 September 1931, H.C. Debates 1930-31 vol. 256 col. 562; Reports, William McKeag speeches, *Durham Advertiser*, 6 May 1932, *Newcastle Journal*, 2 June 1932, *Northern Evening Despatch*, 11 May 1933 cit. *Cuttings Book belonging to the Estate of William McKeag*.

¹⁰⁰ Reports, William McKeag speeches, *York Herald*, 28 August 1932, *Durham Advertiser*, 4 November 1932, *Northern Evening Despatch*, 21 August 1933, *North Mail*, 21 November 1933, *Durham Advertiser*, 24 November 1933 cit. *Cuttings Book belonging to the Estate of William McKeag*; William McKeag to Herbert Samuel, 20 November 1933, Samuel Papers A/95. Of course, McKeag was not the only Liberal National in this position. Curry’s position was similar to McKeag’s and he actually did end up joining the Samuelites due to his opposition to many government policies. On Curry, see Geoffrey Shakespeare to John Simon, 10 February 1932, Simon Papers MSS. Simon 71/41-43, Aaron C. Curry to John Simon, 5 September 1932, Simon Papers MSS. Simon 73/48; Report, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 October 1932 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 73/165; Reports, *Newcastle Journal*, 29 October 1935, 1 November 1935, 4 November 1935.

party'.¹⁰¹ Thus, it can be seen that Liberal Nationals often felt rather uncomfortable, with their expressions of discomfort and resistance revealing a sense that an incorporation of their party into a Conservative *bloc* was not going to be left unchallenged. The body of Liberal Nationals were in many ways the malcontented 'cuckoos in the nest' created by their Liberal political leaders in their partnership agreement with the Conservatives.¹⁰²

The other substantive influence on political outlook was the politics of Baldwin. His patriotic values won him support from Churchill, whose realisation of shared political perspectives in this respect was crucial in the timing of Churchill's move back to the Conservative party.¹⁰³ Guest, Young and Mond had similar feelings but also found particular attractions in his desire to avoid social disharmony and 'moderate' financial policy; they initially saw Baldwin as someone with whom Liberals could work in partnership, but he also seems to have been an encouragement in their journeys out of Liberal politics.¹⁰⁴ Simon was also influenced by Baldwin, having warmed to Conservative policy over the General Strike and due to his appointment to the India Commission, but Baldwin's influence was ultimately less of a positive inclination.¹⁰⁵ In government, after 1931, the close alignment of Simon's position with that of Baldwin was a major factor in the difficulties Simon had in separating himself and his party from the Conservatives, with nothing seeming fundamentally different from Baldwin's liberal Conservatism and Simon's attempted creation of a distinct

¹⁰¹ Geoffrey Shakespeare to John Simon, 23 September 1932, Simon Papers MSS. Simon 73/79-82.

¹⁰² The phrase is actually a kind of inversion of the title of a monograph on the Liberal National grouping. Liberal Nationals were more Liberal cuckoos in a Tory nest than the other way round; see Nicholas Cott, 'Tory Cuckoos in the Liberal nest? The case of the Liberal Nationals: a re-evaluation', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 25 (1999-2000), 24-30.

¹⁰³ See below, pp. 92-123.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 124-174.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 213-222.

patriotic Liberalism. Working in partnership with Baldwin then could be a way of losing a separate identity, even if this was not the intended outcome.

The influence of Baldwin on recruitment extended to other Liberals too. A good example lies with McKenna whose major criticisms of high levels of government expenditure brought him closer to Baldwin's position. In the years following the War, McKenna had, in any case, been moving closer to the Conservatives, witnessed through evidence of his involvement in an intrigue to replace the Lloyd George coalition with one led by Birkenhead, and friendly relations he had with Balfour and Bonar Law, both of whom had tried to persuade him to forsake his city role at the Midland Bank in order to take governmental office as Chancellor of the Exchequer.¹⁰⁶ With all this in mind, McKenna became central to Baldwin's early leadership strategy of wooing anti-Lloyd George Liberals in order to increase the liberal credentials of himself and his party, and by so-doing, enabling the passage of a renewed trade tariffs policy that would be controversial.¹⁰⁷ Thus, he offered McKenna a further chance to join the government as Chancellor with pressure being applied on the Conservative, Sir Frederick Banbury, to resign his City of London seat in Parliament to make the way for McKenna to return.¹⁰⁸ The situation was not all about political strategy, however, as there appeared to be a personal relationship of mutual admiration and respect that existed between both figures, with McKenna's 'promise' to serve as Chancellor demonstrating more commitment to Baldwin personally rather than to Conservative politics. There was no sense that McKenna was interested in actually becoming a

¹⁰⁶ Report, *Liberal Magazine*, December 1920; Diary of George Riddell, 23 June 1921, 29 May 1922 in John McEwen (ed.), *The Riddell Diaries, 1908-1923* (London, 1986), pp. 345, 387; Report, *The Times*, 24 October 1922; Wyburn-Powell, *Defectors*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰⁷ Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 276-278, 282-283.

¹⁰⁸ Report, *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, June 1923; Austen Chamberlain letters to his sisters, 9 July 1923, 1 August 1923 in Robert C. Self (ed.), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters – Correspondence of Sir Austen Chamberlain with his Sisters, Hilda and Ida, 1916-1937* (London, 1995), pp. 230-231; Reginald McKenna to Stanley Baldwin, 13 August 1923, Baldwin Papers MSS Baldwin 42/105; Reginald McKenna to Stanley Baldwin, 13 August 1923, Baldwin Papers MSS Baldwin 42/105.

Conservative; in fact, he was only prepared to fight an election as a Liberal, and was thus unwilling to completely sacrifice his Liberal credentials, which means his position was not dissimilar to some of the other Liberal recruits considered in this chapter in only going part way along the line of coalescence with Conservatives.¹⁰⁹ This continuing affinity with the Liberal party was the main reason why he never got to become Chancellor since Banbury's refusal to resign was on account of McKenna's unfavourable party affiliation.¹¹⁰

In relation to others, the situation is less explicit, but Baldwin's influence also appears strong. A good example is in relation to Bernays over the specific issue of him taking the government Whip after the 1935 election. He had been a critic, certainly in private, of Liberals in government which had left him refusing to formally associate himself with either Liberal faction, but, in 1935, he wrote to Baldwin explaining that he would wish to associate himself with the government by taking the Whip. This may be dismissible as an act of courtesy on Bernays' part in simply informing the Prime Minister of his intentions, but the sense exists that Bernays wished to show Baldwin that he perceived himself to be his ally.¹¹¹ And then, one has to consider the position of the Liberal Nationals themselves; it has been seen that they were often partisan but a number held very clear concerns about the need for retrenchment of public finances, and Baldwin's common

¹⁰⁹ This situation does not seem too dissimilar from the circumstances of Runciman being offered a Cabinet post by MacDonald in 1931; see below, pp. 224-267. It was Runciman's professional business qualities which MacDonald wanted to utilise in the Cabinet and, in regards to the case discussed here, there seems to have been a parallel motivation on Baldwin's part to bring in professional experience, as well as a partisan aspect in assisting his task in undoing the Liberal party. Interestingly, both McKenna and Runciman had turned their attention to business interests and away from party politics, revealing something in the success of MacDonald, in the case of Runciman, and Baldwin, in the case of McKenna, in courting two Liberals whose separation from Liberal politics meant that they were more amenable to their services being sought outside the Liberal sphere.

¹¹⁰ Report, *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, June 1923; Austen Chamberlain letters to his sisters, 9 July 1923, 1 August 1923, pp. 230-231.

¹¹¹ Robert Bernays to Stanley Baldwin, 24 October 1935, Baldwin Papers MSS Baldwin 47.129.

feelings in this regard must have encouraged their involvement with the Conservative party from 1931. Some Liberal Nationals, such as Lambert, had been consistent critics of government expenditure since the War, and it is likely that they felt encouraged to support the National Government, knowing that Baldwin had shared his broad inclinations in this regard.¹¹²

III

The final aspect of Liberal recruitment into the Conservative party relates to the internal factors within the Liberal party itself which assisted the change in political allegiance. In terms of longer-term pressures on allegiance, one can cite the progressive development of poor relations with party figures and on-going factional conflict, whilst more immediate issues include specific differences between Liberals in relation to policy and strategy, often heightened by personal animosity. In all these developments, a sense emerges that intra-party difficulties could be affected by personal ambition and calculations of self-interest, which perhaps inevitably emerge in political relationships but also complicate assessment of the relevant issues. Overall, it can be seen that there are connections with the sections of the chapter concerning convergence of Liberal politics with the politics of the Conservative party, since many disagreements related to supposed negation of the appropriate political direction the Liberal party needed to take. But internal factors should not really be taken as direct reasons for changes in

¹¹² For Lambert's experience see: Report, George Lambert speeches, *Liberal Magazine*, December 1920, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 30 November 1918, October 22 1922, 1 December 1923, 18 May 1929, 10 October 1931; George Lambert, Letters to the Editor, *The Times*, 18 February 1930, 5 June 1930. For other examples, a good one might be McKeag. He became particularly interested in the defence of capital interests and the need for sound finance in the years after 1931; despite his noted disgruntlement with the government, Baldwin's views on such matters may well have been appealing and assisted in his decision not to seek to join the Samuelites; see Report, William McKeag speech, *North Mail & Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 27 October 1931; Report, William McKeag speech, *Sunderland Echo*, 1 February 1932 cit. *Cuttings Book belonging to the Estate of William McKeag*.

allegiance; their role was more to create a context for them in assisting the breakdown of whatever political associations there were with the Liberal party so that movement towards the Conservative party became more possible.

Circumstances which affected later party allegiances can be traced back to even before the First World War in the cases of Liberal recruits with the longest political careers. This can be seen in relation to both domestic and international policy issues, where Liberals soon found their political aspirations were thwarted by other prevailing perspectives which led to some disagreements.

On the domestic front, there were some concerns about the tendency of government to appease Liberal dogmatists rather than to act on the more cosmopolitan interests. This can be seen in the position adopted by Churchill and to a lesser degree Mond, from 1908.¹¹³ Churchill's views varied from the government on issues such as licensing, disestablishment, education, and Irish Home Rule, leading him into his difficulties with colleagues when he entered the Cabinet. In line with his desire for a national government, it can be seen that Churchill wanted less Liberal party politics and more emphasis on social reform, and he was keen to move forward with the plan for National Insurance, believing it was being delayed, in part, by excessive Liberal partisanship. All his problems with the Liberal party were an encouragement to him in seeking *rapprochement* and, indeed, coalition with the Conservatives in order to develop a consensus over important policies, underlining a detachment from political colleagues even at this early stage of his involvement with the Liberal party. With regards to Mond, his concerns were about the pace of social reform, and he too looked for combinations outside Liberal politics, although he seemed more set on working with moderate Labour than the Conservatives at this time. In both cases, there was a particular disappointment with Asquith in his failure to live up to the expectation of driving social reform, but this sentiment was also coloured by frustrated ambition, with both Churchill and Mond believing that they had

¹¹³ See chapters below on Churchill and Mond.

talents which could be utilised, but were not recognised, so the disaffection certainly had a personal as well as political edge to it.

Other future recruits also had concerns about domestic issues, such as Runciman and McKenna.¹¹⁴ They too ended up in conflict with partisan Liberal opinion in relation to issues such as education in the desire for secularisation.¹¹⁵ And there were also similar criticisms of Asquith's leadership.¹¹⁶ The criticism had a personal flavour, despite otherwise friendly relations, since they were affronted by Asquith's lack of support against their Cabinet opponents and believed that he was deliberately sidelining them from important appointments, in particular, McKenna from the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in Lloyd George's favour in 1908, and, in Runciman's case, being moved to Agriculture from the Board of Education in 1911. Their feelings led them to contemplate resignation from the Cabinet and to feel a sense of insecurity about their long-term prospects under Asquith. This insecurity probably fed the tension which emerged with other Cabinet members, such as Lloyd George and Churchill, towards whom they developed difficult relations over the costs of social reform, particularly the cherished old age pension and National Insurance schemes.

Domestic policy revealed some precursors of the later and more fundamental troubles in Cabinet, some of which were to emerge in international policy. The first of these difficulties was to come during McKenna's period at the Admiralty. McKenna, not unlike his ally, Runciman, was a clear 'navalist', and keen therefore to bolster the Royal Navy, bringing him to the very centre of a controversy over naval construction, in 1909. He clashed with Lloyd George and Churchill, and relations were not aided when it was found that his plans were based on

¹¹⁴ Ibid on Runciman; Martin Farr, *Reginald McKenna – Financier among Statesmen, 1863-1916*, (New York & Abingdon, 2008), pp. 91-128.

¹¹⁵ N. D. Daglish, 'The transfer of power at the Board of Education, 1911', *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 32 2 (2000), 1-10; M. J. Wilkinson, 'Educational Controversies in British Politics, 1895-1914', Unpublished University of Newcastle Ph.D. (1977).

¹¹⁶ Some of McKenna's collective concerns were set out in a letter to Runciman; see Reginald McKenna to Walter Runciman, 28 March 1910, Runciman Papers WR 35.

false intelligence.¹¹⁷ Not long after, there was the Agadir Crisis of 1911, attracting further criticism, especially when Lloyd George and Churchill were edging towards support for a war with Germany. Both incidents were seized upon as evidence of McKenna's unsuitability for an Admiralty role, and Asquith seemed receptive to the views, moving McKenna to the Home Office, with Churchill replacing him at the Admiralty.¹¹⁸ Both incidents could not have left McKenna with fond relations with any of the three Liberals, particularly Churchill and Lloyd George, whom he believed had manufactured his demise.¹¹⁹ With regards to Asquith, McKenna saw the situation as another example of how he had taken sides against him, being too easily influenced by other opinions. He also believed Asquith's leadership skills were in question in not seeking to devise a firmer line on whether he wished his Cabinet to pursue a navalist or 'continentalist' policy.¹²⁰ However, the situation has been seen to have galvanised support for McKenna, against Churchill and Asquith, from Runciman, who rightly saw the post-Agadir policy as one which would bring British interests closer to France, antagonise Germany and involve Britain in a continental land war.¹²¹ Both McKenna and Runciman were then similarly alienated from colleagues and once again there is evidence that they considered yet another resignation from the Cabinet.

The rift in the Cabinet over naval issues showed no signs of abating in the period up to the War. Fresh controversy emerged over the naval estimates for 1913-14. Runciman and McKenna were joined in opposition to

¹¹⁷ Farr, *McKenna*, pp. 144-280.

¹¹⁸ For Churchill's perspective see below, pp. 92-123.

¹¹⁹ Diary of Charles Hobhouse, 7 March 1909 in Edward David (ed.), *Inside Asquith's Cabinet – From the Diaries of Charles Hobhouse* (London, 1977), p. 73; Journal of J.A. Pease, 29 March 1909 in Cameron Hazlehurst & Christine Woodland (ed.), *A Liberal Chronicle – Journals and Papers of J. A. Pease, First Lord Gainford, 1908-1910* (London, 1994), p. 110; McKenna to Asquith, 30 July 1910, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 12/80 A-E; Diary of C. P. Scott, 17 February 1911 in Trevor Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott 1911-1928* (London, 1970), pp. 39-40.

¹²⁰ Reginald McKenna to Asquith, 17 October 1911, McKenna Papers MCKN 4/1/8; Diary of Charles Hobhouse, 16 November 1911, p. 108.

¹²¹ See below, pp. 224-267.

the direction of policy by other Liberals in the Cabinet, including Simon.¹²² All believed that Churchill's estimates were unnecessarily high, although the reasoning varied, with McKenna's view being based on the need to avoid a costly continental war, whilst Simon appeared more concerned about the limitations that expenditure would bring to the government's domestic agenda.¹²³ Churchill found himself in a similar position to that of McKenna at the Admiralty in the years immediately before, but with a faction organised against him now, with Simon and McKenna being at the forefront of plans to oust him from government – McKenna seemed to want his revenge – and there was talk of more threats of resignation, if Asquith did not accede to their view.¹²⁴ Of course, Churchill was not ousted and there were no resignations, just more undermining of internal political unity. The whole incident made no impact on McKenna's integration within the government and it even assisted in pushing Churchill closer to the Conservatives, with his approach to them about some kind of political deal.¹²⁵

All in all, the battle lines seemed already drawn for the wartime conflict in the years previous to it, but the rift between the two factions was extended significantly further by the experience of war, largely due to differences about how the war should be fought which created personal conflict.¹²⁶ McKenna joined Runciman and, to some extent, Simon in seeking to fight for the maintenance of a limited war, and waging of economic warfare on Germany, which they saw as representing the best means to restore pre-war economic conditions after the War was over.¹²⁷

¹²² Ibid on Simon and Runciman.

¹²³ Diary of Charles Hobhouse, 28 January 1914, p. 159; Diary of C. P. Scott, 23 January 1914, 6 February 1914, pp. 78, 80.

¹²⁴ Diary of C. P. Scott, 18 January 1914, 23 January 1914, pp. 75, 78.

¹²⁵ See below, pp. 92-123.

¹²⁶ Martin Farr, 'Winter and Discontent: The December Crises of the Asquith Coalition, 1915-1916', *Britain and the World* 4.1 (2011), 109-141.

¹²⁷ See chapters below on Simon and Runciman; Farr, *McKenna*, pp. 259-340; Richard A. Smith, 'Britain and the Strategy of the Economic Weapon in the War Against Germany,

However, the creation of the First Coalition brought to the fore the views of Liberal and Conservative compulsionists and, by 1916, McKenna and Runciman feared that the War would have lasting negative economic consequences, leading McKenna even to recommend that there should be a negotiated peace.¹²⁸ This led to some major internal conflict with McKenna's attempt to try to destabilise Lloyd George, encouraging the rumours of his intent to depose Asquith and seize power for himself.¹²⁹ McKenna was obviously quite alienated from Lloyd George and from the government, which led to another of his now customary threats of resignation, although he decided to stay to enable him to remain as a fifth column against Lloyd George and his distrusted Conservative allies. McKenna was certainly not moving in the direction of the Conservative party at this time. He appears to have disliked them more than ever due to their leaders' association with Lloyd George.¹³⁰ In all this, McKenna did not win himself any particular friends. Not unlike his colleagues, Runciman and Simon, his actions in government had lost him Liberal allies outside of power, and his obsessive attack on Lloyd George left him with few friends closer to government too, with Mark Bonham Carter summing this up well in say that 'he almost damns himself to perdition by his animus against his opponent'.¹³¹ McKenna, Runciman and Simon were not to remain long in

1914-1919', Unpublished University of Newcastle Ph.D. (2000), p. 69. Simon was not really an ally of Runciman and McKenna but their views coincided on various issues.

¹²⁸ Diary of Frances Stevenson, 23 February 1916 in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.) *Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson* (London, 1971), p. 101.

¹²⁹ Diary of Frances Stevenson, 17 September 1915, 31 October 1916, pp. 60, 120; Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 29 March 1915 in Michael & Eleanor Brock (eds.), *H. H. Asquith – Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1985), p. 517. There is also evidence that Lloyd George accused McKenna of trying to depose Asquith as well, so they were equally matched in politicking; see Farr, *McKenna*, p. 273; Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 29 March 1915, 30 March 1915, 1 April 1915, pp. 519, 522, 524, 582.

¹³⁰ Reginald McKenna to Asquith [unsent], December 1915, McKenna Papers MCKN 5/9/1-2; Charles Hobhouse to C. P. Scott, 30 December 1915; Farr, *McKenna*, p. 299.

¹³¹ Maurice Bonham Carter to Violet Bonham Carter, 31 December 1916, in Mark Pottle (ed.), *Champion Redoubtable – The Diaries and Letters of Violet Bonham Carter, 1914-1945* (London, 1998), p. 90. Also see Diary of Charles Hobhouse, 23 March 1915, p. 230;

government; Simon chose to leave in January 1916 with the other two pushed out in December. Lloyd George's success was a humiliation for McKenna and Runciman, and the experience was to leave them feeling rather ill-treated, not only by Lloyd George, but also Asquith too, whose characteristically indecisive leadership and lack of unambiguous support to them, they believed, had contributed to his and their fall; their fate and his was inextricably linked and no doubt it convenient to blame Asquith for a plight, a large extent to which was their own making.¹³² McKenna was clearly left disillusioned, taking up employment at the Midland Bank, and therefore leaving frontline politics. He does not appear to have given up on the idea of a return in more favourable circumstances, but the experiences of the years in Cabinet, self-made or otherwise, could hardly have offered him much incentive to be part of it.¹³³ His situation may well have created a context for his being approached by Conservatives for a return to politics within a few years. No longer being set on an unequivocal return to a party which was still divided and even more influenced by his wartime opponent, Lloyd George, this offer gave him a way back without having to endure close association with Liberals he disliked.¹³⁴ It points to a very real way in which McKenna's removal of immediate connections of association with the Liberal party body opened the way for more positive connections to the Conservative party. Fascinatingly, however, McKenna's position appears to have contrasted to a large extent with that of Simon and Runciman, who, despite being part of the same controversies, losing office and then their seats in Parliament, decided to continue their involvement in the Liberal party. They continued to hold political ambitions as Liberal politicians, which helps to provide the explanation. Both were alienated from Lloyd

Diary of Duff Cooper, 8 December 1916, in John Julius Norwich (ed.), *The Duff Cooper Diaries, 1915-1951* (London, 2006), p. 42.

¹³² Farr, *McKenna*, p. 280; Farr, 'Winter and Discontent', 129.

¹³³ Cregier, 'McKenna'.

¹³⁴ This section should be examined in conjunction with previous comments about McKenna wishing to stand as a Liberal; see above, pp. 74-75. McKenna's remaining interest in Liberal politics should not be confused with the desire to fully re-establish his place at a high level in the Liberal party.

George, but they continued to associate with Asquith, despite their doubts about his leadership, hoping to position themselves as his successors.¹³⁵

It was not only the anti-Lloyd George faction that was affected by the experience of war. Churchill also was, with his treatment by Asquith in the Dardanelles campaign being decisive in alienating Churchill from him permanently.¹³⁶ The situation also encouraged the development of a faction around Lloyd George and Churchill, with some Liberals relevant to this study, through their involvement with the Liberal War Committee especially, offering support for their wartime policy, and thus taking sides in the Liberal conflict.¹³⁷

The wartime period was important in recruitment generally in terms of a legacy of lasting factionalism, between a cohort of Liberals congregating around Asquith and one around Lloyd George, which had an impact upon personal relations and sense of integration within the party.¹³⁸ The disagreements of wartime remained unresolved and evolved into fresh ones in peacetime which confirmed a permanent split that even Liberal reunion was not able to heal.¹³⁹ This factionalism helped to encourage drift away from the party in the period up until 1931 and it assisted political opponents in exploiting the difficulties in the party, particularly Baldwin, whose attacks

¹³⁵ See chapters below on Simon and Runciman.

¹³⁶ See below, pp. 92-123.

¹³⁷ The 'Liberal War Committee', including the future recruits like Guest, Mond, Greenwood and Lambert, some of whom were to become supporters in the aftermath of War. For a good examination of the issues here, refer to Matthew Johnson, 'The Liberal War Committee and the Liberal Advocacy of Conscription in Britain, 1914-1916', *The Historical Journal* 51 2 (2008), 399-420. On Lambert's position see: George Lambert speech, 14 March 1916, HC Debates Vol. 80 1916 col. 1983-4; Reports, George Lambert speeches, *The Times*, 2 November 1916, 14 November 1916, 3 January 1917, 3 February 1917.

¹³⁸ Farr, 'Winter and Discontent', 139.

¹³⁹ H. H. Asquith, *Memories and Reflections, 1852-1927, Volume 2*, (London, Toronto & Sydney, 1928), pp. 172, 238-242; Margot Asquith, *The Autobiography of Margot Asquith, Volume 2* (London, 1936), pp. 193, 221, 234.

on Lloyd George were designed in part to make political capital out of Liberals divisions.¹⁴⁰

The negative impact of factionalism can be seen on both sides of the political divide. On the Asquith side, there was Runciman and Simon.¹⁴¹ Both held ambitions to resist Lloyd George's takeover of the party. There were collective concerns about Lloyd George's ethical and moral character, with impressions formed in the War added to by further supposed outrages against his opponents in engineering their defeat with the Maurice debate, the coupon in 1918, the use of his Political Fund to buy him influence after 1922, and his role in the Liberal electoral rout of 1924 featuring strongly.¹⁴² In the early post-war years, both responded with rigorous opposition to the Coalition, which led them into electoral controversy, particularly Simon, who found himself involved in an unpleasant political contest in the Spen Valley, in 1919, where his opposition to Lloyd George met with resistance from Lloyd George Liberals, adding to his alienation from Lloyd George and his supporters. Runciman, however, sought to try to build a rival coalition through his involvement in the 'Grey conspiracy', which showed his alienation to the extent that he was ready to work outside the Liberal party to defeat his political rival. However, after reunion, tactics switched, particularly as it became clear that Lloyd George's influence was growing, with Runciman's retreat into sectional partisanship, as witnessed through his involvement in the Radical Group (1924) and then Liberal Council (1927) and Simon's retreat into a measure of political isolation, appearing more like an independent Liberal in the House of Commons. Both set out their own separate strategy and policy agendas from Lloyd George, exploiting political controversy to do with Lloyd George's new leftist direction, and putting

¹⁴⁰ Cowling, *The Impact of Labour*, pp. 276-278, 282-283; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 194 suggests that MacDonald's strategy was more passive, basically waiting for the Liberals to destroy their party on their own.

¹⁴¹ See chapters below on Simon and Runciman.

¹⁴² Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 193.

forward their own alternatives versions.¹⁴³ Such tactics were pursued with great energy in many ways, but it showed that they were not comfortable within their party, and they might have sought to distance themselves from it, like McKenna, had they not thought there was scope to depose Lloyd George.

For both Runciman and Simon, their hopes of replacing Lloyd George waned both with Asquith's retirement from politics in 1925 and death in 1928, which removed a vital ingredient in continuing interest in internal opposition to Lloyd George, and with politicians taking seats in Parliament, after 1929, with fewer connections to the politics of factional split. With these issues in mind and their general discomfort within the party, it is hardly surprising that they eventually started to seek to distance themselves from it with Runciman's decision to retire from politics in 1930, not unlike McKenna before him, to pursue his business interests. For Simon, it encouraged his political interests outside the party, such as his involvement with the India Commission, as an alternative political role. In doing this, both found the important political connections outside the Liberal party – Runciman to MacDonald and Simon to Baldwin. The factional split and views of Lloyd George had certainly changed their relationship to their party fundamentally. This change was very significant in the new circumstances after 1931, since it enabled Simon to channel his energies into the creation of a new Liberal faction to work with his Conservative contacts, whilst in the case of Runciman, it assisted in offering his assistance to the new government on a professional business rather than party basis, accepting his Cabinet post on MacDonald's request rather than Herbert Samuel's or even Simon's.

The political factionalism also negatively impacted on the integration of Lloyd George's supporters into their party. Churchill and Mond had almost completely separated themselves from Asquith and his supporters

¹⁴³ In can be seen in the case study chapters that their alternatives were sometimes not dissimilar to those of Lloyd George; it was just that they wanted to exploit his difficulties and to make clear that there could be alternative leaders.

after the War.¹⁴⁴ In Churchill's case this was perhaps an encouragement to continue to emphasise the importance of working with the Conservatives, helping to draw him into the Conservative party fold. Mond seemed, on the face of it, to wish to see some kind of reconciliation, from 1922, favouring an early Liberal reunion, but his view was actually more that the Asquithian section should be absorbed into an augmented Liberal party dominated by Liberals who had been associated with Lloyd George. After reunion, evidence shows that Mond's relations with Asquithians actually deteriorated since he disagreed with them publicly over party strategy and, very significantly in relation to this study, he could not come to terms with them in resistance to Liberal land policy, in the mid-1920s, which contributed directly to his decision to leave the Liberal party altogether. Had Mond been able to find common cause, perhaps he would have been dissuaded from any change of party.

Other Liberals also joined Churchill and Mond in separation from Asquith and his supporters. Firstly, there was Grigg. It has already been shown how he sought to distance himself from the Asquithians due to their views on empire, which, just like in the case of Churchill, encouraged Grigg's desire for working with the Conservatives. He was not in favour of Liberal reunion, and after it, Grigg possessed poor relations with both Simon and the Radical Group judging from a range of exchanges in correspondence sources.¹⁴⁵ Secondly, there was Guest.¹⁴⁶ In the period between 1918 and 1922, as a key election strategist and activist for Lloyd George, he planned and executed political manoeuvring against Asquithians, most particularly against Simon in the Spen Valley controversy.¹⁴⁷ He too was against Liberal reunion and his feelings overall encouraged him to seek to work with

¹⁴⁴ See chapters below on Churchill and Mond.

¹⁴⁵ See evidence from correspondence between Edward Grigg & John Simon, 14 May 1923, 15 May 1923, 17 May 1923, 28 May 1923, 31 May 1923, 6 June 1923, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001; Edward Grigg to Lloyd George, 9 November 1923, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001; Frederick Guest to Grigg, 1 May 1925, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1002.

¹⁴⁶ See below, pp. 176-194.

¹⁴⁷ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 193.

Conservatives rather than to build bridges with his former anti-coalitionist Liberal opponents. Finally, there was both Macpherson and Greenwood. They were targeted electorally by Asquithians, often leading them into candidate selection problems.¹⁴⁸ In Greenwood's case, such opposition was heightened by his own interference in the Spen Valley by-election.¹⁴⁹ There is no direct evidence that Greenwood was drawn more to working with the Conservatives by involvement in such conflict, but it did nothing to assist him in remaining active in Liberal politics, particularly when, even after reunion, it does not appear that former Asquith Liberals in his Sunderland constituency were very prepared to support him.¹⁵⁰

However, not all Liberals were anxious to align themselves with one or other of the Liberal leaders in the factional conflict. Firstly, there was Lambert. He had lost his position as Civil Lord of the Admiralty when the May 1915 Coalition was created and he had not been given the coupon in 1918, so in some senses he seemed equally separated from both leaders.¹⁵¹ In the immediate aftermath of the 1918 election, he did take the Asquithian Whip, but he quickly tried to assist in circumventing the split, playing a role in unity negotiations, between February and April 1919, culminating in his election as Sessional Chairman of the 'non-official' Liberal members of the House of Commons.¹⁵² He was keen to distance backbench Liberal opinion from the split at the highest level. Lambert did, however, change his allegiances, in a manner, in accepting the Sessional Chairmanship of the

¹⁴⁸ Report, *Highland News*, 7 December 1918; Editorial, *The Highland Times*, 12 December 1918; Report, *The Inverness Courier & General Advertiser*, 27 October 1922; Report, *Highland News*, 17 November 1923; Report, *The Inverness Courier & General Advertiser*, 23 November 1923; Report, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 13 April 1920; Report, Hamar Greenwood speech, *Sunderland Echo*, 28 October 1923.

¹⁴⁹ Report, *Sunderland Echo*, 3 December 1919.

¹⁵⁰ There is some evidence that a few hundred Liberal voters split their votes between the other Liberal candidate and Labour, enough perhaps to have lost him the seat in 1923.

¹⁵¹ Report, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 23 November 1918; George Lambert, Letter to *The Times*, 27 March 1920. It does not seem that he was highly rated by Asquith given his private view that Lambert was 'not very competent'; see H. H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 9 August 1914, p. 161.

¹⁵² Reports, *The Times*, 6 February 1919, 12 March 1919, 3 April 1919.

Coalition Liberal party, when a separate faction was formed in August 1919, which, on the surface, suggested he was taking sides with Lloyd George's supporters.¹⁵³ However, this proved not to be the case, given various criticisms of government policy over the period of the Coalition, and he continued to campaign for reunion, even becoming chairman of the Liberal reunion group in November 1922.¹⁵⁴ Lambert was not at all impressed with Asquith, or Lloyd George, or their chief factional supporters, characterising the whole dispute as a 'Liberal Luncheon War', and he poured scorn on the records of both Liberal leaders, eventually claiming that together they had both helped to destroy the Liberal party.¹⁵⁵ He believed they had ruined his aspirations for a reunified party, and this caused him to become disillusioned; a manifestation of this being his retreat into local constituency politics and a distancing of himself from the party apparatus.¹⁵⁶ For Shakespeare, this disillusion was even starker, in some senses, with the internal strife leading him to withdraw his candidature for the Warwick and Leamington constituency in 1926.¹⁵⁷ In neither case did their feelings immediately affect their party affiliation, but their seeking of extrication from the main affairs of the Liberal party is a significant development in the context of the decline in association with it; they were still interested in Liberal politics but their relationship to the party had been tested and the consequence had been a negative one.

¹⁵³ Report, *The Times*, 7 August 1919.

¹⁵⁴ Reports, George Lambert speeches, *Liberal Magazine*, December 1920, February 1921; Report, *The Times*, November 28 1922. Lambert was not unusual as a Coalition Liberal in being critical of government policy, however. See Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George's Stage Army: The Coalition Liberals, 1918-1922' in A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (London, 1971), pp. 225-254.

¹⁵⁵ George Lambert, Letter to *The Times*, 27 March 1920; George Lambert to Winston Churchill, 6 November 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/138/63.

¹⁵⁶ For an example see Report, George Lambert speech, *The South Molton Gazette & West of England Advertiser*, 1 December 1923.

¹⁵⁷ Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare, *Let Candles Be Brought In* (London, 1949), p. 121.

Aside from the factional dispute there were also problems within the section of the party supposedly most connected to Lloyd George. In many cases, his supporters eventually found that he, as the critical figure that had been a focus of their involvement in the Liberal party, presented shortcomings of a personal, moral and ethical nature – in fact not dissimilar from Baldwin's and the Asquithian views of him – and his move electorally to the left sat uneasily with their various political outlooks. From this perspective, Lloyd George can be seen as very central to their views, but this comes with many caveats since disagreement with Lloyd George could sometimes be seen as a means to disguise changes which were motivated by other and self-interested factors.

Most of the Liberal recruits to the Conservatives had been, or were, allied to Lloyd George at the time of the Coalition. All of them objected to an altered political strategy which saw Lloyd George edge towards Labour after 1922, and this concerned them, not least because of their wish to seek to position the party closer to the Conservatives, due to their political convictions and electoral assessments in the desire for national government and the pursuit of anti-socialist strategies, for example. In one case – that of Churchill – this concern led to decisive alienation from Lloyd George and the party. He objected to the decision to vote Labour into office, which seemed clear evidence of the new approach; an event which, on the surface, appeared to be decisive in moving him out of Liberal politics for good.¹⁵⁸ In reality, however, Churchill had been moving much closer to the Conservatives since 1922, so voting in Labour was more important in making his recruitment to the Conservatives seem less personally problematic.

Another case is that of Mond. His electoral situation had pushed him to seek distinction from the Labour party, leading him to pursue a similar sort of 'Constitutionalist' position to Churchill, although without the commitment to integration into the Conservative party, even if he wanted an electoral truce with Baldwin.¹⁵⁹ Mond was most dissatisfied with the

¹⁵⁸ See below, pp. 92-123.

¹⁵⁹ See below, pp. 124-153.

decision to vote Labour into government and, after 1924, his were amongst the strongest fears of Lloyd George's intention to seek fusion with Labour, which would be disastrous to him electorally. His increased concern related to emerging land policy which he equated with nationalisation. Mond had been appointed as Chairman of the Commission on the land issue, but Lloyd George used his influence within the party to marginalise Mond's position, which alienated Mond from him personally now, as well as politically. The disillusion that Mond suffered seemed to suggest that he wished to leave public life altogether and his resignation from the Liberal party in early 1926 is evidence of this, but he stayed on, and joined the Conservative party, having been promised his peerage by Baldwin in return for his support. There is much to reflect on about the reasoning behind accepting a place in the Lords, but one explanation is that it was in line with his thinking about separating himself from party politics; in the Lords, no matter by whose nomination he got there, he could use his professional skills and avoid being embroiled in party disputes; indeed, something very attractive for a man who wished to maintain his political interest but to retire from the political mainstream and escape the politics of Lloyd George.

For Guest and Grigg, Lloyd George encouraged them in their own form of attempted factionalism. Guest developed particular concerns, not unlike Mond, about land policy and also the General Strike.¹⁶⁰ In his constituency, he declared himself effectively as an independent Liberal because of his concerns and in Parliament he sought to create a new faction, alongside Grigg, to oppose the direction of politics. As in the case of Asquithians, such tactics were evidence of his displeasure within the party, which did not go unnoticed by Lloyd George and his supporters who engineered a plot to oust him as Liberal candidate in Bristol, which contributed to his electoral defeat in 1929.¹⁶¹ The circumstances surrounding this event do seem central to the timing of Guest's change of party since it was met with unprecedented bitterness towards Lloyd George, and it deprived him of an opportunity to realistically propagate his preferred

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 175-194.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

renewed alliance in Parliament between Liberal and Conservative forces. However, whilst Lloyd George had pushed Guest into fuller integration into the Conservative fold, he was already part way into it, since his compromise with the Conservatives in his constituency marked him as effectively a Conservative in an electoral sense, in any case.

In relation to Grigg, Lloyd George must certainly have affected his political affiliation, firstly, in his resignation from Parliament, in 1925, partly in despair at the policy of the party, and then in seeking to create the new faction which was to evolve into his Liberal-Unionist idea.¹⁶² Interestingly, and almost uniquely in the body of recruits, Grigg remained on good personal terms with Lloyd George, perhaps because of absence from Parliament, from 1925 to 1933, which meant that he was separated from any personal involvement in party disputes.¹⁶³ Nonetheless, he was still affected by them with the failure of convincing Lloyd George and others of the suitability of his Liberal-Unionist idea, doing nothing to improve his sentiment about Lloyd George's political direction, and perhaps assisting in his move out of Liberal politics altogether.

A new factionalism took hold from 1930 when a pact with Labour in Parliament caused great concern amongst a large number of Liberals, significantly amongst a number of recruits who were to largely become the mainstay of the body of the Liberal National grouping in later 1931. Various criticisms emerged of Lloyd George's policy, as it became clear that government policy was severely open to criticism.¹⁶⁴ There was particular concern over issues, such as the Coal Bill, where some Liberals were shocked by Lloyd George's encouragement of dropping opposition to it, in 1930, with commentators having pointed to Clement Davies being

¹⁶² Grigg's political disillusion has been noted by Michael Hart; see Michael Hart, 'The Decline of the Liberal Party in Parliament and in the Constituencies', Unpublished University of Oxford D. Phil (1982), p. 256.

¹⁶³ Cott, *Interview with John Grigg*.

¹⁶⁴ Tregidga, *The Liberal Party*, p. 58; Roberts, 'Clement Davies', p. 21; Alun Wyburn Powell, *Clement Davies: Liberal Leader*, (London, 2003), pp. 34-40 (Davies had determined to resign and take a position on the board of Unilever); Dutton, *Liberals in Schism*, pp. 19-39; George Lambert, Letters to *The Times*, 18 February 1930, 5 June 1930.

particularly infuriated on a personal level, as he had been working up a Liberal alternative.¹⁶⁵ The situation revived electoral concerns, after a disappointing but not disastrous election performance in 1929, with Lambert even pointing out that Lloyd George's policy would cost him his seat, and Hore-Belisha feared challenges to the integrity of an independent Liberal party, feeling that policy was drifting away from prudently 'judging measures on their merits' to other political calculations, which lacked principle.¹⁶⁶ Shakespeare said: 'I believe this policy of general support of the government will mean that we shall become a wing of the Labour party in two or three years with pacts in the constituencies'.¹⁶⁷ In this atmosphere, many disaffected Liberals sought to organise themselves to oppose Lloyd George's policy direction, operating more or less as a new but recognisable faction within the Liberal party by the middle of 1930.¹⁶⁸ Lloyd George had driven them into factionalism by his policy towards Labour, and in this context it seems understandable that a faction, involving the greater element of this group, would edge from the party in the circumstances of the financial crisis in 1931 and into a separate parliamentary faction, which promised a new approach to managing public affairs, without the Labour party, or indeed, Lloyd George. In all this, it is significant that such Liberals involved themselves with Simon, whose complete separation from Lloyd George and distinction from the party body made him a suitable ally for disaffected Lloyd Georgians, despite his previous unpopularity amongst a large section of the party. The Liberal National grouping, from 1931, has been described as a disparate group of Liberal opinion, but in one sense it was not, in that it was the coming together of some former Asquithians and Lloyd Georgians, united now, at least for a while, in favour of a new policy

¹⁶⁵ Leslie Hore-Belisha Diary, 24 March 1931, in Hore-Belisha Papers HOBE 1/1/1-2; Roberts, 'Clement Davies', pp. 2023; Wyburn-Powell, *Clement Davies*, pp. 37-49.

¹⁶⁶ Dutton, *Liberals in Schism*, p. 22; Leslie Hore-Belisha Diary, 24 March 1931, Hore-Belisha Papers HOBE 1/1/1-2; Ian R. Grimwood, *A Little Chit of a Fellow – A biography of the Right Honourable Leslie Hore-Belisha* (Sussex, 2006), pp. 27-28.

¹⁶⁷ Report, Geoffrey Shakespeare speech, *Liberal Magazine*, June 1931.

¹⁶⁸ Leslie Hore-Belisha Diary, 29 June 1931, Hore-Belisha Papers HOBE 1/1/21; Report, *Liberal Magazine*, June 1931.

approach.¹⁶⁹ There was a sort of paradox here of the coming together of elements of the old factions, Asquithian and Lloyd Georgian, whilst also assisting in the forging of the new post-1931 ones.

IV

In this chapter, it has been seen that there are a number of very significant similarities amongst the Liberal recruits. The opening major section showed that there were common social and cultural characteristics, particularly around middle-class or connections with the established elite, which created a political context to understand social and political aspirations, and ideas and values espoused. It has also assisted in providing a view of how recruitment related to the wider dimension of realignment of politics in the period.

The middle sections referred to the impact of convergence of Liberal with Conservative politics. On the electoral side, it was shown that pursuit of anti-socialism, although often lacking in substance, assisted in aligning Liberals with Conservatives since they appeared to occupy similar electoral ground, making them seem indistinguishable from them, even where that was not the intention. In some cases, particularly those of Grigg and Greenwood, anti-socialism became so important that it was more significant than emphasis on other electoral issues, making it very central to their associations with the Conservatives party. It was also central to Aske's, although he, not unlike others in similar situations, was forced into pursuit of anti-socialism due to Liberal weakness in triangular contests. On reflection it can be seen that the language utilised in anti-socialism seemed to mimic the sort of political discourse emphasised by Baldwin, which suggests that he carried political influence on electoral campaigns, unconsciously perhaps in some cases.

In terms of political ideas, convergence occurred as a result of both a patriotic desire for national government and wider developments of common

¹⁶⁹ Dutton, *Liberals in Schism*, p. 43.

views on policy matters, often linked to associations with Baldwin. In the first case, it can be seen that some of the recruits were not very committed to Liberal politics in a partisan sense, having been more interested in patriotic and imperialist approaches ‘above party’ interests, which seems clear in the cases of three profiled specifically here – Grigg, Greenwood and Spears as well as others – and their drift in the Conservative direction, therefore, does not seem remarkable in this context. However, there is also a sense of short-term thinking drawing Liberals to patriotic sentiments, despite other attachments to party, with accidental connection to the Conservatives, shaped by circumstances, certainly in the cases of the body of Liberal Nationals. In relation to values and policies more widely, Baldwin’s moderate middle-class and patriotic domestic agenda would seem to have won him supporters, with some very close contacts achieved with Liberals, not least in the case of McKenna. The connections with Baldwin are not as apparent as they might have been if more emphasis had been placed on the experiences of individuals being profiled in the case study chapters but the discussion here has at least shown aspects of his influence and the consequences for political affiliations.

The final section highlighted the importance of internal factors in alienating Liberals from their party. It was rare that these factors, in themselves, caused changes of allegiance, but they were very important in opening the way for those new associations since negative experience of involvement in the Liberal party encouraged the desire for extrication and consideration of involvement in politics on the outside, especially perhaps when encouragement was given from Conservatives, like Baldwin, for them to find an alternative political home in a different party.

It has been shown that for some Liberals, their alienation from the Liberal party was progressive, over a period of many years, with the factional conflict sustained over the period of consideration, being very important. Difficulties with political leaders emerged, particularly Lloyd George, which were central to their disaffection. For former supporters of Asquith, objections to Lloyd George were shaped latterly by his treatment of them from wartime onwards, and there was a lot of personal animosity, particularly where they felt personally victimised. Lloyd George also

alienated former Coalition supporters and other Liberals elected for the first time after 1922 by his leftist position, which from the middle of the 1920s, became a major issue for continued associations with the Liberal party. Lloyd George's politics can even be associated with developments after 1931, with the group of Liberals who had organised to oppose him forming a separate faction to work with the Conservatives.

