

Aspects of Birmingham Community
Power Around 1900:
A Study of Decision- Making

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ABSTRACT

This study of Birmingham's local history around 1900 adopts a decision- making methodology, rooted in a modified and expanded version of Lukes' first dimension of power.

Three significant and contrasting decision- making areas are investigated.

It is argued that the council had little choice but to build the Elan valley waterworks if public health were to be safeguarded. Some of the ratepayers protested at the expense, but they failed to show that the scheme was unnecessary. Its enormous cost, however, caused growing disenchantment with Birmingham's "forward" civic policy.

In contrast, the municipalisation of Birmingham's electricity supply industry was not forced upon the council by circumstances, but occurred at a time when the municipal trading movement was at its height, and when the potential profitability of electricity was becoming increasingly obvious. Throughout, the Corporation reserved to itself the power to municipalise by dominating the political agenda.

In housing, despite a growing concern over slum conditions, the city council, after a few small-scale experiments, rejected proposals for municipal house building and relied instead upon a

policy of "slum patching." This development, in sharp contrast to the council's large scale building schemes after 1918, is explained via an investigation of the "mobilisation of bias" against more radical reform.

Throughout, it is argued that Lukes' definitional categories can be modified so that the significant concepts of agenda setting and mobilisation of bias through decisions and non-decisions may be incorporated into the first dimension of power. Accordingly, contrary to many claims, they are susceptible to empirical analysis in the first dimension of power. Such an analysis sheds new light on both familiar and unfamiliar issues.

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A NOTE ON SOURCES

Sources consulted in the Birmingham Reference Library are, as appropriate, quoted after the fashion in which they are listed in the Birmingham Reference Library Catalogue and are followed by their accession numbers and, if applicable, their finding codes, both of which usually follow the prefix "Ref:". This may mean deviations from standard form, for example in the use of the upper and lower case. Sources first studied in the City of Birmingham Water Department are now lodged in the Reference Library Archive Department and these are indicated in the appropriate place. Also indicated below are the manuscript sources consulted in the House of Lords Library which are also available in printed form in the Birmingham Reference Library.

The main newspapers consulted were the Birmingham Daily Post, the Birmingham Daily Gazette and the Birmingham Daily Mail. The Post and the Gazette were eight page morning newspapers, both containing extensive coverage of political and municipal affairs. The Mail was a somewhat more popular four page evening newspaper. The Post, around 1900, was the leading journal of Liberal Unionism, and the most staunchly loyal to Chamberlain and his followers. The Mail shared the Post's political position, but was somewhat less fervent, and on occasion demonstrated signs of dissension. The Gazette was a Conservative and clerically- inclined newspaper, although, with the growing alliance between the Conservative and Liberal Unionist Parties in the city, it in practice frequently supported the same causes as its two rivals. For further information, see Whate's book on the Post, Gammage's article on the Gazette, the contemporary survey of the local press by Anderton, and, for the early nineteenth century, the paper by Briggs.¹

Notes and References

1. Whates (Harold Richard Grant), The Birmingham Post 1857:1957: A Centenary Retrospect (The Birmingham Post and Mail Ltd.), (Birmingham) 1957. Ref: L 08.1 660880; M. T. Gammage, "The Birmingham Daily Gazette: A Case Study in the History of the Conservative Provincial Press, 1862-1914", in West Midlands Studies, 13 (1980): 27-33; Anderton (Thomas), The Tale of One City: The New Birmingham, 1900. Ref: L73.3 155217, The Fourth Estate, pp.122-139; Briggs (Asa), "Press and Public in early nineteenth century Birmingham. (Dugdale Society Occasional Paper No.8) (Oxford) 1949. Ref: 60212.

ABBREVIATIONS

To reduce repetition, a number of abbreviations are used. The five following shortened forms are adopted throughout:

- M. - Birmingham Daily Mail
- P. - Birmingham Daily Post
- G. - Birmingham Daily Gazette

(These press references are followed by the date of the relevant issue.)

- V3 - Charles Anthony Vince, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Vol.3 (1885-1899). Birmingham, 1902.
- V4 - Charles Anthony Vince, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Vol.4 (1900-1915). Birmingham, 1923.

(These references are followed by the relevant page numbers.)

There are also a number of other abbreviations which only pertain to single chapters. These are explained in the notes to those chapters.

CHAPTER 1. METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES.

1. Introduction.

This study is centred upon Steven Lukes' Power: A Radical View and upon the academic debate surrounding it.[1] The methodology is based upon Lukes' first, or decision-making, dimension of power. The aim is to see what this application of Lukes' approach tells us, firstly about community power in Birmingham around 1900, and secondly about the validity and empirical usefulness of the approach itself. In each of the substantive chapters a distinction is drawn between on the one hand a historical account and on the other a decision-making approach. The major objective is to establish whether the latter adds any significant new insights to the former. The conclusion adopts the same division, with the same objective. It attempts to investigate firstly the theoretical coherence of the decision-making approach, secondly the difficulties in its application, and thirdly whether the insights gained are sufficiently significant to justify the attempted application. Of course, the conclusion reached may be that this approach has yielded few significant insights. Unfortunately, however, there is no way of knowing this in advance until the method has been tried. In the absence of any substantial body of existing literature even a negative and pessimistic judgment may, perhaps, be seen as

justifying the attempt, particularly in view of the considerable recent influence of Lukes' dimensional approach to the study of power.

As part of the application of Lukes' dimensional perspectives to the local history of Birmingham, an attempt is made to investigate the ways in which the present research endorses or modifies the findings of previous local historians. For the most part, however, the findings on this are particular to each individual chapter, and are dealt with there and then summarised in the conclusion.

As stated above, the study incorporates an investigation of what this attempt at empirical application tells us about the validity and usefulness of the dimensional approach itself. Under this heading it must be borne in mind that the reason why these case studies were selected in the first place was because they relate to important political decisions which seem, prima facie, to be suitable for analysis in the terms suggested by Lukes. It therefore follows that, if any worthwhile insights at all are gained, the approach is to some extent vindicated, since without that approach the research would not have been undertaken in its present form.

A consistent argument in the sections investigating the validity of Lukes' approach is that although the definitional categories within his first dimension cover all empirical cases,

their application is frequently complicated, even where the facts themselves may appear to be simple and straightforward. For example, many local farmers appear to have been delighted at the prospect of selling land in the Elan valley to the Corporation at a price above its market value. The negotiated purchases were therefore not conducted in terms of a zero sum game where the winner took all. Rather they were part of a variable sum game where compensation (which might have been considered either more or less adequate) was paid for losses. Conflict there certainly was, for example over the compensation to be given, and investigation of the situation in the terms postulated by Lukes is indeed possible. This investigation, however, needs some sophisticated political analysis which may or may not be worth the effort.

Lukes' concept of a separate second dimension of power as the realm of the non- decision is rejected. This second dimension, it is argued, collapses into either the first, or less frequently into the third. If a decision, as Lukes argues, is a deliberate choice between perceived alternatives then one form of non- decision falls into the first dimension and is therefore amenable to empirical analysis. This category, for example, includes so- called "non- decisions" which were, in fact, decisions to do nothing, to do something else, or to change the rules and procedures of the decision- making process. Many such cases occur in the present study, including the "non- decision" not to build council houses, which was manifested in the decision

to reject proposed schemes for their construction. Against this, non- decisions in the more extended sense which, for example, arise from a failure or refusal to perceive an issue as an issue, fall into the category of non- events which by definition are not amenable to empirical enquiry. Thus, throughout the study, Lukes' categorisation of a second dimension of power, and, in particular, his categorisation of a "non- decision", are not accepted.

It is argued, however, that a debt of gratitude is owed to Schattschneider, Bachrach and Baratz and Lukes for developing the useful concepts of "mobilisation of bias" and of "control of the political agenda." These ideas, as will be seen, are constantly invoked and applied. Lukes identifies them with his second dimension of power, but here they are seen as operating within his first, or theoretically within his third even though no case of the latter was discovered in the present research.

The concepts of mobilisation of bias and agenda setting have also been modified to make them more suitable for the analysis of actual decision- making. Given the emphasis on conflict in Lukes' first dimension of power, what is frequently categorised is a mobilisation of two opposing biases by, for example, the Corporation and the dissentient ratepayers over the 1892 Water Bill. This enables the balance of political forces to be more sharply analysed and the resulting decisional outcomes to be

explained more clearly. For example, in the case of the 1892 Water Bill, it will be seen that the Birmingham opponents were crushed by an overwhelmingly superior mobilisation of bias.

As is standard in the literature, the assessment of opposing political biases is investigated via a comparative analysis of the political resources available to both sides in the conflict. Here, however, a wider than usual definition of political resources is adopted, since these are taken to include aspects such as the strength of political arguments, as well as more tangible factors such as the decision-making power of those in official office.

Finally, in the present study the control of the political agenda is in general seen as one of the spoils accruing to the victor in a decision-making conflict. For example, the Water Committee's victory in their struggle with the Birmingham opponents enabled them to place the building of the Elan valley waterworks onto the municipal agenda. The large scale construction of council housing, on the other hand, was kept off the political agenda by the Housing Committee as a result of their victory over the advocates of more radical reform.

It should thus be noted that in this research Lukes' first and second dimensional categories are not applied in the form in which he himself envisaged them. The concept of a separate second, or non-decision-making dimension of power is rejected.

Instead, an expanded version of Lukes' first dimension is applied, which borrows many of the conceptual trappings of his second.

Extended analysis of power in Lukes' third dimension is precluded by the nature of the research scheme. The entire study could, it is true, have been re-cast as an investigation of power in the third dimension. But although that investigation might have yielded some interesting premises, these could not have been empirically examined with any ease. The main problem with the third dimension is found to be its dependence upon the concept of "real interests." Plausible specifications of these can indeed be constructed, but this plausibility is both contestable and continually contested, not least because the evidence for the existence of real interests must of its very nature be subjective and indirect. Several instances are looked at later. One of the more obvious is the case of the ratepayers opposed to the Welsh water scheme. It can be plausibly argued that their preference for low rates over an adequate supply of pure water was against their own real interests. But the argument must of necessity be value-laden. Lukes third dimensional concept of "real interests", however, is accepted and incorporated into the analysis, despite such problems of defining and investigating it.

The final conclusion is that Lukes' approach is of some value, but needs to be applied in a modified form. Even then the application can be difficult. The definitional categories within the first dimension are adequate for purposes of empirical enquiry, but necessitate a complicated and arguably counter-productive analysis. Furthermore, Lukes' postulation of a separate second dimension of power hinders rather than helps empirical enquiry, and it would be preferable to subsume this second dimension, insofar as it is amenable to empirical enquiry at all, within re-defined versions of the first and third. No case of the operation of power in Lukes' third dimension was discovered in the present study, perhaps because of the nature of the research scheme. In any case, it is argued that third dimensional power is not amenable to scientific investigation. However, the concept of real interests subsumed within Lukes' third dimension is found to be heuristically useful.

Another book which has influenced the research is Power in Capitalist Societies by Cox, Furlong and Page.[2] In that work the authors draw a correlation, imprecise but close enough to be heuristically useful, between each of Lukes' three dimensions and three separate theories of power.

The first dimension of power is defined by Lukes as "the ability of A to prevail over B in formal political decision-making (normally in government) on one or more key issues, when there is a direct and observable conflict between A and B over

outcomes." It is roughly equated by Cox, as well as by many other observers, with pluralist studies of power developed mainly by specialists in political science.

According to Lukes, the second dimension of power is defined as "the ability of A to prevail over B in determining the outcomes of observable conflicts of interest in formal decision-making and also in determining what is to count as a formal issue, where there is a conflict of interest over policy preferences and observable grievances over these preferences outside the political system." This is the dimension of agenda setting and of non- decisions. It is roughly equated by Cox with reputational and positional approaches, and with elite- based studies of power largely developed within the discipline of sociology.

Lukes defines the third dimension of power as "the ability of A to prevent B from realising his real interests or from articulating them effectively due to the mobilisation of bias resulting from the institutional structure of society." It is associated by Cox with a Marxist approach, although in the present study this is extended to include other approaches based on social stratification, class, political culture and the perspectives of social anthropology.[3]

The dimensions of power are further discussed below. It is now necessary, however, to explain why the present study is centred upon the decision- making or first dimension of power. The reasons for this may be divided into two categories, positive and negative.

On the positive side, there is a place for new approaches to local history. For Birmingham, Briggs' comment of 1952 that "there are ... many subjects and problems which need further exploration" is still broadly applicable.[4] Hart's study of political alienation, for example, is one of the few attempts to apply the perspectives of political science to the history of Birmingham.[5] In general, studies of decision- making are rare. Garrard has applied a decision- making approach to the history of local government in Salford, Bolton and Rochdale, but otherwise such perspectives have had little influence among local historians in Britain.[6] Even Garrard's treatment of decisions, moreover, is brief. For example, his book on the industrial towns contains only a few pages on each issue addressed, and no analysis of agenda setting and non- decisions.[7] "Sanitation and water supply" in Rochdale, for example, occupies the equivalent of two sides.[8] With regard to Birmingham, a number of writers have investigated decisions within the city as part of a broader descriptive or institutional framework. Only Newton, however, has adopted a decision- making approach, and this is for the period after 1945, and forms a fairly brief chapter in a more general survey.[9]

According to Cox, there have, nationally, been "only a few attempts" at such studies of local authorities, a situation which is in sharp contrast to that in the U.S.A.[10]

On the negative side, a concentration on the first dimension of power is indicated because the problems for the historical researcher become much more difficult in the second and third dimensions. These overlapping problems relate to the definitions of power, resources and interests, to power's essentially contested nature and to the evaluation of counterfactuals. There are, in addition, difficulties of empirical verification and of acceptable evidence.

Definitional problems are sharply highlighted by writers in the radical tradition such as Lukes and Connolly. For Lukes, "the absolutely basic common core to ... all talk of power is the notion that A in some way affects B ... in a non-trivial or significant manner." However, what is a significant manner? Lukes considers the views of Talcott Parsons, Hannah Arendt, Bertrand Russell, Max Weber and Nicos Poulantzas and finds them all wanting. Of the range of answers, he concludes, "a fortiori, none offers a generally satisfying and informative definition" of power. Indeed, "the very search for such a definition is a mistake." Lukes himself finds it useful to distinguish "between power relative to an issue or an outcome and power simpliciter" but this in turn raises the question of the scope of power, the answers to which are again chimerical. Furthermore, since it is

relevant to ask "who can control whom", the question of freedom is raised to which, again, Simmel, Weber, Galbraith and Foucault have given contradictory and inadequate answers. And so Lukes' analysis continues, heaping problem upon problem into a seemingly insurmountable heap.[11]

Lukes' fellow radical, Connolly, highlights similar difficulties. He stresses the link between power and responsibility, arguing that "there is a particularly intimate connection between alleging that A has power over B and concluding that A is properly held responsible to some degree for B's conduct or situation." [12] The moral judgment entailed in this assertion then raises the further problem of the essentially contested nature of power. To this Connolly devotes an entire section of his book.[13] He agrees with Waismann that every concept is "open textured", adding that "contests over the meaning and interpretation of power are ... part of politics itself." Worse still, in an attempt to avoid responsibility and blame, "those who exercise power over others typically seek to deny it or to hide it", thereby making the researcher's task even more difficult.[14]

The phrase "essentially contested" was coined by Gallie who listed eight characteristics of concepts so described.[15] His case is disputed by most American pluralists, but is accepted by Cox, Lukes, Morriss and many others in Britain.[16] Its correctness is also affirmed in the present research. Its

adoption, however, brings still further problems. Lukes, for example, quotes Gallie to the effect that power is "an essentially contested concept" which will "inevitably involve endless disputes about ... proper uses." On the other hand, he claims that his view is both "evaluative ... and empirically applicable"[17] For this he is rightly taken to task by Cox who, for example, points out that his "attempt to argue that his third dimension can be empirically verified leads him to contradict his original and beneficial insight that all theories are value dependent."[18] However, Cox's argument, accepted here, "does not mean that hypotheses in the social sciences have to be falsifiable in the strict sense." For example, "Marxist explanations can often be ... replete with insights, but ... are not usually falsifiable in the positivist sense."[19]

Definitional problems, particularly in the second and third dimensions, do not stop with the concept of power itself, but spill over into the related concepts of resources and interests. According to Morriss, it is often necessary to "infer powers from knowledge of resources" and from "the skill with which the actor can handle his resources." However, "neither resources nor skill can be directly observed" and "resources are intangible and difficult to locate" (particularly, it might be added, in a historical context). Furthermore, the problems, as Morriss goes on to indicate, do not stop there.[20]

The difficulties in analysing interests are even greater since distinctions are made between subjective interests and objective or real interests. Connolly discusses the topic at length. Particularly thorny is the problem of defining and investigating real interests. On what authority, for example, does the researcher claim to know, better than the actor, what the actor's real interests are? "Every assessment of real interests" concludes Connolly "is mediated through the way of life of those making the assessment and, as a result, such judgments promise to remain controversial to some degree." [21]

This point of view is accepted in the present study, but it needs to be qualified by the analysis of Morriss. He argues that "reaching agreement on people's interests, at least in broad terms, may not be as difficult as many have supposed." He suggests that we "examine the obvious" such as "facts of life (and death)." For example, the working conditions described in Chapter 10 of Marx's Capital "are so clearly injurious to health that not even the factory owners could claim that they were in the workers' interests." Citing Crenson's study summarised below he also points out that it cannot reasonably be argued that it is in anyone's interests to breathe polluted air. [22] In a useful later development, Lukes similarly categorises real interests as "welfare interests", arguing with Feinberg that "what promotes them is good for a person in any case, whatever his beliefs or wants may be. [23] This is applicable to the present case studies with regard to suffering from an inadequate and dirty water

supply and to living in appalling slum conditions. The concept of real interests is thus utilised, as appropriate, particularly in the chapters on water and housing. But it still does not meet all cases. What, for example, of the Christian who pursues eternal life by selfless deprivation or even death, and the fearless Muslim who believes that destruction of his body in holy war will send his soul to Paradise? "The notion of interests", as Lukes affirms, "is an irreducibly evaluative notion." It remains problematic and has generated a complicated literature.[24] All this also, as argued above, makes Lukes' further assertion that "the identification of ... interests ultimately always rests on empirically supportable and refutable hypotheses" untenable.[25]

Lukes criticises the view of pluralists that interests are merely policy preferences. "Interests", he adds, "might be unarticulated or unobservable, and ... people might actually be mistaken about, or unaware of, their interests." The concept of interests is particularly important in the third dimension of power where, as will be seen, Lukes asserts that there may be "a latent conflict ...a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude." [26]

Another difficulty relevant to problems of definition and evidence is posed by the necessity of formulating counterfactuals of the "what would have happened if ..." type. To a positivist,

as Cox points out, theories are only adequate when, among other things, "they can be subjected to refutation by the production of counterfactuals." [27] Morriss adds that this is "the basis of scientific experimentation" and claims that its application to the study of power "is not as absurd as it appears." The problems, however, are formidable, since, on Morriss's own admission, "what we can observe - the evidence we can gain - are facts; we cannot observe, nor gain evidence directly about, counterfactuals. What we have to do is gain evidence of facts - make observations - and from this impute to counterfactuals." [28] To give an example from the present research, the only way to scientifically evaluate the influence of councillor Nettlefold on housing policy would be to do a re-run of history in which he was not an actor and then compare the two outcomes. This may be possible for the chemist in his test-tube, but in the context of the local history of Birmingham must be speculative.

For Lukes, "any attribution of the exercise of power ... always implies a relevant counterfactual, to the effect that (but for A together with any other sufficient conditions) B would otherwise have done, let us say, b." [29] However, on Lukes' own admission, in the third dimension of power particularly, "sometimes it is extraordinarily difficult to justify the relevant counterfactual." For example, "can we always assume that the victims of injustice and inequality would, but for the exercise of power, strive for justice and equality? ... Is not such an assumption a form of ethnocentrism?" The debate thus

becomes an aspect of the wider debate on power and interests, and again Lukes erroneously seeks "empirical support" and attempts to "adduce evidence" to prove propositions which are value laden and essentially contested.[30]

The difficulties of empirical verification are addressed by Morriss, who postulates five different ways of collecting evidence about power. Of these, the first, controlled experimentation, is clearly impossible for the historian, and the only role for it suggested by Morriss is in the investigation of power within the limited confines of the family. The second approach, of looking at "the obvious: things that there can be no doubt at all about", is valuable, as has been seen in the analysis of real interests, but is scarcely an original insight for the historian. The third approach, of "examining the relationship between actual preferences and outcomes", the standard method, as Morriss states, of the decision-making school of community power is the main research method of the present study. Thus the preference of the Corporation around 1892 to develop the water supply via the construction of a network of Welsh dams will be looked at, together with the preference of the dissident ratepayers not to proceed with the scheme. The decisional outcome of their clashing preferences will then be evaluated. In the other chapters other policy preferences and outcomes will be investigated, such as the Corporation's preference in the 1890's to municipalise the electricity company and that company's subsequent take over. In

the early 1900's the Corporation's Housing Committee had a preference to refrain from schemes of council house building while others, such as the local labour movement, wished to proceed. Again, there was a clash of policy preferences leading to a particular decisional outcome, all of which will be analysed. Morriss's fourth approach, of consulting experts, is a standard method of the reputational school of scholarship. Again, it impossible for the historian to do this systematically, since it would involve interviewing the dead about the reputations of power actors. The final approach is to investigate the power resources at the disposal of actors. This is the method used by scholars of the positional school who are investigating agenda setting and non- decisions. It has a role in the present study, but here, as will be seen, the interpretation of Parry and Morriss is accepted that the concept of a "non- decision" is unhelpful and that in most cases agenda setting is best investigated via a study of actual decisions taken in Lukes' first dimension of power. A criticism of all this advice of Morriss is that it is rather vague.[31] This, indeed, is a common feature of "those who offer discourses on our methods" who, as Cox points out, "are, by and large, academics who have never actually engaged in empirical research." [32]

As indicated above, the theoretical and definitional problems involved in the study of power have been discussed at some length in order to justify the first dimensional or decision- making approach of the present study. There are, as

Cox points out, two serious weaknesses of the first dimensional approach. Firstly, it has "a bias towards systematic empiricism ... with all its attendant problems of description rather than analysis." Secondly, to enable the pluralists to arrive at an empirical definition of power, "the concept has (had) to be confined to a very narrow focus." [33]

This, however, is an advantage as well as a drawback. The leading pluralist, Robert Dahl, for example, argues strongly that all power concepts must be capable of falsification, and that those which are not, such as "false consciousness" and "real interests" should be rejected as unscientific. [34] Working from this premise, Dahl's associate Polsby, by defining power solely in terms of decision-making, arrives at a verifiable if simplistic formulation. [35] The same, as has been seen, is true of the pluralist definition of interests, which, to Polsby, are merely the perceived preferences of actors. [36] Such simple and clear cut definitions, and the practical research schemes derived from them, hold clear advantages for the local historian.

To confine the investigation solely to the first dimension of power, however, would be too restrictive. A synthesis of different methods and approaches to local history is needed if the past, in all its facets, is to be understood. The present study, therefore, adopts an eclectic approach. It makes use, as appropriate, of the works of previous historians of Birmingham, whether these are studies of elites, of important institutions

such as political parties, or of the general political culture. It also attempts to incorporate as many different perspectives and as great a range of evidence as possible. Particular stress is laid upon integrating the research with the wider literature where this exists. Much of all this, of course, cannot be done systematically because of the first dimensional nature of the research scheme, the problems associated with the investigation of the second and third dimensions, and the difficulties of collecting and evaluating historical evidence. The injunction to eclecticism, however, is widespread, particularly in the more recent literature. As Briggs has written, "there is not one valid approach to urban history, but many, and ... different kinds of historian are needed just as different kinds of technique or insight."^[37] Attempts at synthesising elitist and decision-making approaches in the U.S.A. can be dated from the early 1960's.^[38] Cox argues that the essentially contested nature of power makes an overarching or generally acceptable theory impossible, and that the best approach is therefore to adopt "a sceptical and eclectic approach to research."^[39] Morriss too issues "a plea for methodological tolerance" and "an eclectic attitude" arguing that "it is unscientific ... to reject evidence on the a priori ground that it does not fit some criterion of hardness."^[40] According to Waste, intolerance and sectarianism between pluralists and elitists in the U.S.A. resulted in twenty years of sterility prior to a more tolerant era from about 1975.^[41]

This section has attempted to introduce Lukes' three dimensions of power, and to justify the decision-making and eclectic methodology of the study. It will also be necessary to explain why decisions relating to water supply, the municipalisation of electricity, and housing policy have been chosen for special study. Since this question relates to a wider debate as to what constitutes a significant issue, it is deferred until the next section, where there is also an explanation of why the chapter on water supply is longer, and the chapter on electricity municipalisation shorter, than the other two chapters.

2. The First Dimension of Power: Decision-Making and Pluralist Analysis.

In his discussion of what he terms "the one dimensional view", Lukes begins by agreeing with those who employ it (i.e. those widely categorised as pluralists) that their concepts approaches and methods can lead to non-pluralist conclusions. This assertion is in sharp contrast to the arguments of many other radicals. It is endorsed, however, by Benton[42] and by the findings in the present study, which, as will be seen, suggest that political decision-making in historical Birmingham was firmly centred on the city council and its influential committees.

Lukes then analyses pluralist definitions of power. Robert Dahl, he argues has two formulations. The first refers to potential power and asserts that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do." The second refers to actual power and involves "a successful attempt by A to get B to do something he would not otherwise do." It is the second of these definitions which is crucial to the pluralist perspective, asserts Lukes. Thus Dahl explains, in his most famous book, Who Govern's?, that his aim is to "determine for each decision which participants had initiated alternatives that were finally adopted, had vetoed alternatives initiated by others, or had proposed alternatives that were turned down. These actions were then tabulated as individual successes or defeats. The participants with the greatest proportion of successes out of the total number of successes were then considered to be the most influential."

The advantage of this approach, as Lukes admits, is that it studies "concrete observable behaviour", either at first hand or indirectly from documentary and other evidence. There are, however, a number of problems. For example, Lukes accuses the pluralists of being somewhat sloppy in their definitions of terms so that concepts such as "power", "influence" and so on "tend to be used interchangeably." More significantly, the emphasis on "key issues" and "issue- areas" assumes "actual, observable conflict." This, adds Lukes, is the view of Dahl who writes that

it is "a necessary though possibly not a sufficient condition that the key issue should involve actual disagreement in preferences among two or more groups." This assumption of overt conflict, argues Lukes, is false, and is, indeed, not always made by Dahl himself, who transcends his own methodology in Who Governs? with some highly perceptive analyses of policies which were unopposed. Finally, as argued above, Lukes criticises the pluralists for rejecting the concept of real interests and for propounding instead the simplistic argument that interests are merely the policy preferences of actors. Thus, Lukes concludes, "the diversity and openness" observed by the pluralists "may be highly misleading if power is being exercised within the system to limit decision-making to acceptable issues." Thus, a system which is pluralist in its decision-making might be elitist in its mobilisation of bias and its control of the political agenda.[43]

In his later work Lukes adds three further criticisms of studies in the first dimension. Firstly he claims that measuring the "extent" of A's power over B, in Dahl's formulation, must be in large part subjective and unempirical. Secondly certain changes of B's behaviour brought about by A might be by way of requests, advice or good argument rather than the exercise of power. Thirdly there are a number of cases, for example where B is beaten or imprisoned, where A might not change his behaviour but clearly has power over him.[44]

Lukes' critique is part of a long debate which was initiated in 1957-9 when Robert Dahl and two of his graduate assistants, Nelson Polsby and Raymond Wolfinger, began a study of New Haven, Connecticut. Their research produced four seminal texts, Dahl's "Critique of the Ruling Elite Model" and Who Governs?, Polsby's Community Power and Political Theory and Wolfinger's "Reputation and Reality in the Study of Community Power." [45] The work of Dahl and his school has stimulated a lively debate too extensive to be fully summarised here. For example, as well as the "non-decision making" literature discussed in the next section, there have been concepts such as "the policy approach" and "policy styles." [46] As will be seen, Dahl and his associates launched an attack on Hunter's reputational analysis of Atlanta, Georgia, in which he asked influential people to list the politically powerful. Instead they looked at decision-making in the issue areas of public education, urban renewal and party nominations in New Haven. Their findings purported to refute almost every important proposition of Hunter, Wright Mills and other elitists. They found no overlap of major decision-makers across the three issue areas, and the decision-makers differed sharply from those who were socially significant and from those identified as politically significant by Hunter and his school. They further discovered that electoral considerations were important for both decision-makers and electors, a factor which was omitted from Hunter's analysis. Thus, as Waste indicates, "Dahl's pluralist

New Haven ... stood in stark contrast to Hunter's elitist Atlanta. With little apparent room for compromise, an impasse soon developed between adherents of the two camps." [47]

In the long debate, however, definitions and characterisations of "pluralism" have become somewhat blurred. Lukes, as has been indicated, rejects the adjective "pluralist" as an accurate description of his first dimension of power on the grounds that the application of its methodology can lead to non-pluralist conclusions. [48] Polsby distinguishes between what he calls Pluralism1, Pluralism2 and Pluralism3. Thus, "Pluralism1 ...refers to eclectic methods of gathering data. Pluralism2 refers to propositions or sentences purporting to describe a certain state of affairs in one or more local communities." This state of affairs is characterised by one or more of the following: "dispersion of power among many rather than a few participants in decision- making; competition or conflict among political leaders; specialisation of leaders to relatively restricted sets of issue areas; bargaining rather than hierarchical decision- making; elections in which suffrage is relatively widespread as a major determinant of participation in key decisions; bases of influence over decisions relatively dispersed rather than closely held." Finally, "Pluralism3 refers to an intellectual tradition that has some strength in American political theory", namely the tradition of "Madison, Tocqueville, Montesquieu, and Locke." What is employed in the present research is thus a version of Pluralism1 and there is no

intention to endorse the liberal democratic interpretation of American political life enshrined in Pluralism² or the intellectual tradition associated with Pluralism³.^[49]

A different typology of pluralism, based upon a summary of its various academic schools, is set out by Waste. He conflates Polsby's Pluralism¹ and Pluralism² into a category which he defines as "classical pluralism", a belief system which "holds that public policy is a tug of war between various interest groups that often ends in a delicate balance or compromise." This formulation, as will be seen, is inapplicable to the policy outcomes analysed here. On the question of water supply, for example, the choice was either to build the Welsh dams or not. Even the scheme's opponents, in the jaws of defeat, did not suggest a compromise whereby the project was half completed. This classical pluralist version has drawn withering criticism from the left.^[50]

Waste's second category he calls hyperpluralism. This is a formulation developed by F.M. Wirt in his study of San Francisco. It describes a situation in which "city government is characterised ... by multiple groups but where the government itself is weaker than the pressure group system." Waste quotes another commentator, Lineberry: "Hyperpluralism ... is an exaggerated, extreme, or perverted form of pluralism; it is so decentralised and pluralistic that it has trouble getting anything done." The phenomenon has been observed in the New

York- New Jersey conurbation and in other American cities.[51] According to Newton the situation it describes "encourages private middle- class solutions to middle- class problems, and non- decisions for other kinds of problems." Newton adds, however, that "in Britain ... local government is more unified and has greater power. It is capable, in principle if not always in actual fact, of delivering collective benefits and implementing public solutions to public problems." [52] As the Welsh water scheme demonstrates, this was the case in Birmingham around 1900.

Within his second pluralist category Waste incorporates a sub- category with a long title: "Truman (II) and the transition to stratified pluralism." It refers to the second edition of D.B. Truman's The Governmental Process in which he "broke ranks with the classical pluralists." Instead, he argued that a disadvantaged body of "chronic nonparticipants" existed side by side in American society with their more vocal and effective fellow citizens. Thus an elitist version of pluralism existed wherein some favoured participants possessed (differing amounts of) "strategic access" to decision- makers, while, at the same time, others had no access whatever. Hence "a large group of persons, ... instead of playing in the system and losing, simply did not play at all" and even major injustices, such as the systematic denial of civil rights to blacks, might not be significantly opposed.[53] This, as will be seen, appears to have been partly true of the slum dweller in Birmingham around

1900, although he might, to some extent, have been accurately represented by the nascent labour movement. In the U.S.A., where the independent political organisations of the working class are peripheral, Truman's argument adds strength to Gaventa's third dimensional analysis of powerlessness in the Appalachians discussed below. It is an example of how, after a long period of sectarianism, the community power debate in America is entering a new era of ecumenism, with theories being refined, developed and integrated.

The third delineation of pluralist scholarship in the United States is dubbed by Waste "stratified pluralism." It is the term he uses to describe Dahl's original analysis of New Haven in 1961, and represents a significant re-writing of the pluralist credo. In a spirit of detente and compromise Waste argues, with some plausibility, that for a quarter of a century the pluralist case was simplified and misrepresented by its opponents. From the beginning, Dahl had described New Haven as "a republic of unequals" and had never denied that there were two layers of the population, the politically active and those that did nothing. "Thus, ... politics was pluralistic but stratified. New Haven involved a pluralism for and among the active citizens, as opposed to a free-wheeling pluralism involving the larger or general public as a whole." Thus, argues Waste, did Dahl attempt to explain the comparatively high proportion of blacks who voted in elections. On this analysis, they were responding rationally to their lack of other political resources. Waste follows up his

analysis with an interview with Dahl in which he too claims that he has been misunderstood.[54] Waste's interpretation of Who Governs? may be seen as a valuable attempt to stimulate co-operation between pluralists and elitists. It is, however, to be found nowhere in the preceding 25 years of acrimonious debate. The implication must be that throughout the conflict subjective preferences have sometimes played a more important role than objective science. It is thus, perhaps, yet another indication that the concept of power is essentially contested.

Waste's fourth and final pluralist category he calls privatised pluralism. This is where "in many policy areas, a limited number of participants have usurped the authority and resources of public policy-making for private ends." Thus McConnell argues, in the context of U.S. national politics, that there are influential groups which are unopposed in their respective areas of operation rather than a situation of group conflict as described by Dahl. An example which he cites is the domination of Federal agricultural policies by the farm lobby in the 1940's. There is a similar analysis of the influence of business groups under Eisenhower and Kennedy by Bauer, Pool and Dexter. Waste argues that his four categories of pluralism "represent descending points along a continuum of inclusiveness or community involvement and participation", with privatised pluralism being the version with the most restricted access to decision-making. It thus has affinities with elitist interpretations, but there are important differences. For

McConnell, for example, the various groups "are not united, do not care about big or general issues, and do not control parties, the presidency, or the Supreme Court." Bauer argues that business groups have no interest in general policy and may be thwarted if the agenda of the politicians changes. On both analyses, therefore, the permanence and cohesion normally attributed to elites is missing.[55] Unfortunately, the concept of privatised pluralism has never been systematically applied to local government. The theory seems of dubious relevance in historical Birmingham. For example, one of the major private interests in the field of housing, the landlords, were forced against their will to pay for slum improvements, and the owners of the private electricity supply company were curbed by national legislation and the power of the local Corporation.

As the above typologies of pluralism show, the adoption of a decision- making methodology does not entail the acceptance of a pluralist political ideology. Pluralist perspectives, especially in their more recent developments, are also more sophisticated than Lukes suggests. A final example of this is Eulau's network analysis of local government. This technique aims to analyse political resources by asking people to whom they would complain if they had a political grievance. It illustrates, however, the problems facing the historical researcher, in this case in interviewing the dead.[56]

The application of pluralist approaches to local Government in Britain has been discussed by Cox. Four sets of actors are characterised, the councillors, the officials, the institutions of national government and the local public. Here, this is adequate for the issue areas of electricity supply and housing, but fails to take account of the widespread hostility to Birmingham's Welsh water scheme from other local authorities and from non-local actors. Cox also points out that councillors are usually members of political parties, a phenomenon investigated below, particularly in the section on the water supply. Cox mentions the role played by council committees, a system which has recently thwarted attempts at corporate management. The power of such committees is illustrated here in all three case studies, although there is also evidence of the fragmentation of decision-making mentioned by Cox. As will be seen, different actors emerge as significant in the three different issue areas, and this is largely dictated by committee membership. There was, however, no evidence of departmentalism by local government employees, and the Town Clerk played a strong central role, particularly on the issues of water and electricity supply. Also significant within their own fields of competence, however, were the officials in the water, electricity and housing departments, the city's Medical Officer of Health and, particularly in the case of water, various external experts and consultants of which the most important was the civil engineer James Mansergh. Around 1900, at national level, there is little evidence that "different ministries, or even different parts of the same ministry" had

"different types of relationship with local authorities" since a strong co-ordinating role was played by the Local Government Board. Little evidence was found of the operation of local authority associations or national professional bodies, perhaps because of the nature of the research plan. Secondary evidence is adduced, however, to the effect that these were less significant then than now. With regard to public involvement, voting patterns are also excluded in the present study, but local groups are looked at insofar as they participated in the issue areas investigated. The most significant group discovered was the body of ratepayers opposed to the Welsh water scheme. Group participation has obviously mushroomed since, however. Newton discovered about 4,500 voluntary groups in the city, with about 1,000 having an influence on policy.[57]

The validity of a decision-making approach to local history is endorsed by Fraser, who describes "political issues" as "taking on the character of boreholes penetrating each stratum" of "urban life".[58] But which issues are significant and which "key issues" should be chosen for empirical research? Here, as Newton remarks, "Dahl himself admits to a degree of arbitrariness." The researcher must also beware of confining investigations to important and/or contested issues, where pluralist decision-making may dominate, while ignoring routine and uncontroversial questions which taken in toto may be more significant or may be more likely to be controlled by elites. Thus a consideration which must be borne in mind is that certain

groups may be pluralist in their decision- making and elitist in their agenda- setting, mobilisation of bias and non- decision- making.[59] As Parry writes, within Dahl's three "issue- areas" the decisions selected for study "were the ones regarded by the participants themselves as the most important" so that "policies which the leaders did not regard as important, but which the mass of the community believed important, would be disregarded." [60] This use by Dahl of Hunter's reputational method to identify key issues is criticised by Morriss, who questions the validity of looking at issues which seem important to politicians but which might not significantly affect or interest the bulk of the population. Morriss suggests that "a view from the bottom, based on people's interests, will produce a much wider list of outcomes than the elite- oriented view has typically come up with, and one that may support the common attitude that politicians spend most of their time talking about matters of no concern to the average man or woman." [61]

Morriss's criticisms can hardly apply to two of the issues here. On Lukes's designation of welfare interests all the citizens of Birmingham had an interest in securing an ample supply of pure water, and slum dwellers had an interest in better housing. The Welsh water issue, indeed, illustrates a point which appears to have been missed in previous studies of decision- making, namely that the nature of the issue itself may to some extent determine the outcome. For Dahl, issues and outcomes were largely peripheral to his main purpose in Who

Governs? which was to investigate the decision- makers. His critique of the elitists led him to accept their agenda. An investigation of the nature of issues, however, can help to explain why decisions are made. Birmingham Corporation seem to have built the Welsh dams for two main reasons. Firstly, by the early 1890's, Birmingham was in urgent need of a large extra supply of pure water. Secondly, expert advice at that time suggested that the best place to obtain such a supply was the Elan water catchment area. A section of the ratepayers objected to the cost, but in the political debate their attacks on the necessity for the scheme and their alternative proposals were easily discredited by the promoters. The ultimate decision would probably have been the same whatever the membership of the Water Committee and the council, although a less competent set of city fathers might, in the short term, have fudged or bungled the issue.

Some ratepayers also saw it as against their interest to pay for better housing which, unlike water, was at that time considered to be, for the most part, a private not a public good which largely benefited those re- housed. But both issues were significant on other grounds. The Welsh water scheme was the biggest and most expensive project adopted by the city during the Victorian era. Contemporary opinion and evidence also clearly establishes that housing was the most hotly debated of all local political topics. For the municipalisation of the electricity supply industry, however, the justification must be different.

Here the main overt opposition came from a small section of investors who had bought shares at inflated prices and who demanded better buy-out terms. At the time the significance of the new source of energy was not fully grasped, even by the rival Gas Committee, no overall charge on the rates was anticipated, and the bulk of the citizens seemed either mildly favourable to the acquisition of a potentially profitable asset or apathetic. The importance of the issue, therefore, must be inferred from subsequent events. Why was it that Birmingham and other cities were taking their utilities into public ownership nearly a quarter of a century before Clause 4 (4) of the Labour Party Constitution of 1918 made the issue of common ownership a socialist battle cry? Furthermore, given the rise and fall of public ownership in Britain since 1945, a study of its early origins would appear to be of legitimate concern.

The method of selecting decisions in the present study differs from that used by Dahl. As indicated, he began by identifying "issue areas" and then used a reputational technique to determine which decisions were important within those areas. Here, the decisions to build the Welsh water scheme and to municipalise the electricity supply industry were chosen before the issue area was identified. With housing, by contrast, the issue area was decided first, and then decisions within that area were sought out. The criteria for the choice of decisions are therefore more varied than Dahl's. Significantly, the study of housing threw up an important non-decision, or rather a decision

to do nothing, in the rejection by the council of large scale municipal housing schemes. Also discovered was an attempt to alter the political agenda by changing the rules and procedures governing the decision-making process. This was done by taking housing out of the control of the Health Committee, which supported municipal housing, and handing it over to a new Housing Committee, which did not.

