



Bridgewater State University

Virtual Commons - Bridgewater State University

Honors Program Theses and Projects

Undergraduate Honors Program

8-2-2022

A Leap in the Dark: How Benjamin Disraeli's 1867 Reform Bill Remade the Tory Party

Eric Beauregard
Bridgewater State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj



Part of the [European History Commons](#), and the [Political History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Beauregard, Eric. (2022). A Leap in the Dark: How Benjamin Disraeli's 1867 Reform Bill Remade the Tory Party. In *BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects*. Item 501. Available at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/501
Copyright © 2022 Eric Beauregard

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

A Leap in the Dark: How Benjamin Disraeli's 1867 Reform Bill Remade the Tory Party

Eric Beauregard

Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Departmental Honors in History

Bridgewater State University

December 2, 2021

Dr. Sarah Wiggins, Thesis Advisor

Dr. Bingyu Zheng, Committee Member

Dr. Leonid Heretz, Committee Member

“I have seen in my time several monopolies terminated, and recently I have seen the termination of the monopoly of Liberalism.”¹ To a modern audience, Disraeli’s proclamation of the death of Liberalism’s monopoly may seem a little premature, however his words ring true. After his landmark voter reform bill in 1867, the era of Tory Democracy, or One Nation Conservatism, bolstered by an increase in voting constituents, made the Tory Party more politically relevant than ever before seen. Add on top of this a theoretical increase in the electorate of 138 percent and it is not hard to see why Disraeli was lauded as a champion of the people and gifted with a laurel wreath in celebration of its passage.² In any event, Disraeli is almost solely responsible for an ideological revolution within the Conservative Party that saw him unseat his elder peers and drag the Tories to his vision of a party to this very day.

Why was Benjamin Disraeli and his political revolution within the Conservative Party of England so important to the history of England as a whole? As a study on working-class Conservatism showed, between the years of 1885-1918, Conservatives captured 47 percent of Parliamentary seats and cast 48.7 percent of total votes in Parliamentary elections.³ This fact was only made possible through Disraeli’s championing of the 1867 Reform Act and his vision for what Conservatism meant thereafter.

Publications on Benjamin Disraeli tend to focus on popular topics like his clashes with William Gladstone, career as an author, or supposed opportunistic character. Biographers like Robert Blake have produced retellings of Disraeli’s life encompassing several volumes, and there are a multitude of writings on the lasting legacy he left on the Conservative Party and the

¹ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 171.

² Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 25.

³ Shannon, Richard. *The Age of Disraeli 1868-1881*. New York NY: Longman Inc., 1992. 1.

United Kingdom as a whole.⁴ These publications also include Monypenny and Buckle's seminal *Life of Disraeli Vol.III 1846-1855* upon which a large portion of modern Disraeli scholarship is based. Some volumes like *Young Disraeli: 1804-1846* by Jane Ridley focus on Disraeli's life before he became Prime Minister. The discussion within these publications often attribute Disraeli's political actions as being opportunistic rather than a living, developing ideology that grew with him through his career. Essentially he is often characterized as a man who had no particular ideology and just adapted pieces of existing political thought to capitalize on popular consensus. However, by examining the 1867 Reform Act, this paper seeks to disprove the notion that Disraeli was simply a political opportunist instead of a political mastermind who engineered a new winning identity for the Conservative Party.

This paper aims to utilize Disraeli's own speeches, letters, and musings to delve into the ideas that formed his political ideology, One Nation Conservatism. It will use the words and thoughts of its founding father to define what One Nationism is and what served as its genesis. Newspapers and contemporary accounts will also reveal the United Kingdom's reactions to Disraeli's policies and how it became so entwined with Tory dogma. Disraeli's motives and pre-established line of thinking can be used to demonstrate he had already formulated the basis of One-Nation Conservatism and was acting accordingly.

One-Nation Conservatism, or Tory Democracy as it is also known, is a particular brand of conservative political ideology formulated and popularized by Benjamin Disraeli in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In simple terms, the goals of One-Nationism are to preserve the established institutions and traditional values of England within a democracy. What set this brand of conservatism apart from others of the day was the belief that there should be some

⁴ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012.

economic programs to benefit the average citizen. However, it resists the notion that society should be crafted and molded through policy and programs, rather than being allowed to develop naturally. One-Nationism belief also holds that the elite class should be acting in a paternalistic role to the rest of the society by considering and acting in the interests of all classes rather than solely the business one. In contrast the predominant Conservative line of thought at the time had been more in line with free market capitalism, something that reared up in the debates about the Corn Laws repeal. This would remain a major point of contention when Peelite, William Gladstone broke off and joined the Liberal Party who continued to champion a more laissez faire form of capitalism.

Since Disraeli's inception of the ideology, its popularity has held strong in England, most notably during the turbulent 1930s and 40s under Winston Churchill. It took a massive hit when Margaret Thatcher took leadership of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990. Thatcher criticized One-Nationism for what she viewed as its role in transforming the UK into a "welfare state."⁵ Since 1990, One-Nationism has proven to be more popular in the UK than Thatcherism, with the last three Prime Ministers of the nation self-identifying as One-Nationists.⁶

Benjamin Disraeli was actually born Benjamin D'Israeli on December 21st, 1804 to Issac D'Israeli and Maria D'Israeli, nee Basevi. His surname at birth is an important distinction as it initially pointed to his Jewish heritage, and at that time his father was active in the faith. This fact

⁵ Moore, Charlie. *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*. London, UK: Penguin House, 2016. 81.

⁶ York, Chris. "What Is This One Nation Conservatism That Boris Johnson Keeps Banging on about?" HuffPost UK. HuffPost UK, December 13, 2019. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/one-nation-conservatism-explained_uk_5df39be3e4b04bcba183df7f.

would have prohibited Benjamin Disraeli from entering Parliament until 1858, had his father not converted to the Church of England when Disraeli was nine years old over a dispute with local Jewish leaders of the faith. This allowed Disraeli to run for office sooner than would have previously been available to him, but it did not stop his origins from being levied on him as an attack.⁷

Disraeli was the second oldest of four children. Issac and Maria Disraeli had another child Naphtali who did not survive infancy in 1807 when Benjamin was just three. He was closest by far with his elder sister, Sarah, with whom he maintained close correspondence with her throughout his whole life. Disraeli remained on good terms with his brothers James and Ralph as well, but Sarah's figure looms largest in his family life. Disraeli's father Issac was a literary critic, by profession, and the family enjoyed a relatively comfortable middle-class lifestyle in Disraeli's childhood. Later in life, Disraeli would fabricate his father's origins with claims that his patrilineal line contained prestigious members from Venetian noble houses. Ironically, it was Disraeli's matrilineal line, with whom he had rarely shown any interest in, that had a better claim towards any noble lineage.⁸

Benjamin Disraeli seemed to enjoy a good relationship with his parents with the exception of resentment over his parents' choice of schooling for him. Whilst his brothers were both sent to Winchester College, a pipeline school for England's political elite, Disraeli was sent to Higham Hall, which in comparison was a fairly standard college who would come to be most associated with producing Disraeli. A plethora of hypotheses have been thrown out for why the Disraeli's would choose to send their brightest son to a lesser school, whilst the other two were sent to such a prestigious school. One of the most popular conjectures is the Disraeli's financial

⁷ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 52.

⁸ Ridley, Jane. *Young Disraeli: 1804-1846*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 1995. 10.

situation did not allow for all three to attend, something that does not hold much weight as Disraeli's grandfather had passed in 1816 and left a substantial sum to his son that would have ensured all the boys could have attended Winchester College. Other historians, in trying to glean autobiographical material from his novels, point to an excerpt from *Vivian Grey*, "Mr. Grey was for Eton but his lady was one of those women whom nothing in the world can persuade that a public school is anything but a place where boys are roasted alive; and so with tears taunts, and supplications, the point of private education was conceded."⁹ It would seem that Benjamin Disraeli held the belief that his mother had sought to keep him from Winchester to protect him from the bullying and alienation she felt he would endure. Why would Maria Disraeli seek to do this for one son and not the others? The answer is both practical and sad. Benjamin Disraeli, had suffered from spotty health through his formative years, and his mother apparently feared for his health away at school.¹⁰ Whatever the reason for his exclusion from Winchester College, Disraeli would attend Higham Hall for three years before acquiring a post clerking for one of his father's acquaintances in London.¹¹

It was during this period that Disraeli would commit one of the true blunders of his life by getting involved in speculation on mining shares in South America. There are two major events of note in Disraeli's early life that would help to shape his political ideology. One was his involvement, along with John Murray, in a venture to establish a rival newspaper with *The Times*. The other is related to his dabbling in speculating on the mining markets in South America. The latter would become an anchor upon Disraeli for most of his life, troubling him in matters of business and the heart.

⁹ Disraeli, Benjamin. *Vivian Grey*. London: Cassell, 1968.

¹⁰ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 55.