Some of the disagreements developed a very personal dimension of mistrust which meant that ultimately there was not always much difference in views about Lloyd George between recruits who had been Asquith's supporters and the wider body. However, it would be misleading to suggest that it was Lloyd George alone who destabilised involvement in the party; there was a lack of common purpose and personal agendas, self-interest and rivalry, which encouraged inflexibility, single-mindedness and extremities of opposition to Lloyd George – none of which could have been helpful to continuing associations with Liberal politics.

Overall, the chapter has shown that Liberal recruitment was multifactorial in character. In most cases, recruitment does not seem to have been part of a grand plan, but largely more a reaction to circumstances as they emerged sometimes, indeed, over a very long period of time. Through examining the long-term factors in recruitment, it can be seen that the phenomenon could have a very long gesticulation period, with immediate circumstances being insufficient in themselves as explanations of the actual change in party. Moreover, the circumstances of Liberal recruitment can be seen to be central to understanding of realignment, with the recruits' actions helping to further the disintegration of Liberal politics through participation in intra-party conflict and through the pursuit of links to the Conservatives.

Chapter Two: Winston Churchill

Examination of Winston Churchill as a specific focus is important to the topic of recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative party but it also raises some complications. An extensive range of secondary source material exists commenting on various aspects of his personal and political life leaving apparently little scope for fresh enquiry and analysis. Thus, it could plausibly be suggested that there is very little point in producing more material since there is a clear risk of repeating the arguments already put forward and offering little in the way of originality. Moreover, there is also a question mark as to the applicability of Churchill as a subject in a comparative study such as this given his position in starting and ending his career as a Conservative – something that can be seen to make him somewhat of an anomaly. However, both these suggestions, if accepted, would ignore important points. Firstly, there are weaknesses in some of the historiography on the issues surrounding Churchill's character and his decision-making about where his political allegiances should lie. This is because no substantive studies exist which make Churchill's recruitment into the Conservative party a primary focus – they may refer to it but it is often secondary to some other major issue for consideration. Secondly, it would be a mistake to assume that Churchill's career was so anomalous, for whilst he was one of only a handful of the recruits to have started out as a Conservative in the first place there are a number of commonalities between Churchill's position and the positions of other individuals recruited from the Liberal party but with no prior political involvement with the Conservative party.¹

I

The various studies of Churchill do provide some important coverage of aspects of his personal and political character. One issue has been the level

¹ See above, pp. 41-45.

of consistency or principle in his political decision-making, and more specifically whether he was motivated by broad political values or by opportunism. Some of this discussion, when consolidated, brings together a detailed profile useful as a context for assessment of political affiliations, but there have been some different emphases and perspectives.

In terms of assessment of consistency and principle in Churchill's involvement in politics Gilbert claims that Churchill followed a 'philosophy' which he describes as a 'middle course', characterised by the desire for progressive reform.² This is helpful in determining why Churchill changed his political associations since it can be seen have placed him awkwardly outside the party-system, preventing the development of bonds of loyalty towards a political party. Such notions of consistency are backed by John Charmley, Robert Rhodes James, Roy Jenkins, Henry Pelling, Geoffrey Searle and Martin Pugh.³ Charmley and Pelling, for instance, connect him to 'Tory Democracy' or 'One Nation Toryism', 'Whig-Liberalism' and 'Liberal-Imperialism', and, of course, for Martin Pugh and Geoffrey Searle, Churchill is essential to their respective emphasis of the belief in the value of a patriotic centrist or national government.⁴ However, some other studies, by Paul Addison, Ian Chambers, and Keith Robbins, have emphasised more the inconsistencies and opportunistic aspects of his position, particularly in examination of Churchill's political ambitions.⁵

² Martin Gilbert, *Churchill's Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 4, 50.

³ John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory – A Political Biography* (London, 1993), pp. 19-20, 22, 29, 34; Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900-1939* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 40; Roy Jenkins, *Churchill* (London, 2001); Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill* (London, 1974), pp. 69-7, 91-93; Martin Pugh, 'Left in the Centre? Lloyd George and the Centrist Tradition in British Politics' in Judith Loades (ed.), *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George* (Bangor, 1991), p. 20; and Geoffrey Searle, *Country Before Party – Coalition and the Idea of "National Government" in Modern Britain, 1885-1987* (London, 1995).

⁴ See above, pp. 12-15.

⁵ Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front, 1900-1955* (London, 1992), p. 40; Ian Chambers, 'Winston Churchill and Irish Home Rule, 1899-1914', *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 19 3 (2000), 405-421; Keith Robbins, *Churchill* (London & New York, 1992), pp. 18, 33, 42.

These studies have assisted in overcoming a tendency towards being uncritical of Churchill, but assessment of opportunism can lead to sweeping assumptions and it is not always clear that evidence justifies the claims of opportunism; some caution is needed when examining the findings of these studies in this regard.

More recent research by Richard Toye has built on ideas about Churchill's character, acknowledging points of principle and values – particularly in the context of his outlook of imperialism, his associations with Tory democracy and distinction from political parties – but at the same time recognising the underlying ambition which informed his perspectives and influenced his actions.⁶ He also places emphasis on the centrality of a rivalry and difficult friendship he held with Lloyd George, which was an underlying issue for the development of his political character and how he pursued his political career.⁷

In examination of Churchill's change of political allegiance, between Liberal and Conservative, most sources have tended to be focused only on very immediate issues – most commonly the decision to vote Labour into office in 1924 – bypassing the possibility of fuller assessment over a longer period and leading to presentation of a perspective on Churchill that he had simply moved to the right of British politics.⁸ This is problematic since it exaggerates the significance of his concerns about Labour, and it reduces the capacity to establish the connections of Churchill's change in party to a context of his political outlook, his disagreements over Liberal policy and poor personal relations with other Liberal politicians over a longer period of time.⁹ Toye has perhaps come closest to such a contextual assessment in his

⁶ Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill – Rivals for Greatness* (London, 2008); Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire – The World That Made Him and the World He Made* (London, 2010).

⁷ Toye has not been the only commentator to place emphasis on Lloyd George but he is unique in producing a study which examines the relationship between the Churchill and Lloyd George as the central focus of examination.

⁸ Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, p. 287; Martin Gilbert, *Churchill – A Life*, p. 456.

⁹ There were various difficulties over policy and poor personal relations. For problems over naval estimates see: Pelling, *Churchill*, pp. 150-153; Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 222; Charmley,

consideration of his relationship with Lloyd George over many years. It can be seen very clearly that the negative aspects of their relationship affected not only personal and political relations between the two of them, but also Churchill's relationship to the Liberal party, as his on-going involvement with the party had much to do with Lloyd George. Furthermore, in the period more immediate to the change of party, Toye describes the manner in which 'by a series of crab-like stages' Churchill moved into the Conservative party which can be seen as related to the state of his relationship to Lloyd George, connections with Conservatives (both on a personal and policy level), and interest in bringing together Liberals and Conservatives into a political union.¹⁰ Examination of research suggests, in fact, that this characterisation could be extended to a wider part of his political career since an impression is that Churchill was edging back into the Conservative party from almost as soon as he left it.

II

Examination of Churchill's entry into the Liberal party in 1904 leads to considerable understanding of what attracted him to the Liberal party, what

Churchill, p. 76; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 54. For problems over wartime policy see: Jenkins, *Churchill*, pp. 265-268, 273, 277, 285, 288; Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume IV: 1916-1922* (London, 1975), p. 6; Charmley, *Churchill*, p. 141; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 126-155. For differences over Post-War Coalition policy see: Pelling, *Churchill*, pp. 249-258, 275-276; Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, p. 210, 217-219, 224; Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (London, 2000), p. 403; Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume IV*, pp. 235-400, 411-413, 505-506, p. 768; Charmley, *Churchill*, p. 154, 166, 169, 178; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 160-235. For personal difficulties with Asquith see: Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 273; Gilbert, *Churchill*, pp. 325, 328, 356, 363, 370; Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume IV*, pp. 6, 9-14; Charmley, *Churchill*, pp. 131, 135-136; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 139. For personal difficulties with Lloyd George see: Pelling, *Churchill*, pp. 265-266; Rhodes James, *Churchill*, p. 167, Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 252; Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume IV*, p. 581; Charmley, *Churchill*, pp. 166, 169; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill* (much of the account shows major tensions).

¹⁰ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 238.

factors drew him out of the Conservative party, and of his general lack of political tribalism. One issue of importance was the identification by Churchill of Liberals with the broad principles that he espoused. However, in this it is possible to observe Churchill's misconceptions about how much the Liberal party could offer an outlook on politics akin to his and how much influence he would personally have over the party's political direction; there might have been some Liberals whose politics were similar to his, but by no means all, and it was an error of judgement on his part to assume that the party would distance itself from its party political dogma. Overall, it seems that Churchill joined the party for some wrong reasons and thus his long-term commitment to involvement in Liberal politics was open to question even at the outset of his involvement.

It can be observed that Churchill's position in leaving the Conservatives and joining the Liberal party had a good deal to do with policy issues, with particular criticism of Conservative policy on tariff reform (Churchill was a strong advocacy of Free Trade in common with Liberal politicians) and army expansion.¹¹ The tariff reform issues was decisive. However, it was not only the specific policy Churchill objected to. He construed Conservative policy as a negation of the creation of a broad-based 'national party' of which he was a firm advocate.¹² This emphasis on the importance of this national party idea is important since it provides an indication of Churchill's underlying political outlook. Here, there is much to link Churchill with the views of historians in connecting him firmly to what became known as One-Nation Toryism. This is particularly plausible given that he presented himself as a defender of his father's political position (Lord Randolph, of course, being the archetypal One-Nation politician), and

¹¹ Winston Churchill to C. E. B. Webb, 19 October 1903, in Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 2 Part 1*, p. 241; Winston Churchill to Lord Hugh Cecil, 24 October 1903, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/8/105-107; Winston Churchill to J. T. Travis-Clegg, 24 April 1903, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/3/113-117; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 27.

¹² Winston Churchill to J. T. Travis-Clegg, 24 April 1903, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/3/113-117.

where he praised the combination of Conservative and Liberal Unionists as an example of near attainment of the national party idea.¹³

[...] the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists by this compact seemed almost to have attained that grand ideal of a National Party of which Lord Randolph Churchill dreamed and for which he toiled.¹⁴

However, whilst his position might seem in defence of his father's cause, it is doubtful that Churchill was connected to such thinking entirely since, as even Charmley acknowledges, One-Nation Tories were first and foremost Tories, and were more partisan in their attitudes than Churchill. Rather, despite obvious differences over Free Trade, it seems that his perspective may have been more heavily influenced by Joseph Chamberlain in terms of his attempts at coalition-building through the compact between the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists and in the pursuit of a managerial, imperialist and social-reformist policy distinct from party interests. Such a connection makes sense given Churchill's praise of the Liberal Unionists, and also similarly-minded Liberals who were also influenced by Chamberlain or had previous associations with the strongly imperialist Rosebery faction and who, in the early years of the twentieth century, continued to pursue a brand of imperialist politics. Indeed, immediately prior to his change of party, Churchill had been hopeful that a coalition led by Rosebery might be established.¹⁵ A measure of this connection is reinforced by the experience of the Oldham election of 1900 where private correspondence points to friendly relations with his Liberal 'Imperialist' opponent at the election, Walter Runciman, hinting at some kind of political connection which would endure whatever outcome the election brought.¹⁶ Churchill suggested that 'the success of either of us need not necessarily

¹³ Charmley, *Churchill*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁴ Winston Churchill to J. T. Travis-Clegg, 24 April 1903, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/3/113-117.

¹⁵ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 37.

¹⁶ See below, pp. 224-267.

mean the discomfiture of the other' and commented that it was 'a satisfaction to know that we don't enter in this contest in any ungenerous spirit'.¹⁷

Not all of the reasoning to change party was based on a rational assessment of commonality over political outlook, however; one can also see the decision in the context of a tendency to make rash judgements. A Conservative mentor of Churchill's in his early political years, Hugh Cecil, noted his 'incalculable instability'.¹⁸ Cecil felt that Churchill shared little in common with the Liberal party beyond common views on Free Trade, wisely anticipating future problems for his relationship to the party. However, Churchill said that the Liberal party was to be recast as a buffer between the powerful forces of capital and labour, and, in a rebuke to Cecil, advised him to face the 'real facts of the case and help to preserve a reconstituted Liberal Party'.¹⁹ But the Liberal party's ability to be transformed in this way was wishful thinking since it was steeped in party tradition and with the political pendulum swinging back to the party in the years after the Khaki election of 1900 it was unlikely to seek to transform itself too greatly. Churchill had been prematurely anticipating realignment and thus his future in the Liberal party did not bode well since he was sure to be disappointed when he found that the Liberal party did not 'reconstitute' itself in the way that he had anticipated, becoming in many ways more partisan as its partisan elements grew in confidence, despite the presentation of reformist policies in the Edwardian era.

Some of these latter points suggest a kind of idealism that shaped Churchill's views, but there is a potential for overstatement here with his justification for joining the Liberal party potentially related to more

¹⁷ See Walter Runciman to Winston Churchill, 8 August 1900, Chartwell Trust Papers, CHAR 1/25/25. Some of the comments related to the context of potentially working together as the constituency elected two members, but the friendliness also indicates Churchill's view that their political outlooks were not dissimilar.

¹⁸ Lord Hugh Cecil to Winston Churchill, Undated December 1903, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/2/10/67-70.

¹⁹ Winston Churchill to Lord Hugh Cecil, 24 October 1903, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/8/105-107.

opportunistic motives in his strong desire to obtain political office.²⁰ This point becomes important in assessment of the origins of the pre-war relationship between Lloyd George and Churchill. Churchill seems to have seen in him not only someone who shared his outlook on politics, but also someone with rising stature. Working with Lloyd George would undoubtedly assist Churchill's own rise and thus cooperation with him was a means to aid the advancement of his own political ambitions.

III

On the surface, it might have appeared that suggestions of difficulties for Churchill's relationship to the Liberal party were unfounded since he was able to pursue a political career as a prominent Liberal MP entering the Government as a junior minister in Colonial Office, in 1905, and, after 1908, as a member of the Cabinet, often in pursuit of issues which suited his political outlook. Electorally too, his situation seemed more secure; he deserted his Oldham constituency in 1906 for Manchester North West, presumably so he could centre his campaign more successfully on Free Trade and, although he lost a ministerial by-election in April 1908, he was returned the following month in safer Liberal territory in Dundee. However, his position was not so comfortable given that he developed severe misgivings about the partisan elements in his new party and their ability to wreck the passage of legislation that he believed vital to the national interest. He also developed poor relations with Cabinet colleagues; in fact, this happened very swiftly on his arrival into government, with concerns surfacing about government policy. After September 1911, furthermore, he entered into a factious dispute with colleagues over naval policy, from which he was to emerge as a discontented loser.

Some understanding of Churchill's awkward position can be gained, first of all, from examining the years prior to his Cabinet appointment. Churchill's private papers during the period show that on questions, such as

²⁰ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 27-35.

licensing, disestablishment and education, he was ambivalent, refusing to accept the Liberal line, and on Irish Home Rule he was more interested in defending Ulster.²¹ Churchill seemed only prepared to acquiesce with Liberal policies he agreed with, namely Free Trade, retrenchment (certainly in terms of military if not domestic spending), and Army reform. This reveals evidence of a consistency in his political principles but was a significant obstacle to his ability to fully integrate himself into the Liberal party.²²

Whatever his sentiments about the Liberal party, potentially he might have become more contented following his appointment to the Cabinet in April 1908. Churchill initially seemed to be enthusiastic about the prospect, explaining to Asquith reassuringly, just before his appointment as President of the Board of Trade, that he would support him in ‘whatever you [Asquith] decide is best for the Government & is in the general interest’.²³ However, the arrival of Churchill into the Cabinet revealed poor integration into the ministerial team. Some opinions of Churchill in government can be found, all pointing out negative characteristics in the desire ruthlessly to force through his own perspective, no matter the consequences for colleagues, and an inability to be reconciled to decisions he was not in favour of.²⁴ Furthermore, some Cabinet colleagues saw him as a source of factionalism and disharmony, and undermining good working relationships, with Charles Hobhouse summing this up in saying that ‘the

²¹ Winston Churchill to Samuel Lamb, 26 March 1904, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/16/94-95; Election address, 1 January 1906, in Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 2 Part 1*, pp. 421-424; Chambers, ‘Winston Churchill’, 411-415.

²² Winston Churchill to Samuel Lamb, 26 March 1904, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/16/94-95.

²³ Winston Churchill to H. H. Asquith, 14 March 1908, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 11/10.

²⁴ Diary of Charles Hobhouse, 27 July 1908, 13 August 1912, in Edward David (ed.), *Inside Asquith’s Cabinet – From the Diaries of Charles Hobhouse* (London, 1977), pp. 73, 121; Journal of J. A. Pease, 19 July 1909, Cameron Hazlehurst & Christine Woodland (ed.), *A Liberal Chronicle – Journals and Papers of J. A. Pease, First Lord Gainford, 1908-1910* (London, 1994), p. 127.

whole Cabinet atmosphere [had] been upset by Churchill'.²⁵ Part of this concern was the emergence of Churchill's alliance with Lloyd George, which appeared as a challenge to Asquith's leadership; Churchill was largely blamed for this new cleavage within the Cabinet, even though it was just as much of Lloyd George's making as Churchill's, which is testament to Churchill's reputation.²⁶

As well as poor relations in Cabinet, Churchill was not very satisfied with his portfolio, at least before 1911. Churchill had not been keen on a domestic portfolio, having hinted at replace Elgin as Secretary of State at the Colonial Office to carry on his work in winning support for what he termed 'a policy outside party lines'.²⁷ Here one can gain some understanding of his discontent in that he wished to avoid any office which would embroil him in Liberal partisan politics, maintaining the distance he had established since joining the Liberal party. And then, once in Cabinet, he found it hard to resist interfering in other ministers' non-domestic portfolios, particularly to the detriment of relations with Asquith, to some extent, and Reginald McKenna over naval spending and the management of the Royal Navy.²⁸

By the turn of the decade, it became clear that Churchill was keen on the possibility the government could be reconstituted as a coalition; suggesting that he had no faith in a single party Liberal government anymore.²⁹ This was clear during the constitutional crisis of 1910 when he appears to have supported a coalition arrangement with the Conservatives in order to secure a range of policies which he had interests in, such as House of Lords reform to ease the passage of his National Insurance plan, Poor Law reform, and reform of the Navy in defiance of the direction set under

²⁵ Diary of Charles Hobhouse, 7 March 1909, p. 73.

²⁶ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 38-120.

²⁷ Winston Churchill to H. H. Asquith, 14 March 1908, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 11/10.

²⁸ Winston Churchill to Reginald McKenna, 19 September 1908, McKenna Papers MCKN 3/17/8-10. His interference was in collaboration with Lloyd George; see Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 54.

²⁹ Alfred Mond was also greatly excited by the prospect of a coalition; see below, pp. 124-153.

McKenna.³⁰ And after the crisis, he continued to urge for more dialogue between the two parties. These sorts of sentiments emerged strongly in private correspondence with Asquith:

I trust that some of the disappointment of defeat may be mitigated by a Liberal grant of Honours [...] to prominent members of the Opposition [...]. Then on policy – we shd offer to confer with the Conservatives not only on the reform of the House of Lords, but on [...] the Poor Law, on [...] Labour [...] I should like to come to an understanding with Balfour about the Navy... You will be strong enough to pursue a sober & earnest policy without the stimulus of undue partisanship: & it is my hope that after triumphing in the storms of faction Liberalism may acquire that measure of national approval wh is due to those who have not merely been successful but sight upon many of the great questions of the day.³¹

It is useful to note that Churchill pointed out a need for a less partisan response, seemingly reaffirming a view that Liberal partisanship was a major barrier to reconciling the political parties and introducing reforms that represented a higher national interest.³²

Despite all his perspectives, Churchill progressed within the government as Home Secretary in 1910 and then as First Lord of the Admiralty in September 1911, which perhaps marked a concession to his interest in foreign and imperial affairs and the desire for a non-domestic portfolio; however, this move created further tension with colleagues, particularly after the Agadir Crisis of 1911, when he argued that more resources should be directed to the Royal Navy to protect British

³⁰ Charmley, *Churchill*, p. 66; Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 217.

³¹ Winston Churchill to H. H. Asquith, 3 January 1911, Asquith MSS Asquith 13/1-5.

³² Toye suggests that there were some underlying tensions with Lloyd George over both coalition arrangements and National Insurance, however. Churchill, it is claimed, was being ‘elbowed out’ of being given credit for the National Insurance policy, and he was suspicious that Lloyd George would desert him in a coalition deal; see Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 57-8, 69. If either of these points is correct they could hardly have assisted Churchill’s sense of security in the Cabinet.

supremacy.³³ The problem was that this argument did not carry much weight with Liberals of a more pacifistic variety, and this reached its peak in the controversy over the naval estimates for 1914.³⁴ It was all very damaging to Churchill's position and could have done little to assist a sense of comradeship; however, evidence shows that a sense of disillusion was further heightened by Lloyd George's position in 1913. Lloyd George had given him private assurances that he would support him on the naval estimates, but when it came to it he reneged on this undertaking, effectively siding with the Churchill's opponents, leaving Churchill now totally isolated.³⁵ The problems created over the 1914 estimates had a clear impact upon Churchill's position. For a second time, he sought to make contact with Conservatives in order to broker some kind of deal, possibly coalition, which would lead to support for his proposals.³⁶ And in correspondence with Asquith he indicated the possibility that he might leave the government.³⁷

Thus, by the end of the pre-war period, Churchill was disillusioned and it seems that he was regretting his involvement with the Liberal party. Churchill apparently stated: 'Every politician makes one great mistake in his

³³ In a sense, this was a departure from his previous view, but it was consistent with his national policy in its pragmatic focus on the protection of British imperial interests. The question was no longer about purely making military forces efficient; there needed to be expansion to deal with the threat. See Pelling, *Churchill*, pp. 150-153; Addison, *Churchill*, (London, 1992), p. 83; Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 243; Jenkins, *Churchill*, pp. 202-204, 222; and Charmley, *Churchill*, p. 84. Also see above, pp. 74-75.

³⁴ Diary of Charles Hobhouse, 27 November 1912, p. 124; Diary of C.P. Scott, 15 & 23 January 1914, in Trevor Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott 1911-1928* (London, 1970), pp. 73, 78; Winston Churchill to H. H. Asquith, 18 December 1913, in Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 3 Part 1* (London, 1972), pp. 1857-1858.

³⁵ Winston Churchill to Lloyd George, 16 December 1913, in Randolph S. Churchill, *Churchill – Companion Volume 2 Part 3* (London, 1969), p. 1833; Martin Pugh, *Lloyd George* (London & New York, 1988), p. 71; Diary of C. P. Scott, 15 January 1914, p. 73; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 104-105.

³⁶ Gilbert, *Churchill – A Life*, p. 269.

³⁷ Winston Churchill to H. H. Asquith, 18 December 1913, in Randolph S. Churchill, *Churchill – Companion Volume 2 Part 3*, pp. 1834-1835.

life. I made mine when I left the Tory party'.³⁸ Furthermore, he went on: 'If I hadn't [left] I should be its leader'. This latter suggestion was unrealistic but it is useful in understanding Churchill's state of mind more fully since it is a reflection on his unfulfilled ambitions in seeking a higher place for himself in politics. Churchill had risen to the Cabinet but he still lacked the influence over affairs that he sought; Churchill believed he deserved more and this had not been delivered through involvement in Liberal politics as he had anticipated.

IV

The early years of the First World War saw more disagreements. What a number of Liberals disliked was Churchill's early and enthusiastic embrace of military conscription and the idea, building on his previous thoughts, that a coalition government was needed to manage the war effort.³⁹ All this gave him a reputation as a war-monger, amongst a large section of opinion in the Liberal Cabinet and raised further suspicions about the extent of his loyalty towards the Liberal party.⁴⁰ However, what was more significant for his integration within the party was a further deterioration of his relationship with Asquith, in particular, as a result of the failures of the campaigns, first in 1914, at Antwerp, and then, in 1915 in the Dardanelles in which, as First

³⁸ Diary of C. P. Scott, 23 October 1913, p. 64.

³⁹ Journal of J. A. Pease, 25 August 1914 in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 3 Part 1* (London, 1972), p. 54; Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 302; Charmley, *Churchill*: (London, 1993), p. 97. There are parallels here with the position of Mond; see below, pp. 124-153.

⁴⁰ Diary of Margot Asquith, 8 May 1915, in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 3 Part 1*, pp. 849-850; Margot Asquith, *The Autobiography of Margot Asquith, Vol. 2* (London, 1936), p. 145.

Lord of the Admiralty, he played a key role.⁴¹ Churchill felt that Asquith did nothing to defend him, and this led to a feeling of great alienation.⁴²

Grievances against Asquith can be traced back to the establishment of the First Coalition when Churchill was demoted to the position of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Asquith's decision was a personal blow.⁴³ Churchill clearly felt that he was being unfairly treated and this was a sign that Asquith was intent on making him appear culpable for the failed campaigns.

I do not feel that my judgements have been falsified, or that the determined pursuance of my policy through all the necessary risks was wrong. I wd do it all again if the circumstances were repeated [...].⁴⁴

A mixture of personal sorrow, indignation and frustration emerged and it all led him to become preoccupied with the need to prove his innocence of the charges against him, writing to Asquith on at least two occasions, urging him to publish documentation that he felt would help him, claiming that he was 'in the shadow of utterly false opinions which are a serious injury'.⁴⁵ The fact that Asquith refused to do so only served to widen the gulf between

⁴¹ Pelling, *Churchill*, p. 216; Keith Robbins, *Churchill* (London, 1992), p. 69; Jenkins, *Churchill* (London, 2001), p. 273, p. 277, 285-288, 294, 314; Gilbert, *Churchill – A Life*, p. 325, 328, 356, 363, 370; Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Volume IV*, p. 6, 9-14; Charmley, *Churchill*, p. 103, 105, 131, 135-136, 141.

⁴² Asquith's position at this stage was informed by his view that Churchill possessed poor judgement, lacked competence and was unpopular. See extracts from the Countess Oxford & Asquith papers, in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 3 Part 1*, pp. 454-455 & pp. 849-850).

⁴³ Winston Churchill to Archibald Sinclair, 9 June 1915 in Ian Hunter (ed.), *Winston & Archie – The Collected Correspondence of Winston Churchill and Archibald Sinclair, 1915-1960* (London, 2005), pp. 12-13. For Asquith, however, this was a concession to Churchill; the Tories had wanted Churchill to be removed from Cabinet, but Asquith chose to retain him.

⁴⁴ Winston Churchill to Archibald Sinclair, 9 June 1915, Thurso Papers THRS 1/1/2.

⁴⁵ Winston Churchill to H. H. Asquith, 15 September 1915, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 28/108-11.

them. Churchill came to believe that Asquith did not want to do this in order to hide his own role in ‘approving and agreeing at every stage’ in these campaigns.⁴⁶

As if his relations with Asquith were not bad enough, other damaging situations came about. One issue was the general opinion that Churchill developed towards this coalition. He was critical of Asquith and his government, believing that there was a lack of direction, and he started to ponder the possibility of alternative governments under the headship of Lloyd George.⁴⁷ His position on coalitions was known in Parliament and it was thought that Churchill was actively seeking to bring down the government, which hardly helped his relations with Asquith and his Liberal supporters.⁴⁸ The view of Churchill’s conspiring was not an unreasonable opinion to possess given his renewed close working with Lloyd George (he had put aside his pre-war disagreements to some degree) in relation to controversial issues, such as conscription, which over the course of time were helping to undermine Asquith’s authority.⁴⁹

Furthermore, Churchill had continued to covert a military portfolio and found it difficult to accept that he was not considered for a Cabinet post at the War Office, on the death of Kitchener, or for a place in the War Council. He found it so difficult in fact that it was another source of alienation, leading him finally to resign from the government in November

⁴⁶ Winston Churchill to Clementine Spencer-Churchill, 2 January 1916, Spencer-Churchill Papers, CSCT 2/9/4.

⁴⁷ Winston Churchill to Archibald Sinclair, 30 July 1915, p. 18; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 168. There seem to be some parallels with Alfred Mond in his desire to see an alternative coalition; see below, pp. 124-153.

⁴⁸ Lord Fisher to C. P. Scott, 9 March 1916, in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 3 Part 2*, p. 1445;

⁴⁹ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 166.

1915.⁵⁰ Churchill claimed privately that ‘I can feel no sense of loyalty or friendship for Asquith after the declaration of his utter indifference’.⁵¹

Poor relations with Asquith by this time could have seen Churchill seek to distance himself from the Liberal party too, and this occurred to an extent through further consideration of the alternative coalition arrangements he wished to be put in place. For him, hopes rested on an arrangement involving Lloyd George and Bonar Law, actually with no particular view about which of them should lead, indicating that Liberal party interests were subservient to other considerations in creating an effective administration.

I have a feeling that B. L. and L. G. have a supreme chance now, if they have the resolution to act. It does not seem to me material whether B. L. is first or L. G. War or vice versa. Either place wd afford the basis of an effective war organisation - compared to wh nothing matters [...].⁵²

Of course, Churchill’s position was in part to improve his own political standing. Linking himself to Lloyd George was the only way he could ever return to office.⁵³ There had been some lingering bitterness to Lloyd George as a result of the disagreements in the pre-war period and due to his lack of support for him on the Dardanelles, but these thoughts had to be cast aside if Churchill was to achieve his ambitions.⁵⁴ However, it is clear that he was still not altogether positive about the possibility of cooperation with Lloyd

⁵⁰ Winston Churchill to Archibald Sinclair, 9 June 1915, Thurso Papers THRS 1/1/2; Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 214; Winston Churchill to H. H. Asquith, 11 November 1915, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 15/136-7.

⁵¹ Winston Churchill to Clementine Spencer-Churchill, 10 January 1916, Spencer-Churchill Papers CSCT 2/9/12.

⁵² Winston Churchill to F. E. Smith, 8 April 1916, in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 3 Part 2*, pp. 1482-1483.

⁵³ Winston Churchill to F. E. Smith, 8 April 1916, in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 3 Part 2*, pp. 1482-1483; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 152.

⁵⁴ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 143; Winston Churchill to Clementine Spencer-Churchill, 2 January 1916, Spencer-Churchill Papers CSCT 2/9/4.

George given Churchill's view of the personal challenges this would provide in suggesting that 'distrust based on experience is a terrible barrier'.⁵⁵ Thus, he was aware that cooperation with Lloyd George was not necessarily going to provide him with a political future which would make him any more content.

V

By 1916, Churchill seemed to have returned more clearly to his original goal of creating the new national party. What he envisaged was much greater co-operation between Liberals and Conservatives outside the main parties in the interests of winning the War and afterwards in pursuing the appropriate national policies for the post-war reconstruction.⁵⁶ However, this new position was in many ways really a precursor to that after 1920 when he came to advocate a policy of 'fusion' which was intended to solidify the arrangement formally by uniting the two coalitionist wings of the Liberal and Conservative parties, and thus truly putting into existence the national party.⁵⁷ Thereafter, he predicted the establishment of a new alignment in politics whereby the new division would be between a national *bloc* (made up of the united coalitionists) and Labour.

Mr. Churchill agreed that the old lines of cleavage had been obliterated by the war, and that new lines of cleavage had come into existence; that old causes of controversy are no longer operative [...].

'[...] Why should it not be possible now, at this moment, when our difficulties are so great, when they call for our united exertions – why should it not be possible to combine the patriotism

⁵⁵ Winston Churchill to Archibald Sinclair, 30 July 1915, p. 18.

⁵⁶ Report, *Liberal Magazine*, August 1919.

⁵⁷ Diary of Duff Cooper, January 23 1920 in John Julius Norwich (ed.), *The Duff Cooper Diaries, 1915-1951* (London, 2006), p. 118; Report, *Liberal Magazine*, February 1920.

and stability of the Conservative Party with the broad humanities and tolerances of Liberalism?'.⁵⁸

Fusion was also important in dealing with a threat to national stability that he suggested was posed by the Labour party by providing the necessary bulwark against it ever coming to power.⁵⁹

The advent of a Socialist Government to power would be a national and imperial disaster on the greatest possible scale. The Socialist Party have shown themselves [...] quite unfit to govern. The calamitous strikes in which they have involved us, the open failure of their moderate leaders to control their extremists, have undoubtedly been a great aggravation of the suffering which had in any case to follow the war. The accession to power, now or in the next year or two, of a raw Socialist Government would utterly destroy the commercial credit and confidence upon which our hopes of economic revival can alone be based; and its mere menace would overhang business and enterprise like a black cloud.⁶⁰

The importance of the anti-socialist element should not, however, be overplayed since beyond the rhetoric there appears to be very little substance.⁶¹ Churchill had, of course, favoured collectivist measures in the pre-war period and his aim here was to use language to raise the profile of a supposed threat of socialism to bring Conservative opinion round to his view.⁶² Furthermore, on a more personal level there was likely to have been increasing anxiety at his position in Dundee where he was vulnerable to Labour and divisions within the Liberals meant that some direct appeal to

⁵⁸ Report of Winston Churchill speech, *Liberal Magazine*, February 1920.

⁵⁹ Pelling, *Churchill*, p. 272; Addison, *Churchill*, p. 201.

⁶⁰ Press Release, 12 January 1922, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/122/45-52.

⁶¹ See above, pp. 46-57.

⁶² Addison, *Churchill*, p. 201.

Conservative voters in Dundee was essential if he was to hold his seat in a post-war election.⁶³

Churchill's re-emphasis of the national party idea made him no more satisfied with his position in politics, however. There were a number of reasons for this chiefly relating to his relationship with Lloyd George.⁶⁴ Firstly, there were their personal relations, which quickly became tense, not in a dissimilar way to those between Churchill and Asquith in 1914 and 1915, due to Lloyd George's supposed lack of recognition of his talents. On the creation of the government, Churchill was not even included, largely due to his unpopularity with Conservatives, but it was Lloyd George who was deemed to be at fault, with Churchill believing that he had formulated some deal to his detriment with the newspaper baron, Northcliffe, over the composition of the government.⁶⁵ He did, of course, soon obtain office, firstly as Minister of Munitions and then as Secretary of State for Air and finally as Colonial Secretary, which brought him more influence, and it has been claimed that these developments improved 'his state of mind', but there was always the sense that he wanted something more, and he again found fault with Lloyd George for not offering him the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1921.⁶⁶ With regards to this Chancellorship

⁶³ In the elections of 1910 and in 1918, Churchill's percentage majority over the Labour party was just over 1 per cent.

⁶⁴ *Churchill*, pp. 265-266 & pp. 275-276; Rhodes James, *Churchill*, p. 167; Addison, *Churchill*, pp. 210, 217-219, 224; Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 252; Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Volume IV*, pp. 235-400, 411-413, 506, 581, 768; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 160-236.

⁶⁵ George Riddell claimed that Lloyd George did not include Churchill because he was too unpopular with the Conservatives and adding him would have prevented a government being formed; see *Diary of George Riddell*, 10 December 1916, in John. M. McEwen (ed.), *The Riddell Diaries, 1908-1923* (London, 1986), p. 388. pp. 177-8. Also see Winston Churchill to Archibald Sinclair, 10 December 1916, p. 43.

⁶⁶ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 182; Unsent letter from Churchill to Lloyd George, 24 September 1919, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 16/11/140-142; *Diary of Frances Stevenson*, 26 April 1921, in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 4 Part 3*, p. 1451. There are parallels here with Alfred Mond's thoughts about support from Lloyd George; see below, pp. 124-153.

appointment, there was suspicion that Lloyd George had colluded with Birkenhead in some way.⁶⁷

Secondly, there were problems in relation to policy. Before the War, this appears to have rested purely upon discomfort over the composition of the government which Churchill suggested would not be able to pursue the necessary policies with enough vigour.⁶⁸ However, after the War, they became more severe relating to domestic and foreign policy issues.

Of the issues in relation to domestic policy, two emerged, in particular, which pointed to the government's weaknesses in a policy that would appeal to the national interest or indeed to safeguard electoral interests, and this led to appeals to Lloyd George for a change in direction. Churchill was critical of the government's policies on war profits; he wanted them taxed as a pragmatic means of controlling debt and also a patriotic concession to the idea of equality of sacrifice in the post-war reconstruction.⁶⁹

The first and greatest mistake in my opinion was leaving the profiteers in the possession of their ill-gotten war wealth. Had prompt action been taken at the beginning of 1919, several thousand millions of paper wealth could have been transferred to the State and the internal debt reduced accordingly. The question was, however, deliberately held over and delayed until the moment was lost. Most of this war-made capital has faded as fast as it was created, but internal debt, which might so largely have cancelled and which was incurred in similar abnormal conditions, towers up over us like a precipice. The assets of taxation to which the State might have looked have vanished: the war debts of the State are consolidated and will even grow heavier as trade revives and money regains its purchasing power [...]. In looking back on this lost opportunity I feel

⁶⁷ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 216.

⁶⁸ Winston Churchill to Archibald Sinclair, 10 December 1916, Thurso THRS 1/1/18a-b.

⁶⁹ Similar perspectives emerge in the cases of Hilton Young and Guest; see below, pp. 1765-194.

that it constitutes a very great and irreparable disaster to the country.⁷⁰

Free Trade was more significant. Churchill had backed the continued use of Protection in peacetime, as a pragmatic short-term measure to correct the imbalances that existed in trade, and he continued to emphasise that some measure was justifiable, even by the end of the 1918-22 Parliament.⁷¹ However, his wider inclinations to Free Trade led him to be concerned that Liberals in the government were not honouring their pledges on its restoration with some electoral fall-out likely unless the government altered its position; he was unclear of the wisdom of safeguarding legislation as it emerged in the Act of 1921.

I think we are forced to give further consideration to the working of the Safeguarding of Industries Act. I consider that we have been drawn and are being drawn a long way from the original pledges and undertakings which we gave our constituents at the General Election, and that very great injury will be caused in Coalition Liberal seats if this tendency develops. At the General Election it was understood that certain industries vital to our war-making capacity of which we had felt the need in the war should be fostered here. A very small number of industries were contemplated, and this position could quite easily be defended as a matter of practical administration without any derogation from the principles of Free Trade.⁷²

Such feelings about Free Trade may also have been on his mind when the Exchequer was filled by a Tory. As Churchill perceived himself to be a leading Liberal Free Trader in the government, his failure to be appointed to

⁷⁰ Winston Churchill to Lloyd George, 8 October 1921, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 22/7/40-44.

⁷¹ Report, *Liberal Magazine*, August 1919.

⁷² Winston Churchill to Lloyd George, 15 June 1922, in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 4 Part 3*, pp. 1917-1918.

the post was not just a personal blow but also a blow to the prospects of the reintroduction of a clear Free Trade policy.

In relation to foreign affairs, there were three major issues of contention. The first of these was in relation to the policy over Turkey where Churchill viewed the government's pro-Greek policy as harmful to the integrity of the Empire due to the impact that this was likely to have upon Islamic opinion.⁷³ However, there was also the attitude towards Soviet Russia. He regretted severely the lack of firm commitment to the White Russians and later the decision to open diplomatic and trade relations with Russia – something which significantly led to the thinly veiled threat of his resignation in July 1922.⁷⁴ Whilst some of his criticism was probably tactical, with electoral considerations in mind, it also appears there was a genuine sense that Churchill believed there were severe dangers in appeasing Bolshevik activity in terms of the threat to imperial interests.

I contend that the disasters in Russia are solely due to the Bolsheviks - a terrible sect of cosmopolitan fanatics, whose devastating doctrines of fierce execution have laid Russia low, and will lay low every nation in which they obtain ascendancy [...]. It is becoming increasingly clear that all these factions are in touch with one another, and are acting in consort - in fact, are developing a world-wide conspiracy against our country, designed to deprive our place in the world and rob us of the fruits of victory [...].⁷⁵

Also, linked to this were his views about Germany. Churchill felt that Germany should be treated less harshly and thus the terms of the post-war peace treaties should be altered.⁷⁶ As a central European power, Churchill believed that it could be built up as a bulwark against Soviet advances into

⁷³ Winston Churchill to Lloyd George, 4 December 1920, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/111/82-85.

⁷⁴ Winston Churchill to Lloyd George, 26 July 1922, Lloyd George Papers: F/10/3/22.

⁷⁵ Report of Winston Churchill speech, *Liberal Magazine*, December 1920.

⁷⁶ Winston Churchill to Lloyd George, 24 March 1920, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 22/2/58-59.

Europe. Churchill, it appears, felt so strongly about this issue that he was prepared, at one point, to contemplate open defiance of the government.⁷⁷

Finally, there were the army and naval considerations. Churchill was successful in fighting off attempts for the Geddes Axe to be wielded through his ministry (as Secretary of State for War and Air, January 1919 to February 1921), but not without a struggle. The existence of Bolshevism and the extra commitments to British mandated territories following the peace treaties convinced Churchill that this was not the time for sweeping economies and it seems that he felt that Lloyd George was lacking in judgement by thinking that this could be the case.⁷⁸

All of these difficulties raise questions about why Churchill chose to co-operate with Lloyd George for as long as he did and the major explanation was that he was reliant on Lloyd George for political influence and it was the only means for him to be able to encourage a fusion between the Conservative party and the Coalition Liberals.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, it did not stop him from seeking alternative political combinations for his association, witnessed through involvement in a plan to replace Lloyd George with the Conservative, Lord Derby, in 1920.⁸⁰ Further evidence comes from some contemporary Conservatives noting Churchill's decidedly 'reactionary Tory' perspectives.⁸¹ The suggestion of Churchill's reactionary nature seems rather inconsistent for a politician keen on bringing together Liberal

⁷⁷ Diary of Sir Henry Wilson, 10 October 1919 in Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 4 Part 2*, p. 908.

⁷⁸ Winston Churchill to Clementine Spencer-Churchill, 27 January 1921, Spencer-Churchill Papers CSCT 2/14/1-2; Winston Churchill to Clementine Spencer-Churchill 31 January 1921, Spencer-Churchill Papers CSCT 2/14/4.

⁷⁹ Winston Churchill to Clementine Spencer-Churchill, 4 February 1922, in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 4 Part 3*, pp. 1751-1754.

⁸⁰ Diary of George Riddell, 23 June 1921, p. 345; Diary of Winston Churchill, 24 August 1920, Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 4 Part 2*, pp. 1178-1179; Charmley, *Churchill*, p. 169. This must be compared with other Liberal recruits seeking political combinations outside Liberal politics, such as in the case of Walter Runciman; see below, pp. 224-267.

⁸¹ Diary of Duff Cooper, January 23 1920, p. 118; Diary of Alice Balfour, 18 November 1922 in Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 241.

and Conservative politicians, but it may have been an impression he wanted to give in order to win over support from Conservatives and enable him to loosen his ties to Lloyd George. References to his reactionary attitudes were not recorded in the most positive way, which suggests the impression was counter-productive, and from this point of view it makes Churchill's appeal to Toryism seem ill-considered.

VI

The final twenty-six months or so from the fall of the Coalition in 1922 until Churchill's recruitment into the Conservative party in 1924 were ones in which his ability to co-operate with Conservatives improved and he set about developing closer relationships with the Conservative party in order to create a new political home for himself and other similarly-minded Liberals. Much of his perspective was another manifestation of the desire to build a national party, but the need to reintegrate himself into the party system as a result of the end of the Coalition in 1922 and his subsequent electoral defeat in Dundee, meant that hopes rested on reaching accommodation within the Conservative party itself on national party lines rather than to build a separate alternative to it.⁸² Thus, much of Churchill's efforts were directed to ensuring that there would be a place for him and other Liberals within a Conservative party on terms that were acceptable, and there is evidence that he tried to manipulate the advantages he held at his disposal in doing so. The emphasis here is different from other studies which have considered more short-term perspectives in the movement of Churchill into the Conservative party, such as the support of Liberals for the Labour government and his acceptance of imperial preference; these issues provided

⁸² In Dundee (1922), Churchill fell to fourth place with only just over 17 per cent of the vote.

evidence of some of the circumstances for his change of party but they need to be seen in a wider context.⁸³

Churchill's view in favour of attaching himself to the Conservative party was expressed soon after his defeat in Dundee, despite his continuing involvement in Liberal politics, fighting the election in Leicester West as a Liberal candidate following the party's political reunion at the General Election in 1923. In May 1923 he told George Riddell that he would be 'glad' to be able re-join the Conservatives.⁸⁴ Thus, his return to Liberal politics was certainly peculiar, but it can be accounted for on one level by the partisan position adopted by Conservatives in their call for a general system of Protection; it has been seen that Churchill was flexible on fiscal matters, but this was a step too far, drawing him to a position of separation from Conservatives in reaction.⁸⁵ There was also some short-term self-interest. In 1922-3, it was unclear that a reunited Liberal party would fail to become a significant political force and Churchill needed to present some semblance of association with it. This sort of situation is suggested from contact he had with Asquith's daughter, Violet Bonham Carter, where, following the inconclusive result of the 1923 election, Churchill was at pains to push forward Asquith's right to the Premiership.⁸⁶

The failure of Churchill's re-election campaign in Leicester, and of the Liberal party to assert an effective political agenda in the hung Parliament of 1923, not least due to its support for a Labour government, led him quickly to a more definitive position of cooperation with the Conservative party, and he set out plans for a new formal political union

⁸³ Addison, *Churchill*, pp. 227-228, 230; Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 377; Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 463; Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Volume V: 1922-1939* (London, 1976), pp. 24-25; Pelling, *Churchill*, pp. 287-290, 292-294; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 245.