This section closes with an analysis of the nature of decision-making. Parry makes the distinction, standard in the literature, between the initiation of a policy, its formal acceptance, and its implementation. In the first stage, "support for the project is mobilised, whether by public actions or by private bargaining and exhortation." The next stage, of "authoritative consideration", entails "the consideration of policy alternatives by constitutionally authorised persons" such as "the electorate, ... appointed officials, ... (or) elected rulers." The second stage is normally "taken as a decisional outcome" which is then "promulgated and put into effect." Although this delineation is useful, there are a number of problems too lengthy for full discussion here. Sometimes, for example, "a decisional veto" may be exercised at stage one. This is what Lukes might refer to as an exercise of power in the second dimension and is discussed below. Stage two "can be long and complex and can be further dissolved into a number of steps." [62] For example, decisions of council committees to build the Welsh water works and to municipalise the electricity

supply had to be forwarded as recommendations for endorsement by the full council and then sent on through both Houses of Parliament as draft bills before receiving the royal assent and passing into statute law. Even if a decision passes stage one, of course, there is no guarantee that it will pass stage two. In Birmingham around 1900 a proposal to construct council housing was rejected in the council chamber. Stage three may appear purely formal, but in the case of the Welsh water scheme the physical completion of the works was so difficult and protracted that it led to an attempt to review the original decision to build.

Of the chapters below, that on water supply is easily the longest. This is for a number of reasons. Firstly, the decision to build the Welsh dams resulted in a widespread opposition from other parts of the country which manifested itself in the Parliamentary Committee stages of the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill of 1892. Secondly, unlike in the case of the municipalisation of the electricity company, the council's proposals generated a lively local opposition from dissentient ratepayers which stands in need of analysis. Thirdly, the opposition of local ratepayers to the Welsh water scheme is relevant to an extensive secondary literature, particularly on ratepayers' revolts, which necessitates investigation. Finally, the issues raised in the debate with the opponents of the Welsh water scheme, such as those pertaining to water purity and the adequacy or otherwise of local supplies, call for fairly detailed

analysis if they are to be properly understood. By contrast, the electricity chapter is the shortest, since the decision to municipalise generated no significant opposition, either nationally or locally, and the issues involved received no extended public discussion. The ultimate purchase of the company also effectively ended the matter, and, unlike with the Welsh water scheme, there was no agonising aftermath of delay and escalating cost during which opposition to the decision continued. Finally, it was necessary to deal with the question of housing at some length because it generated a fierce local debate, and because the main decisional outcome (not to build council houses) was in sharp contrast to the massive schemes of municipal construction after 1918. Since, however, little was done before 1914 except for a certain amount of "slum-patching", there were, apart from the abortive proposals to develop Potter Street and Bordesley Green, no expensive public works plans for endorsement and local discussion.

3. The Second Dimension of Power: Non- Decisions, the Mobilisation of Bias, Agenda Setting and the Analysis of Elites.

The concept of a second dimension of power is rejected in the present study. Lukes' second dimension, it is argued, collapses into his first and third. Even this, it is claimed,

only applies to those cases where the second dimension is capable of empirical investigation at all, since Lukes himself appears to agree that the concept of a non- decision as something that does not happen is capable of an infinite number of applications, most or all of them metaphysical. It would thus have been better, it is argued, if Lukes had never postulated his second dimension as a separate category. On the other hand, theories of non- decision- making have been influential in the literature, and the concepts of mobilisation of bias and of political agenda- setting, usually identified with Lukes' second dimension, have been found to be useful in the present analysis. The second dimension is also normally taken to embrace important and currently relevant studies of elites. It has therefore be found convenient to refer to it as appropriate.

As implied above, Lukes seems to endorse the view that most non- decisions can only be meaningfully investigated in cases where they can be categorised as decisions. These, as will be seen, embrace decisions to do nothing, to do something else, or to change the rules and procedures by which decisions are arrived at. This category of non- decision which can be defined as a decision, it is argued here, is best analysed on the level of the first dimension of power. Examples in the present study include the initial decision not to create a municipal electricity supply (manifest in the decision to tolerate the creation of a private company), the decision not to act on an early engineer's report recommending Wales as a source of water supply, and the conscious

refusal, after 1900, (demonstrated in actual decisions to reject proposed schemes) to endorse a policy of municipal house building.

Such decisions often stem from the mobilisation of bias and the control of the political agenda, both of which, as stated above, are here found to be useful concepts. They are concepts, however, which in most cases are best seen as operating in Lukes' first dimension. To give an example, in 1900 there was a mobilisation of bias by which control of municipal house building was taken away from the Health Committee, which supported it, and given to a new Housing Committee, which opposed it. This alteration of the procedures and rules for making decisions was followed by an important change in the political agenda whereby proposals to build council housing were rejected. It all happened, however, at the level of decision-making and in Lukes' first dimension of power. To give another example, the mobilisation of political bias by the Corporation to secure the passage of the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill of 1892, and the important change to the local political agenda which arose from it, can also be seen as occurring predominantly within Lukes' first dimension of power. Other instances are more difficult to investigate, and the historian, in particular, is often reduced to the necessity to speculate. Here, the problem arises because a non-decision which cannot be re-defined as a decision is difficult to investigate empirically. Present examples might include the failure to act quickly on a number of social

problems, such as polluted water or slum conditions, because of pressure from the ratepayers, scientific ignorance, or councillor complacency stemming from their own wealth and security.

A minority of so-called non-decisions, however, are not seen as falling into Lukes' first dimension. In cases where real interests and false consciousness are involved non-decisions may occur in Lukes' third dimension of power. Perhaps because of the nature of the research scheme, however, no such examples, as will be seen, were discovered here.

Therefore, to recapitulate this brief summary, it is argued in the present section that Lukes' second dimension of power collapses into his first and third. Since this analysis, however, has never been explicitly formulated in the literature, it will be necessary to expand upon it.

Lukes derives his second dimension of power from the work of Bachrach and Baratz. For them, power is not only embodied in "concrete decisions" and in the making of them, but "is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A." The idea stems ultimately from Schattschneider's formulation: "All forms of political organisation have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of

others, because organisation is the mobilisation of bias. Some issues are organised into politics while others are organised out." For Bachrach and Baratz this mobilisation of bias consists of "a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures (rules of the game) that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups and at the expense of others." Thus "power may be, and often is, exercised by confining the scope of decision-making to relatively safe issues." This view of power is sometimes called neo-elitist, since it argues that "more often than not, the status quo defenders are a minority or elite group" even though this "is neither foreordained nor omnipresent."

As indicated above, a problem with this view of power is that, on Bachrach and Baratz's original depiction, non-decisions constitute events which do not happen, and hence cannot be empirically verified. However, Lukes (simplistically, as argued here) seems satisfied with their later claim that "their so-called non-decisions which confine the scope of decision-making are themselves (observable) decisions." He argues that there are five aspects of power so defined. These are: "coercion ...where A secures B's compliance by the threat of deprivation" in a conflict between them; influence where A prevails over B without threat; authority where B acquiesces because he considers A's power to be legitimate and reasonable or to be exercised under

legitimate and reasonable procedures; force, used by A to secure B's unwilling compliance; and manipulation which Lukes characterises as "an aspect or sub- concept of force."

Bachrach and Baratz, as Lukes explains, "are, in effect, redefining the boundaries of what is to count as a political issue" since for them "it is crucially important to identify potential issues which non- decision- making prevents from being actual." However, like the pluralists they "stress ... actual, observable conflict" and they argue that, if "there is no conflict, overt or covert, the presumption must be that there is consensus on the prevailing allocation of values, in which cases non- decision- making is impossible." Thus situations where "there appears to be universal acquiescence in the status quo" are "beyond the reach of the political analyst." As Lukes adds, this suggests "that Bachrach and Baratz are unsure whether they mean that non- decision- making power cannot be exercised in the absence of observable conflict or that we could never know if it was." Finally, Bachrach and Baratz accept that the conflict is between the interests of the actors, but, as with the pluralists, they assume, simplistically in Lukes' view, that these interests "are consciously articulated and observable." [63]

Bachrach and Baratz's Power and Poverty is a study of politics, poverty and race in Baltimore. It updates and significantly alters their previous views. By 1970, accepting that the definition in their articles was metaphysical and

incapable of empirical investigation the two scholars re-categorised a non- decision as "a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision- maker." Polsby launched a powerful critique of this change of line. He pointed out, for example, that there is "much ..information about non- decisions, according to this new definition, in ...pluralist studies." This "redefinition of the second face of power to coincide with the first face", he added, meant that the authors erected "extremely high hurdles for everyone else to jump, and then when their turn came to do some empirical work they removed the bar altogether, waltzing through the gap where the obstacle once stood." [64]

For the most part, Polsby's view is endorsed in the present research. However, the extension of his argument to include a blanket rejection of the entire concept of the "mobilisation of bias" as formulated by Schattschneider is considered unjustified and is not adopted. The definition of the "mobilisation of bias" used in the present study, however, is largely shorn of aspects which cannot be empirically verified. It includes, however, things like expertise, influential friends and other political resources. In this slightly amended formulation it has been found very useful throughout the study. The Corporation's superior mobilisation of political bias thus defined, for example, does much to explain their victory over the dissentient ratepayers at the time of the Water Bill of 1892. The same may be said of the associated concepts of agenda control and

manipulation. As developed by Bachrach and Baratz in their original articles, these too contained elements which were incapable of empirical investigation. Here, the definition is broadened somewhat, and the emphasis is on those aspects which can be discerned by the researcher, usually those operating within Lukes' first dimension. These include, for example, the important change in the local political agenda effected by the Corporation when they raised the issue of the Welsh water scheme and subsequently achieved the construction of the works, and the editing out of the local political agenda of large scale schemes of municipal housing construction by the Housing Committee in the years before the First World War.

Along with Polsby, however, the present research rejects Bachrach and Baratz's pre- 1970 conceptualisation of a non-decision. Instead it is argued that those so-called "non-decisions", in Bachrach and Baratz's typology, which are capable of empirical investigation are, for the most part, decisions to do nothing, to do something else or to change the rules and procedures by which decisions are arrived at. Thus, as stated above, the "non- decision" on council houses in Birmingham after 1900 was, in reality, a series of conscious decisions not to build them. As Parry and Morriss have argued, the term "non-decision" is a portmanteau term, and its various usages need to be unpacked and separately categorised.[65] "The term non-decision", they write, "is by no means clearly defined." They then run through the uses of the term by Bachrach and Baratz and

conclude that most of their characterisations of non- decisions are, in effect, decisions. These include the use of force and sanctions, "the invocation of procedures to thwart or redirect innovation" and "strengthening and reshaping the mobilisation of bias." Some of the categories discussed have relevance here. For example, what Parry and Morriss call "the technique of the pre- emptive strike of stealing the Whigs' clothing" was adopted by the non- socialist majority on the city council after the First World War when they took up the Labour Party policy of building large municipal housing estates. "Strengthening and re- shaping the mobilisation of bias" in the form of "new procedural barriers to change" occurred when a new Housing Committee was established after 1900, thereby removing control of housing policy from a Health Committee which had proposed two schemes to construct municipal dwellings. The tactic of "calling on the norms of society to limit demands or even render them illegitimate by regarding the control of business as outside the realm of politics and as part of the free enterprise system" was frequently resorted to as an argument against municipal building and, until the political agenda changed, as a justification for allowing a private company to develop the city's electricity supply. Parry and Morriss conclude that "most - though not all - so- called non- decisions can be seen to fit into the category of decisions." This assertion is accepted in the present research, although a rider might have been added that many applications of the concept of a non- decision are metaphysical, and consequently receive no consideration at all from the authors. Also accepted

is Parry and Morriss's claim that, consequently, "primacy should be given to a decisional approach to the study of power." There is, however, a residual element which, similarly to Lukes, they categorise as "primarily examples of false consciousness." Unlike Lukes, however, they do not tie in this assertion with the notion of real interests, or, as is done here, position such cases in the third of Lukes' dimensions of power. These aspects are further discussed in the section below.[66]

Parry and Morriss also point out that politics consists, not only of conflict, but also of "ruling" which "does ... imply the attempted resolution of conflicts but ... even more, regulation." Thus, "government routinely works within the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange." At national level, "the bulk of the arrangements are there before the advent of any particular government and are still there after its departure." Most significantly of all, "politics conceived of as ruling has ... an inbuilt conservatism." [67] In Birmingham around 1900, the rule of the city council covered a number of important areas of local political life. Regulation occurred from outside, deriving, for example, from the system of statute law and the role of central governmental agencies and departments such as Parliament and the Local Government Board. Housing policy in the city, for example, must be seen against the legislative framework of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890 and associated laws. Major policy initiatives such as the building of the Welsh dams and the municipalisation of the electricity supply were dependent upon

Parliamentary approval in the form of the passage of private acts. Finally, the borrowing of money to fund important policy initiatives, together with any alterations in the terms of existing loans, were subject to the approval of the Local Government Board. But regulation also occurred within the framework of municipal government itself. The system of council committees was particularly important here, since it was from the relevant committees that the decisions to build the Welsh dams, to take over the electricity supply company and to adopt and then to shelve proposals for municipal house building were formally initiated. On occasion, however, the role of the council itself was prominent, as when the plans for municipal construction presented by the Health Committee were rejected. The assertion that these routines always played a conservative and restrictive role, however, cannot be substantiated, since when once a radical or challenging policy, such as the enormous project for the Welsh dams, was decisively taken up it could be carried through with great effectiveness, partly because of the power of the committee system.

A related aspect to the theme of "ruling" is that of the timing of decisions, an aspect which receives no separate consideration by Parry and Morriss but which is highly significant in the cases studied here. The importance of timing is pointed to by Goodin in an article frequently invoked in the present study.[68] He sees it, however, largely in terms of agenda management, of "manipulating politics" by "manipulating

time" or by claiming "that the time is not right for a particular reform." [69] This idea is certainly applicable to the present case studies. It was resorted to, unsuccessfully, by the opponents of the Welsh water scheme. It was used to prevent the earlier municipalisation of the electricity supply. And it was adopted as one of the arguments by the council's Housing Inquiry Committee around 1914 to shelve yet again the policy of municipal house building. But there are aspects of the timing of decisions which are omitted from this somewhat restricted categorisation, but included in the present study. For example, take the question of why the Welsh dams were built in the 1890's and not in 1871, when their construction was first advised. This is a complicated issue which cannot be reduced simply to the agenda setting of manipulative politicians. Other relevant factors include the increase in the consumption of water, the steady deterioration of the quality of local supplies by pollution, increasing scientific evidence that poor water was bad for the public health and the demonstration effect of similar schemes adopted by Liverpool, Manchester Glasgow and other towns. It could even be claimed, although no evidence was found for it in the present study, that there was a previously inoperative element of fashion involved, since with others having already gone to unpolluted uplands, a "forward" city like Birmingham did not want to be left out. With electricity at first a private company was allowed to set itself up and this needs explanation. The company was subsequently municipalised and the timing of this must be investigated. Yet again it was not just an exercise in

agenda management. Here relevant factors include: the reluctance of the council to annoy the ratepayers by expending public money on a venture which, at first, was seen as speculative; the growing power of the municipal trading movement in the 1890's; and, associated with this latter point, the example of the municipalisation of supply in other towns. In housing, there is the question of why the council rejected municipal house building before 1914 but enthusiastically adopted it after 1918. Here too factors other than agenda control were involved. These include: the growth of the labour movement and the erosion of the ideology of laissez-faire liberalism; the spirit of reform after the First World War, epitomised by Lloyd George's phrase concerning "homes fit for heroes"; and government subsidies.

Bachrach and Baratz's theories may be viewed as a neo-elitist version of a wider elitist scholarship. As Cox observes, the founding fathers of the school were Pareto and Mosca, whose analyses were carried forward in Joseph Schumpeter's Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (1942) and C. Wright Mills' The Power Elite (1956). There were a number of early attempts to apply elitist analyses to American towns and cities which culminated in 1953 in Floyd Hunter's Community Power Structure, a study of Atlanta, Georgia.[70] All of these works were mercilessly excoriated by Polsby, starting with the Lynd's study of Middletown (Muncie, Indiana) in the mid- 1920's and '30's. For Polsby, the studies of elites (or "stratification studies" as he misleadingly called them) were based upon 5 false assertions:

that local communities are ruled by the upper class; that political and civic leaders are subordinate to this upper class; that the community is ruled by a single power elite; that this upper class elite rules in its own interests; and that there is social conflict between it and the lower class. Floyd Hunter's "reputational" method came in for particular criticism. The compilation of lists of political leaders from names nominated by civic organisations, and the arbitrary editing of the original 175 names to a shorter list of 40, claimed Polsby, was subjective, unscientific, and led to false conclusions about the distribution of local political power. As a methodological and analytical tool, it was infinitely inferior to the decision-making method developed by Dahl, Wolfinger and Polsby himself.[71] Polsby's book was a major set-back for the study of elites. In the second edition the author wrote that his "points ... have been pretty much conceded" which, considering his "strong position against a substantial and respectable body of conventional wisdom ... seems ... fairly remarkable." Thus Polsby quoted a number of academics, including Bachrach and Baratz and Britain's Ken Newton, who endorsed his argument as if it were self-evident.[72]

Another attempt to investigate non-decisions was Crenson's study of air pollution in Gary, Indiana, and in East Chicago.[73] This documents the alleged influence of U.S. Steel in preventing the issue of air pollution from being raised in the town of Gary, and in decisively watering down the anti-pollution law which was

finally passed. This, it is claimed, was done without the company entering the political arena by "mere reputation for power, unsupported by acts of power." The company, argued Crenson, "thus defied the pluralist dictum that political power belongs to political actors." His analysis made a strong impression on Lukes, who devoted nearly four pages of his brief study to a discussion of it. Lukes admits, however, that "the theoretical framework ... can be seen as lying on the borderline of the two- dimensional and the three- dimensional views of power." [74] Other commentators have been more critical. Polsby applauds Crenson's comparative approach, but argues that his "bits and scraps of findings ... will not support the burden he places on them ... and yield conclusions of questionable validity only after the most relentless pummeling by an investigator whose biases are busily engaged." [75] McLean agrees with Crenson that clean air was initially opposed by machine politicians because such a "public good" played no part in the political "trade in divisible benefits." He is scathing, however, on Crenson's conclusion which he claims "is weakly supported by evidence." Crenson, adds McLean incredulously, "actually cites U.S. Steel's official attitude of non- intervention in Gary's affairs as a critical obstacle to the development of the dirty air debate." [76] Developing a point from Lukes' analysis, Cox argues that "Crenson and others ... have tended to founder on the difficulties of separating the notion of a latent issue ... from that of real interests." [77] In any event, Crenson's methods are unsuitable for use by the local historian since they depend on

the completion of questionnaires.

The year 1976 saw the appearance of an article by Molotch on "the city as a growth machine." Molotch's thesis is that the dominant local elite in modern American cities is based on or associated with land ownership and use. The group includes "local businessmen, particularly property owners and investors in locally oriented financial institutions, ... lawyers, syndicators and realtors" together with "those who, although not involved in land use, have their futures tied to growth of the metropolis as a whole." Such actors have a common economic interest in the development of their city and their "desire for growth provides the key operative motivation toward consensus ... however split they may be on other issues." The process, it is claimed, operates at various levels, from shopkeepers arguing about where to put bus stops to hotel owners contesting the location of a convention centre, and so on upwards to inter-city rivalry for government funding of development projects and for investment by private companies. Thus, governmental agencies are assiduously cultivated and "virtually any issue of a major business magazine is replete with ads from localities ... trumpeting their virtues ... to prospective industrial settlers." In these circumstances, "a key role of elected and appointed officials becomes that of ambassador to industry." Intimately bound up with this are "the city-sponsored parade floats, and stadia ... and support for professional sports teams carrying the locality name, ... the glossy claim of creating a greater Cleveland, ... etc., ...

public school curricula, children's essay contests, soapbox derbies, spelling contests, beauty pageants, etc." to "help build an ideological base for local boosterism." Such, argues Molotch, is "the essence of local government as a dynamic political force." [78]

Molotch's lively article was enthusiastically received by other elite theorists. Domhoff's tone is positively celebratory: "Growth machine. It has a ring to it." He castigates latter day Marxists for seeing the problem in terms of profits rather than rents. An arbiter of growth interests, he adds, echoing Molotch, is usually the local newspaper, which in the last analysis will back expansion against environmental conservation in an effort to expand its potential readership. Sometimes the local building trades unions can be enlisted as "a useful junior partner." The theory, Domhoff adds, can also incorporate "historical factors" which critics always argued elite theories could not do. In the nineteenth century, for example, there were fierce fights over the acquisition of local railways, a vital need of growth machines at that time. To-day, sunbelt cities, with no outdated infrastructure of heavy industry, unused land and good weather might have better chances of attracting high technology electronics companies. Domhoff also claims that the growth machine theory "is a complete vindication of Hunter and his dreaded reputational method." Like Molotch, Domhoff points to the strains in the growth machine, for example conflicts with

neighbourhood groups who do not want throughways and other disruptive infrastructure cutting into their area, but argues that the landed interests often win out in the end.[79]

Perhaps the most useful treatment of the growth machine for present purposes, however, is by Dye, who looks at its implications for local policy-making. He draws a sharp distinction between policies to stimulate growth (which the growth machine is likely to support) and policies to provide amenities (which it is likely to oppose or at least fail to promote). Dye thus categorises four different types of policies, developmental, redistributive, allocational and organisational. The growth machine, he argues, values developmental policy highly, and reputational studies such as Hunter's are very effective at highlighting this. The local elite, however, would prefer to edit redistributive policy out of the local political agenda, something which it is usually able to do because of the dominant role played by Federal government in this area. It has a strong interest in thwarting the introduction of high business taxes, minimum wage legislation and so on, since this might drive away trade, but it can normally prevail upon other actors to accept this as being in the common good. Public unrest, such as riots and agitation, however, are threatening to confidence, and the local elite has perfected a number of strategies for containing these by symbolic or token concessions or by discrediting the protesters. Allocational decisions include those relevant to the police and fire services, the school

service, etc. and these are "pluralist in character." Dye adds that pluralists tend "to mistake allocational politics for the whole of community politics." Finally, the growth machine usually takes little interest in organisational policy unless its control of development policy is threatened. The participation of blacks in urban government, for example, is readily tolerated, especially since black mayors often pursue expansionist economic policies.[80]

The theory of the growth machine has been summarised at some length because it appears to shed light on Birmingham community power around 1900. The local press, for example, as the growth machine theory suggests, spoke out frequently in the interests of the city and of its economic and developmental welfare. Unfortunately, the present research scheme precludes the systematic identification of landed interests in local political life. Indeed, the emphasis on the industrial advantages of pure water, the successful pressure by commercial interests in the city centre to secure the introduction of the electric light, and the cavalier treatment by the Housing Committee of small property landlords suggest that, if there was a growth machine, it was probably led by industrialists. The surge of civic pride surrounding the construction of the Welsh water works, however, and the frequent contemporary references to the contribution it would make to the prosperity of the city are relevant to the idea of a local growth machine. With electricity, it seems from the national debate on municipalisation and from the success of the

publicly owned gas and water companies, that the council thought they could administer these utilities more efficiently than a private company. The decision of the local "growth machine" (if it existed) to develop under municipal ownership an increasingly important part of the city's infrastructure would thus seem reasonable. With housing, the council had no great objection to municipal building if it could be made to pay for itself. When it became clear that this was impossible, this redistributive policy was, for financial reasons, removed from the formal political agenda, partly, perhaps, because it was largely irrelevant to economic growth and the development of the infrastructure. As implied above, however, all these points must remain contestable, as must the argument that, even if there was a local "growth machine", its main basis was landed interests rather than those businessmen usually identified by historians as the members of local elites.

The study of local elites in the U.S.A. has been too extensive for systematic summary. By contrast, as Cox has noted, British contributions have been relatively sparse. Pahl's thesis stresses the elite role of "urban managers" who have considerable discretionary power over the distribution of goods and services. He mentions local housing officers and planners who decide on the location of shopping centres, housing estates, etc. The part played by such groups went unnoticed in the present research. Dearlove's study of the relations between the elite group of councillors and officials and interest groups in Kensington and

Chelsea showed that the controlling Conservative Party exhibited a systematic bias in favour of groups with which it was ideologically sympathetic. This has some correlation to the field of housing in Birmingham around 1900, where Housing Committee members gave scant courtesy to representations from the Trades Council and other labour movement bodies to which they were ideologically and politically opposed. In Croydon, Saunders investigated the relationship between the elite group of councillors and local business interests. He found that the local authority was an independent actor in local politics, but that it cultivated important links, formally via consultation and informally via the local social scene, with a business community which gave it constant policy guidance.[81] The present study failed to identify this feature of local politics, but some of the historical studies of local elites summarised below are relevant to its investigation. All three of these British studies adopt Newton's injunction to investigate "the ways in which elites interact with citizens", a factor which tends to be overlooked in the U.S.A.[82] Furthermore, in Britain C. Wright Mills' "positional" approach, whereby formal actors are identified from their official positions tends to be more common than Hunter's "reputational" method.

The "positional" approach is, of course, standard in historical studies of elites because of the impossibility, alluded to above, of interrogating the dead. Despite the vigorous attack upon the concept of local elites in the U.S.A., there have been a number

of such "positional" studies of the economic, social and religious backgrounds of political leaders in Birmingham. The approach was mooted by Hennock in his doctoral thesis, and subsequently developed in his book Fit and Proper Persons.^[83] It has been adopted by Linda Jones in her study of the role of liberal businessmen in the municipal politics of Victorian Birmingham,^[84] and by Bailey in his investigation into the role of the Quakers in local government.^[85] The social history of Birmingham's commercial and industrial elite has been chronicled by Ballard.^[86] Even Moreland, in his study of "petit- bourgeois hegemony" in nineteenth century Birmingham, gives extended biographical details of some of his major actors.^[87]

Throughout the field of local history, the study of urban elites, as Trainor has shown, is common.^[88] The Leeds elite, for example, has been traced back as far as 1626 by Kirby, and described in its nineteenth century manifestation by Kitson Clark.^[89] The technique of investigating the occupational composition of municipal councils is particularly common. It forms, for example, an important part of Kidd's analysis of the middle class in Manchester.^[90] Ironically, even the historical sections of Dahl's Who Governs?, as Garrard has pointed out, "are based only upon an occupational analysis of elective leadership."^[91]

The limitations of an analysis of the origins of municipal councillors, when taken in isolation, are demonstrated by Hennock's 1968 study of Birmingham and Leeds. There are, for example, formidable problems of definition. Hennock pays "particular attention to ... occupation", but admits that "the calibre of the councillors ... the really important consideration ... is not really pinned down by means of an occupational survey." There are also "many borderline cases" which he is forced to categorise, arbitrarily and "without comment", as either large or small businessmen, having no section to cover the middle ground. Thus, Hennock's conclusion that, from 1862 to 1882, the "owners of large businesses" increased and the "owners of small businesses" decreased as a percentage of the total number of Birmingham's councillors seems reasonable, but cannot be established very precisely. In justification of his research plan, Hennock argues that "the elected personnel of urban local government played a crucial role" during the period from 1835 to 1914, and that their "decisions ... were to affect for good or ill the physical and social environment of an ever-increasing proportion of the population." There is no systematic attempt, however, to demonstrate how changes in the social and economic composition of the council might affect the policies pursued and the decisions arrived at, although reference to an article of 1963 on ratepayers' revolts implies that small businessmen mean economy and big ones the spending of money. Hennock's conclusion is that there are "marked differences over the period as a whole" between the composition of the councils of Birmingham and Leeds

and that "a study of other towns would strengthen the impression of variety." The policy implications of these variations, however, are avoided, and it is claimed that "it may be impossible to generalise about the course that events have taken in different towns." [92] An investigation of decision-making, however, reveals that, around the end of the nineteenth century, virtually every sizeable municipality took its local electricity company into public ownership, and that Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham all acquired new supplies of water from unpolluted uplands. The policy dynamics involved in such decisions, moreover, were only tenuously related to the social and economic composition of municipal councils. [93]

Linda Jones's study of the role of businessmen in Birmingham's municipal politics likewise gives only a brief treatment of issues and decision-making. Having established that businessmen were predominant on the council, she assumes that they will act in the expected way and carry out "a holding action ... against the forward march of municipal trading and municipal socialism." For her, "hard business sense delayed the purchase of the electricity supply company." But why, if the aim was to hold back municipal enterprise, did the purchase occur at all? Here, an investigation of the contemporary national debate on municipal trading, and of case studies of the electricity industry in other towns and cities, is relevant. To some extent, Jones's conclusion is contradictory: "Municipal trading did expand as the complex nature of civic problems gradually pushed

councillors beyond set principles. In the period between 1870 and 1900, however, ... the limits of municipal action ... were surprisingly clearly defined." [94] An analysis of the decision in the early 1890's to construct the Elan valley waterworks, the most expensive and interventionist project adopted by the municipality up to that time, would suggest that the first part of Jones's interpretation is sounder than the second.

4. The Third Dimension of Power: Real Interests, Ideology, Political Culture and Class and Marxist Analysis.

Lukes' definition of the "three dimensional view of power", as opposed to his obiter dicta on it, is quite brief. It involves, he explains, "a thoroughgoing critique of the behavioural focus of the first two views as too individualistic and allows for consideration of the many ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics, whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or through individuals' decisions." He adds that "this ... can occur in the absence of actual, observable conflict, which may have been successfully averted - though there remains here an implicit reference to potential conflict." However, "this potential ... may never in fact be actualised. What one may have here is a latent conflict, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude."

To this "summary" Lukes adds two glosses. Firstly, "the term behavioural" is used "in the narrow sense ... to refer to the study of overt and actual behaviour - and specifically concrete decisions. Of course, in the widest sense, the three-dimensional view of power is behavioural in that it is committed to the view that behaviour (action and inaction, conscious and unconscious, actual and potential) provides evidence (direct and indirect) for the attribution of the exercise of power." Secondly, Lukes stresses that the latent conflict referred to "is latent in the sense that it is assumed that there would be a conflict of wants and preferences between those exercising power and those subject to it, were the latter to become aware of their interests."

This new characterisation of power, Lukes argues, is needed because although the two-dimensional view of power "represents a major advance over the one-dimensional" it, in turn, is inadequate. For example, "it is still too committed to behaviouralism." It is also "inadequate ... in its association of power with actual, observable conflict." Finally it insists "that non-decision-making power only exists where there are grievances which are denied entry into the political process in the form of issues. If the observer can uncover no grievances, then he must assume there is a genuine consensus on the prevailing allocation of values." Lukes continues: "Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent

people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial?"

The arguments of pluralists against the study of non-decisions in the second dimension are true a fortiori of the third, and Lukes quotes Polsby's and Wolfinger's "classic objection" that you cannot study or explain what does not happen. Lukes admits that it is difficult, especially to identify inaction and unconscious power (of which even the exerciser may be unaware) and to attribute the exercise of power "to collectivities such as groups, classes or institutions", an aspect which, as explained below, has generated a complex debate centred upon the concept of "structural power." Lukes claims that the problems can be overcome, but, as has been seen, this means making contestable assumptions about real interests.[95]

Cox, somewhat simplistically, links the third dimension of power exclusively to Marxist interpretations: "Marxists ... are concerned to explain how it is that people come to believe the things that they do, not just with who wins out in observable conflicts of interest or who sets the agenda of political debate." Thus, "third dimensional theories are ... less concerned with conflict and more interested in suppression and

social conditioning ... so that individuals never understand their real interests. He continues, "for third- dimensional theorists the answer to this question is that the ... capitalist economic and social structure predetermines individual thought and action such that fundamental threats to the system are not only contained but that people are incapable of realising that they should want to change the system." Later, however, Cox alludes to "the valid claim by pluralist and elite writers that Marxist accounts are simply not falsifiable." Thus any expressed preferences by working people which appear to cast doubt upon Marxist perspectives can be explained away as false consciousness capitalist hoodwinking or ideological manipulation, irrespective of empirical evidence to the contrary. Thus "Marxist accounts are based on logical and coherent theoretical argument, but they do not contain a counter- factual which would render them capable of formal falsification." Cox's claim is accepted in the present study, but so is his further assertion that investigations of latent interests, social conditioning, ideological control and so on can still be of value.[96]

An attempt to investigate power from a third dimensional perspective was made by Gaventa in his study of "power and powerlessness" in the Appalachians. His work, which has been commended by both Lukes and Morriss, investigates the apparent "apathy and ignorance" of coal miners in the Clear Fork Valley.[97] "Why", asks Gaventa "in an oppressed community where one might intuitively expect upheaval, does one find, or appear

to find, quiescence? Under what conditions and against what obstacles does rebellion begin to emerge?"[98] To describe Gaventa's explanation, as Morriss does, as "quite moving" is to understate the case.[99] After a lengthy theoretical and methodological opening based on the perspectives of Lukes, the author turns to "the case of a central Appalachian valley" and catalogues a powerful system of indirect control and manipulation operating in the interests of the absentee British coal owners. In the field of local politics, Gaventa found no observable conflict on issues such as the low taxation of corporate wealth, poverty and social reform. The miners of the valley remained loyal to the corrupt leadership of the United Mineworkers of America against the reform movement of Jock Yablonski because they saw the union as there to defend them and resented internal troublemakers. Help from Federal government and from well-meaning outsiders was ignored by miners who had a shrewd grasp of the realities of power and who resented attempts to undermine the hillbilly's way of life. The analysis is in part subjective, and it makes assumptions about real interests which are not amenable to empirical enquiry. But it is persuasive, and it demonstrates the inadequacy of studying power by the observation of decision-making alone.

Whether the undoubted value of Gaventa's study can be ascribed entirely to its third dimensional perspective, however, is doubtful. Morriss refers to its "commendably eclectic methodology" and it appears to transcend the boundaries of the

academic debate from which it stems. In particular, in common with studies of power in the family commended by Morriss, it adopts some of the perspectives of social anthropology, and also of sociology.[100] Perhaps the functional inter-relationships which it chronicles between the economic, social and political forces oppressing the beleaguered mining community would have caused less comment if published outside the discipline of political science.

An attempt to apply third dimensional Marxist approaches to local government is made by Cox. Most Marxists, he argues, view the state as a whole and ignore its peripheral agencies. However, Cockburn's study The Local State attempts a Marxist analysis of Lambeth Borough Council. This looks at the development of neighbourhood councils and, in its institutional sections, resorts to a descriptive first dimensional account which maintains an uneasy co-existence with the more theoretical material. In contrast, the Spanish Marxist Castells attempts a structural approach. His argument is that the function of local government is to provide housing, transport and other public goods which are necessary for the maintenance of the system but which the capitalists do not wish to pay for themselves. The new towns movement, for example, can be seen as an attempt by the capitalist system to transfer the costs of dealing with inner city slums onto the state. Dunleavy gives a similar structuralist analysis in which local government, and in particular voting in local elections, is dominated by conflicts

over collective consumption of locally provided goods and services such as housing, education and transport. Professionals employed by local authorities become increasingly important political actors because of their role in distributing such benefits. Saunders argues that there is a "dual state" defined by relations of production on the one hand and consumption on the other. Like the theorists of the "growth machine" he thus draws a distinction between social investment in infrastructure, which he says is governed by "corporative" decision-making, and social welfare provision, where a more "competitive" and "pluralist" dynamic is at work.[101]

Castells' analysis may have some relevance to Birmingham around 1900 since the massive investment in the infrastructure of the Welsh dams, arguably necessary if capitalism was to prosper in the city, could hardly have been financed from private sources. It also might explain why little was done to provide council housing, since Castells explains that housing reform is intended partly to blunt the power of the growing labour movement. For him, this explains why early agitation for new towns was thwarted and why the first big advances came after the working class electoral victory of 1945. Before 1914 the labour movement was comparatively weak in Birmingham. After 1918 it was stronger, and, on Castells' analysis, the adoption by the non-Labour majority of their rivals' policy may be seen as an attempt to thwart the proletariat. This, however, together with similar applications which might be made of the theories of the other

Marxists summarised, must remain speculative. All observers agree that such interpretations are not reducible to empirically verifiable propositions.

This is the problem with all attempts to apply third dimensional analyses to studies such as this. The difficulty has arisen in a complicated discussion of whether or not the largely Marxist concept of "structural power" is a contradiction in terms. Marxists such as Poulantzas, in the words of Hugh Ward, "argue that power is a product of the interaction of various structural levels operating through social classes rather than individuals" and "for them all power is structural." On the other hand "Lukes believes that to talk of structural power is self- contradictory." Ward's own conclusion is that "it is neither self- contradictory nor redundant to talk of the structural power of capital." [102] It would have been difficult to utilise this concept in the present research, however, largely because of the problem, referred to above, of applying it empirically.

Perhaps partly because of the research plan, no case of the operation of power in Lukes' third dimension was discovered in this study. In other words, at no stage did there appear to be an attempt by the powerful to hoodwink those below them or to exploit their false consciousness in such a way that they acted against their own real interests. In the case of the Welsh water scheme, indeed, the opposite seems to have been the case. The

opposition could plausibly be represented as betraying their own real interests in preferring lower water rates and an inadequate and dirty water supply. The Corporation, by making them pay higher water rates for an ample and pure supply were forcing them, against their will, to act in their own real interests. In that particular case, therefore, the concept of real interests is stood on its head, and used to reinforce the more general point about the irrationality of the opponents' case.

In this research, therefore, the concept of real interests has been found of value, despite its contestable nature and the fact that here no third dimensional analysis is based on it. The notion of real interests, or "welfare interests" in a more recent phrase of Lukes, has already been analysed above as part of the justification for the present research scheme. To summarise, on Morriss's analysis, things like water supply and housing conditions are so central to human health and well-being that widely acceptable assumptions about real interests can be made in respect of them. At the time of the Welsh water scheme, for example, everyone, including the scheme's opponents, were prepared to accept that the city needed adequate pure water, and, if all else failed, had to get it whatever it took. There was also, in the housing case study, a very broad consensus, which excluded only a section of the landlords, that it was seriously against people's interests to live in appalling slum conditions. Thus, true to the eclectic methodology, an analysis of the real "welfare" interests of all citizens for pure water and of slum

dwellers for better housing will be attempted, and it will be speculated to what extent the acquisition of the electricity supply industry was in the real interests of the inhabitants. Various interpretations of the political culture of the city and of the balance of political forces within it will also be made which may, perhaps, at least in some cases, be reasonably ascribed to the third rather than to the first dimension of power on the grounds stated by Parry and Morriss and summarised above.

5. Conclusion.

"Local authorities", as Cox has written, "cannot be regarded as independent political systems in the same way that one might regard nation states." [103] Newton criticises "the early community power studies" in America which "treated their cities as if they were city- states with autonomous and independent policy- making powers", but adds that the common British attitude that "there is no sense in looking at local politics and decision- making" because of the power of central government is also mistaken. [104] In Birmingham around 1900, the local authority had control of significant policy areas, but its relationship with national government must be constantly borne in mind. There are various aspects of this, but some of the more significant, as indicated above, were the need to work within the framework of national statute law, the role of the Local

Government Board, and the requirement to obtain local acts of Parliament before implementing certain policy initiatives. Thus Newton rightly stresses "the crucial importance of seeing local politics in its national framework, and of analysing the interplay of national and local factors." [105] His advice is as relevant to the historian as to the student of local government to-day.

Newton also warns about the danger, again alluded to above, of uncritically transferring findings from American cities to the British experience. American local government is more fragmented than Britain's: "It is divided geographically into municipalities, counties and townships, and functionally into sanitation boards, pollution control boards, education boards, water districts, school districts and housing authorities. The New York Metropolitan Region is governed by 1,400 separate political entities." In Britain, the system was and is more unitary. Around 1900, for example, there still existed the separate entity of the Poor Law Guardians, but the old School Board was abolished by the Education Act of 1902 and its powers transferred to the city council. The strength of local councils over the last hundred years casts doubt upon any attempt to transfer the findings of American pluralists and hyper-pluralists to Britain. As Cox has commented, the few efforts to carry out "community power" studies in Britain, including Ken Newton's in Birmingham, "tended to end with the ... conclusion that it was the local authority and its members and officers who

were the most influential people in local politics." [106] Newton cites two more examples. An elitist study of Bristol in 1970 "used the reputational method only to find that the council was the centre of local decision-making." In 1967, an investigation of seventeen local issues in Bath also demonstrated "the extent to which the formal office-holders on the council dominated the decision-making process." [107] Similar conclusions are arrived at here, but there is more at stake than simply identifying the decision-makers, a limited objective which, as suggested above, has partly vitiated the American research. In Birmingham around 1900, the analysis of the issues themselves, it is argued, is often the most productive approach to understanding the decisions arrived at.

Finally, the points made at the beginning of this chapter are now repeated. The aim of the research is to see what the application of Lukes' approach tells us, firstly about community power in Birmingham around 1900, and secondly about the validity and empirical usefulness of the approach itself. The analysis of these two aspects is therefore introduced at the beginning, developed in the middle sections, and summarised at the end of the next three chapters. It is then synthesised and summarised in the concluding chapter. An important part of the application of Lukes' approach to the local history of Birmingham is the investigation of how the present research endorses or modifies the findings of previous local historians. In the investigation of the validity of the approach, it is argued that the research

scheme and the topics investigated stem from the methodology adopted. Thus, if any useful insights at all have been gained, that methodology is to some extent vindicated.

