

Richard Toye* *University of Exeter*
.....

‘Perfectly Parliamentary’? The Labour Party and the House of Commons in the Inter-war Years

Abstract

Ralph Miliband’s influential Marxist critique of Parliamentary Socialism (1961) depicted a Labour Party that had condemned itself to futility by its dogmatic commitment to parliamentary methods. By contrast, Social Democratic writers such as Ben Pimlott have argued that Labour’s reformism secured concrete gains, whilst accepting the premise that the party’s electoralism/parliamentarism went unquestioned at the time. Both sides are right insofar as no group within the party suggested abandoning parliamentary methods. What has been forgotten, however, is that there was considerable debate after 1918 about how Parliament should be used. Not only was Labour’s commitment to Parliament challenged by other parties, which alleged extremism and disregard of the rhetorical conventions of the Commons, but Labour itself accused its opponents of riding roughshod over parliamentary liberties. Thus, the decision of some left-wing MPs to use parliamentary disruption tactics in their quest to present themselves as spokesmen of the unemployed was depicted by them as a proper use of the Commons to challenge capitalism and by Conservatives as proof of Labour’s innate extremism and unfitness to govern. Issues of class were central to these understandings, and gender was also important. This article examines the arguments about Parliament and parliamentary methods that were conducted within and without the Commons, often through symbolic manifestations such as rowdy ‘demonstrations’ within the Chamber. It concludes that the inter-war experience taught Labour not the possibilities of Parliament but its limits.

The inter-war years were a rollercoaster ride for the Labour Party. In the years of flux from 1918 to 1931, the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP)

*R.Toye@exeter.ac.uk. I am grateful to Laura Beers, Glen O’Hara, David Thackeray, Andrew Thorpe, Mark Wickham-Jones and several anonymous referees for comments on an earlier version of this article. Any errors that remain are of course my own responsibility. This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council [grant number AH/I025298/1]. The research materials supporting this publication can be publicly accessed in the archives and publications identified in the article footnotes.

experienced rapid changes in size and personnel. It moved from the position of an embattled band of comrades to party of government and then back again, forcing the Labour cohort in the Commons to reinvent its role repeatedly. Moreover, Labour's constitutional credentials and 'fitness to govern' were under consistent attack from its opponents, making the question of how the party should use Parliament inevitably controversial.

Yet, historians across the ideological spectrum have frequently presented Labour's relationship with Parliament as relatively uncomplicated. Ralph Miliband's influential Marxist critique *Parliamentary Socialism* (first published in 1961) depicted a Labour Party that had condemned itself to futility by its dogmatic commitment to reformist parliamentary methods. He argued: 'the leaders of the Labour Party have always rejected any kind of action which fell, or which appeared to them to fall, outside the framework and conventions of the parliamentary system...it has been a party deeply imbued with parliamentarism'.¹ From a right-wing Conservative perspective, Maurice Cowling made the remarkably similar argument that Labour's leaders, conceiving themselves as sober, moderate parliamentary politicians, posed no threat to the system: 'even when they said the opposite, they assumed that the political and social system could not be overturned and that it was impossible to establish a hegemony of the poor over the rich'.² Less idealistic than Miliband and less cynical than Cowling, Ben Pimlott's work demonstrated a Social Democratic belief in the ability of reformism to secure concrete gains; but he too accepted the premise that 'Labour's Parliamentarism...has not merely been an orientation or predilection; it has been the very reason for its existence'.³

In one sense such claims are unarguable: it is quite right to suggest that Labour leaders never advocated methods 'which appeared to them to fall' beyond parliamentary conventions. At the same time, they beg some very important questions, not least, did everyone else agree that their behaviour was irreproachably parliamentary? These claims also appear to rest on the assumption that the 'conventions of the parliamentary system' were understood by contemporaries in the same way, a way similar, in effect, to more modern understandings. In other words, Parliament and the range of possible techniques for making use of it are largely taken for granted; it is imagined that

¹ R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour* (2nd edn, London, 1972), 13. Miliband has found many followers, e.g. D. Coates, *The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism* (Cambridge, 1975); and G. Elliott, *Labourism and the English Genius: The Strange Death of Labour England?* (London, 1993).

² M. Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920–1924: The Beginning of Modern British Politics* (Cambridge, 1971), 11.

³ B. Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), 196.

everyone knows what 'parliamentary methods' are and were and that there is little ground for argument on the topic. The effect of this has been to shut down debate on the question of what Labour thought about how Parliament should be used, and above all what they thought it was *for*. Although there has been plenty of discussion of the PLP in terms of its ideology and effectiveness, there has been little exploration of how it actually operated within the Commons and what this meant for wider understandings of the constitution.⁴ Nor has it been systematically examined in the longer-term context of parliamentary behaviour, notably the efforts at obstruction by the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) in the Parnellite period and by the disruption caused by Conservatives over Home Rule before 1914. In the 1920s, Labour's enemies presented the party as disrespectful of Commons tradition; but whereas Labour eschewed complete obstruction in the style of the Irish, it attempted to justify some of the 'scenes' that it did create with reference to Edwardian Tory precedents. What its opponents painted as 'rowdiness' it presented as established constitutional action. The issue of social class, moreover, was central to understandings of what did or did not constitute 'respectable' parliamentary behaviour.

There are some exceptions to the historical neglect of the problem but they are, for the most part, rather limited. Anthony Wright has presented the relationship of British socialists to the constitution as a 'history of satisfaction', but he does allow that 'behind the celebration of constitutional orthodoxies there has also been a history of heresies and discontents'; and more recently Miles Taylor has shown persuasively that Labour's interest in constitutional and constitutional reform was more considerable than has been generally thought.⁵ Philip Williamson has made a valuable study of Labour's attitudes to the House of Lords.⁶ For his part, Miliband wrote of the importance of 'the climate of the House of Commons and the 'aristocratic embrace' in taming so many Labour members', but he showed little interest in the mechanics of the party's parliamentary actions.⁷ David Marquand has acknowledged that there were different forms of Labour parliamentarianism, with left-wingers favouring 'a more aggressive, and above all

⁴ Thus, Richard Heffernan's account of the PLP is not illuminating on Labour's parliamentary technique: 'Leaders and Followers: The Politics of the Parliamentary Labour Party', in B. Brivati and R. Heffernan, eds, *The Labour Party: A Centenary History* (Basingstoke, 2000), 246–67.

⁵ A. Wright, 'British Socialists and the British Constitution', *Parliamentary Affairs* 43 (1990), 322–40, at 323, 325; M. Taylor, 'Labour and the Constitution', in D. Tanner *et al.*, eds, *Labour's First Century* (Cambridge, 2000), 151–80.

⁶ P. Williamson, 'The Labour Party and the House of Lords, 1918–1931', *Parliamentary History* 10 (1991), 317–41.

⁷ Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, 96. For a critique of the 'aristocratic embrace' thesis, see N. Owen, 'MacDonald's Parties: The Labour Party and the 'Aristocratic Embrace', 1922–31', *Twentieth Century British History* 18 (2007), 1–53.

a morally more intransigent' version.⁸ More substantively, in his seminal book on the period, David Howell has noted correctly that during the 1920s 'the issue of parliamentary strategy remained contested' and that some MPs, eager to articulate the plight of their poverty-stricken constituents, 'felt that radicalism should be expressed through parliamentary scenes whether planned in advance or arising from the cut and thrust of debate'.⁹ However, Howell's brief treatment presents the issue as somewhat marginal, as does Matthew Worley's subsequent work. Worley writes that although parts of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) tried to exploit Commons 'scenes', 'the majority of the PLP adhered to MacDonald's lead, seeking to familiarize themselves with "parliamentary ways" in an attempt to demonstrate Labour's capabilities'.¹⁰ In effect, this view amounts to a retrospective endorsement of MacDonald's own boast, made privately in 1923, that he was 'bringing the wild socialist Labour members to heel'.¹¹

There is no need to reject MacDonald's self-assessment entirely: his intentions were undoubtedly as he stated them in that instance. Yet, the effect of accepting at face value his own account of his attitude to Parliament has been, paradoxically, that we know very little about it. The conventional wisdom sees Labour accepting his version of parliamentarism; but what this parliamentarism actually was is left vague. Sometimes it seems from the existing historiography that what MacDonald did was parliamentarism; and that parliamentarism was whatever MacDonald did. However, the question of Labour's attitude to Parliament is much more interesting and complex than the standard picture implies.¹² The party never sought to do away with Parliament, of course; but this did not necessarily imply an unquestioned faith in the institution as it stood. From the beginning of the period, Labour's attitude to Parliament contained ambiguities (and variations between groups and individuals) that its enemies could exploit. Its commitment to Parliament was challenged by other parties, which alleged extremism and disregard of the rhetorical conventions of the Commons. Labour reacted, certainly, by affirming its parliamentarism, but it did so in part by attacking the parliamentarist credentials of its opponents. In other words, rather than submitting passively to supposedly accepted norms,

⁸ D. Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Kinnock* (London, 1992), 115.

⁹ D. Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922–1931* (Oxford, 2002), 29.

¹⁰ M. Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party between the Wars* (London, 2005), 28.

¹¹ Quoted in Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, 95, n. 1.