⁸⁴ Diary of Lord Riddell, 30 May 1923, p. 388; Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, p. 283; Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Volume V*, p. 17.

⁸⁵ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Volume V*, pp. 24-25; Jenkins, *Churchill*, p. 377 & p. 386. It can be compared with other Liberals who behaved similarly; see below, pp. 124-153.

⁸⁶ Winston Churchill to Violet Bonham-Carter (unsent), 28 December 1923, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/126/114-117; 8 January 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/132/10-13.

between Liberals and Conservatives.⁸⁷ In this, there was much in common with his previous support for fusion in that he continued to believe in a new alignment between a national *bloc* and Labour. However, the difference was that Churchill now seemed more confident that such a union was possible. This was because of his view that the party controversies which had separated them had been resolved and, with this being highly apparent, there was nothing fundamental to separate Liberals or Conservatives. It was certainly clear to him after the 1923 election when the Conservatives dropped Protection meaning that a common national policy, focusing on shared views of commercial, business and imperial interests was a realistic possibility.⁸⁸

Now that the fiscal question has been decided by the late election, there is no difference of principle which separates Liberals and Conservatives. All the great issues on which they quarrelled before the war have been settled by agreement. Differences exist, no doubt of mood, of temperament, of degree; but they are not differences of fundamental principle, either in regard to domestic or foreign affairs. They are not comparable to the gulf which yawns between Liberal and Socialist doctrines.⁸⁹

In a sense then, it appears from the evidence that Churchill envisaged a much broader unification of forces than before 1922 when his policy had been more to unite chiefly coalitionist Liberal and Conservative elements. Now potentially all factions within the two parties could be brought together to face an electorally-distinct Labour force. Furthermore, there was an immediately pressing reason for co-operation. He was concerned about the impact the three-party system was having on political stability with a

⁸⁷ Churchill was beaten by over 400 votes by Labour in Leicester West.

⁸⁸ Winston Churchill's Election Address for the Westminster Abbey By-Election 1924, Spears Papers MSS SPEARS 1/76; Winston Churchill to Baldwin, 7 March 1924, Baldwin Paper MSS Baldwin 51/61-62; Report, *Liberal Magazine* March 1924; Winston Churchill to Balfour, 3 April 1924, Balfour Papers GD433/2/19/126.

⁸⁹ Report, Winston Churchill speech, *Liberal Magazine*, March 1924.

succession of weak and minority governments likely which were clearly not, in his view, in the national interest.

Our constitutional and party system is out of joint. The one security on which all our institutions have depended has been the good sense of the majority of people. But we have now entered a period of minority rule. The so-called three-party system is incapable of affording any solid or stable basis for our public life. Its continuance can only mean a succession of weak Governments [...].⁹⁰

The continuing three-party system was also no doubt seen as a means for Labour to get elected to power given that Liberals and Conservatives were increasingly competing for the same sort of voters as their interests converged.

Given all this thinking, it seems strange that Churchill was no longer a proponent of complete political amalgamation of the parties. However, the experience of the Coalition years appears to have taught him that Liberal and Conservative identities, despite commonalities, could not be completely overridden and he came to believe that Liberal and Conservative organisations should remain separate although in friendly co-operation.

I think it of great importance that the Conservative and Liberal wings in this matter should develop separately and with clear determination to co-operate against a common foe when the time comes.⁹¹

In terms of attitudes to politics Churchill now seemed very close to Baldwin and other Conservative leaders and this assisted in enabling communications with Balfour and Baldwin over proposals for what

⁹⁰ Winston Churchill's Election Address for the Westminster Abbey By-Election 1924, Spears Papers MSS SPEARS 1/76.

⁹¹ Winston Churchill to Granville, Undated April 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/132/87.

Churchill termed ‘the Conservative and Liberal Union’.⁹² For Baldwin, Churchill had the potential to provide a liberal face for his Conservative strategy for political courtship of Liberal politicians and breaking the Liberal party, which perhaps accounts for why regular distrust of Churchill was put aside. However, Churchill was not prepared to simply join the Conservative party on the basis of shared perspectives, even if he now saw himself more clearly as a Conservative politician; he was attracted by remaining detached from the Conservatives to ensure that he maintained credentials for assistance with his political union idea. It seems that he was anticipating some form of schism and Churchill wanted to make sure that there was personal benefit that could be derived from it by appearing to be leading Liberal opinion into the Conservative party.⁹³ Conservatives seemed tolerant of his approach, with Baldwin coming to view of Churchill’s importance to the acquisition of Liberal recruits, too influenced possibly by exaggerated predictions of the number of Liberals interested in the political union idea.⁹⁴ Churchill’s desire to remain detached also explains why he sought to stand as a Constitutionalist at the Westminster Abbey By-Election in March 1924 and in the General Election at Epping later that year. However, it was also informed by his lack of complete trust of the Conservatives to maintain a position akin to a national party and in support of the political union idea:

⁹² Winston Churchill to Baldwin, 7 March 1924, Baldwin Papers MSS Baldwin 51/61-62; Arthur Balfour to Churchill, 14 March 1924, Balfour Papers GD433/2/1/17; Winston Churchill to Balfour, 16 March 1924, Balfour Papers GD433/2/1/12; Winston Churchill to Baldwin, April 1 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/132/64-65; Winston Churchill to Granville, Undated April 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/132/87; Winston Churchill to Balfour, 3 April 1924, Balfour Papers GD433/2/19/126; Winston Churchill to F. Stanley Jackson, 10 May 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 6/2/58-59; Winston Churchill to Sir Samuel Hoare, 18 June 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/133/71-72; Winston Churchill to Balfour, 11 October 1924, Balfour Papers GD433/19/122.

⁹³ Winston Churchill to Balfour, 3 April 1924, Balfour Papers GD433/2/19/126.

⁹⁴ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 249.

Of course if I stood as a Cons. it wd almost certainly be a walk over. But I cannot do this & it is far better for all the interests we are safeguarding that I shall carry with me moderate Liberals.⁹⁵

Despite his preparations, Churchill's desire to gain support from Liberals for his political union idea suffered blows of his own making. The Westminster Abbey campaign, despite the intention, presented Churchill more simply as a Conservative, and he made an error in suggesting that the Conservative party itself would become 'the main rallying ground for opponents of Socialism', for which he received complaints from Liberal sympathisers whom he hoped to broker an arrangement for within his union.⁹⁶

Churchill joined the Conservative party, not long after the General Election of 1924. Only a few Liberals standing as Constitutionalists had been elected (and fewer still came with Churchill into the Conservative party) and this fact, as well as the Liberal party's own disaster at the polls meant that the whole idea of a political union was no longer credible; there were simply not enough Constitutionalists or Liberals with Conservative sympathies elected to make their position important in the direction of political affairs.⁹⁷ For Churchill, it was not such a surprise that in these circumstances he would seek simply to re-join the Conservative party, given that he had already indicated his affinity with it during the course of 1924, and the failures of both the Constitutionalist grouping and the political union idea made it logical and inevitable.

In his decision to work with the Conservatives in 1924, it is not absolutely clear as to the extent the Liberal party itself played a role given

⁹⁵ Winston Churchill to Clementine Spencer-Churchill, 24 February 1924, Spencer-Churchill Papers CSCT 2/17/8-10.

⁹⁶ Edward Grigg to Winston Churchill, 6 March 1924, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001, Edward Spears to Churchill, 7 March 1924, Spears Papers MSS SPEARS 1/76. His position in looking like a Conservative is not dissimilar to that of Greenwood in his standing as a Constitutionalist at the 1924 General Election; see above, pp. 53-57.

⁹⁷ Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Defections and the Liberal Party, 1910-2010* (Manchester & New York, 2012), pp. 105-113.

that his alienation from it was apparent also before this time. But it is clear that he had not been happy with the party's position on Labour, and this was a source of further dissatisfaction and led him to find the excuse for a decisive break and to legitimise his working with the Conservative party.⁹⁸ There is also the relationship to Lloyd George to consider.⁹⁹ The usefulness of cooperation was less, with Lloyd George's decline in political significance after the fall of the Coalition and through his support for Labour; thus, a factor in continuing involvement in Liberal politics had been removed. However, there is an ambiguity here with some evidence pointing to Churchill's belief that Lloyd George might renege on his left-leaning perspective at some stage, encouraged potentially by contact over election strategy in 1924. Churchill still had hopes of incorporating Liberals into some kind of alliance, post his recruitment, and a revived relationship with Lloyd George to facilitate it was not unthinkable.¹⁰⁰ It does not seem then that he had given up on working with Lloyd George altogether.

VII

From this analysis of Churchill's career it can be seen that his recruitment into the Conservative party was part of a long process, with Toye's characterisation of a later part of it as a series of crab-like movements back into the Conservative party being a fair description of his whole career from 1904 to 1924, with a series of challenges to his involvement in Liberal politics always seeming to push him towards his original party. Like a number of the Liberal recruits, Churchill was not very committed to partisan causes, having been influenced by patriotic political influences which stayed

⁹⁸ Winston Churchill to Violet Bonham-Carter (unsent), 28 December 1923, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/126/114-117: 28 December 1923; Winston Churchill to Violet Bonham-Carter, 8 January 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/132/10-13; Winston Churchill to H. G. Tanner, 5 February 1924, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/132/38-39.

⁹⁹ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, pp. 246-250.

¹⁰⁰ In his view of Lloyd George he was eventually to become disillusioned; see Winston Churchill to Edward Spears, Undated May 1927, Spears Papers SPEARS 1/49.

with him in a desire to create a national party 'above party' interests, firstly through means of the Liberal party, then through coalition and fusion, and, then finally, by joining the Conservative party itself due to the circumstances of the political situations he faced over time. Churchill had very difficult relations with the Liberal party, and especially its leaders, partly because of disagreement over policy and strategy, but also on a personal level, where, as an ambitious politician, he felt that his political progress was being frustrated. These difficulties informed Churchill's perspectives of where to position himself in politics and it is clear that he might have sought to sever his ties with the Liberal party on a number of occasions throughout his involvement with it. His relationship with Lloyd George was critical; whilst the relationship was often difficult, it was Lloyd George who sustained his involvement with the Liberal party, both because Churchill felt that they shared a similar outlook and because he was a means to provide him with political influence that he would not otherwise have possessed due to his unpopularity. In this context, it is important to understand that when Lloyd George was no longer perceived to be influential and their political outlooks started to diverge that Churchill decided to abandon Liberal politics completely.

Churchill's decision to join the Conservatives was marked by an elaborate means of departure from the Liberal party in 1924. He only made his final decision formally to align himself to the Conservative party after the onset of the Labour government, and, even then, he only finally joined the party when his more detached position was no longer feasible. In aligning himself with the Conservatives, Churchill aimed at ensuring that he would be important to his new leaders and that he would overcome their previous prejudice towards him. On a more personal level, he had to seek to legitimise his position in having changed his mind about parties now twice and his elaborate means of reincorporation into his original party is evidence of his desire to resolve a problem for him in this situation. There was a difficulty; as he put it himself: 'anyone can rat, but it takes a certain

ingenuity to re-rat'.¹⁰¹ The Liberal party's support for Labour gave him the justification for changing party in some respects, but he needed to ensure that there was no perception of discontinuity with his general outlook on politics. From the perspective of creating a national party there was a lot of consistency, but in the framework of party politics, changing parties more than once was a potential problem for views of his integrity; he needed to address this difficulty if he was to be able to play a successful role in politics for the future and this was something that obviously played upon his mind.

Churchill accepted the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer in Baldwin's government in November 1924 which from the point of view of dealing with the 're-ratting' issue at least was not the right decision, since it encouraged a perception of Churchill's disloyalty and inconsistency which affected his reputation and career until the Second World War and helped influence historical perceptions of him thereafter. If he had allowed more time before accepting office the situation may have been different but one can imagine that he was so anxious to fulfil his ambition of holding one of the chief offices of state that such thoughts probably did not occur to him.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Winston Churchill, 1924, in Antony Jay, *Oxford Book of Political Quotations* (Oxford, 2007), p. 25.

¹⁰² Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, p. 252.

Chapter Three: Alfred Mond

Alfred Mond is one of the major figures in recruitment into the Conservative party and he is often referred to in general texts on Liberal history, but as a specific focus there has been far less examination, with no major studies of him at all within the last forty years. Further detailed coverage of his political career is overdue.

Mond first sat as the Liberal MP for Chester between 1906 and January 1910, and then Swansea from 1910 to 1918.¹ After the War, he became the MP for Swansea West, serving between 1918 and 1923. Mond served in government; firstly as First Commissioner of Works from 1916 to 1921; and then, as Minister for Health (with a seat in the Cabinet) from 1921-22. Mond was a firm supporter of Lloyd George but became a prominent advocate of Liberal reunion after the fall of the Coalition; this position, however, did not reward him electorally since he lost his seat in the 1923 election. Mond was not out of Parliament for long as he was returned as the MP for Carmarthen, following a by-election victory in 1924, and he continued in this role until 1928 when he was elevated to the House of Lords. In early 1926, Mond parted company with the Liberal party by joining the Conservatives.

Outside of politics, Mond was a major industrialist; he had an established career before he gained political office and his industrial interests remained an important focus of his life. He was the younger son of the German Jewish émigré industrialist, Ludwig Mond, and became a director in the family's business interests which brought him into connection with the Liberal-Radical, John Tomlinson Brunner, who was a business partner of his father. During his life, Mond pursued various directorships alongside his political interests, which at times took precedence over his political work, such as the Mond Nickel Company, the International Nickel Company of Canada, the Westminster Bank and the Industrial Finance Investment Corporation. In business terms, his lasting

¹ Frank Greenaway, 'Mond family', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 11 August 2011).

legacy was the role he played in the establishment of Imperial Chemicals Industries (I. C. I.); Mond was the first chairman.

I

There are two biographical studies of Mond; one provided by his official biographer, Hector Bolitho, and also the more scholarly Geoffrey Bayliss doctoral thesis of the late 1960s.² Since then, there has been little specific focus beyond a very helpful journal article by J. Graham Jones, examining Mond in the context of Carmarthenshire and land politics in the 1920s.³ These studies provide some understanding, but there are gaps in appreciation of Mond's outlook on politics and in understanding some of the circumstances of his recruitment into the Conservative party.⁴

In examining aspects of the literature, a useful starting point is with Bayliss' view that Mond became essentially a Conservative from even as early as 1916.⁵ He supports his suggestions by pointing to Mond's embrace of compulsion in wartime and the pursuit of anti-socialist and protectionist policies thereafter. However, there are various objections to this characterisation, some of which can even be gleaned from other details of Bayliss's research. More consideration is needed of the impact of his political values and the effect of them on his party affiliations over time. Indeed, Bayliss's research suggests that there is much to link him to prevailing middle class and business perspectives in the more practical,

² Hector Bolitho, *Alfred Mond – First Lord Melchett* (London, 1933); Geoffrey M. Bayliss, 'The outsider: aspects of the political career of Alfred Mond, First Lord Melchett (1868-1930)', Unpublished University of Wales Ph.D. (1969).

³ J. Graham Jones, 'Sir Alfred Mond, Carmarthenshire and the Green Book', *The Welsh History Review*, 19 3 (1999), 487-516.

⁴ It is incomprehensible as to why there has been so little scrutiny of Mond given his prominence in business and British politics; one can only speculate as to the reasons. The most likely reason would be that this has been simply accidental – indeed, that extensive scrutiny has been overlooked amid the concentration on other major figures in the period of Liberal party decline – as no other satisfactory explanation can be found.

⁵ Bayliss, 'The outsider', pp. 167, 226, 235-236, 336, 344, 492, 501-507, 543-553, 575-577.

technocratic and managerial approach to political affairs, which can be seen in support over time for state intervention in the economy and social policy.⁶ Such political perspectives might have eventually drawn him close to the Conservative party, due to the convergence of Liberal and Conservative politics, but it does not necessarily follow that Mond was a Conservative. Mond's anti-socialism should not be seen as evidence of his Conservatism either. Aspects of research to do with constituency campaigns suggest that pursuit of anti-socialism had a more electoral character to it in competing against the Labour party; in other words, it was an electoral shift as opposed to an ideological move to the right.⁷

More consideration is needed of Mond's outlook on the party system and the impact it had on his political affiliations. One overarching consideration was the lack of sustained commitment to party politics itself; Mond often looked beyond limited party combinations to bring together a broader range of opinion, so this limits the extent to which his change of party can be seen as a change in political perspective. Bayliss identifies that Mond was actually an advocate of a 'centre' or national party which, if true, places Mond's politics on a similar footing to other later recruits in pursuit of the idea of a national government.⁸ The origins of this patriotism are not fully developed in the research but it is likely, in part, to have been motivated by the desire to overcome racial prejudice against his German and Jewish background, which impacted upon involvement in politics; research for this study suggests that Mond tried to over-compensate for his background which led him to extreme and exaggerated perspectives in his support for national interests.⁹ His background also influenced him in negative perceptions of the British system of parties for 'muddling through' when more decisive action was needed. It frustrated him that party politics

⁶ Bayliss, 'The outsider', pp. pp. 16, 25-28, 83, 156, 322, 502, 507, 521. Also see above, pp. 7-9.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 483-521. Also see relevant discussion of other Liberals and anti-socialism; see above pp. 43-57.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 70, 81, 216, 284.

⁹ See above, pp. 41-45.

got in the way of good decision-making.¹⁰ However, views need to be balanced against a tendency to sometimes retreat into party politics when electoral interests came to the fore.¹¹

Away from issues considering Mond's political outlook is commentary related to internal Liberal party factors which can be linked directly to his decision to leave the party. One such point seems to have been poor relations with Asquith. Bayliss speaks of Mond's exclusion from high office by Asquith, hinting at prejudice of a racial kind.¹² Naomi Levine's study of Asquith reveals his prejudices against Jews and this suggests that Bayliss has a point although this may not be an entirely fair characterisation, with prejudice against Mond also potentially related to Asquith's suspicion of industrialists as materialists and profiteers.¹³ Whatever the reasons, Mond was clearly sensitive to potential prejudice against him and has been shown to be unhappy with his exclusion from office; it is clear that it contributed to his seeking Asquith's removal as Prime Minister on a couple of occasions.¹⁴ This feeling of distrust for Asquith needs further consideration because it remained with him, and it drew him into prejudice towards Asquith's supporters in the damaging factional conflict after the War.

The difficulties with Asquith have been shown to have assisted Mond in forming allegiance to Lloyd George.¹⁵ Bayliss points to good relations with Lloyd George over time due to a measure of faith in political

¹⁰ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 70 refers to 'his Prussian contempt for the entire party system'.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 341.

¹² Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 69.

¹³ On Asquith's anti-Jewish prejudices, see Naomi B. Levine, *Politics, Religion and Love* (New York & London, 1991), pp. 160, 177, 193-194, 199, 208, 306-309. This is also a factor that can be seen through a trawl of correspondence, particularly that contained in Michael & Eleanor Brock (eds.), *H. H. Asquith – Letters to Venetia Stanley*, Oxford University Press (Oxford, 1985) as a good example. On his anti-industrialist perspectives see Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 106.

¹⁴ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 120.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 69.

Liberalism but tempered by imperialism, and he shows that good relations endured over the years with support for Lloyd George's leadership even after the fall of the Coalition.¹⁶ However, this view of positive relations is overstated since other research shows frustration with Lloyd George whilst in government, and the relationship between the two politicians does not appear quite as close as Bayliss's impression suggests.

There is substantial detail in discussion of the issues which led to Mond's move out of the Liberal party. Not unlike a number of other recruits after the fall of the Coalition he favoured Liberal reunion, which Bayliss suggests emerged very early – actually before the fall of the Coalition – due to problems of working with the Conservatives and in order to exploit 'Wee Free' dissatisfaction with Asquith.¹⁷ He wanted Lloyd George to take over the party. It is also suggested he wanted the united party to position itself clearly against socialism.¹⁸ In Bayliss's perspective, it was the failure of Liberal unity and to pursue an anti-socialist line after the 1923 election which led to tensions. Mond, it has been shown, was concerned about the decision to vote Labour into office and the subsequent pursuit of a left-leaning political strategy which shattered any possibility of unity of purpose. It is also mentioned that he possessed concerns about Lloyd George's moral authority, with his Political Fund being used to influence the party direction.¹⁹ All this led to a divergent path from Lloyd George's, with evidence of favouring a move towards renewed relations with the Conservatives, both nationally and at constituency level, and to a clear line against policies which looked too far to the left.²⁰ Research points to growing frustration and disaffection over the issues which reached their climax in relation to the development of the Green Book policy, which Mond opposed, confirming there could be no cooperation with Lloyd

¹⁶ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 32, 267-359.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 341.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 403.

¹⁹ John Campbell, *Lloyd George – The Goat in the Wilderness* (London, 1977), pp. 99-102, 128; Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 586; Jones, 'Sir Alfred Mond', 501.

²⁰ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 501; Jones, 'Sir Alfred Mond', 501.

George, so at that point Mond severed his ties with Lloyd George and the party.²¹

The sequence of events which led to the departure from the Liberal party seem well scrutinised by historians but the swiftness of the movement into the Conservative party – only seven days after – seems less understandable and requires more consideration. Bayliss's view implies that Mond simply came to the conclusion that he would have to join the Conservative party, as the only party now pursuing policies against socialism and which represented the 'national' interest.²² Alun Wyburn-Powell emphasises 'ideological connections' to the Conservative party which assisted the move, no doubt building on the research of Bayliss in emphasising Mond's essentially Conservative outlook.²³ Jones emphasises Baldwin's offer to Mond of a peerage if he should join the Conservatives; Jones believes that Mond had succumbed to ambition in accepting this offer.²⁴ These views need to be tested further in the context of additional evidence, particularly referring to the nature of the relationship with Baldwin as a critical figure in drawing Liberals to the Conservative party. It is not clear that the reasons for joining the Baldwin's party have been fully demonstrated.

II

The early years of Mond's parliamentary career reveal a propensity towards involvement with the party political concerns of the day. His first speeches in the House of Commons were ones of typical contemporary Liberal preoccupations; for example, the condemnation of the use of Chinese labour

²¹ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 586.

²² Ibid, p. 591.

²³ Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Defections and the Liberal Party, 1910-2010* (Manchester & New York, 2012), p. 121.

²⁴ Jones, 'Sir Alfred Mond', 509. The point is also reiterated by Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 121.

in the Transvaal and the defence of Free Trade.²⁵ In the latter case, his views seemed particularly partisan in his uncompromising Cobdenite perspective. He said: 'Free Trade, which Cobden once dreamt would be extended to the whole world, is based upon the rock of economic freedom and on a sound principle'.²⁶ Perhaps in such cases Mond was revealing the influence of the radical, John Brunner, on his early political outlook.²⁷ A similar position existed in relation to Mond's advocacy of land taxation although Liberal-Radical prejudice against landowners seemed to work alongside the more business-like concerns about competition and efficiency, perhaps adding some credence to the position of Geoffrey Searle in his identification of business Liberals, like Mond, with the desire to build a broad pan-class alliance of working people against unearned wealth.²⁸ Thus, Mond's position was not necessarily one to connect with party political perspectives so completely.

In other areas of politics, there were some early tensions in Mond's relationship with the political process, such as over the pace and development of state intervention in welfare provision; his impatience accounted for on the basis of his interests in the social aspects of imperialism.²⁹ This view can be seen especially amid discussion of national insurance in 1911 where Mond hinted at frustration with political colleagues as well as foes in Parliament:

[...] For years I have been advocating compulsory insurance against unemployment and invalidity, and for years I have been told that any such scheme was quite impossible. I was told that nobody

²⁵ Alfred Mond speech, 26 February 1906, HC Debates 1906 Vol. 152 col. 653-657.

²⁶ Alfred Mond speech, 8 February 1911, HC Debates 1911 Vol. 21 col. 391.

²⁷ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 15, 29, 148.

²⁸ Alfred Mond letter, *The Times*, 17 June 1909; Geoffrey Searle, 'The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business', *English Historical Review*, 98 388 (1983), 29-60; Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 32. There are similarities with the position adopted by Runciman here; see below, pp. 224-267.

²⁹ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 25-28. The frustration is similar to that felt by Churchill at this time; see above, pp. 92-123.

would submit to a compulsory system, that it might do for the Germans and other countries, but it would never do here [...].³⁰

And there were further tensions in 1914, this time in relation to Liberal colleagues specifically, when, as Bayliss has shown, Mond appealed for lower defence spending to secure funding for social reform.³¹ The only difficulty Mond ever seemed to have over the welfare agenda appeared to be in relation to minimum wage legislation. Mond had distaste for compulsion, but when legislation came before Parliament in 1912 he reluctantly supported it as a practical measure although still feeling it was necessary to voice criticisms, particularly of the rush to get it through Parliament.³²

A limit to Mond's association with partisan causes can be seen in some tendency towards consensus, like in his views on welfare reform and in the non-partisan tenure of some of his speeches, and against adversarial party activity which was confirmed, especially in the constitutional crisis of 1909-10, where he became critical of other parliamentarians.

But the constitutional issue is of much greater importance than any mere party triumph, and it ought to receive more thoughtful treatment from all interested in the future conduct of the government of this country that it appears to be now doing amid the din of party polemics.³³

It seems that, at least on important issues of state, he wanted to see parties working together in the national interest which, amongst other things, possibly accounts for his advocacy of proportional representation.³⁴ Bayliss

³⁰ Alfred Mond speech, 29 May 1911, HC Debates 1911 Vol. 26 col. 820.

³¹ In this context it is also interesting to note his position by 1914 as Vice President of the Naval League and thus was a keen supporter of the protection of British naval supremacy. However, this has to be balanced against the importance of social reform and also his desire to avoid war with Germany which he believed would be a disaster for trade; see Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 129, 149.

³² Alfred Mond speech, 21 March 1912, HC Debates 1912 Vol. 35 col. 2111, col. 2115.

³³ Alfred Mond letter, *The Times*, 1 October 1909.

³⁴ Alfred Mond speech, 4 November 1912, HC Debates 1912 Vol. 43 col. 998.

takes Mond's commitment to non-partisanship much further in identifying his desire to create a 'centre' party or national party. Supporting this possibility is a record of a private meeting hosted by Mond with Lloyd George in 1912 in relation to forming some kind of coalition involving moderate Labour and Liberals and the Liberal-Radical newspaper magnate, Sir Henry Dalziel, but other evidence suggests that he was not closely connected to these discussions.³⁵ Rather it would seem that Mond had heard rumours of coalition talks and sought to opportunistically exploit the possibility that one would bring to affirm a relationship with Lloyd George and gain him some higher political office, working in Lloyd George's service.

I read of rumours of changes in the Government of course they may mean nothing but I should just love it if there was a chance to become your right hand man, as Financial Secretary to the Treasury [...]. I write to you because I know I understand you and we could work together, I have always loyally backed your ideas and fought for them [...] and you want people with courage to support you for your great work of the future.³⁶

Thus, it is possible that Mond was very interested in realignment of the party system but there were clearly possibilities of self-interested motives in seeing this happen.

It is also unclear as to the extent to which Mond wished to work directly with other parties, as can be seen in his attitude towards Labour electorally. Bayliss himself provides an example in Mond's contrasting actions during the Mid Glamorgan by-election of March 1910 and the Gower election in December 1910.³⁷ In Mid Glamorgan, he actively supported a Liberal candidature, despite the compact with Labour supported by the central party organisation, whilst in Gower Mond opposed a Liberal renegade on the basis that he was a threat to Liberal-Labour relations. It

³⁵ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 81.

³⁶ Alfred Mond to Lloyd George, Undated December 1912, Melchett Papers AP3/1.

³⁷ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 70-78.

seems that Mond's position was dictated by the peculiarities of local circumstances; Labour was only tolerable insofar as it was not a threat to the Liberal party's electoral interests.

A final issue for consideration at this point was Mond's personal relations with his party leader, Asquith. Potentially there were a number of reasons why Mond was not rated by Asquith, including the prejudices against him, and due to an involvement with Lloyd George, but possibly also some unattractive personal qualities, such as his naked ambition, his single-mindedness and outspokenness in parliamentary debates; he needed to be seen as less self-interested and more of a party loyalist.³⁸ Whatever the reasons, Asquith's disregard detracted from any respect he might have otherwise had, reflected in his eventual support for Lloyd George to replace him. Poor relations with his leader were not issues that left him feeling disaffection from his party as a whole, but they could not have made him feel very integrated within it.

III

Mond's imperialist and pragmatic instincts came to the fore in 1914, witnessed in his abandonment of Liberal principles of voluntarism and *laissez faire* and in his acceptance of a rigorous and interventionist wartime policy.³⁹ In particular, his acceptance of conscription is of critical interest given the view of Bayliss that it brought him to a Conservative view of politics. Despite the questionability of this suggestion, it is undeniable that Mond's political judgement on the issue brought him closer to the Conservatives, even if this is viewed solely as a practical response to circumstances.⁴⁰

The reluctance of the military authorities in this country compared to those of our Allies to release skilled men is probably not a little

³⁸ See above, p. 127 for prejudices against Mond.

³⁹ Mond's swift embrace of compulsion mirrored that of Churchill; see above, pp. 92-123.

⁴⁰ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 164.

dictated by the fact that with our voluntary system of recruiting the authorities can never be sure whether or not the vacancies can be filled up, whereas with a properly organised system of military service all this proceeds automatically.⁴¹

It was not, of course, only on conscription that Mond's views seemed to have evolved; on Free Trade too there were developments; his views changed somewhat after 1915 in calls for allied preference during wartime, and in the aftermath, Dominion preference, and then finally, Safeguarding.⁴²

In relation to these perspectives there were some mitigating circumstances which demonstrate his pragmatism and other considerations of principle. The issues surrounding conscription are perhaps most clear in these regards with Mond's letter in *The Times* clearly referring to wartime policy as a short-term justification, not some general scheme of policy for the longer term, which tends to support Matthew Johnson's contention that early support for conscription, like Mond's, did not necessarily mark a wholesale abandonment of Liberal principles.⁴³ Not unlike other members of the Liberal War Committee, Mond supported conscription as a means to secure an 'equality of sacrifice' during wartime, with an echo of his greater interest in policies wider than simply a narrow partisan position. This pragmatic and egalitarian position is evident from a speech in the Commons 'General Compulsory Military Service' debate in May 1916:

I am glad that the Prime Minister, even at the eleventh hour, has agreed upon a scheme of general compulsion. I was one of the few who, a long time ago, in opposition to the political traditions of the

⁴¹ Alfred Mond Letter, *The Times*, 15 September 1915.

⁴² Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 166, 175; Report, Alfred Mond Speech, 10 January 1916, HC Debates 1915-16 Vol. 77 col. 1325; Report, *Liberal Magazine*, February 1919; Report, Alfred Mond speech, *Liberal Magazine*, July 1921. There were some parallels with the views of Runciman here who on fiscal questions, at least, adopted a similar perspective; see below, pp. 224-267.

⁴³ Matthew Johnson, 'The Liberal War Committee and the Liberal Advocacy of Conscription in Britain, 1914-1916', *The Historical Journal* 51 2 (2008), 399-420.

party to which I belong [...] urged that we should adopt a rational and equitable and a fair scheme of compulsory military service.⁴⁴

In relation to Free Trade, there were a number of considerations. In the first place, there was the tone. A characteristic of jingoism can be identified, which appears closely connected to the need for Mond to appear unquestionably loyal to the British and imperialist interests in a period when his background seemed to be subject to particular public scrutiny as to whether he was truly loyal to the allied and imperial cause; there were those who were keen to smear his reputation.⁴⁵ As a politician, it is clear he felt the need to deal firmly with these suggestions, accounting for the forcefulness of his rhetoric.⁴⁶

The Germans may be quite certain of one thing, that no mistaken kindness to them is going to be exercised either by this House, by the Government, or by the country at the end of the War, and if they can imagine that they can commit unparalleled atrocities, break every rule and law of civilised warfare, that they can ride roughshod over what everyone has held holy, and that at the end of that, at their own moment, they can come back and take up their position as citizens and have the same civil life or the same trading life as before, and that their goods will have the same open markets in our

⁴⁴ Alfred Mond speech, 2 May 1916, HC Debates 1916 Vol. 81 col. 2621-2622, 2655.

⁴⁵ Asquith reported an attack by Ormsby Gove on Mond's racial allegiances in 1915; see H. H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 15 March 1915, in *H. H. Asquith – Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 480-481. Also see Report, *The Times*, 6 December 1918. The report suggests that he had been attacked as a 'source of pro-German influence in the Government and likely to weaken the determination of this country to exact from Germany the fullest terms of reparation for the wrong committed by her during the war.' And also Report, *The Times*, 13 January 1920. Mond won a libel case against H. H. Beamish for suggesting that he was a traitor in his business affairs in dealing with the Germans after the War. A reading the evidence points to the potential for some kind of coordinated campaign against Mond, although the source of this seems very unclear.

⁴⁶ Diary of George Riddell, 5 May 1921, in John McEwen (ed.), *The Riddell Diaries, 1908-1923*, (London, 1986), p. 343.

Empire or among the Allies, I think they will find themselves rudely mistaken.⁴⁷

Secondly, in his acceptance of allied, and then Dominion, preference there was some short-term expediency involved, with a wish to see the restoration of Free Trade sometime in the future. Mond was not a convert to Protectionism; he obviously felt, perhaps from his first-hand business sector knowledge as well as political influences, that wartime had reduced the capacity of some industries to compete openly in a market environment and that these had to be assisted in these circumstances.

These industries to-day are not yet in a position to stand on their own two feet. From my own knowledge I can say that, if they are simply left to the free play of competition, they will disappear.⁴⁸

As part of the move back to pre-war Free Trade conditions duties should first be reduced to assist the restoration of trade with Britain's closest allies.

How anyone can contend that a reduction of existing Duties can be an infringement of the principles of Free Trade quite passes my comprehension, because it is obviously a movement towards Free Trade and a very strong movement. If you abolish all the Duties existing in all the Dominions and in this country, then you will have absolute Free Trade, and obviously a reduction of duties must be a movement towards Free Trade.⁴⁹

His position was not evidence of the conversion to the 'Chamberlainite Zollverein'; in Mond's own terms he was still a good Free Trader.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Alfred Mond Speech, 10 January 1916, HC Debates 1915-16 Vol. 77 col. 1325. There are parallels here with the position adopted by future recruit, Hilton Young; see below, pp. 154-174.

⁴⁸ Report, Alfred Mond speech, *Liberal Magazine*, July 1921.

⁴⁹ Report, Alfred Mond speech, *Liberal Magazine*, June 1919.

⁵⁰ Mond's position was not dissimilar to that of other Liberals, like Runciman, found themselves in in the 1930s in arguing for 'freer trade'; see below, pp. 224-268.

Mond's adaptation to changing circumstances was reflected to a degree in relation to attitudes towards the political complexions of governments, certainly at the start of this period. He initially became an enthusiastic supporter of Coalition politics seeming to be rather disillusioned with the party scene, no doubt fuelled by the desire to protect his view of the national interest and due to his dislike for Liberal politics as led by Asquith.⁵¹ It also seemed to be that he believed party politics itself was a casualty of war and that it would not return; adaptation to a new type of politics was essential.

I hope that I have learnt – and I think many in this House have learnt – that there is another way of governing a country besides the old way of parties in and out of office opposing each other, not on principles but on party lines, and after the War, it is perfectly certain that neither the country nor the House of Commons will revert to these ancient methods which have broken down in war.⁵²

He again sought a system of proportional representation, which he saw as a means to enshrine such cross-party working or coalitions into the normal fabric of government.⁵³

Yet despite the emergence of coalition arrangements, Mond did not appear very satisfied with them leading ultimately to disillusion in the whole idea. In the first instance there was the experience of the Asquith Coalition.⁵⁴ He disagreed with Asquith's policies over the management of the War effort, inspired particularly by his early impatience for a policy of compulsion. And then he was dissatisfied with the Lloyd George Coalition, despite promotions which gave him a say in governmental affairs, leading him into Cabinet office in 1921 as Minister of Health. Mond had concerns about policy under Lloyd George, and these surfaced after the War in

⁵¹ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 216.

⁵² Alfred Mond speech, 4 July 1917, HC Debates 1916-17 Vol. 95 col. 1215-1223.

⁵³ Alfred Mond speech, 4 July 1917, HC Debates 1917 Vol. 95 col. 1222.

⁵⁴ This is very similar to the position of Churchill in his feelings about Asquith. The War appeared to be pushing Mond into a similar camp of disaffection; see above, pp. 92-123.

thoughts about Welsh Church disestablishment, economies to health spending, Ireland and foreign policy, despite evidence of acquiescence in some of these issues to bolster Lloyd George's position.⁵⁵ However, his concerns were also rooted deeply in the very complexion of the Coalition itself, manifesting themselves in criticism of the Conservatives who were pushing the government in the policy direction with which he was unhappy and costing the Liberal party support amongst the electorate.⁵⁶ This sentiment surfaced strongly after the War, in his recommendation that the Coalition should be reorganised so that it became 'more a real joint body and less of two separate forces' under Lloyd George.⁵⁷ Such words could be interpreted as evidence of a movement in the direction of a policy of fusion of the two forces, but viewed in the context of Mond's fears about the Conservative influence it seemed more a call on Lloyd George to exercise greater political leadership and to lead the Coalition in an alternative direction less closely associated with the Conservative party.

In regards to Mond's fears there was definitely a more local perspective which fed his anxieties. In South Wales, Mond feared electoral fall out for Lloyd George and the Liberal party, as he told Rufus Isaacs in a private letter, suggesting that Lloyd George was 'by no means too popular in South Wales and he must be under no delusion as to the Coalition not being a very popular stunt [...]. The Liberals in this part of the world look upon him as having sold himself to the Tories'.⁵⁸ Such opinion was perhaps related as much to mobilising activists as much as the feelings of the electorate as a whole but both were linked in terms of Liberal fortunes. However, this more provincial thinking was not only an assessment of

⁵⁵ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 268, 273, 284, 299; Kenneth Morgan, 'Lloyd George's Stage Army: The Coalition Liberals, 1918-1922' in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (London, 1971), pp. 225-254. Also compare this position to that of Churchill's; see above, pp. 92-123.

⁵⁶ Alfred Mond to Lord Reading, 12 December 1918, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/58/5-6. This distanced Mond from Churchill who was actively seeking fusion of the Coalition forces in the period; see above, pp. 92-123.

⁵⁷ Alfred Mond to Lloyd George, 15 March 1919, Lloyd George Papers F/36/6/46.

⁵⁸ Alfred Mond to Reading, 12 December 1918, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/58/5-6.

regional fortunes it also had a personal perspective for Mond in his Swansea constituency. Here there was great competition with the Conservatives and Liberal votes appeared to be haemorrhaging to Labour and it seems that Mond also acutely felt a sense of his own electoral vulnerability as a supporter of an unpopular government.⁵⁹

Added to the concerns about the Coalition's character was Mond's dissatisfaction about his own place in politics. On a number of occasions he revealed his frustrated ambitions.⁶⁰ A measure of these emerged as early as 1918 in a letter to Rufus Isaacs complaining about the lack of recognition of his acumen for high office and also his greater deserving than other promoted individuals, with even some resentment of Lloyd George over the issue.⁶¹

Without being conceited I do not think that George sufficiently realises that the business world looks upon me as a much more important person than Auckland Geddes, Fisher, Albert Stanley and a number of new men whose ability I do not want to deny who have been shoved over my head by George [...]. For the sake of our families it would probably be much more sensible for me to give up

⁵⁹ Jones suggests that Swansea West Conservatives opposed Mond for racial reasons as well, so there was no question of a local pact between the Conservatives and Coalition Liberals as was the case for other Coalition Liberal colleagues; see Jones, 'Sir Alfred Mond', 489. The election results in 1918 and 1922 show Swansea West to have yielded small majorities over the Conservative party of 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. The Conservative vote at around a third of the votes polled remained static. Mond was right to be fearful of a defection of Liberal support to the Labour party. The Labour vote increased from a quarter of the votes in 1918 to just under a third in 1922 at the expense of the Liberal party. The unpopularity of Lloyd George which he perceived may also have raised in his mind the potential for the emergence of an Asquithian rival which, given the electoral situation, would have almost certainly cost Mond his seat; see Alfred Mond to Lord Reading, 12 December 1918, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/58/5-6: 'There are many more Asquithites about than he [Lloyd George] thinks, even in South Wales and Swansea [...]'.

⁶⁰ This mirrors the position of Churchill in feeling under-valued by Lloyd George, and thus disaffected; see above, pp. 92-123.

⁶¹ See Alfred Mond to Lloyd George, Undated, Lloyd George Papers F/36/6/60, as an indication of such feelings.

office and devote myself again to business. Therefore unless I can get in office something worth doing I shall naturally after the election have very seriously to consider where I stand.⁶²

It is important to note the suggestion that he might have withdrawn from Parliament, which may be interpreted as a form of petulance on Mond's part, but also is a reminder of his wider business interests which he continued to pursue, even as an MP.⁶³ Mond always had an alternative occupation option and Lloyd George, he felt, should have seen his presence on the Liberal coalitionist benches as being very fortunate and something to nurture rather than to risk losing. It was not only his business talents, however, for which he believed Lloyd George should promote him; he even felt that it was only having men like him on the ground which kept Lloyd George in office, pointing out, for instance, his invaluable contribution to keeping the Coalition Liberals in business in places such as Swansea, even going so far as to suppose that there were 'men here who would support me [Mond] and would not support him [Lloyd George].'⁶⁴

There was a certain amount of conceit in Mond's position, despite his protestations, and it is unclear that he fully appreciated the extent of the perceptions of him as an outsider, and as someone who was disliked, which constrained Lloyd George's position. Lloyd George later alluded to this unpopularity in setting out how he had promoted him – eventually to the government - 'in spite of very serious protests'.⁶⁵ He also stated that Mond 'was loathed by the Conservatives' and also Liberals, who 'knowing him better, liked him even less'. Some of these points can possibly point to exaggeration on Lloyd George's part, as at the time of this speech they were no longer political colleagues, but it does at least assist in providing insight into Mond's situation and how he was quite an isolated figure.

⁶² Alfred Mond to Reading, 12 December 1918, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/58/5-6.

⁶³ A trawl through the Index to *The Times* shows many more references to Mond's business interests than his political ones, in fact.

⁶⁴ Alfred Mond to Lord Reading, 12 December 1918, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/58/5-6.

⁶⁵ Report, Lloyd George speech, *The Times*, 18 March 1929.

Overall then, it can be seen that Mond became hostile to coalition, with the electoral concerns, disagreements over policy, frustration about Conservative influence and his lack of promotion all leading him to believe some alternative was necessary, and it was these issues collectively which prompted him to seek a reunion of Liberal forces to replace the Coalition in 1921. He had, for the moment, lost faith in cooperating with other political parties and this reveals that by the early 1920s any future link with the Conservatives seemed a very distant prospect.

IV

Mond was one of the first advocates of Liberal reunion, not only due to the desire to find an alternative to coalition but also his electoral concerns due to self-interested considerations in his Swansea constituency, where he feared electoral difficulties as a result of involvement of Liberals in the Coalition.⁶⁶ In a letter to Lloyd George he claimed that Liberal unity was his best chance locally of avoiding ‘annihilation’ and he publicly called for the setting aside of sectional differences.⁶⁷

Evidence reveals that Mond was also preoccupied with how the reunited Liberal party should be positioned between Conservatives and socialism. In a sense, his position was a retrospective one, emphasising the role of the Liberal party as progressive force for democratic reform, as a continuation of an historical role prior to the War.⁶⁸ There was an anti-socialist lean to the right, however, with a specific attack on socialism, at least in public, contrasting a moderate Liberalism with the ‘disaster to this [...] country’ that pursuit of socialism would bring which gave an

⁶⁶ Churchill and Guest also returned to favouring a separate Liberal appeal at this time; see above, pp. 92-123; see below, pp. 176-194. The Swansea West election in 1922 saw Mond gain only 35.5 per cent of the vote to 32.4 per cent for the Conservatives and 32.1 per cent for Labour. This was down some five percentage points on 1918 to the benefit of Labour which was up some seven percentage points – by then almost equal with the Conservatives.

⁶⁷ Alfred Mond to Lloyd George, Undated 1922, Melchett Papers AP5.