Another point relevant to the validity of Lukes' approach is that the definitional categories within his first dimension, although adequate to cover all empirical cases, sometimes necessitate a sophisticated and difficult analysis of what might seem, *prima facie*, to be simple and straightforward situations. The question must therefore be asked as to whether the complicated analytical exercise is invariably worth the effort.

With regard to the second dimension it is argued, on the grounds stated above, either that it is not susceptible to empirical enquiry, or that it collapses into the first or less frequently into the third dimension. Thus, the concepts of "mobilisation of bias" and of "agenda setting", which Lukes identifies with his second dimension, are seen as useful, but as operating mainly within the first dimension. Both of these concepts, furthermore, are applied in a modified form in order to make them more suitable for the analysis of decision-making conflict. Thus, in the investigation of the case studies, second dimensional analysis is eschewed, and instead a broader version of Lukes' first dimension is applied.

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CHAPTER 2. THE BUILDING OF THE ELAN VALLEY WATER WORKS.

1. Introduction.

As explained in Chapter 1, the present chapter has two main objectives, namely to see what the application of Lukes' dimensional approach to the study of power tells us, firstly about Birmingham local history around 1900, and secondly about the usefulness and validity of the approach itself.

With regard to the first of these objectives, it is found that certain aspects of community power in Birmingham are, as in the other case studies, thrown into sharper relief by the application to them of Lukes' dimensional approach. Such aspects, as will be seen, include the legislative role of Parliament, the part played by important political actors such as Martineau and Lawley Parker, the power of the council's committee structure, and the nature of the external opposition from London, Wales and elsewhere to the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill of 1892. In addition, considerable emphasis is laid on the usefulness of Lukes' approach in helping us to understand the conflict over the 1892 Water Bill between the Corporation and a small but vociferous group of dissentient ratepayers. On this latter aspect, the application of Lukes' perspectives also sheds light on the wider secondary literature on ratepayers' revolts.

As throughout the study, it is argued that, if any useful insights at all have been gained, then Lukes' approach and the research scheme derived from it are to some extent justified.

The historical analysis occurs mainly within Lukes' first, or decision-making, dimension of power. The main argument is that towards the end of the nineteenth century Birmingham urgently needed a larger supply of pure water. Reasons of public health dictated that this need must be met irrespective of cost. Expert opinion indicated that the construction of the Elan valley works was the best way to obtain the required water, and the city fathers and most ratepayers concurred. A section of the ratepayers objected to the expense, and launched a campaign against the project, but they could neither shake the promoters' case nor formulate viable alternative proposals of their own. Thus, with water, the policy imperative was the urgent need to resolve a problem, and other factors, such, for example, as the origins and backgrounds of the decision-makers, were largely peripheral.

It is further argued, in Lukes' first dimension, that in the public debate on the building of the Elan valley waterworks the Birmingham opponents were consistently outflanked by the promoters. This was largely because of the greater cogency of the promoters' case, and not because (as the opponents claimed) of their superior physical resources. For example, on the two issues of wells and of the so-called system of "dual supply" the

dissentients suffered serious defeats in the course of debate. A theme which emerges clearly is that the promoters' case, in spite of its various shortcomings, was logically and rationally argued. They were guided by the examples of similar schemes adopted elsewhere, and by the best obtainable expert advice. Their opponents, on the other hand, were frequently amateurish, blundering, cranky and prone to indulge in vague and ill formulated pontification. Thus, the quality of the arguments employed, and the largely inevitable nature of the decision arrived at, are stressed. This, it is argued, were more influential to the outcome than the struggle between people with different interests, the process of political bargaining, or the social and economic background of the major political actors.

With regard to the chapter's second objective, it is found, here as elsewhere, that Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories are indeed adequate, but that in some cases their application is not straightforward. A complicated political analysis is sometimes required which is arguably more trouble than it is worth. One reason for this is Dahl's emphasis on decision-making conflict, which Lukes criticises but nevertheless incorporates into his definition of first dimensional power. In this case, for example, the most important first dimensional decision was taken in the 1890's by the competent and constitutional municipal authorities when they resolved to construct a network of Welsh dams. According to Lukes' categorisation, as explained in Chapter 1, the relevant

manifestation of first dimensional power in this case involves "a successful attempt by A to get B to do something he would not otherwise do." For example, the Corporation prevailed upon dissentient ratepayers to pay higher water rates to finance the Welsh dams. The formulation does not cover all the cases very neatly, however. It could be said, for instance, that the Corporation prevailed upon the L.C.C. to look elsewhere than the Elan valley for extra water for the metropolis. But the L.C.C. did not control London's water supply, and even if it had done, it probably would not have tried to supplement it from Wales. The victory of the promoters over London interests, and interests with similar objectives in South Wales, merely closed one of their possible future options. The L.C.C., the Glamorgan County Council, etc., were not forced to do anything that they would not otherwise have done. And yet the promoters had clearly exercised power, if only limited, by prevailing over them in a situation of conflict. Even more problematic are the cases of opponents, such as landed interests, which were happy to comply as long as they received adequate compensation. Here, they had clearly done something they would not otherwise have done, for example sold land to the Corporation. But in this they were often willing collaborators, and rather than political conflict there was economic bargaining. This bargaining occurred, however, in a context where behind the explicit offers of voluntary purchase there lay the perceived threat of compulsory purchase. Most willing collaborators succumbed to the offers, but in the case of the Prickard family it was compulsory arbitration which was

ultimately decisive. In most cases, therefore, the negotiations were concluded by offers which were acceptable to both parties, with of course the usual tactical skirmishes as to what constituted a mutually agreeable price. In the one case of the Prickard family, however, failure to achieve such a negotiated price resulted ironically in an arbitrated settlement at terms preferable to those obtained by other proprietors in the offer situation. Such events are mirrored in contemporary disputes over analogous issues in which the last proprietor in a chain occupies a particularly significant strategic position.

The present chapter, like the others, rejects Lukes' formulation of a separate second dimension of power as the realm of the non- decision. This theme may perhaps be tied in with Goodin's emphasis on the importance of the timing of decisions. We have to ask, for example, not only why the Elan valley scheme was constructed in the 1890's, but why it was not constructed before. *Prima facie* this might seem to be a suitable case for second dimensional analysis. However, as in the other cases, this question is not best answered via the investigation of a number of hypothetical non- decisions which, as critics of Bachrach and Baratz's early work have pointed out, are not empirically ascertainable. Instead, it will be asked why an actual decision was made, in Lukes' first dimension, not to act on a Report of 1871 that recommended the Elan valley as a water source. In this case too, therefore, the view of Parry and

Morriss is endorsed that most so called "non- decisions" are best viewed as decisions to do nothing, to do something else, or to change the ground rules and arrangements for decision- making.

On the other hand, the emphasis placed by Schattschneider, and by Bachrach and Baratz, on the mobilisation of bias and the control of the political agenda, as throughout this study, is found most useful, and is constantly referred to. It will be demonstrated, for example, that in the conflict between the promoters of the 1892 Water Bill and their Birmingham opponents, the former were able to mobilise an overwhelming political bias in their favour, whereas the political resources of the latter were for the most part negligible. The promoters were thus able dramatically to change the political agenda by the introduction of a major new initiative. As indicated, however, the mobilisation of bias and the control of the agenda which secured this change are largely seen as operating within Lukes' first dimension of power. This analysis is part of the general interpretation, repeated periodically throughout the study, that Lukes' second dimension tends to collapse into his first and, less commonly, into his third.

For the purposes of the present study, Lukes' second dimension of power is taken to incorporate elitist and neo-elitist approaches. Of these the most applicable to all three case studies are the theories of the so- called growth machine, as expounded by Molotch and his followers. In the case of the

water supply there were constant references, not only to the public health benefits of the proposed new supply, but also to the economic and industrial wealth it would bring. Given the nature of the research plan, however, it is not possible to link the operation of the local growth machine in Birmingham at this time with landed interests, as Molotch does. On the contrary, such evidence as does emerge tends to suggest that industrial interests were the major spokesmen for growth, a hypothesis which is in line with the influence of industrialists in political life discovered in the various studies, summarised in Chapter 1, of Birmingham elites at this time.

As in the other case studies, no evidence is found of the exercise of power in Lukes' third dimension. In other words, it does not seem that, in the case studies of water supply, municipalisation of electricity or housing, there is, in Lukes' terminology, "a latent conflict, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude." This, as explained in Chapter 1, may be because of the nature of the research plan. On the other hand the issues of water supply, and later of housing, raise important questions of health and well-being. In these cases, Lukes' emphasis on real interests, or welfare interests as he later called them, is found to be valuable, and an attempt will be made to incorporate it into the analysis, particularly in the sections relevant to the Birmingham opposition. As Morriss points out, it is not always as difficult as is sometimes claimed

to make plausible if nevertheless contestable assumptions about real interests. On any account of real or welfare interests it is highly implausible to suggest that adequate supplies of clean water are not in the interests of individuals, regardless of whether those same individuals perceive it as being in their interests. There is sometimes a significant distinction between what is in an individual's interests, and what individuals are interested in. Even for the dissentient ratepayers, their welfare interests dictated that such a supply was necessary, even if they themselves had denied it, and even though what they were interested in was low rates.

Throughout this chapter, as throughout the study, other concepts and ideas are utilised to supplement the perspectives of Lukes. One of these, as mentioned above, is Molotch's theory of the growth machine. Another is the important distinction which is drawn between private and public goods and interests. These ideas, in all three of the case studies, are seen as interacting together. Thus, on the analysis of the growth machine theorist Dye, the development of the water supply from the Elan valley was an improvement in the city's infrastructure which was in the real interests of the citizens as a whole. It was what Dye would term a developmental policy which the local growth machine would be inclined to support. The case of the municipalisation of the electricity supply, as will be seen, is slightly more complicated. However, people, at the height of the municipal trading movement, seemed to think that electricity could be more

effectively developed under public rather than under private ownership. The decision to municipalise, therefore, can again be seen as a developmental policy to improve the infrastructure in the real interests of everyone, including the local growth machine. With housing, however, as will be seen, it was thought at the time that only the real interests of private individuals would be substantially advanced by improvements. Housing reform was thus considered (probably wrongly, it is argued later) largely as a redistributive policy which, as Dye suggests, the local growth machine would be likely to edit out of the political agenda, unless, perhaps, it was self financing. In some ways, therefore, growth machine theories appear to fit the facts, and, particularly when tied in with the concept of public and private goods, seem to contribute towards a definition of real interests, at least in the cases here discussed.

The plan and contents of the present chapter may now be briefly summarised. After the introduction there follows an investigation of the opponents of the 1892 Water Bill from outside Birmingham. The Birmingham opponents are then considered together with the issues and themes related to them. During the course of the analysis a number of glosses are suggested on existing historical interpretations, including those on the role of the Conservative party in local elections, on the local government of Victorian London, on the history of Welsh nationalism, on the problem of public health and on the part played by the official and the expert in municipal life. In the

conclusion, the analysis is related to the wider debate on ratepayers' revolts. There follows, to finish this introduction, a brief summary of the wider scholarship on municipal trading and water supply, and a note on the engineering works connected with Birmingham's Welsh water scheme.

Recently, the municipal trading movement in nineteenth century Britain has been described and analysed by Falkus and Kellett.[1] Against that background, the growth and impact of the water industry has been documented and interpreted by Stern and Hassan.[2] As with the supply of electricity considered below, the municipalities were far more successful providers of water than their private enterprise rivals. By 1941, for example, Finer could report that: "Water undertakings are conducted by 838 public authorities, that is to say, single local authorities to the number of 790 and 48 joint bodies. These supply a population of about 27,000,000, which is two thirds of the total population of England and Wales; while private enterprise supplies about 6,000,000 people." [3]

Hassan, alluding to the paucity of modern research on water supply (other than as a source of power), points out that some of the most valuable treatments of the topic date from before the First World War.[4] Perhaps, indeed, this is the justification for his claim that "local case- studies invariably explore questions internal to their topic rather than general themes." [5] Thus, although the present chapter attempts to relate its

findings to the work of other scholars, this is not always possible because that work often does not exist. Hassan's paper itself, for example, relates largely to the issues surrounding municipalisation rather than (as is treated here) the subsequent development of municipalised undertakings.

In this study of political decision-making, no systematic treatment of the engineering works is given, and engineering aspects are only alluded to insofar as they affected the political debate.[6]

2. The history of the Birmingham water supply, and of the Elan valley scheme.

The decision to build the Elan valley waterworks, like all decisions, needs to be set in its historical context. Only thus can the important question, highlighted by Goodin, of the timing of the decision be understood. The present section attempts to do this, and to investigate why a recommendation to go to Wales in 1871 was not acted on until twenty years later.

The first recorded reference to Birmingham's public water supply appears in the Town Book for 1735, where it is recorded that a Mr. Johnson was hired to repair a well at the junction of Dale End and Bull Street.[7] The edition of Hutton's History of

Birmingham published in 1835 mentions "two excellent springs" at Digbeth and Lady Well, although it adds that "the water ... from pumps is hard." [8] In 1808 a company was formed and a bill prepared for Parliament, but in the face of a hostile resolution from a town's meeting in January 1809 the plan came to nothing. [9] In 1811 a further Parliamentary Bill failed, but a Company was eventually floated following an Act of Parliament of 1826. At first, the company held 41 customers and an annual income of £133. After the incorporation of Birmingham in 1838, a report by a government health inspector in 1849 pointed to the pollution of many wells and pumps, the prevalence of private water carts, and the fact that the Company only supplied, intermittently, about a third of the town with about 1 million gallons daily. Only from 1853 did the Company provide a constant supply.

By their Improvement Act of 1851 the Corporation was granted powers to compulsorily purchase the company, but no action was taken and the powers lapsed. From 1st January, 1872, the Company was prevented by Act of Parliament from using the increasingly polluted waters of the river Tame, except in exceptional circumstances. Meanwhile, the company had been gradually expanding its activities, so that by 1870 it was producing over 17 million gallons a day to supply an area of over 54,000 acres.

The Birmingham Corporation Water Act of 1875, passed under the Mayoralty of Joseph Chamberlain, gave renewed powers of compulsory acquisition which were at once invoked, the Corporation purchasing the undertaking for £1.35 million and taking over the company's mortgage debt of £189,000.

Under its first chairman, Alderman Avery, the Corporation's new Water Committee improved and enlarged the supply in a series of developments, including the completion of a new reservoir at Shustoke. The Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act, 1883, stipulated a statutory area of supply of about 83,000 acres, which included a number of areas outside the town boundaries, such as Solihull and Handsworth. The Water Committee, in the years following, continued their deliberations as to what provision should be made for the future.[10]

In 1870 an unsolicited report had been presented to Birmingham council by the engineer Richard Hassard proposing the rivers Teme and Ithon as future sources of water for Birmingham. In 1871, the Public Works Committee commissioned a Report from another engineer, Robert Rawlinson, and this recommended instead the rivers Elan and Claerwen in Wales. At that time, however, such an enormous engineering project was beyond the resources of a private company. If the water supply had continued in private hands, it seems unlikely that a scheme the size of the Elan operation would ever have been initiated, since it can scarcely be claimed that it would have been in the immediate economic

interests of shareholders. The people of Birmingham, however, and, if it existed, the members of Molotch's local growth machine, did have an interest in the provision of an adequate supply of pure water via an appropriate development of the city's infrastructure. This conflict between the private interests of shareholders and the public interests of the citizens and those committed to local growth may in part explain the municipalisation of Birmingham's water supply, and, insofar as the case was typical, the wider phenomenon of municipal socialism in the late nineteenth century. By the time the water supply was municipalised in 1875, however, the Elan valley proposals were no longer on the immediate political agenda, and the Corporation was more concerned with the transfer of ownership and all the administrative difficulties thrown up in its wake. The problem of water shortage also appears not to have been as serious as in the 1890's. In any case, for whatever reasons, the Water Committee took no immediate action on Rawlinson's report, and preferred for the time being to extend the local sources of supply. The outcome of these events, it may be added, is best seen as resulting, not from non- decisions in Lukes' second dimension, from two actual, first dimensional, decisions: to reject Rawlinson's suggestions for the time being; and to develop local sources, rather to go to Wales.

The initial first dimensional decision which led ultimately to the Elan valley was made on 7th October, 1890. On that date, the council sanctioned a request from the Water Committee to

consult James Mansergh, an engineer who had assisted Rawlinson in the preparation of his 1871 report, concerning the future supply of water to the city.

On 7th April, 1891, Alderman Sir Thomas Martineau presented to the council a report from the Water Committee which stated that the existing works would be inadequate to meet maximum demand by 1893, and average demand by 1900. The Committee also corroborated a report from the Department's engineer, John Gray, that maximisation of local supplies would cost £1 million and at best only suffice for twenty years, adding that both Gray and Mansergh were agreed that the best plan for the future was to go to the Elan and Claerwen. This Welsh scheme, they suggested, could be financed within the maximum water rates allowed by Parliament by re-imposing old levels of water rental which had previously been reduced. No special rate in aid, suggested the Committee, would be required. In moving the Report Martineau made a long and important speech. Thus, yet again, a decisive role in the formulation of important decisions in Luke's first dimension was played by a powerful council committee and its influential chairman.

The council meeting of 7th April was adjourned until 21st, when the next decision was taken, this time to authorise the Water Committee to obtain further details and estimates for the

Welsh scheme and to make preparations for the necessary Parliamentary Bill. A total of 51 councillors supported the resolution, with none against and one neutral.

At a council meeting held on 13th October, 1891, Martineau presented detailed financial estimates for the Elan scheme drawn up by Mansergh and reported, on behalf of the Water Committee, that a Bill had been drafted, and that the important task of referencing the land in the water catchment area and along the line of the aqueduct was almost complete. The decision, in Lukes' first dimension, to go to Wales was then endorsed. 56 councillors voted in favour of the scheme, with none against.

The process of first dimensional decision-making then continued. The council approved the draft Bill on November 24th, 1891 by 55 votes to 1, and at a statutory meeting of the ratepayers held in the Town Hall on 5th December, 1891, the Mayor declared a resolution approving the Bill carried by a big majority. When Beriah Shepherd, a local dissident, exercised his legal right to demand a poll, 4,016 ratepayers supported the Bill, and 563 opposed it.[11]

The nature of subsequent decision-making reinforces yet again the need to remember Newton's injunction to see local politics in its national context. Further developments now needed a number of decisions by Parliament to sanction the necessary local bill. This duly received its first reading in the House of Commons on

16th February, 1892. Joseph Chamberlain moved the second reading on March 8th, 1892, after a delay occasioned by the opposition of members from London and elsewhere. After a three hour debate the House decided in favour of the second reading by 244 votes for and 102 votes against. On March 9th the Bill was referred to a Hybrid Committee of nine M.P.'s chaired by Campbell- Bannerman. This Committee sat for eighteen days, starting on 31st March, 1892, and, on 13th May, declared the Bill's preamble proved.

The Bill was reported to the Commons on May 26th, 1892, and it received its third reading, without a division, on 31st May. The first reading in the House of Lords also took place on 31st May, and the second reading on 14th June, after which it spent four days in Committee before passing its third reading on 21st June. On 22nd June the Commons decided to accept the Lords' amendments and on 27th June, the Royal Assent was granted.

The council on July 26th, 1892, delegated all powers conferred upon it by the Act to the Water Committee. At the same meeting it was decided to reject, by 50 votes to 3, a resolution to delay the scheme proposed by Samuel Lloyd, an opponent of the project who had recently been returned by the voters of Market Hall Ward. On July 18th, 1893, Sir Thomas Martineau died, and was shortly afterwards replaced by Alderman Lawley Parker, the Mayor during the passage of the 1892 Act. On the 6th February, 1894, the council rejected by 52 votes to 6 another motion, this time from councillor Stembridge, to delay the scheme.

The council successfully promoted another Bill in Parliament in 1896 authorising the compulsory purchase of land adjacent to the aqueduct for the dumping of spoil, and sanctioning the construction of a railway in connection with the works, from Rubery to the site of the planned reservoir at Frankley. A further Bill was passed in 1902 for various purposes, the most urgent of which was the authority to complete the works after the end of the ten year period following the Royal Assent, a deadline of 27th June, 1902, which had been added to the 1892 Bill by the House of Lords. On July 4th, 1907, the Royal Assent was granted to another Birmingham Corporation Water Bill, the effect of which was to ease the repayment of municipal loans raised to finance the Elan valley scheme. Under the terms of the Birmingham (Water and Gas) Order of 1914, as endorsed by Parliament, the Corporation was empowered to extend its area of supply and, providing the Local Government Board agreed, increase charges and raise new loans in connection with the Elan valley scheme.

Meanwhile, on July 21st, 1904, in a large and prestigious ceremony, King Edward and Queen Alexandra had visited the Elan valley and the King, after knighting the Lord Mayor, Alderman Hallewell Rogers, had opened the sluices between the filter beds and the aqueduct. By 17th September, Frankley Reservoir was full and the new supply to consumers commenced. By March, 1905, 12 million gallons a day was being dispensed and by September, 1905, the whole area of distribution was served by Welsh water.[12]

3. The Political Context.

A problem with the analysis of decisions in Lukes' first dimension of power is that it does not always pinpoint the significance of the general political culture, or of institutions, groups and political actors operating within that culture. In an attempt to fill this gap, a brief summary of the political context in which the decision to construct the Elan valley scheme was taken is given below.

Until his death in July 1893 a major political actor in the promotion of the Elan valley scheme was the Water Committee's chairman, Sir Thomas Martineau, who introduced it to council and gave lectures to the public.[13] Another able propagandist, pamphleteer and lecturer in support of the scheme was Thomas (later Sir Thomas) Barclay.[14]

Local newspapers also played a significant political role sometimes acting, as Molotch suggests, as spokesmen for local growth and development. The Birmingham press unanimously supported the Welsh water scheme, to the satisfaction of the promoters and the complaints of their opponents, with the Post, as usual, being a particularly staunch ally of the Corporation.[15] Despite its support for the scheme, the

Conservative Gazette showed rather more sympathy for the ratepayers who opposed the Elan valley project than did the other Birmingham newspapers, but it became somewhat irritable with the local opponents in the latter stages of the Parliamentary campaign.[16] The Gazette was also not above a little political in-fighting on behalf of the Conservative Party[17] and was placed in a difficult position as the local opposition gained momentum during 1892, since many of the opponents of the measure, like the newspaper itself, were advocates of economy and Toryism.[18] The Mail, as time went on, also became less enthusiastic in its support for the scheme.[19]

The history of the Elan valley undertaking provides a case study in civic pride and the perceived dignity and honour of public service. Even "A Londoner", for example, in a letter to The Times opposing the scheme, paid tribute to "the manner in which the interests of Birmingham are watched over by its far-seeing and enlightened municipality." [20] It was rare indeed that even an opponent of the council scheme saw fit to debunk the city fathers. Instead, dissentients found it expedient to stress their own commitment to local patriotism.[21] Sir Thomas Martineau, in particular, was widely praised, even by his opponents.[22] This theme of pride in the city of Birmingham was taken up by the local press,[23] and was utilised in support of the scheme by James Mansergh, the city's engineer for the Elan project.[24] It was displayed too in the pronouncements of the city fathers, in the mutual admiration and respect which they had

for each other, and in the high attendance at Committee meetings.[25] Martineau linked the provision of pure water to the real interests of all classes of the population: "The question of the increased water supply was a working man's question; it affected their health and happiness." [26] Such municipal pride was endorsed by Barclay.[27] and by the veteran Alderman Avery, whose words might almost have been put into his mouth by Molotch and the theorists of the growth machine: "Birmingham would advance. (Applause.) Nobody need be afraid that it would cease to do so as long as the leaders of the city were bold enough to take opportunity by the hand." [28] For Alderman Clayton, the Mayor of Birmingham until succeeded by Lawley Parker in November, 1891, civic pride was linked to a belief in his own version of municipal socialism: "It was most important that the municipality of a city should undertake the work of supplying the water.[29] Such sentiments were repeated many times over, for example by Alderman Hart and by councillors Granger and Pemberton.[30]

Perhaps the clearest and fullest statement of civic pride was made by Martineau: "He thought that many members of the council, who had spent the greatest part of their public lives in the service of their town, would feel a proud satisfaction in thinking that the matter rested with no board of directors anxious to make a dividend for a set of hungry shareholders, but rested with the representatives of the people, backed with all

the force of a powerful municipality, and with no object to gain, no interest to serve, but the greatest possible good to the population whom they represented. (Loud applause.)"[31]

The phenomenon of civic pride had three main manifestations stemming from the construction of the Elan valley waterworks: the model workman's village at Elan; the official opening of the works by the King in 1904; and the conferring of the freedom of the city upon Lawley Parker in 1905. The model village was created to cater for the direct labour used to build the Welsh dams.[32] It included "dwelling and lodging houses for about 1,000 men ... a Mission and School Room, a Public Hall with a Free Library, a Bath House, an Accidents Hospital and an Infectious Hospital." [33] The main aspects of the opening ceremony for the Elan valley waterworks were summarised by the Corporation's official historian, and both the Water Department and Birmingham Reference Library compiled extensive collections of contemporary newspaper cuttings to mark the city's pride in its achievement on that July day in 1904.[34] But when the junketings were over, there was one last ceremony left to complete. The Lord Mayor, had already paid fulsome tribute to alderman Parker, the Water Committee's chairman, who had laboured for eleven years to secure the scheme's success.[35] In October, 1904, the General Purposes Committee recommended to council that he be granted the freedom of the city,[36] the first time the honour had been conferred upon a serving council member.[37] The

proposal was "hailed ... by citizens generally with the greatest satisfaction,"[38] and the award was conferred in July, 1905, to the widest approbation.[39]

One of the problems of using contemporary documents and newspapers as historical sources is that they do not always highlight very effectively the crucially important aspects of party discipline, and of the decisions taken secretly or semi-secretly in party meetings and caucuses. This is particularly true perhaps of the present, which emphasises decision-making rather than the formal machinery of party organisation. With respect to the Elan valley scheme, however, this is less important than it might otherwise be, since, in the words of Martineau, "we had the good fortune of having the support of all parties." [40] Thus, in December, 1891, "Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Satchell Hopkins and Alderman Cook, representing the three political parties of the town, ... joined in a solicitation to the Ratepayers to vote for the Bill." [41] Chamberlain, for the Liberal Unionists, had sent a letter to Martineau concluding with the words "I earnestly recommend the citizens to vote for the Bill", and Satchell Hopkins for the Conservatives and Alderman Cook and Father Greaney for the Liberals wrote in similar vein. [42]

For the Post it was "pleasing" in particular "to find the Conservative Party - which on every former occasion has allied itself with the minority - joining in approval of the forward

policy which has made the municipal reputation of Birmingham what it is." [43] Conservative acquiescence to the water scheme was, however, only a part of the wider relationships between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives in Birmingham at this time, relationships which, although often awkward, were to become more and more intimate until eventually, after the First World War, the two parties formally merged. In an embarrassing incident in 1891, for example, both sides nominated opposing candidates in a municipal bye- election. [44]

In municipal affairs, the Conservative Party was very loosely organised. In mid- December, 1891, for example, the Mail, under the heading "Proposed Tory Municipal Party" reported a speech by the chairman, J. Satchell Hopkins, to the Grand Council of the Birmingham Conservative Association. The Conservatives, he said, who had no seats on the council in 1878, now held 19, and "he hoped these 19 gentlemen would organise themselves as a political party in the council, so that they might vote together and work together." The theme was taken up by other speakers, one of whom stated that he was not sure who the Conservative leader in the council was, and the image of party unity can, indeed, hardly have been enhanced by the lone opposition to the Elan valley proposals waged in the council chamber by the Conservative councillor Jacobs (who also spoke at the meeting) seemingly in complete disregard of any concept of party discipline or joint party action whatever. [45]

Among modern scholars, such a situation would appear to strengthen Green's criticism of Briggs' "organisational view of the growth of Conservatism" in Birmingham at this time[46] and to qualify Briggs' assertion that "Conservative organisation continued to improve." [47] Alcraft's explanation for the rise of the Ratepayers' Union is that "by the early '90's ... Chamberlainite Progressivism ... produced new forms of opposition activity, made necessary by the failure of either Conservatives or Gladstonians to effectively oppose the prevailing creed." [48] The all-party support for the Elan valley project would appear to endorse this view, but the stand made by the Conservative Jacobs against the Water Bill shows that, with the absence of party discipline among Conservative councillors, an economist could still pursue a municipal career as a member of the Conservative Party. Young's study of Conservative intervention in local elections in London "challenges the frequently propagated claim that the Conservative party's record in the history of local elections is one of reluctant intervention." [49] Young adds, however, that "there existed striking contrasts between towns and even counties." [50] In Birmingham's case, there would appear to be little evidence of that "rise of party" postulated in the title of Young's book when Conservative councillors, after election, settled down to their municipal duties. This was despite the fact that, with 19 council seats in 1891, the Conservatives clearly held the balance of power between the Liberal Unionists with 29 seats and the Gladstonian Liberals with 24. [51]

For their part, the Liberal Unionists were clearly being drawn more closely to the Conservative party by their national alliance with them.[52] On the other hand, the Mail was able to claim, in February 1892, that the fact that Joseph Chamberlain had voted against the Conservatives on the issue of Welsh disestablishment demonstrated that he was not "tied to the wheels of the Tory chariot." [53]

Around the time of the Parliamentary campaign to secure the passing of the 1892 Birmingham Water Bill, there was a national swing of opinion by the electorate towards the Liberal Party, which was eventually to culminate in Gladstone's General Election victory in the summer of 1892 and a Liberal administration from 1892 to 1895. One indication of the voters' mood was the London County Council election of March, 1892.[54] The high hopes of the Liberal Party and their Irish allies for the expected General Election, and their dislike of Joseph Chamberlain and any Bill sponsored by him, appear to have spilled over into the debates and divisions in the Commons on the 1892 Water Bill.[55] Before the second reading, the Irish members were clearly expected to oppose a measure for which Chamberlain was seen to be responsible.[56] In addition, many Liberals appear to have voted in sympathy with the opposition to the Bill from the Liberal strongholds of Wales and, to a lesser extent, London.[57] A similar situation, although with some cross-voting, occurred at the second reading.[58]

On the Select Committee itself, however, party political rivalry played little part, and the strength and force of the Corporation's case carried the day irrespective of party affiliations. As the Mail recorded, "the ... Committee ... consists of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman (Chairman), Mr. Walter James, Mr. Philip Stanhope and Mr. Causton (Gladstonian Liberals), Mr. Powell Williams (Liberal Unionist), and Sir Stafford Northcote, Sir William Houldsworth, Mr. Llewellyn and Mr. Gedge (Conservatives)."[59] This Committee, chaired by a Liberal, was to support the Birmingham Corporation in all its major contentions. And yet, as the Gazette affirmed, "it cannot be said to have had a great partiality for the Birmingham Corporation. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman had only a short time ago led a determined attack upon the great small arms trade brought into the city by the exertions of Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Collings, and the other local members."[60]

The greatest political threat to the passage of the Birmingham Water Bill, however, was posed by the impending and widely-expected dissolution of Parliament prior to the holding of a General Election. In early June, 1892, after the Bill's first reading in the Lords, the Post's London correspondent wrote that "it seems impossible to hope ... if any opposition is persevered with, that the further stages ... can be accomplished within the life of the present Parliament."[61] Already, in mid-May, 1892, the Gazette had asserted that "a dissolution may take

place almost any day, and as the law stands that would compel the Corporation to go over again the whole of the ground already covered at enormous expense in the promotion of this Bill."[62] The Gazette later made a specific appeal to the local opponents of the Elan scheme: "Much will depend on the action of the Birmingham dissentients as to how long the House of Lords Committee may be engaged. ... Very grave reasons must ... be advanced if the local opposition should endeavour to force the Corporation to commence again de novo."[63]

Given the influence of Chamberlain and the Liberal Unionist Party on the Conservative members of the Government, it is an interesting speculation as to whether the issue of the Birmingham Water Bill played a part in determining the date of Parliament's dissolution. Certainly, the Government appears to have done all in its power to expedite the passage of the Bill in its latter stages.[64] In the event, the Bill received the Royal Assent on the 27th June, 1892 and the dissolution was fixed for the 28th.[65]

4. The Opposition to the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill From Outside Birmingham.

4.1 Introduction.

In this study of the decisions relevant to the Welsh water scheme, the main emphasis is on the Birmingham opposition to the 1892 Birmingham Corporation Water Bill, and on the issues and themes related to it. During the Parliamentary campaign, however, an important role was played by opponents from outside the city. In the mobilisation of their political bias to overcome this opposition and to achieve the desired decisional outcomes the promoters found it necessary to distinguish between the majority of opponents, who could be compensated by money, water or other recompense, and a minority whose success, like that of the Birmingham opponents, would have led to the delay or abandonment of the scheme. An example of the first type of opposition was that of landed interests, whereas examples of the second were the opposition of the London County Council and of interests in South Wales. The main strategy of the Corporation in dealing with the first type of opposition was to accommodate it by prudent generosity, despite the "fancy price" that sometimes had to be paid.[66] Thus, even opponents were forced to confess that "the greatest possible fairness and liberality" was exhibited by the promoters, a policy which was expensive, but, as the Post and the Mail pointed out, politically expedient.[67] In Bachrach and Baratz's terms, therefore, this type of opposition was dealt with, not by the political mobilisation of bias, but by the negotiation of economic deals. The second type of opposition, which hit at the very basis of the scheme, was defused by rational explanation where possible, and, if this failed, countered by a polite but firm political resolve.

As will be seen in the analysis of the mobilisation of bias against the Birmingham opponents, the promoters had considerable political resources to deploy against the intransigent, including, in Joseph Chamberlain, a Cabinet Minister of considerable ability and influence. In contrast, many of the opponents, as will be seen, were split among themselves or made mutually exclusive demands. Throughout this section on the opposition from outside Birmingham the attempt to analyse decisions in terms of Lukes' definitional categories is, for the reasons stated above and developed below, somewhat complicated.

The strenuous opposition to the Corporation's decision to promote the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill does not appear to have been widely anticipated.[68] Hostility tapered off, however, towards the end of the Parliamentary campaign so that by the time the Bill reached the House of Lords only ten opposing petitions remained.[69] Already, in March, 1892, however, the Mail was anticipating "a long and keen fight"[70] and by June, 1892, the Post was describing the opposition as "persistent, prolonged and bitter."[71] According to Sir Thomas Martineau "there were petitions from no fewer than thirty- five public or private bodies" in opposition to the Bill.[72] As will be seen, many of these were settled with privately, and some opposition, such as that from the Kings Norton Poor Law Guardians and the Northfield Highway Board was fairly minor.[73]

Serious opposition to the decision to proceed with the Elan valley proposals was first manifested in the House of Commons at the time of the Water Bill's second reading on March 8th, 1892. It occurred in Lukes' first, or decision-making, dimension of power, and manifested itself in attempts to defeat, alter or influence the proposed legislation. In response to this opposition, the promoters agreed to refer the Bill to a Hybrid Committee with greater powers to enquire and collect evidence.[74] In other words, rather than attempting to alter the rules of the game in their own favour, the Corporation made a procedural concession in order to gain support and sympathy for their case. They may perhaps have considered that the propaganda value of appearing reasonable and generous outweighed the extra trouble and expense of a more protracted investigation. At all events, it seems that, for their own advantage, they neatly stood the tactic described by Parry and Morriss on its head.

Some indication of the level of opposition to the Water Bill was the sum of "£673-6-0 ... produced from the sale of Minutes of Evidence to opponents and others" by the end of October, 1892,[75] to which, later, "the Town Clerk reported that he had received a further £60-14-0." [76] Because of the contentious nature of the Water Bill, around March 1892 "it was found necessary ...to take an office in London ... at 9, Bridge Street, Westminster, where the Town Clerk and his assistants were in daily attendance".[77]

4.2 The London Opponents.

The opposition of the London County Council, and of various interests in Wales, to the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill of 1892 clearly demonstrates that the modern concern over the acquisition of supplies of pure water can be dated back at least to the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the London and Welsh County Councils wished to lay claim to the headwaters of the Elan and Claerwen for possible schemes of their own. They thus had fundamental, if mutually exclusive, objections to the Birmingham Bill which could not be placated by monetary payments.[78] Therefore, when they could not be talked out of their hostility, they were firmly opposed, amid increasing rancour between the two sides. The intervention of opponents from London and elsewhere, therefore, was marked by a situation of conflict in what was perceived to be a zero sum game where one side could only win at the expense of the other. The situation would thus seem to be ideal for analysis in terms of Lukes' first dimension, in which the role of conflict in power struggles is stressed. The problem, as explained above, arises from Dahl's definition of power (criticised by Lukes, but incorporated into his first dimension) whereby, in this situation of conflict, one actor prevails over another to do something that he would not otherwise have done. In this case, however, if the London opponents, and others in South Wales, were prevailed upon to do anything, it was to look elsewhere than the Elan valley for a supply of water, something which, for the reasons explained

above, they would probably not have done anyway. The case thus provides another example where Lukes' definition of power is adequate but cannot be simply applied. It could even be argued, indeed, that the application is too complicated to be worth the effort.

In London, it was the County Council which attempted to influence the first dimensional decision-making surrounding Birmingham's Welsh water scheme. The L.C.C. wished to delay any decision to appropriate the Elan valley pending the report of a proposed Royal Commission on the water supply of the metropolis. A remark made by Sir Thomas Martineau that "London would be a rival sooner or later", when brought to the attention of London M.P.'s and the L.C.C., caused them to fear that Birmingham was attempting to steal a march on them.[79] At first, the promoters attempted to appease the L.C.C. by a display of reasonableness. They thus decided to delay the second reading of the Bill and to attend a conference between the two sides. At this conference, Chamberlain and Martineau claimed that Birmingham's case was urgent, and that she was much more constricted in her choice of sites than London for a supply by gravity because of her height above sea level. Although temporarily placated, the Londoners soon reverted to their original attitude and the L.C.C. maintained a badly conducted but expensive opposition.[80]

The main spokesman for the metropolis was Sir John Lubbock, the L.C.C.'s chairman, who wrote an article on the subject in Nineteenth Century.^[81] He was supported by his vice-chairman, John Hutton, who gave evidence against the Bill in the Lords Committee.^[82] The L.C.C., however, found it difficult, in Schattschneider's phrase, to mobilise its political bias effectively since at that time the water supply of the metropolis was in the hands of private companies.^[83] It still, however, attacked the Elan scheme in Committee, arguing that "the future needs of Birmingham ... pale in importance before the future possible needs of London."^[84]

In Birmingham, the metropolitan opposition to the decision to proceed with the Elan valley scheme was not anticipated.^[85] When it materialised, it caused resentment, with Martineau in particular expressing regret at the unnecessary "collision."^[86] For Mansergh, it was "a monstrous proposition" that Birmingham "should be stopped or delayed by ... London"^[87] and other witnesses on behalf of Birmingham, such as the hydraulic engineer, Thomas Hawkesley, agreed with him.^[88] It was also claimed by Birmingham's counsel that the Royal Commission investigating the water supply of London was "not as to the best sources of supply" but "as to the sufficiency of the existing sources" and was therefore "without any power of suggestion as to where (London) should go."^[89]

Martineau vigorously denied that "competition with London led to the production of our scheme at a time earlier by a single day than was necessary for the wants of Birmingham itself." [90] But Londoners could have been forgiven for assuming that Birmingham was out to dish them. In December 1891 Martineau repeated that "if the scheme were rejected the supply would be absorbed by other people" and that "London was already looking after it." [91] In Birmingham the London opposition, as the Mail argued, probably made the Elan valley seem more attractive to the citizens and the decision to seize the water catchment area more acceptable. [92] The dissentient ratepayer Beriah Shepherd and, two years later, councillor Stembridge, were certainly convinced that, in Birmingham, the fear of being pre-empted by London was used by the promoters as a highly effective debating point. [93]

The L.C.C.'s decision, in Lukes' first dimension, to oppose the Elan scheme must be placed in the context of the wider issue of the supply of water to the metropolis. [94] In the Parliamentary Session of 1890-1 a Select Committee of the House of Commons considered a London Water Commission Bill. One of its conclusions was that Parliament should consider the possible requirements of London before handing over any remaining sources to others. [95] In October 1891 the Post quoted from "a Report of the Water Committee of the London County Council, drafted by Sir Thomas Farrer." This referred to the conclusion of the Parliamentary Committee quoted above, and commented that the "recommendation with respect to the future action of Parliament

clearly points to the case of Birmingham." [96] It was against this background that, in March 1892, the Government announced to the House of Commons the decision on the membership (which included James Mansergh) of "the Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Water Supply." [97] Meanwhile, Lubbock convened a conference of London interests which concluded that Birmingham should for the time being stay its hand, despite the fact that Martineau had already refused to do so. Soon a committee had been set up to confer with Birmingham. [98] And so the lengthy saga continued. [99] Eventually, the Royal Commission reported that London could meet its immediate requirements from local sources, which it proceeded to do. [100]

The conclusion on the London opponents is that, on this issue at least, they lacked, in Bachrach and Baratz's terminology, decisive political resources, and mobilised those that they did possess with indifferent skill. In contrast, the Birmingham Corporation was able, in this particular case, to mobilise a decisive political bias against the L.C.C. and thus to control the political agenda and the decision-making process. "While London," wrote Barclay, "burdened with its unwieldy parochial government, is endeavouring to create a representative authority, which shall be empowered to buy up the property of the eight companies which now provide its inhabitants with water, ... the citizens of Birmingham ... have their water supply in their own hands, unhindered by troublesome prescriptive rights." [101] This situation, indeed, remained largely unaltered until the

creation of the Metropolitan Water Board in 1903.[102] Faced with such formidable obstacles, the L.C.C. faltered and, in Lukes' terms, proved incapable of forestalling the Corporation's first dimensional decision to proceed with the Welsh water project. They presented no evidence to the Commons Select Committee, relying solely on cross-examination and an address by their counsel.[103] "London", reflected Martineau when it was all over, "could not look back at their campaign with satisfaction. They had spent a lot of money ... and yet were in much the same position." [104]

The difficulties faced by London interests were well illustrated by a letter printed in the Post in April, 1891, from the London firm of engineers, Hassard and Tyrrell. This asserted that the "Elan and Claerwen ... are included as sources in our project for supplying London with pure water from mid-Wales" and suggested that, in view of this, Birmingham should take instead the waters of the Teme and Ithon, as suggested by Hassard himself to the Corporation in 1870.[105] Nothing could have been better calculated to endear opinion in Birmingham to the decision to proceed with the Elan scheme, and to harden the attitudes of the citizenry against attempts from the metropolis to influence the Corporation's political agenda. Here, clearly, was a firm of engineers who, for their own business ends, were attempting to saddle the Midland city with an inferior water catchment area! The Water Committee, said Martineau, "told Messrs. Hassard and Tyrrell that if they were so fond of the Teme and Ithon they

could take them for London." He was supported, among others, by Lawley Parker and the Lord Mayor, Alderman Clayton.[106] Clearly, the London engineers had unwittingly succeeded in increasing fears in Birmingham as to the future water supply, and in strengthening support for the city's decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme.