¹² Similarly, some recent work has suggested that inter-war Labour was less urban focussed and more media-savvy than traditionally thought. C. V. J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside: The Politics of Rural Britain 1918–1939* (Oxford, 2007); L. Beers, *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

the party seized and to some extent remoulded them, in an aggressive attempt to deny the claims of Tories and Liberals to be the legitimate custodians of parliamentary tradition. Indeed, codes of parliamentary behaviour had *always* been contested, never more so than from the late-nineteenth century onwards. This has to be seen in relation to the changing nature of the Commons' relationship to the people in the era of mass enfranchisement. A. B. Cooke and John Vincent have written that Parliament in the late nineteenth century 'was closed to those outside, in terms of direct access and influence: it was closed also in that politicians were bound to see more significance in the definite structure of relationships at Westminster, then in their contacts with the world outside'.¹³ But by the inter-war period this was no longer possible, if indeed it had ever been completely true. The individual member sat at the nexus of high and low politics. MPs of all parties, but especially Labour ones, were eager to prove their credentials as hard-working constituency representatives (although this is not to say that all MPs did so).¹⁴ From Labour's perspective, its MPs' increasingly active constituency role formed part of the party's wider claim to speak for the people.

The contest over the place of Parliament in public life left a mixed inheritance. On the one hand, MacDonald's claims to have educated his party into proper parliamentary methods were not inherently absurd, albeit his efforts to control the 'wild men' at times required him to flirt with their ideas. On the other hand, acceptance of the outward forms of parliamentary behaviour was matched, by the 1930s, by increasing doubts about the capacity of the 'amazingly unbusinesslike' parliamentary machine to deliver social and economic progress in the absence of procedural reform.¹⁵ Britain's long 1920s—culminating in MacDonald's departure with the Labour split of 1931—represented less a coming to terms with Parliament than a time of disillusionment, high faith in its potential to attack poverty being replaced by a growing awareness of the limits of its usefulness. This did not mean that it had become dispensable, rather that it was now viewed increasingly instrumentally, as the handmaiden to executive power, instead of being valued principally as a forum for discussion and persuasion through morally forceful speech.

That should be seen as the central point of this article. In order to make the underlying claim clearer, it is worth emphasizing also what

¹³ A. B. Cooke and J. Vincent, *The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics in Britain 1885–86* (Brighton, 1974), 21.

¹⁴ P. G. Cambray, *The Game of Politics: A Study of the Principles of British Political Strategy* (London, 1932), 8–9.

¹⁵ H. Dalton, *Practical Socialism for Britain* (London, 1935), 44.

is *not* being argued. The existing historical paradigm is essentially a binary one, in which Labour faced a choice between constitutional/parliamentary/reformist methods and unconstitutional/extra-parliamentary/revolutionary ones, and opted the former, albeit with a few teething troubles. It is *not* suggested here that the choice was more close-run than formerly thought, or that there is some plausible counter-factual whereby Labour's attitude might have turned out to be very different. Nor is the purpose of the discussion of Labour's parliamentary behaviour merely to illustrate at greater length and in more detail the established story of how the extremists were 'brought to heel'. Rather, granting that all parts of the party accepted parliamentarism in some form, the intention is to explore the *varieties* of Labour's parliamentarism, together with their significance in contemporary debate and the ways in which they changed over time. There are two reasons for doing this. First, although the idea that Labour had any revolutionary potential may be reasonably considered ludicrous today, the party's opponents either believed it or claimed to believe it in the first years after the First World War, and the charge had an electoral power that was demonstrated by the Zinoviev letter episode of 1924. Labour's attitude to the Parliament, then, was an important source of political ammunition for the Conservatives at the time, however contrived or artificial the resulting debates may now look. These attacks also had an impact on how Labour chose to present itself and on the ways in which launched assaults of its own. Secondly, equally important questions surround the ways in which Labour became converted to a concept of bureaucratic governance based on strong executive action and rule by experts, and which did not so much reject Parliament as conveniently side-step it.

In order to understand this latter point, we need to distinguish between two types of parliamentarism. The first sees Parliament as part of a rational public sphere, whereby the clash of ideas generates superior conclusions. The second sees it merely as a tool for implementing the will of the electoral majority.¹⁶ It is argued here that although Labour never believed wholeheartedly in the first type—of which the Liberals considered themselves the guardians—it did in the 1920s have faith in the Commons as a venue in which the voices of those it represented could be heard.¹⁷ This faith, however, was not sustained beyond 1931. While continuing to pay verbal tribute to the value of debate, the party concluded that the achievement of its socio-economic agenda risked being prejudiced by excessive devotion

¹⁶ C. Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (Cambridge MA, 1988), 4. This work was first published in 1923, with a new edition appearing in 1926.

¹⁷ 'What is Parliament For?', *The Liberal Pioneer*, June 1927.

to the principle of 'government by discussion'.¹⁸ This growing faith in executive action, however, was by no means unique to Labour, in an era in which all governments presided over a shift in power away from Parliament towards the state bureaucracy.¹⁹

The article, then, explores Labour's attitude to Parliament from the brief post-First World War era of 'direct action' to the post-MacDonald reassessments of the 1930s, and briefly suggests some consequences for the Attlee government of 1945–51. (The focus is on the House of Commons, which had reinforced its position as the dominant chamber in the Edwardian period.) It draws on evidence both of what happened within the Commons itself and of attitudes towards Parliament that were expressed outside. This is important because, while the Commons can be seen as a 'community of practice', in which newcomers adopted the habits of the institution through 'situated learning', it must be remembered that this was learning that took place in the full glare of national publicity.²⁰ Therefore, the question of what Labour did within Parliament cannot be separated from that of how Parliament itself was argued about outside. In other words, we need to consider attitudes to Parliament in an overall sense alongside the more specific question of Labour's negotiation of parliamentary conventions, protocol, and culture. Exploring the two themes together allows us to explore the implications of José Harris's observation that throughout the twentieth century 'the party's adherence to the orthodox principles of the British constitution (rooted in the sovereignty of Parliament) was... in latent tension with its role as a popular movement'.²¹ It also casts new light on the 'the transformation of British public politics after the First World War' highlighted by Jon Lawrence, whereby established politicians sought to distance themselves from rowdy behaviour in the sphere of extra-parliamentary politics.²²

Late-nineteenth-century observers detected 'a common understanding or consensus' between the two main British political parties about the basic forms of government.²³ Admiration for Parliament was

¹⁸ The phrase—if not the concept—was originally Walter Bagehot's and was later referred to by, amongst others, Harold Laski and Aneurin Bevan. N. St John Stevas, ed., *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot Vol. VII* (London, 1974), 106–33; H. Laski, *The Foundations of Sovereignty, and Other Essays* (London, 1921), 36; A. Bevan, *In Place of Fear* (London, 1952), 29.

¹⁹ K. Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society: The Experience of the British System since 1911* (London, 1979), esp. 22, 309. For contemporary criticism (not targeted particularly at Labour), see Lord Hewart, *The New Despotism* (London, 1929).

²⁰ S. Harris, 'Being Politically Impolite: Extending Politeness Theory to Adversarial Political Discourse', *Discourse & Society*, 12 (2001), 451–72, at 453.

²¹ J. Harris, 'Labour's Political and Social Thought', in D. Tanner *et al.*, eds, *Labour's First Century* (Cambridge, 2000), 8–45, at 15.

²² J. Lawrence, 'The Transformation of British Public Politics after the First World War', *Past & Present*, 190 (2006), 185–216.

²³ 'Party Government on the Continent', *Saturday Review*, 24 April 1897.

not completely hegemonic on the left, but many of the pioneers of the Labour Party had considerable respect for Parliament. Some of them, including MacDonald, gained experience in mock-Westminster 'local parliaments'—as well as in local councils, trades unions, and other rule-bound debating fora—and thus received a grounding in parliamentary ritual and rhetorical technique.²⁴ Respect for and knowledge of Parliament did not necessarily imply complete acceptance of the 'tardy methods' of the Commons, though.²⁵ The ILP was in the vanguard of reform proposals. Fred Jowett MP became the long-standing champion of a system whereby ministers' work would be carried out in conjunction with parliamentary committees, and this did eventually become part of the ILP programme in 1926.²⁶ And whereas this particular scheme did not achieve widespread mainstream Labour support, this is not to say that procedural reform in general was unpopular. As Taylor has shown, although MacDonald rejected Jowett's ideas, he 'took for granted radical parliamentary reform' in order to deliver socialism in a more business-like and efficient way.²⁷

Socialist radicals wanted to win parliamentary power, but in so doing to challenge the deferential behaviour of the existing 'Lib-Lab' workingmen MPs. Elected to the Commons for the first time in 1892, Keir Hardie made a class-symbolic sartorial statement by eschewing the typical uniform of frock coat and top hat in favour of a tweed suit and soft cap.²⁸ A 1906 Labour Party poster speaks of the conviction both that it was possible to make progress by taking control of the Commons, and that Parliament desperately needed shaking up. Figures representing 'Landlordism', 'Sweating', and 'Monopoly' threaten to tie up the vigorous Labour 'youngster'—now that he has broken his way into Parliament—with bonds marked 'speechifying', 'formality', 'antiquated procedure', etc. He responds: 'You just wait, I still have my axe.'²⁹ This surprisingly violent imagery did not suggest a supine readiness to accept the status quo.

