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The Bulletin, 'Londonisation' and Scottish politics in the 1940s and 1950s

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Abstract

This article seeks to examine Scottish politics in the decade or so following the Second World War. The objective is to uncover the texture of Scottish politics in a period that has been characterised rather simplistically. Much of the evidence for the paper is drawn from the Scottish popular press, most notably newspapers such as the *Bulletin*, which was a Glasgow publication with a Unionist outlook, motivated by a concern to keep Scottish issues to the fore and to resist centralisation. The article will examine the way in which common interpretations of this period in Scottish politics as being one dominated by a unionism that was common to the main parties, serves to flatten what was an interesting and contested landscape. There is a considerable literature on this period in British historiography that engages in a debate about the value of the idea of 'consensus' in British politics. The apparent consensus over the Union hid a range of important debates about the way in which the Union ought to operate that were of such an extent to bring the idea of a unionist consensus into question. Given that the SNP was such a marginal force in Scottish politics in this period, it seems more sensible to focus on the debates about the meaning of the Union rather than to adopt an existential focus that was simply not present in day-to-day political debate in the decade following the Second World War.

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In late June 1945, during the General Election campaign, Winston Churchill travelled to Scotland. He appeared first in Glasgow, where he made a series of speeches. He noted his connections to Scotland – representation of Dundee from 1908 to 1922 and command of a Scottish battalion during the Great War – but he received a mixed response in the Second City of the Empire.[1] There was some ill-mannered booing at Tradeston and the windows of the Conservative Club were broken. Nevertheless, he spoke to a crowd estimated at 12,000 packed into Blythswood Square. This permitted the *Scotsman* to conclude that 'Glasgow by the cordiality of its greeting gave the lie to the oft-repeated libel about "Red Clydeside"'.[2] He then made a 'triumphant tour' in a cream-coloured Renault to Edinburgh. In many of the towns and villages that he passed through he gave a short speech. At Cumbernauld, Dennyloanhead and Linlithgow he lauded the Scottish contribution to the war, regretted that the coalition government had not continued but argued that this was a moment for continuity under the Conservatives rather than for bold experiments under Labour. At Carntyne he encountered a novel form of political advertising, in the shape of two donkeys in a farmer's field: one had a placard tied to it that read 'I am a Churchill man', the other animal's message read 'The Beaverbrook Press'! His objective in Edinburgh was a major set-piece speech in Princes Street Gardens, in

[1] There is a tendency to exaggerate Churchill's Scottish connections, although he played the Scottish card when it suited him, as at Ibrox in 1949 and the Usher Hall in 1950, speeches discussed later in this article; Andrew Liddle, *Cheers Mr Churchill! Winston in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2022) does so at times; Ian S. Wood, *Churchill* (Basingstoke, 2000) is judicious.

[2] *Scotsman*, 29 Jun. 1945, 5.

which he repeated his message that the electorate should 'vote against bringing in revolutionary and disturbing internal changes … [they] should support those who had practical tasks to carry out', that is the Conservatives, or, as they were known in Scotland, the Scottish Unionist Party. Unfortunately, a tour of Leith had to be cancelled to allow Churchill to travel south from Waverley Station, thereby disappointing a crowd of 4000 people gathered around Queen Victoria's statue at the foot of Leith Walk. They agreed to disperse only after an announcement from a police loud-speaker van.[3] The Prime Minister was buoyed by this tour and as a result of the receptions he had received in Scotland he told Jock Colville, his assistant private secretary, that he was in no doubt of the victory to come. Colville replied that he 'would agree if it were a presidential election'. It was, of course, no such thing.[4]

In this short tour Churchill encountered a range of Scottish political opinion and some auguries of the election result – which came as a surprise to much of the Scottish press – can be detected.[5] Churchill was respected, although far from universally popular, there was a reservoir of support for Unionism north of the Border but it required conservation. The *Scotsman* was sufficiently concerned to issue a reminder. The electorate were warned that they could not have their cake and eat it:

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[3] *Scotsman*, 29 Jun. 1945, 5.

[4] John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, 1939–1955* (London, 1985), 609; Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, volume VIII, 1945–65* (London, 1988), 50–1.

[5] Part of the issue was the way in which excitement built up after the bulk of constituencies polled on 5 July but some were delayed until 12 and 19 July and the result was not declared until 26 July to allow votes of soldiers still stationed overseas to be returned to the UK and counted. *Scotsman*, 26 Jul. 1945, 4; 27 Jul. 1945, 4; 31 Jul. 1945, 4 *Aberdeen Journal* 5 Jul. 1945, 1, 2; 6 Jul. 1945, 2; 11 Jul. 1945, 2; 27 Jul. 1945, 3,4; *Dundee Courier*, 5 Jul. 1945, 2; 27 Jul. 1945, 2; 28 Jul. 1945, 4; *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 26 Jul. 1945, 1.

they could not have Socialist policies, superficially attractive, <u>and</u> retain the services of the wartime Prime Minister. The election, the editorial continued, was a clash of both men and measures, a clash of ideas as well as personalities:

> Mr Churchill is the Unionist and National party leader. He finds himself opposed to Socialism because he believes that …it would strike at the self reliance which is the mark of our nation and especially of the northern part of it.[6]

This short tour and the reactions to it indicates that the 1945 election represented the uncertain start to a new political era. The feeling of novelty was increased when Labour won a working majority for the first time at the election. The party now had a chance to put its stamp on the British state and society. What did this mean for Scotland?

This article seeks to examine Scottish politics in the decade or so following the Second World War. The objective is to uncover the texture of Scottish politics in a period that has been characterised rather simplistically. Much of the evidence is drawn from the Scottish popular press, most notably newspapers such as the *Bulletin*, which was a Glasgow publication with a Unionist outlook, motivated by a concern to keep Scottish issues to the fore and to resist centralisation, which it termed 'Londonisation'.[7] Most of the writing on this period focuses on elections and

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[6] *Scotsman*, 29 Jun. 1945, 4.

[7] Given the significance of newspapers to Scottish political culture there is a marked lack of scholarship on the subject, see Harry Reid, *Deadline: The Story of the Scottish Press* (Edinburgh, 2006); Tom Gallagher, 'The press and Protestant popular culture: a case study of the *Scottish Daily*

the extent to which this was a period dominated by a unionist consensus. The Scottish Unionist Party and the Labour Party gained over 85 per cent of the share of the vote in the elections of the 1940s and 1950s. A further feature of this period, in contrast to earlier and later periods, is that Scottish electoral patterns did not diverge from those in England. The period has been characterised by Harvie as a 'moment of British nationalism' and much of the literature suggests that it is flat and uninteresting.[8] Even the 1945 election, widely regarded as a watershed, was a muted affair in Scotland. Indeed, Attlee came to the Scottish Labour Party conference in Musselburgh in October 1945 and chided the members for their relatively poor performance in the Scottish constituencies. He wondered if the Scottish party had 'not devoted enough energy to the work of organisation and propaganda' and that they may have 'trusted too much to mass sentiment'. He emphasised that the great victory in the 1945 election could not have been won without a broad appeal, 'beyond the range of the weekly wage earner' and he

Express', in Graham Walker and Tom Gallagher (eds), *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990), 193–212.