4.3 The Welsh Opposition.

The opposition of Welsh interests to the Corporation's decision to promote the Elan valley scheme was of three main interconnected types. Firstly there was antagonism which sprang from a general feeling of Welsh nationalism. Secondly, and closely linked to this, was the hostility of interests in South Wales to the appropriation of a water catchment area which they themselves might one day wish to acquire. And thirdly there were the various local interests which were about to be infringed by the construction of the works, and which had to receive compensation. In general, the policy of the Water Committee was to conciliate the third type of opposition by adequate monetary payments or other concessions, and to oppose the first and second types, particularly the second which, if successful, would reverse the decision to proceed with the Elan operation.

As in the case of the London opponents, it is quite complicated to analyse the opposition ^{from} Wales in terms of Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories. The emphasis placed by Dahl on conflict during the decision-making process (which is criticised by Lukes but incorporated nevertheless into his first dimensional definitional categories) is certainly applicable to the opposition from Welsh nationalist M.P.'s. As with the L.C.C., Birmingham Corporation could be described as prevailing over them in a situation of conflict. For the L.C.C., if Birmingham succeeded in its Elan valley scheme, then it could not mount its own scheme in that particular watershed. In the case of the Welsh nationalists, if Birmingham succeeded then the interests which they claimed to represent would have been overridden. It is true that those interests were characterised by little more than an intangible opposition to outside developers. But, on the other hand, the antagonism expressed towards the Corporation was, as will be seen, very real. With regard to local interests in the Elan valley, the majority seemed, if anything, to welcome the arrival of the Corporation with its offers (considered generous by impartial observers such as Campbell-Bannerman) to purchase marginal agricultural land on infertile uplands. For many local landowners, the Elan valley scheme, far from being perceived as an unwelcome threat, was seen as involving welcome offers.

The specifically nationalist opposition to the Water Bill was for the most part confined to the proceedings on the floor of the House of Commons and one of its main instigators was Sir Thomas Ellis, the M.P. for Merioneth.[107] On March 8th, 1892, "on the motion for the second reading ... Mr. Thomas Ellis moved that the Bill be read a second time this day six months"[108] a delaying tactic which was firmly opposed by the Birmingham members, and which failed. Ellis had more success, however, in moving reference of the Bill to a Hybrid Committee of nine members. This proposal, as explained above, was accepted by Chamberlain on behalf of the Birmingham M.P.'s. It was a procedural concession which was apparently aimed at winning support by appearing reasonable. As explained above, it was thus the opposite of the normal tactic, described by Parry and Morriss, of manipulating procedures to one's own advantage.[109] Another proposal, that the Committee's quorum should be five, was also accepted by the promoters, presumably for similar reasons.[110] A subsequent attempt, though, by Ellis's associate, David Thomas, to add another two Welshmen to the Hybrid Committee was unsuccessful. Clearly, the Corporation only wanted to appear reasonable if, in their judgment, the final decision was not altered, and putting large numbers of Welsh M.P.'s onto the Hybrid Committee might, in their view, have had that effect.[111]

After the Bill had returned from Committee for its Report Stage, the nationalist opposition continued. A motion for example was agreed to by Chamberlain banning use by the Corporation of barbed wire for fencing, which, he remarked, "there had never been any intention to use," and Lloyd George unsuccessfully attempted to secure a decision to subject common lands incorporated into the scheme to "a body of trustees" dominated by Welsh interests, an attempt to influence the decision-making procedures which again the Corporation successfully opposed.[112]

To the Spectator, commenting on the debate on the Bill's second reading, it was clear "that the Home Rule feeling is almost extending to the wish to exclude the inhabitants of a different Home Rule district from the advantages of the water which springs up in your own district." [113] Certainly, according to the Mail's report, Ellis, at the second reading, spoke "in a spirit of great hostility to the measure." [114] And yet the nationalist opposition was frequently somewhat unspecific and vague. Ellis himself, for example, told the Commons Committee that "water supply is ... a national question," and that "the ... appropriating ... (of) ... gathering grounds ... should be an Imperial matter." [115] To observers in Birmingham it all seemed very puzzling. The opposition of "the Welshmen", commented the Mail, "was more sentimental than real," [116] and Chamberlain ridiculed the cry of "Welsh water for the Welsh." [117] Jesse Collings, however, was most alarmed,

particularly at Welsh amendments which might threaten Birmingham's powers to keep its water pure.[118] But Welsh nationalist sentiment had no discernible alternative objective in its opposition. Its aim was to prevent the water scheme from proceeding even though many local landowning interests (themselves Welsh) appeared to welcome it. In its Parliamentary expression, it was also closely linked to a Liberal Party still in opposition. It thus lacked both the political will and the political resources to launch a sustained and effective mobilisation against the 1892 Bill, and it had no effect on the decisional outcomes.

A similar conclusion may be drawn on the related opposition from South Wales. By early March, 1891, reported the Press Association, "the Welsh members" had decided "to protest against English towns taking possession of Welsh sources of water supply" which might one day be needed by South Wales.[119] In the Commons, the main spokesman for such interests was Sir Henry Hussey Vivian, the M.P. for Swansea, who, at the second reading, "protested against the Principality being regarded as a carcase, to be divided according to the wishes and the wants of Birmingham and London." [120] Sir Henry also spoke against the Bill in Committee and, at the third reading, unsuccessfully attempted to move its rejection.[121]

By the time the Bill appeared before the Lord's Committee the opponents from South Wales had been joined by the County Councils of Monmouth and Glamorgan."^[122] Sir Henry Hussey Vivian now gave evidence for the Glamorgan County Council in his capacity as its chairman, and accused the promoters of "forestalling."^[123] On the next day "the case of the Glamorganshire County Council was continued, and several witnesses gave evidence for them". The Welsh opponents, however, were split among themselves, and Lord Ormanthwaite, the chairman of the Radnorshire County Council, said he was as opposed to the claims of Glamorganshire as he was to Birmingham's.^[124]

Both the Welsh nationalist opposition to the Elan scheme and the antagonism from South Wales left people from Birmingham and their supporters somewhat baffled. Martineau and Mansergh had a particularly low opinion of the case of Glamorgan which, it was claimed, had enough water for 70 years at least.^[125] "If Wales", argued the Mail, "has not more water than it knows what to do with, where is surplus water to be found?" And, in any case, the Glamorganshire County Council "had no duty in connection with the supply of water."^[126] In any event, the decision-making process was not affected by such antagonism.

The third type of opposition from Wales came from local interests in the vicinity of the proposed dams. It was of four main types. Firstly, there was the opposition of the Radnorshire

County Council. Secondly, there was the opposition which stemmed from the threat posed by the Bill to various common rights. Thirdly, there was opposition from various landed interests, both owners and tenants. In this category, the opposition of the largest landowner, Lewis Lloyd, and of the Prickard family was particularly significant. And, fourthly, there was the opposition from the Builth Lead Mining Company which operated a small local lead mine. Unlike the hostility from London, the Welsh nationalists and South Wales, which was to the strategic principle of the scheme, most of this opposition was over the tactical details of compensation. Accordingly, therefore, the Birmingham promoters of the Bill were usually able to conciliate it by judicious generosity. In such cases, the process of tactical bargaining consisted in the interplay between the offer of voluntary purchase and the background threat of compulsory purchase.

Radnorshire County Council's main witness was its own chairman, and the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Lord Ormanthwaite, who made two main complaints. He did not wish to alter the Corporation's decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme, but he wanted a few supplementary decisions to safeguard the interests of his county. Firstly he feared for law and order with the arrival of an estimated 2,000 navvies, a development which he argued would necessitate a new police station and various other forms of expenditure for which he demanded recompense.[127] His second and associated demand, which was

answered point by point by Birmingham's counsel, was that "no expense should be thrown on the Radnorshire County Council owing to the action of the Corporation of Birmingham." [128] However, the council's Parliamentary opposition to Birmingham cost it an estimated £350 in legal fees, and this, it was claimed, was caused by the intransigence of the promoters. [129] Subsequently, the County Licensing Committee decided to endorse the opening of a public house at Rhayader in the teeth of opposition from the Water Committee in Birmingham which was worried about drunkenness among its work-force. In Birmingham this was construed as an act of pique. This judgment, perhaps, might not be considered unreasonable, given that there were no substantive differences at issue. Radnorshire County Council had sought guarantees that it would have to bear no additional expenses because of the scheme, and Birmingham had agreed to this. Indeed, Radnorshire C.C. did incur legal costs in fighting a campaign, but this campaign might, perhaps, be construed as being ill-advised and superfluous. On the other hand, this construction itself must be based upon the assumption that Radnorshire C.C. were mistaken in their belief that the Corporation was intransigent in the period before the Parliamentary enquiry, and that without their legal intervention it would have remained so. [130]

According to the Parliamentary Notice for the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill, it was intended to alter or abolish, with compensation, all common rights in the Elan valley which might hamper the scheme. [131] In doing this, the Corporation was

generous, but firm in its resolve to preserve the purity of its water supply. As will be seen, its main strategy was to attempt to actually purchase the land in the water catchment area. Counsel for local owners and occupiers claimed that this was an enclosure act which, under the 1876 Commons Preservation Act, needed thorough local investigation, but Martineau denied this claiming it was "a purchasing Act." He was adamant, however, that, in the interests of water purity, Birmingham must own the land in the valley, since legal remedies against abuse of common rights would be too slow. Besides, he added, there were only 180 people in the whole area. Martineau was particularly worried about the threat to water purity posed by sheep washing, which, by Section 48 of the Act, was prohibited,[132] with the Corporation agreeing to provide alternative facilities nearby.[133] A separate issue was the right to cut peat on common land (the right of turbary), which it was decided to grant, subject to bye-laws, despite the fact that coal was by now in general use instead.[134] These bye-laws formed a final point of difference, since local interests wanted a say in their formulation.[135] In the event, the Corporation was granted the power to make bye-laws, subject to the approval of the county councils of the neighbourhood and of the Board of Agriculture, to prevent pollution of the river from the use of the land by the commoners. As seen above, it seems to have been a consistent aim of the Corporation to avoid a decisive Welsh intervention in decisions which affected water purity, and here, as with the membership of the Hybrid Committee, Welsh involvement was

limited.[136]

Martineau subsequently admitted that the council's claim to become a very large landowner by the power of compulsory purchase had been a difficult one to secure in the Hybrid Committee. In the end a compromise was decided upon whereby tenants of land which was not required for the purpose of the works were offered leases for twenty- one years on the same terms as they had previously enjoyed. In addition, it was decided that the council should grant to every freeholder from whom they had purchased a 999 year lease of the land not actually required for the works at a rent equal to 3 per cent upon the price paid for the land, 3 per cent being the rate at which the purchase money would be borrowed by the Corporation. In return, the Corporation was protected by restrictive covenants with respect to pollution. In view of the complicated nature of the compulsory purchases, seven years were allowed for their completion.[137]

By far the most important local landowner in that portion of the valley which the council needed to purchase was Robert Lewis Lloyd.[138] Lewis Lloyd was an urbane and courteous British gentleman, apparently untouched by the nationalist sentiment manifested by various Welsh members at the Water Bill's second reading.[139] Like other landowners, the Lewis Lloyds, possibly anticipating a profitable buy- out, had been co- operating with the Corporation, and had maintained a rain gauge in the valley since 1870.[140]

The matter of the sale of the Lloyd estate, however, had to be handled with delicacy. In June, 1891, the Parliamentary Sub-Committee of the Water Committee resolved "that the Chairman be requested to put himself into communication with Mr. Lloyd with the view of making a conditional arrangement for the purchase of the Estate, at Wales." [141] Needless to say there was the expected posturing in order to take up an advantageous bargaining position, with Lloyd's solicitor remarking in early 1892 that his client had "the strongest objections" to selling his estate. [142] Such pretended misgivings were given credibility by Martineau's admission that Lloyd's ancestral home at Nantgwilt was about to be "submerged." [143] Nevertheless, on 6th April, 1892, Lloyd's counsel announced to the Commons Committee that a sale had been agreed, and that at no stage had there been any "very important opposition." [144] The main opposition, indeed, came from the Birmingham dissentients, with councillor Jacobs claiming, without revealing his source, that £150,000 had been paid for an estate worth only £40,000. This allegation he subsequently repeated, to the embarrassment of the Water Committee which had agreed with Lloyd that the price should remain secret. [145] The problem, however, with open government and full disclosure was well put by Martineau: "The opposition of the landlords was so important, and especially the opposition of Mr. Lewis Lloyd, that it would have been impossible to get the Bill through Parliament" unless the Water Committee had been given authority to make arrangements with opposing proprietors. [146] In the case of the

Lewis Lloyds, negotiations of a voluntary sale were concluded successfully, negotiations which, presumably, the water committee wished to remain secret to prevent other landowners from acquiring a yard- stick by which to assess any offers made to them.

To implement the Elan valley scheme, the Water Committee found it necessary to acquire part of the Dderw Estate owned by the Prickard family. This land was more peripheral to the water catchment area than that of Lewis Lloyd, but the acquisition was strongly contested, so that the purchase was the only one that went to arbitration.[147] All the other landowners had settled by June 1892, but the Prickards held out until 1896 when there was a court case lasting six days the verbatim report of which fills 400 printed folio pages. In his official history, Vince clearly thought that the Corporation had been forced to pay over the odds. In the latter stages of the dispute, indeed, the main motive for the Prickard's intransigence may have been to get a better price rather than to retain the land. In this, the last of the land purchases, however, being over- charged was probably something which the Corporation was prepared to tolerate as a way of clearing the issue. In the early deals, the negotiation of a high price with one landowner might have set a benchmark for other claimants, unless, as in the case of the Lewis Lloyd estate, the terms of the deal were kept confidential. Thus, if the Corporation was now paying over the odds (however defined) it may have been precisely because the Prickards had held out longer

than others and gained therefore a strategic advantage. From their viewpoint, however, this was a somewhat risky strategy, because any increased price from the arbitration process might have been more than offset by greater legal costs. This still remains a familiar dilemma in modern cases involving compulsory purchase.[148]

During the Parliamentary campaign, the Corporation bought up the mining rights of Edward Wood, who had been working a lead mine in the area "on a very small scale." [149] The Corporation's main dealings over the issue of mining operations, however, were with the Builth Lead Mining Company. This, too, however, consisted only of "a few gentlemen who ... are all personal friends of one another." Their mine, according to Mansergh, was "now turning out but very little ore" and was likely to die as part of "a ruined industry." [150] By early May, 1902, a settlement had been agreed whereby the Corporation paid £8,000 for the company's mineral rights. [151] The Corporation, however, was prepared to see a continuation of lead mining by the company as long as suitable bye-laws governing the purity of the water were complied with, and an agreement was subsequently drawn up. [152] In this case, too, given the difficulties faced by the lead mining industry in Wales, the Corporation's compensation terms may well have been gratefully accepted.

4.4 The Commons Preservation Society.

The intervention of the Commons Preservation Society at the Committee Stage of the 1892 Birmingham Corporation Water Bill was comparatively friendly and innocuous, and was met by the Corporation, as a progressive and probably sympathetic local authority, with a conciliatory response. It provides an early case study of an environmental pressure group in action, but at no stage did it threaten the success of the Bill. It is also another case of decision-making in Lukes' first dimension where, if there was any conflict, it was decidedly muted.

Unlike the commoners in the valley, the main interest of the Society was in attempting to secure rights of access for the general public to the land about to be acquired by the Corporation. This objective the Corporation was prepared to accept, provided that the purity of the water could be secured. In the House of Commons, the Privy Counsellor Shaw-Lefevre spoke on behalf of the Society. On his motion, of which, in a spirit of seeming friendship rather than of conflict, he gave advance notice to the promoters, the Hybrid Committee was instructed to report on public access. The Corporation, for their part, decided to accept this proposal as "comparatively harmless" rather than oppose it. Once again muted conflict had been resolved by gentlemanly agreement. The Corporation might have been able to exercise its overwhelming bargaining power

differently, but the "economy of power" entailed that the Corporation conserved its power resources for significant battles rather than squandering them in minor skirmishes.[153]

Later the Commons Preservation Society petitioned against the Bill, but seemed happy with Martineau's assertion that the promoters only wanted to take powers to exclude people "so that we may regulate them." [154] By early April, 1902, an agreement had been reached whereby public access was granted subject to appropriate bye-laws. This, however, as Campbell-Bannerman pointed out, was "not on behalf of the Commoners, but the Commons Preservation Society," and the locals were left to argue other rights of common for themselves.[155]

4.5 Opponents Down the River.

The Birmingham Corporation Water Bill of 1892 excited a lively opposition from fishing interests on the River Wye and from the city of Hereford, much of which centred on the amount of compensation water to be sent downstream from the Elan reservoirs. It cannot be said if at any stage such opponents wished to prevent the scheme, but if they did they seemed to realise that the fight was hopeless, and were consequently content with appropriate compensation. From their viewpoint, and in accordance with the law of anticipated reactions, there was no

point in fighting battles which from the outset they had no real prospect of winning. From the viewpoint of the Corporation, it too realised that this was the case and consequently adopted a conciliatory attitude, which it could afford to do.

In the area of the Elan valley, fishing was one of the common rights claimed by the locals.[156] Ultimately therefore these fishing rights, like the rights of turbary mentioned above, were allowed, subject to bye-laws, by Section 54 of the Act.[157] "The Corporation is also bound," added Vince, "to provide a rent-free house by the great dam for a water bailiff." [158]

Greater opposition to the Corporation's decision to proceed with the Elan scheme, however, came not from anglers in the valley, but from those further downstream. There was, for example, a petition against the Bill from "the owners, lessees and occupiers of fisheries etc., on the River Wye." [159] The Wye Board of Conservators was also concerned and organised a joint conference with Hereford County Council.[160] Soon there was also a hostile "report of the Board of Trade ... laid on the table of the House of Commons." [161]

For Birmingham Mansergh argued that all that was involved was "some quite problematical and fanciful injury to the sport of a few rod fishers", and rich salmon fishers at that.[162] Martineau, however, was more conciliatory, and agreed to consider

"to provide equivalent spawning grounds" for those taken away.[163] Eventually, the Conservators agreed to accept "mere money compensation" of £7,500 for the improvement of the river.[164] The fishery owners, however, continued with their case and called witnesses who claimed that rod fishing would be badly damaged by the Bill.[165] They were successfully conciliated, however, and the Board of Trade's objections were dealt with by a number of amendments to the Bill.[166]

The Wye Conservators, on 13th June, 1892, petitioned the House of Lords, but only to "be heard against any alteration" to a Bill with which they were by that time satisfied.[167] Meanwhile, the withdrawal of the petition from the Wye Conservators to the Commons Select Committee had "also caused the opposition of the Duke of Beaufort and other petitioners to be similarly withdrawn." [168] A major aspect of the final settlement of the fisheries question, however, was the decision on the amount of compensation water to be released into the Wye, and this is separately dealt with below.

Not all opposition down the river came from fishery interests. Other opponents were Hereford City Council and Hereford's M.P., Sir Joseph Bailey. Bailey, indeed, made common cause with the Welsh nationalists in a bid to get the measure delayed.[169] Another friend of Hereford, Sir Henry James, caused some consternation to the promoters with a procedural attempt to secure to the inhabitants of the city rights "to the

same extent and in like manner as if the measure were not passed, or a full equivalent." After discussion, however, he was satisfied.[170] Meanwhile, as indicated above, the Herefordshire County Council was joining the opposition and decided to set aside £100 to pursue the struggle.[171]

The main opposition, however, was to come from Hereford City Council which claimed that an Act of 1854 gave it ownership rights over all the water in the Wye and its tributaries.[172] In April 1892 a public meeting of ratepayers and owners unanimously passed a resolution authorising their council to oppose the Bill.[173] For Birmingham Mansergh was not impressed, arguing that Hereford would still have "a hundred times as much water ... as ever they require" and that York got no- where with a similar petition against Bradford.[174] Counsel for the Water Committee, for their part, quoted the relevant sections of the Hereford Improvement Act of 1854 in an attempt to show that the city council had no great powers or privileges under it.[175] Hereford's main contention, however, was that, in view of the 1854 Act, "they should be allowed to take water free from the Birmingham aqueduct on their constructing the main to Hereford." As Martineau explained afterwards, "their case was met ... by giving them the privilege given to communities within fifteen miles of the aqueduct" to purchase water (even though they were out of range) "and they were to be entitled to a supply of water at half the rate charged to other communities." [176]

In all these cases, it was recognised by the competing parties that conflicts over the use of water were influenced by an inescapable fact. Downstream interests would be affected by the amount of compensation water to be discharged from the dams once they had been constructed. The promoters accepted from the start that the release of compensation water was normal practice and the Caban Coch dam was partly designed to meet this requirement. Even their opponents at no time suggested that the Corporation wished to cease this normal practice. Accordingly, the dispute was not over the principle of discharge, but over the amount to be discharged. In these negotiations, the promoters were constrained by two considerations. The greater the discharge the greater the capital cost and the less water for Birmingham. For the Corporation's opponents, the greater the amount of compensation water, the more would be available for fish spawning grounds and for their own consumption and use. For these reasons, there was a sharp conflict over the amounts of compensation water to be discharged.[177]

Mansergh claimed that in a dry summer the total flow of the Elan at the Caban would be under six million gallons a day and that therefore 22.5 million gallons a day of compensation water would be generous.[178] Even this, he added, would cost £300,000, and "the whole interest of the river is not worth anything like that money." Finally, concluded Mansergh, discharge of the water was guaranteed since there was a fine to pay for non-compliance.[179]

Hereford and some of the other opponents, however, wanted more than the 22.5 million gallons on offer. The Wye Conservators eventually made an offer of 27 million gallons but Brecon County Council asked for 40 millions.[180] The fishery owners, lessees and occupiers argued for 37 million gallons a day, but were refused.[181] The final figure was 27 million, and, in addition, for a period not exceeding 21 days, on receipt of notice from the Wye Conservators, 5 million gallons a day was to be kept back to be released as a little spate later. According to Mansergh, "the compensation water amounts to about one-fourth of the total collectable quantity, and this fourth is now becoming the recognised proportion in rivers whose waters are not used for manufacturing purposes." [182] If Mansergh was correct, the seemingly sharp conflict had a predictable outcome. The Corporation might be depicted as making an initial offer of 22.5 million gallons which it was prepared to negotiate up, and the opponents as demanding much greater amounts which they were prepared to negotiate down. There are one or two complications to what in principle might appear as a normal negotiating process, however. For example, did the Corporation, on Mansergh's advice, make an initial offer that was too generous? Was Mansergh, as an engineer interested in winning as large a contract as possible, comparatively unconcerned about this? The decision also does not seem to have been dispassionately and rationally negotiated. Some opponents in Herefordshire were clearly outraged and affronted. As they saw it, a river to which

they had a strong and romantic attachment was being threatened, and such damage could never be adequately compensated by money and quantities of water. On the other side, Mansergh, in his usual forthright fashion, seemed to be echoing the resentment of some people in Birmingham at the dog-in-the-manger attitude of those who had plenty of water themselves but were trying to deny others in their hour of need. Such intangible human sentiments, however, by their very nature, are not easy to incorporate into any analysis of a negotiating process.

On this most significant question, any conciliatory offer by the Corporation was constrained by the view that this was an issue which counted, because any conciliation entailed a reduction in the water available to Birmingham itself, the provision of which was the whole objective of the exercise. The greater the amount of compensation water agreed to, the less there remained for the inhabitants of Birmingham and vice versa. If the allowance for compensation waters were over-generous, then it would defeat the whole objective of the scheme. The converse, however, does not hold. If no compensation water, or an amount which was perceived as inadequate, was allowed, this might have induced sustained and intense opposition from downstream interests which might have delayed or prevented the scheme.

The Select Committee also accepted "a new clause" proposed by counsel for the fishery owners, etc. "providing that the Corporation should give the rod fishers pecuniary compensation if they could prove damage by reason of the scarcity of water." [183] An interesting postscript to the question, which reinforces the above analysis of human sentiments, occurred in 1904-5. At that time there was a proposal to cut the compensation water from 27 to 20 million gallons a day. This was at first accepted by the Wye Conservators in return for a proposed £8,000 compensation. But they were then forced to change their line following a vociferous opposition. [184]

4.6 Wolverhampton and Worcester.

The opposition from Wolverhampton and Worcester to the 1892 Bill in no way threatened its successful passage. There was a certain amount of jockeying for position, and some short temper, but both cities welcomed the construction of the aqueduct and merely wished to obtain the right to purchase water from it on favourable terms.

In early May, 1891, there came a request from Wolverhampton that the Water Bill should make provision for them to buy water by the inclusion of a clause similar to Section 81 of the Manchester Corporation Water Works Act, 1879. [185] On Mansergh's

advice, however, Wolverhampton was told that powers would be sought to supply adjoining areas, but that negotiations must wait until after the Bill's passage.[186] This reply was unacceptable to Wolverhampton which threatened opposition at Westminster but to no effect.[187] This was mere skirmishing, however, and by the end of February 1892 agreement had been reached and a similar deal, based on four per cent of the cost, which was one half of one per cent less than that allowed in the Manchester clause, was being offered to Worcester.[188] Thereafter, Wolverhampton steadfastly supported its midland neighbour and its M.P., Fowler, was one of the Bill's proposers and sponsors.[189] No agreement with Wolverhampton, however, was forthcoming. In 1902 there were talks, but since the capital cost of the Elan supply was still unknown the price could not be calculated. An interim deal was offered, and kept open, but Wolverhampton preferred to look elsewhere.[190]

Worcester too was worried about its water supply and in April 1891 its city council called for a report from its Water and Sewerage Committee.[191] In December, 1891, an enquiry was made to Birmingham about the purchase of water from the Elan aqueduct.[192] On February 8th, 1892, the Worcestershire County Council joined the fray when its Sanitary Committee decided to try to firm up the Bill with regard to water sales to towns along the aqueduct.[193] Meanwhile Worcester City Council also kept up the pressure.[194] The Worcestershire County Council, to which the Birmingham Town Clerk's letter in February 1892 had

been addressed, agreed in March, 1892, to continue talks.[195] By mid- May, 1892, the Corporation of Worcester had got what it wanted and ceased its opposition,[196] although it was disgruntled at the increased legal expenses arising from Birmingham's alleged tardiness and consequently refused to sponsor the measure in the House of Lords.[197]

As has been seen, the issue of water sales to communities along the Elan aqueduct was important to Hereford, Wolverhampton and Worcester. In addition the Wednesbury Town Council asked its M.P. to support the Bill in case they wished some day to purchase water.[198] Birmingham's water engineer, Gray, also argued against premature abandonment of the old works at Whitacre since they might be useful in emergencies, and could some day supply other areas.[199]

The Water Committee and its allies had two conflicting objectives with regard to water sales. The first was to reconcile the people of Birmingham to the commitment, and the second was to convince Parliament and potential opponents that, because of the provisions for the sale of water, the Elan scheme would also benefit others. One press correspondent was fearful of taking on "the responsibility of the supply of water to a district 80 miles long by 30 broad, ... an area of rather more than one twenty- fifth of England and Wales." [200] The Water Committee argued that they had no choice, that the terms of sale were not unfavourable, and that Birmingham had first claim on the

water in the event of shortage.[201] On the other hand, in selling the scheme to the House of Commons, the promoters projected it as providing cheap water for the whole of the Midlands.[202]

The final settlement of the water sales question was complicated, but it gave a right of purchase to local authorities within fifteen miles of the aqueduct. The cost was based upon interest payments on a fraction of the capital and running costs of the works equal to the percentage of total output consumed.[203] In the event, however, the only other Corporation to purchase water from Birmingham was Coventry, which had no right of supply under the 1892 Act, and that came from the old works at Whitacre reservoir and not from the Elan valley.[204] In theory, the sale of water, like the sending downstream of compensation water, was a zero sum game, and every pint purchased from the Corporation, at whatever cost, reduced the utility to Birmingham of the expensive infrastructure of the Welsh dams. In Lukes' terms, therefore, one might have expected another sharp conflict over the issue. This, however, did not occur, for a number of reasons. Firstly, as mentioned above, the principle of water sales had been established in previous cases, and its application to their own scheme was accepted by the Corporation as inevitable. Secondly, the money paid for the water, based as it was on an equitable percentage of the total cost of construction, may have been seen as a welcome financial relief, or as enabling the works to be extended if necessary at no cost

to Birmingham. Thirdly, and most significantly, perhaps the Corporation estimated from previous cases that little if any water would be purchased. If this were so, the city's reasonable and generous attitude may have been adopted partly for propaganda purposes.

What the above sections illustrate is the competent way in which the Corporation played its negotiating hand vis a vis various ostensibly opposed non- local interests. Where those interests could be bought off they were. Where minor skirmishes took place these were perceived as such by the Corporation, which used just sufficient resources to achieve victory but husbanded its other resources for major battles and did not seek needless antagonism. Only where serious opposition emerged did the Corporation deploy all of the resources at its disposal, both locally and nationally. The mere possession of an overwhelming strategic advantage might be a necessary, but it is not always a sufficient, condition of victory, since such an advantage might be lost through the ill- advised or inappropriate use of power resources. The sufficient condition of success was that these overwhelming resources were deployed with strategic acumen. The sections below deal with the opposition to the 1892 Water Bill from a group of dissentient ratepayers. In that case, in contrast to the cases involving land and fishery interests, but similarly to the cases of the L.C.C. and the opposition from South Wales, the opponents struck at the very principle of the scheme. Therefore, even if their opposition was perceived as

being unlikely to prove effective, it had to be taken seriously. Conciliation and compromise were excluded, and the struggle had to be fought through until one side won and the other side lost.

5. The Birmingham Opposition to the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill.

In Birmingham, the Corporation's decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme encountered a small but vocal opposition. This grew from early 1892 onwards, and was still to be heard in 1894 and later.[205] Like the hostility from London and South Wales this opposition was to the very principle of the scheme rather than, as with landed and fishery interests, to particular details of it. This vocal minority focused their campaign on what they regarded as the excessive cost, and, indeed, as that cost grew, so did the opposition (a typical problem with large scale engineering works).

Arguably, the main objective of this opposition was to prevent the Welsh water scheme and its attendant expenditure, rather than to present alternative proposals of their own. But in order to gain any credibility, alternatives had to be presented. There were a number of these, but two were particularly significant: the claim that more water could be drawn from local wells; and the proposals for a dual supply.

From the viewpoint of the Corporation, therefore, two strategies were deployed. Firstly, to counter objections on cost, the promoters attempted not only to present their own proposal in the best possible light but also to belittle the alternatives advanced by their opponents. To employ a by now familiar phrase, the Corporation, through the mobilisation of its political resources, had to win the propaganda battle by convincing significant political actors that there was no alternative.

From the viewpoint of the protesters, there were two logical possibilities. Either they could try to block the scheme and gain acceptance of their preferred alternatives instead. Or they might attempt to shift the burden of the water rates away from themselves and onto others. The first alternative entailed a conflict with the Corporation, which was determined to proceed and which was backed by the mobilisation of overwhelming political resources. The second alternative would have entailed a challenge to the whole rating system. If it had been attempted, it would, for reasons which are further explained below, almost certainly have failed. In effect, therefore, the protesters were faced with making the least worst choice between two unpalatable alternatives.

Another aspect of the conflict was the skill with which political resources were deployed. It was not that the Corporation itself wanted to become embroiled in what would

clearly be the enormous difficulty and expense of the Elan operation. This, indeed, might have been one of the factors which delayed the implementation of Rawlinson's report of 1871 for so long. But by 1891 the Corporation thought it could defer a decision no longer, even though it might have wished to do so. By that time the Corporation was advised by its Water Committee that an extra supply of pure water was needed, and that Wales was the place to get it from. The Corporation never fundamentally doubted the correctness of that advice. Typically, however, as costs rose, some members of the Corporation (although still a small minority) asked for a reconsideration. In this case, then, the Corporation saw itself as constrained closely by circumstances beyond its control. Given those circumstances, there was no alternative to placing water on the immediate political agenda, and once that was done there was no feasible alternative to the Elan valley as a source of supply. In clear contrast to the municipalisation of the electricity supply company, and, perhaps, to the housing question to a lesser extent, the Corporation's agenda setting in this case was perceived as a response to circumstances which it might have wished were different. From the outset it was clear that this would be a large scale and contentious programme. It was thus not that the Corporation wished to take it on, but that it felt that it had no choice. The following analysis traces the development of and responses to the Elan valley scheme in the light of this view of decision- making under externally dictated constraints.

In the conflict, the Corporation might be portrayed as advancing the "real interests" of all sections of Birmingham's population. But care must be taken in invoking the always contestable notion of real interests in this case, even if, as Morriss argues, too much can be made of this contestability in matters of life, death, and public health. The Corporation, acting on the best scientific advice available at that time, thought that it was in the real or welfare interests of the population to have sufficient supply of clean and disease-free water rather than an insufficient supply of dirty and disease-ridden water. In this case, we have a beneficent exercise of power in the real interests of the population. For a majority of ratepayers, the Corporation's case was accepted. Even for the vocal minority the Corporation's affirmation of the need for a satisfactory supply of water was accepted. The dissentients merely claimed that the same objectives could be achieved more cheaply. What we have here then is a dispute, not over real interests, but over the best means to serve them. Even so, it is argued below that the protesters, by denying that the Welsh water scheme was the only way to get the necessary water, were refusing to accept the logical extension of an argument with which they agreed. It is therefore not unreasonable to criticise them for putting a desire for low rates before their own real interests in being served by a satisfactory water supply.

On another point, in contradiction to Molotch and Dye's analysis of the growth machine, in this case certain land related interests seem, under the guise of big city centre ratepayers and landlords of small house property, to have been hostile to this important developmental policy.

The detailed investigation of the Birmingham opponents below, and of the issues and themes relevant to them, aims to substantiate these general assertions and, in the conclusion, put them within the wider academic debate on ratepayers' movements.

The Water Committee, as has been seen, had little difficulty, in 1891, in getting the decision to promote the Elan valley scheme ratified by the Birmingham city council, with the only threat of opposition coming from councillor Jacobs.[206] In the event, Jacobs abstained and no-one voted against.[207] At the statutory meeting of the ratepayers, legally necessary under section 288 of the Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act, 1883, only about 200 members of the public were present and the draft Bill was approved almost unanimously. Councillor Jacobs, perhaps realising that opposition to the Corporation's decision was doomed, appears to have acted in accordance with the law of anticipated reactions and absented himself.[208] At the meeting, however, Beriah Shepherd, a prominent local opponent of the Water Committee, exercised his right to demand a poll.[209] The outcome was another victory for the promoters, with 4,016 voters deciding in favour of the scheme and 563 against, a majority of

3,453.[210] This, however, according to the Bill's opponents, was only a small fraction of the electorate of 70,000 to 80,000.[211] The dissentients then continued the struggle in the correspondence columns of the newspapers.[212] By March, 1892, they had also organised themselves into "the Double Service Water Committee" and were issuing their own literature and organising meetings.[213]

In March, 1892, the Birmingham opponents, continuing their open struggle against the Corporation's decision, petitioned Parliament against the Bill. The petition alleged, among other things, "that there is no need for this vast and costly scheme." [214] There followed lengthy opposition from Birmingham in the Hybrid Committee.[215] In opening his case, Gough, the solicitor acting for the local dissentients, "spoke the whole day." [216] He "stated that he represented 383 property owners, 54 of whom had 3,285 houses, of an estimated value of £291,518.[217] As will be seen, the conduct of their case by the Birmingham opponents was amateurish and ineffective. A serious tactical mistake, for example, was the failure to launch a concerted filibuster in the Lords Committee which, in view of the imminent dissolution of Parliament, might have proved very effective. For their part, the promoters pointed out that the petition to Parliament had been signed by only 383 people out of a population of 494,000, and that the ratepayers' poll showed that nearly eight to one were in favour of the scheme.[218]

A significant spin off from the local opposition to the Welsh water scheme was the decision to strengthen the mobilisation of political bias against alleged council extravagance by setting up a Ratepayers' Union. The first indication of this came in March, 1892, when Samuel Lloyd was described as the "chairman" of the "Ratepayers' Committee".[219] By the end of March, 1892, the Ratepayers' Union has been unofficially launched, by the end of April it was advertising in the local press, and in June, at a meeting of about 150 people, the decision to establish it was formally endorsed.[220]

A few days later, Samuel Lloyd, one of the main dissentients, attempted to influence the political agenda by delaying the decision- making process. He asked the Lord Mayor for an impartial reassessment, but lacked the political resources to prevail and was met with a refusal.[221] Soon, the Corporation was able to sidetrack their opponents and to weaken the opposing mobilisation of bias by the issue of a legal threat. Some of the opponents' literature, claimed the Town Clerk, was libellous. Fearful of a court action backed by the full legal and financial resources of the council, the president of the Ratepayers' Union, T. Wilson, decided to resign.[222]

In June 1892 the decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill was challenged at the polls after Michael Davis, the councillor for Market Hall Ward, which covered the prestigious business quarter in the city centre, decided to retire.[223] The election was set

for the 24th June, and the two candidates were Arthur Scruton, a Conservative standing as a representative of the Liberal Unionist/Conservative alliance,[224] and Samuel Lloyd of the Ratepayers' Union.[225] Martineau himself was quick to endorse Scruton and denigrate Lloyd, and was joined by the local press.[226] However, Scruton lost the election, polling a total of 832 votes, 15 votes less than Lloyd's total of 847.[227] Commenting on the result, a correspondent to the Gazette wrote of Lloyd's campaign: "I know for a fact there were hundreds of voters who never received any voting cards, and who had no knowledge of Mr. Lloyd or what he represented. With my own eyes I saw hundreds of voting cards returned on the day of the election that had been sent out wrongly addressed through the post. And yet he was returned. Why?"[228] The answer would appear to be that Scruton's defeat was one of the costs to the Conservative Party of espousing the Liberal Unionists and their expensive projects. In 1879, according to Green, a "ratepayers' revolt" had "produced a substantial Conservative majority in Market Hall ward." [229] The Conservative reverse was temporary, however, and, according to Alcraft, all three of Market Hall's councillors were Conservative by 1895.[230]

At a council meeting in July, 1892, Lloyd, supported by Jarvis and Jacobs, attempted unsuccessfully to get a reconsideration of the Welsh water scheme by three supposedly impartial persons.[231] In February 1894 councillor Stenbridge, who had supported the Bill in 1892, made a similar attempt to

refer the scheme to an independent local commission and was similarly defeated. This time the opponents mustered six votes, those of Stembridge, Jacobs, Jarvis, S. Lloyd, Reynolds and Wilson, against 52 votes against them.[232] This debate in the council chamber was part of a more general agitation against the Elan scheme in 1894. In January, for example, Samuel Lloyd initiated another correspondence with the Mayor.[233] There was also an exchange of letters between the Mayor and Howard Lane in which the latter levelled a number of charges against the Water Department, including the allegation that Mansergh's commission was excessive.[234] Finally, there was a resurgence of comment and correspondence on the water scheme in the local press, which continued until at least November, 1894.[235]

From June 1891 onwards, however, the tactics of the opposition indicated the weakness of their position. In the Parliamentary campaign they had decisively failed to reverse the Corporation's decision to go to Wales for water. For them, this represented a serious defeat. All they could do now was to try to delay the scheme by calling for further investigations. But even this limited attempt to modify the Corporation's agenda was opposed and heavily defeated by an overwhelming mobilisation of political resources.

To conclude this section, there follows an analysis of the social basis and composition of the ratepayers' revolt, and of the types and categories of ratepayer that were most

dissaffected. The sections which follow, on the issues and themes relevant to the Birmingham opposition, will then, among other things, attempt to give an insight into the political and social perspectives and the ways of thinking of the Bill's opponents. The judgment is that they were an irrational and reactionary element in municipal life. In the conclusion these interpretations are related to the wider literature on ratepayers' revolts.