The reality of course was rather less dramatic. It is hard to see the Edwardian Labour Party as much more than a junior partner to the Liberals, doing its best within the confines of the system to

²⁴ R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain* (Oxford, 1991), 22–3.

²⁵ See e.g. J. Hodge, *Workman's Cottage to Windsor Castle* (London, 1931), 152–3, 155–6.

²⁶ Wright, 'British Socialists', 326.

²⁷ Taylor, 'Labour and the Constitution', 155.

²⁸ C. Benn, *Keir Hardie* (London, 1992), 92–5.

²⁹ 'Labour Inside the Gate', 1906, reproduced in the frontispiece of Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, and discussed at 20. For the significance of posters during this period, see J. Thompson, 'Pictorial Lies? - Posters and Politics in Britain c.1880–1914', *Past & Present*, 197 (2007), 177–210.

achieve small-scale reforms within capitalism and within existing parliamentary procedure. The First World War, which split the Liberals and strengthened the unions, transformed Labour's fortunes. Arthur Henderson, the party's war-time leader wrote: 'The Labour Party can rehabilitate parliament in the eyes of the people who have been wearied by the unreal strife of the orthodox parties, and by the cumbrous working of the Parliamentary machine.'³⁰ But in the 1918 Parliament the PLP remained weak. The uninspired chairmanship of William Adamson (1917–21) and the rather stronger leadership of J. R. Clynes (1921–2) were insufficient to make much impression in the face of the enormous majority wielded by the Lloyd George coalition. According to its critics, Labour ran its parliamentary work merely 'as a side show to its trade union organization'.³¹ In the climate of the time, it was unsurprising that there was increasing discussion of non-parliamentary methods and of radical alterations to Parliament. Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (1920) proposed abolishing the House of Lords and splitting the House of Commons into a 'Political Parliament' and a 'Social Parliament'.³² Guild Socialism, based on the idea of 'functional representation', also enjoyed a brief vogue.³³ G. D. H. Cole was its chief proponent; Clement Attlee recalled being 'a good deal influenced' by his writings.³⁴ More important in terms of the party political discourse of the time, however, was the concept of 'direct action'—the use of industrial power outside Parliament for political ends.

Direct action was a short-lived phenomenon, owing to major setbacks such as the fragmentation of the Triple Alliance of three major unions on 'Black Friday' in 1921 in the face of large-scale unemployment.³⁵ (The unions should clearly not be seen as a potential source of a radical alternative to parliamentarism; in fact, their conservative behavioural norms to some degree contributed to Labour's constitutionalism.) It is not even probable that direct action's most celebrated 'victory'—the *Jolly George* affair, when dockers refused to load weapons onto a ship destined for anti-Soviet Poland—actually had an effect on government policy.³⁶ Nevertheless, it had the important effect of

³⁰ A. Henderson, *The Aims of Labour* (London, 1918), 62.

³¹ *Daily News*, 29 July 1921, quoted in 'The Failure of the Opposition', *The Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, August 1921.

³² S. Webb and B. Webb, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (London, 1920).

³³ G. D. H. Cole, *Guild Socialism* (Fabian Tract No. 192) (London, 1920), 6.

³⁴ C. R. Attlee, *As It Happened* (London, 1954), 53.

³⁵ A. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (3rd edn, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2008), 54–5.

³⁶ N. Davies, 'Lloyd George and Poland, 1919–20', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6 (1971), 132–54, at 143.

dividing the Labour Party. Clynes argued that the use of direct action would give other parts of the community an excuse 'to imitate the bad example which labour had set'.³⁷ Henderson, another leading moderate figure, equated direct action with Bolshevism and suggested that its advocates were alienating voters.³⁸ However, the proponents of direct action were not all extremists: indeed, they included some future stalwarts of the Attlee government. In 1919, Herbert Morrison argued that British intervention in the Russian civil war 'should be resisted with the full political and industrial power of the whole Trade Union movement', a view endorsed by the Labour Party conference.³⁹ In 1920, Ernest Bevin used his position as a dockers' leader to back the men of the *Jolly George* incident, and took a leading role in creating the Council of Action to combat intervention (although he later failed to support strike action in defence of the miners on Black Friday).⁴⁰ It should also be noted that many advocates of direct action saw it as a complement to parliamentary methods, not as an alternative.⁴¹ This, indeed, was MacDonald's formal position.

MacDonald's short book *Parliament or Revolution* (1919) rejected the latter option, as one would expect. However, it also made the more surprising argument that direct action was theoretically permissible and in certain conditions desirable:

I reject the argument that direct action is 'unconstitutional'—whatever that may mean; I deny that it is illegitimate; I do not believe that it is inconsistent with democratic Parliamentary government; I offer no hospitality to the views of a Leviathan State whether based upon the will of a monarch or that of a Parliamentary majority.

There were, however, important caveats. Direct action could only be used when Parliament had forfeited popular confidence: 'the demand for it can only arise when governors have created revolutionary conditions by their stupidities or oppressions; freedom prevents its being used for trivial grievances and forbids its becoming a regular feature of democratic activity'. (The 1918 Parliament was widely viewed as the illegitimate product of a rushed election in the emotional post-Armistice atmosphere.) In effect, then, as MacDonald himself admitted, he had in practice reached similar conclusions to the

³⁷ *Report of Proceedings at the Fifty-First Trades Union Congress* (London, 1919), 338–9.

³⁸ R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain* (Oxford, 1991), 56–7.

³⁹ Quoted in G. D. H. Cole, *History of the Labour Party from 1914* (London, 1948), 104.

⁴⁰ A. Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin Volume 1: Trade Union Leader 1881–1940* (London, 1960), 134–5, 178–9.

⁴¹ See e.g. D. Englander, 'The National Union of Ex-Servicemen and the Labour Movement, 1918–1920', *History*, 76 (1991), 24–42, at 38.

opponents of direct action even while he rejected their reasoning.⁴² His argument can be read both as an opportunistic attempt to retain influence with the Labour movement, and as an oblique attempt to convince 'revolutionists of the efficacy of parliamentarism', to quote a contemporary review.⁴³

Attacks on Labour's flirtation with direct action became a staple of Liberal and Conservative attacks on its constitutional credentials.⁴⁴ MacDonald's attempts to have things both ways made him vulnerable to the ridicule of his enemies. The Conservative magazine *The Popular View* used this technique in 1922:

Parliament, he argues, must be representative. When it ceases to be representative it is no longer Parliament. So direct action, he says, taken against a non-representative Parliament is not anti-Parliamentary action. Of course, he will decide when Parliament is non-representative and so, when direct action is justified.⁴⁵

However, the Conservatives themselves were susceptible to accusations of double standards. According to the *Daily Herald*, 'When the Council of Action, representing the mass of the workers of this country, did what the House of Commons ought to have done, and prevented war with Russia, it was assailed as a wrecker of society... When Mussolini actually practises Direct Action and boasts he has made a revolution, he is styled the noblest of patriots, and all the Reactionaries hasten to hand him bouquets.'⁴⁶ Within this atmosphere, MacDonald's approach may have made him seem more palatable to left-wing radicals than Henderson and Clynes were. In his (admittedly very

⁴² J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Parliament and Revolution* (Manchester, 1919), 69–84. Quotations at 69, 74, 75. See also R. E. Dowse, 'A Note on Ramsay MacDonald and Direct Action', *Political Studies*, 9 (1961), 306–8.

⁴³ P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism, and the British Left, 1881–1924* (London, 1998), 153; R. L. Schuyler, 'Review of *Parliament and Revolution*', *Political Science Quarterly*, 35 (1920), 669–71, at 671.

⁴⁴ See e.g. 'How To Get Real Progress', in Liberal Publication Department, *Pamphlets and Leaflets for 1919* (London, 1920); 'Vote for Colonel the Right Hon. Leslie Wilson, The Conservative Candidate', leaflet for the Portsmouth South by-election of 13 December 1922, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford (henceforward CPA), PUB 229/1/1; 'What I Stand for by Basil Murray Liberal Candidate', leaflet for the St Marylebone by-election of 30 April 1928, CPA PUB 229/1/4. It was sometimes suggested that those Labour figures who opposed direct action did so merely for political convenience and for the time-being only. See e.g. the cover cartoon of *The Popular View*, October 1922.

⁴⁵ 'Labour' MPs' New Leader. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald Resumes Pre-War Post', *The Popular View*, December 1922.