[8] Christopher Harvie, 'The moment of British nationalism, 1939–1970', *Political Quarterly*, 71 (2000), 328–40; Michael Dyer, 'The evolution of the centre right and the state of Scottish Conservatism', *Political Studies*, 49 (2001), 30–50; W.H. Marwick, *A Short History of Labour in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1967), 109–14; Andrew Marr, *The Battle for Scotland* (London, 1992), 92–120; a thoughtful essay is provided by Ken Alexander, 'Lessons from Scotland', in Jim Fyrth (ed.), *Labour's High Noon: The Government and the Economy, 1945–51* (London, 1993), 195–213; an interesting and subtle account can be found in Catriona M.M. MacDonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet: Scotland's Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2009), 216–41.

concluded by arguing that 'in Scotland your appeal has not been sufficiently broad' and that socialism could only be achieved with 'moral fervour'.[9]

The Prime Minister's analysis of the Scottish Labour performance was somewhat harsh. In 1945 the party gained ten seats from the Conservatives and there were five further gains from Liberals, Liberal Nationals, National Labour and the ILP; further, the Motherwell by-election loss to the SNP was restored.[10] After a slow start before the Great War, Scotland became a source of strength for the Labour party and in the elections of the 1920s it performed better in Scotland than in Britain as a whole. In 1945 Labour won thirty-seven seats and its share of the vote, 47.9 per cent, was the highest achieved up to that point. Nevertheless, the swing to Labour in Scotland, 8.2 per cent, was less than that in England, 12.1 per cent.[11] Aside from the unusual case of the Western Isles, where Malcolm MacMillan won with a considerable personal vote, the Labour seats were all in the industrial central belt. The Conservatives fought the 1945 election on their own account without the advantage of the National Government coalition arrangements that prevailed in 1931 and 1935. In this context their performance was defensible and the party focussed on improving their organisation and membership in the aftermath of the election. A notable feature of Scottish politics in 1945 was the dominance of the two main parties. Although some National Liberals (ie the political descendants of those Liberals who supported the National Government in 1931) survived, and a couple in the Highlands attempted an appearance of independence (although they were not

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[9] *Scotsman*, 22 Oct. 1945, 3.

[10] *Scotsman*, 27 July 1945, A4.

[11] I.G.C. Hutchison, *Scottish Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills, 2001), 70; Christopher Harvie, 'Labour in Scotland during the Second World War', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), 921–44.

opposed by Unionists), the independent 'Sinclairite' Liberals were wiped out north of the Border, Sinclair himself losing in Caithness and Sutherland.[12] Even well-known Liberal candidates in rural areas, such as the former Rugby internationalist and Gaelic singer John M. Bannerman, who stood in Argyll, found little audience for a Liberal policy aimed at Highland voters.[13]

The political chronology of the shift from war to peace in 1945 was very different from that experienced in 1918, the memory of the latter by some of the key political players was important. Many leading Labour figures were keen to avoid a repetition of the 'Coupon election' of 1918, which they remembered as working to their disadvantage. In 1945, the coalition came to an end on 20 May, soon after the end of the war in Europe, but with fighting continuing against Japan, and the Labour ministers resigned from the Cabinet. This was partly due to pressure from the NEC of the Labour party, perhaps motivated by memories of the course of events in 1918. The Conservatives, from Churchill down, questioned the role of this unelected committee in events of such import and this led to a worsening of relations between Attlee and Churchill and perhaps contributed to the tone of the some of the exchanges in the election.[14] A new 'caretaker government' was established under

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[12] *Aberdeen Journal*, 27 July 1945, 3.

[13] *Oban Times*, 9 Jun. 1945, 5; 16 Jun. 1945, 3; 23 Jun. 1945, 5. Bannerman came third with less than 12 per cent of the vote, a much weaker performance than inter-war Liberals in a seat that the party had last held in 1923.

[14] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945–1951* (Oxford, 1984), 34–6; John Bew, *Citizen Clem: A Biography of Attlee* (London, 2016), 330–1; the role of the NEC, and in particular of Harold Laski, the Chairman of the Labour party, was deprecated in some of the Scottish press. His role in trying to limit the room for manoeuvre for Bevin and Attlee at the Potsdam summit was the source of much controversy, see *Daily Record*, 18 Jun. 1945, 2; *Bulletin*, 20 Jun. 1945, 4.

Churchill and a vigorous general election campaign was initiated. There were many voices of regret that these circumstances terminated the wartime coalition and that party politics were to be resumed, but resumed they were. The *Bulletin* pointed out the dangers of a 'khaki election', as the 1918 contest had been characterised, and warned that the party (by implication the Labour party) that 'insists on going to the polls at once may find that it raises a good deal of resentment among voters who prefer not to be hurried'.[15]

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This article will examine the way in which common interpretations of this period as being one dominated by a unionism that was common to the main parties, serves to flatten what was an interesting landscape. There is a considerable literature on this period that engages in a debate about the idea of 'consensus' in British politics. While this body of writing has taken little notice of national differences across the United Kingdom, it is useful in that an apparent consensus over the existence of the NHS, the Welfare State, housing or economic policy, hides a range of distinctions between the parties. These reflected significant variations in approach to major areas of national life. Indeed, these debates could not be contained within parties, as was exemplified by the strife over the NHS within the Labour Party in the early 1950s. [16] Similarly, the apparent consensus over the Union hid a range of

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[15] *Bulletin*, 22 May 1945, 4.

[16] The seminal work in the literature on consensus is Paul Addison in his *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London, 1975); aspects of his account have been challenged by Kevin Jefferys, *The Churchill Coalition and Wartime Politics, 1940–45* (Manchester 1991); Robert

important debates about its meaning that were of such an extent to bring the idea of a unionist consensus into question. Given that the SNP was such a marginal force in Scottish politics in this period it seems more sensible to focus on the debates about the meaning of the Union rather than to adopt an existential focus that was not present in day-to-day politics. The Union was simple enough in form and its longevity meant that the boundaries were well known to all political actors. The implications, however, of the arrangements were highly complex. The main change since the late nineteenth century had been the development of 'administrative devolution' and the increasing professionalism and organisational focus of the Scottish Office, now firmly located in Edinburgh. At first glance, it was clear which issues fell into its competence – agriculture, fisheries, education, prisons, the health service, the administration of justice, oversight of local government – but there were some complications. In the educational field, for example, the school system was clearly a

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Crowcroft, *Attlee's War: World War Two and the Making of a Labour Leader* (London, 2011); Kit Kowol, 'The Conservative movement and dreams of Britain's post-war future', *Historical Journal*, 62 (2019), 473–93; the literature on consensus is dealt with in Harriet Jones and Michael Kandiah (eds), *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945–64* (Houndmills, 1996); an exception to the general neglect of the multi-national aspect of the UK in this context is Matthew Cragoe, '"We like local patriotism": The Conservative Party and the discourse of decentralisation, 1947–51', *English Historical Review*, 122 (2007), 965–85 and Matthew Cragoe, 'Defending the constitution: the Conservative Party and the Idea of Devolution', in Chris Williams and Andrew Edwards (eds), *The Art of the Possible: Politics and Governance in Modern British History, 1885 to 1997: Essays in Memory of Duncan Tanner* (Manchester, 2015), 162–87; see also Neil Rollings, 'Poor Mr Butskell: a short life wrecked by schizophrenia?', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5 (1994), 183–205; a critical approach has been adopted by Richard Toye, 'From "consensus" to "common ground": the rhetoric of the postwar settlement and its collapse', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48 (2013), 3–23.