According to the local opponent Howard Lane, the Birmingham opposition to the council's decision to promote the Welsh water scheme came from "the community at large".[236] Vince, however, had another explanation, asserting that "the local opponents drew support chiefly from shopkeepers occupying highly-rated premises in the centre of the town." [237] This conclusion would certainly appear to be vindicated by the decision of the voters in the Market Hall bye-election in June, 1892. Other large ratepayers mentioned at the time as potential sources of hostility, however, were higher rated householders, landlords who rented out dwellings, and the owners of offices.

The main motive of the Birmingham opponents in the struggle over the 1892 Water Bill was to avoid the payment of higher water rates. The impact of the water scheme on the rates was raised at the council meeting of April, 1891. "With regard to the increase of water rentals", which was an integral part of the system for financing the project, claimed councillor Jacobs, "... the

charges in Birmingham were already more than 1s. in the pound (which was) higher than in most first- class towns, while the rates were nearly double." [238] "There were grievous complaints", stated councillor Bradley, "... that large shopkeepers in the middle of the town, using very little water, had to pay extremely heavily in proportion to what they paid at their private houses; and the committee would do well to bear this fact in mind, and make provision for some kind of equalisation of this increase." In his reply to the debate, Martineau was unable to give any very comforting answer. "The system to which they were accustomed in Birmingham and the neighbourhood," he said, "was that of making the inhabitants supplied with water pay in proportion to the rateable value of their houses, water being supplied by meter for manufacturing purposes. They were receiving now something over £130,000 a year under the water rental, and they proposed to put on an addition of £24,000, which was less than one- fifth of the total amount they received. There were certain classes of property, some of which would take perhaps a larger share, and some a smaller share; but if he was asked that day to say how they were going to deal with the different classes of consumers, he must decline to answer the question." [239]

Briggs records that "the city subsidised the water undertakings from the rates between 1904 and 1930 in order to meet the heavy expenditure begun in 1892". [240] However, as is here explained, the water rate was calculated as a percentage of

rateable value. It would thus make little difference to the average ratepayer whether his water rates or his domestic rates rose to meet the costs of the Elan operation, except insofar as the domestic rates were subsidised from the Exchequer - a theme which is further investigated below. Hence the fierce opposition of a section of the ratepayers in 1892, years before any rate in aid from the domestic rates was contemplated or imposed. At the council meeting of October 13th, 1891, a number of related points were raised. Councillor Davis, for example, pointed out "that a working man, living in a small cottage, would use a great deal more water than a person would use in offices for which he was rated at £50 or £100 a year." [241]

"The opposition", commented the Post after the ratepayers' poll, "was raised by owners of small- house property, precisely the kind of property which most needs looking after by the sanitary authorities, and which would derive most benefit from a full and plentiful supply of pure water. The Water Committee has given alarm to some of these owners by its proposal to reimpose some portion of the water charges remitted in past years; and as there will be no valid pretext for raising house rent because of the slightly increased water charge, the landlords will have to bear this outlay. Hence their protest." [242] This analysis would seem to be consistent with the finding of a recent study that, at this time, "the incidence of rates upon house property was severe and rising, with the burden falling increasingly upon owners rather than occupiers." [243] At the time, however, not

everyone agreed that the increase would not be passed on to the tenant. Councillor Davis, for example, asserted that the burden "would be largely on small house property, and would indirectly press upon the working classes." [244] One press correspondent, however, claimed that the lower orders were unaware of the alleged threat. [245] The Mail agreed with the Post, although it did not distinguish clearly between large householders (who, presumably, lived in their dwellings) and landlords: "Apparently, it is among higher rated householders that disfavour of the scheme exists. Probably these people are property owners, and they see in prospect a heavy impost being laid upon their houses by the scheme. If we were to describe the nine hundred and ninety-seven as the small house landlords' vote we should not be very far wrong." [246]

Before the Commons Committee, however, the opposition among the large shopkeepers and other ratepayers in the city centre was prominent. "One gentleman", asserted counsel for the local opponents, ... went into three of the principal streets of the city - into Corporation Street, New Street and High Street - and out of 247 of the principal ratepayers whom he called upon, 244 signed a petition against this Bill." [247] The opponent referred to, Edwin Fletcher, was subsequently called as a witness. He reaffirmed that he had canvassed "in the central and principal streets of the city" but claimed that he "took manufacturers and professional men and shopkeepers just as they came." [248] According to the opposition witness Charles Marshall Powell, he

had "seen some 200 or 300" ratepayers who consisted "of the principal ratepayers of three or four of the principal streets in Birmingham" and he found "not two per cent in favour of the town scheme." [249] A point to note is that the percentage increase in rentals which was proposed and levied was far more unfavourable to big ratepayers than a flat rate increase would have been, although it is doubtful to what extent the ratepayers themselves realised this. [250] In fact, "the rental for supplies to retail shops and offices", states Vince, "was increased by ten per cent" whereas "the scale" as a whole "was calculated to produce a general increase of twenty per cent." Despite this relief, however, it is likely that the percentage rise, which was based on rateable value, was not as favourable to such premises as a flat rate imposition. [251]

In view of the incidence of the water rates as described above, it may be asked why the local opponents did not attempt to challenge the way in which these rates, and the domestic rates from which they were derived, were assessed and levied. Alternatively, they could have attempted to alter the distribution of any additional rate burden. At first sight these would seem to have been more intelligent tactics than trying to demonstrate the impossible, namely that the Welsh water scheme was unnecessary. Part of the explanation for this may have been that the dissentient ratepayers were afflicted with a short-sighted inability to see beyond the immediate point at issue. More significant, however, may have been the powerful influence

of procedures and routines over the decision-making process. This, as has been seen, is an aspect stressed by Parry and Morriss. In this particular case, the domestic rating system was based upon statute law as applied locally. It was well established, and enforced by legally authoritative officials under agreed procedures. A decision to change all this would have been very difficult to obtain and would almost certainly have necessitated a national campaign. Even if the nature of the water rate burden had been altered, it might have had a fairly marginal effect on the amounts paid by the dissentients. Insofar as different categories of ratepayer were active in the opposition movement, it would also have been difficult for them to make agreed demands. In any case, any move to make the rich pay less and the poor more via, for example, the adoption of a system of flat rate increases would almost certainly have been met by an opposing mobilisation of political resources in which the nascent labour movement would have played a vociferous part. Thus, the failure of the Birmingham opponents to link their campaign to a demand for fundamental changes in the system of levying the water rates illustrates yet again the validity of Parry and Morriss's argument.

The enormous difficulties in implementing the decision to bring water from the Welsh hills, however, was a factor in the loss of faith in an expansive civic vision. The promoters successfully maintained that their opponents' case was weak, a contention which is endorsed by the current research.[252] But

as the scheme's cost escalated the local dissentients gained a certain amount of credibility, even in the eyes of a previously hostile press.[253] It is clear that, for many, the decision to build the Elan dams had advanced the council's "Forward" policy as far, if not further, than they wanted it to go. The enormous task of bringing water from the Welsh hills thus placed distinct difficulties in the path of a continued development of the "civic gospel."

6. The Issues Relevant to the Birmingham Opposition.

6.1 Finance.

In the open struggle to secure the adoption of the Elan valley proposals, the biggest single complaint of the Birmingham opponents was that the enormous cost would cause a big rise in the water rates. Fortunately for the success of the proposals, however, no-one, not even the promoters, had any idea of how great the expenditure would be when the scheme was accepted. In this case, therefore, the mobilisation of bias by the promoters, and their triumph over their opponents in a situation of conflict, was assisted by their unintentionally false information and propaganda. It is an interesting question whether the decision to promote the scheme would have been taken and persisted with if the full financial truth had been known at the

outset. It seems reasonable to assume that it would, because of the biological necessity for an adequate supply of pure water. Unfortunately, however, this is yet another instance where the relevant counterfactual, namely a re-run of history in which people were better informed, cannot be applied. It may be added that on this particular aspect, the political theorists summarised and discussed in Chapter 1 are of little direct use to us. Nowhere in Lukes, or in the other secondary literature relevant to his dimensions of power, is there any systematic discussion of the influence played by misconceptions during the decision-making process.

The decision-making associated with the adoption and endorsement of the Welsh water scheme entailed an enormous and escalating expenditure. According to Vince the final cost was greatly in excess of Mansergh's original estimate of £6.6 million.[254] For the present study of political decision-making, however, as suggested, the actual figures are less significant than the figures which were bandied about in argument, and even the various estimates are only of significance to the extent that they were used in the political debate.[255]

The Elan scheme was, both financially and operationally, easily the biggest project which the Birmingham Corporation had, as yet, undertaken. The decisions to purchase the gas works and the waterworks, for example, entailed an expenditure of about £2 million pounds each, and the decision to promote the Improvement

Scheme a little over £1.5 million.[256] In 1891, indeed, Birmingham's total debt was a little less than £7.7 million.[257] Understandably, therefore, the "gigantic expense" of the scheme was constantly referred to by opponents unwilling to pay for it.[258]

At first the promoters decided to finance the operation by re-imposing for some years charges which had been previously remitted, and no assistance from the rates or raising of the maximum statutory prices for water was envisaged.[259] This decision may have been adopted partly for propaganda purposes, but also appeared justified from the advice of the experts retained by the Corporation. The Water Engineer, Gray, for example, argued that the natural growth of receipts with the growth of the district would enable this plan to succeed.[260] Mansergh agreed, arguing that the extra £28,000 a year from the re-imposition of the old rates was all that was required.[261] According to the Corporation's Accountants, Howard Smith and Slocombe, the picture was even rosier, since Mansergh, they claimed, had overestimated interest payments.[262]

The Water Committee agreed with its experts and in April 1891 claimed that a sum of £4 million should prove more than enough to pay for the scheme.[263] He and his colleagues, Martineau explained, could hardly believe their luck, and Barclay and many councillors agreed with him. Alderman Hart, in Molotch's formulation, spoke for the interests of the local

growth machine, arguing that this was not expenditure at all, but a developmental policy based on the purchase of infrastructure. Councillor Jacobs, he said, "failed to distinguish between an enormous debt and an investment." [264] Such sentiments were fully endorsed by the local press (always active members, according to Molotch, of his growth machine) and particularly by the Post. [265] The scheme's opponents ruefully admitted the effectiveness of such propaganda in influencing the decision-making process. [266]

It was further claimed that the scheme appeared more expensive than it actually was because the estimates included the cost of various local works, which would have to be paid for whether the Welsh scheme went ahead or not. According to Gray, the total cost of these was £761,250. [267] Finally, the scheme's promoters argued that in this case the process of first dimensional decision-making was incremental. The scheme, they said, was conceived in a series of instalments, and if demand did not rise as anticipated the Corporation could decide to delay or cancel the later stages of the works. [268] Thus, although the Bill envisaged an ultimate expenditure of £6 million, the initial decision to go ahead would only cost about £3 million. [269] Again, the local press echoed its support for such arguments. [270]

By October, 1891, however, the Mail and the Gazette seemed somewhat alarmed at the steady increase in the estimates.[271] By February, 1892, the Mail was even more worried, and by July 1892 even the Post was admitting the scheme's "costliness." [272] The Birmingham opponents made great play of the escalating expenditure before the Commons Select Committee. "When this thing was first brought before the Council", one of them stated, "a million and a half was mentioned, and so the thing grew on." Fortunately for the promoters at that time no-one knew the awful truth and some of the claims of the dissentients, although in the end not far short of the mark, were widely regarded as scare mongering.[273] In any case, it was claimed, water was a basic necessity of life which must be secured at any cost.[274]

The scheme's opponents, as might have been expected given their composition as discussed above, launched a particularly strong attack on the decision to increase the water rentals by what they claimed was about 25 per cent.[275] The other financial provisions were also criticised, however, in letters to the press, at meetings of dissentients, and before the Hybrid Committee.[276] This increasing concern over the need to curb allegedly unnecessary Corporation expenditure is seen in a number of side-issues relating to the financing of the Welsh water scheme. One of these was the size of Mansergh's commission.[277] Another was the decision to pay an honorarium to the Town Clerk for his role, as Solicitor for the Bill, in steering it through Parliament.[278] The proposal encountered sharp opposition in

the council chamber, and a lengthy debate ensued, during which two antagonistic amendments were put, before it was passed by 32 votes to 18.[279] Press reaction was mixed. The Post supported the payment, but the Mail and the Gazette were opposed, the Mail pointing to the urgent need for economy in view of the cost of the Elan operation.[280] Finally, in December 1892, Thomas Starkey, the long serving secretary to the Water Department, announced his intention to retire. The Water Committee proposed that he receive a pension of £400 per annum but there followed an exciting vote among the councillors when, by 28 votes to 27, it was decided to reduce this to £250.[281]

All this, of course, conforms to a familiar pattern where large scale and long running engineering projects are involved. To observers in the late twentieth century, for example, there would appear to be some striking similarities to the development of the channel tunnel by private enterprise. With the Welsh water scheme the initial decision to proceed was taken, and the project was well under way, when the Corporation was confronted by the seemingly inevitable cost over-runs. From that point onwards, the responses of both supporters and opponents of the venture had a familiar ring. For the opponents, the additional expenditure was seen as a confirmation of their initial suspicions, and they indulged in a number of taunts of the "I told you so" variety, as well as arguing for a reconsideration. In response, the promoters argued that "we can only press on." To abandon the project now, they claimed, would be a waste of the

money already spent, and would cost even more in the long run. Therefore, the project must be continued, but with a tighter control over costs.

The main reasons for the unanticipated expenditure entailed in the Corporation's decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme have been summarised at length by Vince whose analysis is endorsed by other sources.[282] The problems which he enumerates necessitated a number of unforeseen and extraordinary financial provisions and only in October 1907 was it possible to close the Elan Supply Bank Account.[283] These provisions included, for several years after 1902, the repayment of interest with borrowed capital.[284] By 1904 there was a water surcharge on the domestic rates of 4d in the pound, or £45,000 per annum.[285]

However, even for those committed to the continuation of the scheme, there appears to have been a loss of self confidence in the optimistic civic gospel of a "forward" policy as it was proclaimed in the days of Chamberlain's Mayoralty. This would appear to be particularly the case since the calibre of men such as Martineau and Lawley Parker, and of the array of distinguished experts such as Mansergh and Orford Smith who assisted them, would appear to have suffered little if any diminution since the golden age of Victorian self-confidence. Like characters in a Greek tragedy, the council leaders had their self-confidence and pride shaken and broken by the ordeal, and it left them chastened and humbled. By 1904, the Lord Mayor, Sir Hallewell Rogers, was

admitting that estimates of the cost had caused them "many a fright and a sleepless night" and even the Post, the paper which had been most loyal to the Water Committee in 1891-2, was admitting that the forecasts of cost had been "exceeded by about 50%" and that "the finance of the scheme forms a most unfortunate and unsatisfactory chapter." [286] Significantly many such comments, together with other reactions quoted or to be found in the sources cited, were made at or around the time of what should have been the Water Committee's greatest triumph, the official opening of the works by the King and Queen.

6.2 The Potential of Local Supplies.

As stated above, the main objective of the Birmingham opponents of the 1892 Bill was to avoid paying increased water rates. If they wished to do this they had to reverse the Corporation's decision to promote the Welsh water scheme. This meant discrediting the promoters' claim that it was necessary, and putting forward a credible alternative. Both of these tasks proved impossible for them. One aspect of this was the opponents' failure to undermine the promoters' claim that local supplies of water were inadequate. In their attempts to demonstrate the impossible the dissentients made use of palpably absurd assertions which further damaged their case. It emerged that they were poor, not only in the more obvious political

resources, but also in knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, the facts of the case, perhaps even more than the powerful mobilisation of political bias against them by the Corporation, bore down on them and crushed them. Thus, as suggested above, the nature of the issue itself had a decisive impact on the decisional outcome. No matter how they tried, the opponents were unable to present evidence that was convincing to anyone but themselves. The Corporation, the Parliamentary enquiry, and many members of the public who participated in the debate, in the newspapers and elsewhere, remained singularly unimpressed.

In their attempt to discredit the Corporation's decision to go to Wales for water, the opponents put forward a number of arguments concerning both the demand for and the supply of water. They claimed, for example, that demand for water would taper off because of a slowing of the rate of population increase and other factors. This point, however, they utterly failed to establish before the Commons Select Committee.[287] Another unsuccessful assertion was that too much water was being wasted.[288] The dissentients, however, as will be seen, made little use of the argument that demand for water could be reduced by abandoning customers outside the city. In the light of these reductions in demand, the protesters argued, on the supply side, that the proposed dams in Wales were unnecessary. Instead, they claimed that more water could be drawn from local wells, and that a dual system of supply, by allowing the use of less pure water for certain purposes, could to some extent overcome the problem of

the pollution of local sources. It was also alleged that water might be purchased from the South Staffordshire Water Company or taken from increasingly polluted local streams. However, both of these propositions were also impossible to sustain.[289] Thus, as will be further demonstrated below, all the dissentients' major claims concerning demand and supply were decisively refuted in the council chamber, before the Parliamentary committees, and elsewhere during the public debate.

As early as 1871, Rawlinson had declared that local sources could yield but little extra water.[290] In January, 1891, Gray reported that increasing demand, partly caused by "the adoption of the water closet system, and ... the great increase of baths to a small class of house" could no longer be met by local supplies, and that the situation would get worse as time went on.[291] He later told the Parliamentary Select Committees that, unless extra water were brought into the city from a distance, in a few years "we should be stumped." There were 129,000 houses in Birmingham, Gray made clear in his evidence. In 1886, 7,648 of them had water closets, and by 1891 this figure had already grown to 27,620.[292] James Mansergh concurred with Grey's opinion and, as usual, the Water Committee endorsed the judgement of its experts.[293] The Committee's conclusion was assiduously promoted by Martineau, Barclay, the Lord Mayor and the local press.[294] The Gazette, in particular, spoke up for the local growth machine and implied that the opponents lacked local patriotism. It found, it said, not "the slightest cogency in the

argument that ... trade may decline and therefore the number of people diminish." [295] The Corporation's case was summarised by George Henry Hill, the Water Engineer to Manchester, who was called as a witness on their behalf. "All local supplies", he said, "are nearly taken up in all these districts and you must go long distances." [296] At first the scheme's opponents were nonplussed by these assertions even Jacobs merely asking, on this particular point, "how could they be certain that the previous rate of increase would continue?" [297] They were accepted by the Commons Committee in early May 1892, and the Corporation were told they need present no further evidence to rebut their local opponents on the point. [298] This assertion was later of great value as propaganda, and was, for example, quoted in full in the Water Committee's report to the council in July, 1892, and reaffirmed by the Lord Mayor who claimed that it demonstrated the bankruptcy of the dissentients' case. [299]

In his report to the Water Committee of January, 1891, the city's Water Engineer, John Gray, evidently with great reluctance, gave details of a scheme for developing Birmingham's local supplies of water for a period of 20 years. His conclusion, however, was quite clear, namely that the idea was riddled with problems, and that the only sensible policy was to seek more distant sources, an argument which he later put a fortiori to the Lords' Committee. [300] This analysis was carried further by Mansergh, who pointed out that Grey's report made no

mention of compensation water, and that, when this was provided for, the amount of extra water would be "trifling." [301] Not surprisingly, the Water Committee again accepted the guidance of its experts, and Martineau defended the decision claiming that this, the last available local option, was by now thoroughly discredited. [302] In an interesting reference to the timing of the decision to go to Wales, Martineau also argued that "a million of money", the cost of Gray's scheme, could have been saved "twenty- one years ago" if Rawlinson's report of 1871 had been acted on in the first place. [303] It is, therefore, an indication of the weakness of the local opponents' case that they from time to time referred to Gray's scheme as if it were a viable proposition, and used it as an argument that the decision to promote the Elan proposals was unnecessary. [304]

It soon became clear, in this decision- making conflict, that the Water Committee had mobilised decisive material forces and had at its disposal overwhelmingly superior expertise. Perhaps even more significantly, however, their case was correct, as subsequent events were to demonstrate. Thus, during the long wait for the Welsh water, serious problems occurred in the maintenance of supplies. In the summer of 1893 there was what Lawley Parker described as a "prolonged drought" which "the Department ... just scraped through." [305] In 1894, the Water Committee commissioned a "Private and Confidential" report from James Mansergh and his associate Henry Davey which advocated "very stringent ... efforts to prevent all misuse and waste of

water."[306] In 1899 the Water Committee found it necessary to issue a handbill, calling "during the summer" for "the strictest economy ... in the use of water," with various penalties for transgressors including a £5 fine for leaving taps running.[307] The summer of 1904 saw a complete ban on garden hose pipes, the purchase of water from the East Worcestershire Waterworks Company, and an expenditure of £3,790 to expand the output of the Longbridge well.[308] The water shortages in Birmingham between 1892 and 1904 clearly illustrate the irresponsible baselessness of the dissentient ratepayers' claims that local supplies were adequate and that the decision to build the Welsh dams was unnecessary.

At midnight on 8th November, 1891, Balsall Heath, Saltley and Harborne were added to Birmingham.[309] This development, however, was only a small part of the problem of catering for the outlying areas many of which had always been outside the city limits and many of which had for a considerable time been within them. In 1890, for example, a nine- inch main to Solihull was completed at a cost of £5,048, as well as a new twelve- inch main to supply Moseley from Selly Oak at a cost of £2,884.[310] In October, 1890, the Water Committee reported that £613 had been spent on a main to supply Coleshill.[311] Between 1888 and 1892, £1,510 3s 2d was spent in improving the water supply to Washwood Heath and, in 1892, a new 12- inch main was started to Solihull and Acocks Green.[312] These are merely a few illustrative

examples of a process of expansion which continued up to and beyond the First World War.[313] It brought extra revenue, but it also demanded greater quantities of water.

At the council meeting of April, 1891, Alderman Baker appeared somewhat resentful of "the position of the water consumers outside the city" who "escaped any responsibility in the matter" and whom "Birmingham was bound to supply with ... water at the same rate as the city was supplied"[314] The real problem, however, arrived when, as has been seen, a rate-in-aid from the domestic rates had to be levied to meet financial deficits. Consumers outside the city would clearly not pay Birmingham rates, and unless they paid more for the actual water they would receive sizeable subsidies at the expense of Birmingham citizens. Only with the advent of Greater Birmingham in 1911 was the possibility of such anomalies substantially reduced, and even then some areas, such as Solihull, remained unincorporated. The point made by the scheme's promoters, however, about the outlying suburbs was that, whether they were inside or outside the city limits, they all increased the amount of water required, an argument that was repeated by Mansergh, Martineau and Barclay.[315]

It might have been thought that the local opponents would have launched a concerted campaign to ditch consumers outside the city boundaries, but they did not. This may seem surprising, because there did appear to be anomalies which might have been

capitalised upon by an intelligent opposition. They might have strung together a plausible argument based upon the premiss that areas outside Birmingham should fend for themselves. They could then have produced calculations of the amount of water that would be saved and contended (with what effectiveness can never fully be known) that present supplies were sufficient to cater for the smaller number of consumers. At worst this would have been somewhat less hopeless than trying to prove the impossible, namely that the Water Department could cater for its existing customers with its existing resources of water. The local opponents appear to have been too amateurish, however, to develop such points, preferring instead their hare-brained alternative of a dual supply as described below. On the other hand, perhaps, on the argument of Parry and Morriss, the influence of established procedures and routines again played a part in the decisional outcome. The Water Committee's commitments to supply consumers outside the city were enshrined in law, and, even if they were not, a progressive municipality could hardly withdraw from anyone a basic necessity of life just because he or she lived outside the city boundary. At all events, and for whatever reason, the opponents made no consistent attempt to secure a decision to reduce the Water Committee's customer base, just as they did not try to alter the system of water rates. The argument that extraneous users should be discarded was only used on one occasion, by councillor Jacobs.[316] Other inimical comments were rare, although one press correspondent wanted to know "why, in the face of a water famine, the Corporation, so

recently as last year, conveyed their pipes to Solihull, some eight miles away." [317]

Another claim made by the Birmingham opponents in their first dimensional campaign to reverse the Corporation's decision to get water from Wales was that local wells could provide adequately for the city's needs. This assertion was easily refuted by the promoters. Nevertheless, together with their advocacy of a system of dual supply, it formed the basis of their case, the Gazette, after the Parliamentary campaign, curtly dismissing them as "the wellite opponents". [318] Among other things, they argued that the Corporation wells did not go down far enough, that about 5,000 wells had been needlessly closed, and that the advent of the water closet meant that contamination of surface wells would decrease. [319] They even argued that Paris was "largely, if not wholly, supplied by artesian wells" but Barclay, quoting the prefect of the city, quickly pointed out that it was not. [320] Despite all evidence to the contrary, however, Samuel Lloyd was still arguing in 1894 that wells would suffice. [321]

Not all such arguments in favour of wells were so easy to refute, however, and the most effective part of the opponents' case in their favour was that played by two Professors, Wanklyn and Hull. Wanklyn asserted that deep wells could supply Birmingham with 10 million gallons a day. [322] For a short time Hull seemed to pose a serious threat to the promoters' case

before the Common Select Committee, claiming that the potential supply from such sources was "almost unlimited."^[323] He withered, however, under cross-examination, and was forced to admit his ignorance of unsuccessful local drillings at Warwick, Coventry and Leamington, and to face an allegation that a well drilled at Tamworth on his advice was a failure.^[324] The Mail, whose leader writer appeared to be badly shaken on the day of Hull's initial evidence,^[325] was quick to capitalise. "Professor Hull's knowledge", it recorded, "all turned out to be based on observations he had made in 1866".^[326]

The promoters' case against wells was decisive, and the main factor in the early acceptance by the Commons Hybrid Committee that local supplies were inadequate.^[327] As early as 1854, indeed, Rawlinson had stressed that wells were "not recommended", an opinion subsequently endorsed by Mansergh, the Water Committee, Martineau, Barclay and the Lord Mayor.^[328] Already, the Corporation's counsel had echoed, in Molotch's terminology, the sentiments of a local growth machine based on industrial interests. "The well water which is supplied to Birmingham", it was said, "has become so hard that it is absolutely unfit to be supplied for any trade or manufacturing purpose whatever."^[329]

The strongest and most effective element in the Corporation's arguments against wells, however, was that provided by its geological experts, particularly by Professor Lapworth of Mason College (later the University of Birmingham), whose

opinions and information were constantly quoted and alluded to by the supporters of the Welsh water scheme, and whose evidence before the Commons and Lords Committees was a key element in the promoters' case.[330] Professor Lapworth was supported by other experts retained by the promoters, including Professor A. H. Green, F.R.S. By the time he took the stand, however, Campbell-Bannerman was of the opinion that "we have enough evidence of that particular kind,"[331] and soon, as has been seen, the Corporation's case was cut short by the Committee's ruling that they were satisfied that Birmingham's local resources of water were insufficient.

Thus, the dissentients failed to uphold their claims that local wells were adequate and that the council's decision to go to Wales was unnecessary. In fact, so overwhelming was the evidence to the contrary that even the opponents themselves advocated, in addition, the use of a supplementary supply of dirtier water from rivers and streams. They therefore had to say how, in their view, this should be done. Their answer, a dual system of supply, left them open to a large amount of denigration and ridicule. Yet again, a significant element in the mobilisation of political bias against them was the force of the Corporation's case. On this issue too, the arguments used by the dissentients in their attempts to alter the decision-making agenda looked increasingly absurd.

In March, 1892, opponents of the Elan proposals, organised into "the Double Service Water Committee", issued a pamphlet already referred to entitled "Why the Welsh Water Scheme is not the One for the City of Birmingham". This contained an extended and detailed description of what it called "the Double Service System." It was intended, the opponents said, "to make a distinction between the pure water for domestic use and the soft surface water adapted for other purposes. ... By separating the water it will become possible to utilise various sources of supply which hitherto have not been brought into requisition." The idea, they argued, was to use pure well water for human consumption and various manufacturing purposes, and dirtier river water for all other uses. This scheme was also advocated in the dissentients' petition to Parliament against the Bill.[332] It was put forward too by various correspondents to the press and others, together with similar suggestions such as the use of water pumped out of coal mines in the Black Country.[333] At public protest meetings the policy was proclaimed and endorsed by resolutions.[334] Before the Commons Committee, one opposition witness advocated the use of the waters of the Tame for sanitary purposes as part of a double supply system, and it was claimed that Paris and various English towns had already adopted such a procedure.[335] The systematic ridicule and attack of the promoters and their allies, however, forced some of the opponents to modify their original concepts regarding a dual supply, which they later claimed would only be needed as a last resort, and in the distant future.[336]

The promoters had no difficulty in discrediting the idea of a dual supply. Gray spoke out strongly against it and Mansergh described it as a "vicious proposal." [337] For Birmingham, he added, it was an "outrageous" suggestion, although "it may do for Frenchmen." [338] Opposition to a dual supply was continued by Martineau, Barclay, the promoters' counsel and the local press. Among the many points against the idea was the enormous cost of laying a duplicate system of pipes and mains. [339] There is, perhaps, no better illustration of the bankruptcy of the Birmingham opponents' case than that they were forced to present so strange and absurd a proposal. On this issue the arguments they used in the attempt to mobilise their political bias against the Corporation's decision-making were almost certainly counterproductive.

6.3 Purity and Pollution of Supplies.

The promoters claimed that another reason for their decision to go to Wales was that local supplies of water were increasingly polluted. This assertion was never effectively challenged by the Birmingham opponents. Indeed, their abortive proposals for a dual supply appeared to be predicated upon it. In the first dimensional decision-making debate on this aspect too, therefore, the promoters won the argument. Thus, in the

terminology of Schattschneider, superior arguments again formed part of the successful mobilisation of political bias and influenced the municipal agenda.

There is a large body of modern scholarship devoted to the study of mortality before and during the Victorian period, much of which makes reference to water-borne diseases and to the effect of water supply upon death rates.[340] Hassan urges the need for "caution about stressing the public health effect of improved water supplies" since, among other reasons, "it is difficult to isolate the indirect effects of the increased consumption of purer water within households upon mortality rates." [341] Hassan's conclusion is that "by 1850 the chief water-borne diseases, cholera and typhoid, had already ceased to have a major impact upon at least decennial urban mortality trends. Gastro-intestinal disease mortalities were still high, but were influenced by a whole range of complex - and still not fully agreed or understood - social, nutritional, and institutional factors, rather than by the state of water supplies as such. In any case, they showed little improvement, and some temporary deterioration, in the period down to 1910." [342]

What is of relevance to the present chapter, however, is not the findings of modern scholars on the relationship between water supply and mortality, but the influence of contemporary attitudes on the decision to build the Elan valley waterworks and on the operation of power in Lukes' first dimension. Here, it is true,

the medical opinions of, for example, Dr. Alfred Hill, the city's Medical Officer of Health, formed one of those sources of expert guidance which were so influential in securing the scheme's adoption. There was, however, no extended or detailed medical debate on the public health aspects of the Welsh water scheme, and contemporaries for the most part, including the Water Bills' opponents, merely held a set of favourable but vague assumptions on the benefits of a pure water supply. Even in The Lancet, during the twelve months of 1892, there was no extended coverage of the medical benefits of pure water, in Birmingham or anywhere else.[343] In addition, as will be seen, some of the opinions expressed by medical men at the time seem somewhat questionable to the modern reader.

A related issue, and one of more direct relevance to any industrial version of Molotch's local growth machine, was the alleged benefit of securing a supply of soft water uncontaminated by lime. This, it was argued, would bring a number of economic benefits such as, to industrialists, the avoidance of encrusted boilers. Hassan postulates a number of reasons why "mains supply drawing upon more distant, pure sources became increasingly important to industry during the nineteenth century." [344] Most of his examples, however, are from industries in "the northern textile belt", [345] and it is not clear to what extent his argument is applicable to Birmingham. As the account below shows, the industrial (and also the domestic) benefits of pure water were constantly canvassed by the Water Bill's promoters.

But there was only one observed case of an opponent of the Bill claiming that one of the promoters, as an industrialist, had a vested interest in its passage. This was when a newspaper correspondent alleged that Barclay was "a manufacturer of aerated waters, and our present supply of artesian water does not suit him." [346]

As will be seen, for the most part neither supporters nor opponents of the Water Bill had much to say in favour of the local water supplies, so that in this respect the Corporation's case was accepted by the other side even though the decision predicated upon it, namely the sponsorship of the 1892 Water Bill, was not. Indeed, the only favourable point made (usually by the opponents) was that the well water had certain redeeming features. [347]

Most observers, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the Corporation water. The well water, it was claimed, was hard, and, according to Alderman Dr. Barratt, "injurious to people of rheumatic or gouty tendencies." [348] Barclay and Martineau even doubted that it was always pure. [349] The main criticism, however, was of Corporation water derived from local rivers and streams. Official spokesmen, of course, needed to be diplomatic about this, but even so Martineau and the Health Committee's chairman, Alderman Cook, expressed concern. [350] The Corporation's experts agreed that Birmingham's water supply was becoming increasingly suspect. Their witness Dr. Frankland said

so forcibly to the Commons Committee, and was strongly supported by Hill, the city's Medical Officer of Health.[351] Yet again the local press endorsed the Corporation's claims.[352] Members of the public put the case rather more forcibly. "We have no water in Birmingham", recorded one press correspondent, "only an aqueous solution of lime and other salts." Other citizens narrated a number of horror stories in which encroaching wildlife featured strongly.[353] There was also a claim from Sutton Coldfield that one of the streams used by the Corporation was heavily polluted with horse manure.[354] At one of Barclay's lectures he faced interventions from the floor on the question.[355] Gray, however, confessed to the Commons Committee that certain impurities could not be removed.[356] As indicated, the suspect nature of the existing supply was, for the most part, accepted by the Birmingham opponents, although they sometimes blamed the Water Committee for it.[357]

Another reason, claimed the Bill's promoters, for the decision to go to Wales was that even the existing level of water purity would degenerate further as the Corporation was forced to use a greater percentage of stream water as against well water.[358] Before the Parliamentary Committees, Gray gave detailed figures of the increasing number of complaints about Corporation Water.[359] The point had been argued as far back as 1871 by Rawlinson, who stressed the growing incidence of agricultural and industrial pollution.[360] The problem of progressive deterioration was pointed to by Mansergh, Martineau,

Barclay and the local press.[361] It was also illustrated by the specific cases of the local rivers, the Tame,[362] the Blythe and the Bourne.[363] Putting the issue into its more general context, Mansergh asserted: "I cannot call to mind that any town of repute - much less one of our first- rank cities - has within the last twenty years come to Parliament seeking powers to obtain water from highly cultivated residential districts like the valleys in the neighbourhood of Birmingham." [364] Similar strictures, argued Mansergh and Martineau, also applied to the Stour, the Severn, the Teme, the Wye, the Trent, in fact to all possible sources of new supply nearer than the Elan valley.[365]

On the other hand the purity and high quality of the water from the Elan valley was constantly cited as a justification for the decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill. This had been proclaimed in 1871 by Rawlinson and was now repeated by Mansergh and the Corporation's scientific advisers and witnesses, among whom Dr. Frankland and Professor Dewar had carried out exhaustive scientific tests.[366] Already, in December 1890, Alfred Hill, the city's Medical Officer of Health, on the basis of his own tests, declared the Elan water "pure and most excellent", an opinion endorsed by an opponent from Hereford.[367] An opposition theory that the soft Welsh water might cause rickets was debunked by both Barclay and the Mail. [368]

Three aspects of this general purity, however, were specifically raised in the debate on the Welsh water scheme: the problem of peat stain; the alleged saving in soap and from the less regular cleaning of boilers, etc.; and the claim that the Elan water might become polluted by lead.

The problem of peat was raised by the opposition witness, Professor Wanklyn, who testified that "peaty water causes diarrhoea It is dirty." [369] Mansergh admitted that the Elan water was "slightly stained" but added that the peat would sink to the bottom when the water was stored in reservoirs. [370] This assertion was good enough to win the argument, but, when it arrived, the Welsh water did indeed have a brownish tinge and complaints were received. [371]

As has been suggested already, if there was a "growth machine" in Birmingham at this time, it appears to have differed from the one described by Molotch, and to have been based on industrial rather than on landed interests. It was, for example, constantly argued by the promoters that Welsh water would be better, not just for domestic use, but also for a wide range of industrial purposes. The project was therefore commended not only for the public health benefits it would bring, but also, in Dye's typology, as a developmental policy to improve the city's infrastructure and to bring local economic growth. The point was not, in general, separately argued, however, and the domestic and industrial benefits tended to be lumped together. It was thus a

consistent claim of the promoters than the Elan water would save soap, prevent the encrustation of boilers and bring other sundry benefits such as savings in coal and tea.[372] These points were vigorously argued by Mansergh although his critics claimed he was exaggerating.[373]

According to Barclay, "the Welsh water would cause 320 tons less of scale every year in boilers with the present consumption of water, and for washing purposes there would be a yearly saving of £35,000 in soap, calculating it at 2d per pound." [374] Alderman Clayton "wished (Barclay's figures) had included also an estimate of the saving in coal." [375] Similar points were made by councillor Pemberton, by Lawley Parker, and by the Corporation witness Doctor Frankland.[376] At first the press seemed enthusiastic about such economies, but later the Gazette and the Mail concluded that the promoters were overstating their case.[377]

The most serious allegation made against the Welsh Water by its opponents, however, was that it carried the risk of lead poisoning. There were two aspects to this charge: firstly, that the Elan water had lead in it before it left the water catchment area; and, secondly, that the soft Elan water would absorb lead from lead pipes. Again, however, the promoters successfully countered the claims of their rivals and implied that they were scare mongering. Yet again, therefore, the Corporation mobilised arguments as part of a wider mobilisation of political bias, and

this too helped to strengthen their position in the first dimensional, decision- making power struggle over whether the municipality should acquire water from Wales.

The allegation that the Elan water had lead in it from the beginning was made in the opponents' publicity material and, more authoritatively, by their witness Professor Wanklyn, who warned of "outbreaks of lead poisoning." [378] His assertion appears to have shaken counsel for the promoters, who argued that "if we were dealing with an ordinary court" it would clearly have been in contempt. [379] Such points were countered by Gray and Mansergh, who argued that water from a small lead mine could easily be diverted, and that, in any case, the Wye Fishing Board had already dealt with the matter. [380] In answer to Wanklyn's assertions the promoters recalled Dr. Frankland who agreed that he could find no trace of lead in the Elan water, and Professor Dewar, who asserted that to call the valley "a poisoned area" was "ridiculous." [381]

The second objection to the decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill was that the Welsh water was likely to acquire lead from lead pipes. This point was propounded by the Birmingham opponents in their campaign literature and in letters to the press. [382] Professor Wanklyn was again their most prestigious spokesman, although another opposition witness, Professor Hull, admitted that the problem could be overcome with suitable treatment. [383] For the promoters Mansergh, Martineau and

Frankland argued that filtration was the answer.[384] Barclay even claimed that, during its journey through the aqueduct, the Elan water "without any treatment being necessary, will most probably be rendered perfectly safe so far as its action on lead is concerned." [385] The Corporation's case was again good enough to persuade public opinion and the Parliamentary Enquiry but was not, in fact, correct, and, in the event, powdered chalk had to be added.[386]

The debate on the inadequate and increasingly polluted nature of local water supplies, like much of the wider debate on the 1892 Water Bill, can be readily analysed in the terms postulated by Lukes. It took place almost entirely within the parameters of his first or decision-making dimension of power, and his definitional categories are adequate to explain it. A decision had been made by the Corporation to go to Wales for an extra water supply. The local opponents attempted to reverse this decision by means of another decision, by Parliament, to reject the 1892 Birmingham Corporation Water Bill. They also waged a campaign in Birmingham to try to get the Corporation to review its original decision. The ultimate outcome, in the terminology employed by both Lukes and Dahl, was that A (the Corporation) exercised power over B (the dissentient ratepayers) in a situation of conflict to do something (pay higher water rates) that B would not otherwise have done. It is helpful to the analysis, however, to incorporate into this first dimensional struggle concepts normally identified with Lukes' second

dimension of power, such as the mobilisation of bias and the control of the political agenda. An important aspect of the successful mobilisation of political bias by the Corporation was its virtual monopoly of professional expertise on this issue. Practically all expert opinion concurred with the Corporation and disagreed with the dissentient ratepayers. In the mobilisation of political resources the Corporation's policy seemed, to almost everyone concerned, to be overwhelmingly authoritative.

6.4 The Elan and Claerwen Water Catchment Area.

Another claim made by the promoters in justification of their decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill was that the Elan valley was an excellent site for a network of dams. This argument was accepted almost unanimously, and the opponents made no significant attempt to refute it, apart from their unsuccessful claims about possible lead pollution summarised above. On this issue, as on some of the others, it is, perhaps, what the opponents did not do rather than what they did which is significant. The assertions of the promoters carried such conviction that the dissentients, realising that counter arguments were doomed to failure, appear to have followed the law of anticipated reactions and kept quiet. This failure of the Birmingham opponents to shake one of the Corporation's major propositions almost certainly contributed to the failure of their

case. As stated above, it was not only tangible political resources, such as control of the decision-making machinery, which the rebel ratepayers lacked. They were also incapable of mustering effective counter arguments as part of their attempted mobilisation of opposing political bias. Thus the political agenda, and the decision-making process in Lukes' first dimension of power, continued to be controlled by the Corporation.