¹¹ Ridley, Jane. *Young Disraeli: 1804-1846*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 1995. 27.

John Murray was a prominent publisher operating out of London who was a family friend of the Disraelis. It was through his father's friendship with Murray that Disraeli was introduced to the man and at one point Disraeli had even submitted his own manuscript to Murray for publication.¹² So it stands to reason that Murray would have at least mentioned in passing to the young writer the prospective paper. Regardless of how he learned of its existence, by 1825 Disraeli had convinced Murray that he was the man to make this paper successful.¹³ Murray relented with the caveat that Disraeli procure the services of J.G. Lockhart as editor for the paper. A caveat that Disraeli naturally failed to deliver which frosted the relationship, and it ultimately dissolved completely in a matter of mere months.

The dissolution of his brief partnership with Murray could not have come at a more inopportune moment for Disraeli. In fact, it was at just this time that the mining bubble market burst leaving Disraeli and his partners out nearly seven thousand pounds sterling.¹⁴ The debt, compounded with the loss of his newspaper partnership, set Disraeli on a long road of financial debt that would plague him for a large portion of his life. This albatross around his neck would be used to attack Disraeli's character in attempts to stain his marriage and imply his unfitness for office. In fact, it was not until 1849 that Disraeli was able to pay off the initial terms of his debt, shirking at least one of his negative labels in the process.¹⁵

The deterioration of Disraeli's relationship would further and only serve as another source of consternation for him after the publishing of his first novel *Vivian Grey*. In the novel, the titular protagonist, Vivian Grey, is followed from early childhood to early adulthood as they pass through the different phases of education in a Victorian person's life. Within the novel the

¹² Weintraub, Stanley. *Disraeli: A Biography*. New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1993. 30.

¹³ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 60.

¹⁴ Weintraub, Stanley. *Disraeli: A Biography*. New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1993. 33.

¹⁵ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 61.

virtues and detriments of each form of education is analyzed by Disraeli, who at the time had published it only under the guise of an anonymous “man of fashion.” Vivian’s last form of schooling in the story is life experience wherein he is portrayed as attempting to form a political party around a wealthy, high society patron. The patron, the Marquess of Carabas, is portrayed as a doddering fool, who despite all his inherited advantages is ineffectual in government. Ultimately, Vivian’s lack of advantage and political experience end up destroying him, teaching him the last lesson.

While the novel was well received when the first part was published in 1826 under his pseudonym, that changed when Disraeli was revealed as the author. Now the novel was seen as a semi-autobiographical tale about Disraeli and Murray’s attempt to get *The Representative* up and running. Disraeli, who was known to not be an aristocrat himself, was painted as someone who attempted to rise above his station, failed, and now had the gall to lay bare the scandalous details to the public. This was Disraeli’s first brush with public scandal but certainly not his last and may point to his motivation to meld the social classes into one symbiotic mechanism with One-Nationism.

By 1837, the same year of Queen Victoria’s coronation, Disraeli was finally elected to Parliament for his initial term as a representative for Maidstone. Disraeli may have been toying with the idea of a political career as early as the 1820s when he was writing *Vivian Grey*, as that novel centered around a young man similar to Disraeli who was attempting to break into politics. Disraeli had made several attempts at acquiring an MP position in the years prior but fell short each time. He was elected to Parliament in Maidstone along with Wyndham Lewis, whose wife became quite enamored with the young Tory backbencher.¹⁶ In fact, the two would marry after

¹⁶ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 174.

the death of Wyndham Lewis and become lifelong partners. Owing to his struggles with debt, during his first term, Disraeli was often characterized by opponents and detractors as a man who could not be counted on for his integrity. Specifically, he was slandered by charges he would sell his vote for any chance to claw his way out of financial ruin.¹⁷

One would expect that a man of Benjamin Disraeli's historical legacy would have opened his maiden speech with a memorable or impactful statement of intent for British politics. This was not the case as Disraeli's introductory speech did little to herald the arrival of the statesmen he would become. Instead, he was regarded as nothing more than a curious oddity among the back benchers.¹⁸ Despite this lack of fanfare Disraeli worked diligently to rise amongst the backbench and to achieve that goal teamed up with fellow youthful MPs to form an alliance astutely dubbed "Young England."

Young England was a small group of MPs including Disraeli, George Smythe, Lord John Manners, Henry Thomas Hope, and Alexander Baillie-Cochrane and represented some of Disraeli's earliest attempts at creating a coalition around him as the power base. In this early phase he toyed with more radical ideas like neo-feudalism, or the belief that government and economy should return to a more feudal system in which the nobility was responsible for the caretaking of the nation, while the lower classes made the nation run. Young England represented an idealized form of feudalism in England where the nobility would live up to all the roles that were required of them which did not necessarily correlate with the actions of Plantagenet Kings before the Magna Carta nor after. Whilst most of these ideas were scrapped, the philosophy of Disraeli probably was derived from it. For instance, his recurring belief that the lower classes naturally look towards the upper classes for guidance. Notably, Disraeli was the

¹⁷ Ridley, Jane. *Young Disraeli: 1804-1846*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 1995. 123.

¹⁸ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 160.

only member of the Young England faction to have not attended Eton, Oxford, or Cambridge and to have not come from an aristocratic origin. Despite this he was selected by the group to be the purveyor of their message to Parliament and became the de-facto leader in many people's eyes, a recurring theme in Disraeli's pre-Prime Minister political career.¹⁹

The origins of Disraeli's own Tory faction could probably be best derived from his involvement in the 1846 debates over the Corn Laws. Through the proceedings, Disraeli would emerge as one of the preeminent leaders amongst the Conservative Party. His doing so, however, would come at the expense of Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister and de-facto leader of the Tories.

Prior to 1841, Disraeli and Peel had enjoyed a cordial enough relationship, in that Disraeli was perpetually trying to get in Peel's good graces, whilst the latter viewed the former as merely an amusing but inconsequential MP. Nonetheless, that relationship evaporated after the Conservative's victory in the General Election of 1841. Due to the resounding victory, Disraeli was anticipating a position in Peel's new government and was none too shy about making that feeling known. Popular belief amongst older Tory leadership held that Disraeli was a loose-lipped troublemaker who would cause more derision than benefit within the Cabinet.²⁰ Disraeli, acutely aware of rumblings about his fitness for the office and character, penned a letter appealing to Peel:

I have tried to struggle against a storm of political hate and malice which few men ever experienced, from the moment, at the instigation of a member of your Cabinet, I enrolled myself under your banner, and I have only been sustained under these trials by the conviction that the day would come when the foremost man of the country would publicly testify that he had some respect for my ability and my character.

I confess to be unrecognized at this moment by you appears to me to be overwhelming, and I appeal to your own heart - to that justice and that magnanimity which I feel are your characteristics - to save me from an intolerable humiliation.

¹⁹ Ridley, Jane. *Young Disraeli: 1804-1846*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 1995. 137.

²⁰ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 162.

*Believe me, dear Sir Robert,
Your Faithful Servant
B. Disraeli²¹*

Somewhat amusingly in this letter, Disraeli comes off more as someone in shock over a perceived double-cross than the leviathan of politics his legacy would suggest. His verbose writing style is on display as he attempts to evoke sympathy from Peel over the storm of humiliation he perceived himself to be in. Disraeli did himself no further favors by insinuating that one of Peel's own inner circle was the catalyst for the ill feelings towards him.

Even while casting aspersions on Peel's confidants, Disraeli was careful to maintain a tone of admiration towards the new prime minister. He appealed to Peel's position as the "foremost man in the country" to save him from an "intolerable humiliation." In reality, the humiliation could more likely be attributed to Disraeli's own actions rather than any other Member of Parliament. After all, Disraeli had made no secret about desiring a cabinet position. For his part, it seems Peel had never seriously considered Disraeli for any role, even prior to the correspondence. As historian Robert Blake points out, Peel had been operating off a list of potential candidates furnished to him by Sir Francis Robert Bonham. A list that bore no mention of Benjamin Disraeli.²² Blake goes on to highlight that Disraeli at this point brought no tangible value to the cabinet as he held no territorial influence of his own.²³ Whilst Peel's rebuff was not the sole reason for their collision course over the Corn Laws, it certainly can be attributed to the critical attitude Disraeli held on Peel.

²¹ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 164.

²² Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 165.

²³ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 165.

At this point, Disraeli seemingly was more politically isolated than ever in Parliament. Without a lifeline from Peel, he was still relegated to the backbench. Furthermore, with his political ideas having already distanced himself from most Tory MPs, he had furthered that chasm by his conduct in petitioning for a position from Peel earlier in the year. During one Parliamentary session, he wrote to his wife Mary Ann that he felt “utterly isolated” and that “Before the charge of government Political party was a tie among men, but now it is only a tie among men in office.”²⁴ The bonds of political brotherhood, something Disrael had once revealed in, he felt had now been severed by a cabal of political elites that he had no place amongst. Interestingly, one of the core tenets of One Nation Conservatism seeks to dilute those barriers between the aristocratic elite and the rising middle class of the United Kingdom. The ideology seeks to leverage the wealth and power of the aristocratic class for the benefit of the realm rather than allowing them to run the nation in their own interest as an oligarchy. Disraeli saw the path to this political reformation through enfranchising people from his own social strata. It is tempting to see the spark for this idea in his frustrations over being frozen out of Peel’s Government.