Scottish-Office responsibility and funding for the universities came from the Treasury through the arms-length University Grants Committee, which acted as a buffer between Government and university. Even here, however, there were complexities in that the Scottish Education Department sent an assessor to the UGC and had some responsibility for higher education through the 'Central Institutions'. In economic policy, it also seemed clear that the Treasury and the Board of Trade were the key Whitehall departments and the Scottish Office had little formal responsibility for economic policy, the location of industry and regional policy. These matters, however, had a significant influence on areas that were the responsibility of the Scottish Office and local government in Scotland. A major new industrial initiative, for example, had implications for housing, schools and a host of local services. Thus, 'the Union' was all pervasive in Scottish politics and was part of political discourse in Scotland far beyond the relatively few occasions when its formal provisions were debated. The Union was more central to Scottish and British politics than is suggested in general histories that allow Scotland only a walk-on part on such occasions as the taking of the Stone of Scone from Westminster Abbey in 1950. The boundaries of the debate did not extend to the existential and Scotland was more important to British politics than the small number of occasions when an unambiguously 'Scottish' issue, if such a thing could be defined, crept onto the British political agenda. As political scientists have pointed out, the UK was a 'Union state', rather than a more straightforward 'unitary' state, and 'the Union' affected all

parts of it. The debate on nationalisation, and the critique of it, that it was a form of centralisation ('Londonisation') that was inimical to Scotland, is one such example.[17]

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The popular newspapers of Scotland, despite the fact that they were important reflections of what Colin Kidd has termed the 'banal' unionism of post-war Scotland, have been neglected by historians.[18] Although this article draws on a range of newspapers, the principal source is the Glasgow daily newspaper *The Bulletin*, published by George Outram, who also published the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Evening Times.* This was a title founded in 1915, and described later as 'one of the healthiest war babies founded during the 1914 to 1918 struggle'. In 1923 it was merged with the *Scots Pictorial* and its content reflected this genealogy, with lots of visual material. Read mostly in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, it reached a peak circulation of nearly 200,000 in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Although the *Scottish Daily Express* reached a wider circulation, its political points of view were eccentric and subject to the whims of its proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook. The *Bulletin*, as this article will show, articulated strong support for the Unionist party, deep scepticism about the centralising tendencies of Labour ('Londonisation'),

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[17] James Mitchell, *Governing Scotland: The Invention of Administrative Devolution* (Basingstoke, 2003); James Mitchell, 'Conservatives and the changing meaning of the Union', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 6 (1996), 30–44; Lindsay Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2003); Richard Weight, *Patriots, National Identity in Britain, 1940–2000* (London, 2002), esp 127–35; Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain, 1945–1951* (London, 1992), 435–6; Iain G. C. Hutchison, ' The Scottish Office and the Scottish Universities, c. 1930–c. 1960', in Jennifer Carter and Donald Withrington (eds), *Scottish Universities: Distinctiveness and Diversity* (Edinburgh, 1992), 56–66.

[18] Colin Kidd, *Union and Unionisms: Political Thought in Scotland, 1500–2000* (Cambridge, 2008).

especially during their period of government from 1945 to 1951, and a strong Scottish identity. The early to mid-1950s were its peak period of strength. The *Bulletin* ceased publication in 1960, with some of its market eroded by the rise of television as a better medium for visual imagery and, more importantly, advertising. Even at this point it had a circulation of 120,000, compared to only 88,000 for its 'quality' stablemate the *Glasgow Herald*. In their evidence to the Royal Commissions on the Press in 1947 and 1961, senior journalists and executives of Outram's noted that rising costs necessitated a price rise from its traditional 1d. This contributed to a fall in circulation and precipitated closure. The closure relieved Outram's of the burden of mounting losses associated with publication of the *Bulletin*. The closure was part of a general trend in this period that saw a decline in the number of 'popular' titles, at a time when the 'qualities were expanding their circulations.[19] Nevertheless, if our understanding of post-war unionism is to move beyond the worlds of elite politicians and intellectuals and their echo chambers in the 'quality press', we must explore its popular manifestations.

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[19] *The Newspaper Press Directory and Advertisers' Guide, 99th Annual edition* (London, 1949), 89; *Times*, 27 Jun. 1960, 12; 30 Jun. 1960, 7; 1 Jul. 1960, 7; Cmd 7398, *Royal Commission on the Press, Minutes of Evidence, 22nd Day, 19 Feb. 1948,* Qs 7297–9; Cmnd 1812, *Royal Commission on the Press, 1962, Evidence Vol. 1*, Qs 3785–7, 3830; Cmnd 1812–5, Documentary Evidence, Vol II, pp. 76-81 (written submission by Outram); Colin Seymour-Ure, *The Press, Politics and the Public: An Essay on the Role of the National Press in the British Political Sphere* (London, 1968), 78.

One of the key themes to emerge in political debate in the late 1940s was the effect of nationalisation on Scotland. The general topic of nationalisation has occasioned debate among historians, often in response to those who see it as one of the key reasons for the apparent decline of the British economy in the post-war period. Recent scholarship has sought to move away from this framework and to attempt a more general analysis of the place of nationalisation in the economy and in political debate, the latter is the main focus in this article.[20] Given the economic structure and the lingering effects of the war, nationalisation was very significant for the Scottish economy. The nationalisation of coal mining, the railways, and, later, the iron and steel industries had a major effect on the Scotland. There were, however, subtle differences in the process and structure of nationalisation across the Scottish economy. At one end of the spectrum stood the coal mining industry, which had been dogged by bitter industrial relations in the inter-war period. There was a widespread view that the private owners had not made the necessary investment in modernisation in an era when a broad range of economic activities required huge amounts of coal. Although there were criticisms of the level of compensation paid to former private owners, there was broad popular support for nationalisation. Right-wing criticisms of the long-term effect of nationalisation emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, as strikes recurred, but were more muted in the 1940s and 1950s. At the opposite end of the spectrum was the iron and steel industry, which was taken into public ownership after a fierce controversy. In contrast to coal, there was no

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[20] Jim Tomlinson, 'A "failed experiment"? Public ownership and the narratives of post-ward Britain, *Labour History Review*, 73 (2008), 231; Leslie Hannah, 'A failed experiment: the state ownership of industry', in Roderick Floud and Paul A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge economic history of modern Britain. Volume 3: structural change and growth, 1939–2000* (Cambridge, 2004), 84–111.

consensus that the private ownership of this crucial industry had been a failure, or even inefficient.[21] There were also areas of the economy that Labour declined to nationalise, despite long-term commitments to do so, rural and urban land for example.[22]

The political discussion, however, was wider than this and concerned issues of 'control'. The post-war Conservatives were fearful of comprehensive socialist planning of the economy, which was not implemented by the 1945–51 governments, but this did not prevent the Conservatives using the theme of 'control' in their

[21] The official history isby Sir Norman Chester, *The Nationalisation of British Industry, 1945–51* (London, 1975); a clear overview is provided by Martin Chick, *Industrial Policy in Britain 1945–51: Economic Planning, Nationalisation and the Labour Governments* (Cambridge, 1998), 72–102, esp. 74–8 for the contrast between coal mining and iron and steel; Jim Phillips, *Scottish Coal Miners in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2019), 20–7; John Singleton, 'Labour, the Conservatives and nationalisation', in Robert Millward and John Singleton (eds), *The Political Economy of Nationalisation, 1920–1950* (Cambridge, 1995), 13–33; Ruggero Ranieri, 'Partners and enemies: the government's decision to nationalise steel, 1944–8', in Millward and Singleton, *Political Economy of Nationalisation*, 275–305; Christopher Massey, 'Steel nationalisation and the labour governments of 1945–51', in Anne Baldwin, Chris Ellis, Stephen Etheridge, Keith Laybourn and Neil Pye (eds), *Class, Culture and Community: New Perspectives in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Labour History*. (Newcastle, 2012), 127–42; Martin Francis, '"Not reformed capitalism but democratic socialism": the ideology of the Labour leadership, 1945–51', in Jones and Kandiah, *Myth of Consensus*, 46.