The merits of the Elan valley had been extolled by Rawlinson in 1871 and were reaffirmed in 1892 by Mansergh, and also by Martineau, with the latter making propagandistic reference to the high opinion of the valley held by his opponents from London, Wales and Hereford.[387] The Birmingham opponents found it impossible to shake these general assertions, merely referring vaguely to "various engineering objections" and the need "to secure the safety of the embankments."[388]

Echoing Rawlinson's report of 1871, Mansergh and Martineau stressed the high rainfall of the area as a major advantage.[389] The only problem, Lawley Parker reported in 1903, was that the heavy rain was holding up the works.[390] The large size of the water catchment area was also commended by the promoters.[391] The Post described it as "a vast tract of mountain land,"[392] and at no stage did the Birmingham opponents, or anyone else, suggest that its dimensions were inadequate. Finally, Mansergh

and Barclay, again repeating Rawlinson's assertions of 1871, claimed that the construction of adequately large storage reservoirs was possible.[393]

The Elan valley, therefore, with a heavy rainfall, a big water catchment area and ample sites for reservoirs was hailed by the promoters as all that could be wished for. "The proposed works", claimed the Water Committee, "...will afford an ample supply, for the next 50 years." This claim was endorsed by Barclay and left the Birmingham opponents speechless.[394] Clearly, the strength of the Corporation's case on this particular question would appear to have been influential, unless it is asserted, as a general proposition, that political arguments have no effect upon the first dimensional decision-making process.

A major advantage of the Elan valley, in the opinion of its supporters, was that it would enable water to be conveyed to Birmingham by gravity, thereby avoiding the expensive necessity of pumping. On this too Rawlinson's opinion of 1871 was endorsed by Mansergh[395] who claimed that almost £30,000 a year would be saved.[396] Gray and Martineau put the figure at £20,000, but they both agreed that this was a big advantage, an opinion which was shared by Barclay.[397] These arguments were used as part of their pro-Elan propaganda by the local press.[398] Again, the Birmingham opponents had no very effective answers to the

promoters' case, and one of them was reduced to arguing that Birmingham, being a machine-making town, ought to obtain its water by machinery.[399]

The promoters made a serious error, however, in their analysis of the geology of the Elan valley. Mansergh claimed that this was eminently suitable for the construction of reservoirs and that ample supplies of suitable stone existed nearby.[400] Mansergh's opinion was endorsed by the judgment of the geological experts Topley and Green, from whom the Corporation commissioned a report in 1891.[401] But the experts were all seriously mistaken. The foundations had to be dug much deeper than at first thought, and there was a shortage of nearby stone for two of the dams.[402] The Water Committee might have taken warning from the case of Liverpool, where the same problem had arisen in the construction of the works at Lake Vyrnwy.[403] During the whole of their campaign, however, the Birmingham opponents made no reference to these future difficulties. The incident demonstrates that, even when the promoters did leave a chink in their armour, the dissentients lacked the expertise and other political resources to capitalise upon it. On this aspect of the debate, as on the others, the protesting ratepayers were quite incapable of mobilising their political bias to change the first-dimensional, decision-making agenda.

This discussion of the political debate surrounding the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill of 1892 is somewhat atypical. Many studies of decision-making tend to ignore political issues. Instead, they analyse conflict during the decision-making process in terms of opposing mobilisations of other political resources, such as the authority of office, pressure group activity and so on. All of these, it is true, influence the formulation of decisions within Lukes' first dimension of power. The additional argument advanced here, however, is that, in a constitutional system of government, political argument may also play a role in the mobilisation of bias. Furthermore, in cases involving real or welfare interests, the nature of the issue itself can have a powerful influence on the decisional outcome. In this particular case, it seems that the Corporation itself had no particular desire to go to Wales for water, and only decided to do so when constrained by dire necessity. Before taking this important decision, the Water Committee and the council considered the evidence carefully. The outcome of the debating conflict with the Birmingham opponents would seem to indicate that, after the fashion of sober and responsible political actors, they had judged the matter truly. In contrast, by the end of the campaign, the dissentient ratepayers appeared irrational and ill-informed.

7. Themes Relevant to the Birmingham Opposition.

7.1 Some General Political Arguments Advanced by the Bill's Promoters.

As has been seen, an important part of the successful mobilisation of political bias by the promoters in defence of their decision to promote the Welsh water scheme was the strength of their arguments, which were often in sharp contrast to the weak and ill- formulated assertions of their opponents. So far this has been investigated in the context of the specific issues raised during the campaign for the Welsh water scheme. The promoters, however, also made a number of more general points in favour of their proposals. These included the plea of urgency, the assertion that an adequate supply of pure water was vital irrespective of cost and the claim that, since the scheme was inevitable, delay was pointless. These points were for the most part effectively made, and appear to have strengthened the mobilisation of political bias in favour of the Corporation. Indeed, even the opponents tacitly accepted that an adequate water supply was a biological necessity. The overall effect of the council's arguments therefore was probably to strengthen their control over the decision- making agenda in Lukes' first dimension of power.

The promoters' argued that their decision to go to Wales for water stood in need of urgent implementation. Their arguments, however, were aimed at two separate audiences. To the people of

Birmingham, as well as the alleged inadequacy of future supplies, the danger of a rival appropriating the Welsh water catchment area was argued, an aspect which, as has been seen, it was impolitic to stress when pleading urgency against opponents from London and South Wales during the Parliamentary campaign.

To their audience in Birmingham, Grey, Mansergh, the Water Committee, Martineau and Barclay stressed that delay in implementing the decision to build the Welsh dams was fraught with danger. To make the mobilisation of political bias appear even more decisive, Joseph Chamberlain himself, it was reported, had written to Martineau in support.[404] Local opponents clearly thought they were being rail- roaded. The decision, they stated, "is being rushed and ... the requisite consideration of such tremendous proposals has not been allowed to the ratepayers." [405] Unlike with the cases discussed by Goodin, however, this attempt to manipulate the decision- making process by arguing that the time was not ripe was a desperate ploy by a politically insignificant minority rather than a powerful tactic by those holding power.

The claim that the decision to build the Elan valley works needed urgent implementation was also made during the Parliamentary campaign as a means of assuaging or counteracting opposition from other parts of the country. It was, for example, used by Chamberlain to Lubbock of the L.C.C., and again at the Bill's second reading.[406] In his Proof of Evidence, Mansergh

laboured the point at length.[407] Some people in London, however, like the Birmingham opponents, got the impression that they were being frogmarched into too hasty an acceptance of the Corporation's decision-making agenda.[408]

The plea of urgency was no mere debating ploy, however, and was implicitly believed by the Water Committee itself, and by its supporters.[409] "If they had not succeeded in proving the urgency of their case up to the very hilt," Martineau told the council, "it would have been impossible for them to have got the Bill through either House."[410]

Another argument is relevant to the concept of real interests normally associated with Lukes' third dimension of power. As Morriss suggests, where public health and well being are at stake, the definition of real interests, although contestable, is not necessarily contentious. It was thus difficult for the opponents to shake the promoter's assertion that, in the last analysis, an adequate supply of pure water was vital, irrespective of cost. Indeed, they did not even try to do so. "It was certain," Martineau told the council in October, 1890, "that the people of the district must have water,"[411] thereby articulating an argument that was to be heard many times during the preparation and passage of the Water Bill. Barclay and other local politicians such as Alderman Clayton and councillor Bradley thought the same, the latter adding that "cost was ... secondary."[412] Chamberlain articulated his own version

of the growth machine theories of Molotch by hinting at the industrial implications as well: "Without a full supply of good water the continuous extension and development of Birmingham will be impossible." [413] The argument, however, was most frequently put in the editorial columns of the local press with the clear objectives of drumming up support for the water scheme and reconciling the public to its cost. [414] Since the idea was universally accepted, opponents such as councillor Jacobs were restricted to propounding different views as to how to achieve it. [415] Even years later, when the rate in aid was imposed, the Post pointed out that the truth still held. [416] The general points are stated several times in the course of this chapter. Firstly, the force of the Corporation's arguments played a powerful role in the successful mobilisation of political bias in favour of the decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme. The more tangible political resources which the promoters had at their disposal, such as control of the formal decision-making machinery, were important but do not represent the full picture. Secondly, on this particular issue, unlike with the municipalisation of the electricity supply and the housing question, the policy-makers had little leeway for choice. An adequate water supply had to be secured, and expert advice indicated that the Elan valley was the best place to get it from.

The promoters, however, still had the task of persuading the Birmingham public and the Parliamentary Committees that this expert advice was sound. This, as has been seen, they did in a

detailed fashion, the debate centring on the inadequacy of local sources, the unsuitability of other supplies at a distance and the positive merits of the Elan water catchment area. But the general point was still repeatedly made, with or without adjacent corroborative demonstration. As a rider to the assertion, the argument was frequently added that the decision to go to the Elan valley was inevitable, and had been fully explained. Delay therefore was pointless, and the decision should be implemented with all speed. Thus, in October, 1891, the Water Committee asked for council approval to proceed immediately.[417] On several occasions, Martineau stressed that there had been enough talk, and it was time for some action, and the Corporation argued the same during the Parliamentary campaign.[418] The local press also constantly voiced a desire to get on with things.[419] As indicated above, this is an example of those in power doing the opposite of what Goodin suggests. Instead of manipulating the timing of decisions to slow down reform, the Corporation put the Elan valley proposals onto the decision-making agenda with what its opponents considered to be unseemly haste.

The Corporation's tactics posed problems for their opponents which they never successfully overcame. While arguing for the alternatives detailed above, the dissentients also stressed the need for more information, for time to reflect and consider, and for proceeding, if at all, at a leisurely pace. This was the view, for example, of Howard Lane, and it was repeated by other correspondents to the press.[420] "The haste with which the

scheme was rushed through the Council, and then sprung on the ratepayers", asserted the opponents' publicity pamphlet, "is much to be depreciated." [421] In the council chamber, Jacobs made the same point. [422] To refer again to Goodin, however, slowing down decisions by manipulating their timing is usually a game for those in power and not for those on the political sidelines. In this particular case, the ploy completely failed to influence the decision-making process in Lukes' first dimension of power.

7.2 Precedents: The Examples of Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow and Other Places.

So far, the opposing mobilisations of bias over the Corporation's decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill have been investigated mainly in the context of the attendant political debate. One of the main arguments has been that an important political resource possessed by the promoters was the superiority of their case. This superiority has been demonstrated via a detailed consideration of the issues which were in dispute. It was, it is claimed, one factor in the Corporation's overwhelming victory over the dissentient ratepayers in a situation of conflict within Lukes' first or decision-making dimension of power. But the Corporation had other political resources too, which, in comparison with those available to their opponents, reinforced still further their control of the decision-making

agenda. These other political resources included: the political advantages stemming from similar schemes previously promoted by others; and the plethora of expert advice and assistance which was at the Corporation's disposal. In contrast, the mobilisation of opposing bias on the part of the dissentients was hampered by their amateurism, and by a number of serious mistakes which they made. In the next three sections below these aspects are further investigated. There then follows a conclusion in which the various themes are drawn together and, as in the other sections, an evaluation is made of what this attempted application of Lukes' perspectives tells us both about Birmingham local history and about the utility of the approach itself. The conclusion also discusses the opposition to the Welsh water scheme within the wider context of ratepayers' movements.

The promoters were not left isolated in defence of their decision to promote the Welsh water scheme. What Birmingham was doing others had done before. The precedents of other great British cities were useful to the promoters of Birmingham's Welsh water scheme in various ways. Firstly, they provided useful examples from which to learn and to gain expertise. Secondly they furnished valuable propaganda material. Thirdly, politicians, officials and experts associated with similar schemes elsewhere acted as advisers, propagandists and friendly witnesses. All these factors contributed to the mobilisation of political bias in favour of the scheme, to the benefit of the promoters and the disadvantage of their opponents. Such factors

thus, in a situation of first dimensional conflict as defined by Dahl and Lukes, helped the Corporation to maintain control of the decision- making agenda.

Birmingham certainly gained from an engineering viewpoint from the previous experience of other cities. G. N. Yourdi, for example, the resident engineer at Elan, "had practical experience in connection with the Vyrnwy dam of the Liverpool Corporation." [423] In January, 1891, Gray reported that he had ruled out Lake Bala as a potential source of supply because it had been rejected by Liverpool. [424] The engineering technique of constructing the works in stages and gradually adding to the conduit pipes had also been previously tried and tested by both Liverpool and Manchester. [425] The decision of the Water Committee in Birmingham to rely on direct labour in the water catchment area rather than on contractors was based on a consideration of the examples of Manchester (which used contractors) and Liverpool (which did not), in the course of which Lawley Parker met his opposite number, the chairman of the Liverpool Water Committee. [426] And the experience of Liverpool with a pernicious micro- organism which clogged its conduit pipes facilitated the early detection of the same life form in the Elan water and the prompt construction of the Foel filter beds to deal with it. [427]

The experience of other cities was also useful in the determination of legal points and clauses. "We are told", Martineau testified, "that the experience of Liverpool and Manchester is that it is the ownership of the land by the Corporation which is the real way of preventing the pollution of the reservoirs."^[428] Martineau went on to explain that the clause relating to water sales to other towns was based on the precedent of Manchester.^[429] Likewise, explained the Corporation's counsel, to deal with the problem of rights of public access to the water catchment area, "we have adopted the Thirlmere clause", which derived from Manchester's experience.^[430] In the resolution of these and many other legal problems Birmingham was assisted not only by the examples, but also by the active co-operation, of the two northern cities. This was acknowledged gratefully by Martineau when moving the final acceptance of the draft Bill before the council in November, 1891. Their Town Clerks, he said, had given "very excellent hints."^[431] Finally, the financial arrangements for the Manchester and Liverpool water schemes provided useful guidance and precedents for Birmingham.^[432] The Water Committee in its report to council of April, 1891, drew various lessons and conclusions from the financial experience of Liverpool and Manchester, and furnished comparative figures of the costs of the Vyrnwy and Thirlmere operations.^[433]

The most frequent use to which the experiences of other cities was put, however, was as argumentative or propaganda material with which to sponsor and promote the Elan valley project, although there was no clear dividing line between this use and the more mundane and pragmatic use detailed above.

In 1871, Rawlinson made extensive reference to the experience of other cities and towns with regard to their water supply.[434] In 1891 and 1892 Mansergh argued that Birmingham should come into line with Glasgow, Leeds, Bradford, Liverpool, Manchester, and other towns and made particular play with the failure of Liverpool's wells.[435] He quoted their cases again before the Commons Committee in an attempt to show that it was reasonable for Birmingham, like them, to seek a supply for the next 50 years.[436] It was Martineau, however, who made the most extensive use of other cases. On one occasion, in this city of Chamberlain, unionism and imperialism, he pointed to the case of Bombay which "had obtained a supply from a distance of fifty miles." [437] He also frequently referred to other cities as good examples to follow.[438] Barclay's use of other examples was also frankly propagandistic. He made a number of points, including the obvious one that several other cities had also be forced to go to mountainous uplands.[439] The local press made similar points, with the Post throwing in the extra example of New York.[440]

The examples of Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow were also of considerable assistance in defending the Corporation's decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill during the Parliamentary enquiry, when the promoters' counsel made frequent reference to them, and friendly witnesses were procured from them.[441] Before the Lord's Committee, the Corporation's witness, Sir Frederick Bramwell, pointed out that 12 years earlier Lubbock of the L.C.C. had attempted to thwart Liverpool, just as he was now attempting to thwart Birmingham.[442] J. M. Gale, Glasgow's water engineer, commended the scheme in the interests of a local growth machine based on industrial interests. At with Glasgow's Loch Katrine project, he said, "there will be attracted to this area a large number of industries that could not be carried on with hard water." [443]

The attempts of the opponents of the Water Bill to use the examples of other cities to challenge the decision to promote the Welsh water scheme met with indifferent success. Councillor Jacobs tried to argue that, in a recent dry summer, Liverpool and Manchester had faced water famine whereas Birmingham's well water had pulled her through, an assertion which, as Martineau was quick to point out, conveniently missed the point that Vyrnwy and Thirlmere were not yet completed.[444] In a subsequent tussle with Martineau over the respective costs of Vyrnwy and Elan, Jacobs' performance was again unimpressive.[445] The Birmingham opponents, however, frequently tried to use the instances of Liverpool and Manchester to strengthen their case in letters to

the press.[446] They raised a number of points, including the claim that Glasgow's soft water was a cause of rickets.[447] In their amateurism, however, they failed to make good use of one obvious debating point namely that the cost of similar schemes elsewhere greatly exceeded the original estimates. This, perhaps, illustrates yet again that political resources such as plausible arguments are only potential resources until they are harnessed and used. As will be seen below, the mobilisation of political bias against the promoters was very ineffective, and this was to the dissentients' disadvantage and to the Corporation's benefit in the decision-making struggle between the two sides.

From time to time, opponents other than those in Birmingham attempted to use the precedents of other cities to challenge the decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill. For example, Thomas Ellis, M.P., a leader of the Welsh opponents, claimed that tenants in Vyrnwy were unhappy with Liverpool Corporation as their landlords."[448] Likewise, counsel for the London County Council implied that the clause concerning water sales to other towns was mere window dressing, and doubted that Liverpool and Manchester had sold any water at all.[449] Such comments, however, tended to be made in passing. They were not systematically developed and their impact on the decisional outcome was negligible. On the whole, the precedents provided by

Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool were effectively used by the promoters to reinforce their decision to proceed with a similar scheme of their own.

7.3 The Role of the Expert.

In the debate over the issues raised by the 1892 Water Bill it was seen that the case presented by the promoters was well-informed and expert whereas that of their opponents was frequently ignorant and amateurish. It has also been demonstrated that the precedents of similar schemes elsewhere were also useful to the Corporation in sponsoring and implementing their decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme. These factors, it has been claimed, played a significant part in the mobilisation of political bias by the promoters, and they help to explain the Corporation's success and the dissentients' failure in the decision-making conflict within Lukes' first dimension of power. However, perhaps an even more direct and obvious political resource available to the Corporation was the overwhelming weight of expert guidance, assistance and endorsement which was available to them. This, especially when contrasted with the amateurism of the opponents, also influenced the decisional outcome and appears to have been a significant factor in the successful passage of the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill.

The professional expertise available to the Bill's promoters was indeed formidable. A sizeable public purse enabled the best geological, engineering, legal, medical and other experts to be retained, if, indeed, they were not already employed by the Corporation. A wealth of political expertise was also available, free of charge, from among the councillors themselves, or from Chamberlain and the Birmingham M.P.'s. In contrast, the opponents of the scheme had neither the resources to purchase adequate professional assistance nor the political experience of the councillors and M.P.'s. The contest thus developed into a one-sided conflict over decision-making, in Lukes' first dimension of power, between efficient professionals and, as will be seen, incompetent and bungling amateurs.

Experts were used for a variety of purposes by the promoters of the 1892 Water Bill, one of the most obvious of which was to endorse the Corporation's decision-making agenda for the construction of the Welsh dams. The invaluable assistance of "all the professional men" who had assisted the Corporation was gratefully acknowledged by Martineau, although he went on to point out that they did not come cheap.[450] The propaganda technique of appealing to expert authorities in justification of the decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme was frequently resorted to by the press. "Experts have told us", recorded the Mail, and similar assertions were frequently made in editorial columns.[451] Mansergh was more specific, citing the

report of "the greatest living Hydraulic Engineer in the world, Mr. Hawksley, and other eminent authorities." [452] Barclay reinforced his case against wells with a long letter from a distinguished mining engineer possessing a string of qualifications. [453] The unanimous judgment of Rawlinson, Mansergh and Grey was cited by Barclay as good reason to support the decision to build the Elan dams. [454] According to the Post, "Sir Robert Rawlinson twenty years ago" argued that "we should go boldly to Wales for our supply." [455] In April 1891, to strengthen their case, the Water Committee had Rawlinson's 1871 report reprinted and distributed with their own report. They also found it expedient to remind the council that Mansergh had assisted Rawlinson in 1871. [456] Great trust was placed in Mansergh, and the arguments of the London-based engineer were constantly used by the promoters in their propaganda campaign. [457] In his Proof of Evidence, Mansergh himself listed his impressive credentials to strengthen his clients' case. [458] By 1904 Mansergh was, to Lawley Parker, "the greatest water engineer in the world." [459] In 1894, on the retirement of Gray, Mansergh became responsible for the entire works, including the aqueduct from Hagley to Birmingham which Gray had previously supervised. [460] Mansergh's recommendations, even on matters such as salary increases, were usually endorsed by the Committee on the nod. [461]

John William Gray, the Water Department's Engineer, was another well qualified professional who played an important role in the endorsement and implementation of the Corporation's decision to promote the Welsh water scheme.[462] His worth was recognised by both Martineau and Barclay.[463] G. N. Yourdi, the resident engineer at Elan, came with the highest recommendation from Mansergh.[464] Mansergh's high opinion of Yourdi was corroborated by others.[465]

E. Anthony Lees was appointed Secretary of the Water Department in 1893. He was well qualified and highly praised by Barclay and Lawley Parker for his secretarial and financial ability.[466] Another top bureaucrat held in universal esteem was the Town Clerk, Edward Orford Smith. Martineau, Lawley Parker and Barclay all spoke in the highest terms of his achievement in securing the passage of the 1892 Bill.[467] In the analysis of the Elan Water, and to advise and pronounce on associated medical matters, the promoters could rely on Dr. Alfred Hill, the city's Medical Officer of Health, whose assistance and authority was frequently invoked, and who was a valuable witness in the Parliamentary campaign.[468] There was even a proud advertising announcement in the Mail that Hill had told the Commons Committee that "he had analysed the water at Flinn and Co.'s Brewery and found it pure." [469] Among others who played an important role in the campaign, both as advisers and as authorities cited for propaganda purposes, were the Corporation's accountants, Howard Smith and Slocombe.[470]

The ultimate fortunes of the Water Bill, however, were determined not by experts but by politicians, and here, too, the Bill's promoters had some powerful experience at their command.

Considerable political authority resided in the Water Committee, which clearly enjoyed the confidence of the council, one of a number of examples in the present study of the power of council committees.[471] They played an important role in the initial stages in putting the decision to build the Elan valley works onto the political agenda. Their position was further reinforced by the full support of their first chairman, the veteran Alderman Thomas Avery.[472] Among them, Water Committee members possessed various expert and specialist skills. Alderman Beale, for example, was particularly useful in negotiations for land purchases.[473] It was generally agreed that the chairman's job was particularly onerous, and that both Martineau[474] and Lawley Parker[475] were able and well qualified men who performed it with great distinction. In 1904 Lawley Parker, as described above, became the first sitting councillor to be awarded the freedom of the city. He even came with a wife who was, in Hallewell Rogers' phrase, "an unseen but efficient ex-officio member" of the Water Committee,[476] and who was "the local Hon. Secretary of the Navy Mission Society, which has done much good work among the men employed on the waterworks." [477] As mentioned many times above, both Martineau and Lawley Parker had

the able assistance of Thomas Barclay as publicist, the second edition of whose pamphlet contained a whole page of favourable press comment on the first.[478]

In addition to the wealth of political expertise centred on the Water Committee, the promoters could rely on powerful and effective political friends in Westminster. These included Joseph Chamberlain, Jesse Collings and other experienced local M.P.'s, who co-operated closely throughout.[479] In addition, "Birmingham was ably represented on the Hybrid Committee by ... Mr. Powell Williams." [480] Chamberlain was also able to use his influence with his Cabinet colleague, Ritchie, the President of the Local Government Board, who firmly supported the measure.[481] But it was the political professionalism and expertise of Chamberlain which excited most comment. According to Martineau, all the Birmingham M.P.'s "rendered great assistance" but "especially ... Chamberlain, who fought their battle over and over again on the floor of the House of Commons with a zeal which was the admiration of all of them." [482] Barclay and the local press warmly endorsed this judgment.[483]

The legal aspects of the Water Bill were also dealt with by skilled professional experts. These included the Parliamentary draftsman, Fitzgerald, and the Corporation's London Parliamentary Agent, Pritchard.[484] Counsel for the Bill included no less than three Q.C.'s.[485] The leading counsel, Pope, appears to have been particularly effective. "The case is over", said

Campbell- Bannerman at the end of the evidence, "until you begin to tell us what to think, Mr. Pope." [486] When the eminent counsel did deliver his summing up speech it was, declared the Post, "admirably lucid." [487]

The eminent engineers, geologists and other experts retained as witnesses by the Corporation have already been extensively described and quoted. [488] Great stress was laid upon getting the support of the eminent geologist Lapworth, who, after some initial reluctance, accepted the retainer offered. [489] He, and those who assisted him, were described by Mansergh as among "the most experienced geologists in the country." [490] Both the Commons and the Lords Committees appeared shell- shocked by the barrage of top expert opinion. [491]

In the first dimensional conflict over the Corporation's decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme the array of expertise and talent available to the promoters posed serious problems for the Birmingham opponents, who clearly considered that the Corporation had an unfair advantage. "All the municipal skill, consideration, estimates, and professional assistance have been devoted to ... the promotion of the ... scheme," they complained, and "the whole official financial power of the city" had been mobilised against them. [492] An opposition witness before the Commons Committee complained of "the amount of money which the Corporation have in employing Counsel. The ratepayers think that we have no chance against such eminent

Counsel as the Corporation have employed."[493] Howard Lane made a different point - that the retained experts were self-interested: "We are naturally aware of the advantages that will accrue to ... experts who engage in and complete an undertaking of such an important nature."[494] His charge, however, made no discernible impact upon the decision-making process. In any case, money, for the opponents, was only part of the problem. There was also, in Birmingham, the respect which people had for their city council, and the political prestige which that body possessed. Thus, the high reputation of the city fathers gave enormous authority to their decisions, and to their control of the political agenda within Lukes' first dimension of power. The ratepayers who voted for the scheme, complained one dissentient, "simply heard the Council say we shall soon be short of water, and we shall have to go to Wales to fetch it."[495] The citizens, complained another opponent, "have accepted (the scheme) at the hands of the Council without consideration."[496]

Significantly, the times when the opponents came closest to shaking the Corporation's case was when they succeeded in finding expert witnesses of their own to speak on their behalf, such as the Professors Wanklyn and Hull.[497] The promoters found it a problem to discredit the evidence of such eminent men. Luckily, however, the Corporation's own expert witnesses, and its retained legal experts, were equal to the task. The Corporation's counsel claimed to "have known Professor Wanklyn for a long time as a man of great ability, but as ... somewhat eccentric."[498]

Another tactic of the promoters was to try to show that the opposition experts had been only very recently retained, and were consequently insufficiently briefed through lack of time. The most successful attempt at this ploy was the cross examination of Professor Hull previously alluded to, in the course of which the witness admitted that he had first heard from the Birmingham opponents "on Thursday last." [499] Another opposition witness, William Matthews, a former Water Engineer to Southampton, conceded under questioning by the promoters' counsel that he had only been in Birmingham to carry out his enquiries for "three days altogether" and had had no contact with Gray or the other officials. [500]

Thus, in Schattschneider's phrase, the mobilisation of political bias in favour of the Corporation's decision to proceed with the Welsh water scheme was greatly strengthened by the sources of expertise available to the promoters. Thus the Corporation's control of the decision-making agenda was strengthened and its victory in the first dimensional conflict with its local opponents was made more sure. This section, however, is also relevant to another debate in the secondary literature concerning the importance, in an increasingly complex and technical world, of the permanent official and the expert. To conclude the section, therefore, this wider debate is summarised, and related to the present research.

The role played by permanent officials and experts in the local history of Birmingham is highlighted in Briggs' summary of the municipal civil service.[501] Briggs adds, citing the example of the Birmingham Tame and Area District Drainage Board, that "a civic gospel ... by itself would not have been enough ... The sources of inspiration required more and more to be canalised in expert channels if life was to run smoothly and progress be maintained." [502]

The general debate among scholars on the role of the municipal official is summarised by Waller, who cites as examples Joseph Heron, the influential Town Clerk of Manchester from 1838 to 1877, and others. "According to their eulogists", records Waller, Heron and similar "outstandingly able men became in effect city managers; and their ostensible masters in the council were dummies to their ventriloquism." [503] Garrard, on the other hand, gives a somewhat less prominent place to the role of forceful personalities, a perspective which would appear to be endorsed by the present research: "Work and expertise, rather than economic weight, increasingly determined the way power was distributed - firstly among elected representatives, and secondly between them and their paid experts. Because of the growing scope and complexity of corporate functions in the urban setting, and the continuing pressures of business responsibilities upon members of the political elite, councils were finding it increasingly difficult to control their specialist committees. For the same reasons, committees were

themselves experiencing severe problems in keeping tabs on those they employed." [504] From an institutional viewpoint, argues Garrard, "nineteenth-century municipal officials had fewer advantages vis- a- vis councillors than their twentieth century counterparts ... The municipal hierarchies wherein decisions are taken that twentieth century councillors know little about, though clearly emerging, were still at an early stage. The national organisations of professional officials, now so important as networks for the circulation of privileged technical information, the creation of professional esprit de corps and negotiation with central government were scarcely evident at all." [505]

The present research would appear to corroborate Garrard's view, particularly with regard to three points. Firstly, no evidence has been found here of the influence of "national organisations of professional officials", although this may be partly attributable to the nature of the research scheme. Secondly, the council's committee system, as seen in all three of the present case studies, did indeed stimulate and thrive on the development of specialist expertise. Partly for this reason committee reports and recommendations carried great weight in the council chamber and were at the heart of municipal decision-making. Thirdly, Garrard's assertions are relevant to the influential role of the ad hoc expert who was not a council employee. It was clearly not "professional ... networks" but competent advice which gave the Westminster-based engineer,

Mansergh, his authority and credibility in Birmingham. The position of the retained expert in civic life, which has so far received little attention from scholars, can, perhaps, in this respect, be looked at side by side with the position of his more permanent counterpart.

7.4 The Amateurism of the Birmingham Opponents.

The skill and expertise deployed by the promoters of the Water Bill of 1892 was in sharp contrast to the ineffective amateurism of their opponents. In order to make an evaluation of the respective political resources available to each side in this first dimensional decision-making conflict the conduct of the opposition's case must be evaluated. Only thus can we reach a balanced judgment on the Corporation's superior "mobilisation of bias" (in Schattschneider's phrase) by which it successfully placed the building of the Welsh dams onto the political agenda. As will be seen, the difference in competence between the two sides is very marked, and played a significant part in the endorsement and implementation of the Corporation's decision to construct the Elan valley waterworks.

The vagueness of the Birmingham opponents, and their failure to develop their reasons for opposing the Corporation's decision to promote the water scheme, were the constant butt of ridicule and criticism from the promoters and their supporters, and Jacobs and Lloyd came in for particular attack.[506] To cite but one example, in June 1892, Lloyd asked the Mayor for a reconsideration because he was "convinced from investigation" that there was enough water locally, a vague and unsubstantiated assertion which the Post's editorial writer had little difficulty in ridiculing.[507] Beriah Shepherd was also prone to be unspecific, telling the Commons Committee somewhat airily that a duplicate set of pipes would cost "in round figures £1,000 a mile." [508] Other opposing witnesses appeared rather nebulous too. When asked by Campbell- Bannerman why there was opposition to the scheme, one of them replied "because everyone is convinced that there is plenty of water without any Welsh water." [509] In letters to the local press, this vagueness reached epidemic proportions.[510] At opposition meetings the vagueness continued, with accusations that the scheme was "useless and wild" and "mad." [511] Needless to say, such nebulosity was roundly attacked and mocked in the editorial columns of the local press, particularly of the previously tolerant Gazette, which by mid- 1892 had lost all patience with the dissentients.[512]

Sometimes, in their attempts to challenge the Corporation's decision- making agenda, the Birmingham opponents made wild and unsubstantiated assertions, of both a specific and a nebulous

nature. On occasion they posed as self-styled experts, as when Samuel Lloyd claimed to be "one of those who helped many years ago to form the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company,"[513] or when a press correspondent attempted to strengthen his assertions on wells with the information that he "had over forty years' practical experience" as a local well-sinker.[514] The ratepayers' meeting in December, 1891, saw, together with an attempt by one dissentient to read a set of figures which no one could follow, an assertion by a well-sinker that the Elan water would deteriorate in transit.[515] Usually, however, remarks were made with little claim to precise authoritative origins. In their publicity pamphlet, the Birmingham opponents laid great stress on the judgment of "competent mining engineers", "one of the principal pump-sinkers in Birmingham", "the best scientific and practical opinions", "practical men", and so on, most of whom were unnamed and unquoted.[516]

In the letters columns of the press some contentious assertions were made. One opponent did not like the planned reservoir at Edgbaston, arguing that it should be replaced by a number of "less dangerous ... ornamental" ones.[517] Another considered that the increasing tendency for people to live at a distance from Birmingham and commute in made a long-term project unnecessary.[518] Howard Lane had a series of strange ideas, including the apprehension that "as we increase the supply of water to this district from external sources, so will the difficulties and expense in dealing with our sewage

increase." [519] And so the list of curious and unsubstantiated ideas continued. [520] They were put forward at public meetings as well as in letters to the papers, as when one speaker declared that "Mr. Lloyd knew more about the water scheme than all the Town Council put together." [521] Again, such outbursts provided ammunition for the promoters. Mansergh attacked them in scathing terms, and even the urbane Martineau and the aged Avery were stung to a riposte. [522]

It is, indeed, difficult to deny Vince's assertion that most of the opponents' alternatives to the decision to obtain water from Wales were "obviously absurd." [523] One idea, from Beriah Shepherd, was that drainage water from mines might be used for secondary purposes, a scheme which was endorsed by one of his colleagues, but easily discredited and eventually abandoned by the dissentients themselves. [524] Shepherd also had a plan to build a ship canal from Liverpool to Birmingham, and offered water from it to the Corporation, another idea ridiculed by the press. [525] Shepherd, however, was undeterred and soon had another bright idea, "that we should construct leaky reservoirs and pump up the water pure and beautiful from underneath them." [526]

A variety of other comments and suggestions on the water question were made in the course of the campaign, most of which demonstrate the inherent dangers of laymen dabbling in specialist and technical areas of knowledge. One idea was to collect pure

rainwater from roofs for human consumption.[527] Howard Lane had a remarkable suggestion, namely "that electrolysis might be most effectually employed as a final purifying process on ... recovered sewerage water. The marvellous purifying effect of nascent oxygen, as produced at the poles of an electrical system, is well known, and the hydrogen simultaneously produced would serve to raise steam for the dynamo engines." [528] And so the silly ideas continued, with perhaps the silliest of the lot being the idea of a water train instead of an aqueduct to carry the water from Wales.[529]

As indicated, eventually the blind irrationality of the dissentients' assertions, and their stubborn persistence in the face of overwhelming evidence that they were wrong, alienated even the Gazette, previously the most sympathetic of the three daily papers to their case.[530] During the renewed opposition to the water scheme in 1894, the Post echoed the Gazette, describing Lloyd and his fellow dissentients as "half a dozen cranks", and likening them to flat-earthers.[531] Certainly, the alternative proposals and ideas formulated by the Birmingham dissentients in their opposition to the Corporation's decision to go to Wales for water were not impressive, and probably aided the mobilisation of political bias on the part of the promoters.

Apart from their unconvincing arguments, the Birmingham opponents also showed their amateurism by committing a number of serious mistakes. Their solicitor, Gough, for example, badly

vitiating his case before the Commons Select Committee by a series of blunders, one of the most obvious of which was the failure, despite friendly warnings, to cross-examine Corporation witnesses.[532] Other mistakes included: the insertion of an unofficial table among some official records without its being separately identified; the promulgation of opinions and hearsay evidence; and errors in the presentation of fact.[533] Gough was out of his depth, as he himself frankly admitted.[534] Indeed, he was not the only local opponent who ran into difficulties in the Committee room. Subsequently, Barclay, mentioning such opposition witnesses as Beriah Shepherd, Howard Lane and Edward Fletcher, added that "under cross-examination ... the testimony of these gentlemen was considerably shaken, and many admissions favourable to the Bill were obtained".[535] Their trouncing in the Commons Committee clearly dispirited the Birmingham opponents, and they presented no case against the Bill in the Select Committee of the House of Lords. As indicated above this in itself was a serious error, since, with the dissolution of Parliament imminent, a concerted filibuster could have proved extremely embarrassing for the promoters.

Professor Hull, echoing sentiments already quoted above, "regarded it as an abominable shame that the cost of opposition should be left to private citizens, whilst on the other hand the Corporation were able to draw upon the rates to back up their case." [536] The factor which he alluded to was undoubtedly an enormous disadvantage to the Birmingham opponents. But it cannot

entirely explain their catalogue of misguided thinking and botched actions. Access to the public purse, and an absence of amateur personnel, were by no means prerequisites of effective political action, as the history of the Liberal caucus and the Liberal Unionist Party in Birmingham clearly shows, and salaries for politicians were unknown of in those days. The conclusion must be that the calibre of political actors such as Martineau, Lawley Parker and their colleagues was superior to that of men such as Samuel Lloyd and Beriah Shepherd, and that, even if they had not been fortified with an arsenal of well qualified professional expertise, the purely political struggle would have been weighted in favour of the promoters. The ultimate outcome of the decision-making conflict between the two sides was thus decisive. The mobilisation of political bias by the Corporation was overwhelming, and the dissentients were completely outgunned. The Corporation emerged triumphant from the first dimensional struggle over its decision to promote the Welsh water scheme, and remained firmly in control of the municipal agenda.

8. Conclusion.

This concluding section falls into two parts. The first part places the Birmingham opposition to the 1892 Water Bill into the wider context of the secondary literature on ratepayers' revolts. The second part summarises what this application of

Lukes' dimensional approach to the study of power tells us, firstly about the local history of Birmingham and secondly about the validity of the approach itself.

The ratepayers' opposition to the 1892 Birmingham Corporation Water Bill is of relevance to the work of Gill, Hennock and Briggs on the history of Birmingham, and to the researches of McCord, Cossick and Hennock on ratepayers' revolts. It also provides a gloss to the assertions of Fraser regarding the mid-century opposition to Liverpool's Rivington Pike scheme. It would, for example, appear to qualify the findings of McCord and Cossick regarding the categories of ratepayers who were most prominent in the opposition to rate rises.

The main conclusion here arrived at, however, is that with the vital questions of public health associated with the provision of a pure supply of water, the nature of the issue itself and the urgent need to find an effective solution to it largely predetermined the final decision, even if that decision might have been delayed or fudged as a result of variable political factors. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the bankruptcy of the case put by opposition ratepayers against the Elan valley scheme. It would thus seem more appropriate, in the case of water, to concentrate on the issues themselves rather than, as Hennock does, to attempt an explanation of policy based upon a biographical study of the decision-makers. The position is well summarised by Waller: "In previous centuries, water

supply was one of several environmental factors which set limits to urban growth. Now, by sophisticated technology and enlarged wealth, this confinement was broken; but, for the larger cities, this massive cost of extending supplies brought political turmoil."[537] Kellett's remarks concerning the role of municipal government in the mid- nineteenth century also appear apposite here: "It was not a matter of ideology or theory, but simply of urgent necessity; of public duty in the oldest civic sense, or (if one wished to be more cynical) of self-preservation by those whose health and even lives were threatened".[538] Water would thus appear to be a very different case from the provision by the ratepayers of charitable welfare benefits, where, as will be seen, McCord's researches suggest that there was sometimes a distinct disinclination to pay up. The nature of the distinction between the two cases is indicated above, and arises from the difference between a public and a private good. An improvement of the water supply, or the improvements which might be anticipated from the municipalisation of a utility such as electricity, benefited the citizens as a whole. Welfare benefits, or housing reforms, largely benefited the recipients, or at least were thought to do so at that time. It might therefore be expected that the former might gain more general approval from ratepayers than the latter. Another way of viewing the distinction is that of the theorists of the growth machine. Dye, for example, as was seen in Chapter 1, would categorise the first type of policy as developmental and the second type as redistributive, and would expect the local growth

machine to support the former and attempt to exclude the latter from the local political agenda.

The present research has some interesting points of contact and comparison with Gill's account of the political history of Birmingham in the 1850's. This was the decade when Joseph Allday and the "economists" held sway. Gill's description makes it quite clear that, in many ways, these were the historical antecedents of the Ratepayers' Union of the 1890's. The influence of Allday's group in mid-century was hardly progressive. Gill writes, for example, that "in 1856 and 1857 the Council reached its lowest level. It was factious in debate, narrow in outlook, mean and reluctant in public service. The party of inaction was stronger than before." [539] And yet, a mere two or three years later, in November 1859, a "progressive group" of councillors scored its first victory when "Joseph Allday ... failed to secure reappointment as an alderman" and withdrew from civic life in a huff. [540] Why, one might ask, the sudden reversal of fortune for the party of retrenchment, and why, by the 1890's, had political sentiments such as those of Allday been relegated to the periphery of municipal life? Gill gives no very concerted explanation but, on the whole, seems to see the development in terms of an improvement in the calibre of the councillors, a theme which, as will be seen, is further developed by Briggs and Hennock. The appalling record of the council of the 1850's, however, particularly during Allday's mercifully brief ascendancy in 1856-7, would seem to point to

another, concomitant factor. The short-sighted and shallow policies of economy and penny-pinching were totally inadequate as a response to the problems of urban life in the nineteenth century. The realisation that this was the case came, first of all, to those most closely involved, namely the councillors responsible for Allday's 1859 rebuff. As late as 1855, Allday's charisma, and a dislike of being rated, were able to carry the day at a ratepayers' meeting, and a much-needed Improvement Bill was thrown out by an overwhelming majority. But by the 1890's, the ratepayers too, or most of them at least, were prepared to vote away their own money in the interests of public health and a pure and adequate water supply. And why did Allday retire so abruptly from the fray? Was it a peremptory personality, or was it also an inability to formulate and fight for a credible alternative strategy to that of the progressives? The Elan valley issue of a generation later provides, perhaps, an illuminating comparison. Given the stupidity and the baselessness of much of the local opponents' case against Welsh water, it was, one might think, fortunate that the Water Committee was chaired by Martineau and Lawley Parker rather than by the inheritor of Allday's mantle, Samuel Lloyd.