Disraeli would formally conduct his split from the Peelite Tories through his fervent opposition to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. An effort spearheaded by Peel in order to establish a firmer policy of free trade. Disraeli, sensing weakness in Peel’s Government, aligned himself with Lord George Bentinck and a faction of Pro-Protectionist Tories against the bill. On the 23rd of January 1846, Peel officially presented his case for repealing the Corn Laws and the benefits of a policy of Free Trade and ended his speech by chastising members of Parliament and more specifically of his own party who took exception with this change of course. Next to speak

²⁴ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 167.

was Lord Russell, Leader of the Opposition Whigs, but he echoed much of the sentiment that the Prime Minister had. Many Conservative MPs were left deflated at seemingly having lost the chance to needle Peel for this perceived betrayal of Tory ideals. The debates and proceedings had all but concluded with a whimper when Disraeli arose from his seat to finally challenge Peel. To Peel's surprise and abject anger the lowly backbencher let loose a vitriolic tirade on him and his bill. Disraeli decried Peel's betrayal of Conservative values, comparing him to "the admiral of the Ottoman fleet who, on taking command, had steered the Sultan's entire navy into the enemy's port."²⁵ "I have an objection to war"²⁶ was the humorous answer Disraeli said the admiral gave which elicited laughter from the gathered MPs. With his humorous allegory Disraeli had introduced the notion that Peel's position on the matter was laughable and ostensibly gotten the House of Commons to laugh at his position publicly. Emboldened, Disraeli continued his assault claiming Peel's supporters had been treated with "contempt and disdain"²⁷ and that Peel was "a man who never originates an idea"²⁸ but was instead "a watcher of the atmosphere."²⁹ In other words, Peel was content to tailor his opinion to match the popular opinion of the time.

No doubt Disraeli had seen his star grow exponentially after his attack on Peel's first reading of the bill. Practically overnight he had become the face of the opposition to repealing the Corn Laws. Disraeli had put his fanciful and comedic style on display in his attack of Peel and had won a fair share of admirers through it. He had made the Prime Minister of the Nation out to be a farce at the same time. Something that was not sitting well with a contingent of

²⁵ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 42.

²⁶ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 42.

²⁷ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 42.

²⁸ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 42.

²⁹ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 42.

politicians namely the pro-Peel Tories, who would come to be known as Peelites, and eventually form the Liberal Party. Peelites had been angered by Disraeli's tactlessness in his challenge of Peel and none so more than William Ewart Gladstone. Gladstone, who had not been in office in 1846, was seething back home at this attack on the character of Peel, someone he credited as nurturing him through his early political career. However, out of office Gladstone was in no position to oppose Disraeli yet. Instead, this would fall to his mentor, Sir Robert Peel, who himself had been quietly brooding over his treatment at Disraeli's hands.

1852 would prove to be both a pivotal and formative year in Benjamin Disraeli's career as a statesman. Now cloaked in the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, his position was such that his ideas and plans for the party and the British government as a whole could actually be enacted in a tangible way. However, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, the burden and blame of devising the Kingdom's budget rested solely on his shoulders. Disraeli's struggles with the Budget of 1852 proved disastrous, despite economic policy being such a core tenet of One Nation Conservatism.

In April of 1852, Disraeli was deep in the machinations of Parliament life and in particular this upcoming budget proposal. As he relayed to his beloved sister Sarah, "I have neither time to feed nor sleep, tho pretty well: great every/night & the budget on Friday for wh: I have literally not time to prepare."³⁰ Disraeli's correspondence with his sister implies that the task of preparing the budget was proving stressful and encompassing for the newly minted Chancellor. In his early days in the office, it would appear as if Disraeli was adjusting to the faster pace of life on top of the added duties that came with being at 11 Downing Street.

³⁰ Eds. M.G. Weibe, Mary S. Millar, and Ann P. Robson, *Benjamin Disraeli's Letters Vol. VI 1852-1856*. Toronto Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1997. 52. 2276

By the summer of 1852, however, the cocksure Disraeli, who had penned the Young England manifesto and had seen a vision for a new political ideology, had returned. Perhaps emboldened by his status at the right hand of Lord Derby, the former upstart backbencher poured himself into the task. Through the budget, Disraeli glimpsed a way to expand the influence of the Conservative Party as well as ensure their continued grip on the reigns of Parliament. To do this, he would seek to enfranchise classes who had never been involved in the political process. Unfortunately for him, this effort would be intertwined with the controversial malt duties.

Despite all this, in August Disraeli felt confident enough in his ability to deliver a popular budget to write to Lord Edward Stanley, “A week of undisturbed abstraction has developed a budget, which, had we a majority to support it, would give the government of the country to the captain/for life, with power of leaving it to the son of his right hand³¹ - my friend.”³² The Disraeli who penned this letter was far more relaxed and assured in his position than even a few months prior and outwardly projects a supreme confidence in his ability to deliver not just a satisfactory one but, like everything else with Disraeli, an ambitious one. Even amongst the confident language there is a tinge of doubt, or perhaps more accurately, self-awareness. Disraeli by now was well aware that he had made no friends in the House of Commons by effectively ending the political career of Sir Robert Peel in the Corn Laws row. When Disraeli muses about “had we a majority to support it,” he could also be begrudgingly hinting at the plethora of Peelites who would be seeking a measure of revenge in the debates.

Removing the apprehension of a Peelite challenge, one can see the trademark ambition that can define Benjamin Disraeli’s legacy. As previously alluded to, Disraeli saw the budget as

³¹ A play on the Hebrew translation for “Benjamin”

³² Eds. M.G. Weibe, Mary S. Millar, and Ann P. Robson, *Benjamin Disraeli’s Letters Vol. VI 1852-1856*. Toronto Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1997. 111. 2357

an opportunity to lay the foundation for a new Conservative Party, one that saw him squarely at the head of the table. Disraeli would naturally see himself as the heir apparent to the Prime Ministership and leader of the Conservative Party both as Derby's right hand man and by way of being the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Little surprise then that he would seek to not only grow but also solidify the influence and reach of the Tories through his budget. It is also intriguing that he already seemed set on economic policy being one of the major paths forward for the Conservative Party.

Disraeli was not the only Tory MP who had come to that conclusion and many eagerly awaited his budget proposal to Parliament in the upcoming December session. One such MP was Lord Henry Lennox, who expressed the aforementioned notion in a letter to Disraeli in September of 1852, "Your career will be like William Pitts, you will conciliate the Court, you will become the First Englishman of your time, & will make England the first Country in the world, You will efface Party distinctions by the introductions of a colossal measure of Financial Reform..."³³ Lord Lennox is oddly prophetic with his profound belief in the financial reforms and himself believed Disraeli to be heir apparent to Lord Derby. The British Empire would reach its peak amidst Disraeli's reforms and his legacy amongst Conservative leaders in British history is rivaled only by Churchill, Thatcher, and the aforementioned Pitt the Younger. It would not come about due to the Budget of 1852, however.

In 1852, the idea that Benjamin Disraeli would rise on the wings of financial reform was rather a perplexing position to maintain. Disraeli had no background in finance to speak of having come from the world of literature. In fact, his dabbling in speculation had left him in financial ruin, a fact that was well known amongst Parliamentary circles. Rumors swirled that

³³ Eds. M.G. Weibe, Mary S.Millar, and Ann P. Robson, *Benjamin Disraeli's Letters Vol. VI 1852-1856*. Toronto Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1997. 147. 2398n1

Disraeli's finances were in such shambles that his integrity as a MP could be bought. Indeed, the economic situation of Disraeli is seemingly the source of many peers' opinions that he was more of an opportunistic charlatan than an idealistic statesman. Barring the perception of Disraeli's financial situation, it still brings forth the query on why exactly Disraeli was chosen for such a position. As Robert Blake, historian and Disraeli biographer, puts it, Disraeli was "completely unfitted"³⁴ for the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1852.

Another factor that made the passage of Disraeli's budget unsurmountable was the collection of enemies he had amassed in his early days in Parliament. Chief amongst those was William Gladstone and other Peelites who resented Disraeli's political assassination of Sir Robert Peel in 1846. These opponents were now excited at the prospect of revenge for what they saw as Disraeli's fickle and traitorous actions towards Sir Peel during the incident.