[22] Michael Tichelar, 'The conflict over property rights during the Second World War: the Labour Party's abandonment of land nationalisation', *Twentieth Century British History*, 14 (2003), 165–88; Michael Tichelar, 'The Labour Party, agricultural policy and the retreat from rural land nationalisation during the Second World War', *Agricultural History Review*, 51 (2003), 209–25.

rhetoric.[23] There were Labour critics of the model of nationalisation that was implemented by the Attlee government. Some of them also argued that the Boards that ran the nationalised industries were too remote from the workers and the communities in which they lived, as well as the government that had nationalised them. There was a debate about centralisation within the Labour government, some younger ministers and economists disagreed with the structure favoured by Herbert Morrison, the Lord President, who was the chief strategist on nationalisation. Nevertheless, the latter prevailed and models of nationalisation where power and management were distributed or regionalised were eschewed.[24] Some historians have suggested that the government's lack of focus on the transformative possibilities of nationalisation mean that its wider social impact was lost and, despite

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[23] Jim Tomlinson, 'Planning: debate and policy in the 1940s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 3 (1992), 154–74; Stephen Brooke, 'Problems of "Socialist planning": Evan Durbin and the Labour government of 1945', *Historical Journal*, 34 (1991), 687–91; Martin Chick, 'Competition, competitiveness and nationalisation, 1945–51', in Geoffrey Jones and Maurice Kirby (eds), *Competitiveness and the State: Government and Business in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester, 1991), 64–7.

[24] Martin Francis, *Ideas and Policies under Labour, 1945–1951* (Manchester, 1997), 65–99; Stephen Brooke, 'Revisionists and fundamentalists: The Labour Party and economic policy during the Second World War', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), 157–75; Richard Saville, 'Commanding heights: the nationalisation programme', in Fyrth, *Labour's High Noon*, 43–9; Glen O'Hara, '"What the electorate can be expected to swallow": Nationalisation, transnationalism and the shifting boundaries of the state in post-war Britain', *Business History*, 51 (2009), 501–28; Chester, *Nationalisation*, 383–558 provides a clear account of the structure of the governing boards of the various industries.

declining to privatise much when they returned to government in 1951, allowed the Conservatives to entrench the power of the sections of society that backed them.[25]

Historians have debated the extent of division between Labour and the Conservatives on the question of nationalisation in the post-war period. In the depth of the slump in the 1930s, some Conservatives – especially those, such as Harold Macmillan, associated with the 'Middle Way' – had accepted nationalisation of some industries. In the post-war period, as they came to terms with defeat in 1945, the Conservatives had to balance a traditional emphasis on personal freedom and creating the conditions for individual wealth creation, with the reality of popular support for much of the nationalisation programme. The popular memory of the Conservatives as the main party of government during the economic depression of the 1930s had to be overcome. This led to a pragmatic approach and focused opposition to the more controversial proposals for nationalisation, such as road haulage or iron and steel. The Conservatives tried to find lines of criticism of public ownership that stopped short of wholesale promises to privatise. The theme of 'control' was prominent and the argument that in a Scottish context 'nationalisation' meant 'denationalisation' and centralisation was apposite.[26] The determination by

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[25] John Foster, 'The Twentieth Century, 1914–1979' in R. A. Houston and W.W.J. Knox (eds), *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London, 2001), 455–62.

[26] The lineaments of this debate can be followed in John Ramsden, '"A party for owners or a party for earners"? How far did the British Conservative Party really change after 1945?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 5th series., 37 (1987), 49–63; John Turner, '"A land fit for Tories to live in": the political ecology of the British Conservative Party, 1944–1994', *Contemporary European History,* 4 (1995), 189–208; Harriet Jones, 'A bloodless counter-revolution: the Conservative Party and the defence of inequality', in Jones and Kandiah, *Myth of Consensus*, 1–16; Martin Francis, '"Set the

Unionists to depict Labour as the 'other' in political debate was not, of course, new in the post-war period. This had been a central characteristic of the relationship between the Conservatives and the Liberal party in the 1920s and 1930s. In many cases, even outside the formal coalitions of 1918 to 1922 and post-1931, local agreements were frequently come to in order to polarise politics against 'Socialism'.[27] This survived after 1945 in two ways. The first was a critique of the Labour government's wish to direct and plan Scottish life and society. This was a common line of criticism from the right in the 1940s (indeed, was referred to by Churchill in his Edinburgh speech in June 1945) and early 1950s. During the 1945 election campaign, the editor of the *Bulletin* was worried about the danger of getting 'into a frame of mind and habit where we do nothing without the consent of some official or other'.[28] In the 1950 campaign, the same source talked of the 'exasperating hierarchy of officials', detected the possible end of private property rights, state

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people free"? Conservatives and the State', in Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (eds), *The Conservatives and British Society, 1880–1990* (Cardiff, 1996), 58–77; Martin Francis, '"Not reformed capitalism but democratic socialism"' in Jones and Kandiah, *Myth of Consensus,* 40–57; Helen Mercer, 'Industrial organisation and ownership, and a new definition of the "postwar consensus"', in ' in Jones and Kandiah, *Myth of Consensus,* 139– 56; E. H. H. Green, 'The Conservative party, the state and the electorate, 1945–64' in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), 176–200; James Freeman, 'Reconsidering "Set the People Free": Neoliberalism and freedom rhetoric in Churchill's Conservative Party', *Twentieth Century British History*, 29 (2018), 522–46.

[27] This is a major theme in Gordon Brown, 'The Labour party and political change in Scotland, 1918 to 1929: the politics of five elections', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1982, eg 89, 296, 478.

[28] *Bulletin*, 30 Jul. 1945, 4.

control of even the smallest businesses, such as the 'wee shop around the corner'

and, somewhat hyperbolically, asked its readership if a 'kind of collectivist Soviet

Britain' appealed to them.[29] One Unionist politician even argued that Labour

legislation amounted to 'totalitarianism in a most insidious form' and gave them

powers akin to those of Charles I![30] This approach to politics was deemed to have a

stifling effect on Scottish life. Labour's attempt to control was due, in this view, to its

inability or unwillingness to comprehend the idea of 'people getting out of the ruck'.[31]

This was held to be one of the reasons for the high levels of Scottish emigration in

the 1940s. Although there was an admission that there was a tradition of Scottish

emigration and a sense of pride in the perception that the Scots were an imperial

race, the Unionists deprecated mass emigration. This had been the case during the

inter-war period when they perceived it as draining the best human material from

Scotland.[32] In the post-war period an additional argument that was developed was

that the stultifying effect of 'control' induced emigration and that 'too many men and

[29] *Bulletin*, 4 Feb. 1950, 4 ('No end to state ownership'); see also 11 Feb. 1950 ('controls are the rock bottom of Socialist theory).

[30] NLS, Tweedsmuir Mss, Acc. 11884/1/2, Political notes, 1946, Aberdeen South By-election.

[31] *Bulletin*, 11 Feb. 1950, 4.