Hennock's doctoral thesis deals with the municipal reform movement in Birmingham in the period before 1876, and concentrates particularly on the role played by religious dissent in that movement.[541] "The recruitment of many of the abler big-businessmen in the town"[542] is stressed, together with

the idea "that this development was in some way closely concerned with the influence of the non-conformist churches." [543] Among the reasons cited for the growing interest of nonconformists in municipal life is the politicising effect of the furore over the 1870 Education Act, the devolvement onto the civic authorities of various public health functions previously undertaken by the churches as part of their charitable work, and, particularly in the case of the Quakers, the desire to curb the influence of the publicans on the town council. The impact of nonconformist preachers such as George Dawson and R. W. Dale within the reform movement is examined, together with the role of the Unitarians and Quakers, which Hennock argues was more important than that of the Baptists and various other groups. More significant from the viewpoint of the present research, however, are the sections on the sewage problem, sanitary conditions and the municipalisation of the water supply. The importance of such social questions in precipitating Christians of good will and charitable spirit into public life is clearly seen by Hennock. On the experience of the 1890's, an issue-based and decision-making analysis of such aspects, which was beyond the scope of Hennock's enquiry, would have strongly reinforced his argument. Carrying the analysis a stage further back, it might also be asked why the electorate was increasingly prepared to vote for progressives, and why the economists were able to mount no sustained electoral campaign against the new and more enlightened public men. Again, it is a hypothesis worth considering that the urgent perceived need for interventionist policies was undermining support for economy

among the public, and demoralising or modifying the political perspectives of the economists themselves. Certainly, as Hennock records, Thomas Avery, perhaps the most intelligent and flexible of the economists, became increasingly sympathetic towards a forward policy. In 1876, as has been seen, he served as the first chairman of the Water Committee, and by 1891 he was supporting the Elan valley project.

The companion volume to the book by Gill discussed above is by Asa Briggs, and traces the history of the city from 1865 to 1938.[544] In his explanation of the abandonment of the restrictive and parsimonious policies of the "economists" on the council, Briggs stresses the aspect alluded to by Gill, and expressed more forcibly by Hennock, that "reform ... could not go very far until a new type of councillor was elected by the wards." [545] Of the period after 1900 he writes that "there were natural enough complaints in some quarters that the standard of the Council had deteriorated in comparison with the golden age of the 1870's," quoting at some length from The Times in substantiation of his point. Briggs himself does not accept this argument, however. He concludes that "it is difficult to accept the thesis that the calibre of the Council deteriorated between 1877 and 1900. What had occurred, however, was a loss of faith in an adventurous policy of civic development" for which "the reasons ... were in large measure financial." [546] This important line of analysis is fully endorsed by the present chapter, a perusal of which leaves little doubt about the

political calibre and stature of men like Martineau and Lawley Parker. Briggs, however, makes no direct reference to the cost of the Elan valley operation in explaining the increasing disillusionment with expensive civic policies. This disillusionment was exhibited, for example, in the rejection of a draft General Powers Bill by a town's meeting and subsequent poll of ratepayers in 1902, and by the failure of a civic renewal programme proposed by the Public Works Committee in 1907, again amid strenuous opposition from the ratepayers. The present research would suggest that the escalating expenditure on the Elan project was a powerful factor in both of these incidents. Briggs' explanation of the council defeat of 1902 would seem rather lame: "The causes ... were mixed, but they reflected a considerable volume of criticism of the Council as such." (A re-drafted Bill, he adds, was subsequently endorsed in 1903.) The 1907 episode receives a fuller exposition, but still with no mention of Welsh water.[547]

In contrast to the case of Birmingham, Fraser, writing of Liverpool's Rivington Pike water scheme in the mid-nineteenth century, affirms that "there is really no place here for the picture sometimes dispensed of social reformers frustrated in their enlightened policy by intransigent, insensitive, selfish economists." [548] As has been seen, Gill suggests differently about the Birmingham economists of the 1850's, and the present research indicates that the adjectives utilised by Fraser are somewhat apt as a description of important elements in the

Birmingham opposition to the Water Bill of 1892. There thus seems to have been, on Fraser's analysis, a broader- minded type of economist in Liverpool than in Birmingham where Fraser himself castigates "the negative public parsimony of Joseph Allday" in the mid- 1850's.[549] In an allusion to Birmingham, Fraser correctly points out that Thomas Avery was an (albeit broad minded) economist in the 1860's, but omits that he later became the first chairman of the Water Committee and supported the Elan project.

McCord's study of ratepayer unrest in the North East limits itself to the field of social policy.[550] He deduces that ratepayers had "a disinclination to part with ... money" if the purpose was to fund handouts or welfare benefits for the poor.[551] His findings would thus seem to be only partially relevant, at best, to the Elan valley scheme, where an overwhelming majority of voting ratepayers supported an expensive project which they saw as of benefit to their own health and well- being. As explained above, the difference between public goods, such as an improved water supply (which benefit everyone) and private goods, such as welfare entitlements (which largely benefit, or were at that time thought to largely benefit, the recipients) may help to explain the ratepayers' different attitudes in the two cases. McCord is somewhat vague on the question of which sections of the ratepaying public were the most vigorous in their agitation for economy. He goes to some trouble, however, to stress the role of the poorer ratepayer and

to point out that, between 1870 and 1914, there "was a continuing increase in the number of workers who were direct ratepayers by virtue of owning house property." [552] On the basis of the present research, there is no evidence that such ratepayers were prominent in the opposition to Birmingham's Welsh water scheme. As has been seen, the main dissentients in Birmingham, insofar as they can be pinpointed at all, appear to have been large shopkeepers in the city centre, higher rated householders, landlords who rented out dwellings, and the owners of offices.

For Crossick, too, "ratepayers' associations reveal a petty-bourgeois radicalism", and such groups "appeared all over the country in the 1850's to campaign against sharp rate rises produced by expensive sanitary activities. ... By late in the century they were widespread, and evidence to the 1898 Royal Commission on Local Taxation reveals a clear sense of the conflict of interests between small property owners and the larger capitalist interests to which they sought to transfer some of the rate burden." [553] Again, the emphasis on the petty bourgeoisie would seem, at least in part, to be inappropriate to the case of ratepayer opposition to the 1892 Birmingham Corporation Water Bill.

In 1963, an article by Hennock on the subject of ratepayers' revolts in the nineteenth century was published. [554] This article focuses on the problems posed for civic leaders in persuading their ratepayers to accept increasing levels of local

expenditure and hence bigger rate bills. Hennock explains that the background to this scenario was that rates in many towns were the only significant source of income available to the municipal authorities, and that they fell disproportionately on certain sections of the population, especially on the landlords of small house properties. The result was that aggrieved or irate ratepayers, influenced or led by such elements, frequently formed associations which sometimes seized municipal power and initiated reactionary and penny-pinching policies. In these circumstances, asks Hennock, what could civic leaders do? There were, he suggests, three strategies, namely: (1) "careful financial administration",[555] which might have some good effect, at least at the margin; (2) "political skill and imagination"[556] and (3) the acquisition of "a substantial revenue independent of the rates",[557] such as, for example, a municipal gas undertaking. Insofar as the third of these strategies was the most firmly based, and likely to prove the most successful, one of Hennock's main conclusions is that "it would be illuminating to inquire rather more carefully ... into the social composition of urban local government bodies", particularly to see whether there was "a marked flair for business" among the membership.[558]

The present research, however, would appear to suggest that to concentrate on the relationships between civic leaders and their electorates and, as a corollary, to stress the social and economic origins of those leaders, is to misplace the emphasis of

the interpretation, an emphasis which Hennock himself, in the opening sections of his article, sharply highlights. "The urbanisation of England in the nineteenth century", he writes, "raised in an acute form ... the question of mere survival." In the eighteenth century, he argues, the towns contained a smaller percentage of the population, and the problem of high urban mortality rates was met by replacement of the dead with rural migrants. "Large- scale urbanization, however, presupposed a state of affairs in which towns were no longer parasites on the rural population. With the beginning of this process, the conquest of death and disease rose up as an urgent challenge, if major calamity were to be avoided." Hennock correctly sees this dynamic as the main reason for the introduction and growing importance of the new municipal and public authorities in the first place: "In one field after another the necessity of compulsory regulation, or the need for revenues greater than could be raised by voluntary subscriptions, made an increasing reliance on such authorities inescapable." [559] The present research strongly supports this general conclusion. In the field of public health, (for example, the provision of water) it would seem that the nature of the issue itself, and the urgent need to resolve it, were important factors in the determination of policy. To centre historical research on such aspects is likely to prove at least as fruitful as the study of the social and economic backgrounds of the policy- makers, although biographical details, and an investigation of political institutions such as parties and pressure groups, help to explain the timing and

direction of policy changes. For example, if the Water Committee, however composed, wished to secure the physical well-being of the people of Birmingham in the 1890's, it needed to find fresh sources of pure water. Unless it were incompetent, it would clearly attempt to do this by seeking expert advice. And the specialist guidance which it obtained, at the level of technical knowledge then pertaining, would lead it into directions which severely curtailed its policy options, whatever the origins, views and opinions of its members might be.

The limitations of Hennock's approach can be seen in his concluding analysis. True, he reaches the correct conclusion, namely "that in the 1890's" and afterwards "the factors discussed in this article were rapidly declining in importance." [560] His reasons for deducing this, however, on the basis of the insights afforded by the present research, seem distinctly weak, although he convincingly argues that "there is no single change in the franchise qualification that enables one to speak of the ending of ratepayers' dominance." [561] His own explanation incorporates two points. Firstly, he stresses "the interest taken increasingly from the 1880's by the new party organizations in local government politics." [562] This point, however, is thrown in at the end of a paragraph and is left undeveloped. Why, for example, were the ratepayers incapable of sustaining political organisations of their own which could effectively challenge the established political parties in municipal life? And why did not the ideas of civic retrenchment supported by ratepayers'

associations find a stronger echo within the established political groupings? Hennock's second argument is that "the factor of outstanding importance was the growth of the exchequer grant" which "cushioned the ratepayer against the effect of rising expenditure." On his own figures, however, the net result of this, after the reform of 1888, was to increase the exchequer grant as a proportion of local authority income from 5 per cent to 15 per cent by the early 1890's. Yet, compared with the enormous and unprecedented cost of the Elan operation, this increase appears comparatively insignificant. The acquiescence of the ratepayers was, it is true, obtained at a time when they were unaware of the final cost of the scheme, and increasing affluence and ability to pay might also have helped to reduce their opposition to expensive projects. Furthermore, a backlash from the ratepayers, as has been seen, could still rock the municipal authorities when expenditure which might be considered unnecessary was proposed.[563] But, for all the disenchantment with expensive municipal policies and the continuing dislike (despite the exchequer grant) of high levels of civic expenditure, an obvious point emerges from the present chapter, particularly if it is read in conjunction with Gill's account of the economists in the 1850's. By the 1890's the increasing political bankruptcy of civic economy in Birmingham was clear. In its extreme form, and when it failed to restrict itself to the margins of political policy-making, it constituted an irrational and dangerous element in local government. In particular, the opposition of the Ratepayers' Union to the Welsh water scheme, if

it had been endorsed by a majority of the electorate, might have put the health and well-being of the city into serious jeopardy, a fact which was clearer in the 1890's than it might have been in the 1850's because of improved scientific knowledge concerning the causes of disease and the wider dissemination of that knowledge among the population. Fortunately for the progress of the city, there were not enough ratepayers who were sufficiently stupid, selfish or ill-informed to put a dislike of high rates above what Lukes would refer to as their real or welfare interests. Interesting in this respect was the opinion of the Gazette, which, as has been seen, started out with a fairly sympathetic attitude to the Birmingham opposition and finished up by making the most scathing attacks of any of the three daily papers on their persistent pig-headedness.

The second part of this conclusion summarises what the attempted application of Lukes' dimensional approach to the study of power tells us, firstly about the local history of Birmingham and secondly about the usefulness and validity of the approach itself.

With regard to what the application of Lukes' perspectives tells us about the local history of Birmingham, the findings have been described in detail throughout the chapter and may now be briefly summarised. Birmingham in the late nineteenth century urgently needed an extra supply of pure water. This biological necessity largely predetermined the decision-makers' choice of

policy options. The Water Committee and the city council were forced to respond to the problem by calling in expert opinion and acting upon it. Sometimes that expert opinion was unsound or mistaken, as, for example, when the Corporation's geologists gave an over- sanguine report on the firmness of the Elan valley's bedrock. But, for all its shortcomings, professional advice still proved the only viable basis on which to proceed, and was far superior to the amateurish suggestions of the dissentient ratepayers.

The Birmingham opponents were for the most part selfish, narrow- minded and short- sighted. This is seen in the political debate where the promoters' expert and reasoned presentation of their case was in sharp contrast to the amateurism and irrationality of the local opponents. The latter had no sensible answer to the serious urban problem of water supply, and their illogicality and narrow sectarian selfishness rendered them ineffectual and politically bankrupt. Thus, in the management and development of Birmingham's water supply, factors such as the social and economic backgrounds of the policy- makers were peripheral to the overriding need to find a technically viable solution to a pressing biological problem. As will be seen, however, the outcome was less predetermined in the fields of electricity supply and housing.

The second objective of this chapter has been to investigate what this attempted application of Lukes' approach tells us about its validity. Here the conclusion is that Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories are indeed adequate for the analysis of political situations that are characterised by conflict over decision-making. It has been found convenient, however, as explained below, to utilise a broader version of the first dimension of power than the one postulated by Lukes. This broader version, for example, incorporates some of the concepts, such as mobilisation of bias and agenda control, which Lukes associates with his second dimension. Within this wider conceptual framework, two types of opposition to the Corporation's decision to sponsor the Welsh water scheme have been investigated, that from outside the city and that from within it. Both types were found to be amenable to analysis in the terms postulated by Lukes, although in some cases, such as that of the opposition of the L.C.C. and of landowners in the water catchment area, the analysis is quite complicated. In such cases, it could, perhaps, even be argued that the results do not entirely justify the effort expended. With regard to the Birmingham opposition, however, the application of Lukes' perspectives is fairly straightforward. Here, in Lukes' terminology, one party (the Corporation) prevailed over another party (the dissentient Birmingham ratepayers), in a situation of conflict, to do something that they would not otherwise have done (pay higher water rates).

With regard to Lukes' second dimension the conclusion is different. Here, as throughout the study, it is argued that the postulation of a second dimension of power as the realm of the "non- decision" is unhelpful. In the present case study, the aim was to look at the actual decision to build the Elan valley waterworks and thus so called non- decisions were only encountered incidentally. When they were met with, however, it was found that they were best characterised as decisions, usually, in this particular instance, to do nothing or to do something else. Hence, the council's failure, for twenty years, to take up a recommendation of 1871 to develop the Elan water catchment area is best represented as a decision not to act, and/or as a decision to develop local supplies instead. Likewise, the partial abandonment of local supplies after 1892 is best seen, not as a non- decision not to develop them, but as an actual first dimensional decision to pursue the alternative policy of going to Wales. As well as decisions to do nothing or to do something else, there is, it may be noted, another kind of so- called non- decision, encountered later, which is also best interpreted as an actual decision. This is a decision to change the rules and procedures of the decision- making process. There may or may not, of course, here and in the other case studies, have been a large number of other "non- decisions", but unless these can be represented as decisions of one sort or another they must remain metaphysical and incapable of empirical investigation.

On the other hand, the present case study suggests that historians and political analysts owe a debt to Schattschneider, Bachrach and Baratz and Lukes for developing the concepts of the mobilisation of bias and the control of the political agenda. These, however, are best seen, not as sustaining a number of non-decisions in Lukes' second dimension, but as influencing decisional outcomes within his first. The idea of the mobilisation of bias as a mobilisation of political resources, standard in the literature, is also endorsed. But, given the stress on conflict which is found within Lukes' first dimension and which is applicable to this particular case, it is useful to conceptualise the mobilisation of two opposing biases in the decision-making struggle. The relative weight of the political resources available to both sides (in this case, for example, to the council and to the dissentient ratepayers) can then be evaluated and appropriate inferences drawn.

Finally, to understand fully the decision-making process, a broader definition of political resources is needed than those normally given. Most analysts stress factors such as the power accruing to elected politicians, public officials and others who control the formal decision-making process. The emphasis on the skill with which political resources are deployed is also common in the literature. An example of this in the present case is the greater political effectiveness of professionalism and expertise as compared with amateurism and bungling. But, on the evidence of the present case, another, less tangible factor is

also important, namely, the force of political arguments. This can be seen in the discussion of the wider debate on ratepayers' revolts. Since most scholars, when analysing these, do not undertake a systematic analysis of the issues in dispute, they tend to miss one obvious possibility. This is that sometimes the advocates of economy and retrenchment may have failed to influence decisional outcomes because their case was weak and badly presented. As a rider to this point is another which tends to be ignored in the secondary literature. This is that with some issues such as water supply there may be urgent policy imperatives which must be met, irrespective of cost or political considerations. In such cases the nature of the issue itself may be a powerful factor in the mobilisation of bias, and may sometimes impel policy-makers into directions in which they would rather not go, and enforce decisional outcomes on political dissidents who might even, perhaps, be far more influential and far better organised than were the opponents of Birmingham Corporation in 1892.

To summarise the above discussion of Lukes' first two dimensions, what is applied to the historical facts in the present study is an expanded version of his first dimension which incorporates many of the conceptual trappings of his second. The utility of the second dimension, unlike its associated concepts of mobilisation of bias and agenda control, is denied, and no analysis of it in the form defined by Lukes is attempted.

The study, however, tries to amalgamate into its interpretation elite theories such as that of Molotch's growth machine which are normally identified with Lukes' second dimension. The growth machine, as in the other two case studies below, was found to be the most heuristically useful version of elitist theory. However, such evidence as emerges suggests that if there was a local growth machine, it was dominated by industrial interests rather than by those described by Molotch and linked to the ownership of land.

There was no evidence in the present case study of the operation of third dimensional power as defined by Lukes and studied by Gaventa. In other words there was no sign that people acted against their own real interests because of false consciousness or being misled by the powerful. This too is true of the case studies below. Nevertheless, Lukes' concept of real interests was found to be useful. It is relevant, for example, to the motivation of the dissentient ratepayers, who can plausibly be argued to have suffered from false consciousness. Here the view of Morriss is accepted that where human health and well-being are concerned, widely acceptable, if subjective, judgments can be made about real interests. It has thus been argued that it was not in anyone's real interests, including the dissident ratepayers', to receive an inadequate and dirty supply of water, no matter how much they paid in water rates. This indeed has been one of the grounds upon which the futility of the ratepayers' case has been postulated. The local opponents

accepted the claims of the Corporation that an adequate supply of clean water was vital, but they refused to endorse the implementation of that policy imperative. However, here the argument of Lukes' is stood on its head, and a progressive municipality is characterised as forcing some of the more stupid and short sighted citizens into unwillingly acting in their own real interests.

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4. Op. cit., p. 531.
5. Idem.
6. For a brief description of the works, see Water Department, City of Birmingham, The Elan Valley Waterworks, 1968, Ref: 663542 L45.31. Numerous and exhaustive details are contained in other sources cited, particularly, for example, the various engineers' reports. See also the description in Engineering, July 22, 1904, a copy of which is in one of the two volumes of newspaper cuttings which form part of MS 944 in the Archive Department of the City of Birmingham Reference Library. (Henceforth, these two volumes of newspaper cuttings, which are not differentiated by volume numbers are referred to as NC1a and NC1b.) Also included in MS 944 are the Minute Books of the Water Committee (henceforth referred to as WCM and followed, where appropriate, by the Minute number) the Minute Books of the Water Committee's Parliamentary Sub- Committee (henceforth referred to as WC(PSC)M and followed where appropriate by the Minute number) and the Minute Books of the Water Committee (Construction), later called Water (Elan Supply) Committee (henceforth referred to as WESC. and followed, where appropriate, by the Minute number). This last Committee was not a Sub- Committee, but the full Water Committee meeting to consider the Elan valley scheme. To references to some of the longer Minutes, page numbers are appended. The most important of the official Corporation papers are included in Birmingham Water Committee, Reports of the Water Committee and Minutes of Council, from Oct. 7 1890 to July 26, 1892 - Birmingham, 1892 z 11069 x Ref. L 45.32 668639. This useful volume was added to the Birmingham Reference Library while the present research was in progress. All the documents in it, however, were obtained from elsewhere, and all are included in the present study, separately footnoted. The Engineer's own description of the works can be found in Mansergh J., "The Bringing of Water to Birmingham from the Welsh mountains", Proceedings of the Royal Institution, 15 (1896-98), Ref: 140754, p. 670, where the interesting feature of the submerged dam at Caban

Coch is particularly well explained. For a magnificent collection of contemporary photographs, see the volumes entitled Birmingham water supply, Views of the new Waterworks in the Elan Valley, Photographed by J. Hudson, 1895-1904, Ref. 129665.

7. City of Birmingham Waterworks, A Short History of the Development of the Undertaking, with a Description of the Existing Works and Sources of Supply, p. 1. This volume, printed by James Upton Limited of Birmingham, is attributed to no author and undated, although it is accompanied by a supplement dealing with the period 1954 to 1966. It was kindly donated to the author by Mr. H. R. Bristol, formerly of the City of Birmingham Water Department. No copy has been traced in the Birmingham Reference Library, to which the author will donate his copy on the completion of this research. It is clearly, however, an update of the City of Birmingham Water Department, A Short History, etc., 1926, Ref. 331103, henceforth referred to as Short History, 1926.
8. Loc. cit.
9. Op. cit., pp. 1-2.
10. Op. cit., pp. 2-8.
11. Briggs wrongly dates the approval of the ratepayers as occurring in 1892 - A. Briggs, History of Birmingham, Volume 2, Borough and City, 1865-1938, Oxford, 1952, p. 90.
12. A general history of the Water Department in Birmingham during these years and of the Elan Valley project can be found in: Charles Anthony Vince, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Vol.3 (1885-1899), Birmingham, 1902 and Vol.IV (1900-1915), Birmingham, 1923., henceforth referred to as V3 and V4. The information for this section was for the most part taken from V3 and V4.
13. V3, p. 319; P.8.9.1891; G.2.11.1891. House of Lords Record Office Vol.2. Evidence 1892 B. Committee Office. Minutes of Evidence on the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill. House of Commons Select Committee (henceforth referred to as CM-Commons Minutes) 9.5.1892. The handwritten originals of these Minutes, and the House of Lords, Evidence on Opposed Bills B1. 1892 Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill (henceforth referred to as LM-Lords Minutes) were consulted during the present research, as well as the printed edition of the Minutes, Minutes of speeches and evidence on the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill (In Parliament, Session 1892) (With a copy of the Act.) (1892) Ref: 118843 LF 43.31. The printed version includes speeches of counsel omitted from the Parliamentary MSS. Thus, although the handwritten Minutes are the original

historical documents, for purposes of following up footnotes in the present study, the printed Minutes are more convenient, since references to the speeches of counsel will not be traceable in the MSS. Since the pagination is different in the two sources, the references are particularised by indicating the date of the relevant hearing.

14. P.8.9.1891; P.10.9.1891. CM.9.5.1892; CM.9.5.1892. Barclay, (Sir) T., The Future Water Supply of Birmingham (Elan Valley Scheme): A Lecture, 1891, Ref: 111980 and 2nd ed., 1892, Ref: 531701 L45.31 . For the most part, the second edition (henceforth referred to as B) is cited in the present study. It is an expanded version of the first edition including, for example, an Appendix replying to the scheme's critics point by point. A comparison of the two editions thus gives interesting insights into the growing local opposition to the scheme, and of the Water Committee's response to it. Reference is also made herein to Thomas Barclay, The Future Water Supply of Birmingham, 3rd ed., 1898, Ref: L45.31 143679, henceforth referred to as B (3rd ed.)
15. CM 1.4.1892; P.14.6.1892; The Times, 8.3.1892, in (Newspaper cuttings, etc., relating to the Birmingham water scheme.) 2 vols. (1891-1904) Ref: L45.31 115557 (Vol.1) 208890 (Vol.2) (henceforth referred to as NC2). All references are to volume 1 unless otherwise stated.
16. G.19.3.1902; G.21.4.1892.
17. G.22.4.1891.
18. G.9.3.1892 and G.14.5.1892.
19. M.23.2.1892; M.25.6.1892.
20. M.8.3.1892, also in NC2, pp. 215-6, where the original letter to The Times is pasted.
21. G.8.2.1894 in NC2, p. 233.
22. The Times, 8.3.1892, in NC2, p. 216.
23. P.13.10.1891.
24. Birmingham Corporation Water, In Parliament Session 1891, Reprint of proof of evidence by J. Mansergh in support of the Bill, 1897, Ref: L45.3 227130 (henceforth referred to as Mansergh, 1892), p. 2.
25. WCM.4452, p. 265; M.7.4.1891; G.2.11.1891.
26. P.7.12.1891.

27. B, 3rd ed., p. 190.
28. P.22.4.1891.
29. G.2.11.1891.
30. M.21.4.1891; P.8.4.1891.
31. P.8.4.1891.
32. V3, pp. 321-1 and 323-5; V4, p. 491. Mansergh, 1892, pp. 56-7; WESC., Meetings held on 9.12.1892, 13.1.1893, 17.1.1893 and 10.2.1893.
33. V3, pp. 322-3. For photographs of life in the village, see J. Hudson, *op. cit.*
34. V4, pp. 439 and 440; NC1a and b, *passim* and NC2, Vol.2, *passim*.
35. P.27.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 102.
36. M.17.10.1904, in NC1a, p. 133.
37. Birmingham Evening Despatch, 17.10.1904, in NC1a, p. 133.
38. *Idem.* 8.10.1904, in NC1a, p. 135, where full details are given of Lawley Parker's life and career, and of the six previous honorary freemen. There are various other reports and commentaries on the issue - *ibid.*
39. NC1b, p. 194 ff., where the full story of the presentation, etc., as told in the various newspapers, is recorded.
40. CM.1.4.1892.
41. M.7.12.1891.
42. *Idem.* Alcraft has discovered, via his researches among the Chamberlain papers, that Chamberlain "privately had serious misgivings" about the 1892 Water Bill, but that "his doubts were avowedly personal and private and never publicly expressed." - D. H. Alcraft. "Joseph Chamberlain and the Politics of Central Birmingham, 1889-1895", M.A. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1978, pp. 75 and 139. The precise reference is in note 40 on p. 75.
43. P.8.12.1891.
44. P.30.11.1891.

45. M.15.12.1891. For more about councillor Jacobs see the section on the Birmingham opponents of the Elan proposals below.
46. Christopher Maurice Green, "The Growth of Conservatism in Birmingham, 1873-1891", B.A. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1971, p. 6 and elsewhere.
47. Briggs, 1952, op. cit., p. 188.
48. Alcraft, op. cit., pp. 74-5.
49. Ken Young, Local Politics and the Rise of Party: The London Municipal Society and the Conservative Intervention in Local Elections, 1894-1963, Leicester, 1975, p. 29.
50. Idem, p. 30.
51. Briggs, 1952, op. cit., p. 188. See also, pp. 175-9 and 185-191 on the relations between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives.
52. Fulford (H.C.), "The great Liberal victory in London, The Birmingham water scheme, and the taxation of ground values, A speech published by the Birmingham Liberal Association", in Birmingham Parliamentary Elections. A collection of Leaflets, etc., 1892, (On page 51 of collection and not recorded in `Contents.')
- Ref: 115846, p. 5.
53. M.24.2.1892.
54. M.7.3.1892; Fulford, op. cit., p. 4.
55. P.1.6.1892.
56. M.9.3.1892.
57. M.5.4.1892.
58. P.9.3.1892; M.9.3.1892.
59. M.30.3.1892.
60. G.14.5.1892.
61. Quoted in M.4.6.1892.
62. G.14.5.1892.
63. G.1.6.1892. See also P.27.5.1892.
64. G.1.6.1892.
65. V3, p. 315, and M.21.6.1892.

66. M.18.5.1892.
67. CM.9.5.1892; P.5.3.1892; M.28.6.1892.
68. See, for example, the editorial in M.6.4.1891.
69. Mansergh, 1892, p. 55; LM. 13.6.1892.
70. M.12.3.1892.
71. P.23.6.1892.
72. P.27.7.1872. For full lists of petitioners, including those who withdrew or settled outside the Committee, see CM.31.3.1892 and WCM.15,405 (p. 280).
73. M.24.2.1892.
74. V3, pp. 311-312.
75. WC(PSC)M. 371.
76. WESC.11.
77. WCM.4452, p. 270.
78. The Times, 8.3.1902, in NC2, p. 218.
79. P.8.4.1892.
80. V3, p. 311.
81. M.23.2.1902.
82. WCM.4452, p. 277.
83. M.14.10.1891.
84. CM.31.3.1892.
85. M.8.10.1891.
86. P.27.7.1892.
87. Mansergh, 1892, p. 14.
88. LM.15.6.1892.
89. CM.1.4.1892.
90. M.10.3.1892.
91. P.7.12.1891.

92. M.26.2.1892.
93. CM.9.5.1892; G.7.2.1894, in NC2, Vol.1, p. 230.
94. For histories of London's water supply which concentrate on the early nineteenth century see: T. F. Reddaway, "London in the Nineteenth Century, III: The Fight for a Water Supply", in The Nineteenth Century and After, 148 (1950) 118-130; and John David Graham- Leigh, "The Transformation of London's Water Supply, 1805-1821", M.Phil thesis, Open University, 1984. For treatments of subsequent developments, see: Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay, "The Politics of London Water", The London Journal, 1, no. 2 (November 1975) 207-224; and Idem, "The Politics of London Water Supply 1871-1971", Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1972. A history of the engineering works, from the sixteenth century onwards, is to be found in: H. W. Dickinson, Water Supply of Greater London, Newcomen Society, Leamington Spa and London, 1954. On the local government of London see: William A. Robson, The Government and Misgovernment of London, 2nd ed., 1948; Ken Young, "The Politics of London Government, 1880-1899", Public Administration, 51, no. 1 (1973): 91-108; and Ken Young and Patricia L. Garside, Metropolitan London: Politics and Urban Change 1837-1981, 1982. Related to water supply is the question of public health in the metropolis. On this, see: Mary Kilbourne Matossian, "Death in London, 1750-1909", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 16, no. 2 (Autumn 1985): 183-197; Anne Hardy, "Smallpox in London: factors in the decline of the disease in the nineteenth century", Medical History, 27 (April 1983): 111-138; Thomas R. Forbes, "By What Disease or Casualty: The Changing Face of Death in London", Journal of the History of Medicine, 31, no. 4 (October 1976): 395-420; W. Luckin, "The final catastrophe- cholera in London, 1866" Medical History, vol. 21 (January 1977): 32-42 and Bill Luckin, "Evaluating the Sanitary revolution: typhus and typhoid in London, 1851-1900", Chapter 5 in Robert Woods and John Woodward (eds.), Urban Disease and Mortality in Nineteenth Century England, 1984, pp. 102-119. References on the wider questions of water supply and public health are given later in this chapter. For a treatment of public health in London which concentrates on the question of the water supply, see: Anne Hardy, "Water and the search for public health in London in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries", Medical History, 28 (July 1984): 250-282. The question of London's water supply was an early case study in the debate on laissez- faire and the proper limits of state activity. On this see Pedro Schwartz, "John Stuart Mill and Laissez- Faire: London Water", Economica, New Series, 33 (February, 1966): 71-83. None of the sources cited in this footnote, however, make any reference to the London opposition to the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill of 1892.

95. M.23.2.1892.
96. P.2.10.1891.
97. M.15.3.1892.
98. M.23.2.1892.
99. M.2.3.1892; M.9.3.1892.
100. Garnett (W.), A little book on water supply, (containing a chapter on the Birmingham water supply), Cambridge, 1922 Ref: 530378, p. 45. For a contemporary treatment of London's water, see Edward Frankland, "The Past, Present and Future Water Supply of London", Proceedings of the Royal Institution, 15 (1896-98): 53-74. The same volume also contains an article by Mansergh on the Elan scheme.
101. B, p. 38.
102. Hassan, op. cit., p. 532.
103. CM.8.4.1892.
104. M.26.7.1892.
105. P.11.4.1892. For Hassard's original report, see Hassard (R.), The Water Supply of Birmingham: a paper descriptive of a project for procuring water for Birmingham and adjacent districts from the upper drainage areas of the rivers Teme, Ithon and Wye, laid before the Committee of the Corporation, Feb. 26th 1870, Ref: 4821045. The proposal was rejected in 1871 by Rawlinson, the engineer retained by the Corporation. See Rawlinson ([Sir] R.) Birmingham water supply. Report on the public and domestic supply of water to Birmingham (1871) Ref: 109926 (henceforth referred to as Rawlinson, 1871), p. 29 ff. Also relevant is Hassard (R.) Birmingham water supply: a review of Mr. Rawlinson's report etc. 1871. Ref: 482104.
106. P.22.4.1891. The detailed arguments for and against the Teme and Ithon proposals are omitted from the present study, but may be found in the sources cited.
107. V3, p. 312. For a general history of Welsh nationalism, see Kenneth O. Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism: The Historical Background", The Journal of Contemporary History, 6, no. 1 (1971): 153-172.
108. M.8.3.1892.
109. M.9.3.1892 and M.12.3.1892.

110. CM.11.3.1892.
111. M.30.3.1892 and M.5.4.1892.
112. M.12.3.1892. The standard biographies of Lloyd George, such as that by Grigg, make no mention of this incident in his early career. See John Grigg, The Young Lloyd George, 1973.
113. Quoted in M.12.3.1892.
114. M.9.3.1892.
115. CM.11.5.1892.
116. M.9.3.1892.
117. M.9.3.1892.
118. P.1.6.1892.
119. M.1.3.1892.
120. M.9.3.1892.
121. CM.11.5.1892; P.1.6.1892.
122. V3, p. 315; LM.15.6.1892.
123. LM.16.6.1892.
124. LM.17.6.1892.
125. P.27.7.1892; Mansergh, 1892, pp. 54-55; LM.15.6.1892.
126. M.12.5.1892; M.17.6.1892.
127. CM.3.5.1892.
128. CM.3.5.1892.
129. WC(PSC)M. 359.
130. Idem and V3, p. 322.
131. G.20.11.1891.
132. CM.1.4.1892. Local Acts 55 and 56 Victoria 1892. Vol.5 Cap. 172-213 (House of Lords Records Office) (55 & 56 Vict.) Birmingham Corporation Act, 1892 (Ch. cixxiii) (henceforth referred to as Act, and followed by the number of the section of the Act referred to.) A copy of the Act is also included in the printed Parliamentary Minutes (CM. and LM.) as referenced above.

133. M.26.4.1892.
134. CM.5.5.1892; Act, 54.
135. CM.5.5.1892.
136. P.27.7.1892. The following section on land interests is also relevant to common rights, as is the section on the Commons Preservation Society below.
137. P.27.7.1892. See also V3, p. 314.
138. Williams (J.), A General history of the county of Radnor, compiled by E. Davies, 1905, Ref: 202201, p. 410, where biographical details are given.
139. CM.4.4.1892, Mansergh's evidence.
140. Mansergh 1892, pp. 26-28. 1870, of course, was the year when Mansergh had gone to research the Elan valley for Sir Robert Rawlinson - see also Rawlinson, 1871, op. cit.
141. WC(PSC)M.15.
142. WC(PSC)M.211.
143. CM.1.4.1892.
144. CM.6.4.1892.
145. P.27.7.1892; G.7.2.1894, in NC2, p. 231.
146. P.27.7.1892. For details of this and other buy- outs, see WCM.4452, pp. 273 and 281, where it appears that the total money paid for all the purchases itemized was £286,279. After the passing of the Water Act, Lewis Lloyd was still a force to be reckoned with in the valley. - WESC. 4, 5 and 6.
147. V3, p. 320; On the Prickard family, see Williams, 1905, op. cit., p. 399.
148. Birmingham Corporation Water Act, 1892, Arbitration between Rev. W. E. Prickard and the Corporation of Birmingham (re Dderw estate proceedings), Nov. 1896, Feb. 1897 (1896-7), Ref: 227128 LF.45.31; V3, pp. 320-1.
149. LM.15.6.1892; WCM.4452, p. 277.
150. CM.3.5.1892; Mansergh, 1892, p. 24; CM.4.4.1892.
151. CM.9.5.1892; WC(PSC)M.358.

152. WCM.4549. In all, "leasehold interest in mining rights over about 1,200 acres" was purchased from the Company - WCM.4452, p. 281.
153. M.1.3.1892; WCM.4,452, p. 268-9; CM.11.3.1892; Shaw- Lefevre was the M.P. for Bradford. - M.12.3.1892.
154. CM.11.3.1892; CM.1.4.1892.
155. CM.7.4.1892. Public access, of course, is not necessarily compatible with the interests of farmers exercising common grazing and other rights. For the final settlement of the question see Act, 53.
156. CM.5.5.1892.
157. Act, 54. For an interesting account, from 1903, of "Salmon poaching at Rhayader", see NC1b, p. 52. There also seems to have been a difference of interests between the trout fishers near the water catchment area and the salmon fishers downstream. - CM.4.4.1892.
158. V3, p. 314.
159. M.26.2.1892.
160. M.10.3.1892; M.14.3.1892.
161. M.31.3.1892. For a copy of this Report, see Water Bills. Copy of the Report by the Board of Trade upon the Birmingham Corporation Water Bill, 1892. Ref: 113976 LP 45.31.
162. Mansergh, 1892, pp. 31-33, emphasis in original.
163. CM.1.4.1892.
164. CM.6.4.1892; P.27.7.1892; WCM.4,540.
165. CM.2.5.1892; WCM 4,452, p. 271.
166. CM.19.5.1892.
167. LM.13.6.1892.
168. WCM.4,452, p. 273.
169. M.2.12.1892; M.9.3.1892.
170. M.9.3.1892; WCM.4,452, pp. 269-270.
171. M.11.4.1892.
172. M.19.3.1892; M.6.4.1892.

173. M.9.4.1892.
174. CM.4.4.1892.
175. CM.5.4.1892.
176. P.27.7.1892. For the exact details, see Act 62, also summarised in V3, p. 317.
177. Water Department, Report of Mr. J. Mansergh on additional water supply, (City of Birmingham), 1891, Ref: 109925 L45.3 (henceforth referred to as Mansergh, 1891); P.8.4.1891. For the engineering aspects of the provision of compensation water, involving a submerged dam below the Caban Coch reservoir, see Mansergh's article quoted above.
178. Mansergh, 1892, pp. 28-29. A footnote added later by Mansergh claims that "since we have been at work in the valley, the flow has fallen to under four million gallons a day." For other estimates of the dry weather flow see Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club Second Field Meeting, Tuesday, June 23rd 1896. Visit to the Works of the proposed Birmingham Water Supply from the Elan Valley in Wales. Ref. L45.31 664003, p. 152; and Short History, 1926, p. 9.
179. CM.4.4.1892.
180. CM.2.5.1892.
181. CM 18.5.1892.
182. Mansergh, 1892, pp. 52-3, emphases in original. For another account of the provision for spates see Woolhope Naturalists, etc., 1896, loc. cit.
183. M. 18.5.1892.
184. P.2.1.1905 and Western Mail, 2.1.1905 and 6.2.1905; in NC1b, pp. 155-170, where the saga is covered at length.
185. WC(PSC)M.10.
186. WC(PSC)M.21 and 29.
187. WC(PSC)M.41 and 57.
188. WC(PSC)M.214; WC(PSC)M. 23.2.1892.
189. M.5.3.1892; P.9.3.1892; V3, p. 301.
190. V4, pp. 446-7.
191. P.22.4.1891.

192. P.2.12.1891.
193. M.9.2.1892.
194. M.2.3.1892.
195. M.15.3.1892.
196. M.18.3.1892.
197. P.15.6.1892.
198. M.8.3.1892.
199. Water Department, Engineer's Report on the supply of water to Birmingham, (City of Birmingham, 1891), Ref: 109923 (henceforth referred to as Gray, 1891.) p. 10. As will be seen, the Whitacre supply was eventually used by Coventry.
200. G.29.3.1892.
201. V3, p. 312; Mansergh, 1891, p. 25; P.8.4.1891; P.14.10.1891; CM.1.4.1892; WCM.4452, p. 267; P.8.4.1891; LM.16.6.1892.
202. The Times, 9.3.1892, in NC2, p. 218; M.20.6.1892; CM.4.4.1892.
203. Act, 62; V3, pp. 317. For the possible implications of water sales for the engineering works and the size of the aqueduct see Mansergh, 1892, pp. 39-40.
204. WCM.8,752; V4, p. 447, where full details are given.
205. V3, p. 301.
206. M.20.4.1891; P.20.4.1891. As was seen above, Jacobs, who represented All Saints Ward, was a Conservative but obeyed no Conservative Party whip. For more details see P.12.12.1891 (Supplement).
207. P.22.4.1891; G.22.4.1891; P.14.10.1891.
208. B, p. 29; WCR. 24.11.1891, p. 2; P.25.11.1891; P.7.12.1891. As recorded in chapter 3 below, the number attending the ratepayers' meeting to ratify the municipalisation of the Electricity Supply Company, an issue which was considerably less contentious than the Elan scheme, was less than 20.
209. P.7.12.1891. For the full and complicated details of the voting system, see M.7.12.1891. For more details of the legislation under which the poll was held, and of the four previous occasions when "obstinate minorities" had demanded polls which they subsequently lost, see P.8.12.1891; CM.9.5.1892.