⁴⁶ 'When Direct Action is 'Patriotic'', *Daily Herald*, 23 November 1922. Throughout the 1920s, the Conservatives were accused of unconstitutional behaviour, sometimes on seemingly flimsy grounds. See e.g. 'James Chuter Ede', Labour Party leaflet for the Mitcham by-election of 3 March 1923, CPA, PUB 229/1/1; 'Oswald Mosley, The Labour Candidate', leaflet for the Smethwick by-election of 21 December 1926, CPA, PUB 229/1/3.

bitter) memoirs, written in the aftermath of the controversial events of 1931, Philip Snowden accused him of playing up to the left-wing at this time.⁴⁷ MacDonald, like Snowden, had lost his seat in 1918, and so, unlike Henderson and Clynes, was not a member of the PLP. (Henderson also lost in 1918 but was returned at a by-election the following year.) This meant that MacDonald avoided being associated with the perceived 'lamentable weakness of the Labour Party in the House of Commons'.⁴⁸ He himself was among the critics, writing in *Forward* in 1919 of the widespread 'feeling of Parliamentary weakness' he had encountered amongst Labour supporters, and finding fault with the PLP's Commons tactics.⁴⁹ He also wrote of 'the admitted fact' that, in its current condition, 'the complexity of Parliamentary representation makes not only Parliament itself ineffective but democracy a mere tool of capitalist dictatorship or a mere plaything in the hands of demagogues and party managers'.⁵⁰ He undoubtedly believed that, once Labour had a majority, this would cease to be the case.⁵¹ But his stance nonetheless appeared more radical and dynamic than that of his rivals. Clynes dared the proponents of direct action to taunt him 'with being more or less of a fogey'; MacDonald made every effort to avoid looking like one.⁵²

This was the context for MacDonald's defeat of Clynes for the chairmanship of the PLP after the general election of 1922. It is well known that he owed his narrow victory to the support of the Clydeside group of newly elected Scottish radical MPs. This group certainly perceived that MacDonald would be the more vigorous leader, but to what extent were their views affected by the men's respective attitudes to parliamentary tactics? Under Clynes, the PLP had not been completely quiescent. In September 1921, two Labour MPs were ordered to withdraw from the House after accusing government MPs of being 'political tricksters' and of winning 'a victory over starving children', in connection with unemployment policy. Clynes then led the rest of the party out in protest.⁵³ He was not enthusiastic about using

⁴⁷ P. Snowden, *An Autobiography Volume Two, 1919–1934* (London, 1934), 574.

⁴⁸ Comment of J. Paton: Independent Labour Party, *Report of the Annual Conference held at Southport, March 1921* (London, 1921), 132.

⁴⁹ J. Ramsay MacDonald, 'The Labour Party: Vandalism Triumphant', *Forward*, 1 November 1919.

⁵⁰ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Parliament and Democracy* (London, 1920), 64. The short chapter on 'The Labour Government and the Constitution' in J. H. Thomas's contemporaneous book *When Labour Rules* (London, 1920) had nothing to say about Parliament beyond advocating an elected second chamber.

⁵¹ As MacDonald observed: 'Get the proper Parliament, and political 'direct action' is unnecessary for Labour', *Parliament and Revolution*, 83.

⁵² *Report of Proceedings at the Fifty-First Trades Union Congress*, 339.

⁵³ The two MPs were W. Thorne and J. Jones: 'Larger Relief Demanded', *The Times*, 27 October 1921.

such methods to help the unemployed, though, recording in his memoirs that 'we were as yet too weak to interfere effectively on their behalf, and our absence served us no better than our presence'. He attributed his loss to MacDonald to the fact that the latter 'had gained the support of the left-wing group, who demanded more demonstrations in the Commons than I was prepared to approve'.⁵⁴ MacDonald had in fact never indicated that he was in favour of such demonstrations. However, at the crucial PLP meeting where the vote took place, he appeared more inclined than his opponent to fight the Speaker's ruling that Labour share the Opposition front bench with the Asquithian Liberals.⁵⁵ There was, in fact, nothing more to be done about the matter by this stage, but—although the Clydesiders' votes were already in the bag—the contrast between MacDonald's fieriness and Clynes's complacency may have won over some who wanted to see a new parliamentary style.

The opening of Parliament after the election—which coincided with the arrival of an unemployed march in London—provided a major flashpoint in the controversy over parliamentary methods. The desire of many of the Clydesiders to present themselves as spokesmen of the unemployed within the Commons led them to be challengingly vocal and, when they thought it necessary, to use disruption tactics. This contributed to an appearance of new vigour on behalf of the PLP as a whole, and as the PLP changed so Parliament changed with it. According to the ILP weekly *The New Leader*, 'By all night sittings, by organised guerrilla opposition, which anyone is free to call "obstruction," for all we care, Labour is making it impossible to forget the unemployed.'⁵⁶ Some of the Clydesiders initially showed scant regard for formal Commons conventions. For example, during his maiden speech, James Maxton corrected himself for addressing a fellow MP by name rather than constituency before adding 'but it does not matter a damn'.⁵⁷

Yet the forceful rhetorical style of the new MPs was quite as much of an issue as were the strict questions of protocol. To the left-wing *Daily Herald*, the efforts of the incomers represented 'a tidal wave from the democracy of the Kingdom – the voice of the people demanding a complete change in the system under which they suffer'.⁵⁸ To the reactionary *Morning Post*, by contrast, their speeches were 'examples of Bolshevik frightfulness well calculated for the end in view of disgusting the "workers" (and everybody else) with Parliament. Even,

⁵⁴ J. R. Clynes, *Memoirs 1869–1924* (London, 1937), 325–6, 330.

⁵⁵ D. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977), 287.

⁵⁶ 'Politics and Work', *New Leader*, 15 December 1922.

⁵⁷ G. Brown, *Maxton* (Edinburgh, 1986), 125.

⁵⁸ 'The Debate', *Daily Herald*, 24 November 1922.

when we come to think about it, the election of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald as Leader of the Labour Party may be part of this design.⁵⁹

A more typical and more measured Conservative reaction was to suggest that Labour MPs betrayed their ignorance of parliamentary tradition by importing 'leather lunged' street-corner methods into what ought to be a dignified setting.⁶⁰ Class and gender constructions were both at work here. Conservatives claimed that the agitational style of the neophytes was at odds with the supposedly traditional Commons speaking technique based on simplicity and restraint. Labour therefore was presented as being in breach of behavioural codes that were claimed as an eternal part of true Commons culture, but which in fact reflected a temporally specific set of elite masculine values.⁶¹ (The overall significance of women MPs should not be dismissed, but they were not a major feature of contemporary debates about rhetorical style.) Stuart Ball has accepted, too easily, that the failure of some Labour MPs to conform was evidence of poor quality speaking on their part.⁶² But those members who maintained a 'platform' style represented an alternative model of masculinity, based on different class norms, in which vehemence rather than restraint served as the token of the required sincerity.

Nevertheless, some established Labour figures shared the Conservative critique. Snowden recalled scathingly in his memoirs that 'To those of us who were well acquainted with the character of outdoor Socialist propaganda, their speeches had a familiar ring.'⁶³ And not all new MPs were devotees of the new style. Henry Snell made a maiden speech in which he spoke of the enduring spell that the Commons had first cast on him as a boy when he witnessed Gladstone in action from the gallery.⁶⁴ (Ironically, of course, Gladstone had been seen by critics in his own time as a demagogue, although Snell was a believer in restraint.) Other moderate figures, such as John Hodge, though, were prepared to defend the Clydesiders. In his memoirs, Hodge (who had served as a minister in the wartime Lloyd George

⁵⁹ 'Frightfulness in Parliament', *Morning Post*, 25 November 1922.

⁶⁰ See e.g. 'Lobby Notes by the New 'MP'', *The Popular View*, January 1923; and F. John Sherwood, 'If Socialists Ruled', *The Popular View*, May 1923. The quotation comes from 'Personalities', *The Man in the Street*, August 1924.

⁶¹ For the evolution of ideas about the politics of masculinity, see K. Good, "'Quit Ye Like Men': Platform Manliness and Electioneering, 1895–1939', in M. McCormack, ed., *Public Men: Masculinity Politics in Modern Britain* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2007), 143–64; and M. Francis, 'Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951–1963', *Journal of British Studies*, 41 (2002), 354–87.

⁶² S. Ball, 'Parliament and Politics in Britain, 1900–1951', *Parliamentary History*, 10 (2008), 243–76, at 266.

⁶³ Snowden, *Autobiography* Vol. 2, 577.

⁶⁴ Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol. 159, 30 November 1922, col. 1037.

coalition) noted that these men were 'filled with the emotions created as the result of the hardships and the miseries which they have observed and lived amongst'. It was no wonder, then, he thought, that they lost patience with the 'deliberate wasting of time in tedious speech making' that took place in the Commons. He asked: 'Who can blame earnest men when sometimes this waste of time is the cause of angry scenes.'⁶⁵ The radical Labour MP E. D. Morel, who was one of the new intake, also invoked the issue of class, although he himself was not from a working background: 'The hideous abuses and injustices which conceal themselves beneath the pomp and venerability of these ancient institutions and solemn pageantries of ours are being revealed in their nakedness by men who live among them.'⁶⁶ Arthur Ponsonby MP (son of Queen Victoria's private secretary) was another who claimed that the Labour influx had brought new life to the Commons, contrasting the current atmosphere to the 'bogus Parliament' headed by 'the Dictator Prime Minister' Lloyd George in 1918–22.⁶⁷

As these examples of Labour discourse surrounding Commons behaviour suggest, the class dynamics of the PLP were complex. The new influx of Labour MPs had substantially increased the working-class element in the Commons. At the same time, even as their numbers increased, the *percentage* of Labour MPs from working backgrounds declined, as the party gained recruits from (in particular) middle-class ex-Liberals.⁶⁸ These complexities were often lost on (or ignored by) Labour's critics. However, although it was often suggested that the party's behaviour in Parliament was evidence of its unfitness to govern, the response to breaches of convention was often one of patronizing amusement rather than genuine outrage. According to one Coalition Liberal MP, 'when honourable members are addressed as "dear friends" it is asking too much not to expect vocal smiles'.⁶⁹ One cartoon in *The Popular View* showed 'The Socialist Party' as a puppy, tearing up the pages of Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*.⁷⁰ The implication was that, although it was doing damage, it would in due course grow up and become house-trained. Labour MPs were thus belittled as being in need of correction and ridiculed by the suggestion that they would not be able to avoid being 'taken in hand'.⁷¹ For its part, *The Liberal*

⁶⁵ J. Hodge, *Workman's Cottage to Westminster*, (London, 1931), 155–6.