⁶⁸ Report, Alfred Mond Speech, *The Times*, 28 October 1922.

appearance of closeness to the Conservatives. This aspect should more be seen in the context of the challenge posed by socialism to the Liberal party, and should not necessarily be seen as evidence of intended positioning close to the Conservative party; rather, he saw a new role for the Liberal party as a moderate national party, independent from either of the other two parties.⁶⁹

Mond's post-coalition outlook revealed much continuity with the period before since he envisaged the reassembled force being led by Lloyd George; in fact, it was in some ways really his desire to see an expanded Lloyd George Liberal party rather than a true reconciliation of two sides. In private correspondence, he suggested that Asquithians should be marginalised in the party, referring to how 'Asquith and his little clique must either be brought in or swept aside'.⁷⁰ This view of Asquithians pointed to ill-feeling towards them and is significant both in the context of Mond's inability to reconcile himself to Asquith and in terms of how even proponents of reunion, like Mond, were not truly committed to it. More speculatively, one might also suggest that Mond saw Asquithians as potential rivals for political office within the party, particularly those such as John Simon or Walter Runciman whose return to united Liberal politics might eclipse Mond's standing; therefore, it was in his interests to keep them away from the centre of political influence within the party.

Mond's thinking about the positioning of the Liberal party was not mirrored by any particular change in policy perspective. He did, however, maintain his perspective on Dominion preference, but his justification continued to be in Free Trade terms and his Free Trader credentials were intact in other areas with his argument in favour of the abolition of the McKenna duties and sugar tax.⁷¹ On public spending, too, Bayliss has shown continuities with Mond's advocacy of increased spending. Rather, the main change was a clear deterioration in relations with an Asquithian

⁶⁹ This drew Mond very close to the position of Churchill at this time; Mond even wrote to Churchill to offer collaboration with him over the issue; see Alfred Mond to Churchill, 29 October 1922, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 5/28A/48-49.

⁷⁰ Alfred Mond to Churchill, 29 October 1922, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 5/28A/48-49.

⁷¹ Report, *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, October 1923; Bayliss, 'The Outsider', p. 439.

section of the party which could hardly have helped his integration within the Liberal party. Mond held a rather patronising attitude towards Asquithians which could not have aided relations, but it seems that he felt that they were deliberately frustrating the attempts to secure unity; something which Asquith himself was most guilty of and this led to public condemnation in May 1923.

[...] Mr. Asquith in his speech at Bournemouth on May 4, expressed with much emphasis his desire to secure Liberal reunion, and nobody doubts his sincerity in this matter. But, as one who made Liberal reunion the first plank in his platform at the last election, and who has been working towards this end ever since, I would like to ask Mr. Asquith whether he really thinks that he and those associated with him are taking the best steps to bring about the desired object. It is quite true that such a movement cannot be brought about by ‘manipulations of leaders and Whips’, but must come equally from the rank and file in the country. The rank and file in the country are doing their part [...]. What they are asking is, not unnaturally, what is preventing Liberal leaders and their followers in the House of Commons from carrying out the expressed wish of the rank and file that they should work together?

No one can say that Mr. Lloyd George and those closely associated with him have not done, and are not prepared to do, everything humanly possible to achieve this cooperation. A very important section – indeed, the majority of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons – proposed the practical step that Mr. Asquith and Sir John Simon should meet Mr. Lloyd George and myself in consultation to endeavour to arrange for closer cooperation. Mr. Lloyd George expressed himself as perfectly prepared to adopt such a course, but the proposal was deliberately declined by Mr. Asquith or those associated with him [...].⁷²

⁷² Alfred Mond Letter, *The Times*, 8 May 1923.

These remarks drew him into controversies with Asquith's supporters over supposed past misdemeanours, such as the record of the Lloyd George Coalition and conscription, finding himself in public disagreement with individuals he might have needed to conciliate to secure a successful reunion, such as Simon.

Mond's confidence in a resurgent Lloyd George-dominated Liberal party emerging as a post-Coalition alternative to Conservative and Labour was, however, shaken in December 1923 when he was defeated in the Swansea West election.⁷³ He found a new constituency to fight, Carmarthen, in August 1924, but the campaign tactics were different from his previous election battles. Mond had by this time been out of Parliament for eight months and he seemed to have learnt from the experience of other by-election candidates, such as Churchill at Westminster Abbey in March 1924, since his emphasis seemed to be on the same sort of 'constitutionalism' and thus more anti-socialist rhetoric; as a loser in 1923 Mond felt keenly how the forces of political realignment were rallying against the interests of the Liberal party. In the by-election, an aggressive anti-socialism, which even went so far as to suggest that Bolshevik agents were present in the South Wales coalfield, was pursued, with Mond attempting to exaggerate the distinctions between Liberalism and socialism in order to build legitimacy as the chief non-socialist candidate.⁷⁴ As Bayliss has shown, this exaggeration was particularly important in undoing the disastrous decision for Liberals in voting the Labour party into office, and was highly successful in that it delivered Mond a sizeable, although not spectacular,

⁷³ Mond was edged out by 115 votes in a close three cornered fight. Labour polled 34.8 per cent of the vote, Mond polled 34.3 per cent and the Conservatives polled 30.9 per cent. The Liberal vote held up reasonably well but in a three way marginal the Labour party was able to come up from third place, polling only some 3 percentage points more than in 1922 – two thirds of which seems to have come from a decline in the Conservative poll but the underlying trends may have been more complex.

⁷⁴ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 492-494.

victory.⁷⁵ Thus, at the following General Election, Mond stuck with his constitutionalist and anti-socialist message, but he sought to take the anti-socialism further by hinting at his probable support for a Conservative government, albeit still choosing to maintain his separate Liberal credentials.

In the circumstances he was glad to accept frankly the assistance of the Conservatives and those who believed in government by gentlemen. Although he would like to see a Liberal Government in power, he would support any decent Government which would give this country stability to carry on its work honestly and under which they would have security to carry on their daily work [...].⁷⁶

Such a situation was no doubt motivated by the weakness of the Liberal party but it brought Mond much closer to the Conservative party.

Mond's relations to the Conservative party at a local level were also reflected nationally where, as Bayliss has shown, he was in touch with Stanley Baldwin in order to try to propagate an electoral truce between the Conservative and Liberal parties on an anti-socialist ticket.⁷⁷ And there was certainly evidence of this desire in both election campaigning and in later parliamentary attacks on socialism.⁷⁸

You will not succeed in converting those who oppose the idea of the abolition of private enterprise or private initiative, what we consider the inherent right of the individual to develop himself to the best of

⁷⁵ The result was Liberal 44 per cent, Labour 28.8 per cent and Conservative 27.2 per cent. Mond had a more comfortable majority of some 4,400 votes. The relatively modest victory was more use to him than was immediately obvious since the more or less equal split of votes between the other two parties seems to have convinced the local Conservative party that it should not seek to contest the seat at the forthcoming General Election which came within three months of the campaign.

⁷⁶ Report, Alfred Mond speech, *The Times*, 20 October 1924.

⁷⁷ Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 501-503, 507.

⁷⁸ Report, Alfred Mond speech, *The Times*, 20 October 1924; Alfred Mond speech, 7 April 1925, HC Debates 1924-1925 Vol. 182 col. 2163-2172.

his ability, with the greatest liberty. That is why we say Socialism is opposed to liberty; because under it nobody could start an industry in this country, nobody could start a shop, nobody could start any enterprise, nobody could start an idea. That is what every Socialist State finally involves. That is why we are passionately opposed to Socialism – in the interests of humanity, in the interests of the development of the human race, and in the interests of liberty, for which our party has always stood.⁷⁹

It seems that Mond even played a leading role in trying to topple the Labour government, with evidence existing of negotiations with Tories in so doing.⁸⁰ Yet, in spite of this evidence, Mond was not settled on working closely with Conservatives since at least at the end of 1924 he was also contemplating an alliance with moderate elements of the Labour party, should circumstances enable Labour moderates to be drawn away from the ‘Socialist wing’.

There may be a division at a not distant date between moderate Labour and the Socialist wing. This may bring some kind of rapprochement between what you and I used to know as the Lib-Labs and other Liberals. This may be the best hope at present of the re-creation of what we might call the Progressive Party – but when and how this will happen no-one can foresee [...].⁸¹

It seemed that Mond was looking to an Edwardian-style cross-class progressive alliance, a view which is strengthened when evidence of his

⁷⁹ Report, Alfred Mond speech, 7 April 1925, HC Debates 1924-1925 Vol. 182 col. 2163-2172.

⁸⁰ Bayliss, ‘The Outsider’, p. 502; Jones, ‘Sir Alfred Mond’, 500; Campbell, *Lloyd George*, pp. 89-95. There were other Liberals involved including two future recruits, Henry Mond and Ian Macpherson. There was support also from Freddie Guest and apparently, Lloyd George, although this seems difficult to appreciate given his conciliation of Labour in the period even allowing for disingenuousness on his part.

⁸¹ Alfred Mond to Lord Reading, 24 November 1924, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/58/29-32.

criticisms of Conservative policies on deflation, Free Trade, for the unemployed and his preference for the introduction of Keynesian economic planning in the period are considered.⁸² It seemed that he may well have preferred this possibility to working with the Conservatives. Mond showed no inclination to foster relations with Baldwin beyond the immediate electoral ones which reinforces this impression.⁸³

Given the distance of Mond from the Conservative party in 1924, it seems incredible that he could so quickly join it; however, in January 1926 he swiftly changed party. The main reason was underlying dissatisfaction with Lloyd George, shaped by his post-1924 left-leaning electoral and policy stance, but which came to a climax at the very end of 1925 and in the opening weeks of 1926.⁸⁴ The specific issue was the development of the Liberal Green Book policy. Mond had chaired the important committee on the land policy, but it seemed that Lloyd George wished to disregard Mond's concerns about the loss of owner occupation, using the financial levers he held over the party's finances to assist bringing the party to his own view.⁸⁵ Mond believed the policy amounted to land nationalisation and he criticised its alleged illiberal character.

To me, Liberalism implies individual freedom. To me, the man on his own land is the freest man in the world – in fact, he is the only free man in the world. Therefore, for the sake, not merely of agricultural progress, but for the sake of the development of individual character, I attach the greatest value to freehold.⁸⁶

⁸² Bayliss, 'The Outsider', pp. 521-537; Alfred Mond speech, 11 June 1925, HC Debates 1924-1925 Vol. 184 col. 2308.

⁸³ Some other recruits have been shown to have developed personal relations with Baldwin as well as political ones; see above, pp. 69-72; see below, pp. 154-174. There is no record of him having discussed any cooperation on policy issues either.

⁸⁴ Campbell, *Lloyd George*, pp. 49, 99-102, 128.

⁸⁵ Alfred Mond to Alderman John Lloyd, 1 February 1926, Melchett Papers AP5/12.

⁸⁶ Alfred Mond, Notes of a speech, 6 January 1926, Melchett Papers AP5/11.

But his concerns were not credibly due to an ideological attack on Liberalism contained in the policy, no matter what he said in public or private. Given his pragmatism to political issues, what is known of his interests in collectivism and Keynesian planning this idea seems rather dubious, but there was a credible sense that he viewed the policy as going too far in the direction of interventionism and that it gave the appearance of a class policy and being close association with socialism, which his electoral strategy was set against. It also would do nothing to restore Liberal fortunes in that it was likely to extend an antagonism amongst the divided internal Liberal party body. There was, therefore, some bewilderment that Lloyd George was putting so much at stake to achieve this policy.

A feeling of hopelessness and despair set in as Mond struggled to come to terms with what was a serious breakdown of commonality with the person he had regarded as his chief and the impact that the policy would have, as he viewed it, on Liberal fortunes.

The position of the Liberal Party has been steadily drifting from bad to worse. The unity which we have striven for and which I did my best to promote has, in fact, never been achieved, and all efforts to revivify and re-organise the Liberal forces have been rendered hopeless by the introduction by Mr. Lloyd George of a land policy which has produced a new profound cleavage and embarrassment in the Liberal ranks.⁸⁷

Not understanding the sense of Lloyd George's position Mond became convinced that Lloyd George was trying to take the Liberal party into some form of left wing alliance with radical elements of the Labour party, in an effort to cynically 'climb back into office', marginalising Liberals with concerns, like himself, and this prompted him privately to seek some element of *rapprochement* with Asquith and other anti-Lloyd George

⁸⁷ Alfred Mond to H. H. Asquith, Undated November 1925, Melchett Papers AP5.

Liberals in the hope of resisting the policy.⁸⁸ However, this too he soon regarded as futile, being unable to develop meaningful relations with prominent Asquith Liberals, and he thus sought to separate himself from the party, being totally disaffected.⁸⁹

I did not feel I could continue in the ranks of the Liberal Party, carrying on internal warfare, fighting a perpetual battle with one of its most powerful leaders, who, though from the very inception of this policy, well aware of my views, insisted on forcing his policy on the Party [...].⁹⁰

One cannot under-estimate the personal feelings against Lloyd George too. He felt incredibly dissatisfied with Lloyd George's treatment of him personally, which sharpened his resentment and resolve to distance himself from his former chief.⁹¹

In all these circumstances, it needs to be made clear as to how Mond ended up joining the Conservative party rather than, for example, for him simply to retire from public life or to sit as an independent. The public justification was a presentation of one of principle: that he could not support the land policy and that he must look for an alternative party to office service to as result; the former perhaps more understandable than the latter.⁹²

[...] It has become absolutely clear to me that this is a fundamental issue of principle and not of detail which no attempt to compromise can overcome or disguise [...]. I have therefore, after the most careful thought and consideration decided that the only course for me to take is to sever my lifelong connexion with the Liberal Party

⁸⁸ Bayliss, 'The outsider', p. 586; Jones, 'Sir Alfred Mond', 509; Hart, 'The decline of the Liberal party', p. 275; Alfred Mond speech, 14 March 1929, in Campbell, *Lloyd George*, p. 128.

⁸⁹ Report, Walter Runciman speech, *Liberal Magazine*, February 1926.

⁹⁰ Alfred Mond to Alderman John Lloyd, 1 February 1926, Melchett Papers AP5/12.

⁹¹ Campbell, *Lloyd George*, p. 128.

⁹² Bayliss, 'The outsider', p. 586.

and, if I am to be able to render any further political service to the country, join the party with whom I feel I can most usefully cooperate – the Conservative Party.⁹³

There is also some suggestion – indeed, backing Bayliss’s point about Mond’s immediate motives – that if Lloyd George was seeking for the Liberal party some kind of radical left wing course there was no possibility of opposing him and forces opposed to socialism had to be united in opposition outside of the Liberal party.⁹⁴

[...] I have asked no one to follow my course, unless they feel with me how incompatible, how impossible, is the position which has been created by Mr. Lloyd George; how essential it is that those who oppose the Socialist doctrine should make their position absolutely clear, and work together with those who have no weakening or compromise in this direction.⁹⁵

However, some of this does seem a rather elaborate form of self-justification. Jones has examined this point in his suggestion that Mond had succumbed to ambition.⁹⁶ Mond was, of course, keen to achieve high political office, and his political prospects would certainly have been more secure as a Conservative. There is also the issue of his acceptance of a peerage from Baldwin, which he conceivably accepted to give himself security of political office without even needing to fight elections, pointing to self-interest and lack of principle.⁹⁷

Nonetheless, there are some mitigating circumstances. For instance, it seems incredible to suppose that a keen politician such as Mond would simply remove himself from public life because he disagreed with Lloyd

⁹³ Alfred Mond letter, *The Times*, 26 January 1926.

⁹⁴ This was also Young’s view; see below, pp. 154-174.

⁹⁵ Alfred Mond to John Lloyd, 1 February 1926, Melchett Papers AP5/12.

⁹⁶ Jones, ‘Sir Alfred Mond’, 509.

⁹⁷ Stanley Baldwin to Alfred Mond, 21 June 1926, Baldwin Papers 161/171-2 in Philip Williamson & Edward Baldwin (ed.), *Baldwin Papers – A Conservative Statesman 1908-1947* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 183; Report, Lloyd George speech, *The Times*, 18 March 1929.

George; he believed he had a lot to offer politics and wished to continue to work with those who might respect him and secure him some kind of role.⁹⁸ He had not created the land policy dispute; it had been manufactured by Lloyd George and events had forced his action, it can be argued. Furthermore, despite antagonism towards the Conservative party over the years, his electoral view on anti-socialism, flexibility on issues such as Free Trade, and a desire for a moderate social policy meant that there was some common ground, especially, it must be said, with Baldwin's developing liberal conservatism which could not have been totally unattractive. And then there is the context of the peerage itself. As a peer, Mond would have had freedom from the constraints of party controversy, allowing him an opportunity to offer advice and assistance in areas of his professional competence and perceived skill, sometimes on a cross-party level; this is certainly the role he took when he was finally elevated to the Lords, becoming respected in relation to his expertise concerning industrial policy, trade union relations and House of Lords reform. Joining the Conservative party was not necessarily something to be seen in the context of a change of political perspective then but more of a pragmatic means to do more of the work he wanted, not now being able to do so in the frontline nor within his first political party of choice. The months after his departure from the Liberal party revealed his impatience to get into the Lords, not wishing to spend any time longer than he had to in the Commons, which may be taken as evidence of this situation.⁹⁹ It is also certain that his business interests were pressing; supporting the declining Liberal party must have been a drain on time and energy and a place in the Lords would give him more time for outside interests.

V

⁹⁸ This sense of having limited options but to seek *rapprochement* with Conservatives is also common to the position of Guest; see below, pp. 176-194.

⁹⁹ Stanley Baldwin to Alfred Mond, 21 June 1926, Baldwin Papers 161/171-2, p. 183.

Alfred Mond's political career can be characterised as one of many contradictions, being at various times imperialist and radical, Liberal but also non-partisan and, in the end, a Conservative politician, but seemingly not a Conservative. All these contradictions reveal something of the difficulty he had in working within a party political system – particularly in a period of his original party's decline – and the challenges he faced in developing a suitable role for himself in politics. Despite views in other research there is little to suggest that Mond was essentially Conservative in character through his career up until 1926. Links to Conservative politics can be seen in the context of the convergence of the Liberal and Conservative perspectives in the period so shared perspectives were due to the accident of circumstance. Mond was consistent in his views about a patriotic and classless political stance, which was one of the factors that ultimately drew him out of the Liberal party with Lloyd George's supposed concession to class politics. Significantly, there was no inclination towards any involvement with the Conservative party before the 1924 election and involvement with the Liberal party remained quite critical until that point.

Not unlike some other Liberal recruits, there were longer-term tensions in his relations with Liberal party politicians, which create a context for his departure. His unpopularity, the lack of respect awarded to him by two Liberal leaders at different times, and difficulties over policy and direction affected his level of integration into the party. However, in Mond's case the departure from the Liberal party needs to be viewed mainly in terms of factors in the period immediate to his departure. The post-1924 period saw a change in perspective largely because of the party's electoral position, party divisions and Lloyd George's character and political perspective, which caused him disillusion on a grand scale. As an ambitious man, he chose to be in politics to exert influence over political developments and by the mid-1920s his efforts were appearing to have reached their nadir. He had worked to support Lloyd George but the loss of faith in him brought him to a break with both Lloyd George and with the party.

The reasons for Mond's joining the Conservative party were complicated. This flirtation with Baldwin was a lot to do with electoral

convenience and whilst Baldwin's political outlook on domestic affairs was similar to Mond's it does not appear to have been the major reason for his seeking to work with Baldwin; there is also no evidence of them holding particularly close personal relations. This theme of convenience that characterised the cooperation suggests that the offer of a peerage may have been a significant aspect in Mond's decision, not necessarily because he had succumbed to ambition but because it gave him a measure of influence on politics whilst enabling him to distance himself from a Liberal party of which he had grown tired. For Baldwin, Mond's recruitment marked another success in his strategy of conciliating Liberals to break the Liberal party; Mond's presence in his party, even on a non-partisan basis, was convenient to him in projecting the desired moderate image for his Conservative party.

Chapter Four: Hilton Young

Since there is an absence of surviving personal correspondence concerning Young, reliance is placed upon other historical records (particularly regional newspapers) which assist in focusing the detail of this discussion more around political involvement within a context of constituency politics. This is certainly not a weakness because opportunities are provided in understanding recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative party from more the perspective of the various local electoral circumstances; local politics, it will be shown, drew Young into cooperation with Conservatives and it can be seen how the local circumstances were a constraint on political choice and party allegiances.

(Edward) Hilton Young was third son of Sir George Young (third baronet) and his wife, Alice Eacy, *née* Kennedy.¹ He was educated at Eton College, University College, London, and Trinity College, Cambridge. At Cambridge, he served as President of the Union (1900) and as editor of the *Cambridge Review*. After his graduation, with first class honours in natural sciences, Young trained and worked in the law, being called to bar at the Inner Temple in 1904, but his interests in writing, economics and finance, and in the Liberal party, quickly led him towards a seemingly parallel career in journalism and into political activism. As a journalist and writer Young held prominent positions as assistant editor of *The Economist*, from 1908 to 1910, and, from 1910, as the City editor of the *Morning Post* and the London financial correspondent of the *New York Times*. In 1912, he wrote *Foreign Companies and Other Corporations*, a sizable work of corporate law with an intellectual flavour, in which he sought to consider the issue of personal liability in corporate business.² On a political level, Young organised Free Trade unions in Yorkshire and the City of London, and

¹ Wayland Kennet, 'Young, (Edward) Hilton', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 12 March 2010).

² E. Hilton Young, *Foreign Companies and other Corporations* (Cambridge, 1912).

unsuccessfully contested elections to Parliament twice in 1910, at Eastern Worcestershire (January 1910) and then Preston (in December).

Young's career was interrupted in 1914 by the outbreak of war. He joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and he found himself in the forefront of naval battles for which he was awarded the DSC and the *Croix de Guerre*. In 1918, he volunteered for the blocking of Zeebrugge, and he also served in Russia, for which he received a further honour in his appointment to the DSO. Despite all his wartime preoccupations, Young still found time for writing, producing his second book, *The System of National Finance* (1915) in which he examined the workings of the British economic and financial system, revealing an intellectual grasp of capitalism which provided the context for his attitudes towards national policy after the War.³

Young was first elected to Parliament unopposed in February 1915 as the junior member for the electoral borough of Norwich. He was re-elected in 1918, being helped by the maintenance of the two member borough status and by his conciliatory position towards the Coalition, despite not having received the coupon.⁴ After the election, Young aligned himself with Lloyd George whose patronage enabled him to become Financial Secretary to the Treasury in 1921 and Chief Whip of the Coalition Liberals in the period before Liberal reunion. During this time, he developed a reputation as an ardent patriot and for great appreciation of financial matters.

Young lost his Norwich seat in 1923 when the Conservatives put up two candidates against him. He was returned to Parliament again for Norwich in 1924, still as a Liberal, but now with Conservative support. In Parliament, he disagreed with the policy direction of the Liberals and this eventually led to his resignation from the Liberal party in February 1926. In June that year, he joined the Conservative party, motivated by the General Strike. After his recruitment, Young continued to serve as an MP for

³ E. Hilton Young, *The System of National Finance* (London, 1915).

⁴ Young did not, however, receive opposition from a rival Coalition candidate.

Norwich, but he chose not to seek re-election there, choosing instead to stand in Sevenoaks where he was elected as a Conservative in 1929.⁵

I

There are no specific studies of Young's political career, and this makes it very difficult to determine the precise role he played in the affairs of the Liberal party and in the wider realignment of political forces. Some very brief references to Young are, however, identifiable in a number of studies of Liberal politics, and these do provide a starting point for analysis since they concern the specific issue of his decision to join the Conservative party. What they suggest is that Young's politics had moved to the right, using his concerns over Liberal land policy and his cooperation with Conservatives, particularly after 1924, as evidence.⁶ However, as none of these views form part of a substantive study of Young, there is a certain sense of a circumstantial character about some of them; thus, there is immense benefit for a more detailed and holistic assessment of the issues in the context of Young's wider career and of the detail of the immediate circumstances in his departure from the Liberal party.

Research for this study suggests Young's political outlook held much in common with that of some of the other Liberal recruits, particularly in a consistent and enduring non-partisan approach to politics in defence of a patriotic 'national' policy and a preference to seek cross-party

⁵ Young remained as M. P. for Sevenoaks until 1935.

⁶ John Campbell, *Lloyd George – Goat in the Wilderness* (London, 1977), p. 111; Don Cregier, *Chiefs Without Indians* (Washington, 1982), p. 171; Barry Doyle, 'Business, Liberalism and Dissent in Norwich, 1900-1930', *Baptist Quarterly* 35 5 (1994), 243-250; Barry Doyle, 'Urban Liberalism and the 'Lost Generation': Politics and Middle Class Culture in Norwich, 1900-1935', *The Historical Journal* 38 3 (1995), 632; Barry Doyle, 'A conflict of interests? The local and national dimensions of middle class Liberalism, 1900-1935', *Parliamentary History* 17 1 (1998), 134; Michael Hart, 'The Decline of the Liberal Party in Parliament and the Constituencies', Unpublished University of Oxford University D.Phil. (1982), p. 272; Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935* (London & Glasgow, 1966), pp. 170, 324, 328.

combinations rather than to work within the confines of a single party and this is, therefore, of important consideration in the chapter.

Another consideration is the extent to which Young's relations with the Conservatives were shaped by electoral factors. In this regard, the research of Barry Doyle concerning Norwich's socio-political character during the period is particularly useful. Doyle's perspective is that the Liberal party's dominance over the city politically was weakening, despite strength in the persistence of a strong nonconformist tradition, and he shows that it was only through cooperation with the Conservative party that Liberal electoral representation could be assured, with evidence of positive pursuit of arrangements with Conservatives amongst local Liberal party officials and candidates.⁷ In light of the research, it is important to consider the extent of the prevalence of such thinking in Young's cooperation with the Conservatives; if it played a large role, for example, it might suggest there were pragmatic electoral reasons for Young's cooperation with the Conservatives and electoral appeals with an anti-socialist flavour. Doyle's focus is not specifically on the electoral situation itself which means there are only a few references to Young, but one of the most important of them is his identification of dissatisfaction amongst radical and left-leaning sections of Liberal opinion in the city for Young's tendency to seek arrangements with the Conservatives, with evidence of loss of support to Labour because of them.⁸ This factor points to a sense that Young's positioning of the local Liberal party closer to the Conservatives was undertaken in spite of loss of further support; it would not appear that he viewed alienation of support on the left as significant as the advantages that could be gained from appealing to the right. A rightward appeal in such circumstances would confirm Young's movement in the direction of the Conservatives. Electoral forces in Norwich can be seen to have been forcing Young to adopt tactics which

⁷ Doyle, 'Business, Liberalism and Dissent', 243-250; Doyle, 'Urban Liberalism and the 'Lost Generation'', 617-634; Doyle, 'A conflict of interests', 131-140; Doyle, 'Business, Liberalism and Dissent', p. 245; Doyle, 'A conflict of interests?', 133.

⁸ Doyle has revealed unpopularity amongst traditional Radicals and 'newer' Liberals attracted by Lloyd George's policies post-1922; see Doyle, 'A conflict of interests?', 133-134.

assisted his election but reduced his capacity to be seen unambiguously as a Liberal candidate in the period before his recruitment into the Conservative party.

II

Young's entry into Liberal politics was not necessarily one which might have been envisaged from his aristocratic background but it would seem probable that his belief in Free Trade led him in that direction.⁹ Before the War, Free Trade appears to have been one of his chief motivating political concerns as witnessed in his active role in establishing Free Trade Unions and his electoral battles in contests where it was a significant issue: Eastern Worcestershire (January 1910) was the electoral bastion of the tariff-favouring Austen Chamberlain, and Preston (December 1910) was a Lancashire textile centre. He held an internationalist outlook, which no doubt informed his attitude to the Free Trade system, and also came to the fore in his pre-war interests in the subject of international relations and national self-determination.¹⁰ In certain senses, Young was characteristic of a social type. Despite his elitist origins, his employment as a journalist and family interests in publishing associated him with middle-class professionals attracted by a reconstituted and less narrowly partisan Edwardian Liberal party, witnessed in its patriotism, its desire to avoid class disharmony and interest in social reform.¹¹ There is, in fact, some evidence

⁹ See above, pp. 41-45. There is a degree of commonality with the position of Churchill and Freddie Guest in their entries into the Liberal party; see above, pp. 92-123; see below, pp. 176-194.

¹⁰ Part of the interest emanated from his studies of international law in Freiburg; see Wayland Kennet, 'Young', E. Hilton Young letters, *The Times*, 7 January 1908, 31 July 1914. This interest continued into the wartime period with a particular concern for the possibility of self-determination for the Serbs; see E. Hilton Young letters, *The Times*, 25 September 1916, 28 September 1916.

¹¹ There are parallels to the position of Alfred Mond and Walter Runciman here especially; see above, pp. 124-153; see below, pp. 224-267. Also see Geoffrey Searle, 'The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business', *English Historical Review*, 98 388 (1983), 29-60.

that Young's selection to contest Preston had much to do with his profile in this regard; the Liberals there needed a candidate who was not overtly connected to partisan Liberal traditions but had definite interest in social reform to assist in overcoming traditional Conservative strength and to build support for the Progressive Alliance in this two member borough.¹² It is also useful to note the part he played to maintain Liberal and Labour relations, which reinforces an impression that Young was not favourably disposed towards the Conservative party, with a very clear contrast to his later position.

Young was not elected to Parliament until February 1915, and this fact together with his military responsibilities meant that initially he had little opportunity to make much impact on political affairs. After being elected, he wrote occasional letters to the national press on international issues, but beyond this there is little evidence that he spent much time fulfilling his parliamentary duties; there was an absence of involvement in parliamentary debates. It was not until after the War that Young's political career was to get itself in motion.

III

The 1918 election campaign in Norwich saw Young pursue much in character of what might have been seen as a firmly 'Liberal' election campaign. On the home front, Young argued for the early restoration of personal liberties, including the ending of conscription, and the need to repeal the Defence of the Realm Act; he also revealed himself to be in favour of self-government for Ireland, albeit without coercion of Ulster, self-determination for national groups in Europe, and a League of Nations, which also saw him affirming an interest in international law.¹³ However,

¹² Michael Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics – The Labour Movement in Preston, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 161.

¹³ Campaign report, *The Times*, 7 December 1918; Campaign reports, *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 December, 13 December 1918.

his political position seemed rather more overtly patriotic and imperialist than was perhaps expected of a Liberal candidate, with even *The Times* providing him faint praise in its characterisation of his position as ‘Liberalism vitalised by patriotism’.¹⁴ This was particularly notable in his pronouncements concerning the threat of Bolshevism, showing evidence here of a very early identification with the politics of anti-socialism, and most seriously in his desire for retribution against Germany and against pacifism.¹⁵

Retribution carried with it full and complete reparation and restitution, in so far as it could be made to the great rivals of Germany, whom she had injured. We must exact from her such indemnities as she might be able to pay [...]. At this juncture we did not want men who were tarred with the brush of Pacifism. Who should we have to make peace for us - those who would go to the peace conference under the banner of the Union Jack or those who would go under the white flag?¹⁶

However, it could also be seen in his attitude towards Free Trade, where he suggested that he even might be prepared to consider the argument for Colonial Preference if ‘it was for the good of the Empire as a whole’.¹⁷

What these examples in some ways showed was that Young was prepared to put pragmatic national interests above all else; wartime enemies must be punished abroad whilst at home there was a need to suspend party controversies for the greater good. He called for ‘equality of sacrifice’ across the classes to avoid what Young feared could be a ‘war of class’ which seemed to reflect something of the resurrection of the pre-war

¹⁴ Political commentary, *The Times*, 7 December 1918.

¹⁵ Campaign report, *The Times*, 3 December 1918; Campaign report, *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 December 1918. There were parallels with the position of Mond; see above, pp. 124-153.

¹⁶ Report, E. Hilton Young speech, *The Norwich Mercury*, 14 December 1918.

¹⁷ Campaign report, *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 December 1918; E. Hilton Young speech, *The Times*, 13 December 1918. Again, a parallel with the position of Mond; see above, pp. 124-153.

emphasis on promoting social harmony but more clearly now as patriotic duty and national necessity.¹⁸ However, intriguingly none of these ideas seemed to bring him any closer to a view about which political faction he might connect himself to, refusing to align himself with Asquith or Lloyd George, or any other politician for that matter, claiming that such a question was a distraction from the immediate issues in the election; remarkably, he claimed he had still to make up his mind about what the future prospects of his allegiances might hold and he was very circumspect about whether his interest in suspending party controversies would lead him into supporting the Lloyd George Coalition government in the longer-term.

We must keep together until we are out of the wood. But, when the wood is passed, I do not pledge myself to follow the Government until I know whither it is going to lead.¹⁹

Thus, Young seemed to be giving the impression almost of appearing completely unaligned, an independently-minded political voice, it might even be argued, building on the pre-war perception of him as an untypical party candidate.

Young's detached perspective may have been inspired by electoral considerations, however. Looking at the 1918 election campaign as a whole, in fact, what is striking is his attempt to seek support widely across the electorate: the desire for retribution appealing to the right, class unity and patriotism to the middle-class, social reform to the working-class, flexibility on Free Trade to Conservatives and freedom from state coercion chiefly to Liberals; all of which pointed to a desire not only to build a coalition of interests behind his patriotic but independent-minded position, but also to address his political insecurities and calculations. He had not stood in a contested election in the city before and he had not spent much time there due to the War, so he had had little opportunity to familiarise himself with the local political environment. Furthermore, there was the complication of

¹⁸ E. Hilton Young speech, *The Norwich Mercury*, 14 December 1918. Churchill's view was similar; see above, p. 92-123.

¹⁹ E. Hilton Young letter, *The Norwich Mercury*, 14 December 1918.

the two member borough status of Norwich. Young's Labour MP colleague, George Roberts, was contesting Norwich again, but now as a Coalition Labour candidate entrusted with a coupon. There were no Conservative candidates and one 'un-couped' Labour candidate. Thus, there were three candidates and whilst the absence of Conservatives, in particular, was no doubt helpful, Young judged that his appeal needed to be to a broad section of opinion to gain a large turnout of voters for him; he felt he could not risk appearing too close to any particular political faction. Amongst the biggest fears must have been so-called 'plumping' for a single candidate or abstentions which could let in the 'un-couped' Labour candidate at his expense. If he appeared too close to Labour, even a Coalition Labour candidate, he risked abstentions from Conservatives, whilst appearing too close to the Coalition might push traditional radicals and social-radicals within Liberal circles towards Labour.²⁰ Clearly, there were many tactical dilemmas.

Although Young and Roberts ran completely separately their campaigns became linked since they pursued the same kind of political issues and there was no evidence of them opposing each other; thus, a very informal patriotic compact came about which created confusion with some local press controversy as to whether Young was really a Coalition candidate.²¹ Nonetheless, the situation did not appear to harm Young's election prospects and may have even improved them amongst some voters; he took the second seat, finishing comfortably ahead of the losing Labour candidate.²² And it set a precedent of successfully contesting elections outside true party lines.

²⁰ Norwich had in the past a tradition of the 'progressive' candidates working together as in many two member boroughs.

²¹ *The Times* reported that Young was a Coalition supporter, something which he was quick to deny but it does underline the confusion over the issue; see Campaign report, *The Times*, 7 December 1918; Campaign report, *Eastern Daily Press*, 13 December 1918; Campaign report, *The Norwich Mercury*, 14 December 1918.

²² Overall, Roberts gained 45 per cent, Young, 43 per cent and the 'un-couped' Labour candidate, merely 12 per cent.

IV

Following the 1918 election, Young seems to have aligned himself with the Coalition very quickly.²³ There were pressing issues which, for Young, demonstrated the need for cooperation with the government, particularly around dealing with national debt, public spending, and high levels of taxation and unemployment, which were issues of major concern to him.²⁴ Thus, Young reconciled himself to Lloyd George's government, which enabled him to win Lloyd Georgian favour leading him to be appointed, firstly, as a member of the Select Committee on War Profits, established in November 1919, and, secondly, as Financial Secretary, where he was able to influence and oversee the sweeping economies in public spending between 1921 and 1922. However, he retained his non-partisan character, with a sense that his independence of mind and his analytical skills in understanding financial questions won him respect, significantly amongst senior Conservatives, such as Austen Chamberlain.²⁵

Young's support for the Coalition did not mean that he did so seeking to encourage the complete integration of Coalition forces into a single body, however. He was, perhaps surprisingly, distinctly Liberal with some inclination for retaining Free Trade, despite the previously noted flexibility over the issue and his closeness to 'safeguarding' during his time at the Treasury.²⁶ He also appealed for the end to Liberal party disunity and

²³ Research suggests that Liberal opinion in Norwich fell quickly behind Lloyd George and this may have encouraged him in his response. Doyle has shown that this enthusiasm was so clear that by 1922 Norwich Liberals were closely involved in the establishment of the Eastern Counties National Liberal Federation; see Doyle, 'A conflict of interests', 134.

²⁴ Reports, *The Times*, 27 November, 18 December 1919, 4 August, 31 August 1920; *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, May 1921.

²⁵ Austen Chamberlain: 'He is attractive, very able & has made several short but very effective speeches on [financial] questions'; see Diary of Austen Chamberlain, 3 April 1921, in Robert C. Self (ed.), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters – The Correspondence of Sir Austen Chamberlain with his Sisters, Hilda and Ida, 1916-1937* (London, 1995), p. 157.

²⁶ Report, *The Times*, 7 December 1920.

there is no evidence of any particular interest in the idea of fusion with which other future recruits became associated. Thus, to some degree he could be seen to be moving away from the appeal to national unity. But despite this evidence, certainly his interest in cutting national expenditure, preoccupation with reducing taxes and promoting the interests of the private sector seemed to bring him into greater proximity to Conservative perspectives.²⁷ Support for such measures was not necessarily, however, evidence of a deliberate intention to position himself close to the Conservative party at Westminster; indeed, his calls for Liberal unity might point to it being an unconscious one. Furthermore, Young's appointment into the government came at a time when the demand for public economies was at its height, and, as Financial Secretary, he was unsurprisingly one of the ministers at the forefront of implementing a financial programme with support from Liberals in the Coalition as well as Conservatives, so it is difficult to see this situation so certainly in the context of proximity to the Conservative party exclusively, whatever the impression might have been from the outside.

The positioning of Young's political interests close to the Conservatives was even more apparent at a constituency level, where he actively sought *rapprochement*; this saw him, by the end of 1922, offering some general support for the new Conservative government, despite obvious personal irritation of having been turned out of office by a section of Conservative 'diehards'.²⁸ Young may well have held some genuinely warm feelings towards some Conservatives, but it is clear that he had inclination towards his electoral position where he seemed keen to prevent a Conservative intervention which would secure re-election almost certainly. And he was rewarded for his efforts since his offer seems to have secured a Conservative decision not to oppose him.²⁹ Electoral considerations were also apparent in the 1922 campaign in his attack on the Labour party and

²⁷ E. Hilton Young article, *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, May 1921.

²⁸ Report, *The Times*, 21 October 1922.

²⁹ Report, *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 October 1922.

socialism in defence of the economy, the financial system and class unity.³⁰ This latter point is a significant one since the extremity of anti-socialism does point to exaggeration, as in other political campaigns mentioned in this study, to reinforce a position entirely independent from the Labour party in an appeal to Conservatives to support him.³¹ Young was not the champion of individualism that he seemed to wish to communicate to some audiences since alongside his attack on socialism, he also showed some desire to intervene in the economy, favouring taxation of excessive profits, and only opposing a formal capital levy because he believed it could not be efficiently collected, which hardly suggested that he was completely set on a course totally hostile to socialistic legislation.³²

In the campaign, Young found himself working to some degree again in harness with Roberts, standing now as an independent candidate on a national unity and anti-socialist ticket reminiscent of his own. They issued a joint address to Conservative voters which did much to highlight the centrality of Conservative opinion and anti-socialism to their perceived election chances.³³ However, the campaign was not without an appeal to Liberal support, even if it appeared to be a much smaller part of it. Young did remain a little circumspect in his offer of support for a Conservative administration, affirming a commitment to the principles of the Liberal faith and also to offer his support for Liberal reunion.³⁴

He [E. Hilton Young] stood as he always stood, as a Liberal. He believed in the principles of Liberalism. They were principles which

³⁰ Reports, *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 November, 7 November, 13 November 1922.

³¹ See above, pp. 43-57.

³² Report, *Eastern Daily Press*, November 7 1922.

³³ Election address, *Eastern Evening News*, 13 November 1922; Report, *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 November 1922.

³⁴ Report, *Eastern Daily Press* 7 November 1922; Campaign report, *Norfolk Chronicle* 10 November 1922; Report, *Eastern Daily Press* 4 November 1922. The reference to interventionism noted earlier might also have been an appeal to left-leaning Liberals.

were going to pull this country through its difficulties. He recognised no dividing line between Liberals [...].³⁵

But such an appeal may have seemed a little superficial given the focus of the campaign as a whole. This certainly seems to have been confirmed in the minds of at least some voters in the election; Young increased his numerical poll, but his percentage poll and majority were substantially cut with some Liberal opinion moving over to the two Labour candidates who contested the election.³⁶ Young's election strategy had been successful in returning him to Parliament but at the expense of impressions of him as an unequivocal Liberal, despite what he claimed about his allegiances; whilst Young was not a Conservative, as at Westminster, there was now an impression that he was moving in that direction.

After the 1922 election, Young was briefly enticed towards independent Liberal politics; it also seemed to reinforce the idea that he had not moved into the Conservative party camp.³⁷ His advocacy of reunion emerged by the middle of 1923 when he called for the healing of past divisions, and when reunion came he decided to fight an election unambiguously on a Liberal ticket for the first time in his political career. However, his optimism seemed misplaced since the circumstances of the election meant that there was no possibility of a compact with the Conservatives and the contest was set for a six candidate election with the three parties fielding candidates for both vacancies.³⁸

³⁵ Report, E. Hilton Young speech, *Eastern Daily Press* 4 November 1922.

³⁶ In 1922, Roberts again came top, but only by a few votes. Both candidates scored almost thirty-four per cent of the votes to Labour's seventeen and sixteen respectively. Young's large majority was cut by about three thousand votes. Allowance must be made for the higher turnout and the change in the number of candidates between the elections, but even so there appeared to be a loss of support.

³⁷ See above, pp. 92-154 & see below, pp. 176-194 for the experiences of Churchill, Mond and Guest.

³⁸ His fellow M. P. colleague, Roberts, had now joined the Conservative party, and found himself selected by his new party to oppose Young.

Young tried to convince the voters that Liberals offered a middle way between the two other parties in some ways seeming to indicate a view that the Liberals themselves now singly represented the patriotic national interest he had made central to his previous campaigns, due to the party's dual representation of Free Trade interests and opposition to socialism; no doubt he hoped that all patriotic and moderate opinion would coalesce around the Liberal party as it had previously done for him.³⁹

Liberals were asking the country to stand for Free Trade and against Socialism. It was quite clear there was going to be a tremendous majority for Free Trade in Norwich, because Liberals and Labour were Free Traders [...]. It was quite clear there was going to be a tremendous majority against Socialism. That was made clear at the last election, and it was going to be made clear at this election, because Conservatives and Liberals were both against Socialism [...]. If Norwich returned Labour members, it would be misrepresented on Socialism. If Norwich returned Conservative members, it would be misrepresented on Free Trade, and the only way Norwich could get its representation in his opinion was by returning two Liberal members [...].⁴⁰

However, to the voters, particularly Conservative-leaning ones who had supported him in the past, it must have seemed that he had reneged on his commitment to non-partisanship and that he was presenting an anti-Conservative policy, which cost him their support and no doubt aided his defeat with the move of many former supporters to the Conservative candidates.⁴¹ Thus, in distancing himself from the Conservative party in 1923, it could be seen that Young had wrecked his chances of election.

³⁹ See parallel positions to the cases of Churchill and Mond here; see above, pp. 116-117, 141-144.

⁴⁰ Report, E. Hilton Young speech, *Eastern Daily Press* 22 November 1923.

⁴¹ Young's percentage vote total halved and he was relegated to third place behind the two winning Labour candidates. As well as loss of support to the Conservatives, it also seems likely there was further loss of Liberal support to Labour although it is impossible to be

Young's defeat in 1923 brought him to a complete loss of faith in independent Liberal politics, and to seek instead to link political fortunes to that of the Conservative party.⁴² Evidence does not show that he was seeking to abandon Liberal politics, but because of a mixture of electoral tactics, and a growing judgement that he shared much in common with Conservatives politically, he felt that a very large degree of cooperation between the parties was necessary.

The change in perspective was evident after Young's reselection for the 1924 Norwich election, where he and representatives of the Liberal and Conservative political associations agreed the first formal compact in the constituency.⁴³ The compact took the form of one candidate per party for the two parliamentary seats and a joint campaign with common appearances at campaign venues and a show of fraternal spirit on both sides.⁴⁴ It revealed evidence of a careful tactical campaign that would lead to the defeat of both Labour candidates and secure representation for Young, as a Liberal, even if it would compromise the independence of him and his party; Young did not believe the Liberals capable of winning an election without a clear compromise with Conservatives.⁴⁵

certain about the numbers. Overall, the Labour candidates were collectively able to poll over 40 per cent the vote between them, with the Liberals 31 per cent and the Conservatives 29 per cent.