By December, the very month he was to propose the prospective budget to the House of Commons, doubt had begun to creep back into his mind and Disraeli's outlook had adopted a dour tone. Amidst prominent political and press opinion that the budget would be soundly rejected and lead to a particularly embarrassing and quick showing in charge for the Tories, he confided to Lord Derby, "I fear we are in a great scrape and I hardly see how the Budget can live in so stormy a sea."³⁵

Philosophically, the budget proposed by Disraeli was in some ways a proto-manifesto to the tenets that would come to define One Nation Conservatism. Through it he sought to enfranchise the urban middle class and to some extent the working class. The method to do so was through a reduction in malt duties as well as an increase in the inhabited house duty. The latter was a stipulation coerced into the budget by Lord Derby as a way to cover his own vision

³⁴ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 290.

³⁵ *ibid.*

of an increased defense budget. This increase would effectively raise the tax rate for all landlords and owners, a very small but wealthy and influential portion of the populace, first and foremost as they were the few who had voting rights at this point in the Victorian Age. The decrease in malt duties, on the other hand, would lead to a decrease in taxes on the lower classes, allowing them to save more and advance on the economic ladder. Therein lies the crux of why the budget was so vehemently defeated as the landed aristocracy did not wish to see the rise of the traditionally lower classes. Especially as their own tax rates were increased in comparison.

The shrewd Disraeli would not allow his budget to just be torn to shreds timidly in embarrassment though. In a move that would come to define his political career, he instead appealed to populist ideals rather than the aristocracy who shared the halls of Parliament with him. Aware of the bleak prognosis of his budget passing, he rose to address the House, “I appeal from the coalition to that public opinion which governs this country- to that public opinion whose mild and irresistible influence can control even the decrees of Parliaments and without whose support the most august and ancient are but the baseless fabric of a vision.”³⁶ Disraeli was no doubt cognizant of the fact this tactic would not rescue the bill but it did allow to save face and lay blame at the feet of his opponents. Prudently, though, he also began to sprinkle the seeds of his developing political ideology amongst the people of England who he would seek to enfranchise in the hopes it would lay the foundation for his vision of a new Tory Party.

1867 would prove to be a seminal year in the UK and would also serve as Disraeli’s opening night as leading man of Parliament theater. As a decade plus had passed since the budget battle of 1852, the social and political climate had become more amenable to some of

³⁶ Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli Vol.III 1846-1855*.

Disraeli's ideas. Chief amongst these was the issue of popular suffrage. He now had the opportunity to enact his oft toyed-with notion of enfranchising the growing middle class.

A year prior, in 1866, the Liberal-led Government had attempted to pass their own reform bill in an effort to garner the favor of the would-be voters. Ironically, it was defeated rather soundly due to no small effort by Disraeli. Utilizing his particular brand of backdoor politics, he was able to engineer a split in the Liberal vote, leading to the failure of the bill. Disraeli created the rift in the Liberal Party by playing on the differing views within the party on universal suffrage. There existed a sect amongst the Liberal MPs, and other parties, that a small reform would prove a slippery slope towards universal suffrage and would dilute the value of the British political system. The sentiment was in the public consciousness in this particular period, in no small part due to the American Civil War. Traditionally a strong economic partner, the UK had paid much interest to the American Civil War and now pro-reformists at home saw the Union victory as an advancement towards all people obtaining the right to vote. However, the landed upper class of Britain often identified more with the Stateside southern planter class. This faction opposing the reform warned against the brand of "low-class" democracy that had begun to take hold in the United States and Australia. The pro-reformist argument held that the working class were "respectable" enough to acquire the right to vote.³⁷

With the bill defeated, the Liberal government itself collapsed and ultimately Lord Derby was asked by Her Majesty to form a government. The new Tory government was naturally a boon for Disraeli, as he found himself back in 11 Downing Street. Back in the office of the Chancellor of Exchequer, he was in a position to affect suffrage reform in his own right and would do so in February of 1867.

³⁷ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 67.

Disraeli's work in proposing, championing, and passing the Reform Act of 1867 was one of the great plays in British political history. It also served as the keystone for One Nation Conservatism. When he initially proposed the Reform Act, prevailing wisdom within the Conservative Party labeled it as folly. Many foresaw the increased voter base as benefitting the Liberal Party rather than their own. After all, it had been the Liberals who had proposed a similar bill the year prior and who had been the most consistently vocal in their support of the suffrage movement. Disraeli, on the other hand, had long held the belief that these new voters instead would flock to support the Tories, even in the face of those in his own party who labeled his acts as "traitorous."

Why was Disraeli so confident in his plan despite his party's own prognostication? It was his earnestly held belief that the lower classes of the British Isles would naturally seek to elect the nobles and aristocracy to positions of power, as that, in his estimation, had been the historical and natural order of things. This belief offers a glimpse into Disraeli and One Nationism's tenet of paternalism, wherein the wealthy elite and lower socio-economic strata would work in tandem in a father-child like symbiotic relationship. In this dynamic, the lower classes would gravitate towards electing the upper class to Parliament so that they could then use that power to provide for the fundamental needs of the lower classes and the whole nation. Disraeli believed it was in the best interest of the class in power to re-allocate wealth via government projects to maintain the balance of power between the social classes and to further the interests of the UK as a whole. In essence, what Disraeli was arguing for was an economic third way in the middle of free market capitalism and what his contemporary Londoner Karl Marx would offer. Rather than a Victorian facsimile of trickle down economics, Disraeli was proposing the government act as a bastion of financial relief and opportunity but most importantly not a pure redistribution model

that would be espoused on by Marx. Disraeli's confidence in this reasoning came from a survey of British history and not some misguided sense of "nobleman's burden." Through three hundred years of Plantagenet rule and beyond, the landed nobility and lower classes of Britain had always existed in a symbiotic fashion. Most notably through feudalism they were intrinsically tied economically and in a more practical sense for more survival. The peasants in that situation looked towards the nobles for security, stability, and guidance while the nobles rely on the peasants for food and labor to ensure the nation keeps running as it should. In times of great upheaval, like the rule of King John, the nobility would take up the cause of all classes by championing reform, ala the Magna Carta. In a way, Disraeli is seemingly playing off an offshoot of his neofeudalism ideas from his Young England period. In any event, Disraeli's theory was well thought out and indicative of his style of political theory that was often more based on literary study and analysis rather than the traditional legal citations or precedents.³⁸

Disraeli, ever the political chess player, had outplayed all major political parties in proposing the Act. The Liberals were loath to give up credit to Disraeli and the Tories as the people's champion, sweeping in to gift the vote to the huddled masses, but they could not simply reverse course on their pro-reform rhetoric now, especially after proposing it themselves only a year prior. The faction of Tory MPs who had decried the bill, on the other hand, were also forced to muzzle themselves after the resounding public reaction to the bill revealed the atmosphere in Britain. Disraeli had effectively gotten his pawns in order and checked the Liberals all in his opening move.

The Reform Act of 1867 was no small measure in enfranchising the lower classes of the UK either. Disraeli's aim in designing the bill was to make the majority of the urban male

³⁸ Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli Vol.III 1846-1855*.

working class eligible to vote. Prior to the proposed act, roughly 1 million out of 7 million adult men in both England and Wales were able to vote. Disraeli's proposal would immediately double that number and provide provisions to increase that number to effectively all male heads of households. It would be achieved by the end of 1868 due to measures like the end of compounding rent practices.³⁹

Even as opposition in Parliament dragged their feet on the issue, forces brewing in UK society would conspire to assist Disraeli. As previously mentioned, although many Liberal MPs were pro-reform they were decidedly anti-Benjamin Disraeli, and MPs like Gladstone sought to make what they saw as an inevitable victory for Disraeli as long and arduous as was within their power. The Hyde Park Riots would speed up that date with the inevitable in May of 1867, three months after the Reform Act's original proposal. Prior to May the Reform League, a political union dedicated to obtaining universal suffrage had organized several protests in industrial centers like Manchester and Glasgow. The protests, though beginning modestly, had begun to number in the hundreds of attendees and had become enough of a headache that the government had stepped in to prohibit their planned protest in Hyde Park. Over 1000 armed police officers and military personnel were dispatched to Hyde Park to enforce that edict.⁴⁰ The Reform League decided to press on with their plan and the turnout was so large that despite the sizable manpower present, the armed forces dared not act to interfere. The whole incident was so embarrassing to the British government that Spencer Walpole, the Home Secretary, was forced to resign. The fear of popular revolt was now instilled in the halls of Parliament and Disraeli would be the beneficiary. The House now moved quickly in discussing and amending Disraeli's

³⁹ "Second Great Reform Act, 1867." UK Parliament. Accessed November 17, 2021. <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/from-the-parliamentary-collections/collections-reform-acts/great-reform-act111/>.

⁴⁰ Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012. 478.

bill, or as Lord Derby had dubbed it, “a leap in the dark.”⁴¹ The following political cartoon published by *PUNCH* depicts this “leap in the dark”. Disraeli’s face replaces the horse showing that he is the only one making the leap with his eyes open. Atop the blinded rider represents England attached to Disraeli following him into the thick hedges labeled “reform”.