⁶⁶ E. D. Morel, 'First Impressions of Westminster and the Party', *New Leader*, 1 December 1922.

⁶⁷ A. Ponsonby, 'In the New Parliament', *New Leader*, 8 December 1922.

⁶⁸ M. Rush, *The Role of the Member of Parliament Since 1868: From Gentlemen to Players* (Oxford, 2001).

⁶⁹ G. H. Shakespeare, 'Impressions of the New Parliament', *British Weekly*, 14 December 1922.

⁷⁰ 'Puppyhood', *The Popular View*, January 1923.

⁷¹ For variants on this theme, see cartoons in the February and March 1923 issues of *The Popular View*.

Magazine criticized the 'theatrical Performance' by Labour members on 13 December 1922 when they made repeated interjections demanding to know what the government was going to do to help the unemployed: 'the Labour Members were already in possession of the information which they were now demanding with mock indignation and assumed despair'.⁷²

The criticism offered by Labour opponents was important because it shaped the environment in which MacDonald and his critics operated. Laura Beers has suggested that 'the hysterical representation of socialist politics by Labour's opponents helped to reinforce pre-existing tendencies towards gradualism, parliamentarism and financial orthodoxy within the movement, as party and trade union leaders shied away from policies and actions which could be presented as reckless or unconstitutional'.⁷³ This is correct (although representations often fell short of 'hysterical'), but the picture is incomplete. Certainly, MacDonald found the behaviour of some of his MPs problematic.⁷⁴ In public he emphasized that Labour would solve unemployment 'By the exercise of wisdom, not of fists', and contrasted the disciplined PLP he wanted to build with the supposedly 'slap-dash' methods of his critics.⁷⁵ However, he was not powerful enough to make all of his followers behave as he wished. Therefore, he played them on a long leash, leading to the Conservative accusations that he was a 'complacent' leader, who could have acted to restrain rowdy Labour MPs but chose not to.⁷⁶ In addition to laying down the law on Commons technique, MacDonald simultaneously indulged the firebrands and took the fight to the Tories. Thus, in an article for the *Socialist Review* early in 1923 he claimed that Labour's contributions had revived Parliament and given it a 'virile vigour'. He also justified some of the noisy behaviour that had taken place, and threw the blame for it on to the government. Moreover:

It is sheer nonsense to imagine that there will be no 'scenes,' or that 'scenes' are never justified, in Parliament. I have never known a Parliament without its scenes, the ugliest and the most insulting to the Speaker being that arranged by the Tory Party when the Parliament Bill [of 1911] was being discussed and the sitting had to be suspended. For any follower of the Tory or Liberal Party to hold

⁷² 'Notes of the Month', *Liberal Magazine*, January 1923.

⁷³ L. Beers, 'Counter-Toryism: Labour's Response to Anti-Socialist Propaganda', in M. Worley, ed., *The Foundations of the British Labour Party: Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Farnham, 2009), 231-54. Quotation at 233.

⁷⁴ Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 288.

⁷⁵ 'Labour Policy', *The Times*, 12 February 1923; Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 291; A. Morgan, *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (Manchester, 1987), 91.

⁷⁶ 'Lobby Notes By the New 'MP'', *The Popular View*, January 1923. See also the cartoon 'The 'Leader' and the 'Led'' in the same issue.

up horror-stricken eyes to heaven on account of disorderly Labour Members is only a proof of forgetfulness, of ignorance, or of hypocritical humbug.

Just as MacDonald had defended direct action in theory whilst opposing it in practice, so the real message of this article was that 'work in Parliament must be conducted under restraint'. Genuinely spontaneous 'scenes' were acceptable but it would 'fatal' for the PLP to make them into a habit.⁷⁷ In private his language was stronger. In July 1923, he appealed to his MPs 'for a greater measure of self-restraint and for a realisation of the fact that when a Labour Government arrives it will be greatly hampered if, in the meantime, Parliamentary Government has been destroyed'.⁷⁸

MacDonald, then, was indeed trying to steer his supporters towards moderation, his technique for doing so was complex. Lecturing MPs on the need for disciplined behaviour would have been unlikely to work in isolation. In order to bring them with him in his attempt to colonize the middle ground, he had to show, by the exposure of Conservative double standards, that he was ready to deny it aggressively to Labour's opponents. He did not merely assert Labour's constitutionalist credentials but contested those of the other parties. Whereas the Conservatives' behaviour during the Edwardian period of strife made them implausible defenders of the constitution, the Liberals were merely motivated by expediency. Thus: 'But for the stand which the Labour party had made for honest politics and proper Parliamentary action there would be no means for constitutionalism in this country at the present time.'⁷⁹ Such an ability to preach gradualism whilst maintaining robust attacks on Labour's enemies helps explain MacDonald's personal popularity within the party up to 1931, as well as his electoral success.

The year 1923 witnessed further parliamentary 'scenes'. The most spectacular, in April, involved 'actual scimmages, and many threats of violence', and the singing of *The Red Flag*. The government had been defeated the previous day over the question of the treatment of ex-servicemen entering the civil service, and it was its failure to make clear how it was going to respond to the defeat that led to the Labour attempt to prevent the transaction of further business until it did so. The behaviour was justified with reference to the precedent of a similar Conservative action against the Liberals in November 1912. As on that

⁷⁷ J. Ramsay MacDonald, 'The Party in Parliament', *Socialist Review*, January 1923.

⁷⁸ Minutes of a meeting of the PLP held at Caxton Hall, 3 July 1923. Consulted on microfilm: *The Archives of the Parliamentary Labour Party* (Brighton, 1985).

⁷⁹ 'Labour Leader's Vision', *The Times*, 3 December 1923.

occasion, the episode culminated in the Speaker suspending the sitting.⁸⁰ ('Rowdyism', then, could actually be justified in terms of 'parliamentary tradition'.) In June, Maxton's allegation that an aspect of government welfare policy constituted 'murder' led to his suspension from the Commons, together with three other Clydeside MPs who backed him up when he refused to withdraw his remark.⁸¹ Such events were presented by Labour's media machine presented as a sign of its determination to uphold justice, and by its opponents as a disgraceful interruption of the House of Commons as it attempted to do 'the work of the people'.⁸²

The advent of the short-lived Labour government of 1924 had a calming effect on the PLP.⁸³ MacDonald tried to make the best of his lack of a majority by emphasizing the responsibility of MPs to vote 'as responsible Members of the House and not merely as party politicians'.⁸⁴ *The New Leader* cast this as a new dawn for Parliament.⁸⁵ In fact, MacDonald became irritated with what he saw as excessive parliamentary discussion.⁸⁶ But although the government did suffer from tensions between ministers and backbenchers, parliamentary 'scenes' did not have the same utility for left-wingers as they had done when Labour was in Opposition. Obstruction now was the preserve of Liberals and Tories, leading MacDonald to fulminate: 'unless there is going to be some sort of ordinary decency in Parliamentary tactics it is not only the Government which will suffer, but the House of Commons itself which will be brought into contempt'.⁸⁷ Naturally, his was a highly partisan interpretation of 'ordinary decency', and after the fall of the Labour government, his behaviour as Leader of the Opposition attracted equally partisan criticism from Conservatives.

A 1925 *Punch* cartoon shows Baldwin (who had replaced Bonar Law as his party's leader in 1923) and MacDonald as competing rugby captains, under the watchful eye of Speaker J. H. Whitley in the guise of the referee. Baldwin expresses the hope that there won't be

⁸⁰ 'Uproar in The Commons', *The Times*, 12 April 1923.

⁸¹ 'Uproar in The Commons', *The Times*, 23 June 1923.

⁸² 'Notes of the Month', *The Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, May 1923.

⁸³ Stanley Baldwin to George V, 17 January 1924, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 60; A. Ponsonby, 'On the Eve of Historic Change', *New Leader*, 18 January 1924.

⁸⁴ Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol. 169, 12 February 1924, col. 746.

⁸⁵ 'The Commons in Power', *New Leader*, 15 February 1924.

⁸⁶ Ramsay MacDonald diary, 2 March 1924, PRO 30/69/1753, The National Archives, Kew, London (henceforward TNA). Anyone wishing to quote these diaries is obliged to explain that MacDonald meant them simply 'as notes to guide and revive memory' and did not intend them to be published.