⁴² See above, pp. 116-120; 144-145 & see below, pp. 176-194 for similar experiences amongst the recruits.

⁴³ In 1918 and 1922 the Conservatives did not field candidates but there was no formal arrangement made for joint campaigning; this was new.

⁴⁴ Campaign reports, *Eastern Daily Press* 10 October 1924, 24 October 1924. The degree of cordiality was made more possible by the two-member status of Norwich.

⁴⁵ The election saw the defeat of both Labour candidates and the return to Parliament of Young alongside the Conservative, J. G. Fairfax, with over 12,000 more votes and a majority of over 5,000. Nevertheless, the Labour vote had also grown by another 3,000 votes as Liberal support continued to haemorrhage. Overall, Young gained 28 per cent of

The 1924 campaign projected Young's anti-socialist credentials, possibly as previously revealing evidence of exaggeration in order to distance himself adequately from Labour and to highlight commonality with the Conservatives.⁴⁶ He did try to appeal to Liberals to bring them round to his point of view, but this seems to have been done by drawing crude distinctions between Liberals and socialists, so much so that it rather unwittingly confused the practical means of securing Liberal representation he wanted to impress upon them with ideological convergence between his brand of Liberalism and that of the Conservative party; this was hardly a very helpful means to appeal to Liberal perspectives.

[...] Socialism was the very opposite of Liberalism. Liberalism looked to the individual, looked to raising up the individual and the powers of the individual; the individual capacities and opportunities of men, women and children [...]. Let him put it in a single phrase. The idea of Liberalism was to level up to the best. The idea of Socialism often seemed to him to be to level down to the worst [...].⁴⁷

Thus, from a standpoint of retaining Liberal support his campaign was not very effective; he should have identified positive Liberal issues to campaign on.⁴⁸ A clear Liberal perspective was even more vital when considering evidence that Liberal voters threatened to support the old radical, but now sitting Labour MP and candidate, Walter R. Smith.⁴⁹ However, the appearance of closeness to the Conservatives was not altogether Young's fault since his compact had its constraints; appealing too much to Liberals

the votes cast with Fairfax just behind on 27 per cent. Labour's candidates gained 23 and 22 per cent respectively.

⁴⁶ Campaign reports, *Eastern Daily Press* 10 October 1924, 28 October 1924; Campaign reports, *The Times* 14 October 1924, 29 November 1924.

⁴⁷ Report, E. Hilton Young speech, *Eastern Daily Press* 10 October 1924.

⁴⁸ The prospects of doing so would have been a challenge, however, given the lack of coherence of Liberal politics at the time.

⁴⁹ Campaign report, *The Times* 29 October 1924.

might compromise Conservative support as well, so Young was effectively caught between two political camps.⁵⁰

1924 saw continuity existing with previous campaigns in Young's appeal to the national interest, and he tried to link this to the compact arrangement referring to the 'happy combination' presented in this regard by the united Liberal and Conservative forces, working in partnership.⁵¹ This reveals a sense that compromise with the Conservatives was not intended to be a capitulation and that some semblance of Liberal politics was needed. However, not dissimilarly to the manner of the projection of his anti-socialism, a Baldwin-like emphasis on 'safety for the country' which did not appear very different from Baldwin's own 'safety first' campaign theme hardly reinforced the impression that it was not a capitulation, and this illustrates another problem which Young faced in appearing as a legitimate Liberal candidate.⁵² But the reference to Baldwin was an important one for another reason too; it seemed to reveal a liking of Young for him, and although there has been no evidence found of any personal contact between them it does seem that the national position was an influence upon Young's political perspective, with the echo of Baldwin suggesting he might have been keen on a wider compromise between Liberals and Conservatives organised nationally under Baldwin's leadership.⁵³

The integration of Young into the Conservative fold locally was also reflected in the parliamentary position after the election was won when, following the pledge made to his electors and his own liking for Baldwin, Young acted on giving support to the new Conservative administration.⁵⁴ Furthermore, his pre-election pledge was legitimised by the result of the General Election as a whole which had shown that the Liberal party was too

⁵⁰ A similar sense has been noted in the experience of Guest; see below, pp. 176-194.

⁵¹ Campaign report, *Eastern Daily Press* 28 October 1924.

⁵² See above, p. 43.

⁵³ Young's perspective provides another example of how Liberal recruits became attracted to Baldwin in the period immediately before leaving the Liberal party; see above, pp. 69-72; also see below, pp. 176-194.

⁵⁴ Report, E. Hilton Young speech, *The Times* 29 November 1924; see below, pp. 176-194.

weak in the country at large to operate independently in Parliament. Thus, in the national interest he needed to cooperate with the Conservative government, and this, to him, was perfectly compatible with Liberal politics.

As he interpreted his duty to the country and to his constituents, it was that he should not be in opposition; that he should not compete with the Socialists for the means to embarrass the Government, but that, while maintaining the best of his ability the principles of Liberalism, he should direct his efforts to helping, and not hindering, the Government in carrying out the programme which they laid before the nation at the election.⁵⁵

However, in being true to his electorate, he looked detached from the Liberal politics by his perspective, and this appearance increased in the coming months in his support for the government on issues such as Empire Preference and opposition to the direction of Liberal party policy which made him seem ever more like a Conservative.⁵⁶ His private correspondence revealed this detachment even more in his expressed preference for working with the ‘modern Conservative party’ in whom he found ‘much to agree’ over and above some of his Liberal colleagues whom he came to view dismissively as ‘living on a tradition, and nothing else.’⁵⁷ The truth was that whatever he said about his affinity with Liberal politics, it was to Baldwin’s Conservatives that he looked for direction, and although he was not a Conservative he was firmly in the Conservative camp.⁵⁸

The growth of affinity with Conservatives in Parliament was in contrast to the decline in support for Liberals and Liberal party policy under Lloyd George, the latter of which can be seen to have directly impacted on

⁵⁵ Report, E. Hilton Young speech, *The Times* 29 November 1924.

⁵⁶ Report, *The Times* 19 June 1925.

⁵⁷ E. Hilton Young to Rufus Isaacs, 15 January 1926, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/94/11-12.

⁵⁸ Alun Wyburn-Powell presents Young after 1924 as a ‘somewhat suspect member of the Liberal party’; see Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Defections and the Liberal party, 1910-2010* (Manchester & New York), p. 123.

Young's decision to leave the Liberal party. One major factor was the land policy which seemed to be a concession to the level of state interference which he had rejected at the 1924 election and was a barrier to closer relations of Liberals to Conservatives, justifying the step of resignation of the Liberal Whip in February 1926.⁵⁹ But land policy was, in fact, only one of a number of issues which concerned him over a period of time. In a letter to Rufus Isaacs, he hinted at more general concerns about policy direction, and his sense that the party was moving towards some kind of compact with the Labour party.⁶⁰

It is significant that Young chose at first simply to resign the Whip and to sit effectively as an independent which seems to reinforce a sense that he was not seeking to become a Conservative directly. However, his resolve in this regard was to be negated in June when he took the step of joining the Conservative party. This event was due entirely to the General Strike in May which offended his long-term position in promoting of class harmony and the patriotic national interest and created in his mind a sense that there should be no political divisions amongst likeminded politicians.⁶¹

My action was the result of that convulsion in our politics, the greatest but the war in our time, the general strike. That, that alone, and that for the first time, made it clear to me, then an independent member, that it was a public duty to support the Prime Minister henceforward unreservedly. A formidable struggle for individual liberty and the constitution has begun. We lovers of liberty and the constitution must fight it out with every resource at our disposal.⁶²

⁵⁹ E. Hilton Young to Lloyd George, 25 August 1925, Kennet Papers MSS Kennet 78/1/a; E. Hilton Young speech, February 18 1926, Kennet Papers MSS Kennet 78/6; E. Hilton Young to Lloyd George, 13 February 1926, Kennet Papers MSS Kennet 78/2b-k; E. Hilton Young to Lloyd George, 19 February 1926, Lloyd George Papers G/10/14/21.

⁶⁰ E. Hilton Young to Rufus Isaacs, 15 January 1926, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/94/11-12. See above, pp. 147-152 & see below, pp. 176-194 for similar views from Mond and Guest.

⁶¹ E. Hilton Young to Baldwin, Open letter, *The Times* 2 June 1926; E. Hilton Young to A.J. Copeman, 6 June 1926, Kennet Papers MSS Kennet 78/14/a-d.

⁶² E. Hilton Young to A. J. Copeman, 6 June 1926, Kennet Papers MSS Kennet 78/14/a-d.

The Liberal party, under Lloyd George, had moved firmly in a direction against his political outlook and thus joining the Conservative party in such circumstances was the necessary course.⁶³ It does not seem, however, that this decision was made entirely for negative reasons, however, with his praise for Baldwin in becoming ‘the effective champion of the basic ideas that [he] have ever held and advocated’.⁶⁴ This evidence suggests that although it was the event of the General Strike which decisively brought Young into the Conservative party, this could not have happened without Baldwin who provided him with a positive reason to become a Conservative and not just a partner of the Conservative party.

VI

Hilton Young’s political outlook was strongly influenced by patriotism and a strong sense of what he regarded to be in the national interest which made him almost always appear as a detached figure, not only from the Liberal party, but the party system itself. He had been much better suited to the politics of the Coalition years where he had been able to achieve some respect as an authority on economic and financial affairs and to serve as one of Lloyd George’s governmental team; during this period he seemed keen that Liberals and Conservatives should work together in the national interest and favoured the consolidation of the two political forces into an electoral *bloc* although he was not in favour of the complete fusion of the two parties. Despite his non-partisanship and his friendly view of Conservatives, until a very late stage Young viewed the Liberal party as being crucial as a vehicle for pursuing his political interests, but this was put under pressure with the re-emergence of party politics; he had only been elected under coalitions

⁶³ It is intriguing to entertain the possibility that Young’s decision to join the Conservative party might not have occurred had it not been for the General Strike although the experience of other Liberal recruits suggests if it had not been the General Strike another issue would have emerged.

⁶⁴ E. Hilton Young, Open letter, *The Times*, 2 June 1926.

and he was not easily able to adapt to it without unwittingly finding himself appearing to be moving away from Liberal politics as he reacted to a series of political events. He did try to integrate himself more fully into Liberal politics in 1923, marking a discontinuity with his more detached position and close relations with Conservatives, but the failure of this move electorally led him to become even more convinced than ever that Liberals needed to work alongside likeminded individuals in the Conservative party.

From 1924, there seems to have been a genuine patriotic sense of the need to consolidate Liberals and Conservatives into a single force which took his view of the integration of the two forces much further, particularly as he seemed to envisage such a force being led primarily by Conservatives. His growing admiration for Baldwin and despair of Lloyd George, saw the nature of the relationship with the Conservative party evolve in such a way that he saw the future of the Liberal party as kind of junior partner to the Conservative party. It was a preference for him to remain as a Liberal under such an arrangement but this position became increasingly difficult to maintain with the development of Liberal land policy and fears of a Liberal alliance with Labour, leading to his resignation from the Parliamentary party. However, despite all he may well have stayed as an independent had it not been for the General Strike; this seemingly tumultuous event was crucial in bringing him into the Conservative party; it offended his patriotism, creating in his mind a view that there should be no political divisions himself and the similarly-minded Conservatives.

In all the manifestations of political campaigning the sense that Young was drifting towards the Conservative party could usually be countered by other factors revealing his electoral position remained consistent with his firm political outlook. Yet his campaigning, particularly in 1924, seemed to bring him so close to the Conservatives that he appeared almost indistinguishable from them, although this was certainly unintentional; he had wanted to affirm an electoral position as a patriotic Liberal. The closeness to the Conservatives was perhaps heightened due to the involvement in a double-member borough; it provided a legitimate means of cooperation in a formalised partnership arrangement, in theory assisting the cause of Liberal politics through retaining a candidature for the

election, but in practice actually giving an outward impression of the complete fusion of Liberal with Conservative politics through the formality of the joint arrangements.

Chapter Five: Frederick Guest

An examination of Frederick [‘Freddie’] Guest’s political career places it very centrally to the recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative party. Whilst in many ways he was not one of the major recruits, issues including his family connections to Churchill, his distinction from traditional Liberal dogma, and involvement with Lloyd George and factional conflict make him a very appealing character for specific consideration as a case study.

Guest was first elected to Parliament in January 1910 as the Liberal member for Dorset, East division.¹ However, his election was short-lived due to a petition which unseated him. The East division was where Guest’s family held their Wimborne country seat, and his brother, Henry Guest, retained the seat for the family in the by-election that followed (July 1910), but stood aside, in favour of Freddie, when an election was again called in December. Guest subsequently held the constituency until 1922.

Guest came to prominence in 1915 in his support for Lloyd George’s Liberal faction. For his loyalty, he was rewarded with two offices: Coalition Liberal Chief Whip, 1917-21, and Secretary of State for Air, 1921-22. During this time he became embroiled in both Liberal intra-party troubles and inter-party negotiations with the Conservatives. From 1919, he became an advocate of fusion between the Conservative and Liberal parties, pledging support to Bonar Law as well as to Lloyd George.

Guest returned to Parliament as the Liberal Member for Stroud in 1923, but he became dissatisfied with Liberal party policy and again argued for closer working relations with the Conservatives. In 1924, he was elected in Bristol North without Conservative opposition; he had deserted Stroud for a constituency where he could stand openly on a ticket of Liberal and Conservative cooperation. Following the election, he worked in opposition to the Liberal leadership in Parliament by offering general support for

¹ Geoffrey Searle, ‘Guest, Frederick Edward, 1875-1937’, www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 12 March 2010). Guest contested Staffordshire, Kingswinford, in 1906, Cumberland, Cockermouth, on 1 August 1906 and Lincolnshire, Brigg, on 25 February 1907 before his eventual election to Parliament in East Dorset.

Baldwin's government. This was damaging to his prospects of retaining support from his party and, consequently, he was deposed as the official Liberal party candidate, which led to another electoral defeat. Following his effective exclusion from Liberal politics, Guest indicated his intention to join the Conservative party and, in 1931, he secured selection for the Plymouth, Drake constituency, as a Conservative.

I

There is very little historiography of Guest's political career, perhaps because of the apparent absence of personal papers, which has rendered him a rather neglected figure. The commentary that does exist has tended to focus largely on Guest's contribution to coalition politics, and there is a general sense that such involvement led him into political arrangements with Conservatives, particularly when he became concerned about the rise of socialism, eventually leading him to join the Conservative party.² Furthermore, as an early advocate of wartime conscription, Guest's reputation with some historians has suffered from a sense that he was really a Conservative, at least in a philosophical sense, by the middle of the War.³ However, the balance of the argument against such sentiment has been strengthened in the article by Matthew Johnson on the Liberal War Committee (LWC); Johnson profiles Guest specifically, pointing to moral, egalitarian and patriotic sentiments which were central to his interpretation

² Kenneth Morgan, 'Lloyd George's Stage Army: The Coalition Liberals, 1918-1922' in A. J. P. Taylor (ed.) *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (London, 1971), p. 233; Martin Pugh, 'Left in the Centre? Lloyd George and the Centrist Tradition in British Politics' in Judith Loades (ed.), *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George* (Bangor, 1991); Geoffrey Searle, *Country Before Party – Coalition and the Idea of "National Government" in Modern Britain, 1885-1987* (London & New York, 1995), Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935* (Collins, 1966), pp. 131, 150-3, 262, 268, 288-9.

³ For some references see Wilson, *The Downfall*, p. 36; Michael Freedon, *Liberalism Divided – A Study of British Political Thought, 1914-1939* (Oxford, 1986). There is a parallel here with an historical perspective of Mond; see above, pp. 125-129.

of a twentieth century Liberalism, together with a sense of the rightful patriotic interests of the country for the duration of the War.⁴

Johnson's research, whilst only dealing with a small part of Guest's political career, has also impacted on understanding of his political career more generally since if he was consistent in his philosophical approach in 1916, then surely there is a similar possibility at other junctures, and this needs some assessment. Central to any such examination is the problem of Guest's identification as a 'Liberal' from 1904 to 1930. Like his cousin, Churchill, it seems that his original involvement with the Liberal party was because it was perceived to be moving away from party politics, and there was no real sense of a connection to Liberal partisan causes, other than Free Trade. Research for this study suggests that he was really not much enamoured by the prospect of either Liberal or Conservative partisanship; thus, it would be difficult to suggest that Guest's recruitment into the Conservative party meant that he had simply become a Conservative. He did not really have a comfortable political home and Guest's career was dominated by his attempting to build support for political combinations involving both Liberals and Conservatives which would emphasise political interests above party politics.

Given the distance from the prevailing party political structures, it seems inconsistent that Guest should simply join the Conservatives in 1930. Evidence suggests, however, that events drove him out of the Liberal party; major ones being his exclusion from the Liberal party electoral organisation in 1928-9 and deteriorating relations with Lloyd George. Furthermore, it does seem that Baldwin's liberal conservatism could have been influential.⁵ Guest had aligned himself with Baldwin from 1924, particularly in the common desire to promote class harmony and avoid socialism, which meant

⁴ Matthew Johnson, 'The Liberal War Committee and the Liberal Advocacy of Conscription in Britain, 1914-1916', *The Historical Journal* 51 2 (2008), 399, 420. There is a similarity to the position of Mond and Churchill in their situations; see above, pp. 104-105, 133-135.

⁵ See above, pp. 16-18.

they were not dissimilar in political outlook, helping to draw Guest towards the Conservative party.

II

Guest's early life had not necessarily suggested that he was destined for political office with his military involvement suggesting that a career in the army was a more likely pursuit. He obtained a commission in the First Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment in 1894, joined the First Life Guards in 1897, and received a Queen's medal with five clasps for service during the Boer War.⁶ However, such a record may well have encouraged a desire for patriotic public service in politics, a sense no doubt heightened by Guest's exposure to politics as a blood-relation of the Spencer-Churchill family. A decision to stand for Parliament as a Liberal seemed an unlikely one given his aristocratic background; Guest originally considered himself as a Conservative although, in parallel to his cousin, Churchill, he joined the Liberal party at the time of the tariff controversy.⁷

In the years which followed his election, until 1915, it is not absolutely clear what issues most motivated Guest politically. It is clear that he was a convinced Free Trader and that he offered some support electorally for Liberal causes such as self-government for the Transvaal, but he was an obscure figure in national politics, tending to play only a low key role as Churchill's assistant private secretary.⁸

Guest's low profile did not mean that he made no impression in political circles; some evidence shows that he did make one on a personal level and this was not positive, with concerns about his ethical character. J. A. Pease alluded to this, pointing out that 'he was not acceptable in many

⁶ Obituary, *The Times*, 29 April 1937.

⁷ Report, *The Times*, 16 May 1910.

⁸ Report, *The Times*, 16 July 1906.

quarters. Asquith told me to keep my eyes open.’⁹ Evidently, Guest was seen as a rather devious political character by some Liberal politicians, a perception not aided perhaps by the circumstances in which he found himself, having been unseated by electoral petition for ‘corrupt and illegal practices’ in 1910.¹⁰ The offence created a further narrative of untrustworthiness around him. Thus, Guest was a fairly isolated figure, even at an early stage of involvement in Liberal political affairs. He could not have felt much of a sense of being fully integrated within the party.

The early wartime seemed to mark a change in Guest’s political position and to some extent his reputation, with him gaining more prominence in Parliament through his concern about the management of the war effort under Asquith. Disturbed by the lack of success of the early years, he soon made his concerns public, something he felt qualified to do given experience gained as extra *Aide-de-Camp* to Sir John French in France from the outbreak of the War until 1916, which, as he himself explained, put him near enough to the conflict to ‘have one’s wits sharpened’.¹¹ Guest’s own experience, together with distress at Asquith’s ineffectual war management, helped Guest establish himself as a political figure in his own right, still allied to Churchill, particularly in common concerns about the War, but also distinct.

Of immediate concern to Guest was the perceived inadequate supply of men and munitions which were held to have left the War hopelessly under-resourced and he became amongst the first parliamentarians to argue for conscription.¹² None of his views led to any diminution of his affinity with the Liberal party; on the contrary, they seemed to reinforce, or perhaps even create a sense of purpose to his involvement, bringing him into contact with other Liberals from all sections of the party for the first time,

⁹ Journal of J. A. Pease, 25 June 1908, cit. Cameron Hazlehurst & Christine Woodland (ed.), *A Liberal Chronicle – Journals and Papers of J.A. Pease, 1st Lord Gainford, 1908-1910* (London, 1994), p. 48.

¹⁰ Report, *The Times*, 16 May 1910.

¹¹ Frederick Guest speech, 23 June 1915, HC Debates 1915 Vol. 72 col. 1212-1215.

¹² Geoffrey Searle, *Corruption in British Politics, 1895-1930* (Oxford, 1987), p. 299.

particularly through the Liberal War Committee.¹³ It did, however, bring to the fore some interventionist instincts, as well as patriotic ones, with conscription being seen as vital to the managing of the War.¹⁴ His public statements pointed to the short-term nature of his advocacy of conscription which suggested some attachment towards the principles of voluntarism in more normal times, and hence, a reason for involvement in the on-going affairs of the Liberal party.

The concerns about the management of the War were not just about supply of men but also related to egalitarian concern about equality of sacrifice.¹⁵ As well as voluntary recruitment Guest targeted taxation of war profits and luxury goods as key issues of inequality. The War, he felt, demanded class unity, and there could be dangers of class fragmentation which justified such taxation.¹⁶ Guest was advocating a role for the Liberal party to continue the pre-war emphasis on social and political equality.¹⁷

There may well have been a personal dimension to Guest's criticisms of Asquith. From private correspondence, it can be shown that Asquith continued to dislike him incredibly, proclaiming him to be unstable as 'a foolish and adventurous maker – a regular gambler'; he also disliked his tendency for 'begging and pushing', which revealed an unattractive ambitious side.¹⁸ The latter point related to Guest's designs on promotion but Asquith was set firmly against any thought of giving him office. Any knowledge of Asquith's negative view of him and the rejection of his

¹³ Frederick Guest to Churchill, 4 August 1915, Chartwell Trust CHAR 2/67/41-43; Frederick Guest speech, 23 June 1915, HC Debates 1915 Vol. 72 col. 1212-1215; Johnson, 'The Liberal War Committee', 410. There was a similar position to that of Mond too; see above, pp. 134-137.

¹⁴ Frederick Guest speech, 23 June 1915, HC Debates 1915 Vol. 72 col. 1212-1215.

¹⁵ Johnson, 'The Liberal War Committee', 419.

¹⁶ Frederick Guest speech, 15 September 1915, HC Debates 1915 Vol. 74 col. 88-98.

¹⁷ For similarities with the position of Churchill see above, p. 111.

¹⁸ H. H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 5 January 1915, 17 January 1915, in Michael & Eleanor Brock (eds.), *H. H. Asquith – Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 360, 383. Asquith suggested that these characteristics were common to all the Guest family, and he disliked them all. Also see above, pp. 104-108, 126-127.

aspirations for promotion could hardly have assisted in encouraging political loyalty.

The poor personal relations as well as the political criticisms assisted in formulating a view by the middle of 1915 that Asquith should be replaced.¹⁹ Guest initially thought that the appropriate successor could be Churchill, urging him to push himself forward as a ‘powerful critic’ of the government, but he quickly refocused his attention on Lloyd George. This may have just been because momentum had built up around him but Guest’s view must have been influenced by the negative perceptions of Churchill’s war record due to the failures at Antwerp and the Dardanelles. Involvement with Lloyd George was a wise one for his political influence, since it brought him close to the centre of power, as was his wish, for the duration of the coalition years with his new chief at the helm.

Guest’s support for Lloyd George from 1916 saw him ruthlessly and enthusiastically advancing what he saw as Lloyd George’s and the Coalition’s interests. His support eventually earned him the position of Coalition Liberal Chief Whip, and through it he assumed a leading role in the organisation of Coalition activity. His faithful service was, however, at the further expense of perceptions of his character; the Conservative, Leo Amery, referred to him uncivilly as one of the Liberal party’s ‘unscrupulous wire-pullers’, pointing to one of his various shady behind-the-scenes political activities.²⁰ In the middle of 1918 he could be seen to be using his role to exert influence over newspaper proprietors, with private meetings to discuss favourable terms for support to Lloyd George and the government, as well as seeking to raise funds for the actual purchase of a newspaper.²¹

¹⁹ Frederick Guest to Churchill, 21 July 1915, Chartwell Trust Papers CHAR 2/767/31-32.

²⁰ Diary of Leo Amery, 8 November 1918, in John Barnes & David Nicholson (eds.), *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1896-1929* (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland & Johannesburg, 1980), p. 242.

²¹ Diary of George Riddell, 23 June 1918, Undated September 1918, 22 September 1918, 15 October 1918, in John M. McEwen (ed.), *The Riddell Diaries, 1908-1923*, (London, 1986), pp. 229, 235-237, 242, 243. Amery had been invited to one of these meeting which

Latterly, as other research shows, he assisted Lloyd George in the sale of honours and the establishment of his Political Fund.²² However, despite this ruthlessness and the political influence it gave, it did not seem that he was altogether satisfied with his situation. He complained to George Riddell that Lloyd George was 'very difficult to work with' and said that he 'never received a word of praise' for any of his efforts; he had 'a dog's job'.²³ As a faithful servant he expected more reward.²⁴ None of this could have been helpful to integration into his Coalition Liberal party.

Guest's assistance to Lloyd George affected relations with the Asquithians which was damaging to his wider involvement in Liberal politics in the longer-term. The Asquithian section was viewed by Guest as an essentially opposing force rather than a separated branch of the same party, as was demonstrated by Guest's pursuit of a range of means to ignore, discredit and eliminate Asquithian opposition. In his role as Chief Whip there are various examples of Guest's actions against his Asquithian Liberal opponents. In Parliament, he sought to work with Conservative 'federalists' about a solution to the Irish Question rather than the Asquithians, in April 1918, and later in the year he played a key behind-the-scenes role in manoeuvring against them during the Maurice debate.²⁵ Guest fell into bitter conflict with Asquithians about the arrangements regarding seats, taking an uncompromising line in promoting Coalition interests, culminating in the coupon arrangements; he opposed John Simon's candidature at Spen Valley (1919) and sought to ensure that there was a Coalition Liberal candidate to challenge him.²⁶ Guest maintained a disregard for Asquith whom he wished to be publicly discredited, privately encouraging Lloyd George cynically to engineer a situation which would

he described as being in a 'real den of thieves'; see Diary of Leo Amery, 8 November 1918, p. 242.

²² Searle, *Corruption*, pp. 365, 382.

²³ Diary of George Riddell, 30 October 1918, p. 245.

²⁴ For the experiences of Churchill and Mond see above, pp. 110-115, 144-147.

²⁵ Searle, *Country Before Party* p. 112; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 193.

²⁶ Frederick Guest to Lloyd George, 6 July 1918, Lloyd George Papers F/21/2/25; Report, *Liberal Magazine*, January 1920; Report, *The Times*, 16 May 1920.

impact Asquith's credibility with Liberal opinion.²⁷ Some of these issues – particularly the coupon and Spen Valley – were significant in the narrative of the Asquith supporters against Lloyd George in the years that followed, so Guest can be seen as having played a key role in preventing unity within the Liberal party in the decade that followed.²⁸

Guest had a firm strategic reason for discrediting Asquith and his supporters which pointed to some more principled aspects to his thinking. Geoffrey Searle and Trevor Wilson have suggested that he initially wanted to see the recreation of a united Liberal party under Lloyd George's leadership, but research for this study also suggests that he envisaged closer Liberal cooperation with other political parties, contemplating arrangements with either the Conservative party or 'patriotic' Labour in the run up to the 1918 election.²⁹ These initial cross-party ideas soon gave way to a more radical solution, however, in favouring the establishment of a new 'centre' or 'national' party involving the fusion of the Liberal and Conservative parties, which, by early 1922, had evolved into a Churchillian call for 'the formation of a Central Party' involving Lloyd George, Churchill and Bonar Law as leaders.³⁰ These ideas were not, of course, unique to Guest's position, but he was one of the most ardent advocates of fusion, proclaiming boldly that Conservatism and Liberalism were 'dead letters'.³¹ He felt that fusion was the best means to preserve and extend the work of the Coalition and meet the challenge posed by the electoral rise of socialism and the partisanship demonstrated by Conservative diehards and troublesome

²⁷ In the incident referred to Guest encouraged Lloyd George to invite Asquith into the government, believing his certain refusal would enable Coalition Liberals to discredit Asquith for opposing the programme of national reconstruction due to his selfish interests in remaining as Lloyd George's opponent; see Frederick Guest to Lloyd George, 21 October 1918, Lloyd George Papers F/21/2/43.

²⁸ See above, pp. 79-82; Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 193.

²⁹ Searle, *Country Before Party*, p. 113, Wilson, *The Downfall*, p. 131; Frederick Guest to Lloyd George, 21 October 1918, Lloyd George Papers F/21/2/43.

³⁰ Report, *Liberal Magazine*, September 1919; Frederick Guest to Lloyd George, 16 January 1922, Lloyd George Papers F/22/3/37.

³¹ Report, *The Times*, 12 February 1921; Report, *Liberal Magazine*, November 1921.

Asquithians.³² It was also forward-thinking in the sense that it anticipated a realignment of political forces amid electoral change. Thus, Guest's advocacy of the idea of a national party was the first evidence of movement out of the confines of independent Liberal politics.³³

Despite efforts to define a clear political position, Guest was unable to avoid electoral defeat in 1922. The electoral appeal of fusion was limited and whilst he secured support from the coalitionist-minded East Dorset Liberal and Unionist associations, there was substantive opposition to his candidature – informed by negative perceptions of his character no doubt – from local Conservatives which led to an unofficial Conservative nomination in the election.³⁴ Guest campaigned on a 'Liberal and anti-socialist' ticket, being amongst the earliest Liberals to do so, and he pledged to support both Lloyd George and Bonar Law; but he finished third in a three-way battle pitting Liberal against Labour and 'Independent' Conservative. His total number of votes was halved on the 1918 result and his vote share declined by just under fifty percentage points, albeit in a three way fight this time.³⁵

III

Being out of Parliament did not alter Guest's enthusiasm for a new national party; rather, it reinforced it. Even in 1923, when Liberal reunion was re-emerging, he continued to emphasise the redundant nature of independent Liberalism and the need for Liberals to work with Conservatives to build a 'National party' *bloc* to oppose Labour and socialism.³⁶ He was not opposed to Liberal reunion but he believed it focused the Liberal party's attention

³² Searle, *Country Before Party*, p. 120.

³³ Views on fusion can be compared to Churchill's; see above, pp. 108-111.

³⁴ Report, *The Times*, 7 November 1922.

³⁵ The results were Independent Conservative 49 per cent, Labour 27 per cent and 24 per cent for Guest. In 1918, Guest has achieved 73 per cent against 26 per cent for Labour in a two-way contest. The result suggests he was very unpopular too.

³⁶ Frederick Guest article, *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, July 1923.

inwardly on itself and ignored the important reality of Liberalism's post-war position. Nevertheless, he found himself temporarily moving towards more active support for reunion, perhaps more as a tactic to get himself back into Parliament rather than for reasons of genuine enthusiasm; he was elected for Stroud constituency, with one commentator suggesting he even received assistance from the Labour party to secure a victory.³⁷ The latter point seems rather paradoxical given Guest's views on distinction from socialism and one might rightly view his position with cynicism although the circumstances of the 1923 election seem to provide some mitigation in both parties defending Free Trade interests. It also raises questions about how truly he was committed to anti-socialism as a point of principle; Guest, it seems, sought to exaggerate his anti-socialism as a means to achieve the effect of political distance to Labour and closeness to the Conservatives.³⁸

In 1924, Guest was one of the Liberals who voted Labour into office; again, raising uncertainty about how truly he was committed to anti-socialism; however, it was clear that he was soon to regret his decision, and he became disillusioned with any form of Liberal and Labour cooperation. In an open letter to Asquith in *The Times* he suggested he was concerned about a 'temporarily concealed' programme of nationalisation on the part of the Labour party, and that the Liberal party would face ruin unless it changed course.³⁹ Thus, Guest unambiguously again engaged in seeking formal cooperation with Conservatives, with evidence suggesting that he was sympathetic to Churchill's desire to create a 'Constitutionalist' faction as a means to bring together Liberal and Conservative cooperation which was similar to his national party idea.⁴⁰ For himself, his emphasis of cooperation gained him support in Bristol North, where he showed an interest in standing for election; both Liberals and Conservatives there saw the advantage of a compact and he was able to stand on a Liberal ticket

³⁷ Wilson, *The Downfall*, p. 268. Guest won a comfortable victory gaining 53 per cent of the vote to the Conservative 46 per cent. The likelihood would have been defeat if there had had been a Labour candidate.

³⁸ See above, pp. 46-53.

³⁹ Wilson, *The Downfall*, pp. 288-9; Frederick Guest open letter, *The Times*, 26 April 1924.

⁴⁰ Winston Churchill to Balfour, 3 April 1924, Balfour Papers GD433/2/19/126.

amid general compact arrangements between the two parties in the Bristol constituencies aimed at maximising a number of Labour losses.⁴¹ It also delivered him electoral success, gaining him fifty nine per cent of the votes in the straight fight with Labour in the General Election of 1924.

After the election, Guest moved to act on a promise to Bristol electors to support a Conservative government but at the expense of supporting his own party in Parliament. This was, in his view, consistent with the desire to create a Liberal wing of a 'national' *bloc* but, as no definite programme had been identified for this undertaking, it left him seeming almost indistinguishable from Conservatives, despite his protestations to the contrary. In all this, there was much positive inclination towards supporting the government, having become impressed by the moderate Conservatism of Baldwin, and he soon began to talk in what amounted to Conservative language, even showing some inclination to accepting measures of Protection, such as the McKenna duties, and he emphasised similar issues to Baldwin, such as the economic interests of the middle-classes, financial capital and moderate social reform.⁴²

In contrast to Guest's coalescence with Conservative policy was his separation from the Liberal party and growing disagreement with Lloyd George. Rather like the Asquithian rebels, although separate from them, Guest tried to organise resistance to the policies of the Liberal party in Parliament and to support the government.⁴³ He felt the party was edging towards socialism and he grew suspicious that Lloyd George wanted to enter into a compact with the Labour party which would end any hope of Liberal cooperation with the Conservative party; thus, there was serious condemnation of Lloyd George's land policy and response to the General

⁴¹ Report, *The Times*, 13 May 1924.

⁴² Frederick Guest to Edward Grigg, 11 March 1925, Grigg Papers, MSS (Film) Grigg 1002; Frederick Guest speech, 30 April 1925, HC Debates 1924-25 Vol. 183 col. 400-403, 184 col. 1094-1098; Frederick Guest to Edward Grigg, 8 May 1925, Grigg Papers, MSS (Film) Grigg 1002; Report, *The Times*, 1 September 1925; Frederick Guest speech, 30 April 1926, HC Debates 1926 Vol. 193 col. 640-643.

⁴³ He worked with Edward Grigg; see above, pp. 86-87.

Strike.⁴⁴ Guest complained that Lloyd George had not honoured supposed commitments to ‘non fractiousness’ in his relationship with the Conservative government, citing undertakings made at the end of 1924 and a party motion moved by Edward Grigg.⁴⁵ Guest also suggested that Lloyd George had negated the politics of the Coalition years which was the overarching aspect of Guest’s dissatisfaction.⁴⁶ However, it is remarkable that none of these issues destabilised his sense of personal association with the party, perhaps more because his association was now so loose and so completely on his own self-imposed terms rather than that he was any more reconciled to the party leadership.

Guest’s position irritated wider Liberal opinion in Parliament and within his constituency, and the controversy developed some sort of momentum. This can be observed from the events of the end of 1928 when, in mid-December, a resolution was passed by the Bristol North constituency party which enabled the establishment of a rival Liberal association to oppose Guest’s candidature.⁴⁷ The new ‘Liberal and Radical Candidates’ Association’ received endorsement from the Western Counties Liberal Federation and also the national Liberal Organisation Committee; the latter body stating that it would not oppose a candidate being selected against Guest. Thus, the circumstances were created where two Liberal-labelled candidates would be fielded in the election of 1929; one endorsed by the ‘official’ organs of the party and another, Guest, endorsed by the continuing Bristol North Liberal Association and the Conservative Association. And this was disastrous, with the ‘official’ Liberal candidate depriving Guest of

⁴⁴ Frederick Guest to Lloyd George, 1 June 1926, Lloyd George Papers G/8/13/4; Report, *The Times*, 8 March 1926; Frederick Guest letter, *The Times*, 3 November 1926; Frederick Guest to Lloyd George, 1 June 1926, Lloyd George Papers G/8/13/4.

⁴⁵ Frederick Guest to Edward Grigg, 11 March 1925, Grigg Papers, MSS (Film) Grigg 1002.

⁴⁶ Report, *The Times*, 3 November 1926.

⁴⁷ Report, *Liberal Magazine*, January 1929.

almost seven thousand votes which might have come to him, and leading to defeat of both Liberal candidates.⁴⁸

The intervention may have been justifiable, due to Guest's behaviour in the 1924 to 1929 period, but this was not how he viewed it. He was bitter in defeat and directed abuse particularly towards Lloyd George, hinting at betrayal:

[...] I recognise that I have merely paid the penalty for believing what Mr Lloyd George taught the Liberal Party between 1918 and 1922, when on countless occasions he pointed to the Socialists as the chief enemies of Liberalism. I did not see anything in the Campbell case, the Anglo-Russian treaties or the general strike to make me change my mind. Nor could I detect anything in the conduct or programme of Mr. Baldwin which induced me to believe that he was more reactionary than Mr. Bonar Law, with whom Mr. Lloyd George worked fervently for many hardly more critical years.⁴⁹

Guest also reflected upon Lloyd George's character, referring to his lack of principle, his instability and pointing to his corrupting influence over the Liberal party which seemed a bit hollow given his own background of support for Lloyd George. Nevertheless, frustrations pent up over the last few years came to the fore in his feeling that a revival of the Liberal party was impossible with Lloyd George at its head, and he called for his replacement with a nobler and more moral leader, which had echoes, perhaps cynically, of Baldwin's own distaste for the character of Lloyd George and the need to rise above his corrupting influence.⁵⁰ Clearly, he hoped for a leader who would work with Baldwin.

⁴⁸ Labour polled 49 per cent, Guest 34 per cent and the other Liberal, 18 per cent. The Labour vote rose by some nine percentage points on the previous election.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 4 June 1929.

⁵⁰ See above, p. 20.

I suggest that in the interests of Liberalism, the following inferences may be drawn:-

1. It is essential that a great party should cease to be so largely dependent upon a single source for its financial strength.
2. It is essential that the Liberal Party should be led by a man whom they cannot only trust themselves, but whom other parties can trust to be consistent [...].

[...] The Liberal Party contains many notable statesmen to whom straightforwardness is a watchword [...] Surely it would be wise, in the present situation to consider the claims of one of them to the leadership, with complete indifference to any diminution of financial resources which such a course might involve.⁵¹

Even at this late stage in his association with the Liberal party, however, there were still no signs that Guest would seek to join the Conservative party; rather he seemed to be pointing to ways in which the party could be purified and reinvigorated. The party was still relevant to Guest in the middle months of 1929.

Guest's recruitment into the Conservative party did not occur for a further nine months when, in an open letter to Baldwin in *The Times* on 24 March 1930, he indicated his intentions.⁵² In the letter, he reiterated his views of the importance of Liberal and Conservative cooperation and the need to avoid a class policy. There was also emphasis on the need for greater standards of public morality, and there was emphasis of his flexibility over Free Trade, both of which seemed to be an attempt to show to Baldwin that he shared much in common with the Conservative party.

I have for some time past found increasing difficulty in believing that the Liberal Party, under its present leadership, can maintain the high traditions and principles of the past. I have at the same time

⁵¹ Frederick Guest letter, *The Times*, 4 June 1929.

⁵² Frederick Guest, Open letter, *The Times*, 24 March 1930.

been wondering whether fiscal and economic systems based on the facts of 25 years ago are any longer unchallengeable to-day [...].

[...] Many of the differences which divided Liberals from Conservatives have become obsolete. I have, as you know, spent the last eight years stressing their points of agreement [...]. The main political issues have become economic, and all who care for national interests must take sides definitely according to their economic faith. It is my sincere belief that a policy of which you are now a protagonist is the only one which will result in the permanent security of working class conditions in this country, and in the consistent pursuit of a national and Imperial as against a class policy.⁵³

The reasons for this action are not absolutely clear from surviving records but must surely have been related to Guest's desire to remain active in public life; an option which was not credible without the potential of association to a political party.⁵⁴ Having been excluded from the Liberal party, his only available option was to find a way of linking himself to the Conservative party. One can imagine, however, that he was a reluctant recruit in some respects, since he would have to set aside his desire to create a separate national party made up of Liberals and Conservatives. However, he had recent form in supporting Conservatives to the degree of being more or less indistinguishable, and in political outlook terms his 1930 letter suggests he was comfortable in making that decision; the Conservative party might not have seemed very different from the national party he has been hoping for. Furthermore, it is useful to note the references in his letter to the economic system as part of his justification. It implies some significance in the best means of propagating an anti-socialist *bloc*. Even allowing for hyperbole, Guest had major concerns about the potential of too much intervention in the economy and society under a future Labour

⁵³ *The Times*, 24 March 1930.

⁵⁴ This was similar to Mond; see above, pp. 149-152.

administration with the Conservative party seeming like the only form of defence against it by 1930.

IV

In examining Guest's political situation an overriding characteristic was his lack of integration into the Liberal party. Over time he pursued political priorities which always placed him amid divisions within the party, not helped by his single-mindedness, ruthlessness and self-interest which made him unpopular and accentuated his separation from others. His association with Lloyd George brought him to the heart of the Liberal coalitionist force but after reunion and with Lloyd George's changed direction he ended up isolated in the wider Liberal party. His largely on-going negative position in the party might suggest that he was likely to be one of the Liberals who would eventually distance himself from it but, unexpectedly perhaps, he remained steadfast in his desire to be a Liberal and he had to be forced out, in the events of 1928-9, before he looked towards any other political force. He had started out as a Conservative but unlike in the case of his cousin, Churchill, his difficulties with the Liberal party did not see him making similar steps to return to his former party. Joining the Conservatives only occurred when there was no alternative.

In the context of Guest's wish to remain as a Liberal, one of the most intriguing aspects was his belief that whatever position he took on policy or electoral issues did nothing to challenge his involvement in the Liberal politics. This must be seen in the context of the extraordinary incoherent state of Liberal politics where Guest could to some degree claim legitimacy to be representing the real interests of Liberalism; there was no need to resign even if there were fundamental differences of policy and strategy from the leadership.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ It is useful to examine these points in the context of similar discussion of the position of Grigg; see above, pp. 60-61.

Guest's links with the Conservatives are partly explained in the context of the convergence of Liberal and Conservative politics rather than because he had moved to the right. After the War, Conservative politics was very similar to Guest's own and his desire to create a national *bloc* was largely consistent. It seems that he genuinely believed that Liberals and Conservatives needed to work closely together and it was not in their interests to oppose each other. There is some ambiguity in whether Guest firmly maintained his view of the need to form a national party in the mid-1920s or whether he wished the parties to remain separate but in cooperation with each other. The latter seems more likely since his emphasis was more on working in partnership rather than formal amalgamation. In this situation, he was anticipating the development of joint arrangements after 1931, and even beyond, in a more permanent compromise between the two forces. It seems likely that he would have sought to propagate such links within the Liberal party without joining the Conservatives if he had not been forced into severing his ties.

Being forced out of his party, one can see that he had little option but to seek arrangements with the other party in his proposed national *bloc*, and his justifications for joining the Conservatives must be seen in this context. However, in so-doing, he highlighted much of how his political outlook was indistinguishable from a Conservative one; this may have been coincidental but it was apparent nonetheless. It is useful to consider his relations with Baldwin. These were not close; in fact, it has been suggested that Baldwin was not inclined to make him overly welcome in his party and to make propaganda out of the recruitment of yet another Liberal into his party; he had concerns about Guest's ethics and also his previous relations with Lloyd George.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Guest felt that Baldwin was a leader he could work with – he had been an admirer of Baldwin since 1924 – and he saw under his leadership the ability to build and safeguard a suitable political force for the years ahead. Guest's expressed commitment suggests that in the nine after his election defeat he had thought hard about his

⁵⁶ Searle, *Corruption*, pp. 365, 382.

position and was confident in the appropriateness of a complete reconciliation with his old party.