[32] Richard J. Finlay, 'National identity in crisis: politicians, intellectuals and the "end of Scotland", *History*, 79 (1994), 242–59; Andrew Dewar Gibb, the prominent lawyer who straddled Unionism and Nationalism in the inter-war period, was a frequent articulator of these arguments, see his *Scotland in Eclipse* (London, 1930) and *Scottish Empire* (London, 1937). There was also, of course, a nationalist anti-emigration discourse that argued that native talent was being driven away by inappropriate policies imposed by London governments.

women have felt and still feel that there is no scope for their initiative and enterprise and that they have to go outside to get on'.[33]

Unionist political organisers saw a great deal of mileage in this line of argument. It was a way of distinguishing between the parties and appealing to a broad section of Scottish opinion. This was part of a wider fightback by the Conservatives across Britain that helped them to build towards better performances in 1950 and 1951. They were vociferous in their attacks on the austerity that resulted, in their view, from 'Socialist' policies, inept government and obsession with control. The fuel crisis of 1947 provided much ammunition.[34] Labour ought to be attacked because they were 'Socialists', desirous of controlling everything. Patrick J. Blair, the director of Unionist organisation in Scotland, was clear on this point:

> The Socialist "Labour" Party with arrogance and falsehood pretends to be the voice of the workers and to be their defenders; and many "Labour" politicians are much more "capitalists" than millions of "Tory" voters. They are NOT the originators of the Social Services, and they are NOT democratic (remember their flouting of Parliamentary debate and their substitution of Ministerial decision for the rule of law).

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[33] *Bulletin*, 28 Mar. 1950, 4.

[34] Ina Zweininger-Bargielowska, 'Rationing, austerity and the Conservative Party recovery after 1945', *Historical Journal*, 37 (1994), 173–97, this article characterises the politics of this period as 'highly partisan' rather than 'consensual' (193); for the fuel and other crises of 1947 see Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 331–58; this was also the underlying explanation for Churchill's use during the 1945 campaign of the word 'Gestapo' to describe the likely forms of social and political control that would be manifest under a Labour government, see Richard Toye, 'Winston Churchill's "crazy broadcast": party, nation and the 1945 Gestapo speech', *Journal of British Studies*, 49 (2010), 655–80.

In criticisms of nationalisation, the point about control was augmented by emphasis on its 'bad effects', principally that 'what the state owns, no one owns'. [35] Blair was still using this argument in 1959, when the Unionists were defending a majority, although by this time the utility of crude anti-socialism was declining.[36] This distinguished Unionists from Socialists and was common ground between Unionists and National Liberals. In discussions of the bases for continuing co-operation the 'principle of liberty of the individual' was contrasted with the 'Socialist doctrine of regimentation, state ownership and centralised control'.[37]

There were only five Liberals candidates in Scottish seats in 1955 and only one of these projected victories was achieved, Grimond in Orkney and Shetland.[38] This provided space for the Unionists to appeal to Liberal voters who feared further Socialist intervention and helps to explain the strong Unionist performances in 1951 and 1955. Although one must be wary of assuming a simple arithmetical relationship between the loss of votes for one party and the gains for another, it is noticeable that the Conservatives gained 50,000 more Scottish votes than Labour between 1950 and 1951. In the context of a noticeably lower turnout in 1955, they fell back by only 76,000 votes compared to Labour's loss of 142,000 votes. The Unionist vote in 1955

[35] CPA, CCO2/1/17, Memorandum from Col. Blair to Scottish candidates and agents "Line of propaganda for the rest of the campaign", 13 Feb. 1950.

[36] NLS, Acc. 11368/49, Minute Book of the No. 4 Area Group (Highland) Executive Committee, 1951–64, 3 Apr. 1959; Malcolm Petrie, 'Anti-socialism, Liberalism and individualism: rethinking the realignment of Scottish politics, 1945–70', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 28 (2018), 197–217.

[37] NLS, Acc. 11368/4, Scottish Unionist and Conservative Association, Central Council Minute Book, 1947–64, 2 Sep. 1947.

[38] NLS, Scottish Liberal Party Mss, Acc. 11765/54, General Council, 26 Mar. 1955.

was about 50,000 higher than that of 1950 but the Labour vote was about 71,000 lower. The retreat of the Liberals was not the only factor in the famous 50.1 per cent Unionist/Liberal National vote share in Scotland in 1955 but it has to be factored into the context of that performance. Col. Blair's summary of his research on the Unionist performance in 1955 stressed the success of the strong anti-socialist message, the appeal to younger voters of the idea of 'opportunity' that was articulated by Unionists, and a distrust of Bevanite ideas. He also felt that in seats with high levels of industrial employment in private-sector firms the fear of further nationalisation played a part. He cited this factor in Motherwell, where the Colvilles' steel plant at Ravenscraig was a big employer, and in Central Ayrshire where the ICI plant at Ardeer played a similar role. Blair emphasised that these firms had schemes for employees to own shares and that this was important in inculcating ideas of Conservatism among working-class voters. In its particular local context this does not appear very convincing: although the Conservatives took Central Ayrshire in 1955 they lost it in 1959 and Motherwell remained in Labour hands (although there was a very slight move to the Unionists in the straight Labour versus Conservative contests in 1951 and 1955). It does show, however, the importance of nationalisation to Conservative tactical thinking in this period.[39]

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[39] CPA, CCO 2/4/15, Area Series Files, Scotland, 1955–7, The General Election, Scotland, P J Blair, 7 June 1955.

The attempt to paint the Labour Party as a threat to liberty was a common theme of anti-socialist rhetoric across Britain. A particular feature of the discussion in Scotland, however, was the way in which the idea of 'control' was introduced: 'control' from London and nationalisation as centralisation.[40] This was a means of criticising Labour policy. Perhaps the most notable articulation of this point of view was by Churchill in his speech at Ibrox stadium in Glasgow in May 1949. He deprecated the 'caprice and greed' that motivated Labour's nationalisation policy. He argued that nationalisation was:

> Detrimental and offensive to Scotland. It affects not only its prosperity but the independence which Scotland has exercised in so many fields, no sharper challenge could be given to Scottish national sentiment then is now launched by the Socialism of Whitehall.

The Unionists did not promise to reverse nationalisation (except in the special case of the iron and steel industries) but they did make noises about decentralising the structure of nationalised industries. At Ibrox, Churchill touched on this theme arguing that separate Scottish Boards would be set up for rail transport and electricity; in the latter case a Scottish wide Board to complement the North of Scotland Hydro

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[40] Richard Finlay, 'Scottish Conservatism and Unionism since 1918', in Francis and Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *The Conservatives and British Society*, 120–1; Richard Finlay, 'Patriotism, paternalism and pragmatism: Scottish Toryism, union and empire, 1912–65', in David Torrance (ed.), *Whatever Happened to Tory Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012), 33.

Board.[41] The point about electricity boards was an interesting one because by seeking to introduce a Scottish-wide Board, the Conservatives ran the risk of compromising one of the most autonomous entities in the public sector of the economy – the North of Scotland Hydro Board. The 'Hydro Board', was very popular in the Scottish highlands and its Chairman, Thomas Johnston, was a doughty defender of its autonomy.[42] Although the Conservative governments after 1951 did not reverse the Labour programme of nationalisation, with the exception of steel they did 'commercialise and decentralise' many nationalised industries.[43]

The Ibrox speech was not an isolated example, this was a major theme of Conservative rhetoric in the late 1940s. Lady Tweedsmuir, the Unionist candidate at the Aberdeen South by-election of 1946, used this argument.[44] She suggested that the 'important decisions affecting the country's industries will be taken in London with no guarantee that they will be closely related to Scottish needs'.[45] The Scottish Liberal party argued similarly in the 1940s. The threat of nationalisation of the steel industry, for example, risked the destruction of 'the spirit of pioneering enterprise

[41] *Scotsman,* 21 May 1949, 7; see also https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/senior-statesman/conservative-party-rally-speech-1949/ [accessed 6 January 2023] for a video clip of the speech, including his remarks about nationalisation.