⁸⁷ 'Labour in Office: Special Interview with the Prime Minister', *New Leader*, 11 April 1924.

any 'rough play' between the teams, and promises a sympathetic MacDonald: 'Well, I'll keep an eye on my right wing if you'll keep an eye on your left.'⁸⁸ The allusion to the role of Whitley (who served from 1921 to 1928) was significant. He received a fair amount of criticism from Tories for alleged weakness in the face of Labour's rowdy behaviour.⁸⁹ There were some elements of truth in the picture painted by *Punch*, but the idea of the Westminster fight being governed by collusion between the two leaders is short of the mark. It seems doubtful, in particular, that the Prime Minister felt that MacDonald had successfully tamed his left-wing. When Parliament was sitting Baldwin sent daily letters to the King describing and commenting on events there. These letters were likely drafted for him, but there is no reason to think that they did not reflect his views, and they are at any rate a useful source of partisan commentary. One such letter in 1927 complained that 'The back bench Socialists seem to arrogate to themselves the right to indulge, both in the House of Commons and outside it, in the wildest possible statements or accusations of the most provocative character and calculated to offend both the public and personal feelings of their opponents. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that their violent and abusive tactics have been treated with quite remarkable patience and conciliation, they explode in outbursts of rhetorical imagination whenever a Conservative Member is carried away to the extent of making a provocative or inflammatory remark.'⁹⁰

Nonetheless, with some prominent exceptions such as George Lansbury and Josiah Wedgwood, the PLP shared MacDonald's view that it would be counter-productive to attempt to obstruct all government business, as the IPP had attempted in the late nineteenth century.⁹¹ There was however a more general opinion that some forms of disruption were acceptable in response to provocation by the other side. As Conservatives had themselves created major 'scenes' before 1914, their criticisms of Labour now could easily be painted as hypocritical. Thus although MacDonald was strengthening his hold over his MPs, this was at the price of him continuing to tolerate some unruly behaviour, and even to defend his supporters against

⁸⁸ 'A Fellow Feeling', *Punch*, 18 November 1925.

⁸⁹ See e.g. E. Winterton, *Orders of the Day* (London, 1953), 107. The criticism was not unanimous. See Andrew Bonar Law to George V, 14 December 1922, Baldwin Papers, Cambridge University Library, Vol. 60, and 'Inside the House', *The Man in the Street*, July 1928.

⁹⁰ Baldwin to George V, 17 February 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 62.

⁹¹ Howell, *MacDonald's Party*, 29, 35. For contrasting views of the Irish precedent, see J. Ramsay MacDonald, 'The Session', *Forward*, 23 December 1922, and 'MPs Should be Lively', *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 28 February 1925.

excessively strict discipline by the Commons authorities.⁹² The failure of the General Strike is rightly seen as the moment that finally put paid to direct action and moved the unions firmly back towards electoral politics and the attempt to secure a Labour majority in Parliament.⁹³ There were broader issues of 'respectability' surrounding the strike: the related coal dispute saw considerable emphasis by strikers on their right to a wage that would allow them to live 'respectably'.⁹⁴

The new strategy did not mean quiescence within Parliament itself, nor an end to the familiar charges that the party was bringing the Commons into disrepute. In July 1926, the Conservative MP Duff Cooper alleged that 'The Opposition are ceasing to be respectable', a comment that could have been read as a deadly class insult.⁹⁵ The following year a writer in the *Liberal Magazine* complained about Labour's indiscipline: 'Out of this free-lance business emerges a continual affirmation of class distinction. Not only is the Labour view the only one that matters: the working-classes... are the only elements of the nation to be considered by the legislative assembly'.⁹⁶ Nicholas Owen has written that on the Labour side Parliament 'was regarded as a class-neutral arena'.⁹⁷ This may have been true of some MPs, but as a general proposition it seems doubtful, and clearly Labour's opponents would not have accepted this account.⁹⁸ It is perhaps better to say that Labour saw Parliament as a *potentially* class-neutral arena, once put to proper use once the party itself had a majority.

MacDonald was often visibly displeased by his MPs' behaviour, but his rebukes of them tended to be indirect, and at times he appeared even to egg them on.⁹⁹ One notable outbreak took place in November 1927, when Labour MPs demanded that Baldwin himself, rather than the responsible minister, give the official reply to an Opposition-sponsored debate on the coal industry. The uproar when he refused led to the sitting to be suspended. According to Baldwin's letter to the

⁹² For one such episode, see C. Kessler, ed., *The Diaries of a Cosmopolitan 1918–1937: Count Harry Kessler* (London, 1999) 255 (entry for 5 March 1925), and Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol. 181, 9 March 1925, col. 1941.

⁹³ See e.g. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 441–2.

⁹⁴ See e.g. 'Miners and the Government', *The Times*, 28 August 1926.

⁹⁵ 'First Citizen', 'The Comedy of Westminster', *Saturday Review*, 17 July 1926. For Duff Cooper's authorship of this regular column, see his memoirs: *Old Men Forget* (London, 1954), 144.

⁹⁶ M. J. Landa, 'Labour's Parliamentary Failure', *Liberal Magazine*, April 1927.

⁹⁷ Owen, 'MacDonald's Parties', 52.

⁹⁸ Aneurin Bevan (first elected 1929) later pointed out that the 'physical arrangements outside the Chamber' were 'steeped in class bias'. This was a reference to the lack of office space for MPs; as Bevan explained, the assumption was 'that Members of Parliament are well-to-do and possess houses within easy reach of the House of Commons': *In Place of Fear* (London, 1952), 10. See also P. Hastings, *The Autobiography of Patrick Hastings* (London, 1948), 229.

⁹⁹ 'Political Notes', *The Times*, 1 July 1926.

King, 'It had all the appearance of being a pre-conceived plan. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, in the course of his opening speech, made repeated allusions to the Prime Minister's intentions which could have had no other effect than to stimulate his more irresponsible and excitable followers and encourage them to take violent action.' The letter also noted that Kirkwood 'caused intense amusement by leaping excitedly to his feet and asking the Speaker whether his Party were not acting "perfectly Parliamentary" in their method of procedure'.¹⁰⁰ Although 'one or two firebrands' such as Kirkwood appear to have taken the lead in this instance, much of the disruption was carried out by mining MPs, showing that this type of activity was not the exclusive preserve of the Clydesiders.¹⁰¹

The concept of 'perfectly Parliamentary' disruption is perhaps the key to understanding Labour MPs' behaviour. By the time of the 1929 Labour government, there had been a considerable measure of adaption to the norms of the House of Commons, but it was still often felt desirable to use disorder to make principled points, albeit within certain limits. A clear sense of the bounds of acceptability can be gained from the notorious episode in 1930 in which the ILP MP (and future fascist) John Beckett seized the Commons mace. Beckett did this in an attempt to halt the suspension of his colleague Fenner Brockway, who in turn was defying the Speaker in protest at the government's refusal to have a debate on Indian affairs. Beckett did not receive universal condemnation on the left but the general consensus, expressed by the *New Statesman*, was that he had 'made an idiot of himself'.¹⁰² The PLP voted to condemn his action, by 90 votes to 28.¹⁰³ Brockway himself felt that Beckett's action 'had destroyed the dignity of the protest and its purpose'.¹⁰⁴ It was permissible to break the rules, then, in a measured and symbolic way, but such actions had to have their own form of decorum.

Even before 1929 some Conservatives detected signs that Labour MPs had ceased scoffing and begun 'to appreciate the ancient forms and formulas' of Parliament.¹⁰⁵ Miliband's account makes much of how the atmosphere of the Commons turned 'erstwhile agitators into subdued parliamentarians'.¹⁰⁶ Labour MPs did on the whole adjust to the formal ceremonial traditions of Parliament, albeit not always with a

¹⁰⁰ Baldwin to George V, 17 November 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 62.

¹⁰¹ 'Coal Debate Burked', *The Times*, 17 November 1927.

¹⁰² *New Statesman*, 26 July 1930. Beckett received enthusiastic support from his constituency party. F. Beckett, *The Rebel Who Lost his Cause: The Tragedy of John Beckett, MP* (London, 1999), 95.

¹⁰³ Minutes of the PLP, 30 July 1930.

¹⁰⁴ Beckett, *The Rebel Who Lost His Cause*, 93.

¹⁰⁵ 'Quill, MP', 'Pen Pictures from Parliament', *Home and Politics*, November 1928.