On the 11th of February 1867, Benjamin Disraeli rose in the House of Commons to formally propose his own version of a bill on people’s representation in Parliament. Disraeli shrewdly opened by quoting Queen Victoria’s own feelings on people’s representation, “your attention will again be called to the state of the Representation of the People in Parliament; and I trust that your Deliberations, conducted in a Spirit of Moderation and mutual Forbearance, may lead to the Adoption of Measures which, without unduly disturbing the Balance of political

⁴¹ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 122.

⁴² Citizenship. Accessed November 30, 2021.

https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/struggle_democracy/docs/punch1867.htm. *This information is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence*

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>.

Power, shall freely extend the Elective Franchise.”⁴³ It was a wise flourish to quote the Queen to the assembled MPs. Even though Parliament ostensibly had the legislative authority to run the nation as they saw fit, they still served at Her Majesty’s behalf. To that end, her opinion still held some considerable weight, and Disraeli could now color those who opposed the reform, as in defiance of the Crown. From the onset of the reform debates, he was attempting to frame it as the Queen’s will, and therefore Parliament’s duty to enact it.

Disraeli’s next move was to try to turn the misgivings some MPs may have had with the working class’s ability to contribute to the electoral process, by turning the issue back on them. He told the MPs gathered, “and though the labouring classes, in the most considerable seats of labour, might under the old machinery not have been represented, that was not a reason for abolishing the rights but rather for remodeling them to the new circumstances with which statesmen then had to deal.”⁴⁴ Disraeli was claiming that while the laboring class had evolved with the times and developed into a social class worthy of some benefits, the Parliaments of the past had, finding themselves unequipped to grapple with the realities of popular suffrage, neglected the issue rather than introducing reform. Indeed, he would then proceed to rattle off the list of failed attempts on the issue of people’s representation, including, interestingly enough, the year prior, 1866. He even commends the laboring class, “No doubt, the Commons of England, by the immense increase of population and property, have assumed a character with reference to the other estates which never was contemplated in the days of the Plantagenets and the Tudors.”⁴⁵

⁴³ “Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

⁴⁴ “Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

⁴⁵ “Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

Ever the student of history, Disraeli was attempting to draw a clear delineation between the contemporary working class and the feudal peasants of yore, to show just how far the people he hoped to extend the vote to had come.

The Chancellor of Exchequer next moved to his own realm when he decreed by what right the laboring class had to participate in the electoral process:

What, then has placed the Commons of England in the commanding position which they now occupy? It is the development of our financial Constitution. It is the claim that asserted two centuries ago—partially recognized then, and now completely established. Which has practically placed in this house the taxing power. That is the cause of the position and character of the Commons of England. The moment that power was established, every class, every interest in this country, sought representation in this House, and naturally because in this House alone can they defend their rights and their property.⁴⁶

Taxation being intrinsically tied to the notion of Parliamentary representation should not have been a new or radical concept. After all, they had lost significant colonial holdings over the very issue only 86 years prior. However, it still established a firm foundation for Disraeli's argument. The laboring class had seen their own tax rates increase as their prosperity grew, and they greatly outnumbered the aristocracy that had a stranglehold on Parliament. It stood to reason that a popular uprising could occur at home, a fear that was only exasperated by the Hyde Park Riots.

In an effort to provide a hypothesis on why the United Kingdom had lagged behind the Western world in regards to popular suffrage, Disraeli went to work analyzing the political assemblies of the UK, France, Germany, and the United States. He astutely points out that the nation acknowledges that the power of Parliament and its ability to hold the Crown's authority in check is derived and often due to the people. Disraeli argues that it is in fact the ability of most classes to find representation in Parliament that is the key to the people being secure in freedom.

⁴⁶ "Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

Here they come because here power is reposed, and it is here only that they can be guarded in respect to the exercise of that power by the presence of their representatives. The consequence is that every class and every interest has sought, and to a certain degree has obtained, representation in this House. That is the cause of the variety of our character. But is it the variety of our character that has given us our deliberative power? It is our deliberative power that has given us our hold upon the Executive; and it is this hold upon the Executive which is the best, ay, the only security for our freedom.⁴⁷

In Disraeli's estimation, the struggles that the collective people had to take up against the regimes of the past had come to define the national character, and in his own eyes made the UK's political system the world standard. He warned though that the current peerage of Parliament were content to pay lip service to those historical achievements, rather than helping to usher in that moment for a new social class and generation, "Well, Sir, Her Majesty's Government can counsel and countenance no course that will change that varied character of the House of Commons; they respect and reverence the causes which have elevated a rude popular Assembly of the days of the Plantagenets into a Senate which commands the admiration of the world."⁴⁸ Disraeli may have been going as far to even insinuate that the current MPs feared enfranchising the laboring class because they feared being put out to pasture by those they viewed as below their station in life.

Disraeli moved to the other nations by arguing that their forms of government had evolved to suit the times, as well as their individual nation's character. Disraeli first moved to the UK's historical nemesis and closest neighbor, France, "There is France, in the very van of civilization, perhaps—if I were not in the House of Commons and in England I might even venture to say—the first of European nations, inferior to none in vivacity of mind, in acute

⁴⁷ "Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

⁴⁸ "Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

intellect, in wonder-ful perseverance, and in that patriotic feeling which always follows. Well, this gifted nation has a popular Assembly, and it is elected by universal suffrage.”⁴⁹ He praises France as being nearly equal in status and prestige to England and a fair comparison to England in terms of European nations. Although he is also careful to preemptively cut off any counter-argument by playing up England’s preeminence amongst nations, something that routinely features in One Nation political theory.

Does any one pretend that the Legislative Assembly of France is equal in European consideration to the House of Commons? If there be any Englishman who thinks that the Legislative Assembly of France can claim that position, I am sure there is no Frenchman who does so. But it may be asserted that our institutions are not suited to a Latin race, and that the Constitution of France was suddenly and rudely invented under circumstances of disorder and disturbance.⁵⁰

His use of ethnic reasoning should also be noted, as it is an oft played-with idea of his that appears more in his career as a novelist, and wrapped up in his own “Eastern” identity.

If France’s political system was “too foreign,” then Disraeli would instead turn to the UK’s cultural offspring in the States, “Well, then take the case of the United States of America. There you have a House of Representatives, framed by the children of our loins, and certainly under the inspiration of as pure a patriotism as ever existed. That also is elected by universal suffrage.”⁵¹ Disraeli deliberately frames Americans, and the United States in general, as a “child” of the UK in an attempt to dispel the argument the MPs would likely apply to France. Further

⁴⁹ “Parliamentary Reform–Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

⁵⁰ “Parliamentary Reform–Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

⁵¹ “Parliamentary Reform–Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

anticipating the comparisons between the UK Parliament and US Congress, he issues an explanation as to why Congress is not held in the same regard as Parliament:

And what is the cause of this? Why, no doubt the American nation is inferior to us in no point; it is of the same blood, the same brains, the same intelligence, of equal energy, perhaps of more enterprize; but the House is elected by one class; there is no variety in it. And so the Legislative Assembly of America, like that of France, can neither of them rule the country in which it is established.⁵²

In this second analysis Disraeli reveals his true motive between the history and politics lesson. The failures of other nations to enfranchise more than the elite class. To Disraeli, these nations existed in their current forms as oligarchies, and for that reason they could not match the stature of Parliament. However, he was also prophesying that the UK could slide from its perch if it did not continue to expand representation. This would seem to be an apt thought as at this point the UK parliament could be deemed an oligarchy in itself which precipitated the need for the reform bills.

At risk of belaboring the point, a fact he even acknowledges, Disraeli uses Germany as one final example of popular suffrage. He felt Germans were the intellectual equals to the British and thus thought it pertinent that they too now had a legislative assembly elected by “universal suffrage.”⁵³ Universal suffrage in this time meaning men qualifying for a certain, usually financial, parameter, Disraeli was, by this point in the speech, wagging his finger at Parliament chastising them for putting the United Kingdom in a position to possibly fall from its perch atop Europe. At the same time, though, he was holding a path to maintain on top through his proposed reform bill. To Disraeli, the United Kingdom was not just the foremost European nation, but

⁵² “Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

⁵³ “Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%94RepresentationOfThePeople>.

truly the premier nation of the world, and to that end he felt it was the duty of Parliament to maintain that position. Simply put, to Disraeli, the UK's stature as the most powerful nation on Earth was as much a part of the cultural identity as football or the Magna Carta.