Chapter Six: John Simon

Consideration of the career of John Simon is vital to this study. Whilst he did not join the Conservative party, his alignment with it through his leadership of the Liberal National grouping, from 1931, means that specific consideration of his change in political allegiance will do much to develop understanding of the characteristics of Liberal National recruitment into the Conservative-dominated political *bloc* as well as more detailed understanding of Simon himself as an individual recruit. In terms of Simon specifically, it can be noted that he had, for much of his career, been against party compromises or coalitions, in contrast to the perspectives of other Liberal recruits mentioned in this study, making consideration of his eventual inclusion within the Conservative-dominated political *bloc* particularly intriguing. Furthermore, Simon has been identified with the Asquithian section of the party in the 1920s; but, in reality, looking at Simon as an Asquithian, except in a loose sense, is a misnomer since he was single-minded, not really being aligned to any particular faction within the fragmented body of what was Liberal opinion in the period. This sense of separateness played an important role in assisting dissatisfaction with the direction of Liberal politics over a long period of time. Importantly, Simon saw himself as a future Liberal leader to replace Asquith and the frustration of this, chiefly by Lloyd George, is an important context for his political perspectives after 1918 and his eventual decision to work more closely with Conservatives.

I

The historiography of the political career of John Simon yields a number of important issues to consider for this study. An impression is provided of an ambitiousness of character and aloofness from party colleagues, sometimes examined by historians in the context of his political decision-making, even to indicate reasons for departure from the ‘official’ Liberal party in 1931.

Trevor Wilson, for example, has considered the impact of long-term strain on his relationship with the Liberal party, pointing to his inability to progress within it due to the presence of Lloyd George, who had disrupted Simon's political career by keeping him out of Parliament, from 1918 to 1922, blocking his route to the party leadership, and, from 1924 onwards, by seeking *rapprochement* with Labour.¹

A framework, provided by Wilson, helps to identify a context in which to place the various issues that, over a long period of time, impacted upon Simon's relationship with the Liberal party, in some ways pointing to a disaffected political figure from even before the First World War. Various issues can be identified which confirm this impression, mostly by utilising the research of his biographer, David Dutton, but also that of Wilson and other historians' commentaries. The first clear indications of disaffection have been detected in the pre-war controversies over naval estimates and Irish Home Rule, and also during wartime, following Simon's resignation from the government, amid the conscription controversy and Asquith's perceived failures as a war leader.² Simon did not appear to be clearly aligned to either Lloyd George or Asquith, due to his feelings about them, and his appearance of offering a 'radical' opposition to the politics of government was rather a misleading one, since, as Dutton suggests, it was rather coincidental, and he tried to dissociate himself from radical opinion. The period after the War did nothing to mend this sense of disaffection, it seems, since he remained unimpressed with Asquith but yet continued to oppose the Coalition.³ Simon has been shown to have set himself against Liberal reunion which eventually threatened his potential to develop his leadership prospects.⁴ After 1923, a view emerges that Simon's position was characterised by opposing the development of relations with the Labour party, with particular concerns about the voting of Labour into government

¹ Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-35* (London, 1963), p. 391.

² David Dutton, *Simon - A Political Biography of Sir John Simon* (London, 1992), pp. 20-22, 31, 34-41, 44-46; Wilson, *The Downfall*, pp. 106-107, 217, 251, 297.

³ Dutton, *Simon* p. 54; Michael Hart, 'The decline of the Liberal Party in Parliament and the constituencies', Unpublished University of Oxford D.Phil. (1982), p. 148.

⁴ Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 54, 61.

and policy over the General Strike.⁵ It can be seen that he also entered into conflict with Lloyd George in his growing influence over the party, particularly through the Political Fund, which further conflicted with Simon's own wish to secure political advancement. This post-war situation was significant; Dutton suggesting that by 1926 Simon was ready to retire from public life altogether due to his disillusionment over various issues, although research for this study does not suggest that he was quite so disaffected. This, in part, relates to evidence that he was active in trying to resist Lloyd George, even looking at an alternative means to form a relationship with Labour to rival Lloyd George in the period between the 1924 and 1929 elections.⁶

Research identified for this study which points to Simon's own flirtation with Labour may contrast with other research but it does seem to back up other ideas since Dutton has also pointed strongly to Simon's tendency to exaggerate his differences with Lloyd George, largely to try to destabilise the party leadership and bolster his own potential to lead the party.⁷ One way Dutton has shown this is in the political outlook Simon seemed to portray in the 1920s. As in the cases of other Liberals identified within the Asquithian grouping in the post-war period, Simon expounded a neo-Gladstonian position on politics, which no doubt suited his need to appear different from Lloyd George but he was soon to cast it aside, in 1929, when a suitable replacement position emerged in the form of the Yellow Book proposals, underlining the sense that it was some form of political tactic.⁸ Thus, this tendency towards exaggeration suggests there are dangers in reading too much into Simon's sense of disaffection from his party in the years preceding his resignation of the Liberal Whip.⁹ He was fighting for influence within his party, and this did not necessarily suggest that he was in danger of being placed outside it.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 64-68, 75-81.

⁶ See below, pp. 212-216.

⁷ Dutton, *Simon*, p. 61.

⁸ Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 55, 90-101; John Campbell, *Lloyd George - The Goat in the Wilderness* (London, 1977), p. 57, p. 230.

⁹ This event occurred in June 1931.

Dutton has not put emphasis on the longer-term issues in Simon's resignation and recruitment into the Conservative party *bloc*; instead, he has focused on immediate issues concerning deteriorating views about the minority Labour government and alarm at the Liberal party's move towards *rapprochement* with the Labour party. Amongst Simon's grievances against Labour Dutton points to a rebuff of the Commission on India, which Simon had chaired, and some policy issues around the Coal Bill and the Trades Disputes Act.¹⁰ Dutton has shown that these issues set him on a course towards seeking *rapprochement* with the Conservative party from 1930, even to the extent of pointing out that there was no need for an independent Liberal party if it was purely to exist to prop up Labour.¹¹ Thus, according to Dutton's view, Simon gravitated to a position in which he sought to bring a section of Liberal opinion behind him and to set up an organisation in Parliament with the purpose of working closely with Conservatives. However, it was not just views about the Labour party which were important. Dutton revealed that Simon now believed compromises with Free Trade were needed due to the serious financial situation, so this aided his resolve.

A focus on short-term considerations is not exclusive to Dutton's perspective. Graham Goodlad, in his article concerning the Liberal National party, has given thought to Simon's motives in seeking to work with the Conservatives, considering how the Liberal National party's conception was a vehicle to further his own personal interests, witnessed, for example, in his emphasis of pushing his claim for Cabinet office above that of colleagues in his party.¹² It is possible that he had in mind some Cabinet role before 1931, and Goodlad's research does much to help to confirm that this may have been the case.

The emphasis on short-term issues, however, can be seen to risk ignoring of possible *rapprochement* with the Conservative party over a

¹⁰ Dutton, *Simon* p. 104.

¹¹ Dutton, *Simon* p.105.

¹² Graham Goodlad, 'Communications – The Liberal Nationals, 1931-1940: The problems of a party in 'partnership government', *Historical Journal* 38 1 (1995), 136.

longer period of time. Nothing has really been put in place to consider the impact of Simon's pursuit of *laissez faire*, anti-socialism and neo-Gladstonian politics for much of the 1920s on relations with Conservatives and, indeed, whether some of the motivation for his emphasis on these issues, in a parallel to resistance to Lloyd George, marked some kind of move towards the right. In the Spenn Valley, Simon received no opposition from Conservative candidates from 1924, and whilst there could be various reasons for this, the circumstances might suggest some development of better relations with Conservatives. The only issue which has been considered in anything like this context is Simon's position at the time of the General Strike, where it can be seen that he was talking in the language of Baldwin and how this aided Conservative relations, leading to his involvement in the India Commission, but there is much more to examine in this respect.¹³

A final area is to consider how far electoral calculations played a part in Simon's political choices. The importance of such calculations have been shown in Dutton's explanation of his position in uncharacteristically supporting Lloyd George, in 1929, but little else has been suggested by him for other elections, or by other historians, for elections more generally. Research for this study suggests that electoral insecurity played a role in his political choices, certainly from the later 1920s, and more acutely after 1931, with insecurities about the electoral position of his new party grouping in Parliament, particularly when the Samuelite Liberals became more clearly defined as the 'mainstream' Liberal grouping.

II

¹³ Wilson, *The Downfall*; David Dutton, 'John Simon and the post-war National Liberal Party: an historical postscript', *Historical Journal*, 32, 2 (1989), 357-367; Goodlad, 'Communications', 133-143. Research for this study shows that there was little genuine *rapprochement* with the Conservatives before 1930, despite the General Strike and the India Commission, but this is no reason to neglect assessment of the issue altogether. Some reflection on the issue is vital to appreciating Simon's political position.

A mixture of influences can be used to explain Simon's initial attachment to the Liberal party. He was the son of a Welsh Congregational minister, and, on his mother's side of the family, there were Irish Catholic influences. Both probably encouraged his early but unsustained interest in Liberal-Radicalism, witnessed from records of his early contributions to the *Manchester Guardian* and *Speaker*, in his pro-Boer sympathies, and as his parliamentary career got started, in his emphasis on Free Trade, criticism of landed interests, and favouring of Home Rule for Ireland.¹⁴ It also perhaps conditioned his response to the knighthood which went with the post of Solicitor-General in October 1910 – Simon had initially objected to the title.

Other aspects of Simon's background were, however, perhaps more evidence of connection to the established social elite; he was educated at Fettes and Oxford, and his legal training encouraged a more conservative, imperialist and Whig-like perspective towards politics.¹⁵ This fed into early suspicion of the 'new-fangled' nascent Labour party, with opposition to measures such as the 'Right to Work', and the reversal of the Osborne Judgement.¹⁶ This did not mean that he had no interest in social reform; in fact the opposite was true, given his enthusiasm for National Insurance, with evidence showing that he was very impatient for the government to defeat the challenge from the Lords in relation to the measure.¹⁷ It also did not

¹⁴ Dutton, *Simon* pp. 9-15; Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Times*, 24 November 1910, 11 March 1911; John A. Simon to Asquith, 5 February 1910, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 12/111-13.

¹⁵ David Dutton, 'Simon, John Allsebrook', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 8 January 2009). This does not make Simon by background very different from other future Liberal recruits mentioned in this study; see above, pp. 41-45.

¹⁶ John A. Simon to H. H. Asquith, 5 February 1910, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 12/111-13; Election report, *The Times*, 15 October 1910; Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Times*, 29 November 1910.

The Osborne Judgement (1909) was a landmark legal ruling preventing the trade unions from collecting a levy for political purposes, specifically to fund the Labour party.

¹⁷ John A. Simon to Asquith, 5 February 1910, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 12/111-13.

There was a sense that Simon was in sympathy with imperialist perspectives in the

mean that he was anti-Labour either given that his constituency, Walthamstow, possessed a well-functioning pact between the Labour and Liberal parties.¹⁸ But it was clear that his sentiments towards a Labour ‘class’ programme were less supportive, and thus, in this early period one can see early signs of a later, more oppositional position towards the politics of trade unionism and class politics.

The early years of Simon’s parliamentary career can be seen as fairly harmonious ones in terms of his attachment to the Liberal party; he clearly possessed the confidence of Asquith as his rapid appointment to the Cabinet would suggest. However, this was challenged by the controversy over the Naval Estimates for 1913-1914 which was perhaps a precursor to the factious position adopted in the early part of the War.¹⁹ Simon saw the increased expenditure as a threat to Free Trade and a distraction from social reform and from the implementation of the Home Rule bill, which he had personal interests in pursuing.²⁰ The threat to the Edwardian Liberal programme posed by Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, was interpreted as a threat to the government itself by Simon, and he was suspicious of Churchill’s motives in seeking a return to the Conservative party. Evidence suggests that Simon discussed with Cabinet colleagues

government in relation to this issue. His position is comparable to those of Churchill and Mond; see above, pp. 97-98, 133.

¹⁸ Simon was first elected in Walthamstow in 1906, and was re-elected three times in January, November (ministerial by-election) and December 1910. The pact was very beneficial to Simon since he could not have counted on victory had there been a Labour candidate. The respective vote shares for the Liberal party were as follows: 1906: 58 per cent; January 1910: 53 per cent; November 1910: 55 per cent; December 1910: 56 per cent.

¹⁹ Asquith seems to have been on good personal terms referring to Simon by the nickname of ‘the Impeccable’ in private correspondence although towards the end of War he was increasingly referred to as Simon which could suggest that their relationship was becoming less close.

²⁰ Letter to H. H. Asquith signed by Lord Beauchamp, Charles Hobhouse, Reginald McKenna, Walter Runciman and Sir John Simon (in Simon’s hand), 29 January 1914, in Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 2 Part 3* (London, 1969) pp. 1857-1858; Dutton, *Simon* p. 20.

potential ways in which Churchill's resignation from the government could be secured; and, in this, he tended to take matters to extremes, revealing a less pleasant side to his character, with *The Manchester Guardian* editor, C. P. Scott, privately characterising Simon's vengeful behaviour as that of a kind of 'Robespierre', being 'out for Churchill's head'.²¹ Actions such as these reveal the extent of his alienation from Churchill certainly, and helped to sour relations with members of the Cabinet, particularly Lloyd George, even before the onset of the War.

For Simon, it was the War which started to upset his attachment to the Liberal party as the party entered into political territory which he viewed as unsupportable. As Dutton has shown, Simon was so preoccupied with pushing the cause of Home Rule he did not seem to be prepared for war when it came, seemingly having little insight into the powerful war lobby which had grown in the Cabinet, or indeed, the changing political climate which was pushing Britain onto a war footing.²² Surviving records point to a sense of Simon's feeling that a section of the Cabinet, under Lloyd George and Churchill, had dishonestly worked behind the scenes to provoke war and force a war policy on the government.²³

He [Simon] was looking terribly worn and tired. He began at once by saying he had been entirely deceived about Germany and that I ought to know that the evidence was overwhelming that the party which had got control of the direction of affairs throughout the crisis had deliberately played for and provoked the war.²⁴

²¹ Diary of C. P. Scott, 23 January 1914, in Trevor Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, 1911-1928* (London, 1970), pp. 73, 78. Also see Diary of George Riddell, 18 December 1913, 23 January 1914 in John M. McEwen (ed.), *The Riddell Diaries, 1908-1923* (London, 1986), pp. 73-78-79.

²² Dutton, *Simon* pp. 28-30; H. H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 21 September 1914 in Michael & Eleanor Brock (eds.), *H. H. Asquith – Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1985), p. 87.

²³ Dutton, *Simon*, p. 30; Diary of George Riddell, 25 August 1914, p. 89.

²⁴ Diary of C. P. Scott, 4 August 1914, p. 96.

But, of course, Simon did not resign, with Dutton revealing a mixture of political principles and party loyalties playing their part in this decision.²⁵ The importance of party loyalty is quite striking here; clearly, Simon looked for every way possible to justify his party's decision, with Germany being presented as an aggressor, having defied Belgian neutrality, and he could comfortably stay and help to prevent the collapse of the Liberal government on this basis. However, this could be seen as an example of self-interest; outside the government he would have no influence at all, and his decision to stay could gain him some leverage in a realignment of the power-balance in the Cabinet if he could successfully argue a case which might someday command support.

At the start of the Coalition in May 1915, Asquith moved Simon to the Home Office which was a promotion, but seemed a difficult one given that he was not a keen advocate of coalition arrangements; and it was to prove unhappy for Simon in that he used his influence there to resist the mounting pressure, led by Lloyd George, for a more vigorous prosecution of the War and the introduction of conscription, ultimately seeing him resign from the government in January 1916.²⁶ Simon's initial strategy appeared to be one of staying in the government and attracting moderate support, perhaps to build his own potential leadership prospects, but he ended up isolated, alienating Liberal opinion and not winning over those on the left, or the old fashioned radicals, who, despite his radical views on some issues in the past, were not now his natural allies; Simon's views seemed based on more conservative-leaning constitutionalist and legalist arguments than a Liberal-Radical variety.²⁷ Furthermore, his Liberal credentials must have seemed rather tainted; as Home Secretary he had accepted some state coercion, particularly by the introduction of censorship, and, as a Cabinet member, infringements of Free Trade through the 1915 McKenna Duties. Two potential anti-compulsionists allies – Runciman and McKenna – chose

²⁵ Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 31-32.

²⁶ Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 33-40; John A. Simon, *Retrospect - The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Viscount Simon* (London, 1952) p. 106.

²⁷ Dutton, *Simon*, p. 40.

not to support Simon and this caused him irritation.²⁸ Certainly, in the case of McKenna, there was suspicion that Simon was looking for means to seize the leadership of the party; his resignation was itself interpreted as a sign of this intention, with his freedom outside government to criticise policy now allowing him the ability to galvanise support amongst disgruntled Liberals.²⁹ Suspicions of his character played a role here. He could be seen as ‘cool and remote’ which could be interpreted unfairly perhaps as cynical and calculating.³⁰

The isolation suffered as a consequence of Simon’s loss of position was not, however, insurmountable both in the remaining months of the Asquith government and after Lloyd George took over. Simon saw opportunities to identify a new role as part of a ‘patriotic’ opposition, setting himself clearly against the direction of policy pushed especially by the Lloyd George Liberal faction and Conservatives. This saw him forcefully arguing for the revival of purely Liberal principles which had been circumvented by the onset of war, revealed in his defence of Free Trade and his condemnation of Coalition policy in Ireland, particularly with reference to the Easter Rising of 1916.³¹ This new position was successful in many senses, with Simon genuinely seeming more like a leading Liberal.³² It even won him some respect from an unlikely quarter in Lloyd George, who latterly saw a wish to harness Simon’s potential in some way, despite their disagreements, through asking him to draft the Representation of the

²⁸ Diary of George Riddell, 16 January 1916, p. 89.

²⁹ Martin Farr, ‘Winter and Discontent: The December Crises of the Asquith Coalition, 1915-16’, *Britain and the World* 4 1 (2011), 125.

³⁰ Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Defections and the Liberal party, 1910-2010* (Manchester & New York, 2012), p. 151. There were contrary impressions; Charles Hobhouse referred to Simon as having ‘a most attractive personality; a ready wit, a persuasive advocate.’ He went on to say he was had ‘a very lovable character’ in Charles Hobhouse Diary, 23 March 1915 in Edward David (ed.), *Inside Asquith’s Cabinet – From the Diaries of Charles Hobhouse* (London, 1977), pp. 229-230.

³¹ Wilson, *The Downfall*, pp. 106-107; Report, John A. Simon speech, *Liberal Magazine* May 1916; Simon, *Retrospect* p. 110.

³² This reinforced the accuracy of the impression of McKenna that Simon was looking to attempt to take the leadership.

Peoples' Bill and to head up the Wages Awards Committee in 1918. However, this position was not entirely a contented one. There were limits to Lloyd George's overtures towards him; certainly Lloyd George was not intending to draw Simon into his close political circle, and his efforts to define a significant political position for himself, he believed, were thwarted by Asquith's poor leadership once outside of government which cast negativity over Simon's stature with him being a supposed Asquithian sympathiser.³³ It seems Simon was frustrated that following Asquith's fall from power he did not resign the leadership in order for Simon himself to put forward a claim to take on the role; certainly his activities from 1916 suggested he was positioning himself to do just this.³⁴

III

Simon's election defeat in 1918 partly resulted from not being clearly aligned to either of the Liberal factions.³⁵ He did not receive the Coupon in the election, but he still claimed to be both a 'supporter and colleague' of Lloyd George and of pre-war Liberal and Radical politics, hoping vainly to gain some profit both for assisting Lloyd George in 1918 but also resisting the so-called excesses of wartime policy.³⁶ However, instead of analysing the part he played in his defeat, he looked for scapegoats, finding one in Lloyd George and his coupon arrangement.³⁷ However, it could not have been only a sense of collective betrayal that motivated him, given that

³³ Edward David, 'The Liberal party divided, 1916-1918', *Historical Journal* 13 3 (1970), 517; Hart, 'The decline of the Liberal party', p. 148.

³⁴ Simon was certainly not as 'devoted' to Asquith as he chose to present in his memoirs; see Simon, *Retrospect*, p. 106; Dutton, *Simon*, p. 44.

³⁵ The election saw a massive defeat for Simon, polling under 37 per cent in a two-way contest.

³⁶ John A. Simon, 1918 Election Address, Simon Papers MSS. Simon 119/30; Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 52-53.

³⁷ Simon, *Retrospect* p. 121.

Asquith was not altogether his ideal leader either; the defeat was a loss in prestige for Simon personally and a setback to his political career.

The result of the defeat was that Simon, perhaps with little other option, fell more in line with Asquith and his supporters as he looked to rebuild his influence over the Liberal party. This saw a broad attack on a range of Coalition policies such as the cost of financing military activity in Russia, on Ireland, and the Safeguarding of Industries Act.³⁸ There was also an attack on alleged immoral and corrupt practices of the Coalition. Simon, for example, pointed to Lloyd George's unprecedented presidential style, which he used to illustrate what he saw as the government's 'contempt for parliamentary methods'.³⁹ He expressed doubts about the very idea of coalition since, in his view, under Lloyd George it had changed the House of Commons from 'being a real mirror of a variety of streams of opinion' to being 'nothing more than a unified and consistent expression of practically one point of view.' There was much hyperbole in his attack too, which was shaped by the adversarial nature of the opposition to him by Coalition Liberals in the Spen Valley by-election of 1919 where he found himself opposed by a Coalition Liberal candidate; this election must have been, for him, his chance of returning to the heart of parliamentary politics, but the intervention led to a Labour victory.⁴⁰ The attack against Simon was highly personal, with Simon being smeared as unpatriotic and as a traitor due to his 'war record' whilst in government.⁴¹

³⁸ John A. Simon, Extracts of printed speech, 'Sir John Simon on the Misdeeds of the Coalition', 6 September 1919, Simon Papers MSS. Simon 119/61; Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 55-57. There are similarities with the position of Runciman here; see below, pp. 224-267.

³⁹ Report, *Liberal Magazine*, June 1919.

⁴⁰ Report, *Liberal Magazine*, May 1920. The result was Labour almost 40 per cent, Simon with almost 34 per cent, and the Coalition Liberal almost 27 per cent.

⁴¹ Report, *The Yorkshire Post*, 1 December 1919 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 151/1; Report, *The Daily Chronicle*, 17 December 1919 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 152/57; Report, *Liberal Magazine*, January 1920; Report, *Liberal Monthly*, February 1920. It should perhaps be mentioned that the previous member for Spen Valley had been a Coalition Liberal, but the Liberal Association selected an Independent Liberal to replace him; Report, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1919 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon

Whatever the hardships Simon suffered, it was extremely helpful to him in that it added to his 'independent' Liberal credentials, gaining him Liberal sympathisers, including Charles Masterman, who was moved to write in the Asquithian magazine, *Liberal Monthly*, on the subject.⁴² Thus, both by his criticism of the Coalition and his electoral experiences, Simon was able to identify a role for himself again, and his fortunes were to improve still further with his capture of Spen Valley in the 1922 election, following which he was elected by his Asquithian colleagues as Sessional Chair with every prospect, as Dutton has suggested, that he, rather than Asquith, would be responsible for the day to day leadership of the party given his appearance to offer capacity to renew independent Liberalism.⁴³

Simon's appeal for a strong independent Liberalism was not just a reaction to the Coalition, and has been well covered by Dutton in its re-emphasis of traditional Liberal policies; it was a sort of neo-Gladstonian position, based on Free Trade, peace, retrenchment, *laissez faire*, and the conciliation of Ireland.⁴⁴ It seemed, in fact, that Simon was creating a narrative about a Liberal position between the Coalition and the Labour party.⁴⁵ An interesting part of this was that there was an element of anti-socialism, which was, in some ways, a development of his earlier suspicion of Labour, but in the form in which it emerged it can be seen primarily as a means to attract Tory-minded voters; thus, in the early 1920s, he was

151/38. Runciman also suffered from campaigns against him by Lloyd Georgian Liberals; see below, pp. 224-267.

⁴² Charles Masterman commentary, *Liberal Monthly*, February 1920: 'Never was an election campaign conducted with more deliberate personal attack or malignant falsehood - definitely organised from Downing Street. Sir John Simon's crime was that he had been a Liberal all his life and remained a Liberal to-day and that he had accepted the unanimous invitation from a Liberal Association to become their candidate for Parliament. Immediately, the Prime Minister's 'Liberal' supporters united against him in a ferocious onslaught of personal abuse [...].'

⁴³ Dutton, *Simon*, p. 60.

⁴⁴ Dutton, *Simon*, pp. 55-69; Simon, *Retrospect* p. 124; Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Times*, 10 October 1921.

⁴⁵ This was not dissimilar from other Asquithian Liberals; see below, pp. 224-267.

starting to lean towards the right at least in terms of the presentation of an electoral strategy.

Many of the points about Simon's political position in the early 1920s can be seen in an extract of a speech delivered in May 1920:

It is impossible to believe that a permanent alliance of Liberalism with another point of view which, whatever its merits, is the point of view which has been supported and maintained by every selfish interest in the State, can be a specific for preventing the growth of Socialism [...]. The policy of alliance is the policy most likely to promote, and in the minds of some people to justify, the more extreme Socialist doctrine. It is a course of conduct which, whatever else it promises, does not promise a very happy future for Liberals. For I will make this simple proposition: Be Coalition Liberals many or be they few, the future of Coalition Liberalism is Toryism.⁴⁶

In this speech, independent Liberalism is emphasised as a bulwark against socialism, which underlines an appeal to Liberals and Tory-minded voters on a rightward-leaning middle-class agenda. However, it is perhaps more significant in what it says about Coalition Liberals in dismissing their Liberal credentials. Simon it appears saw the two factions as being permanently divided.

In relation to the point about separation, Simon had a personal interest in keeping the factions separate, knowing that his leadership position could be threatened should they reunite, and he did much to try to dissuade and thwart the potential for Liberal unity in the period between 1922 and 1923 in speeches and correspondence.⁴⁷ As Dutton has suggested,

⁴⁶ Report, John A. Simon speech, *Liberal Magazine*, May 1920.

⁴⁷ In this respect, it is interesting to examine an exchange of letters between Simon and the Coalitionist Liberal, Edward Grigg, where Simon seemed to taunt Grigg as though he viewed him as part of an opposing force; see exchange of correspondence, Edward Grigg to John A. Simon, 14 May 1923, 15 May 1923, 17 May 1923, 28 May 1923, 31 May 1923, 6 June 1923, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1001; also see Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Times*, 5 March 1923, *The Times*, 14 May 1923.

as long as Liberalism was divided ‘Simon’s position as heir apparent to the diminished throne of Liberalism seemed strong’.⁴⁸ But, of course, this was not to be with the Liberal factions coming together in 1923, and Simon’s position was, once again, to be eclipsed. Had he been prepared to be more flexible towards the possibility of reunion in the run up to it, it is possible he might have been able to play a more influential role in the Liberal party’s policies in the years which were immediately to follow, but, as it was, he had displayed uncompromising anti-Lloyd George colours which left him isolated in 1923 and in the immediate years of the reunion itself.

It would seem credible that the circumstances of the hung Parliament in 1923 might have created an opportunity for Simon to recreate a position of strength; however, as Dutton has shown, he was unable to convince Asquith or Lloyd George in his view that support for Labour should be conditional on extracting concessions, such as electoral reform, mindful now of the potential weakness of the Liberal position.⁴⁹ He did, however, support Labour in the crucial vote, later indicating his view that it was the ‘right’ decision.⁵⁰ This tolerance of the Labour party in parliamentary terms continued after the vote too since, in the months following it, he continued to argue that the government should be kept in power, even trying to rescue it over the Campbell Case, unlike many of the Liberals who moved to distance themselves from Labour.⁵¹ His position appeared remarkably like he was trying to outflank Labour on the left, negating the sense of rightward drift revealed previously, with a left-leaning Liberal critique of the

⁴⁸ Dutton, *Simon* p. 62.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 64-67.

⁵⁰ Simon, *Retrospect* p. 130.

⁵¹ Dutton, *Simon* p. 68; Report, *Liberal Magazine*, February 1924.

The Campbell Case (1924) involved charges against a British Communist newspaper editor, J. R. Campbell, for alleged ‘incitement to mutiny’ caused by the publication of a provocative open letter to members of the military in the *Workers’ Weekly*. The decision of MacDonald’s government to suspend prosecution of the case, amid pressure from Labour backbenchers, eventually assisted in bringing down the government through a motion of no confidence tabled in the House of Commons.

government's record on social reform and foreign policy.⁵² This, of course, was the position starting to be formulated by Lloyd George, and it would appear that Simon also saw possibilities that some relationship with Labour was a means to revive Liberal fortunes. It also must have related to his own desire to subvert the position of Lloyd George with his own critique of the government designed to reinforce a view that a future could rest with Simon's leadership rather than Lloyd George's.

He was by way of being a friendly critic of the present Labour Government. It seemed to him that they had discharged some duties well. In many other ways they had failed very much. It was a most unfortunate thing that this Labour Government, which proclaimed its devotion to international peace and its belief in the reduction of armaments, should actually have made itself responsible for the building of five new warships, the necessity for which was not shown. [...] With regard to old age pensions, the Liberals of the country were glad the Labour party were doing something to extend their benefits [...]. A tremendously important thing was being handled by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and his government in the settlement of the European question, and they had done the right thing in bringing Germany into the consultations.⁵³

It is remarkable that prospects for Liberal cooperation with Labour rested on the appearance of being a 'critical friend' of the government's rather than looking to seek some kind of political compromise which demonstrated continuing disinterest in electoral arrangements with other parties, but also it seemed to contrast with Lloyd George's suspected desire to seek some kind of fusion with the Labour party which had raised concerns in Liberal circles. There was evidence that Simon wished to identify a role for the Liberal party, post-1924, which safeguarded its future unlike that presented in the supposed policy of Lloyd George. As in the period before reunion, Simon

⁵² Wilson suggests that Simon favoured much of Labour's programme, with the exceptions of the capital levy and nationalisation; see Wilson, *The Downfall*, p. 251.

⁵³ Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Times*, 12 August 1924.

was seeking to marginalise and discredit his opponent, casting doubt on his legitimacy to represent a Liberal position.

The flirtation with a left-leaning approach and continuing desire to remain separate from other parties has not received much coverage in studies of Simon in this period, however, and this probably relates to some evidence which describes a rather different picture at a Spen Valley constituency level; Simon appearing to be continuing his movement rightward. In the election of 1923, building on his perspective in the early 1920s, Simon emerged as a strong anti-socialist.⁵⁴ And this position seems to have been sustained through to the 1924 election, since he received no opposition from a Conservative candidate which would have been unlikely if perceptions of him had been that he was a left-leaning Liberal, no more so than at a time when many Conservatives wished to punish Liberals for flirtation with Labour. In addressing the divergence of position here, it would be easy to dismiss Simon's situation as some kind of cynical exercise in self-preservation through presenting two distinct faces – for audiences at Westminster and his constituency – although this would not be entirely fair especially as such claims might seem circumstantial.⁵⁵ In the Spen Valley, it was clear that Simon had to campaign rather defensively against Labour attacks on his record on social reform and workers' rights, which may have given an exaggerated impression of his proximity to the Conservatives.⁵⁶ And it may have been more the organisational weakness of the Conservative party locally that led to no candidate in 1924, rather than because Simon was seen as a suitable candidate to support. Indeed, whilst relations with

⁵⁴ Report, *The Cleckheaton Guardian*, 2 November 1923 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 153/26; Report, *The Yorkshire Observer*, 21 November 1923 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 153/44; Report, *The Bradford Telegraph*, 3 December 1923 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 153/76F; Report, *The Cleckheaton Advertiser*, 14 December 1923, Simon Papers MSS. Simon 153/98.

⁵⁵ It cannot be ruled out, however, since his political positioning in the period generally seems very calculated to improve his own standing, as his competition with Lloyd George to some extent shows.

⁵⁶ Simon defended his record, but in doing so, ended up reinforcing an anti-Labour and anti-socialist impression; perhaps the Labour attack was designed with this in mind.

local Labour were clearly not good, no direct evidence can be found of any fraternal sentiment towards Conservatives, or *vice versa*, at this stage.⁵⁷

IV

In the early years of the 1924-29 Parliament, Simon distanced himself from the Liberal party leadership, appalled at the manner in which Lloyd George gained influence through his Political Fund, although his criticisms had much to do with the impact this had on his own leadership credentials; he was also dissatisfied with the direction of policy.⁵⁸ Simon's distance from Lloyd George saw his profile as a prominent Liberal slip, a position which was reinforced further by his lack of involvement in the Radical Group, which had assumed the main focus of anti-Lloyd George resistance; Walter Runciman, as the leading figure in that grouping, was also a potential future leadership rival to Simon and distancing himself from Runciman was an important calculation if he was to ever revive his own leadership goals.⁵⁹ One of the effects of his new lower profile was that, rather unusually for a future Liberal recruit, little active part was played in the debate around the contentious land proposals; instead, he seemed to take a more relaxed and detached perspective which pointed to Simon's inclination to seek to build an alternative position between Lloyd George and Runciman. There were thinly veiled criticisms of the Radical Group's Gladstonian view of politics,

⁵⁷ This worked nationally as well as locally, with the Baldwin ally, J. C. C. Davidson, appearing to have no kind words to say about Simon; see John C. C. Davidson to Lord Stamfordham, 21 February 1923, in Robert Rhodes James (ed.) *Memoirs of a Conservative – J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers*, (London 1969), p. 141: Davidson pointed to the 'coldness and inhumanity' Simon 'earned on all sides'. The context of the comments is different from that discussed here but it does confirm an impression of how distant Simon was from influential Conservative politicians at this time.

⁵⁸ Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Cleckheaton Guardian* 17 December 1926 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 157/29; David Dutton, 'Lloyd George, John Simon and the politics of the Liberal party, 1918-1931' in Judith Loades (ed.), *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George*, (Bangor, 1991), p. 82.

⁵⁹ Dutton, *Simon* p. 71; Simon, *Retrospect* p. 135.

and of Liberals who had left the party over the issue, which is perhaps a significant point in that there was no evidence that the land issue was drawing Simon into Conservative party circles.⁶⁰

Sir John Simon said that the Liberal land proposals were the result of prolonged and extensive inquiry extending over two years, and were based on a persistent and deliberate consideration of facts [...]. That was no reason why people should swallow the proposals blindfold, but it was a reason for people giving them careful consideration and study. The proposals were not put forward as a test of orthodoxy; they were for discussion, and no man who might feel doubtful about some portion or other, had any reason, if he were a liberal-minded man, for leaving the party unless, of course, he was seeking for some reason to do so.⁶¹

Simon was, in fact, biding his time, awaiting an issue which could bring him to prominence once again, and it did not take long for that to happen; it only required some controversial issue to emerge which would enable him to develop a clear line of differentiation from his opponents that might attract to him, rather than them, good publicity and support. Such an issue seemed to emerge in the form of the General Strike.⁶² The Strike enabled Simon to offer a position in patriotic defence of the constitution and against the excesses of organised labour, setting out how strike action constituted ‘a revolutionary proceeding’.⁶³ It seemed like a renewed right-leaning perspective calculated to appeal to the middle-class and to and right-leaning Liberals.

⁶⁰ The criticism of the Gladstonian position of the Radical Group seems rather interesting given his own emphasis in this regard before Liberal Reunion; this is evidence of Simon’s desire for distance from Runciman.

⁶¹ Report, John A. Simon speech, *Liberal Magazine*, April 1926.

⁶² Report, *The Times*, 15 June 1926 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 110/1; Dutton, *Simon* p. 76.

⁶³ Simon, *Retrospect*, pp. 136-7. It is interesting that the position marked a development of his negative view of organised labour.

In all this, there was an significant consequence since, whilst his intervention did nothing to destabilise Lloyd George, it brought Simon's position in line with that of the Conservative party; this was something that did not go unnoticed with the Conservative MP, Albert Braithwaite, pointing to the supposed 'right, honest and straightforward line Sir John Simon had taken', and he even called on him to join the Conservative party.⁶⁴ It is not clear how much Simon had intended to position himself closer to the Conservatives but, given his ambitions, it seems likely that he now wished to rival Lloyd George's desire to work more closely with Labour with an alternative standpoint. Simon's position was, in fact, close to Stanley Baldwin's, in his desire to protect the rule of law, whilst at the same time promoting a moderate policy to encourage class harmony in industrial relations.⁶⁵ Thus, in the debate around the rights and limits to the powers of labour organisations, he painted a picture of the need for responsibility to the law, but at the same time, the need to promote the rights and freedoms associated with organisational bodies. Liberals, he seemed to show, could provide a tempering influence on those who would take a less tolerant view.

It was inevitable that there should be a large body of public opinion in this country which said that immense powers had been entrusted to Labour organisations, and that if these powers were not properly used but abused then the conditions under which the powers were exercised must be reviewed. When the matter came to be discussed in the House of Commons it would be, he thought, of most vital importance that there should be Liberals there who, not pledged in advance to defend and uphold every contention however extreme, were determined to see that organised rights of Labour which were legitimate and necessary were preserved in full.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Report, Albert Braithwaite speech, *The Cleckheaton Guardian*, 28 January 1927 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 157/28B.

⁶⁵ See above, pp. 16-18.

⁶⁶ *The Cleckheaton Advertiser*, 4 May 1928 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 158/28.

The position Simon adopted won him respect from Conservatives, and not least Baldwin himself who seemed to view him now as a similarly-minded person, not just on labour issues but also on broader issues of government, witnessed in the eventual appointment of Simon to the Chairmanship of the India Commission in 1928.⁶⁷ But whatever Simon had in mind for the character of cooperation with the Conservative party he was not seeking a compact, and he remained committed to an independent Liberal party. This became apparent in the circumstances of the 1929 election, when he reconciled himself with Lloyd George to support the Liberal electoral programme. One of his chief considerations was to ensure the survival of an independent party, claiming that he saw this programme as one which would 'see Liberalism returned to its rightful place in the nation'.⁶⁸ For Simon, in fact, the bold Liberal position in 1929 was similar to that taken by other Liberals in 1923, and it was risky electorally, with some national Conservatives resolving to force the Spen Valley Conservative Association to put up a candidate against him, despite his role on the India Commission which brought with it the promise of a truce, until intervention from Baldwin prevented this.⁶⁹ Baldwin's intervention was a significant one since Simon's involvement in the India Commission helped to give the Conservative government the moderate and liberal veneer which was important to Baldwin at this time; Baldwin had designs on Simon as part of his strategy to incorporate Liberals into his party.

There was some inconsistency in Simon's 1929 position; he had opposed Lloyd George and his politics, but now was seeking to support him. Part of this does relate to a pragmatic position in supporting a policy which would give the Liberal party a new role and secure its future. A second perspective is that it was important to his longer-term leadership aspirations; if Simon did not support the Lloyd George programme he would find himself further isolated from the party 'mainstream' given that much of the

⁶⁷ John C. C. Davidson to Lord Birkenhead, 25 October 1927, pp. 273-4.

⁶⁸ Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Cleckheaton Guardian*, 3 May 1929 cit. Simon MSS. Simon 159/43.

⁶⁹ Report, *The Cleckheaton Guardian*, 10 May 1929 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 159/50.

party was at least, on the surface, uniting around the programme. It is also significant more directly in the context of this study since it shows that the direction of his politics towards anti-socialism had been halted for the present, and despite the warming of relations with Conservatives, there was little to suppose that he was seeking to move in the direction of the Conservative party.

V

Mindful of his reconciliation with Lloyd George, Simon initially supported the line followed by his party in keeping Labour in office; and he returned to his 1924 Westminster position in viewing the Liberal party's role as a kind of constructive scrutiniser of government policy.⁷⁰ However, by November 1930, his patience had run out with the government, declaring it to have been a 'complete failure', with particular criticisms directed towards the way it had failed to deal with unemployment and control social expenditure, and also its intention to reverse trade union reforms brought in after the General Strike; the latter issue being particularly important given his long-term antipathy towards organised labour and strike action.⁷¹ He also had his personal grievances in the government's rejection of the work of the India Commission.⁷²

Simon's stance on the Labour government led him into open conflict with a Liberal party leadership now agreeing more formal terms with Labour. The situation was, in his view, 'intolerable', and he looked to distance himself not only from the leadership but also eventually an 'independent' Liberal party, revealing his view that Lloyd George's *rapprochement* with Labour had negated the necessity; he seemed thoroughly disillusioned by early in 1931, eventually resigning the Liberal

⁷⁰ Dutton, *Simon*, p. 102.

⁷¹ John A. Simon letter, *The Cleckheaton Guardian*, 7 November 1930 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 161/20; Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Cleckheaton Guardian*, 21 November 1930 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 60/84-89.

⁷² Simon, *Retrospect*, p. 150.

Whip in June.⁷³ This move to distance himself from his party is highly significant given that he had always been, despite previous rifts, committed to the party and his reaction to Lloyd George's position revealed a fundamental rethinking of his political loyalties. However, it is far from clear that Simon was so fundamentally opposed to Labour as his anti-socialist rhetoric suggested, given his previous flirtation with Labour and support for Lloyd George's left-leaning programme only a year prior to him expressing his concerns. Certainly, he was concerned about being perceived as being close to Labour, but it was electoral considerations perhaps which drew him down the extreme route of leaving his party. Mindful of electoral fallout from the Liberal party leadership's support for Labour and the divisions of Liberal opinion in Parliament, he could not have doubted that any election would see punishment from the electorate for him and his colleagues.⁷⁴ Simon's personal situation has to be considered too. In Spen Valley, a Conservative candidate fielded against him would have led to almost certain defeat in such circumstances, taking from him a huge number of anti-Labour votes; he needed to ensure that no candidate would emerge.⁷⁵

The separation from the Liberal party was significant in another way because it saw Simon working with the Conservative party in various respects in building opposition to the Labour government. Evidence suggests that he was very interested in organising local compacts, such as in places like Gateshead, where he tried to secure the withdrawal of the Liberal candidate in the 1931 by-election, and in coordinated Conservative and Liberal parliamentary activity, both with the aim of destabilising the Labour government.⁷⁶ To further these developments, Simon formed a relationship with Neville Chamberlain, who found Simon endearing not only in regards

⁷³ Report, John A. Simon speech, *The Cleckheaton Guardian*, 21 November 1930 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 60/84-89; Report John A. Simon speech, *Western Morning News and Mercury*, 2 February 1931 cit. Reading Papers MSS Eur F118101/32-5.

⁷⁴ Report, John A. Simon speech, *Western Morning News and Mercury*, 2 February 1931 cit. Reading Papers MSS Eur F118101/32-5.

⁷⁵ His majority in 1929 was only four percentage points over Labour in a two-way contest.

⁷⁶ John A. Simon to Cuthbert Headlam, 2 June 1931, Headlam Papers D/He 128/24. It seems that Simon put pressure on John P. Dickie not to stand in the By-Election in 1931.

to his anti-Labour position, but also because of movement of his views on the issue of tariffs, with Simon now seeing a measure of protection as the only means to see through the burgeoning economic crisis; he was not a true Protectionist, but, by this approach, could be seen as a useful ally for Chamberlain in bringing a new tariff policy into being.⁷⁷

The end of independent Liberal politics for Simon meant pragmatic working with the Conservative party and agreeing a compact to which likeminded Conservatives and Liberals could agree upon, certainly for the foreseeable future.⁷⁸ Simon, it seems, had become a late convert to the idea of a patriotic politics where Liberals and Conservatives cooperated to address the issues of the day on the basis of the national interest.⁷⁹ However, Simon did maintain the need for a clear measure of differentiation from Conservatives, rejecting, for example, the idea of the recreation of a Liberal-Unionist party, floated by Chamberlain, which had negative connotations in the assimilation of Liberal opinion within the Conservative party.⁸⁰ It seemed Simon favoured a looser arrangement, with a separate Liberal organisation to work with the Conservatives in the national interest, not dissimilar to the arrangements between Liberals and Conservatives during the Coalition years after the 1918 election.

Surprisingly perhaps, given his regular difficulties of convincing Liberals of his viewpoint, Simon was eventually able to construct some sort

⁷⁷ Dutton, *Simon*, p. 106; John A. Simon to Rufus Isaacs, 2 March 1931, Reading Papers MSS Eur F118/101/38-39; Simon, *Retrospect*, pp. 171-2. On the tariffs issue, evidence shows that Chamberlain pondered the establishment of a tariff board with Simon at its head such was his positive impression of Simon's views; see Neville Chamberlain to Edward Grigg, 23 April 1931, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1003.

⁷⁸ It is not clear that Simon viewed the arrangement as a permanent one; see John A. Simon speech, *The Cleckheaton Guardian*, 21 November 1930 cit. Simon Papers MSS. Simon 60/84-89; John A. Simon speech, *Western Morning News and Mercury*, 2 February 1931 cit. Reading Papers MSS Eur F118101/32-5.

⁷⁹ Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government – British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932*, (Cambridge, 1992), p. 156; John A. Simon letter, *The Times* 25 September 1931.