¹⁰⁶ Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, 95–6.

sense of uncritical reverence. Jennie Lee found the elaborate procedure by which new members were obliged to bow to the Speaker to be 'rather a fantastic way of fighting the class-war' but submitted to guidance on how to do it because she was 'glad enough to be saved from making any unnecessary blunders'.¹⁰⁷

However, some, such as the upper-class future Chancellor Hugh Dalton, consciously wanted to counteract the perceived danger of 'Parliamentary creeping paralysis', and prided themselves on not socializing with MPs from other parties.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, not all ritual went unchallenged. When Snell proposed the 'humble address' in reply to the 1929 King's Speech wearing 'ordinary morning dress' rather than the traditional court dress, resisting pressure from his own side to conform. Snell's version of Christian Socialism blended radicalism and puritanism; his self-confessed 'puritanical bias' was more important to him than the strict observance of tradition.¹⁰⁹ Nor did the influence of the Commons always serve to blunt the forcefulness of Labour's contributions. After witnessing Duff Cooper's powerful maiden speech, E. Rosslyn Mitchell, the Labour MP for Paisley, wrote to congratulate him: 'I was told that the House listened only to the peculiar and irritating style, known as the House of Commons manner, which is made up of hesitation, eh-ahing and a crowd of clichés of the "venture to suggest", "make bold to say" sort. Now you have proved what I was told is untrue.'¹¹⁰ Some Labour members continued to breach convention by delivering controversial maiden speeches, either deliberately (as in the case of Herbert Morrison) or because no one had explained the custom to them (as in that of Leah Manning).¹¹¹ Oswald Mosley credited Jack Jones with bringing 'to an end in the House of Commons the habit of Latin quotation, which he would invariably greet with a stentorian roar: "That is the winner of the two-thirty"'.¹¹² Labour MPs, then, did not simply acclimatize themselves to a static culture; rather, they themselves helped shape the ever-developing informal conventions of the Commons.

Even more importantly, broad accommodation to established parliamentary forms cannot be straightforwardly conflated with movement to the political right, as Miliband's account might perhaps be taken

¹⁰⁷ J. Lee, *To-Morrow Is A New Day* (London, 1939), 124.

¹⁰⁸ H. Dalton, 'First Impressions of Parliament', *New Leader*, 2 January 1925; H. Dalton, *Call Back Yesterday: Memoirs 1887-1931* (London, 1953), 256.

¹⁰⁹ Lord Snell, *Men, Movements and Myself* (London, 1936), 226. For the issues surrounding court dress, see Owen, 'MacDonald's Parties', 15-6.

¹¹⁰ E. Rosslyn Mitchell to D. Cooper, 15 December 1924, quoted in Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, 140.

¹¹¹ H. Morrison, *An Autobiography* (London, 1960), 95; L. Manning, *A Life for Education: An Autobiography* (London, 1970), 88.

¹¹² O. Mosley, *My Life* (London, 1968), 211.

to imply. Figures such as Kirkwood and Maxton eventually became much-loved parliamentary characters, but under the latter's leadership in the late 1920s, the ILP swung to the left, alienating many of its more mainstream members in the process. In 1932 (by which time its representation in the Commons was reduced to a mere handful) it disaffiliated from the Labour Party, committing itself to 'militant Socialist policies'.¹¹³ At the ILP conference of that year, Brockway declared:

we are living in a fool's paradise if we think that a majority in Parliament is enough. Socialist legislation would undoubtedly meet with resistance, not only from the House of Lords (a minor obstruction), but from the aristocratic, plutocratic, financial and capitalist classes generally. Organised action by the working class in the country would almost certainly be necessary to support the political action of their representatives in Parliament.¹¹⁴

In other words, 'perfectly Parliamentary' behaviour within the precincts of the Commons did not necessarily equate to strategic parliamentarism in the sense that MacDonald understood it.

The context for these developments was, of course the 1931 economic and political crisis, and MacDonald's perceived betrayal of Labour by forming the 'National Government'. The impact on the Labour Party as a whole was profound, although on the face of it its reaction was quite different to that of the ILP. It did not revert back towards direct action or (for the most part) embrace the language of revolution. Nor, although it saw the National Government as a fraudulent, and as 'Virtually a Tory Dictatorship', did Labour revert to disruptive parliamentary tactics or 'scenes'.¹¹⁵ Indeed, with its severely reduced numbers after the 1931 election, it would have been difficult to generate the kind of uproar required to make them effective. Meanwhile, there were on-going tensions between the party conference (theoretically the body determined all party policy), the PLP (determined to safeguard its day-to-day independence), and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) (which was keen to remind Labour's National Executive that the party had been 'created by the Trade Union Movement to do those things in

¹¹³ Independent Labour Party, *The Report of the Annual Conference Held at Blackpool March, 1932* (London, 1932), 62.

¹¹⁴ ILP, *Report of the Annual Conference*, 13. This in fact represented a moderate position within the ILP in contrast to those who saw 'worker's councils' as an alternative to Parliament, rather than merely as one possible site of struggle: G. Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream: The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007), 113.

¹¹⁵ W. Dobbie's election address for the Rotherham by-election, 7 February 1933, CPA, PUB 229/1/6.

Parliament which the Trade Union Movement found ineffectively performed by the two-Party system'.¹¹⁶

It should not be imagined that the Commons of the 1930s was entirely quiescent. It is striking, though, that in 1935 Baldwin praised the diminutive PLP for having 'helped to keep the flag of Parliamentary government flying', an easy enough thing to say at a point that it posed no real threat to his party, of course, but also a token of how accusations of rowdiness within the Commons were a thing of the past.¹¹⁷ Ellen Wilkinson, returning to Parliament that same year turned the death of the earlier style into a virtue, portraying it as a sign of political 'seriousness'.¹¹⁸ It might seem, then, that Labour was now fully confirmed in its parliamentarist respectability.

However, acceptance of the outward forms of conduct notwithstanding, 1931—and the events that led up to it—actually undermined Labour's faith in Parliament very considerably. This did not mean, it should be emphasized, that any of its thinkers or politicians wanted to abolish it, or that (unlike the ILP) they placed any hope in the extra-parliamentary route. Rather, they were increasingly doubtful about the ability of Parliament, in the absence of procedural reform, to deliver the social and economic transformation that the party desired. As we have seen, there had, in the past, been a fair measure of interest in such reform and this continued to some extent in the 1920s. The 1922 party conference accepted a resolution in favour of reform, which was reflected in that year's election manifesto. But neither the 1923, 1924, or 1929 manifestos made mention of the idea, even though MacDonald himself felt the need for greater efficiency. However, the failure of the second Labour government to tackle unemployment led to growing doubts the capacity of the parliamentary system as a whole to respond meaningfully to economic crisis. This was exemplified by the radical reform proposals of Mosley, who then left Labour to form the New Party and subsequently the British Union of Fascists. But although Mosley marginalized himself, some of his key concerns were more widely shared.¹¹⁹ The political and economic events surrounding the formation of the National Government enhanced Labour's sense of the need for drastic action to dynamize the government machine.

¹¹⁶ Comments of Walter Citrine, minutes of a Joint Meeting of the TUC General Council and the National Executive Committee, 10 October 1931. Consulted on microfilm: *The Archives of the British Labour Party* (Brighton, 1974–9).

¹¹⁷ Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol. 302, 22 May 1935, col. 371.

¹¹⁸ E. Wilkinson, 'Back to the House Again', *Daily Mail*, 22 November 1935.

¹¹⁹ B. Webb, *A New Reform Bill* (Fabian Tract No. 236) (London, 1931); R. Butt, *The Power of Parliament* (London, 1969), 129–30; M. Worley, *Oswald Mosley and the New Party* (Basingstoke, 2010), 17–21.

The party's 1931 manifesto, therefore, promised that Labour would 'seek such emergency powers as are necessary to the full attainment of its objectives'. The 1935 version, whilst stressing Labour's constitutionalism, pledged both to 'abolish the House of Lords and improve the procedure of the House of Commons'.¹²⁰ The more detailed party programme *For Socialism and Peace* (1934) explained that the present forms of parliamentary government 'were devised to suit the purposes of the negative State in the nineteenth century, and are unsuited to the needs of the positive State in the twentieth'. The 'old-fashioned procedure of the House of Commons which facilitates obstruction and delay' would therefore be rationalized to expedite the through-put of government business. The historic rights of the Opposition to criticize, censure, and discuss were not to be affected, it was said.¹²¹

Reforms in this spirit were in due course carried out early in the life of the Attlee government. Comparatively modest as they were, it may be thought that they were of no great significance.¹²² The thinking that lay behind them, however, was highly revealing of Labour's post-1931 attitudes. At this time there was growing faith in economic planning and in the capacity of technocratic experts to carry it out.¹²³ Labourites in no way saw themselves as wishing to dampen free speech, but they did think that it was possible to have too much of a good thing. 'It is of the essence of democracy that there should be reasonable and adequate, but not excessive, facilities for Parliamentary discussion' wrote Dalton. Moreover, 'The critic's contemptuous description of Parliament as a "talking shop" is not unmerited.'¹²⁴ Discussion was valuable because it could help improve the details of legislation and hold the executive to account; but Parliament was fundamentally a mechanism for putting into effect a broad party platform chosen by the voters, not a forum for independent-minded MPs to exercise their individual judgements. Party discipline was therefore the key, and, as Clement Attlee explained, willingness to subordinate one's conscience to it was a sign of one's acceptance 'of the fundamental principle of democracy – majority rule'.¹²⁵ Such attitudes extended through and beyond the life

¹²⁰ Labour Party, *Report of the Twenty-Second Annual Conference* (London, 1922), 239; F. W. S. Craig, ed., *British General Election Manifestos 1918–1966* (Chichester, 1970), 14, 69, 83. For MacDonald's views, see 'Special Report from the Select Committee on Procedure on Public Business' (London, 1931), 1–21.