The final noteworthy portion of the Chancellor's introductory speech on the bill focused on the population figures compared to those eligible to vote in the UK. Disraeli revealed that roughly 9 million citizens, "an equal amount of the population of all represented boroughs in Parliament,"⁵⁴ lived in areas outside the recognized political boroughs and thus were not afforded representation in the House of Commons. In Disraeli's estimation, these people had been overlooked for too long because they were farmers, laborers, and generally members of the middling to lower classes. He preemptively admonished any MP who would diminish those groups as deserving a vote, calling those classes the "backbone of England," citing their property and percentage of the population.⁵⁵

When Disraeli next rose to speak again on the topic of reform, and defend his arguments, it was a week later on February 25th. Asked what characteristics he saw in the laboring classes that qualified them to participate in the electoral process, he laid out three essential characteristics, "capital, intelligence, and labour."⁵⁶ The cynic could take this response as lip service to potential constituents, however the respect paid towards them is in keeping with Disraeli's previously stated views on the laboring classes. It also shows confidence in his personally held belief that the lower classes and noble class exist together to serve the United

⁵⁴ "Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%9494RepresentationOfThePeople>.

⁵⁵ "Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-11/debates/27bf6451-5ac1-4240-ab2c-4fd12573102f/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%9494RepresentationOfThePeople>.

⁵⁶ "Parliamentary Reform Representation of the People - Monday 25 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Hansard. Accessed October 13, 2021. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-25/debates/43a9d679-de46-4857-8ba5-18759007ac6f/ParliamentaryReformRepresentationOfThePeople>.

Kingdom in a symbiotic fashion, wherein the lower classes would elect the upper classes to govern them as long as Parliament acted in their best interests as a people and nation.

This social contract theory likely served as the genesis for the paternalistic nature of One Nation Conservatism, with the One Nation term itself being particularly emblematic of that paternalism. At its core, the One Nation is the aforementioned symbiotic relationship where the farmers and laboring classes provided the labor, taxes, and votes to the upper classes in Parliament, who then allocate those resources to projects and legislation that benefit the lower classes who put them there. Via this system, Disraeli saw a strong Tory led British Empire that would be left unchallenged both foreignly and domestically.

The opposition to the attempted reforms was cacophonous, with criticisms ranging from the Conservative Party's resistance to reform prior to the perceived lack of intelligence of the new voting body. Viscount Cranborne invoked the Crown, asking why neither it nor any of the members of Parliament could provide a motivation for the reform. He insisted instead that Disraeli and his cohorts had simply decided to suggest it one day with no real plan, "everything that has been done, has been done in something like a panic."⁵⁷

This was a setup by the opposition, who then moved to apply Disraeli's label as an opportunist to the whole Conservative Party. Viscount Cranborne was creative in painting the Tories as having dragged their feet at the prospect of reform previously but now ready to leap as it benefited them, "It tells us what is the policy by which the Conservative party is likely to be guided in the future—that so long as the pot does not boil they will adhere to every opinion they have expressed with a firmness to which some have even given the name of obstinacy; but the

⁵⁷<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-07-15/debates/959f1109-a76e-45fd-ada8-3d1e6eadb268/ParliamentaryReform%E2%80%9494RepresentationOfThePeopleBill%E2%80%9494Bill237%E2%80%9494ThirdReading>

moment there is any appearance of the pot boiling over they will rush to a change.”⁵⁸ Cranborne was accusing the Tories of blindly following popular whim without any real plan or understanding of ramifications in an attempt to court influence away from them in a last gasp.

Viscount Cranborne also took umbrage with Disraeli’s assertion that the lower classes would naturally look towards the upper classes for leadership and guidance. He argued that in any situation where all votes are equal, a group of one hundred people would always vote for themselves and their own interests over a group of fifty from another class with perceived differing interests.⁵⁹ The Viscount confided that he did not believe in the influence of wealth and rank to persuade the masses and warned the reform would destroy the values Tories claimed to uphold.⁶⁰ “It tells us what is the policy by which the Conservative party is likely to be guided in the future—that so long as the pot does not boil they will adhere to every opinion they have expressed with a firmness to which some have even given the name of obstinacy; but the moment there is any appearance of the pot boiling over they will rush to a change.”⁶¹

Another one of the opposition’s favorite sleights on Disraeli would be applied to reform as well, namely debt and its proclivity for corruption. One of the opposition MPs, Lowe, in a thinly veiled shot at the Chancellor of the Exchequer, haphazardly speculated that the lower classes were so poor of cash and character that their votes and dignity could be purchased. “You inundate the small boroughs with voters so poor,” he uttered, “that unless they are endowed with superhuman virtue, it will be impossible for them to resist bribery. You make them the helots of the Constitution.”⁶² Lowe’s poor, yet deliberate, word choice is indicative of the core difference

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.*

between MPs like Lowe and the emerging One Nation Tories who would follow Disraeli. While Disraeli views all social classes as working in concert to achieve a prosperous and prestigious nation, Lowe, by his own admission, sees the lower classes as slaves, helots being a slave social class in Ancient Sparta, to hoist up the Constitution for the elite of England. Lowe continued to show his discontent for the lower classes, claiming that Disraeli should have first educated the “uneducated masses” with whom he now entrusted England’s care.⁶³

Disraeli for his part was cool and collected when his chance to answer these, as he referred to, “two very violent speeches — that is, speeches very abusive of the measure before the House, and very abusive of the Ministers who have introduced it.”⁶⁴ To Disraeli, it would seem not only was he and his bill being attacked, but perhaps more importantly to him, his vision of a new form of politics was being attacked. Disraeli first acknowledged Tory resistance to reform in the past, citing how the two measures being brought up could hardly be comparable. Specifically, he cited the lack of the extent of franchising in previous bills, “I expressed our opinion that if that subject were again opened—and its immediate re-opening we deprecated—the fault which had been committed in 1832 in neglecting to give a due share of the representation to the working classes ought to be remedied.”⁶⁵ His whole argument being that previous bills had never adapted franchising efforts that were congruent with the times and populations of Victorian England.

He answered their charges of Tories dragging their feet by pointing out how much time the opposition had wasted on the issue, especially the Liberal-led Government:

And what, Sir, occurred afterwards? When we were in opposition during several years this question was constantly brought under the consideration of Parliament, and it continued to be patronized and encouraged by the then Ministers of the Crown, who yet

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

would not deal with it until the very last year of their existence as a Cabinet; and then, after an official life of some six or seven years, they did introduce the subject to the consideration of Parliament, and left a Bill upon the table when they resigned their Seals of Office.⁶⁶

In a stunning verbal riposte, Disraeli had turned the Viscount's charges against the Tories back on his own party. It was the Liberal Party who had been in power for over half a decade and only when faced with the end of their reign did they scramble to table reform. In Disraeli's estimation, it was the Liberals who were scrambling to prevent "the pot boiling over," not the Tories. He also made it clear that if his reform bill was considered too severe or stronger than the previous one, it was because he had to amend for the changing times the Liberals had ignored.⁶⁷

The passage of the bill was exactly what Disraeli had hoped for when planning the foundation of his policies. Ultimately it granted the right to vote to all householders in the boroughs as well as renters who paid more than 10 pounds a year. The bill also reduced the property threshold in the counties lying outside city centers, which provided the right to vote to agricultural landowners and their tenants, even those with rather modest landholdings. Disraeli had now effectively given himself the ability to claim credit for doubling the electorate of England and Wales, from one million to two. This claim is something he hoped would lead to the championing of One-Nation ideals amongst the voting populace.⁶⁸

The people were not however the only admirers of Disraeli. The Queen was also an adoring fan. Disraeli's relationship with Queen Victoria was often advantageous to his political schemes and the Queen was an often willing patron to his political arts. As previously mentioned, Disraeli had cited the Queen's own words on suffrage as the impetus to the 1867

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ "Second Great Reform Act, 1867," UK Parliament, accessed November 17, 2021, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/from-the-parliamentary-collections/collections-reform-acts/great-reform-act111/>.

Reform Act and she had eagerly taken in the news of its debate in Parliament. Upon its passage, Queen Victoria was overjoyed at its success, and a few months later was thrilled again at what it had done for Disraeli's career. In a letter to her daughter she gushed, "Mr. Disraeli is Prime Minister! A proud thing for a man 'risen from the people' to have obtained! And I must say really so loyally; it is his real talent, his good temper and the way in wh. he managed the Reform Bill last year- wh. have brought this about."⁶⁹ It is perhaps this perceived sense of loyalty that the Queen saw in Disraeli that provided the foundation for their excellent working relationship as PM and Monarch, something that the Queen did not share with Gladstone to humorous effect.

In Disraeli's mind, even the Monarch was not above the One Nation, while authority derived from the Crown he still felt the Crown too had to work in tandem with other classes for the betterment of the nation and therefore the Crown. It was important that One Nationism was appealing to voters on a national, rather than class, level as well as benefiting the national population.⁷⁰ In order for this political theory to work, however, the Crown needed to be seen as in line with and adhering to, "Queen. Church. Empire,"⁷¹ as Toryism was once defined, but not Queen above Church and Empire. Disraeli was fortunate to have found a willing patron. Queen Victoria was a monarch who seemed to be tailor-made for Disraeli's benefit, and he for her. In the Queen, Disraeli had found the ultimate authority to champion his One Nation ideals, in particular she shared his vision for raising up the middle classes bolstered by suffrage and labor reforms. Queen Victoria also bought into One Nation's ideas on Empire, as it not only benefited her subjects, but also herself: "On May Day 1876, the Queen was formally announced Empress

⁶⁹ Shannon, Richard. *The Age of Disraeli 1868-1881*. New York NY: Longman Inc., 1992. 31-32

⁷⁰ Gamble, Andrew. *The Conservative Nation*. Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1974. 18.