[42] Peter L. Payne, *The Hydro: A Study of the Development of the Major Hydro-Electric Schemes undertaken by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board* (Aberdeen, 1988), 115–18; Chester, *Nationalisation*, 431–3 .

[43] Tomlinson, 'A "failed experiment"?, 231.

[44] For an interesting discussion of Lady Tweedsmuir's long career see, Ward, *Unionism in the United Kingdom,* 57–71.

[45] NLS, Tweedsmuir Mss, Acc. 11884/3/56, Nationalisation.

which created this great industry'.[46] The argument, however, went wider and deeper in Scottish political debate and the popular Unionist press, such as the *Bulletin*. This title was resolutely Unionist and highly critical of the Labour government for raising expectations in 1945 and, in its view, for spectacularly failing to meet them.[47] Labour leaders such as Attlee, Cripps and Chuter Ede, who came to Scotland to give set-piece speeches, were criticised for their lack of knowledge of Scottish affairs and lack of sensitivity to Scottish feeling.[48] Chuter Ede, the Home Secretary, came to Edinburgh in February 1950 and spoke at a meeting in the Central Hall on Lothian Road. He damned the idea of Scottish home rule with faint praise, drawing a comparison with Northern Ireland and the way in which the existence of the Stormont Parliament had caused Northern Irish MPs to withdraw from the House of Commons. He concluded by saying that one of his longest standing political wishes was for English home rule and that Scottish affairs had received more attention from the Labour government than ever before. The *Bulletin* was not impressed, arguing that Labour's approach to Scotland was that 'almost anything done for Scotland is a gift for which we ought to be grateful'.[49]

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[46] NLS, Scottish Liberal Party Mss, Acc. 11765/53, General Council, 1946–50, 7 Sep. 1946, see also 4 Oct. 1947, 28 May 1949. Steel was the most controversial of all the nationalisation projects of the 1945–51 government, see Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 110–21.

[47] *Bulletin*, 13 Jan. 1950, 4; 7 Feb. 1950, 4.

[48] *Bulletin*, 14 Feb. 1950, 4; 16 Feb. 1950, 4; this view was also evident in the *Scotsman,* see 14 Feb 1950, 6, for two leaders ('Mr Churchill's lead' and 'Unionists in Scotland') praising Churchill's speech at the Usher Hall on 13 February and a further leader ('Verbal Assault') criticising Attlee's approach in Scottish speeches on the previous day.

[49] *Scotsman*, 7 Feb. 1950, 8; *Bulletin*, 7 Feb. 1950, 4; earlier in the day Ede had spoken in Dalkeith and had argued that Labour had eradicated the 'dread heritage of Toryism', unemployment. Contrast

For this Unionist organ the simple answer was Home Rule for Scotland and it gave prominent coverage and endorsement to the Scottish Covenant Movement during the run up to the 1950 election. The terms of the Covenant were 'nationalist' in that they appealed to Scottish identity and to the need for government more sensitive to Scottish needs, but also unionist in a formal sense in that it aspired to achieve Scottish self-government 'within the framework of the United Kingdom'.[50] For the *Bulletin*, nationalisation equalled 'Londonisation' and could only be countered by Home Rule for Scotland.[51] This form of centralised control was held to have stifled Scottish interests in a range of areas. In aviation policy, for example, the chance was foregone to develop Prestwick airport as a passenger hub because of the dominance of the London airports.[52] In the view of this form of patriotic Scottish Unionism, Labour was not only neglectful and ignorant of Scotland, but guilty of actively stoking dangerous resentment. This was particularly problematic because the party had

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this with the attitude to Churchill who was described as having made a 'very adroit appeal to Scotsmen' in a speech in Edinburgh in February 1950, *Bulletin*, 15 Feb. 1950, 4; see also 28 Jun. 1945, 4 and 2 Jul. 1945, 4. The *Scotsman* took a similar line, see 14 Feb. 1950, 6; 15 Feb. 1950, 6; 16 Feb. 1950, 6.

[50] James Mitchell, *Strategies for Self-government: The Campaigns for a Scottish Parliament* (Edinburgh, 1996), 144–7; Kidd, *Union and Unionisms*, 295.

[51] With reference to nationalisation of the wholesale meat trade see *Bulletin*, 28 Jan. 1950, 4; or concerning British Rail's inadequate services to the Clyde coast, 12 Jan. 1950, 4.

[52] *Bulletin*, 23 Feb. 1950, 4; Steven Griggs and David Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom: Hegemony, Policy and the Rhetoric of Sustainable Aviation* (Manchester, 2014), 82–92;James Vernon, 'Heathrow and the making of neoliberal Britain', *Past and Present*, no 252 (August 2021), 213–37, at 219–23, Vernon notes that airports were early sites of deregulation.

once been in favour of home rule for Scotland. [53] Its drift in Scottish popularity in

1950 and 1951, although in reality rather slight, was deemed to be a result of its

centralising tendencies.

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Unionists newspapers held that six years of Labour government was central

to shallow treatment of Scottish issues in the 1950 and 1951 elections. Conservative

plans for strengthening administrative devolution in the form of additional personnel

for the Scottish Office, in particular a Minister of State who would spend more time in

Scotland than in London, was not very inspiring to Scottish Unionist opinion.[54] The

Liberals and Scottish nationalists were not sufficiently prominent at the election to be

able to force Scottish issues onto the agenda. One member of the General Council

argued that the situation was so desperate that the Liberals should be grateful for

any press coverage 'even if it infuriates'.[55] The Labour programme was seen from

the point of view of Unionist Scotland as being implicitly centralising, with its bases in

further – but only vaguely articulated – plans for nationalisation: 'Labour is, in fact,

asking for a mandate which would allow it to force through any new scheme for

grabbing and Londonising industries that are still free'.[56] When the Conservatives

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[53] *Scotsman*, 14 Feb. 1950, 6; 21 Feb. 1950; 6.

[54] Anthony Seldon, *Churchill's Indian Summer: the Conservative Government, 1951–55* (London, 1981), 130–40.

[55] NLS, Scottish Liberal Party Mss, Acc. 11765/53, General Council, 1946–50, 8 Mar. 1947, 13 Dec. 1947.

[56] *Bulletin*, 24 Oct. 1951, 4.

returned to power after the 1951 election their main task was held to be to 'undo the follies of Londonisation and satisfy (let us hope) some of the needs of Scotland'.[57]

The chief villain in the view of many Unionists was Secretary of State for Scotland and dedicated opponent of Scottish home rule, Arthur Woodburn. Woodburn was appointed to the cabinet in 1947, in succession to Joseph Westwood. He was a long-standing servant of the Labour party in Scotland. Although he had been a conscientious objector during the Great War, he had little sympathy with the ILP left in the inter-war period and he performed sterling work in the rebuilding after the disaffiliation of the ILP in 1932. He entered parliament in 1939 at the last pre-war by election, Clackmannanshire, and his administrative experience was recognised by a series of minor government appointments during the war.[58] He was an effective advocate of government policy on key issues such as nationalisation, economic management and the welfare state. He was, however, confounded by the appearance of the Scottish Covenant Movement, arguing for a form of Scottish home rule within the Union.[59] Woodburn was a strident opponent of compromise with nationalism. In his 1945 election address he referred to home rule as potentially suicidal for Scotland and he believed that it was a Unionist conspiracy to undermine

[57] *Bulletin*, 26 Oct. 1951, 4.