¹²¹ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace: The Labour Party's Programme of Action* (London, 1934). See also Labour Party, *Report of the 34th Annual Conference* (London, 1934), 261–3.

¹²² H. Morrison, *Government and Parliament: A Survey from the Inside* (London, 1954), 206–20.

¹²³ D. Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1997); R. Toye, *The Labour Party and the Planned Economy, 1931–1951* (London, 2003).

¹²⁴ H. Dalton, *Practical Socialism for Britain* (London, 1935), 45–6.

¹²⁵ C. R. Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective* (London, 1937), 126.

of the 1945 Labour government. Aneurin Bevan argued in *In Place of Fear* (1952) that were Parliament to fail to transfer economic power from private to public hands it would undermine its own authority, because 'People have no use for a freedom which cheats them of redress.' In this analysis, 'government by discussion' was only valuable if it led quickly to firm action of a particular kind.¹²⁶

In the thirties, the more radical expressions of this type of thinking were associated with Sir Stafford Cripps and his Socialist League. Cripps's talk of sweeping emergency powers and of prolonging the life of a Labour government without an election allowed the Conservatives to tar Labour with the brush of 'dictatorship', Baldwin's supposed admiration for the PLP's parliamentarism notwithstanding. Moderates in the party and trade union leadership were infuriated, and Cripps's comments were repudiated by the official Labour machine.¹²⁷ Yet, his Labour opponents themselves wanted stronger powers for ministers. If the specific reforms to parliamentary procedure that they proposed were in fact fairly limited, this was partly because they saw ways to achieve what they wanted by more extensive use of existing techniques, such as delegated legislation. Indeed, they expressed admiration for the way that the National Government had used Orders in Council extensively since 1931; the substance had been wrong but the technique right. 'Parliament should settle general principles,' Dalton wrote. 'Ministers should settle their detailed application.'¹²⁸ Respect for Parliament's 'jolt forward' under the National Government was shared even on what is sometimes thought of as the sentimental left. 'The House is every day becoming more and more like a machine', observed Lansbury, the Labour leader from 1931 to 1935. 'And the House is not therefore getting more useless, it is daily becoming more and more efficient.'¹²⁹

In due course, the Attlee government inherited the sweeping emergency powers granted to the government by Parliament during the Second World War. It retained many of them for the purposes of carrying out its post-war reconstruction programme.¹³⁰ This was not wholly uncontroversial, and there was substantial economic decontrol in the decade after 1945, but some wartime powers ended up on the

¹²⁶ Bevan, *In Place of Fear*, 29.

¹²⁷ Pimlott, *Labour and the Left*, 50–3; W. Frame, "'Sir Stafford Cripps and His Friends': The Socialist League, the National Government and the Reform of the House of Lords 1931–1935', *Parliamentary History*, 24 (2005), 316–31.

¹²⁸ Dalton, *Practical Socialism*, 61.

¹²⁹ G. Lansbury, *Looking Backwards – And Forwards* (London, 1935), 89.

¹³⁰ N. Rollings, 'The Reichstag Method of Governing?' The Attlee Governments and Permanent Economic Controls', in H. Mercer *et al.*, eds, *Labour Governments and Private Industry: The Experience of 1945–1951* (Edinburgh, 1992), 15–36.

statute book permanently.¹³¹ This represented a continuation of the long-standing trend, in train since at least the First World War, whereby the executive (and, arguably, corporatist interest groups) gained power at the expense of the legislature.¹³² Labour ministers presented their methods as a modern, streamlined, technique for dealing with the growing mass of complex business: they and their officials could take care of details, Parliament would retain broad oversight.¹³³ And, doubtless, they and many other Labour members maintained a sincere love of the House of Commons as an institution. (However, the puritanical streak which disapproved of pomp continued to find support amongst a minority of MPs for many decades, and likely generated considerable resonance with many ordinary party members.) Nonetheless, it is possible to reach the conclusion that Parliament was now increasingly regarded by the party's leaders mainly as a useful mechanism for processing a legislative programme, that is to say as an adjunct to the strong Cabinet government that would allow Labour to deliver on its electoral 'mandate'. None of them would have denied the importance of debate; but they thought that Parliament's central purpose was to *do* things, not to talk about them. From today's perspective that view may seem wholly unexceptional. It contrasted, though, with an alternative vision—ably voiced by the Labour MP Maurice Webb in 1945—which saw the 'central function' of the Commons 'as the great forum of public debate on public policy, and a general clearing house for the people's aspirations'.¹³⁴

In conclusion, it is clear that the predominant historiographical picture of Labour as the repository of a more or less undifferentiated 'parliamentarism' is unsatisfactory. It neglects the differing views within the party on how Parliament was to be used and ignores the tactical nods that MacDonald was obliged to make towards the principle of direct action and the use of Commons disruption. The consequence is that, while some historians have disapproved of parliamentarism, they have never doubted that MacDonald was the quintessential embodiment of it. Yet, there is an argument to be made that in fact his confidence in Parliament as a part of a rational public sphere was rather limited. He may have been influenced by his memories of wartime xenophobia in 1899–1902 and 1914–8. He saw little innate value in parliamentary speech, which he saw as a distraction from meaningful activity. 'I dread H. of C. speechifying

¹³¹ R. Norton-Taylor *et al.*, *Knee Deep in Dishonour: The Scott Report and its Aftermath* (London, 1996), 41.

¹³² Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society*.

¹³³ Morrison, *Government and Parliament*, 150–4.

¹³⁴ Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol. 415, 15 November 1945, col. 2371. Emphasis added.

more than ever', he wrote in his diary in 1929. 'Foolishly I moan: "Why must a P.M. speak who wants to do work?"' Encouraged by the Labour press, his own backbenchers talked too much, and when he talked the Liberals and Conservatives would not listen to him.¹³⁵ 'Herbert, I hate this place', he once commented to Herbert Morrison as they sat together on the Treasury Bench—an understandable feeling, perhaps, given his government's difficulties.¹³⁶

By contrast, many of the new Labour MPs came to Parliament vesting enormous hope in it. They may not have been truly convinced that they were going to persuade their opponents in the Commons through debate, or indeed have expected to have their own minds changed through the interplay of conflicting ideas. But they did believe that the Commons chamber was an appropriate pulpit from which to deliver a form of morally compelling speech that would awaken the country to the plight of the working classes. This was not just the preserve of the Clydesiders. 'We can make the House of Commons a sounding-board for words of hope that shall reach that greater audience outside', wrote Dalton in 1925.¹³⁷ Presented by Labour's enemies as a form of populist demagoguery, to its proponents the type of speech would give a new vitality to Parliament. In the simplest terms, they believed that the things they did within the walls of the Commons would actually change things.

In that sense of the word, then, the 1920s were Labour's true parliamentarist moment. Disillusion did not long follow. Bevan was first elected in 1929. His later account of the Labour member's typical experience of delivering a maiden speech is extremely telling:

Having come straight from contact with his constituents, he is full of their grievances and his own resentment, and naturally, he does his best to shock his listeners into some realisation of it.

He delivers himself therefore with great force and, he hopes and fears, with considerable provocativeness. When his opponent arises to reply he expects to hear an equally strong and uncompromising answer. His opponent does nothing of the sort. In strict conformity with Parliamentary tradition, he congratulates the new Member upon a most successful maiden speech and expresses the urbane hope that the House will have frequent opportunities of hearing him in the future...the new member crawls out of the House with feelings of deep relief at having got it over, mingled with a

¹³⁵ MacDonald diary, 2 July 1929, as well as the entry for 3 December 1924, PRO 30/69/1753, TNA.

¹³⁶ Morrison, *Government and Parliament*, 170.

¹³⁷ Dalton, 'First Impressions of Parliament', 2 January 1925.

paralysing sense of frustration. The stone he thought he had thrown turned out to be a sponge.¹³⁸

Neither such experiences nor the crisis of 1931 turned Labour against Parliament; but never again would the party place such confidence in it.¹³⁹ They did not at all give up the belief that a Labour government with a parliamentary majority could genuinely transform society. But they no longer felt that it was Commons speeches that would make the difference. (This complicates Lawrence's claim that 'Most inter-war politicians wanted to substitute a deliberative for a demonstrative model of citizenship': Labour was certainly demonstrative in Parliament in the twenties, but it also placed a higher value on *speech* than that it did later.)¹⁴⁰ In 1945 the old hands explained to the newcomers that their contribution was to be negligible: 'Keep mum, and let the Bills get through.'¹⁴¹ Baldwin is said to have seen his role in relation to the Labour Party as to 'instruct the new arrivals in the limitations of parliamentary government'.¹⁴² It is indeed fair to say that the inter-war experience taught Labour not the possibilities of Parliament but its limits.

¹³⁸ Bevan, *In Place of Fear*, 7.

¹³⁹ Of course, every new intake of MPs experiences some form of frustrated optimism; but no subsequent generation has placed such faith in Parliament (even in the absence of a Commons majority), as distinct from vesting hopes in a newly elected Labour government.

¹⁴⁰ J. Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford, 2009), 128.

¹⁴¹ J. Mann, *Woman in Parliament* (London, 1962), 13.

¹⁴² Bevan, *In Place of Fear*, 26.