⁸⁰ Neville Chamberlain to Edward Grigg, 23 April 1931, Grigg Papers MSS (Film) Grigg 1003. Runciman also was not in favour of this idea; see below, pp. 224-267.

of narrative around his need to create a Liberal wing of a Liberal-Conservative partnership along national lines, and this came to fruition by August 1931, with him firmly in the Liberal leadership.⁸¹ But the situation was far less straightforward since his arguments became entangled with the idea of the creation of a national government. Simon was very much in favour of one now, but his priorities within it, on the evidence referred to, seemed more to maintain the compact with the Conservatives than seeking to renew ties with Liberals who remained within the ‘official’ party that he had deserted only months before. The creation of the National Government was something which initially masked this position, with the nuances of cross-party relationships being lost for the moment in the rallying of multi-party opinion in favour of protecting the national interest. Many Liberals were fiercely independent and it is certainly not the case that all Liberals within Simon’s new grouping saw working arrangements with Conservatives, with the exception perhaps of electoral ones, as the critical priority within the government.

Despite Simon’s prior intention of propagating a new cooperative Liberal force in the national interest, the period between 1931 and 1935, was more noted amongst contemporaries by a promotion of the interests of Simon himself at the expense of Liberal ones.⁸² To many onlookers it seemed like Simon’s self-interest had led to him away from being truly a leader of Liberal opinion to becoming an uncommitted Conservative, with his actions in government seeming to confirm this impression.⁸³

In some respects, these perspectives seemed valid ones. This was seen to be clear in his promotion of Conservative candidates over ‘Samuelite’ Liberal ones, for example.⁸⁴ And even Baldwin, having made use of Simon as a ‘Liberal’ in Cabinet, seemed to have held a less than

⁸¹ Goodlad, ‘Communications’, 135; Williamson, *National Crisis* p. 213.

⁸² Goodlad, ‘Communications’, p. 136; Diary of Robert Bernays, 9 November 1934 in Nick Smart (ed.) *The Diaries and Letters of Robert Bernays, 1932-1939: An Insider’s Account of the House of Commons* (London, 1996) pp. 131-2, 158.

⁸³ Diary of Robert Bernays, 25 April 1934, 9 November 1934, pp. 131-2, 158.

⁸⁴ Reports, *The Times*, 15 July 1932, 23 October 1933, 21 July 1934, 15 October 1934.

favourable private impression, observing in relation to Simon's compromise with Free Trade 'that a Free Trader who turns Protectionist in middle life is like a teetotaller who takes to brandy after a life of abstinence'.⁸⁵ However, the situation was not quite as straightforward with observations of Simon's conduct being related much to an inability to articulate an alternative Liberal explanation for his own and his party's position, both for the reason that he was a Cabinet minister with government responsibilities which must have used up much of his time, and because of the existence of the Samuelite Liberal faction which meant he could not speak with clear authority as a Liberal leader. The difficulties faced in these respects fuelled negative perspectives and explanations, pointing to a betrayal of Liberal politics and self-interest to an exaggerated degree.

Despite all the criticism Simon faced, there was a sense that he actually viewed the Liberal National grouping as the 'mainstream' of Liberalism itself, a position which he felt had some major legitimacy, especially after the abandonment of the National Government by the Samuelites, leaving his Liberal faction alone as the body of opinion to defend national interests within the government. Simon's perspectives in this regard were set out in a 1935 campaigning pamphlet:

When the General Election comes, an effort will be made to detach from the support of the National Government Liberal electors who voted for it on the last occasion. I believe, on the contrary, that men and women who, like myself, were brought up in the Liberal tradition and are proud of the Liberal faith, should continue to support the National Government [...].

[...] It is not the least true to say, or to imply, that in the present House of Commons the Liberals are in opposition. A minority of those elected to the House of Commons as Liberals [...]

⁸⁵ Tom Jones to Flexner, 20 December 1931, Jones Papers S1/22 in Philip Williamson and Edward Baldwin (ed.), *Baldwin Papers – A Conservative Statesman, 1908-1947*, (Cambridge, 2004), p. 279.

have, for reasons which seem good to themselves, crossed the floor and called themselves the Liberal Opposition.

But the greater part of the Liberals in the present House have done no such thing: they were elected as supporters of the National Government and they have remained steady and effective supporters throughout. [...]

[...] The situation, therefore, which Liberal voters will have to face is the following. No same person believes that the return of a purely Liberal administration is possible. Anyone who thinks that he can secure more 'Liberal' legislation by voting against the National Government is deceiving himself [...].⁸⁶

Extracts from the pamphlet show a certain amount of insecurity, with Simon's justifications seeming rather defensive, revealing recognition he and his party faced considerable difficulty in presenting a view that the Liberal Nationals were legitimately Liberal representatives. Such defensiveness was even more evident in private correspondence. This was shown, for example, in a letter of complaint to Geoffrey Dawson, as editor of *The Times*. Seemingly the newspaper had started to refer to the Samuelite position as the 'Liberal position' for which he was strongly rebuked by Simon.⁸⁷ The departure of the Samuelites had not had the desired effect of reinforcing the Liberal line of Simon; rather the opposite was true: the Liberal party, it was being argued, was now in opposition to the government.

The reaction of Simon to this continuing difficulty for him and his party grouping led him into a position which did much to undermine his Liberal credentials, and to associate him with the process of realignment by bolstering the Conservative party. Simon approached Baldwin about ever closer union with the Conservatives, even referring to the position as that of the 'Liberal-Unionists', an analogy he had wished to distance himself from

⁸⁶ John A. Simon, Campaign pamphlet: *'A Word to Liberals'* (1935), Runciman Papers MSS Runciman WR 278.

⁸⁷ John A. Simon to Geoffrey Dawson, 22 November 1933, Simon Papers MSS. Simon 77/140.

in 1931 but which now appeared acceptable. In 1931, it was not clear for how long he envisaged working with the Conservatives; by 1933, however, it was clear that he viewed the arrangements as needing to be permanent.⁸⁸ And it was clear that he wished to draw a sharp distinction between his party faction and the Samuelites; such a distinction had perhaps been drawn already but the manner of his reference to Liberal opposition as amongst the ‘subversive forces’ ranged against Liberal Nationals and Conservatives points to his increased alienation from the Samuelites, which is significant in the context of this study. Moreover, the new desired compact made no particular reference to concessions along Liberal lines; all that appeared to be important was to secure an electoral agreement without any clear conditions. It was true that the bargaining position of Liberal Nationals for particular Liberal interests was rather small in a Conservative-dominated government, but not to have offered any challenge to the Conservatives seems difficult in the context of retaining a sense of distinction. Thus, by his action, Simon was reducing the sense that he was involved in the affairs of Liberal politics; in fact, his letter can be seen as an argument for assimilation of his grouping within the sphere of the Conservative party.

VI

This chapter, in surveying the greater part of the political career of Simon, has shown him to be a single-minded, ambitious and determined individual in his quest for influence in shaping political affairs. He strongly believed in Liberal politics and strove to seek influence to direct it, but, in doing so, he often found himself in conflict with others and in a position of disadvantage in articulating a position for the Liberal politics which commanded respect and support.

Simon had for the greater part of his time in Parliament been an uncompromising advocate of independent Liberal politics, with distaste for

⁸⁸ Stanley Baldwin, 28 September 1932, Baldwin Papers MSS Baldwin 46/59-61; David Dutton, ‘1932: A Neglected Date in the History of the Decline of the British Liberal Party’, *Twentieth Century British History* 14 1 (2003), 49.

electoral compromises with other parties, but his perspective suddenly changed at the beginning of the 1930s. He was motivated by a combination of factors such as despair at Labour policy and Liberal association with it, the financial crisis, which appealed to patriotic sentiments, and a sense that he might become a leader of Liberals, in fact fulfilling a long-term aspiration in uniting Liberal forces in pursuit of his favoured agenda.

The Liberal National party, which Simon led and directed, in many senses was an achievement of efforts to create a *bloc* of Liberals and Conservatives, attaining what some Liberal recruits before him had originally argued for, but had failed ultimately to secure, having ended up joining the Conservative party instead. However, Simon was unable successfully to articulate a Liberal narrative due to perceptions of his self-interest and the means by which he, as leader, sought to tie his party's fortunes to the Conservative party. This problem was particularly acute when the Samuelite Liberals left the government and subsequently went into Opposition. A combination of events outside his control and his own actions contributed to a sense that Simon was indistinguishable from the Conservatives by 1935; he was not a Conservative by his own criteria, but he had effectively been incorporated into the Conservative party and Simon, therefore, was an important figure in the narrative of the realignment of politics in the period, particularly in the consolidation of Liberal opinion within a Conservative *bloc*.

Chapter Seven: Walter Runciman

A second important case study of a Liberal recruit to the Liberal National party is Walter Runciman, the son of the shipping magnate and Cabinet minister.¹ Runciman is significant for this study, having spent over thirty years in active political involvement in Liberal politics by the 1930s. What was important was his prominent role in the resistance to Lloyd George and the means in which he tried to circumvent Lloyd George's influence, and his periodic desire to work with figures outside the Liberal party, eventually leading him into good relations with Ramsay MacDonald and, through him, to become a key member of the National Government. Furthermore, whilst in some ways he offered the Liberal party a cosmopolitan perspective on affairs, he also had the capacity to be partisan and rather backward-looking, seeking to carve out a position for the Liberal party and himself which, in some senses, harked back to an earlier era. Significantly, despite resistance to Lloyd George and some emphasis on class harmony and anti-socialism, in the politics of realignment, Runciman showed very little interest in working with the Conservative party, and this prevented a movement into the Conservative-dominated political circle until well into the 1930s.

Runciman was very significant for the early years of the National Government, being an important architect of the system of Protectionism which was introduced. For him, Protection remained a short-term tactic, and he saw his role as a constraint on Conservative inclination towards more tariff barriers. Runciman's preference had been to retain the Liberal 'label', even after 1931, and significantly, in the context of Liberal recruitment issues, he only joined the Liberal National party when disagreements with Samuelites over government policy forced him into opposition to the Samuelite faction.

¹ Martin Pugh, 'Runciman, Walter', www.oxforddnb.com (accessed 7 April 2009)

A starting point for assessment of the relevant historiographical perspectives undoubtedly lies with a doctoral thesis by Jonathan Wallace, particularly his emphasis on Runciman's political outlook.² Wallace emphasises pragmatic business-like managerial qualities which shaped attitudes to politics, often over and above party political perspectives.³ According to Wallace, evidence for this can be observed across Runciman's political career: for instance, in the support for the social welfare programme of the Edwardian Liberal government; in aspects of wartime policy, particularly trade; in the various policy positions in the inter-war period, including his eventual support for closer cooperation with other parties; in attitudes towards tackling unemployment; and also, ultimately, in the financial crisis of the early 1930s, which drew him into the Liberal National party.⁴ Furthermore, this pragmatism, in Wallace's opinion, left Runciman as a rather poor party-politician, with some tendency to seek to work with politicians outside Liberal politics as well as within it, and thus, presenting a 'moderating' influence on politics.⁵ He even suggests that it was this pragmatism and inclusiveness which drew him into closer association with the National Government in the 1930s.⁶

To a certain degree, Wallace's view of Runciman is one for which potential evidence can be identified elsewhere since the pragmatic managerial approach can be traced in other studies which comment on aspects of Runciman's politics.⁷ It also fits within the framework of studies

² Jonathan Wallace, 'The political career of Walter Runciman. 1st Viscount Runciman of Doxford (1870-1949)', Unpublished University of Newcastle Ph.D. (1995)

³ Ibid, pp. 4-6.

⁴ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 7-12.

⁵ Ibid, p. 4.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 351-358.

⁷ Michael Bentley. 'Liberal Politics and the Grey Conspiracy of 1921', *Historical Journal* 20 2 (1977), 461-478; Nick Smart, *The National Government, 1931-40* (London & Basingstoke, 1999), p. 44; Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government – British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 504-508;

which demonstrate a certain cosmopolitan and imperialist emphasis amongst Liberals recruited to Parliament in the later nineteenth century and early twentieth, who were semi-detached from Liberal politics, bringing Runciman into the same camp as Winston Churchill and Alfred Mond, for example, even though they are usually seen as being distinct.⁸ However, there is doubt as to the degree to which Runciman can really be painted as a true non-partisan since right from the outset of his career he appeared to attach himself to factional interests: for instance, early connections to the Rosebery imperialist faction, opposition to wartime compulsion, and post-war partisanship in the 'guerrilla warfare' waged against Lloyd George, and also in his general attitudes towards the Conservative party.⁹ Much of this partisanship was 'Liberal' in character, but not exclusively, with evidence of his more cosmopolitan characteristics also playing a role. Wallace himself has highlighted some of the factional interests, and these, together with others identified for this study, reveal that they were significant elements of his politics, and played their role in colouring attitudes and relationships to individuals and political parties.

A connected issue is the degree to which Runciman's political outlook drew him into the Conservative *bloc* by the mid-1930s. Wallace demonstrates that Runciman's route into the National Government was more to do with his friendship with MacDonald than any feeling that he must work with the Conservative party, something which is also borne out from sources identified in this study. Nonetheless, there was some coming together of perspectives between that of Runciman and the Conservatives

David Wrench, 'Very peculiar circumstances: Walter Runciman and the National Government, 1931-3', *Twentieth Century British History* 11 1 (2000), 78.

⁸ Geoffrey Searle, 'The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business', *English Historical Review*, 98 388 (1983) 29-60; see above, pp. 13-15, 41-46.

⁹ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 34, 39, 103, 168-169, 184-185, 229, 235, 281-304, 310-336; Michael Hart, 'The decline of the Liberal party in Parliament and the constituencies', Unpublished University of Oxford D.Phil. (1982), pp. 156-157; Bentley, 'The Grey Conspiracy', 461-478; Wilson, *The Downfall*, p. 373; Wrench 'Very peculiar circumstances', 64-65; Wrench 'Cashing In: The Parties and the National Government, August 1931 to September 1932', 152-153.

from the 1920s, as a result of the common emphasis on retrenchment, anti-socialism and the promotion of class harmony, and later on fiscal questions; in fact, so much so that Wallace has revealed that Runciman became attractive to Baldwin as a Liberal to target in his agenda of widening the Conservative party's appeal.¹⁰ But, as Wallace's thesis and research for this study will show, this meeting of perspectives was somewhat by chance of events and his considerations of electoral positioning; in fact, Runciman argued consistently that he held Liberal principles and felt that he had maintained his independence from Conservative politicians, after 1931, even seeming to act as the balance against Conservatives in the Cabinet. This perception of continuity with Liberal inclinations may have just been perception, certainly for the time after he had been absorbed into a Conservative *bloc*, after 1932, but this is not to say that it was not heart-felt and unworthy of further consideration. Furthermore, research shows to some degree that Runciman was actually quite backward-looking, despite his cosmopolitan outlook, almost, it seems, wishing to see a recreation of the pre-war Liberal party which left him with old-fashioned prejudices against the Conservative party, conditioning his sentiments towards Conservatives and preventing *rapprochement*.

Another consideration is Runciman's relationship to the Liberal party itself. Wallace discusses in some detail issues which caused him to become disaffected from his party over time, particularly involving disagreement with Lloyd George, but he tends to view Runciman's decision to move out of party politics in 1930 and 1931 more in the context of immediate issues.¹¹ This does seem plausible given the immediacy of disillusion over the performance of the Liberals in Parliament between 1929 and 1931, but his position can be viewed in a wider context of some factional difficulties over a longer period, dating back to the intra-party conflicts of the 1920s, the conflict of wartime, and even before that. These

¹⁰ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 268-272, 357-358.

¹¹ Wallace. 'Walter Runciman', p. 327; Runciman had initially decided to retire from Parliament at the next election, but discussions about creating a national government led to a change of heart.

longer-term issues have been shown in this study to be generally important in later disaffection, and it seems unreasonable to suppose this would not have been so in the case of Runciman.

And finally, there is, of course, electoral politics to consider. A survey of Runciman's career reveals a series of adjustment of his political views, depending on the electoral situation, leading him into various political positions, which related to the need to gain electoral success, as an ambitious politician, and to support the Liberal party's general election prospects.¹² This saw his perspective swing in different directions at various points, depending on what advantage could be gained. Electoral politics can be seen, furthermore, to have actually conditioned his feelings towards the Liberal party, with periods of inactivity when he felt prospects were poor. In 1930, it can be seen, electoral factors were significant in his decision not to fight another election, and it was only when he was presented with the possibility of electoral compromise, amid the circumstances of the 'national appeal', that he persuaded himself that it was appropriate to carry on. Wallace has shown before this point that Runciman had been starting to direct himself more to his business interests, and his Deputy Chairmanship of the Royal Mail.¹³ Runciman's personal electoral record since 1918 had not been good, and years of electoral failure for himself and his party caused bouts of disillusion.¹⁴ The record of failure, in fact, makes it more clearly definable that electoral issues were important in his political choices than perhaps in the cases of some of the other politicians who have been considered in this study.

II

¹² This may not seem untypical of all politicians, but such changes are not always as stark as in the cases of some of Runciman's as this chapter will demonstrate.

¹³ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 324.

¹⁴ After his election success in December 1910 he did not win another election until 1924, despite a number of attempts to get elected to Parliament.

Runciman entered political life in some respects as a political outsider. Despite his nonconformist background and traditional family connections with the Liberal party, he can be viewed as part of the new breed of Liberals being recruited at this time who had a broader political outlook, having been associated with the Fabians, and consequently, 'National Efficiency' during his time at Trinity College, Cambridge.¹⁵ Politically, in the early years, this can be seen to have led him into sympathy with the Liberal-Imperialists, particularly in their emphasis on social reform, although Wallace has also shown Runciman to have been in contact with more left-leaning Liberal radicals and Lib-Labs.¹⁶ He also had strong connections to the shipping industry in the Northeast, having become a full partner in his father's firm, Moor Line, in 1895, and can perhaps be seen in this context as one of the new business Liberals recruited into the Liberal party in the Edwardian period.¹⁷ This was perhaps relevant in terms of the managerial and pragmatic emphasis which has been detected in his approach to politics.

Wallace's thesis has drawn attention to some early excursions into the political field at Gravesend (1898) and Oldham (1899 and 1900); these campaigns reflected something of the cosmopolitan politics of Runciman at the time with an emphasis on social reform and sometimes only a loose regard for traditional nonconformist grievances of the Liberal party.¹⁸ This political characteristic remained fairly constant over the next few years, being central to his Dewsbury election campaigns.¹⁹ At Dewsbury, the substantial support for Conservatives and Labour, consistently causing three-way fights at election time, left him needing to appeal across political

¹⁵ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 19; Stephen Koss, 'Wesleyanism and Empire', *Historical Journal* 18 1 (1975), 105-118 - Koss's argument that Wesleyans were generally more 'imperialist' minded than their other nonconformist counterparts may have some relevance here.

¹⁶ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 20.

¹⁷ Searle, 'The Liberal Party and Business', 29-6.

¹⁸ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 17-31.

¹⁹ Runciman was M. P. for Dewsbury between 1902 and 1918.

boundaries, and his appeal to imperialist thinking, as well as a clear commitment to social reform, undoubtedly helped him remain elected.²⁰

Despite the potential for conflict with the Liberal leadership, due to his imperialist background, following his election, in 1902, it seems that Runciman sought to work with the leadership to gain political favour, and opportunities soon emerged in his opposition to the Conservative Education Bill of 1902 and in his efforts in promoting Free Trade.²¹ All his efforts saw his rapid promotion, after the accession of the Liberal government, from under-secretary at the Local Government Board (1905), to Financial Secretary to the Treasury (1907) and then to President of the Board of Education (1908). And his continuing support for Asquith's administration, from 1908, saw him retain Cabinet office in the 1910 reshuffle, where he was moved to the Board of Agriculture, and then on to the Board of Trade in 1914. The continuing presence in the Cabinet was perhaps a mark of how important he was perceived to be by Asquith, as a personal friend, and the esteem in which he was held as a capable office holder.²² A measure of all of this can be seen from the decision to keep Runciman in office, despite a number of difficulties which another leader might have resolved by replacing him, particularly as it saw him enter into difficult relations with

²⁰ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 32-50; Dewsbury Election Address, 1906, Runciman Papers WR322; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Dewsbury Reporter*, 6 January 1906, in Runciman Papers WR 322. The Dewsbury election of 1902 was a three-cornered fight, and Runciman did well to poll 48 per cent of the vote, with the Conservative party second, with over 38 per cent and a Socialist candidate with almost 14 per cent. In 1906, Runciman increased his majority, polling almost 55 per cent of the votes cast with the Conservative party and the Independent Labour candidate, splitting almost equally. The 1908 ministerial by-election saw a big fall in Runciman's majority in favour of the Conservative party, but still finishing with almost 46 per cent to the Conservative's 33 per cent; the fifth of the vote gained by the Labour candidate revealed, for Runciman, the necessity of retaining a focus on social reform.

²¹ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 39, 53-60. The association with Liberal-Imperialism even saw Campbell-Bannerman as one of Runciman's detractors.

²² The existence of frank personal correspondence between Runciman and Asquith indicates a personal and political bond.

another, perhaps more important and influential, key Liberal within the government, Lloyd George. These difficulties, it can be seen, affected Runciman's contentment, leaving him disaffected from colleagues, and thus, uncertain about his future within the government.

One such area of tension was over social reform. The difficulties initially lay in what Wallace has termed Runciman's concern 'to combine together the interests of the working and middle, against the landed classes'.²³ It meant that, although he passionately supported social reform there were limitations to the support in terms of the detail, particularly where policy was perceived to be pandering to the interests of one specific group rather than for the good of all. Inclinations of this emerged even before Asquith became Prime Minister, but were revealed in exchanges with Asquith, concerning issues such as the extension of the Workmen's Compensation Act to seamen and the Miners' Eight Hour bill.²⁴ Here, the attitude to both was also coloured by his concern to protect interests of the shipping industry, but he felt there were wider social impacts, particularly in the latter case, in imposing burdens on consumers. More importantly, furthermore, there were some concerns about the old age pensions (1908), implementation of 'Living Wage' legislation, and the People's Budget (1909).²⁵ On the issue of the Budget, for instance, he privately stated that there was the possibility of creating a bad precedent for the future in terms of spiralling social expenditure costs.

My instincts may be at fault or I may have miscalculated the income on super tax items, but I think I am not wrong in saying that, apart

²³ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 87; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Dewsbury Reporter*, 6 January 1906 in Runciman Papers WR 322.

²⁴ Walter Runciman to A. G. Gardiner, 1 June 1906, Runciman Papers WR 14; Walter Runciman to H. H. Asquith, 27 February 1908, Runciman Papers WR 21.

²⁵ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 66, 87-96; Report, *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 April 1908, in Runciman Papers WR 323; Report, *The Times*, 18 April 1908, in Runciman Papers WR 323; Walter Runciman to H.H. Asquith, 18th August 1913, Runciman Papers WR 82.

from all other considerations, we are running the risk on this morning's figures of leaving a huge nest egg for our successors.²⁶

However, his reservations did not mean that he was in any mood to compromise on the settled budget proposals, since he was discontented over arrangements for the Constitutional Conference (1910).²⁷ Runciman appeared set against any form of compromise with the Conservative-dominated House of Lords, since, for him, this would undermine the principles with which the government had been associated in backing social reform, and he feared electoral consequences for the Liberal party, and, on a self-interested level, for him personally given the importance of it in Dewsbury.²⁸

The Conference which is now proceeding on the Lords question has from the first been unreservedly opposed by me. I have been strongly against any form of Conference at this stage for many reasons, but mainly because I believed that our representatives could not in *bona fide* enter the Conference unless they were prepared either to give something away or to agree to some other solution of the Lords question which would be acceptable to the truly Liberal politicians as our present proposals. Now the latter cannot be given to us by Arthur Balfour and the Tories, and the alternative of giving something away is political suicide. The merest hint of giving anything away seems to be unentertainable, but a Conference is the shortest cut to that betrayal [...].²⁹

²⁶ Walter Runciman to H. H. Asquith, 7 April 1909, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith A52-5; Martin Farr, *Reginald McKenna – Financier Amongst Statesmen, 1863-1916* (New York & Abingdon, 2008), p. 112.

²⁷ Walter Runciman to H. H. Asquith, 7 June 1910, Runciman Papers WR 39; Runciman undated letter 1911, Runciman Papers WR 39.

²⁸ Runciman faced particular challenges to his reputation as a reformer from Ben Turner, an ILP activist; see Walter Runciman to Ben Turner, 9 November 1907, Runciman Papers WR 18; Report, *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 April 1908 in Runciman Papers WR 323; Report, *The Times*, 18 April 1908 in Runciman Papers WR 323.

²⁹ Runciman note, undated 1911, Runciman Papers WR 39.

His objections to the Conference were so strong that he even hinted at the possibility that he would seek to leave the government, revealing a sense of great disaffection.³⁰

I prophesy that this Conference leads us into a mess, possibly into disgrace. I have fought it almost single-handed in the Cabinet but I am confident my view is held and attitude shared by Liberals everywhere. My fight is not yet over, and I may be driven to leave the Government and fight against the compromise from outside.³¹

Significantly, in the context of this study, his position revealed something of the antipathy he felt towards the Conservative party; he was certainly not predisposed to the possibility of a coalition, unlike Lloyd George and Churchill, around this time. It is even possible that knowledge of coalition talks may have affirmed a stubborn resistance.

Another difficulty was related to Runciman's time at the Board of Education. During his time, he fostered a position in which he wished to see the state playing a more direct role in control of education; part of the reason being to encourage the development of a more egalitarian and meritocratic education system, devoid of class inequalities.³²

The words secondary [education] and middle-class came to be thought of as meaning the same or nearly the same thing. The working classes were now entering into their inheritance, and those schools were rapidly becoming free from that absurd social

³⁰ Wallace has a different emphasis in that he sees objections to the Conference related to a view that Runciman wished to see the Lords reformed in return for the retention of the veto; see Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 103-104.

³¹ Runciman note, undated 1911, Runciman Papers WR 39.

³² M. J. Wilkinson, 'Education controversies in British politics', Unpublished University of Newcastle Ph.D. (1977), p. 625; Reports, *The Times*, 2 October 1908, 10 October 1908, 5 February 1909, 11 February 1909, 26 March 1909, 11 April 1911. His position again appears to have been close to McKenna; see Farr, *Reginald McKenna*, p. 103; see above, pp. 74-79.

handicap. A class education was contrary to the essence of democracy.³³

However, this message was lost due to controversies which over-shadowed his preferred agenda, arising from his view that denominational schools should bear more costs. The idea of this left him exposed to criticism in nonconformist circles, and he was forced into a defensive position, which seemed to give the impression that he was less in favour of denominational education than he actually was in reality.³⁴ Furthermore, there were clashes with Lloyd George over funding of university grants, and for elementary education.³⁵ The problems led to some level of resentment towards Asquith, for the first time, who, from Runciman's point of view, seemed disinclined to help him and to recognise how damaging all this was for his political reputation, again hinting at resignation and, not for the last time, threatened to return back to his business interests.³⁶

I am not going to drift along, and if my stock has in the P.M.'s view sunk or [is] being talked down so low that I ought to be passed over it is time that I got back to commerce or anything else where I would not be wasting the best years of my life.³⁷

This feeling did not appear to have been removed by his eventual appointment as Secretary of State for Agriculture. Runciman feared that it

³³ Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Times*, 10 October 1908.

³⁴ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 81; Walter Runciman to H. H. Asquith, 25 September 1908, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 20/28-31; T. E. Soddy to Walter Runciman, 21 October 1908, Runciman Papers WR 24; Report by the Agent General for New South Wales to the *Australian Press Association* in Runciman Papers WR 28; Press cutting dated 26 March 1909 in Runciman Papers WR 28.

³⁵ Walter Runciman to David Lloyd George, 19 February 1910, Runciman Papers WR 35.

³⁶ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 107; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Times*, 11 February 1909; Report by the Agent General for New South Wales to the Australian Press Association, 28 March 1909, Runciman Papers WR 28.

³⁷ Walter Runciman to Reginald McKenna, 1 October 1911, McKenna Papers McKN3/22 No 3, fos 78-79 in N.D. Darglish, 'The transfer of power at the Board of education, 1911', *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 32 2 (2000), p. 2.

might block a move to higher office still, sometime in the future, and he was suspicious that he was being pushed to one side.³⁸ He was clearly an ambitious man and this put pressure on his relationship with Asquith.³⁹ In no sense did he feel that Asquith, in retaining him within the Cabinet, recognised him as a key ally.⁴⁰ He was also growing to feel that Asquith's leadership qualities were poor; Runciman believed that Asquith needed to stand up to his detractors.

Most seriously of all, there were clashes with Lloyd George, and also Churchill, over military commitments and expenditure from at least 1911, which again brought Runciman to near resignation; Churchill and Lloyd George becoming seen more as enemies than political colleagues.⁴¹ Runciman had been an advocate of limiting military spending, earlier in the period of Liberal government, having praised the record of the administration in this respect.⁴² For him, too much expenditure was a drain on finances and risked dragging Britain into a damaging continental war which was a threat to the longevity of the Free Trade system. This view became more apparent from 1911 with commitments made towards France, which he felt were unnecessarily antagonistic to Germany, and risked dragging Britain into an expensive land conflict.⁴³ But Runciman was not a pacifist; as an imperialist, he recognised that it was the Royal Navy which provided for Britain's trade interests and defence against war. After 1909, he conceded that naval expenditure needed to be increased, and this should be secured at the expense of any plans for supporting land armies.

³⁸ See above, p. 74.

³⁹ Daghish, 'The transfer of power', p. 3.

⁴⁰ This disaffection from Asquith in relation to his sense of perceived value was also a feature of the positions of Mond, Churchill, Guest and McKenna; see above, pp. 72-79, 101-107, 133-138, 180-182.

⁴¹ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 62, 153-183; Walter Runciman to William Harcourt, 4 September 1911, Runciman Papers WR 39. Again, parallels exist with McKenna; see Farr, *Reginald McKenna*, pp. 155-171; see above, p. 75.

⁴² Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Times*, 24 October 1907.

⁴³ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 153-165.

The sea is our natural element and the sooner they [Churchill, Lloyd George etc.] realise that we are not going to land troops the better will be the chances of European peace.⁴⁴

But even in his desire to resource the Navy there were limits, with a concern as to the extent of the 'naval race' with Germany by 1913-14, leading him to oppose the naval estimates of that year, acting with others to oppose the developing policy, including McKenna and Simon.⁴⁵ This defiance of the 'war party' in the Cabinet had brought the frustrations to a head, particularly now he was at the Board of Trade and could provide more effective resistance to the policy, getting in the way of Churchill and Lloyd George.

Runciman's rather disaffected state, judging from the number of threatened resignations and his response to rearmament, suggested that he might be one of the most likely first casualties in the politics of the war, but this proved not to be the case. Part of the reason for this renewed vigour was no doubt a patriotic desire to be seen to be backing British patriotic and imperialist interests, particularly in protecting British trade, which would be threatened by any German military victory.⁴⁶ Like other factionalists, particularly McKenna, furthermore, Runciman wished to see the propagation of a naval, rather than land conflict which would be expensive and lead to state control

⁴⁴ Walter Runciman to William Harcourt, 4 September 1911, Runciman Papers WR 39.

⁴⁵ Diary of George Riddell, 14 December 1913, in in John M. McEwen (ed.), *The Riddell Diaries, 1908-1923* (London, 1986), pp. 72-73; Letter to H. H. Asquith signed by Lord Beauchamp, C. Hobhouse, R. McKenna, W. Runciman & J.A. Simon (in Simon's handwriting), 29 January 1914, in Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill – Companion Volume 2 Part 3* (London, 1969), pp. 1857-1858; Wallace. 'Walter Runciman', pp. 167-169.

⁴⁶ Address by W. Runciman to the electors of Dewsbury at the onset of War, dated 1914, Runciman Papers WR 134.

of industry and military conscription.⁴⁷ By remaining in government, he hoped to be able to steer the War in a favourable direction.⁴⁸

Arguably, however, Runciman did much at the Board of Trade which could be seen to have compromised the principles on which he rested his position.⁴⁹ Under his management, various measures were adopted to help regulate prices, imports and exports, and to aid intervention within industries such as merchant shipping, railways, coal and munitions; and most significantly, he began to favour allied preference, working behind the scenes to secure a system which would secure benefit to the allies following victory, culminating in the 1916 Paris Resolutions.⁵⁰ But it seems that Runciman believed undertaking these measures was necessary in a pragmatic sense to prevent the further diminution of a limited war, particularly from those who would wish to introduce a more comprehensive system of Protectionism and industrial and military compulsion.⁵¹ The case of allied preference is a good example of how he felt this was the case, with the threat of allied preference being interpreted as something which would even help to bring Germany to the negotiation table, raising the possibility that Runciman was really hankering after a speedy end to war with a negotiated peace that would ensure the restoration of the pre-war political and economic order.

[With] its widespread degree of suffering and the prospects of ruin which face many of their commercial and industrial classes in the

⁴⁷ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 153-178; Richard A. Smith, 'Britain and the strategy of the economic weapon against Germany, 1914-1919', Unpublished University of Newcastle Ph.D. (2000), p. 18; see above, pp. 76-77.

⁴⁸ Runciman's motivation was not dissimilar to Simon's; see above, p. 203.

⁴⁹ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 184-218.

⁵⁰ Walter Runciman to Lord Inchcape 29 September 1915, Runciman Papers WR 117; Walter Runciman to Sir Walter Runciman 28 December 1915, Runciman Papers WR 359; Walter Runciman to Clementel 12 February 1916 Runciman Papers WR 149; Undated note July 1916 Runciman Papers WR 110.

⁵¹ There was another close parallel to the position adopted by McKenna here; see Farr, *Reginald McKenna*, pp. 313-328.

future [...] there must be a section of German opinion, which will thank God for the prospect of an early peace [...].⁵²

If this was not possible, discrimination against German trade would at least offer the possibility of allied recovery and the maintenance of a strong British Empire; Free Trade was only good if benefit could be drawn for Britain, it seems, and this explains much of the nature of Runciman's commitment to it in the period in terms of Britain's national self-interest.⁵³

Runciman's position at the Board of Trade, despite views on fiscal questions, was a great obstacle to the more rigorous prosecution of the War, favoured by Lloyd George, Churchill and the Conservatives, and this led to conflict again, particularly after the creation of the May 1915 coalition. Runciman was greatly disturbed by its formation; interestingly, not being particularly keen on working in what he disparagingly referred to as 'mixed company' with Conservatives, and he soon found himself becoming rather disillusioned again with the government, particularly with Asquith, who, by the end of 1915, he felt was capitulating to pressure from the compulsionists.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he remained where he was, in patriotic service to the country and perhaps also continuing personal loyalty to Asquith, despite all his doubts about him.⁵⁵ Yet, neither this patriotism nor loyalty was to help him to retain his position within the Cabinet ultimately.

⁵² Walter Runciman, 19 December 1917, HC Debates 5s. col. 2087-8, in Smith, 'Britain and the strategy', p. 2.

⁵³ It is also interesting to view this in the context of later developments in his attitudes to Free Trade in the 1930s. Mond had similar motivation in supporting protection; see above, p. 136.

⁵⁴ Walter Runciman to Herbert Samuel, 26 May 1915, Samuel Papers A/48; Note dated 27 May 1915, Runciman Papers WR 136; Walter Runciman to Gullard, undated October 1915, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 15/71-2; Walter Runciman to Sir W. Runciman, 28 December 1915, Runciman Papers WR 359. Also see Farr, *Reginald McKenna*, p. 300; there are parallels with the positions of Simon and McKenna; see above, pp. 76-79, 203.

⁵⁵ Walter Runciman to Thorpe, 1 July 1916, Runciman Papers WR 148. It seems that he was also regarded favourably by Asquith still; see H. H. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 10 February 1915 (two letters), in Michael & Eleanor Brock (eds.), *H. H. Asquith – Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 424-425.

He opposed plans for wholesale conscription into 1916 and this undoubtedly contributed to his fall when the government was reconstituted under Lloyd George in December.⁵⁶ Runciman felt humiliated by the experience, not even, according to some evidence, being informed that he was to be replaced, which reveals something of the extent of the poor personal relationship that existed between Runciman and Lloyd George and his allies.⁵⁷ He must have felt very much on the outside of Liberal politics by the middle of the War.

III

In 1918, Runciman suffered the indignity of failing to be re-elected to Parliament; a humiliation even more severe than it might have been with him finishing at the foot of the poll, being beaten by both the couponed Conservative candidate and Labour, giving him another excuse to dislike Lloyd George.⁵⁸ Runciman found himself in a not dissimilar position to Simon in being out of Parliament, and started to direct his attention to the same sort of oppositional tactics to oppose the government, emphasising his 'independent' Liberalism, and appearing, at least on the surface, to have become an apostle of Gladstone and of *laissez faire* economics.⁵⁹ This led him to advance an exposition of virtually every aspect of Coalition policy. For example, on the domestic front, he attacked public spending, demanding

⁵⁶ Walter Runciman to H. H. Asquith, 1 December 1916, Runciman Papers WR 149; Wallace. 'Walter Runciman', pp. 218-247. Wallace has also shown something of Lloyd George's attempts to completely undermine him in 1915 by intervention in the Coal Strike of 1915 and by pressurising ministers into agreeing to the establishment of a Wheat Commission.

⁵⁷ Report, Walter Runciman speech, *Liberal Magazine*, January 1917; Wallace. 'Walter Runciman', p. 242. Also see the position of McKenna see above, pp. 76-79.

⁵⁸ Runciman lost around two thousand votes since December 1910, managing to secure a mere 28 per cent of the vote, to Labour's 30 and the Coalition Conservative's 42.

⁵⁹ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 11, 248-254; see above, p. 207.

retrenchment, rigid economies and limits to taxation.⁶⁰ He called for an end to wartime controls, and the ‘tyranny of officialdom’, which were, in his opinion, a disincentive for economic growth, becoming an advocate of middle-class and populist ‘anti-waste’ causes; and he campaigned for the reintroduction of Free Trade.⁶¹ Apart from domestic policy, he was very critical of policy towards Ireland and other military interventions abroad over the period, reinforcing the pacifistic element of the Gladstonian emphasis.⁶²

The post-war political emphasis of Runciman gave an impression of a shift in perspective towards a ‘purist’ Liberal one in the ways outlined, particularly as it saw some condemnation of the very idea of Liberals being involved in the Coalition at all.⁶³ But this would not appear to be quite so clear given that instances of appeal for state assistance can still be found within this period.⁶⁴ Wallace exposed this Gladstonian appearance to be ‘skin deep’, and it would seem to relate more to the electoral realities of the

⁶⁰ Walter Runciman to Herbert Gladstone, 19 October 1919, Runciman Papers WR 177; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *Liberal Magazine*, December 1919; Report, *Daily Record* 20 March 1920, cit Runciman Papers WR 326; Report, *Daily Record*, 22 March 1920, cit Runciman Papers WR 326; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Scotsman* 23 March 1920, in Runciman Papers WR 326; Election Address to the Electors of Edinburgh North, dated 27 March 1920, Runciman Papers WR 186; Walter Runciman article, *The Liberal Monthly* July 1920; Report, *The Times* 21 June 1920. Significantly, at one stage, he even hinted at the possibility of the need to link old-age pensions to National Insurance contributions, removing a central plank of Edwardian Liberal policy, see Report, *Alnwick Gazette*, 28 October 1922 in Runciman Papers WR 327.

⁶¹ Report, *Liberal Magazine*, April 1919; Election Address in the Edinburgh North Election, dated 27 March 1920, Runciman Papers WR 186; Walter Runciman article, *The Liberal Monthly*, July 1920; Report, *The Times*, 21 June 1920.

⁶² Selbourne to Walter Runciman, 11 April 1918, Runciman Papers WR 169; Election Address in the Edinburgh North Election, dated 27 March 1920, in Runciman Papers WR 186; Report, *Liberal Magazine* May 1920; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Times*, 17 October 1922, in Runciman Papers WR 327.

⁶³ Walter Runciman speech, *The Times*, 24 November 1919; Walter Runciman speech, *Newcastle Chronicle* 17 July 1922, in Runciman Papers WR 327.

⁶⁴ Report, *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 29 March 1920, in Runciman Papers WR 326.

period for Liberals anxious to carve out an identity separate from Lloyd George, and indeed, to gain re-election.⁶⁵

There were a number of consequences for Runciman's separation of himself from Lloyd George and his attitude towards politics which are important in the context of Runciman's presence within the Liberal party. The first was his relationship with the Lloyd George political machine, which thwarted his re-election prospects, alienating him still further from other Lloyd George Liberal politicians.⁶⁶ Lloyd George and his allies seemed to wish to tarnish Runciman's reputation with slurs against both his personal and political character, including an attempt to implicate him in a plot to oust Campbell-Bannerman before his replacement with Asquith in 1908.⁶⁷ Furthermore, they also exploited, perhaps with some justification, his connection with the Paris Resolutions, which, in being reported so frequently in his Parliamentary campaigns, suggests that it must have held some impact upon Runciman's election prospects.⁶⁸

Secondly, there was the general impact of Runciman's position on his general political outlook. Runciman's emphasis became much conditioned by non-class attitudes to politics, which brought to the fore a pre-war element, but one reconstituted, as a response to the Coalition's

⁶⁵ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 293. Runciman contested elections in Edinburgh North (1920), Berwick upon Tweed (1922) and Brighton (1923), before his securing of Swansea West in the General Election of 1924. With regards to the Berwick election, it is useful to bear in mind that his only opponent was a Lloyd George supporter, so it became even more important electorally to emphasise distinctions between the Coalition position and a Liberal one.

⁶⁶ He did not, however, have poor relations with all Lloyd George Liberals; see Hamar Greenwood to Walter Runciman 28 January 1919, Runciman Papers WR 178. His experience was similar to Simon's in being a victim of the Lloyd George machine; see above, p. 206.

⁶⁷ Wallace draws attention to his alleged eviction of a wife of a deceased tenant on his Doxford estate; see Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 262. Also see Report, *Cardiff Western Mail*, 31 March 1920, in Runciman Papers WR 326.

⁶⁸ Reports, *The Scotsman*, 29 March 1920 & 31 March 1920 in Runciman Papers WR 326; Report, *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, June 1921; Report, *The Times*, 9 November 1922, Runciman Papers WR 327.

position in forging ‘social discontent’ and no doubt fears of the consequence of political realignment along class lines.⁶⁹ In many senses, this brought Runciman closer to a Conservative position, anticipating perhaps the need for a broader moderate force, which could bring non-socialist opinion, including Labour, together. But much of the emphasis here was not necessarily as far-sighted as might be suggested on the surface since, by the early 1920s, Runciman favoured Lord Grey’s leadership of the independent Liberal party, as Asquith’s natural successor, which reveals a more retrospective character to this development, as he looked back to Edwardian glories. Furthermore, even where it seemed more forward-thinking through his involvement in discussions with Gilbert Murray and Robert Cecil about a union of Asquithian Liberals, with Conservative and Labour moderates, it was still retrospective in some senses, since his support depended on Grey’s involvement and appeared more as a means to challenge Lloyd George, through building an alternative coalition, with Lloyd George’s Liberal detractors taking centre-stage.⁷⁰

The failure of Runciman’s post-war attempts to challenge Lloyd George and to secure an Asquithian revival, one perhaps that would gain him election, does seem to have contributed to a retreat from frontline politics between 1921 and 1923, with little existing to show any real contribution to political activity.⁷¹ But he was not truly disillusioned; rather, he was biding his time for an issue to emerge to enable him to return to the frontline and be electorally successful. The issue which brought him back was the 1923 election, which galvanised him into action, even putting on

⁶⁹ Walter Runciman to Herbert 19 October 1919, Runciman Papers WR 177; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Scotsman*, 23 March 1920, Report, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 25 March 1920, in Runciman Papers WR 326.

⁷⁰ Bentley, ‘Liberal Politics and the Grey Conspiracy’, pp. 461-478; Keith Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey - A Biography of Lord Grey of Falladon* (London, 1971), pp. 321-322, 356; Wallace, ‘Walter Runciman’, pp. 256-264; Robert Cecil to Walter Runciman, 24 January 1920, Runciman Papers WR185; Gilbert Murray to Walter Runciman, 31 January 1920, Runciman Papers WR 185; R. Cecil to W. Runciman, 4 July 1921, Runciman Papers WR 190.

⁷¹ Wallace, ‘Walter Runciman’, pp. 264-268.

hold his differences with Lloyd George in the united appeal of Liberalism in defence of Free Trade. An extraordinary measure of this can be seen from Lloyd George's offer of support to Runciman in the Brighton contest, even appearing on the same platform. This unlikely occurrence may have been mutually beneficial since it might secure for Runciman an election without whisperings from detractors and, for Lloyd George, a potential ally for schemes of intervention which he was beginning to consider. The campaign in Brighton showed that Runciman had become interested in state assistance for the unemployed through public work schemes and he also recommended an extension of unemployment insurance.⁷² Participation in the election also revealed that Runciman could reconcile himself to Liberal reunion, putting aside, for the moment, any inclination to build new political combinations outside the Liberal party.