⁷¹ Baird, Julia, *Victoria The Queen: An Intimate Biography of the Woman Who Ruled an Empire*. New York NY: Random House, 2016. 381.

of India. It was one of her proudest moments. She dipped her quill in the well and carefully signed ‘Victoria R & I’ (*Regina et Imperatrix*).⁷² Disraeli would in fact force through legislation later in his career in 1876 that provided that moment to the Queen despite heavy opposition, cementing her love for him.⁷³

The Queen found in Disraeli an empathetic ear who was willing to hear her concerns and act on them in Parliament, but yet did not merely seek to use her as a political tool. Disraeli would heed her words and consider them, weaving them into his own rhetoric and in doing so, married the dual voices of Crown and Prime Minister in a way that befitted the nation for half a century. Disraeli’s demonstration of this by his 1867 Reform Bill had signaled to the Queen that this was the beginning of a fruitful partnership for them both.

With how successful Disraeli was in passing his reform bill it might appear that his old nemesis Gladstone had taken one of his periods away from civil service. The actual explanation for Gladstone’s uncharacteristic quietness was that Disraeli had simply outplayed him so thoroughly, in this particular battle of theirs, that Gladstone was barely in the game to begin with. As a popular riddle of the day asked, “Why is Gladstone like a telescope?” the response being, “Because Disraeli can draw him, look right through him, and shut him up.”⁷⁴

There is an argument to be made that Gladstone did not muster a worthy challenge because he did not feel he could. This is not to say he did not believe he should challenge it, but rather he feared he was not capable of it. In a correspondence with fellow Liberal Party member, Henry Brand, he compared Disraeli to a man in the lord’s wood stating, “If you have to drive a

⁷² Baird, Julia, *Victoria The Queen: An Intimate Biography of the Woman Who Ruled an Empire*. New York NY: Random House, 2016. 382.

⁷³ Baird, Julia, *Victoria The Queen: An Intimate Biography of the Woman Who Ruled an Empire*. New York NY: Random House, 2016. 382.

⁷⁴ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 185.

man out of a wood you must yourself go into the wood to drive him. This is what I am afraid of.”⁷⁵ Gladstone’s uncertainty of his ability to vanquish Disraeli rings in this statement as he grappled with the thought that Disraeli already has an advantage, as evidenced by Disraeli being the man already in the wood in the analogy.

Gladstone was right to fear this, as it was not just their ideologies being pitted against each other in the reform debates, but the men themselves as well. In this respect, Disraeli’s message was clearer and more easily digestible. When he spoke, by all accounts, he was calm and measured and the fact that the ideology was his own brainchild was not lost on people. When not speaking he was just as deliberate, having clear and precise answers when challenged.

Gladstone, on the other hand, in the few times he did speak, could not conceal his frustration with Disraeli and disdain for One-Nationism. At one point, he was so visibly irritated by Disraeli’s speech that the latter paused to joke, “His manner is sometimes so very excited and so alarming that one might also feel thankful that [we] are divided by a good broad piece of furniture.”⁷⁶ The joke raised raucous laughter from the MPs assembled and further cemented the dual images of Disraeli as the carefree strategist and Gladstone the grumpy old brute, an image that existed amongst the general populace as well. Journalists like Edward Russell were responsible for popularizing these views of the men through their reporting on sessions of Parliament. When he reported on Disraeli’s “speech of the session,” he made sure to include “its bold caricature of Mr. Gladstone’s cloud-compelling manner” and highlighted how “the whole House seemed tickled too much ever seriously to fall out with Disraeli on the subject again.”⁷⁷ In

⁷⁵ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 168.

⁷⁶ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 176.

⁷⁷ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 178.

other words, Disraeli had both privately and publicly made a fool of Gladstone to the amusement of the House, essentially destroying any challenge Gladstone would be able to personally make.

The consensus was clear, Disraeli had soundly defeated Gladstone at Westminster. The victory was so thorough that Disraeli declared he would not accept any amendments to the bill that originated from Gladstone. Gladstone was forced to secretly smuggle his ideas into the bill through intermediaries in order to avoid Disraeli's detection. There is an argument to be had whether the result of the vote was a referendum on the opposing ideologies, as Disraeli assumed, or just the House responding to the issue of suffrage. At first glance it would appear that the result was solely based on the issue of suffrage. Although Disraeli would promptly be made Prime Minister after the reform bill's effects were felt he was effectively a lame duck leader as the Liberals won many new seats in the House of Commons. William Ewart Gladstone would serve four terms as PM after the debate, including immediately after Disraeli's brief first term as PM, and he is still viewed as a champion of the common man in the UK. However to Disraeli's credit, if you widen the purview of the discussion, One Nationsim has become far more entrenched with the working class voters than the laissez faire capitalism espoused by Gladstonian Liberalism.

One of the pillars of One Nation Conservatism is imperialism, which serves two purposes. One was to further the power of the British Empire, which in turn furthered the prestige of citizens of the Empire. This was a key component to what Disraeli was selling with his brand of Conservatism, namely an identity of British exceptionalism. British exceptionalism was the concept Britain was the very best of what Europe had to offer so therefore British citizens would be the top tier of Europe as well. Much as it remains in contemporary times, the

pitch was appealing and resonated with the British citizens who were watching the rise of a German Empire while also remembering the rise of Napoleon.

In June of 1872, Disraeli did his best to lay out what the idea of the British Empire meant to Conservatism, and more importantly, to cultural identity. He was particularly harsh on what he deemed “the attempts of Liberalism to effect the disintegration of the Empire of England.”⁷⁸ In particular, he viewed the Liberal platform as disastrous for the nation’s fortunes and felt that their arguments were a bill of false goods propagated to support misconceived feelings that British rule was harmful.⁷⁹

Liberalism was the enemy of Disraeli, so it is only fitting that the brand of Liberalism he detested the most would be named after the man he loathed the most, William Gladstone. Gladstonian Liberalism, like Disraeli and Gladstone themselves, ran antithetical to every practice of One-Nation Conservatism. Where Disraeli saw the UK as a powerful empire, Gladstone saw a muted isolationist who avoided the Bismarckian trends in Europe.⁸⁰ Gladstone felt that involving the UK in the colonial scramble the rest of Europe was swept up in would lead to alliances or rivalries with nations that could draw her into continental conflicts, akin to the Napoleonic Wars. A One-Nationist would argue that by entering into imperialism with the express, driven purpose of being the number one empire you would be able to prevent said conflicts, which seemingly bears out with *Pax Britannica*. For a little over a century the might of the British Empire was enough to quell conflicts and allow the UK to shape and mold European, and global, policy to

⁷⁸ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 239.

⁷⁹ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950 239.

⁸⁰ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950 239.

how they desired. It also allowed the British to maintain peace by always chopping down the number two empire before it could truly threaten them, i.e. France and Russia.

One-Nationism hoped to set up economic programs to help better the lives of the lower classes, whilst Gladstonian Liberalism sought to keep taxes low while practicing free market capitalism with no government programs. Ironically in advocating for this laissez-faire approach to the economy, “The People’s William” Gladstone is far closer a figure to Margaret Thatcher than Disraeli could ever be considered, despite Thatcher coming from the party of Disraeli. Pointedly, Gladstonian Liberalism also cares very little for the historic cultural values of the United Kingdom. Instead, it promotes individualistic thinking with a greater emphasis on one’s self over society.

Disraeli was not opposed to the idea of self governance and felt it inconceivable to imagine an imperial structure without self governance. What he did feel was that self-government had to provide some benefit to the Home Government. He criticized previous imperial concessions, “But self-government, in my opinion when it was conceded, ought to have been conceded as a part of a great policy of Imperial Consolidation.”⁸¹ He was critical of this tactic, seemingly because it clashed with the symbiotic ideals of his One Nation vision. Moreso, he fundamentally felt that the British had made those territories stable and profitable and should have been compensated if ties were to be completely severed. When pitching this line of thinking to the people, he appealed to their wallets by laying out the luxuries these lost colonies had enjoyed on their dime, “It ought to have been accompanied by an Imperial Tariff, by securities for the people of England for the enjoyment of the unappropriated lands[...], and by a military code which should have precisely defined the means and the responsibilities by which

⁸¹ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950.239.

the colony should be defended.”⁸² In other words, those lost colonies had acted like the parasites the Home Government was being accused of being.