[58] William Knox, *Scottish Labour Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary* (Edinburgh, 1984), 284–9. David Torrance, *The Scottish Secretaries* (Edinburgh, 2006), 190–203; George Pottinger, *The Secretaries of State for Scotland, 1926–76* (Edinburgh, 1979), 106–16; Gordon Pentland (ed.), *The Autobiography of Arthur Woodburn (1890–1978): Living with History*, Scottish History Society, sixth series, vol. 12 (Woodbridge, 2012).

[59] John MacCormick, *The Flag in the Wind: The Story of the National Movement in Scotland* (London, 1955); Mitchell, *Strategies for Self-government*.

the Labour government. In his autobiography he was explicit about this, describing his time at the Scottish Office as a 'period when the Tories had linked their campaign with that of the Scottish nationalists'.[60] He saw devolution as possible but as a process of bureaucratic efficiency achieved by the bolstering of the Scottish Grand Committee, the beefing up of the ministerial team at the Scottish Office, or the creation of the Scottish Economic Committee to bring different interests together in a single forum. He recognised the strength of the argument that 'nationalisation' was 'centralisation' and the political problems that it caused the Labour party in Scotland but his responses were rather limited. He claimed to have consulted officials of the nationalised industries in Scotland as to the extent to which they felt that they needed 'greater powers in Scotland' but that the universal response was that they did not and that 'it seemed unwise to create any unnecessary barriers merely for the sake of being separate'.[61] In the same document he had argued that he did not believe in overcentralisation and that a functioning democracy required government to be 'as near and intimate to the people as possible' but that he did not think that Scots 'would be willing to make too big an economic sacrifice for the satisfaction of "governing themselves"'.[62] In such private remarks, he revealed an inability to understand the place of Scottish home rule in political debate. In public, however, he made things very difficult for himself and the government by strident and inflammatory rhetoric, which inflamed both nationalist opinion and the important strand of patriotic Unionism represented by such as the *Bulletin.* The *Scotsman*

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[60] NLS, Woodburn Mss, Acc.7656/4/1, p.145.

[61] NLS, Woodburn Mss, Acc.7656/4/1, p.152; TNA CAB129/22/33, 'Scottish Demands for Home Rule or Devolution', 6 Dec. 1947; CAB129/37/51, 'Scottish Affairs', 12 Dec. 1949.

[62] NLS, Woodburn Mss, Acc.7656/4/1, p.147

noted that he had a 'curious and ludicrous facility for detecting nationalist conspiracies and rabid Anglophobia where these things are imperceptible to anyone else'.[63] As Kidd has noted of the pre-1960 period, there was often 'a narrower line between Unionism and nationalism' but the obverse of this is the extremely wide distance between these views and those of centralist Labour thinking.[64] Woodburn's rhetoric in this period is an example. In the aftermath of the mass signing of the Covenant in November 1949 he implied that the leaders of the Covenant movement were in favour of political violence and he referred to them as 'dangerous', 'irresponsible' and 'extremists'.[65] An undignified exchange of views with John MacCormick followed and Woodburn held a press conference at St Andrews House at which he attempted to close the issue down. This was not successful and it dogged the remainder of his period in office.[66] He was subjected to harsh newspaper criticism. Editorials were critical of nationalist heckling at Partick during the 1950 election campaign but noted that this represented the 'real feeling of reawakened nationhood which is stirring in Scotland'.[67] In another speech at Greenock his extreme language about Scottish nationalism – with the implication that it represented a dangerous form of Anglophobia – was counterproductive. Woodburn claimed that migrants from England who came north to live and work in East Kilbride

[63] *Scotsman*, 14 Feb. 1950, 6.

[64] Kidd, *Union and Unionism*, 263.

[65] *House of Commons Debates*, vol. 469, col. 2097, 16 November 1949.

[66] *Glasgow Herald*, 21 Nov. 1949, 4; see also *Times*, 29 Nov. 1949, 5 for an editorial which detected the 'spirit of Malachi Malagrowther stirring again in Scotland'.

[67] *Bulletin*, 24 Jan. 1950, 4; of this meeting, the *Scotsman* (23 Jan. 1950, 5) reported that he was continually interrupted by organised nationalist heckling and 'challenged with questions on Scotland's position in matters of taxation, finance, food and emigration'.

had gained the impression that they would not be welcome in the New Town. This anti-English sentiment had been whipped up in the newspapers but was contradicted by the hospitable reception they received when they did come north. He concluded that a 'dangerous "hate the English campaign"' was a 'stunt to divert people from voting Labour'.[68] The real issue for patriotic Unionists was not anti-English sentiment but 'natural Scots resentment over the Londonised control of Scottish affairs'.[69] Woodburn's departure from the Scottish Office did not come as a surprise to the *Bulletin* due to his refusal to engage with the issue of Scottish government and his strident language on the issue.

Woodburn's dismissal may not have come as a surprise to the unionist press but the reaction among his friends was different; not least the former Lord Provost of Glasgow, Patrick Dollan, who soothed Woodburn with an assurance that his sacking 'must have been a surprise to 99 per cent of the people'. Dollan went on, however, to make a point about internal Labour party dynamics that ran counter to the position that he had taken on wider Anglo-Scottish relations:

> I think it is high time our people in London, whether connected with the Government, newspapers, trade unions and other organisations, consulted local officials in Scotland in matters affecting our side of the border. There is far too much done in London on the assumption that we will be glad to fall into line with anything they may want done. They can strain one's loyalty almost to the breaking point.[70]

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[68] *Scotsman*, 13 Feb. 1950, 7; *Bulletin*, 13 Feb 1950, 4.

[69] *Bulletin*, 13 Feb. 1950, 4.

[70] NLS, Woodburn Mss, Acc.7656/6/4, Dollan to Woodburn, 9 Mar. 1950.

Clearly, vastly experienced politicians, such as Dollan and Woodburn, were aware of the importance of conducting politics in Scotland with due attention to particularist tendencies. Both were strongly unionist – Woodburn described the United Kingdom as the 'greatest example of cooperation between nations in the history of the world and emphasised that this was based on the importance of Scottish rights and influence in the British House of Commons'.[71] He deprecated Scottish home rule because it would mean that Scottish MPs would have to withdraw from the House of Commons, in the same way that the Ulster MPs had retreated since 1922, and thereby reduce their influence in the House of Commons and in the United Kingdom as a whole.[72]

Labour's unionism has not been so well explored as its nationalist tendencies, even accepting that they are different facets of the same entity.[73] The nationalism of the Unionist Party seems to be more readily comprehensible to historians than the unionism of the Labour movement. Partly this arises from organisation and presentation. Between 1912 and 1965 the Conservatives were known in Scotland as the 'Scottish Unionist Party', whereas the Labour Party was highly resistant to using the term 'Scottish Labour Party'. One scholar has noted that while 'formal autonomy did not operate, and on one level it appeared like a branch line of the UK operation,

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[71] NLS, Woodburn Mss, Acc.7656/4/1, p.148.

[72] *Scotsman*, 13 Feb. 1950, 7. In the same speech he described the UK as the 'greatest democratic unity ever established in world politics' and argued that Scottish home rule would be a threat to it.