The months between the unsuccessful attempt to seek re-election in 1923 and the election of 1924 were again quiet ones politically for Runciman, with little evidence of much commentary on politics.⁷³ He did not, it seems, involve himself in the controversy surrounding the Liberals and attitudes towards the Labour government, and there was little in the way of any commentary about government policy, with the exception of some consideration of the implications of the Russian Treaty, but his comments were measured ones in comparison to the extreme anti-socialist responses presented by some other Liberals.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, Runciman retained political interests and was selected as the candidate for Swansea West where he was to lean in the direction of anti-socialist politics, certainly as a short-

⁷² Liberal candidates' Election Address, *Sussex Daily News*, 24 November 1923, in Runciman Papers WR 328; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *Sussex Daily News*, 26 November 1923, in Runciman Papers WR 328; Report, *The Times*, 5 December 1923.

⁷³ Runciman came third in Brighton behind the two Conservative candidates elected for this two-member borough. Interestingly, Runciman had initially been selected for Shipley but deserted the constituency for a better prospect elsewhere. This reflects on his ambitiousness and reinforces the impression of the blow in not being elected; see Report, *The Times*, 22 November 1923.

⁷⁴ Report, *The Times*, 2 September 1924.

term election tactic, as he faced a difficult contest against not only Labour and but, indeed, the Conservative party, which had substantial support in the constituency too.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, this anti-socialist ‘strategy’ was not really evidence of a change in perspective, since he continued to emphasise the non-class approach to politics and social reform; the conditions of the election even saw him, despite tendencies towards more old-fashioned nonconformist preoccupations with self-help, trying to outbid Labour in terms of the capacity of Liberals to represent the interests of the working-classes.⁷⁶

Runciman’s renewed emphasis on social reform might have suggested that he could be reconciled with the developing Lloyd Georgian domestic policy after 1924, but this was not to be the case due to rivalry. Like Simon, Runciman considered himself heir apparent to Asquith, and he tried to take the Chairmanship of the party, as an alternative candidate to Lloyd George, following the election.⁷⁷ Thus, in the post-election period, he continued to present himself as a Liberal ‘purist’, with thinly veiled criticisms of Liberals who had been elected with the support of Conservatives which are interesting in the context of his position after 1931.

Some of our colleagues in Parliament were returned by arrangement with the Conservatives in the constituencies [...] and had pledged themselves to give general support to the Conservative Government. I don’t criticise them for that, and as honest men we must not ask them to betray in the House of Commons the pledges they gave outside, but the Liberal Party cannot be revived by compromise or by becoming a bargaining counter in the game of politics. The

⁷⁵ Election Address for the Swansea West Election dated 29 October 1924, in Runciman Papers WR 199. The result of the contest in 1924 saw him finally return to Parliament, but with a slim majority of only 845 over Labour and 1,709 over the Conservatives. The percentage polls were 36, 33 and 30 respectively.

⁷⁶ Report, Walter Runciman speech, *South Wales Daily News*, [precise date unknown] 1924 in Runciman Papers WR 329.

⁷⁷ Wallace, ‘Walter Runciman’, p. 273.

Conservative and Socialists alike are foes, and the Liberals can compromise with neither.⁷⁸

This might have been a useful tactic in trying to bring together that remnant of Asquithian Liberalism which had survived the debacle of the 1924 election, but it was hardly a tactic which would endear him to a substantial section of the party elected without Conservative opposition, and therefore, no doubt played into the hands of Lloyd George's election bid.

Evidence points to Runciman's desire to wrestle control of the organs of power from Lloyd George, and reconstruct the party without his influence; this position no doubt influenced by his own prejudices against Lloyd George and the recent experience of the Asquithian rout of 1924, which was blamed on him. Thus, the failure of his election bid led him into an alternative strategy, opting for separation, creating his Radical Group - 'a party within a party' - with energies channelled to thwarting Lloyd George's influence.⁷⁹ The chief manifestations of this can be seen in factional opposition to Lloyd George's position with regards to issues such as the General Strike, and land policy.⁸⁰ The land issue is one which has been seen as significant in alienation of Liberals from the party, although separation meant this was less of an issue for Runciman; but it is interesting to note how he used it to berate former Lloyd George supporters who opposed it, with particular criticism of Alfred Mond's decision to break with the party at this time.⁸¹

Relations with Lloyd George were soured further after Asquith's departure from office at the end of 1926. Runciman was concerned about the consequences of Asquith's departure, believing that it would justify a

⁷⁸ Report, *The Times*, 11 December 1924.

⁷⁹ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 282-284; Wilson, *The Downfall*, pp. 315-346; Hart 'The decline of the Liberal party', p. 254.

⁸⁰ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 285; Walter Runciman to H. H. Asquith, 31 August 1925, Asquith Papers MSS Asquith 34/221; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Times* 27 January 1926; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *Liberal Magazine*, February 1926.

⁸¹ Report, Walter Runciman speech, *The Times*, 27 January 1926; Report, Walter Runciman speech, *Liberal Magazine*, February 1926.

take-over of the party by Lloyd George. He thus became a founder member of the Liberal Council, which completed a total separation of Runciman from Lloyd George, with Lord Grey being considered *de facto* leader in his role as President of the Liberal Council.⁸² This was, of course, another development with retrospective characteristics, with Runciman even trying to give it some philosophical justification with the publication of his pamphlet: *Liberalism As I See It* (1927), which combined the taste for all things Gladstonian with the desire to promote class harmony and judicious social reform.⁸³ Moreover, there was an electoral dimension to this resistance now, with the thwarting of the election of a Liberal candidate, backed by Lloyd George, at Tavistock (1928), being a good example.⁸⁴ It also saw Runciman decide to desert Swansea in favour of St Ives, where the Lloyd Georgian influences were much less.⁸⁵

In the context of this study, the Liberal Council's work brought Runciman close to a Conservative position, but there was little difference in character to his involvement other than the greater formality to the factionalism now. Runciman continued to recognise the political advantage that could be gained by appealing to middle-class voters and the need to avoid their shift to the Conservatives, and, indeed, in many cases, given the 1924 debacle, to win back Liberal voters. He was very confident that this could be achieved, certainly in Cornwall, where he made public his view that the results of the next election should be as good as they were in the 1906 landslide.⁸⁶ Thus, for him, the Liberal Council's role was also to identify a means to overcome the electoral weaknesses of the Liberal party, significantly, needing to compete against the Conservative party as the chief

⁸² Report, *Western Morning News*, 18 May 1929, in Runciman Papers WR 331.

⁸³ Walter Runciman, *Liberalism As I See It*, in Runciman Papers WR 212.

⁸⁴ Report, *South Wales Daily Post*, 16 February 1928, in Runciman Papers WR 218; Report, *The Times*, 8 December 1928.

⁸⁵ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 291; 'C.M.' to Walter Runciman, 27 January 1926, Runciman Papers WR 204; Report, *South Wales Daily Post* 10 February 1928 in Runciman Papers WR 330.

⁸⁶ Report, *The Times*, 8 December 1928.

adversary. He continued to be unfavourably disposed to the Conservative party in any case with partisan distinctions remaining strong.⁸⁷

[...] I can only say that I have been a Liberal all my life, and I shall remain a Liberal to the end. I am convinced that what the country requires to-day is a Liberal Government, acting on a sound Liberal policy, with sober finance, Free Trade and a constructive foreign policy in the foreground. I see no prospect of these essentials being obtained through the agency of the Tory Party.⁸⁸

IV

Despite the support for Lloyd George's loan-financed unemployment proposals in 1929, Runciman's position was not a clear reconciliation. The campaign had seen a certain amount of distance from central organisation, still preferring to work outside 'official' organisation and he continued to refuse to acknowledge the leadership of Lloyd George.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the cooperation which existed soon evaporated, following the 1929 election, with Runciman's initial retreat from frontline politics, and then, towards the end of the year, a renewed interest in resistance to Lloyd George's policies.⁹⁰ This resistance was, however, rather different in character to that of the mid-1920s since he again began to look for ways of cooperating with individuals outside the Liberal party, as he had done in 1921. Unusually for a future recruit, it was with MacDonald with whom Runciman appeared to

⁸⁷ Walter Runciman to Sir Ernest Benn, 13 December 1928, 18 December 1928, Runciman Papers WR 220-221; Report, *The Times*, 25 April 1929 (this report revealed great criticism of the record of Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer).

⁸⁸ Walter Runciman to Sir Ernest Benn, 18 December 1928, Runciman Papers WR 220-221.

⁸⁹ Report, *Western Morning News* 18 May 1929, in Runciman Papers WR 331.

⁹⁰ Runciman gained a narrow victory over the Conservative party in St Ives in 1929, with 43 to 40 per cent of the vote respectively in a three-way contest. The retreat may have related to an element of disappointment at Liberal election results.

want to work, partly hoping to bring him closer in understanding to the position of the Liberal Council over issues such as the Coal Bill and the 1930 budget, where he became frustrated by the position adopted by Lloyd George, and wished to present an alternative Liberal perspective, no doubt to rival Lloyd George's own overtures to Labour.⁹¹ In some ways, Runciman's behaviour saw him working almost as an independent member of the Commons, without a party, but, in other ways, this resistance to Lloyd George seemed to be a continuation of the partisan 1920s resistance.⁹²

Whatever the character of Runciman's position in 1929 and 1930, it was clear that it was leading him into deeper alienation from the Liberal party, so much so that he intimated that he wished to withdraw from party affairs, in private saying that he could 'no longer be comfortable in the Liberal party'.⁹³ Wallace has suggested that he was courted as a potential recruit by both Labour and Conservative politicians, but Runciman continued to be unimpressed by alternative party-groups, so there seemed no sense that he could actually be recruited into another party, even at this late stage of his association with the Liberal party.⁹⁴ Significantly, there was considerable criticism of the Conservative party, which, in leaning towards Protectionism, created a barrier to any possible *rapprochement*.⁹⁵ Importantly, he did seem to respect Stanley Baldwin and younger, more liberal-leaning Conservatives, which suggests that he might have sought to cooperate with them, as well as MacDonald, had it not been for the policy differences. Possibly, a body of opinion involving Runciman and the Liberal Council with MacDonald and moderate Conservatives might have been a possible alternative political combination for Runciman to align himself

⁹¹ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 309-331; Wilson, *The Downfall*, p. 340; Williamson, *National Crisis*, p. 34; Walter Runciman to Sir Robert Hutchinson, 6 March 1930, Runciman Papers WR 220-221; Walter Runciman letter, *The Times*, 18 December 1930.

⁹² Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 310-314.

⁹³ Walter Runciman to Henry Fitzherbert Wright, 25 November 1929, Runciman Papers WR 220-221.

⁹⁴ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 310-314.

⁹⁵ Walter Runciman to Henry Fitzherbert Wright, 25 November 1929, Runciman Papers WR 220-221.

with, but in the period between the 1929 election and the onset of the financial crisis, it does not seem he viewed this as desirable, probably because of his continued sense of a wish to remain true to Liberal politics as much as the policy distinctions mentioned.⁹⁶ Thus, with no comfortable home in party politics, it seems that Runciman made a decision to retire from politics altogether, taking on new duties as Deputy Chairman of the Royal Mail, a post which MacDonald had secured for him.⁹⁷

It is likely that Runciman would have continued with his plan to retire from politics if it had not been for the possibility of the establishment of a national government in 1931; but events changed the situation. The National Government brought opportunities to exercise business and managerial skills in a more technocratic form of government than a party government, and it seems that Runciman felt his skills – both business and previous Cabinet ones - suited the political climate.⁹⁸

Runciman's ambitions were, however, frustrated by the leadership of the Liberal party, in the immediate crisis of September 1931, because he was excluded from office by Samuel, who selected Lord Crewe, rather than Runciman, to serve as one of the Liberal ministers.⁹⁹ Runciman did not take this latter point well, and this marked a further deterioration of relations with the Liberal party, but it did not deter him from pursuing his ambition, with a presentation of an ever more independent position and a certain amount of leaning on MacDonald, which eventually secured for him

⁹⁶ Wallace suggests that Runciman was not in favour of the idea of a Liberal-Unionist style split; see Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 310-14. Also see above, pp. 215-216. Simon also rejected the idea, at this stage at least.

⁹⁷ G. Oliver Luff to Walter Runciman, 20 February 1931, Runciman Papers WR 245. Luff wrote of his disappointment that Runciman was planning to stand down as indicated in the national press. The position Runciman was offered underlines the cordiality of the relationship with MacDonald, both politically and personally.

⁹⁸ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 326.

⁹⁹ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', pp. 325-336; Herbert Samuel to Walter Runciman, 29 August 1931, Runciman Papers WR 215. Samuel appears to have mistakenly believed Runciman would not have wished to take office; a view conditioned, perhaps, by Runciman's previous desire to retire.

Cabinet office on MacDonald's recommendation rather than Samuel's, with a return to the Board of Trade. Significantly, Runciman, in his attempt to secure office, did not appear to try to form any close association with the Simonites or the Conservative party which might have helped him, and it reveals something of the character of Runciman's position and evidence that he was not intending to seek *rapprochement* with the Conservatives as a priority.

As historians have shown, Runciman's entry into the government was intended as a 'balance' to the Conservative interests.¹⁰⁰ He was no longer strictly a 'party' Liberal, but his Liberal credentials seemed strong and his independence from the Samuelites would perhaps give him more leverage in appealing to Conservatives along moderate policy lines. For himself, furthermore, he could exercise freedom from party constraint and pursue politics in the national interest, making use of his business talents, and perhaps coalescing in bringing all moderate opinion together as had been his intention in the period immediately before the National Government was established. However, the strength of Runciman's hand in these regards was to be tested and weakened in the years to come with an appearance of close proximity to the Conservatives.¹⁰¹

As a minister, Runciman played a key role in guiding the government towards Protectionism as a response to the challenge of economic difficulty and economic nationalism.¹⁰² He saw tariffs as a pragmatic 'emergency' measure, and at no time did he believe that he had changed his 'political faith'; rather, in a similar way to which he had justified the application of Protection during the First World War, he

¹⁰⁰ Wallace, 'Walter Runciman', p. 338; Wrench, 'Very peculiar circumstances', pp. 81-82.

¹⁰¹ Runciman was to suffer a similar sense of a loss of credibility as a Liberal that Simon did, despite his intentions of remaining true to the Liberal faith; see above, pp. 219-222.

¹⁰² Williamson, *National Crisis*, pp. 504, 506; Wrench, 'Very peculiar circumstances', p. 71; Walter Runciman to A. P. Laurie, 14 September 1931, Runciman Papers WR 245; Walter Runciman to Ramsay MacDonald, 21 December 1931, Runciman Papers WR 245; Walter Runciman to Sir Walter Runciman 5 July 1934, Runciman Papers WR 360.

believed there was consistency with Liberal politics.¹⁰³ In many senses, this was a position of strength, given the dominant Protectionist view in the Cabinet, and the mild nature of some of these measures compared to those which might have been introduced by a wholly Conservative government.¹⁰⁴ However, as comforting as it this might have seemed from Runciman's perspective, he was increasingly appearing close to the Conservatives in his arguments, not least because Neville Chamberlain and Stanley Baldwin supported them, even if they came at the issue from a different angle of Protectionist interest.¹⁰⁵

The proximity problem became more apparent after Runciman's complete division from the Samuelites from 1932; firstly, very significantly by his resignation of membership of the Liberal Council, which ultimately did not support his view on the use of tariffs, and, of course, by not following the Samuelites into the opposition benches in 1933.¹⁰⁶ Runciman, furthermore, eventually decided to associate himself with the Simonites, substituting the Liberal Council faction for this new grouping, which from the point of view of appearance of proximity alone was an error of judgement since it meant that he was to share in the fate of the faction in

¹⁰³ W. Runciman to Wilfred Auty 30 September 1931, Runciman Papers WR 245; Wrench, 'Very peculiar circumstances', pp. 152-153; Script of Runciman Speech, B.B.C. Radio broadcast, 23 November 1933, Runciman Papers WR 265.

¹⁰⁴ Walter Runciman, undated note 1932, Runciman Papers WR 215; Extract from a B.B.C. broadcast by Runciman on November 23 1933, Runciman Papers WR 265; Williamson, *National Crisis*, p. 506; Wrench, 'Very peculiar circumstances', 75. The mildness upset Conservatives like Leo Amery who became very antagonistic to Runciman because moderation; see Leo Amery to Beaverbrook, 10 August 1932, Diary of Leo Amery, 16 August 1932, 4 May 1933, 25 May 1933, 25 July 1933, 23 July 1934, 7 October 1934, in John Barnes & David Nicholson (eds.), *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume II: 1929-1945*, (London, Melbourne, Auckland & Johannesburg, 1988), pp. 250, 252-253, 293, 295, 301, 384, 387.

¹⁰⁵ Diary of Robert Bernays, 6 April 1933, in Nick Smart (ed.), *The Diaries and Letters of Robert Bernays, 1932-1939: An Insider's Account of the House of Commons* (Lewiston, Queenston & Lampeter, 1996), p. 67.

¹⁰⁶ Walter Runciman to V. Phillipps, 4 March 1932, Runciman Papers, Runciman Papers WR 215.

seeming more akin to being an uncommitted supporter of the Conservative party. In the 1935 election, Runciman recommended that voters support a Conservative, rather than the Liberal, Isaac Foot, in a neighbouring Bodmin division, despite some suggestion that Samuelites agreed not to oppose Runciman in St. Ives.¹⁰⁷ Such action further highlighted the difficulties in presenting himself as a Liberal, with an appearance of disloyalty and betrayal.

Yet despite Runciman's recruitment into the Simonite camp there is little to suppose he shared Simon's thinking, beyond the need for a compact for the 1935 election. His speeches in this period all point to the short-term nature of arrangements with Conservatives amid the crisis, so there is little to suppose he was much interested in the Liberal-Unionist style arrangement Simon had latterly come to support. Some sense of this, for example, was gained from the text of a speech for a radio broadcast, not long after the Samuelites crossed the floor.

I have thrown my whole weight in to the service of the National Government, and of the country as a whole. You put us into office to see you through the crisis. We will not leave the ship while the storm lasts, and we ask all of you, whether Liberal, Labour or Conservative, to join in the general effort to secure an early return to the prosperity for which we are striving.¹⁰⁸

The maintenance of this short-term perspective does much to help support Runciman's credentials as a Liberal. This is all in contrast to Simon who, as has been seen, appeared to have totally dissociated himself from the Samuelites, by 1935, in favour of working with Conservatives. Runciman's relationship had not been good with Samuel, after 1931, and he probably liked his detachment from that faction, but there is no sense, on the evidence found, that he deliberately wished to separate himself from Samuel and his

¹⁰⁷ Report, *Western Morning News*, 12 November 1935, Runciman Papers WR 278; Isaac Foot note, dated 23 November 1935, Runciman Papers WR 278.

¹⁰⁸ Script of Runciman Speech, BBC Radio broadcast, November 23 1933, Runciman Papers WR 265.

colleagues beyond the degree of separation achieved in 1931 when Runciman entered into government with the support of MacDonald.

V

Walter Runciman had a long career as a Liberal politician, with involvement in a broad range of issues affecting Liberal politics, particularly in the context of political realignment. Despite commitment to the Liberal party, Runciman was not a good team player, since he ended up involved in various intra-party disputes and became central to party disunion in the 1920s; in fact, there was much truth in his characterisation by Campbell-Bannerman, even if many years earlier, as a ‘pugnacious sectional partisan’.¹⁰⁹ Overall, he never seemed wholly satisfied with the direction of Liberal politics with various issues emerging early in his career that caused him disaffection, with the quarrels of the Edwardian period and wartime providing a wider context for relationships thereafter, particularly in leaving him alienated from Lloyd George, whose influence over Liberal politics he sought to thwart. Some of Runciman’s perspectives were shaped by political calculations, informed by his own difficulties in gaining election, and his ambitiousness in seeking to secure for himself some important leadership role.

Runciman had, in parts of his career, sought to work with members of other parties, but he was never interested in being absorbed within a Conservative *bloc*, his Liberal instincts being anti-Conservative. From 1930, his desire to work with MacDonald had the consequence of separating him from the Liberal party, and he became more like an independent member of the House of Commons thereafter; nevertheless, he did not seek to join an alternative party, having had in mind that he might leave politics, but eventually he fell in with the Simonite faction. His involvement with the Simonites and his ministerial duties after 1932, however, started to lose him

¹⁰⁹ H. Campbell Bannerman to Herbert Gladstone, 30 October 1901, Herbert Gladstone Papers MSS 45987 f199, in Wallace, ‘Walter Runciman’, p. 39.

visible association with the Liberal political 'label', his work on tariffs bringing him unintentionally close to the Conservatives. Alongside his Liberal associations were consistent patriotic instincts and a managerial character, the latter being informed by his business interests, and he quite properly saw his work as a minister as a short-term, pragmatic and business-like approach, at a time when party political responses needed to be minimised for the good of all.

As a postscript to this discussion, it is important to point out that the direction of politics, by the middle of the 1930s, was not conducive to the continuing presence of a self-confessed, committed Liberal, at the frontline of the politics of the National Government, and Runciman was eventually to find himself excluded from Neville Chamberlain's new government, following his succession (in 1937), effectively forcing Runciman into retirement. For Chamberlain, Runciman must have seemed an uncertain ally; despite his work on tariffs, he was too soaked in Liberal factionalism, and his usefulness was less as Chamberlain tried to make his government more uniformly Conservative.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the issue of recruitment of Liberal politicians into the Conservative party in order to understand a neglected aspect of Liberal party decline and its place in the wider realignment of British political forces in the early part of the twentieth century. It has recognised that although much existing research can be examined in the context of Liberal recruitment of the period, more extensive and specific examination of the topic is necessary.

In developing a more detailed and systematic assessment, the Introduction advised that the study would centre on some critical issues about the character of recruitment and where it sits in the realignment of politics as a whole. For these reasons, Liberal recruitment has been examined in the context of underlying social and cultural issues, such as class, in emergence of shared political priorities between Conservatives and Liberals, and in assessment of the impact of internal Liberal party factors, particularly in views about the leadership of the party. There has also been assessment of collective and unique personal circumstances, such as electoral concerns, and relevant personality characteristics to do with ambition and self-interest. It has provided evidence to understand the place of recruits within the changes in the wider party system, and how their changes in party allegiances affected realignment.

In completing these tasks, the case study approach adopted has been invaluable, since this has greatly enabled detailed assessment of collective and unique aspects of recruits' political characters and the circumstances of their recruitments. Alun Wyburn-Powell noted in his study that he had provided a narrative of the decline of the Liberal party from the point of view of the Liberals themselves and this study has also provided such a narrative, although one which is more specific to the Liberal to Conservative recruitment, recovering the voices of Liberal recruits from the past who have a story to tell.¹ None of this would have been possible had it

¹ Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Defections and the Liberal Party, 1910-2010* (Manchester & New York, 2012), p. 191.

not been for the quality of the primary sources available which have enabled appreciation of ideas in politics, personalities and understanding of interaction of recruits with themselves and other contemporaries in political and personal life. The language in such sources has enabled assessment of nuances of human behaviour and motivation.

Some critical points emerge from Chapter One, in comparative assessment, to show that there were common circumstances that linked the recruits. The chapter has shown that recruitment was reactive to events, and possessed both short-term and long-term dimensions, which illustrates the benefit of assessment of experience over many years as well as issues in the immediate period of changes of party. Overall, a sense of the collective challenges to involvement with the Liberal party and attractions of working with the Conservatives has been made clear.

The case study chapters on specific individuals have been beneficial in profiling a number of politicians discretely, examining both major political figures and some more minor and less well-known ones. These chapters get close to the specific character of the individual recruit, with a number of important points noted that influenced their individual political perspectives and choices about party allegiances. Some of the issues regarding the motivation of recruits are very unique and it has been important to highlight such experiences separately to avoid the circumstances of their political affiliations being lost in more general discussion.

In terms of overall findings, it is possible to draw together some unique points about the recruits both individually and collectively. Many of these points are important in the context of Liberal party decline since they provide a more local and personal dimension, providing a level of insight which has been missing from the majority of substantive studies of Liberal party politics in the historiography.² These studies in focusing often exclusively on policy differences, or societal change can be seen to be too reductionist; a more holistic assessment has revealed many more factors that

² Of course, Wyburn-Powell's study is an exception; see Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*.

need to be considered. Some of these have been shown to connect to political change and policy differences discussed in the historiography, but even so there are still dimensions to acknowledge which have hitherto been neglected.

Thus, in examining the key findings then a first point to mention is recruitment's social character. The study – actually building on the detail of Wyburn-Powell's research – has shown that amongst the cohort of recruits there were middle-class professional and business interests, as well as those of an established elite. It is very difficult to draw together empirical evidence, but when one compares the character of the recruits to those of the wider electorate it seems there is a good deal of similarity. In the wider electorate, it has been seen that these interests in society were increasingly attracted to the Conservative party and it has been suggested that the position of Liberal recruits correlates with this situation; this seems obvious given the Conservative party's refocus on the values of the middle-class, in particular, as part of its electoral appeal and the Liberal party's inability to any articulate values strongly – not least middle-class ones – due to its policy divisions and electoral decline. So, in a sense, the suggestions made show that recruitment has an undercurrent of class motivation, connecting it to the politics of class alignment, which has a certain amount of irony, given that, electorally at least, many Liberal recruits in the years leading up to their recruitment were trying to avoid class politics for electoral reasons.

In regards to the other, more substantive characteristics of recruitment, much has been made of the development of closer ties between Liberals and Conservatives – the so-called convergence of Liberal and Conservative politics – and a number of substantive findings have been presented. On the electoral side, it was shown that pursuit of anti-socialism was not evidence of ideological commitment to the politics of the right; it was more of an electoral strategy, often superficial, in order to gain Conservative votes after 1918. It must be seen in the context of electoral uncertainty, with Liberals unable to gain enough support to win on the strength of their party label alone, and it was used inconsistently; for instance, some Liberals retreated from it – such as Churchill, Mond, Simon, Runciman and Aske – when Liberal fortunes seemed revivable in 1923 or

1929. This study has shown that some Liberal recruits were even amongst those Liberals who used anti-socialism alongside anti-Conservative strategies to circumvent the development of class politics, adopting a middle position between Labour and Conservative. Thus, pursuit of anti-socialism should not, in itself, be taken as evidence of definite and unambiguous alignment with the Conservative party. However, where anti-socialism was utilised, it often assisted in costing Liberals their independence from the Conservatives, making them seem indistinguishable in emphasising the same political issues or, most importantly of all, in arguing for electoral arrangements between the two parties. Active anti-socialist strategies directly assisted the integration of politicians such as Churchill, Greenwood, Young, Guest and Grigg into the Conservative party. Some Liberals wished to retain their Liberal identity very firmly, despite agreeing to anti-socialist compromises, but this was no guarantee that integration would not occur with politicians, like Aske, being metaphorical prisoners in an anti-socialist camp due to their reliance on anti-socialism to avoid difficult triangular contests. Young, Guest and Grigg all tried to retain their 'Liberal' label in their electoral appeals, despite their anti-socialism, but this proved to be unsustainable.

Convergence has also been seen in the emphasis of the desire for national government, or for the creation of a national party. Many recruits connected to philosophical and cultural thinking, rooted in Victorian conceptions of politics, in favour of building political combinations outside of the party system to avoid class conflict, with a patriotic, imperialist and business-like managerial approach to the running of political affairs.³ This

³ This study has recognised, in particular, the relevance of contributions by Geoffrey Searle, Martin Pugh, David Powell and Martin Wiener in drawing attention to relevant intellectual and cultural issues associated with the ideas. See Martin Pugh, 'Left in the Centre? Lloyd George and the Centrist Tradition in British Politics' in Judith Loades (ed.) *The Life and Times of David Lloyd George* (Bangor, 1991), pp. 17-27; Martin Pugh, *Lloyd George* (London & New York, 1988); Geoffrey Searle, *Country Before Party – Coalition and the Idea of 'National Government' in Modern Britain, 1885-1987* (London, 1995); David Powell, *British Politics, 1910-35 - The Crisis of the Party System* (Abingdon, 2004); Martin

made them ill-suited to twentieth century party politics, accounting for part of their discomfort in the Liberal party and also for involvement with the Conservative party, which, certainly after 1918, was in many ways pursuing an agenda akin to that of a national government. Such explanations have particular relevance in discussion of the political aspirations of Churchill, Young, Guest and Grigg. However, not all advocates of national government conceived of it as a virtuous form of government which should be practiced at all times; often, particularly in the case of Liberal Nationals, it was perceived simply as a short-term patriotic response, such as in wartime or in the national crisis of 1931, and cannot, therefore, be fully associated with integration into the Conservative party.

Of major consideration in the context of convergence is the figure of Stanley Baldwin, who appears fundamental to the integration of Liberal recruits into the Conservative party or *bloc* as a whole. His moderate, liberal, classless and non-partisan approaches were attractive. Out of all the Liberals concerned, it seems that really only Runciman's recruitment into the *bloc* lacked significant association with Baldwin. Most others had definite sympathies for him, with some even having developed more personal contact with the Conservative leader in the period before their move into his party. But it was not just in terms of policy that he was attractive; the values that lay behind Baldwin's politics were also important. Of particular significance were the ethical dimensions emphasised, which offered a moral compass missing in the Liberal party. Contrasts were made with Lloyd George whose morals were called into question, and this contrast has been shown to be important in recruitment, particularly in the cases of Mond and Guest.

However, there is a sort of unexpectedness in these associations. Baldwin was really a figure from within the party system, despite all the outward appearance of being otherwise, and his desire to conciliate Liberals was certainly not completely fraternal; it was more political and self-interested in breaking the Liberal party to the electoral benefit of his party –

J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge, 2004).

a strategy which was successful judging from all the evidence. A measure of the importance of the strategy can be seen from the way in which he targeted particular Liberals – like McKenna and Simon – for conciliation, whilst others were not actively approached at all; for example, in the case of Guest, Baldwin was reluctant to welcome him into his party due to doubts about his ethical character and the damage he could bring to the Conservative party.

Some of the success for Baldwin was related to events as much as his character or politics; there was a certain amount of luck which was not of his making in bringing him recruits. He was able, for example, to benefit from the fall of the Coalition which meant that recruits such as Churchill, Young and Guest, who were uncomfortable with party politics, suddenly had to adapt to a renewed party system, finding that the Conservatives were more appropriate to work with than lots of Liberals. He benefited from a refocus of some Liberal opinion on middle-class economic concerns for retrenchment and financial stability when Liberal politics was deemed to be unable to pursue suitable policies without Conservative aid. He found that he could benefit from perceptions of him as a patriot too, meaning that more partisan opinion was eventually prepared to cooperate with him, at least in the short-term, in 1931 when many Liberals rallied to support the National Government and remained allied to Baldwin through the years of the National Government thereafter. Overall, a coherent and united separate Liberal party position might have prevented movement towards him, but without it Baldwin and his party reaped the benefits.

For some Liberal recruits, working with the Conservatives seemed easier and more comfortable than for others on account of previous associations with the Conservative party, certainly in the cases of Churchill, Guest and Grigg. Churchill and Guest were, arguably, always ill-placed in the Liberal party having only become involved when the Conservatives retreated into ‘diehardism’ at the turn of the century, and Grigg was a Liberal Unionist in former times, with his main interest in the Liberal party having been mainly motivated by Lloyd George and relevant social policies – certainly not Liberal party dogma. This ill-placed involvement is best illustrated in the position of Churchill where there is clear evidence to support Richard Toye’s suggestion about his progressive move back to the

Conservatives.⁴ This relationship to his former party demonstrates clearly how he was ill-positioned as a Liberal (although it is not clear that he would have been any better positioned as a Conservative due to general difficulties in working within the party system).

There is a wider point about the relationship to political parties to make. Evidence shows that loyalty to a party was often based on individual assessments of the use of that party for getting things done, with loyalties based on immediate electoral programmes rather than some deeper innate feeling of tribal association for the long-term. Many of the Liberal recruits' fragile associations with the Liberal party through retreat into factions, disloyalty to the leadership and movement out of the party altogether can be seen in this context.

Internal factors have also been seen to be critical in Liberal recruitment, not so much in them causing changes of allegiance, but in their helping to loosen the associations to the Liberal party. Problems were due to difficult relationships, sometimes characterised by ill-feeling built up over many years, as well as immediate issues which led to decisive steps in seeking extrication from the party. One outcome of long-term difficulty has been shown to be factional conflict, which was a particularly destructive influence on associations. This began before the First World War, intensified during it, and left a legacy of two separate factions which remained in constant disagreement until the 1930s. Factional conflict has been shown to have motivated McKenna's move out of politics directly, whilst in Simon, Runciman, Mond, Churchill, Guest, and Grigg's cases, it encouraged separation from party colleagues, and played a role in assisting their moves out of the party eventually, since such division discouraged a sense of full integration into the party body. Not all Liberals were keen on participation in factional conflict, however, particularly further away from high politics; some, like Lambert, tried to resist it, with the failure to secure greater unity of purpose causing disillusion, and leading him to become a rather detached figure from his party.

⁴ Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill* (London, 2008), p. 238.

Another issue, straddling both longer-term and immediate tension, has been shown to be the negative perceptions of the party leadership, with both Asquith and Lloyd George's leadership qualities being brought into question, with resulting disaffection. In terms of Asquith, he seems to have carried some influence in the positions of Churchill, Mond and Guest in seeking relations with other parties. Asquith even possessed difficult relations, at times, with his own supporters, with McKenna's position in retreating from politics, after 1918, partly inspired by Asquith's lack of leadership skill and support for him in crises. In Runciman and Simon's cases, he was an encouragement to their leadership aspirations; Asquith's own failures in leadership saw them looking for opportunities to replace him which assisted in souring relations with Lloyd George who was a rival to the title of leader.

However, ultimately, it was perceptions of Lloyd George which have been shown to be of the greatest importance. Negative perceptions surfaced even before the First World War as poor relations with Simon, Runciman and McKenna reveal, but it has also been seen that he was not completely trusted by his own supporters, such as Churchill, Mond and Guest. In the supporters' cases, it has been shown that he never seemed to offer them the respect that they believed he owed them for their support, and this was a source of tension, assisting in destabilising their relationship with him and the Liberal party over time.⁵ By the mid-1920s, Lloyd George's reputation was suffering further due to his various political methods which led to a general sense of his untrustworthiness even amongst those who had supported him over many years. Mond and Guest felt rather disillusioned by his tactics, in Mond's case in his disagreement over land policy, and for Guest, in the manner of his unseating in his constituency. One particular issue about Lloyd George was his switch from supporting closer relations to the Conservatives to ties with Labour instead, which brought him into conflict with these colleagues, in particular, over the policy and political strategy matters. Lloyd George and his Labour links affected perceptions within the party after 1929 too, with other Liberals becoming concerned

⁵ Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*.

about his propping up a controversial Labour government, eventually helping to push some of his remaining supporters into a renewed factional struggle against him; this faction has been shown to have had links to the split in the party after 1931, which suggests Lloyd George's policy had some kind of role in the circumstances that enabled this to happen.

Behind all these divisions there was a good deal of self-interest, disingenuousness and opportunism. Self-interest tended to lead to exaggerated views on divisions over policy and strategy issues, particularly in the cases of Simon and Runciman in their sectional partisanship, in the 1920s, to further their leadership ambitions; they were not as opposed to Lloyd George as it would seem. Generally-speaking, divisions within the party were exaggerated to propagate relationships with Conservatives and to justify the legitimacy of changing party. Guest was the most disingenuous of recruits in this regard, trying to exploit Lloyd George's ethical deficiencies when he had, during his time as Coalition Liberal Chief Whip, played a key role in working to manipulate politics cynically to his and Lloyd George's advantage.

A final point has been consideration of personality traits, the characteristics discussed building on issues mentioned by Wyburn-Powell.⁶ A number of the recruits were widely disliked and were seen as untrustworthy or too nakedly ambitious – particularly Churchill, Mond, Guest, and to some degree Simon. In politics, a substantial degree of outward presentation of congeniality is necessary for winning friends and for political progression, and it is useful to note the number of times sources demonstrate that this was not the case for some of the recruits, with underlying character traits having real impact on their level of integration into Liberal politics as well as their prospects for achieving political office. They were often isolated, which caused resentment and encouraged seeking of political allies outside of Liberal politics, bringing them into greater proximity to Conservatives.

⁶ Wyburn-Powell, *Defections*, p. 19.

Some overarching conclusions can be drawn, arising from the discussions, which help to understand Liberal recruitment specifically in the context of realignment of politics, and perhaps provide some of the most significant findings of this investigation.

Examination of collective and individual experience has shown, firstly, the reactive nature. With the exception of Churchill, it is hard to find any evidence that Liberal recruits were actively seeking ways to join the Conservative party in the period before their recruitment. It was usually the case that recruitment occurred due to an event or series of events sometimes spanning over some years, which put pressure on involvement with the Liberal party and encouraged relationships with Conservatives to the eventual point of formal links.

A second point relates to the contemporary incoherence of the Liberal party due to disputed and ineffective leadership. What the circumstances of incoherence meant were that Liberals who wished to position the party close to the Conservatives could quite legitimately claim that this was in the best interests of Liberal party. In normal circumstances a party might have a clear leadership and direction, with firmer boundaries in terms of a range of policies and tolerance of proximity to other parties; but in the case of the declining Liberal party there was little direction and the boundaries were blurred. Thus, it becomes difficult to present Liberals who positioned themselves close to the Conservative party as having become essentially Conservatives in the run-up to their recruitment. They may have seemed indistinguishable in some cases but to dwell on this point alone ignores the fact that what a Liberal was is open to debate; proximity to the Conservatives does not mean they were definitely not Liberals.

In relation to this point it needs to be acknowledged that the problems of the Liberal party were part of a wider situation affecting parties. In any transition of party politics from one party duopoly to another there is always going to be fluidity in the boundaries between parties. There were signs of fluidity in the other parties' boundaries too; indeed, it has been shown that some eventual Liberal recruits looked even to bring elements of other parties onto a more Liberal political footing – particularly the so-called Labour and Conservative 'moderates'. Thus, one should not see these

weaknesses as being unique to the Liberal party; it was more that the various other problems affecting Liberal politics prevented the Liberal party from taking advantage of being able to integrate people from other parties into its sphere after 1918 so that it became the chief casualty. There is a contrast here with the Edwardian period when the party showed signs of adapting to political changes, and had itself attracted recruits (Churchill and Guest amongst them).

A third point relates to the sense that Liberal recruits played a role in their own party's demise through choices they made to enter into disagreement and present outward disunity and ultimately to change party affiliations. There may have been justification in their actions due to consistencies with their values and outlook on politics, and they were influenced by force of events and personal circumstances, but from the point of view of their former party's future they did much individually and collectively to undermine it.

A fourth point to make relates specifically to the position of the Liberal National party. Not unlike other recent studies, particularly David Dutton's research, emphasis has been placed on the essentially Liberal aspect of this grouping and its frustration of the development of a two party duopoly.⁷ This aspect of the investigation has not yielded anything uniquely different from Dutton's perspective, but it has added more detail. It has highlighted the dilemma as to how to treat Liberal Nationals and whether they might be seen as recruits at all. Wyburn-Powell has claimed that most Liberal Nationals, due to their essential affinity to Liberal politics, should be excluded from association with change of party. However, as the phenomenon of recruitment is multifaceted (and not exclusively about whether or not Liberal politics was abandoned) it is clear that Wyburn-Powell's view is misplaced. All Liberal Nationals, whatever the character of their motivation in working with the Conservatives, seem as central to the politics of realignment as any other Liberals who worked with Conservatives, and their exclusion from consideration would leave gaps in understanding. No doubt views about Liberal Nationals will continue to be

⁷ David Dutton, *Liberals in Schism* (London, 2008)

debated as historians continue their re-evaluation of their position in the 1930s and beyond.

It is useful to conclude with some observations about the state of Liberal politics which led to recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative party. This study has shown that the Liberal party, between the middle of the First World War and 1935 especially, was so lacking in coherence that it is hardly surprising there were recruitments to the Conservatives (and indeed Labour too). The divided leadership and entrenched views from 1916 onwards meant difficulties in formulating a coherent policy or strategy for Liberal politics. In this situation, it is hardly surprising that Liberals started to fight amongst themselves, which irreparably damaged their ability to work with each other. A most critical point lies with the view that working so closely with the Conservatives – to the point of seeming indistinguishable – was a legitimate form of Liberal politics. Better leadership and the development of shared perspectives on policy and strategy should have arrested or moderated this development, even allowing for the fact that some recruits were not partisan and tended towards working with politicians outside the party, and ensured that recruits were guided away from separation and towards a more recognisable Liberal way forward. The long process of movement from the Liberal party shows that a number of Liberals were keen to retain their links with the party, with evidence of them looking for all manner of different ways of doing so, even in the months and weeks before their decisions formally to align with Conservatives; somehow these different approaches needed to be harnessed within the body of Liberal politics but a lack of uncontested and legitimate leadership made this impossible.

The divisions in Liberal politics and haemorrhaging of support for the Liberal party did, however, assist in a triumph of sorts since the process of recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative party, as connected to divisions and exploited by Conservatives leaders, actually assisted in liberalising the Conservative agenda, pulling the party onto more moderate and liberal political territory. The historiography of British politics in the nineteenth century shows that this liberalising of the party had actually

already begun before the period of this study, especially through incorporation of Liberal Unionists into the Conservative *bloc*.⁸ However, a major contribution of this thesis has been to show that the later incorporation of Liberals into the Conservative party was more rather more significant, particularly at a time when the Liberal party was weakened and unable to recover electoral support, leaving the Conservatives appearing as the major representatives of moderate and liberal opinion. The Conservative party went on to become the most successful political party in modern British politics, with the widening of Conservative support to incorporate former elements of Liberal political opinion in this period seeming of critical significance in laying the foundations for this development.

⁸ The most recent detailed exposition of the impact of the Liberal Unionist on Conservative politics come from Ian Cawood's study of Liberal Unionist politics; see Ian Cawood, *The Liberal Unionists – A History* (London & New York, 2012), pp. 242-252.

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Appendix A:

Source: Craig, F. W. S., *British Parliamentary Election Results 1918-1949*, (3rd. Ed.) Parliamentary Research Services (Chichester, 1983)

Simonite Liberals, 1931-5.			
MPs	Constituency	Comments	Mentioned by Wyburn-Powell
Allen, W	Stoke on Trent Burslem	Served 1931-5. Stood as a National but becomes a Simonite	
Aske, Sir RW	Newcastle upon Tyne East	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Barrie, Sir CC	Southampton	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Blindell, J	Holland with Boston	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Brown, AE	Leith	Elected in 1931 and 1935	Y
Burgin, EL	Luton	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Campbell, G	Burnley	Served 1931-5. Stood as a National but becomes a Simonite	
Collins, Sir GP	Greenock	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Curry, AC	Bishop Auckland	Elected as Simonite but later joins Samuelites	
Davies, EC	Montgomeryshire	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Dickie, JP	Consett	Served until 1935	
Dodd, JS	Oldham	Elected in 1935	
Edge, Sir W	Bosworth	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Elmley, Viscount	Eastern Norfolk	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Fildes, Sir H	Dumfriesshire	First elected in by-election in 1935. Elected again in 1935.	
Furness, SN	Sunderland	Elected in 1935	
Granville, EJ	Eye	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Harbord, A	Great Yarmouth	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Henderson-Stewart	Eastern Fife	First elected in 1933. Elected in 1935	
Holmes, JS	Harwich	Elected in 1935.	
Hore-Belisha, L	Plymouth Devonport	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Hutchinson, Sir R	Montrose	Served until 1932	Y
Jones, L	Swansea West	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Kerr, CI	Montrose	First elected in 1932 and again in 1935	
Lambert, G	South Molton	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Leckie, JA	Walsall	Stood as a National in 1931 but becomes a Simonite. Elected in 1935.	
Llewellyn-Jones, F	Flintshire	Elected as Simonite but later joins Samuelites	
Mabane, W	Huddersfield	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Macdonald, Sir M	Inverness	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Macpherson, JI	Ross & Cromarty	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Magnay, T	Gateshead	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Millar, JD	Eastern Fife	Served until 1933	
Morris-Jones, JH	Denbigh	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Morrison, Dr. GA	Combined Scottish Universities	Elected in 1935. Recruited to the Samuelites	
Norie-Miller, F	Perth	First elected in by-election in 1935	
Peters, SJ	Huntingdonshire	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Pybus, PJ	Harwich	Served until 1935	
Ramsay, TBW	Western Isles	Served until 1935	
Runciman, W	St. Ives	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Russell, RJ	Eddisbury	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Shakespeare, GH	Norwich	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Simon, Sir JA	Spen Valley	Elected in 1931 and 1935	Y
Soper, RJ	Barnsley	Served until 1935	
Strauss, EA	Southwark North	Elected in 1931 and 1935	
Summersby, CH	Shoreditch	Served until 1935	
Wallace, J	Dunfermline	Served until 1935	