He continued on the topic of his thesis by surmising that the only reason Liberalism had failed at dismantling the Empire, and all its benefits to the people, was by the grace of the very people who the Liberals argued that the Empire was oppressing. “But how has it failed?”, he queried, “Through the sympathy of the Colonies for the Mother Country.”⁸³ In other words, the colonies themselves recognized the benefits of the imperial arrangement, even as the Liberal governments had sought to cut ties. More specifically, these colonies recognized the symbiotic benefit they received from the relationship. On the topic of cutting ties, Disraeli admonished any MP who would neglect reconstructing as much of the Empire as possible for the good of the British subjects.⁸⁴

His closing thoughts were a question turned to the audience, and England as a whole, “The issue is no mean one. It is whether you will be content to be a comfortable England, modelled and moulded upon Continental principles and meeting in due course an inevitable fate, or whether you will be a great, an imperial country, a country where your sons, when they rise, rise to paramount positions, and obtain not merely the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world.”⁸⁵ A seemingly simple choice laid out before his constituency: maintain the standard of British excellence that had allowed the period of *Pax Britannica*, or see their once glorious Empire dismantled piece by piece for a pittance like their former Spanish rivals.

⁸² Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 239.

⁸³ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 239.

⁸⁴ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 239.

⁸⁵ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 239-240.

Even in the 1870s, in the midst of Europe's colonial scramble, there were some detractors of the practice of imperialism, such as Karl Marx, while others felt it needed to be justified. Disraeli deployed the argument that the colonial territories had enjoyed happiness, peace, and "comparative prosperity" due to British rule.⁸⁶ He argued that it was the national mission to help fulfill those roles citing, "that in almost every instance in which the rule of the Queen has been established and the great *Pax Britannica* has been enforced, there has come with it greater security to life and property, and a material improvement in the condition of the bulk of the population."⁸⁷ The crux of Disraeli's, and in turn One Nation's, imperial philosophy is that the wealth and stability the Crown provided greatly outweighed any perceived slights towards the people of the territories. He viewed imperialism as a symbiotic relationship between the colonies and home nation rather than the parasitic popular belief. It is also seemingly a natural extension of his concept of paternalism. In Disraeli's estimation even separated by oceans and continents the working and lower classes of the colonies yearned for the guidance of the home government.

Benjamin Disraeli would serve two terms as Prime Minister, one in 1868 and the other from 1874 - 1880, and finished off his career as the Leader of the Opposition against Gladstone's government from 1880-1881. He became bedridden in 1881 with multiple illnesses including bronchitis, asthma, and gout. Among some of the small comforts to him at this time was a card signed only "a Workman" that read "Don't die yet. We can't do this without you."⁸⁸ Even towards the end he reveled in seeing what he meant to the working class citizens that he had done so much to incorporate into the British political system . Unfortunately the illness became

⁸⁶ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 241.

⁸⁷ Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950. 241.

⁸⁸ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 318.

so bad that Disraeli began to lose his vision and friends came to visit fearing this was the end for him. All but the Queen who requested to see him but Disraeli politely refused joking that, “She would only ask me to take a message to Albert.”⁸⁹ Sadly their fears were realized as Benjamin Disraeli, the 1st Earl of Beaconsfield passed away on April 19th, 1881, his final recorded words being “I had rather live but I am not afraid to die.”⁹⁰

The footprint Disraeli left in Britain was so large and apparent that his death left the sitting Prime Minister Gladstone in a bit of a predicament. He knew his life must be publicly celebrated but also was highly conscious of how public their mutual dislike had been. Gladstone was sandwiched in between knowing and feeling, as he had some measure of respect for him, that Disraeli deserved a state funeral but also fearing how his actions would be perceived. If Gladstone went too over the top people might feel he was being disingenuous and patronizing, but if he did too little he would be admonished for letting his animosity taint the affair. Perhaps the greatest pressure on Gladstone was being exerted by the Queen herself, who had adored Disraeli while tolerating Gladstone. Without expressly ordering Gladstone to make the funeral go off without a hitch she telegraphed Gladstone, “I am in deep grief at this irreparable loss of a most devoted and valued friend.”⁹¹ This is just one of many examples of Queen Victoria dropping the royal We in her grief over the loss of Disraeli.

Humorously Disraeli had outplayed his life-long rival one final time in death, for the state funeral would not be held in London but in Hughenden. Disraeli had wished to be buried next to his beloved wife Mary and in doing so had forced Gladstone to reckon with Disraeli’s place in history. The very decision of the location forced special trains to be taken from London to

⁸⁹ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 318.

⁹⁰ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 319.

⁹¹ Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 2.

Hughenden, trains packed full of British and European dignitaries alike all there to honor the man who had risen from modest means to become an Earl and member of the Order of the Garter. The two most notable absentees from the funeral were the Queen who by custom was prohibited from attending, a trend that was not broken until Queen Elizabeth II attended the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill in 1965.⁹² The other was William Ewart Gladstone.

The legacy he leaves behind is staggering in British politics, in which he helped to shape an Empire that for better or ill forged the path of world history for over a century. He rose from humble origins to become one of the premier Prime Ministers in the nation's history, and endeared himself to one of its most famous monarchs. Queen Victoria raised him to Earldom and he was one of her dearest friends in government. He is responsible for Britain's securing the rights to the Suez Canal on top of his spearheading of the 1867 Reform Act and other legislation instrumental in elevating the working classes.

However One-Nationsim also endures today and is a concept that is not mutually applicable to the nation of Great Britain. Disraeli created a viable political ideology that could be applied in theory to any nation and still be as successful. It could even be argued that the United States of America applied One Nationism in the 1940s when dealing with World War II when major corporations and companies devoted resources for the betterment of the nation.

These are not the results of a haphazard political facade cobbled together over an opportunistic career, if so it would not have endured over a century. Instead Disraeli's thought process over decades, starting as early as the 1820s, provides a timeline of One-Nation Conservatism from its inception. By studying his writings and speeches a picture of the brilliant statesmen is painted over the facade of the fickle politician. Benjamin Disraeli's life and political

⁹² Staff, BHT. "Queen Elizabeth II and Winston Churchill's Unlikely Friendship." British Heritage. British Heritage, November 11, 2021. <https://britishheritage.com/history/queen-elizabeth-winston-churchill>.

legacy is a testament to what drive and passion can achieve and is diminished by framing him as an actor who played the role that suited him.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Disraeli, Benjamin. *Vivian Grey*. London: Cassell, 1968.
- Citizenship. Accessed November 30, 2021.
https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/struggle_democracy/docs/punch1867.htm. *This information is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>.
- Eds. M.G. Weibe, Mary S. Millar, and Ann P. Robson, *Benjamin Disraeli's Letters Vol. VI 1852-1856*. Toronto Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- York, Chris. "What Is This One Nation Conservatism That Boris Johnson Keeps Banging on about?" HuffPost UK. HuffPost UK, December 13, 2019.
- Parliamentary Reform-Representation of the People - Monday 11 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Hansard. Accessed October 6, 2021.
- "Parliamentary Reform Representation of the People - Monday 25 February 1867 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Hansard. Accessed October 13, 2021.
- <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-02-25/debates/43a9d679-de46-4857-8ba5-18759007ac6f/ParliamentaryReformRepresentationOfThePeople>.

Secondary Sources

- Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*. New York NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- Baird, Julia, *Victoria The Queen: An Intimate Biography of the Woman Who Ruled an Empire*. New York NY: Random House, 2016.

- Blake, Robert, *Disraeli*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2012.
- Cannadine, David. *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800-1906*. London: Penguin books, 2018.
- Ed. R.J. White, *The British Political Tradition Vol. IV The Conservative Tradition*. London: Nicholas Kaye Ltd., 1950.
- Gamble, Andrew. *The Conservative Nation*. Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1974.
- Hearnshaw, F.J.C., *Conservatism In England: An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey*. New York NY: Howard Fertig, Inc. Edition, 1967.
- https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/one-nation-conservatism-explained_uk_5df39be3e4b04bcba183df7f .
- McKenzie R.I. *British Political Parties*. New York NY: St. Martin's Press, 1955.
- Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli Vol.III 1846-1855*
- Moore, Charlie. *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*. London, UK: Penguin House, 2016.
- Ridley, Jane. *Young Disraeli: 1804-1846*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 1995.

- Roberts, Geoffrey K. *Political Parties and Pressure Groups in Britain*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1971.

- "Second Great Reform Act, 1867." UK Parliament. Accessed November 17, 2021. <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/from-the-parliamentary-collections/collections-reform-acts/great-reform-act111/>.

- Shannon, Richard. *The Age of Disraeli 1868-1881*. New York NY: Longman Inc., 1992.

- Smith, Paul. *Disraeli*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

- Staff, BHT. "Queen Elizabeth II and Winston Churchill's Unlikely Friendship." British Heritage. British Heritage, November 11, 2021. <https://britishheritage.com/history/queen-elizabeth-winston-churchill>.

- Weintraub, Stanley. *Disraeli: A Biography*. New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1993.