[73] Although see the study of Thomas Johnston in Ward, *Unionism in the United Kingdom*, 41–56, although the discussion does not deal with the post-war period in any detail.

on another, informally, the party retained a degree of autonomy and discretion.'[74]

Both parties, however, have gone through phases of different approaches to the

Scottish national question. Between 1880 and the early 1930s Labour was a strong

advocate of home rule. The party entered a more centralist phase in the 1930s

before changing its position in the 1970s, perhaps for defensive reasons in the face

of the rise of the SNP in the 1974 elections. Although Unionist nationalism is evident

in the period under examination here, it is much less so in other periods, most

obviously in the 1980s.[75]

   At the highest levels of government there is some evidence for Dollan's sense

that in London Scottish sensibilities were not taken very seriously. In June 1947

Attlee was shown a letter from John Taylor, Secretary of the Scottish Council of the

Labour party, asking for an enquiry into the possible extent of devolution within the

United Kingdom. He scribbled a note to Herbert Morrison suggesting that an enquiry

might be 'wise' but that 'our Scots friends are apt to be unduly alarmed at Scottish

nationalism'.[76] This typically laconic tone indicated that the Scottish Labour Party

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[74] Gerry Hassan, 'The People's party, still? The sociology of Scotland's leading party', in Gerry

Hassan (ed.), *The Scottish Labour Party: History, Institutions and Ideas* (Edinburgh, 2004), 1–2.

[75] James Mitchell, *Conservatives and the Union: A Study of Conservative Party Attitudes to Scotland*

(Edinburgh, 1990); Michael Keating and David Bleiman, *Labour and Scottish Nationalism* (London,

1979); W.W.Knox and Alan MacKinlay, 'The re-making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth

Century British History*, 6 (1995), 174–93; Ian S. Wood, 'The ILP and the Scottish national question',

in D. James, T. Jowitt & K. Laybourn (eds), *The Centennial History of the Independent Labour party*

(Halifax, 1992), 63–74; Iain McLean, 'Scottish Labour and British politics' in Hassan (ed.), *Scottish

Labour Party*, 146–59.

[76] TNA, PREM 8/658, Note by C.R. A[ttlee], 212 Jun. 1947; Morrison to Attlee, 20 Jun. 1947; John

Taylor to Morrison, 16 Jun. 1947.

was somewhat out of the loop and that leading figures in the government tended to think of the Scottish party in terms of otherness. This was strongly felt by Unionist opinion, which, as we have seen, was concerned by 'Londonisation' and various forms of control. The *Bulletin* was quickly alive to this in the immediate aftermath of the 1945 election, when Joseph Westwood, as Secretary of State for Scotland, was the only Scot (the 'irreducible minimum') appointed to the Cabinet.[77] This had been a constant theme for this newspaper during the campaign. Repeatedly, it had pointed to the tendency for the Labour campaign not to prioritise Scottish issues and for the tone of the campaign to neglect a necessary Scottish dimension.[78] The *Bulletin*, unusually in this strand of opinion, was clear that the way to deal with these difficulties was to introduce home rule for Scotland. This can be seen in their response to the Covenant in 1949 and 1950, they felt that this document represented the 'sincere hopes' of many Scots and that 'unintelligent abuse' of it would be counter-productive.[79] The Labour government was strongly opposed to this and leading ministers argued that dealing with the 'sense of injury and grievance' in

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[77] *Bulletin*, 4 Aug. 1945, 4.

[78] *Bulletin*, 28 May 1945, 4; 31 May 1945, 4; 11 June 1945, 4; 26 Jun. 1945, 4; 4 July 1945, 4; 6 Aug. 1945, 4. This line of argument recognised Liberal attention to Scottish issues but this was tempered by frank assessment of the marginal position of the Liberal party. A small, but telling, example of this sensitivity was an unwillingness by Churchill, during the period of caretaker government, to contemplate publication of the extent of Scottish war losses. The *Bulletin* argued that such an enumeration would be a recognition of national sentiment that would obviate a 'nationalist' sense of 'grievance' (*Bulletin*, 6 Jun. 1945, 4). This issue arose from a question by the SNP MP for Motherwell, Dr Robert McIntyre; Churchill pointed out the practical difficulties but recognised the Scottish contribution to the war (*House of Commons Debates*, vol. 411, cols 687–8, 5 Jun. 1945).

[79] *Bulletin*, 26 Jan. 1950, 4.

Scotland against the present machinery of government could be dealt with by means of 'a big public relations job'.[80] Another route that Labour discussed in the late 1940s was the re-modelling of the Standing Committee on Scottish Bills to deal with the second reading of Scottish Bills and for the discussion of Scottish estimates. This was an extension of Johnston's approach during the Second World War. It was an unimaginative idea and fell short of demands that were growing in the late 1940s.[81] The model that was explicitly rejected by the government was the 'Ulster model' of parliamentary devolution. For some Unionist opinion this was precisely the model that could safeguard the Union, deal with the sense of grievance and address the problems associated with 'Londonisation'. For the *Bulletin* there was 'no convincing reason why Scotland and Wales should not have similar parliaments to [Ulster]'.[82] Neither of the main parties was responsive, only conceding that the Anglo-Scottish relationship should be the subject of an enquiry. This came to a form of fruition in the *Royal Commission on Scottish Affairs* (the Balfour Commission) and the *Report on Scottish Financial and Trade Statistics* (Catto Committee).[83] The latter stimulated expectations that could not be fulfilled, as its remit – to gather statistics on the

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[80] TNA, PREM8/658, Morrison to Westwood, 25 Jul. 1947.

[81] TNA, PREM8/1517, Scottish demands for home rule or devolution, memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland, 6 Dec. 1947 (also available at TNA CAB129/22/33); these proposals were published in Jan 1948 in *Scottish Affairs*, Cmd 7308; in Cabinet Discussion it was noted that care would have to be taken to avoid any encouragement of demands for a Welsh Economic Conference, see TNA CAB128/10/45.

[82] *Bulletin*, 26 Jan. 1950, 4.

[83] For the background to Catto, see TNA, PREM8/1517, Scottish Affairs, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland (Hector McNeil), 11 May 1950 (also available at CAB129/40/1.

financial relations between Scotland and England – was narrow.[84] As James Porteous – economic adviser to the Covenant Movement – noted, it was 'not an enquiry into the desirability or feasibility of Scottish self government'.[85]

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In his Usher Hall speech in 1950 Churchill argued that Labour should not be able to 'force Scotland into the serfdom of Socialism'. For one historian, in this speech Churchill 'flirted outrageously with nationalist sentiment'.[86] As this article has shown, however, this was no mere flirtation but a concerted Unionist argument used throughout the 1945–59 period. This brief examination of Scottish political debate in the late 1940s and early 1950s has revealed interesting texture to the period. The historiography has emphasised a unionist consensus. What the sources examined here have suggested is that this consensus was complicated by deep differences of opinion on questions about the social and economic role of government. The discussion of nationalisation highlighted themes relating to individual and collective ideas about national life, about ownership of property and about the relationship between Scotland and the United Kingdom. Broad agreement about the value of the Union hid disagreements about how that Union should operate, the extent of centralisation or devolution. For those who were opposed to centralisation there were differences between advocates of parliamentary devolution, on the Ulster model, or administrative devolution. This period is problematic in terms of the

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[84] Richard Finlay, 'Unionism and the dependency culture: politics and state intervention in Scotland, 1918–1997', in C.M.M. Macdonald (ed.), *Unionist Scotland, 1800–1997* (Edinburgh, 1998), 100–16.

[85] *Scotsman*, 18 Aug. 1950, 8.

[86] Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front, 1900–1955* (London, 1992), 403.

generally accepted narratives of Scottish political history, which emphasise the demise of Liberalism in the aftermath of the Great War and the rise of nationalism in the period from the late 1960s. There is a risk of a distorted understanding of the operation of, and depth of attachment to, the Union unless there is a more comprehensive understanding of political debate in modern Scotland.