210. WCM.4,452, p. 267. For an account of the voting, see P.10.12.1891.
211. M.8.3.1892.
212. WCM.4,452, p. 267. For a sample of the letters see G.23.2.1892 and The Times, 8.3.1892, in NC2, p. 216.
213. Double Service, 1892, pp. 5, 21-2, 26, and 30; M.20.2.1892; M.5.3.1892; M.8.3.1892; M.11.3.1892; M.25.5.1892.
214. CM.1.4.1892; CM.9.5.1892; M.10.5.1892; Double Service, 1892, pp. 45 and 47.
215. CM.1.4.1892; WCM.4452, pp. 271-2.
216. WC(PSC)M.306.
217. M.4.5.1892. For details of the proceedings, see CM.4.5.1892; CM.5.5.1892; CM.9.5.1892.
218. CM.31.3.1892; CM.1.4.1892.
219. Double Service, 1892. This information emerges from the quoted letters to the press, pp. 31 ff.
220. G.28.3.1892; G.28.4.1892; M.2.6.1892.
221. M.8.6.1892.
222. M.13.6.1892; M.15.6.1892. The document was, in fact, written by the solicitor, Gough, who claimed Wilson had agreed to it. For the text of the correspondence, together with associated letters and further press comment, see P.8.6.1892; P.14.6.1892; P.15.6.1892; P.16.6.1892; P.20.6.1892; P.21.6.1892; G.13.6.1892. See also WC(PSC)M.312; WCM.4452, p. 275; M.18.6.1892. Although the document itself does not seem to have survived, many of its contents, particularly those which caused greatest offence, can be discovered or deduced by consulting the sources cited above.
223. M.20.5.1892; M.25.5.1892.
224. Alcraft, op. cit., pp. 75-6.
225. M.23.6.1892.
226. M.18.6.1892; P.23.6.1892; G.16.6.1892.
227. M.25.6.1892.

228. G.28.6.1892. The analysis below will attempt to show that the large number of big ratepayers in Market Hall Ward was a significant factor in Lloyd's victory. Vince comments as follows on subsequent events: "In the following year a supporter of the Scheme was returned by a narrow majority for the same Ward. Subsequently, two gentlemen who had given evidence for the Birmingham opposition before the Hybrid Committee were elected by Saint Mary's Ward. But on the whole the results of contested elections do not appear to carry any inference modifying the estimate of the balance of public opinion derived from the vote of December, 1891. The polls afford no evidence that any supporter of the scheme had to any appreciable extent lost the confidence of his constituents." - V3, p. 318.
229. Christopher Green, "Birmingham's Politics, 1873-1891: The Local Basis of Change", Midland History, 2, no. 2 (Autumn 1973) pp. 84-98. The quotation is from p. 90. Green adds that "the Market Hall vote reflected the view of the Edgbaston and Harborne burgesses, who seem not to have bothered to vote at home, but exercised their business votes." - Idem. This assertion must, of course, be considered speculative, since it refers to the period after the introduction of the secret ballot.
230. Op. cit., pp. 75-6.
231. P.27.7.1892; V3, p. 318.
232. V3, p. 319; G.7.2.1894 in NC2, pp. 227-232; G.7.2.1894 in NC2, p. 232.
233. NC2, p. 227, handbill, reprinted from G.23.1.1894.
234. NC2, pp. 284-288.
235. NC2 pp. 227-237 and 277-288. See also Lloyd (Samuel), Birmingham water supply. Welsh water scheme. A review of the present situation [with] a speech upon our local supplies, at a meeting of the City Council, Feb. 6th, 1894, Ref: 134586.
236. CM.9.5.1892.
237. V3, p. 301.
238. P.22.4.1892. The words in brackets added to Jacobs' speech are inserted to correct the original newspaper report, which, in a letter to the press, he subsequently claimed was wrong. - P.23.4.1891.
239. Idem.
240. Briggs, 1952, op. cit., p. 91.

241. P.14.10.1891.
242. P.11.12.1891.
243. M.J. Daunton, House and home in the Victorian City: Working Class Housing, 1850-1914, 1983, p. 216. For an analysis of Rate Books in Birmingham for the year 1896, see idem, pp. 109-10.
244. P.13.10.1892. See also, letters in G.9.12.1891 and P.1.3.1892.
245. P.9.12.1891.
246. M.11.12.1891.
247. CM.4.5.1891.
248. CM.9.5.1892.
249. CM.5.5.1892.
250. For details of the incidence of the new charges, see Water Department (scales of water rent charges), (Corporation of Birmingham 1893), Ref: 1188037; V3 pp. 326-7.
251. V4, pp. 453-4. Vince adds that in 1915 the water rates were again altered and increased.
252. P.19.5.1892; B, Preface (unpaginated); P.27.7.1892.
253. M.21.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 17; M.16.4.1904, in NC1b, p. 64; G.22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 58.
254. V3, pp. 306-310 where full and lengthy details are given. For the financial estimate submitted to the Council in October, 1891, see V3, pp. 299-300. For the actual expenditure on capital account from 1892 to 1900, see V3, p. 325. V4, pp. 440-444 gives an update to "the final total, which, in May 1910, was reported to the Council as £5,812,574" for the "cost of the Elan supply works" alone. V4, pp. 449-454 gives information on the general finances of the Water Department from 1900 to 1915, and of the Elan expenditure as part of those finances.
255. For the financial details of the scheme, the references from Vince cited in the previous note form a useful starting point. V3, pp. 317-8 summarises the financial provisions of the 1892 Act, which can be studied in their original form in Act, 66-72. See also, for example: P.14.10.1891, report of Martineau's speech to the Council in October, 1891, which was almost exclusively on the financial aspects of the scheme; B, pp. 22-31, 37, 40-41 and 43-44; Mansergh, 1892,

pp. 47-48; and Birmingham Water Department, Elan Supply Balance Sheets to March 31st 1898, 1898, Ref: L45.32 668693. Press accounts of the Water Committee's Report to Council of October, 1891, which incorporated Mansergh's detailed estimates, can be found in M.8.10.1891 and P.8.10.1891. P.13.10.1891 contains a very lengthy treatment of the scheme, including its financial aspects. Other relevant references appear in the notes below.

256. P.7.4.1891.

257. M.7.4.1891.

258. M.8.3.1891.

259. P.7.12.1891.

260. Gray, 1891, pp. 9-10.

261. P.8.10.1891.

262. WCR.13.10.1891, p. 9. The volume of Water Committee Reports detailed above contains much useful material on the purely financial aspects of the scheme, and may be used to supplement the other references.

263. WCR.7.4.1891, pp. 8-9, 11 and 12.

264. P.8.4.1891; P.22.4.1891; M.21.4.1891; P.22.4.1891.

265. P.22.4.1891; G.5.12.1891.

266. CM.8.5.1891.

267. WCR.13.10.1891, pp. 2 and 6-7; P.14.10.1891.

268. Mansergh, 1891, pp. 44 and 48; WCR.13.10.1891, pp. 3-4.

269. M.9.3.1891.

270. P.13.10.1891; G.8.4.1891. Another financial advantage claimed for the decision to go to Wales - that it would save about £30,000 a year in pumping costs - is considered below.

271. M.8.10.1891; G.14.10.1891.

272. M.23.2.1891; P.27.7.1891.

273. CM.9.5.1892.

274. M.20.4.1891; M.10.12.1891.

275. M.21.4.1891; P.7.12.1891; Double Service, 1891, pp. 24 and 29.
276. P.21.4.1891; G.21.4.1891; M.20.2.1891; CM.9.5.1892.
277. P.22.4.1891; P.14.2.1894, in NC2, p. 284; V3, p. 321 where Mansergh's previously secret agreement with the Corporation is revealed.
278. G.20.11.1891; G.28.11.1891; G.2.12.1891.
279. P.27.7.1892 and M.27.7.1892. For the recommendation of the Water Committee on which the resolution was based, see WCM.4452, pp. 279-280.
280. P.27.7.1892; M.27.7.1892; G.27.7.1892. The press, however, and many of the critics of the payment in council, agreed that the Town Clerk had done a good job.
281. WCM.4566, 4568 and 4578 and "Report from the City Council" above it.
282. V4, pp. 438-9 and 440-444; Lees (E. A.) City of Birmingham Water Department, Elan Supply. A description of the Works, (Published by the Corporation), 1908, Ref: L45.31 210564, pp. 19-20; Lees (E.A.) "City of Birmingham Water Supply" In Handbook for Birmingham, British Association, 1913, Ref: 245684, p. 200 and NC1a (passim, as relevant); NC1b, pp. 61 ff.
283. WCM.8,753-8,756.
284. V4, pp. 436-7.
285. P.22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 28.
286. P.8.10.1904 in NC1a, p. 125; P.22.7.1904 in NC1a, pp. 50-51.
287. CM.4.5.1892.
288. Idem.
289. Double Service, 1892, pp. 45-6; CM.9.5.1892; G.8.12.1891. The level of purity of the local rivers and streams is further considered below.
290. Rawlinson, 1871, op. cit., p. 20.
291. Gray, 1891, p. 5.
292. CM.6.4.1892; LM.16.6.1892.
293. Mansergh, 1891, pp. 5-8; M.6.4.1891; WCR.7.4.1891, pp. 13-14.

294. P.8.10.1890; B, passim; M.20.2.1892; M.20.4.1891;
P.7.4.1891.
295. G.22.4.1891; see also G.14.10.1891. For a summary of the arguments of the scheme's supporters as to the inadequacy of local water supplies see V3, pp. 290-1, 299 and 302-4.
296. LM.15.6.1892.
297. P.22.4.1891.
298. CM.9.5.1892.
299. WCM.4452, p. 272; P. 27.7.1892.
300. Gray, 1891, passim; M.16.6.1892. See also V3, p. 303.
301. Mansergh, 1891, pp. 8-11.
302. WCR. 7.4.1891, pp. 3-5; P.8.4.1891.
303. P.7.12.1891.
304. P.9.12.1891; G.19.12.1891; M.22.6.1892; G.7.2.1894 in NC2, p. 229.
305. G.7.2.1894, in NC2, p. 228.
306. Davey, Henry, Report on existing works by Henry Davey and James Mansergh; supplemented by a report on the Longbridge well, Shustoke Boring, and the Perry Sinking by Charles Lapworth, Birmingham, 1894, City of Birmingham Water Department, Ref: 66640 L45.301, p. 12.
307. WCM.6,326.
308. V4, pp. 445-6.
309. M.9.11.1891.
310. V3, pp. 291-2.
311. WCM.3,937, p. 325.
312. WCM.4,452, p. 282.
313. For details of the period 1900-1915, see V4, pp. 447-8.
314. P.22.4.1891; M.22.4.1891.
315. Mansergh, 1891, p. 6; P.14.10.1891; G.2.11.1891; CM. 13.3.1892; B, p.1, See also P.8.9.1891.

316. P.22.4.1891.
317. P.9.12.1891.
318. G.27.7.1892.
319. Double Service, 1892, pp. 16-18 and 25; M.21.4.1891;
P.22.4.1891; M.20.2.1892; G.7.12.1891; P.7.12.1891.
320. P.8.12.1891; P.9.12.1891. See also B, pp. 6-7.
321. Handbill, reprinted from G.23.1.1894, in NC2, p. 227 (1).
There are two consecutive pages numbered 227, and this is
the first of them.
322. M.25.5.1892.
323. CM.5.5.1892.
324. CM.6.5.1892.
325. M.6.5.1892.
326. M.7.5.1892. See also V3, p. 306.
327. V3, pp. 292 and 303-4; M.16.6.1892.
328. Rawlinson, 1871, pp. 5-6; Mansergh, 1891, p. 11. (See also
p. 6 where the Corporation's existing wells are
enumerated.); WCR.7.4.1891, p. 5; P.8.4.1891; P.22.4.1892;
CM.31.3.1892; P.27.7.1892.
329. CM.31.3.1892. This aspect is further discussed below.
330. CM.5.4.1892; LM. 16.6.1892.
331. CM.5.4.1892.
332. Double Service, 1892, passim. The quotations are from pages
15, 23, 30, 24, 25 and 45-6.
333. G.13.4.1891; P.4.12.1891; P.7.12.1891; P.8.12.1891;
P.9.12.1891; G.8.12.1891; P.27.2.1892; P.1.3.1892.
334. M.20.2.1892; P.4.3.1892; M.5.3.1892; M.8.3.1892;
M.11.3.1892.
335. CM.4.5.1892; CM.9.5.1892; G.8.12.1891.
336. The Times, 8.3.1892 in NC2, pp. 216-7; CM.9.5.1892; CM.
4.5.1892.
337. CM.6.4.1892; Mansergh, 1892, pp. 49-50.

338. CM.4.4.1892. See also CM.5.4.1892 and CM.7.4.1892.
339. P.7.12.1891; CM.1.4.1892; B, pp. 6-7 and 41-2; CM.31.3.1892; M.11.4.1891; P.20.4.1891; P.11.12.1891.
340. See, for example: Anthony S. Wohl, Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain, 1983; Stephen J. Kunitz, "Speculations on the European Mortality Decline", Economic History Review, Second Series, 36 no. 3 (1983): 349-364; T. Ferguson, "Public Health in Britain in the Climate of the Nineteenth Century", Population Studies, 17, no. 3 (March 1964): 213-224; Thomas McKeown and R. G. Record, "Reasons for the Decline of Mortality in England and Wales during the Nineteenth Century", Population Studies, 16, no. 2 (November 1962): 14-22; W. P. D. Logan, "Mortality in England and Wales from 1848 to 1947", Population Studies, 4, no. 2 (September 1950): 132-178 (plus interleaved table following); Robert Woods, "The structure of Mortality in mid- Nineteenth Century England", Journal of Historical Geography, 8, no. 4 (October 1982): 373-394; and B. Keith- Lucas, "Some Influences Affecting the Development of Sanitary Legislation in England", Economic History Review, Second Series, 6, no. 3 (1953-4): 290-296. For medical explanations, see Wesley W. Spink, Infectious Diseases: Prevention and Treatment in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Folkestone, 1978. On the most feared of all the infectious diseases of the day, see: R. J. Morris, Cholera 1832: The Social Response to an Epidemic, 1976; and Charles E. Rosenberg, "Cholera in Nineteenth- Century Europe: A Tool for Social and Economic Analysis", Comparative Studies in Society and History, 8 (1965-6): 452-463. On public health and mortality in towns and cities, see Robert Woods and John Woodward (eds.), Urban Disease and Mortality in Nineteenth Century England, 1984; Bill Luckin, "Death and Survival in the City: Approaches to the History of Disease", Urban History Yearbook (1980): 53-42; B. Benjamin, "The Urban Background to Public Health Changes in England and Wales, 1900-50", Population Studies, 17, no 3 (March 1964): 225-248; D. V. Glass, "Some Indicators of Differences between Urban and Rural Mortality in England and Wales and Scotland", Population Studies, 17 no. 3 (March 1964): 263-7; J. G. Fryer, et al., "Comparing the Early Mortality Rates of the Local Authorities in England and Wales", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A (General), 142, no. 2 (1979): 181-198; Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Was the Industrial Revolution Worth It? Disamenities and Death in 19th Century British Towns", Explorations in Economic History, 19 (1982): 221-245; and John R. Kellett, "The Social Costs of Mortality in the Victorian City", in Anthony Slaven and Derek H. Aldcroft (eds.), Business, Banking and Urban History: Essays in Honour of S. G. Checkland, 1982, pp. 146-165. For public health and mortality in London, see the relevant references in the section on the London opposition above. On

Birmingham, see June Glover, "Health and Disease in Birmingham: 1770-1830" Warwickshire History, 4, no. 2 (Winter 1978/9): 40-55; C. R. Elrington and D. G. Watts, "Local Government and Public Services", in Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Warwick, R. B. Pugh (ed.), 1964, reprint 1965, pp. 318 ff; and Robert Woods, "Mortality and Sanitary Conditions in Birmingham 1870-1910", Journal of Historical Geography, 4, no. 1 (January 1978): 35-56.

341. Hassan, op. cit., p. 543.

342. Idem, p. 544.

343. The Lancet, 1892 (2 volumes). There are a number of isolated general references to the topic, however. See for example, the section on lead poisoning from water on p. 1,148.

344. Op. cit., p. 541.

345. Idem, p. 542.

346. G.28.10.1891.

347. CM.5.5.1892; Double Service, 1892, pp. 25-6.

348. P.14.10.1891. The basis for this claim appears to be doubtful.

349. B, pp. 45 and 46; P.27.7.1892. On well water see also V4, p. 440.

350. P.27.2.1892.

351. M.6.4.1892; CM.5.4.1892; CM.8.4.1892.

352. M.6.4.1892; P.7.12.1892.

353. P.24.4.1891; P.3.5.1892; M.5.9.1892; M.12.4.1892; M.23.6.1892; M.25.6.1892.

354. M.12.9.1891; M.26.9.1892; M.14.9.1891; M.5.9.1891; G.14.10.1891; G.14.11.1891; M.12.4.1892.

355. M.8.9.1891.

356. M.12.4.1892.

357. G.9.12.1891; CM.5.5.1892.

358. WCR.7.4.1891, p. 5.

359. CM.6.4.1892; M.16.6.1892.

360. Rawlinson, 1871, pp. 49-50.
361. Mansergh, 1892, p. 17; G.2.11.1891; P.22.4.1891;
P.8.9.1891; M.9.3.1892.
362. P.21.4.1892; Short History, 1926, pp. 3, 4 and 5;
CM.31.3.1892; P.8.9.1891. For a contemporary treatment of
the subject see G.6.11.1891, which contains a report of a
paper by Dr. Herbert Manley, Medical Officer of Health for
West Bromwich, to members of the Birmingham and Midland
Branch of his Association, on "Polluted Rivers and how to
deal with them, with especial reference to the River Tame."
A particular problem with the Tame, of course, was that,
before it came to Birmingham, it flowed through the
industrial Black Country.
363. CM.6.4.1892; M.16.6.1892; CM.5.4.1892; LM. 16.6.1892;
P.27.7.1892.
364. Mansergh, 1891, pp. 10-11 and 12.
365. Mansergh, 1891, p. 13; P.8.4.1892.
366. Rawlinson, 1871, pp. 50 and 51; Mansergh, 1892, pp. 20-1;
M.6.4.1892; V3, p. 305; LM.16.6.1892.
367. Gray, 1891, pp. 12-13; CM.2.5.1892. See also, on the
quality of the Elan water, B, passim. For detailed
statistical tables, see p. 17. V3, p. 305 gives a
statistical summary of some tests carried out by Barclay
himself and an associate.
368. B, p. 44; M.6.4.1892.
369. CM.6.5.1892. See also M.25.5.1892.
370. Mansergh, 1892, p. 24; CM.7.4.1892; CM.5.4.1892.
371. M.2.12.1904, in NC1b, p. 148; Birmingham Evening Despatch,
6.12.1904, in NC1b, p. 150.
372. The alleged saving in coal and tea were alluded to by the
then Mayor, Alderman Clayton, in a speech to the Council in
April, 1891 - P.22.4.1891, report and editorial comment.
373. M.6.4.1892; M.11.4.1892; CM.4.4.1892; CM.5.4.1892;
M.11.4.1892; CM.5.5.1892. See also V3, p. 304. A press
report of 1904 raised a new spectre, that the soft water was
bad for teeth. - G.22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 58.
- ~~274.~~ P.22.4.1891. See also B, pp. 36-37.
375. P.22.4.1891.

376. P.8.4.1891; CM.1.4.1892; CM.5.4.1892.
377. P.22.4.1891; G.22.4.1892; M.7.4.1892; G.7.4.1892. The same edition contains a long letter from Mansergh on the subject, together with correspondence doubting his claims. For more of the latter see also G.13.4.1892.
378. Double Service, 1892, p. 25; M.25.5.1892; G.11.5.1892.
379. CM.11.5.1892.
380. Gray, 1891, p. 9; Mansergh, 1891, p. 21; Mansergh, 1892, pp. 24-5.
381. CM.11.5.1892.
382. Double Service, 1892, pp. 25-6; The Times, 8.3.1892, in NC2, p. 217; P.11.9.1891.
383. M.25.5.1892; CM.6.5.1892.
384. CM.5.4.1892; P.8.4.1891; CM.6.4.1892.
385. B, pp. 31-6. The quotation is from p. 35. See also, Preface (no pagination) and p. 43.
386. V4, p. 440; WCM.8,790 and 8,794.
387. V3, p. 297; Mansergh, 1892, p. 14; M.26.7.1892; P.27.7.1892.
388. Double Service, 1892, pp. 46-7.
389. V3, p. 297; Mansergh, 1891, p. 21; Mansergh, 1892, pp. 27-8; CM.4.4.1892; P.8.4.1891.
390. M.1.12.1903, in NC1b, p. 40. For other figures on the rainfall, see V4, p. 443; P.22.7.1904 in NC1a, p. 38, and Southall (H.), "Tables of Rainfall at Ross, compared with Rainfall over the Area of Water catchment area in Radnorshire, connected with the Birmingham Water Supply from Wales", Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club Transactions, 1902 (Hereford), 1905. Ref: 326490.
391. Mansergh, 1891, p. 20; Mansergh, 1892, p. 25; P.8.4.1891.
392. P.7.4.1891.
393. Rawlinson, 1871, p. 54; Mansergh, 1892, p. 25; Mansergh, 1891, pp. 21-2; B, pp. 19-21.
394. WCR, 7.4.1891, p. 8; B, p. 37.

395. Rawlinson, 1871, pp. 6 and 53; Mansergh, 1891, p. 4; Mansergh, 1891, p. 19.
396. CM.4.4.1892.
397. Gray, 1891, p. 10; WCR.7.4.1891 pp. 7 and 9; P.22.4.1891; B, pp. 12, 13, 19, 25, 26, 28, 37 and 41, together with the table on p. 30.
398. See, for example, P.7.4.1891, P.20.4.1891 and G.21.4.1891.
399. M.25.5.1892. See also M.5.3.1892. The need to obtain a high elevation site for Birmingham was a major point stressed in negotiations with the London County Council aimed at persuading them to drop their opposition to the Water Bill, and it caused resentment in Birmingham that Sir John Lubbock and his associates refused to accept the argument that a much wider choice of alternatives was available to the metropolis. See, for example: M.26.2.1892 for Chamberlain's reply to Lubbock at the joint meeting of London and Birmingham representatives; M.9.3.1891 for Chamberlain's remarks on pumping during the Water Bill's second reading; P.27.7.1892 for Martineau's opinion of the L.C.C. when the Parliamentary campaign was over; and, for a London perspective, The Times, 8.3.1892, in NC2 p. 216, letter from "A Londoner." See also the section on the London opponents above. For further information on pumping, see V3, pp. 290-1 and 304-5, WCM.3,937, p. 325, and WCM 4,452, p. 282.
400. Mansergh, 1892, pp. 24 and 40-1.
401. Topley, W. and Green, A. H., Birmingham water supply. Report on the geology of the sites of the projected reservoirs in the valley of the Elan and Claerwen (dated at end, London, Sept. 5th, 1891) Ref: L45.31 663191, pp. 10-11; CM.5.4.1892. See also, on the same day, the evidence of Professor Lapworth.
402. V4, p. 443.
403. WCM.10.2.1893, Report beginning on p. 38 with reference to Minute 37.
404. Gray, 1891, p. 11; Mansergh, 1891, p. 26; WCR.7.4.1891, p. 14; M.8.4.1891; P.7.12.1891; B, p. 12; M.7.12.1891.
405. The Times, 8.3.1891, in NC2, p. 216. Emphasis in original.
406. M.26.2.1892; M.9.3.1892.
407. Mansergh, 1892, pp. 10-11.
408. M.8.3.1892.

409. WCM.4,452, pp. 278 and 280.
410. P.27.7.1892.
411. P.8.10.1890.
412. B, pp. 1 and 39; G.2.11.1891; P.22.4.1891.
413. M.7.12.1891.
414. M.11.4.1891; P.7.4.1891; G.8.4.1891.
415. Double Service, 1892, p. 21.
416. P.22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 51.
417. P.8.10.1891.
418. P.8.9.1891; P.7.12.1891; M.15.6.1892.
419. M.20.4.1891; P.7.4.1891; P.20.4.1891; G.14.10.1891.
420. P.4.12.1891; P.21.4.1891; P.7.12.1891.
421. Double Service, 1892, p. 24.
422. P.22.4.1891; P.14.10.1891.
423. P.22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 48. On the history of the Liverpool water supply, see: Ramsay Muir, A History of Liverpool, Liverpool, 1907, pp. 317-8; and Brian D. White, A History of the Corporation of Liverpool, 1835-1914, Liverpool, 1951, pp. 116-7.
424. Gray, 1891, p. 8.
425. V3, p. 300. On the history of the Manchester water supply, see: Gary S. Messinger, Manchester in the Victorian Age: The Half-known City, Manchester, 1985, pp. 119 and 174-5.
426. WCM.10.2.1893, Report beginning on p. 38 and Minutes 46 and 47 following. See also, B (3rd ed.), Ch. 10.
427. V4, pp. 438-9 and P.22.7.1904 in NC1a, p. 51.
428. CM.1.4.1892.
429. Idem.
430. CM.31.3.1892.
431. P.25.11.1891.

432. Water Department. Report to Water Committee, 27th Feb., 1891, by Howard Smith, Slocombe & Co., Chartered Accountants, (City of Birmingham) 1891, Ref: 109924, p. 6.
433. WCR.7.4.1891, pp. 9, 10-11 and 13.
434. Rawlinson, 1871, pp. 21-28, and 48-49.
435. Mansergh, 1891, pp. 12 and 17-18; Mansergh, 1892, pp. 18-21, 26 and 34.
436. CM.4.4.1892.
437. P.8.4.1891.
438. See, for example, P.14.10.1891; P.7.12.1891; P.27.7.1892.
439. B, passim; P.22.4.1891.
440. M.20.4.1891; P.4.12.1891. For a description of New York's response to its problem - "the famous Croton aqueduct and dam" - see The Birmingham Weekly Post, 23.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 88. For a general history of the New York water supply, see Charles H. Weidner, Water for a City: A History of New York City's Problem from the Beginning to the Delaware System, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1974.
441. CM.31.3.1892; CM.13.5.1892; CM.31.3.1892; CM.1.4.1892; CM.7.4.1892; LM.15.6.1892.
442. LM.16.6.1892.
443. LM.16.6.1892.
444. P.22.4.1891.
445. P.27.7.1892.
446. The Times, 8.3.1892, in NC2, p. 217; G.8.12.1891; G.13.4.1892.
447. M.5.3.1892; M.6.4.1892.
448. CM.11.5.1892.
449. CM.8.4.1892.
450. WCM.4,452, p. 279; P.27.7.1892.
451. M.23.2.1892; P.4.12.1891; G.11.12.1891.
452. Mansergh, 1892, p. 40.

453. B, pp. 8-11 and 45-48. Both these sections were added between the first and second editions of Barclay's pamphlet to counter the claims of the Birmingham opponents that wells were a viable proposition.
454. B, p. 14.
455. P.7.4.1891.
456. WCR. 7.4.1891, pp. 5 and 6.
457. Birmingham Weekly Post, 16.7.1904, in NC1a; CM.31.3.1892.
458. Mansergh, 1892, p. 3. For further details see Engineering, 22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 141; Lancaster Guardian, 28.3.1902 in NC1b, p. 2; and the various newspaper cuttings at NC1b, pp. 188 ff.
459. P.8.10.1904, in NC1a, p. 125.
460. P.22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 51.
461. WESC.4,839.
462. M.16.6.1892; CM.6.4.1892; Gray, 1891, p. 11.
463. M.7.4.1891; B (3rd ed.), p. 75.
464. WESC.8 and 19.
465. B (3rd ed.), p. 190; The Weekly Mercury, 23.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 98.
466. B (3rd ed.), Ch.7; B (3rd ed.), pp. 188-9; P.8.10.1904, in NC1a, p. 125; Birmingham Evening Despatch, 18.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 110; The Weekly Mercury, 23.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 98.
467. M.27.7.1892; B (3rd ed.), pp. 115-6.
468. Gray, 1891, pp. 12-13; CM.4.4.1892; CM.8.4.1892; B, pp. 15 and 33.
469. M.7.5.1892.
470. WCR.7.4.1891, p. 12; WCR.13.10.1891, pp. 2-3 and 8-10; P.22.4.1891.
471. P.8.4.1891; P.22.7.1891.
472. P.22.4.1891; B, frontispiece (no pagination).
473. P.8.10.1904, in NC1a, p. 125.

474. P.22.7.1904 in NC1a, p. 48; CM.31.3.1892; P.25.11.1891;
P.8.8.1891; P.14.10.1891; P.22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 48;
P.6.2.1904, in NC1b, p. 53.
475. P.27.7.1892; CM.1.4.1892; B (3rd ed.), frontispiece;
P.8.10.1904 in NC1a, p. 125; The Weekly Mercury, 23.7.1904
in NC1a.
476. P.8.10.1904, in NC1a, p. 125.
477. P.6.2.1904 in NC1b, p. 53.
478. B, endpiece (unpaginated).
479. WCM 4,451, p. 268; WC(PSC)M 216.
480. G.22.7.1904, in NC1a, p. 58.
481. WC(PSC)M. 10.2.1892, letters on pp. 130-1.
482. P.27.7.1892.
483. B. (3rd ed.), p. 115; M.28.6.1892; M.9.3.1892;
P.1.6.1892; P.9.3.1892; P.23.6.1892; G.12.7.1904, in NC1b,
p. 104.
484. P.25.11.1891.
485. CM.31.3.1892.
486. CM.11.5.1892.
487. P.14.5.1892. For a look behind the legal scenes, see Browne
(J. H. B.). Forty years at the Bar (an autobiography with
references to Birmingham Water Supply), 1916, pp. 117-8.
488. For a list of these, see V3, p. 313.
489. WC(PSC)M.226 and paragraph above it; WC(PSC)M.240.
490. CM.4.4.1892.
491. CM.5.4.1892; Mansergh, 1892, p. 55.
492. Double Supply, 1892, pp. 29 and 31.
493. CM.9.5.1892.
494. P.4.12.1891.
495. M.8.3.1892.
496. P.9.12.1891.

497. M.6.5.1892; M.7.5.1892. See also the section on wells above.
498. CM.10.5.1892.
499. CM.6.5.1892.
500. CM.9.5.1892.
501. Briggs, 1952, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-7.
502. *Idem*, pp. 131-4. The quotation is from p. 132.
503. J. Waller, Town, City, and Nation, England 1850-1914, Oxford, 1983, pp. 281 ff. The quotation is from p. 282.
504. John Garrard, Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns, 1830-80, 1983, p. 80.
505. *Idem*, p. 81.
506. P.22.4.1891; M.18.3.1892; M.21.3.1892; M.2.6.1892.
507. P.8.6.1892.
508. CM.9.5.1892.
509. CM.5.5.1892.
510. P.20.4.1891; P.13.4.1891; P.19.10.1891; G.8.12.1891; G.20.2.1892; G.4.3.1892.
511. M.8.3.1892.
512. P.20.4.1891; P.22.4.1891; G.15.5.1892; G.21.4.1891; G.27.7.1892.
513. G.11.3.1892.
514. G.12.3.1892.
515. P.7.12.1891.
516. Double Service, 1892, pp. 16, 17 and 48.
517. P.21.4.1891.
518. P.19.10.1891.
519. P.4.12.1891.

520. G.28.10.1891. See also the letters of Whitefield and "Ship Canal" in G.8.12.1891, and Goodwin's letter on wells in M.9.3.1892, together with the Mail's editorial comment thereon.
521. M.24.6.1892.
522. Mansergh, 1892, p. 13; CM.5.4.1892; P.22.4.1891.
523. V3, p. 306.
524. P.7.12.1891; P.8.12.1891; M.23.2.1891; M.8.3.1892; P.7.12.1891; M.9.3.1892. See, however, Boulton (W. S.), The Water resources of the Birmingham District. (Paper read before the summer meeting of the Institution of Water Engineers, June, 1920.) From The Engineer, June 25, 1920, Ref: 285632, p. 648, where the idea re- surfaces.
525. P.20.4.1891; M.20.4.1891; M.7.12.1891; M.8.6.1892. On the difficulties at that time being faced by the Manchester Ship Canal project, see, for example, G.11.4.1891, M.27.11.1891 and M.3.12.1891.
526. M.10.5.1892.
527. P.6.4.1891; P.20.4.1891; P.9.12.1891.
528. P.4.12.1891.
529. Letter from "Pro Bono Publico" in G.6.10.1892. See also spoof letter from "Bucket" in G.7.10.1892.
530. G.17.3.1892; G.8.6.1892; G.13.6.1892; G.27.7.1892.
531. P.7.2.1894, in NC2, p. 277.
532. CM.5.4.1892; M.6.4.1892; M.25.5.1892; CM.4.5.1892. The normal legal convention is that a questioner is not permitted to examine his own witnesses to contradict the witnesses of his opponents unless those witnesses have previously been cross- examined by him or his associates.
533. CM.4.5.1892; CM.10.5.1892.
534. CM.4.5.1892.
535. B (3rd ed.), p. 97.
536. M.25.5.1892.
537. Waller, op. cit., p. 301.
538. Kellett, op. cit., p. 40.

539. C. Gill, History of Birmingham, Volume 1, Manor and Borough to 1865, Oxford, 1952, p. 416.
540. Op. cit., pp. 423-4.
541. Ernest Peter Hennock, "The Role of Religious Dissent in the Reform of Municipal Government in Birmingham, 1865-1876", Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1956.
542. Op. cit., p. 60.
543. Op. cit., p. 73.
544. Briggs, 1952, op. cit.
545. Op. cit., p. 117.
546. Op. cit., pp. 127 and 129.
547. Op. cit., pp. 127-8 and 130-1. The quotation is from p. 127. Briggs quotes Vince on the 1902 incident to the effect that "this was the most serious rebuff ever inflicted on the Council by its constituents."
548. Derek Fraser, Urban Politics in Victorian England, 1976, p. 165.
549. Op. cit., p. 173.
550. Norman McCord, "Ratepayers and Social Policy" in Pat Thane (ed.), The Origins of British Social Policy, 1978, pp. 21-35.
551. Op. cit., p. 30.
552. Idem, p. 23.
553. Geoffrey Crossick, "Urban Society and the Petty Bourgeoisie in Nineteenth-Century Britain", Chapter 15 in Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (eds.), The Pursuit of Urban History, 1983, pp. 307-326. The quotation is from p. 313.
554. E. P. Hennock, "Finance and Politics in Urban Local Government in England, 1835-1900", The Historical Journal, 6, no. 2 (1963): 212-225.
555. Op. cit., p. 218.
556. Op. cit., p. 220.
557. Op. cit., p. 221.

558. Op. cit., p. 223. Throughout the article, frequent reference is made to Birmingham during the period from Allday to Chamberlain. Hennock makes no specific reference to Allday, however, and his assertion that the economists "ruled for over ten years" after 1855 - op. cit., p. 218 - would seem a little sweeping, given that their leader, as has been seen, received a stinging rebuff from his fellow councillors in 1859. The truth would seem to be, as Gill implies, that the balance of power on the council was somewhat problematic until the emergence of Chamberlain and the Liberal caucus - Gill, op. cit.

559. Op. cit., pp. 212-3. See also: Allan Sharlin, "Natural Decrease in Early Modern Cities: A Reconsideration", Past and Present, 79 (May 1978): 126-38; and Roger Finlay, "Natural Decrease in Early Modern Cities" Past and Present, 92 (August 1981): 169-174, followed by Allen Sharlin, "A Rejoinder", pp. 175-180.

560. Op. cit., p. 225.

561. Op. cit., p. 224.

562. Idem.

563. Idem. On the Exchequer grant, see also E. P. Hennock, "Central/local government relations in England: an outline 1800-1950", Urban History Yearbook, 1982, pp. 38-49.

**CHAPTER 3. THE MUNICIPALISATION OF THE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY
INDUSTRY IN BIRMINGHAM.**

1. Introduction.

In accordance with the research scheme explained in Chapter 1, the present chapter has two main objectives, namely to see what the application of Lukes' approach tells us. firstly about the local history of Birmingham, and secondly about the usefulness of the approach itself.

The analysis of the municipalisation of Birmingham's electricity supply industry is almost entirely confined to Lukes' first dimension of power. It is found that Lukes' approach, particularly if it is combined with a simple game- theoretical analysis of the relationships between the council and the electricity company, yields a number of useful insights. It illustrates, for example, the conflict of interest between the council and the company, and it helps to explain the roles of the various negotiators, and of actors such as councillor Fletcher and the Post newspaper. Lukes' approach is particularly relevant to these and similar cases which are characterised by conflict. It can also be used to analyse the negotiated purchase of the electricity company by the council, but here the application is more complicated, since in that case there was no obvious winner and loser, but a mutually agreed sale.

Despite the first dimensional nature of most of the investigation, concepts such as "mobilisation of bias" from Lukes' second dimension are utilised, as is his third dimensional notion of "real interests." Throughout the chapter, a key concept, adapted from Lukes' second dimension, is that of the "control of the political agenda." It is argued that, for various reasons, the council declined, until the late 1890's, to make the electricity industry a subject for municipal enterprise. The city fathers, however, attempted to retain the municipal option by keeping private enterprise in a weak bargaining position. Putting this in the terms postulated by Lukes, the council used its superior mobilisation of political bias to secure to itself the effective control of the political agenda for municipalisation. It thus retained the decisive power to keep the company as one of its satraps, and to force the issue of public ownership onto this agenda at will. As an indication of the council's success in agenda- setting, the buy- out terms which were finally agreed with the company were largely those initially proposed by municipal negotiators. The analysis is largely internal to Birmingham. However, the wider literature on the history of electricity supply is used to put the issue of municipalisation into its national context, and to help to explain the decisional outcome.

The second major objective of the chapter, as stated above, is to investigate what this attempt at empirical application tells us about the validity and usefulness of the dimensional approach itself. Under this heading it is worth re-stating a point from Chapter 1. The reason that the municipalisation of the electricity supply is being studied in the first place is because it entails important political decisions suitable for analysis in the terms suggested by Lukes. Therefore, if any worthwhile insights at all are gained, the study's decision-making approach is to some extent vindicated, since without that approach the research would not have been undertaken in its present form.

With further regard to the validity of Lukes' approach, it is here argued, as it is throughout the study, that it is indeed possible to analyse historical phenomena within the parameters of his first dimensional definitional categories. However, this analysis, even of what might seem to be straightforward events, can be very complicated, and the question must be asked as to whether it yields results whose usefulness is commensurate to the effort expended. Here, for example, a negotiated purchase of the electricity company, in which most shareholders received a payment for their shares which they considered adequate, can indeed be represented as a confrontation, in a situation of conflict. But, unlike the Corporation's defeat of the recalcitrant ratepayers over the 1892 Water Bill, in this case there was not a zero sum game in which the winner took all, but a

variable sum game where compensation was paid for loss. Thus, an analysis along the lines suggested by Lukes can be made, and is attempted below. But this analysis has to be more sophisticated than might at first be thought.

Also unhelpful, as explained in Chapter 1, is Lukes' idea of "non- decisions" which operate in some alleged "second dimension" of power. In the present case, those "non-decisions" amenable to investigation in the first place were, for the most part, decisions to do something else. For example, the decision not to oppose the creation of a private electricity company in the city in the 1880's precluded for the time being the municipal option, as did the subsequent decision in the 1890's to agree to the company's application for an enlarged area of supply. Likewise, the concepts of "mobilisation of bias" and of "agenda setting", while useful, are best seen as operating, not within some putative second dimension of so-called "non- decisions", but in the real and observable world of first dimensional "decision-making." Thus, the city council, in a series of conscious policy decisions, mobilised, in Schattschneider's formulation, its political bias to weaken the bargaining position of the company. This was done by influencing the enactment of statute law and by confining the company to a short term licence to supply a restricted geographical area. This control over the decision-making process enabled the council to dictate the political agenda on the question of municipalisation, and to carry the

issue through to the desired decisional outcome at a time decided by itself. Moreover, all this occurred, for the most part, within the confines of Lukes' first dimension of power.

Other findings on the validity of Lukes' approach are developed later in the chapter and summarised at the end of it. For example, although Lukes' conceptualisation of a second dimension of power is rejected, various elite theories usually associated with it are endorsed, particularly with regard to the powerful political role of council committees and to the operation of a version of Molotch's local "growth machine." In accordance with the research plan, no systematic attempt is made to investigate the operation of power in Lukes' third dimension. The third dimensional concept of "real interests", however, is found to be useful. Here, as is explained in greater detail below, the analysis is that at that time people's real interests were only peripherally affected by the issue of whether or not the electricity supply was under municipal ownership. There was thus no urgent biological necessity to act, as there was over the water supply, and municipal decision-makers had a freer hand to pursue alternative policies and to proceed at a more leisurely pace.

As explained above, the municipalisation of Birmingham's electricity supply industry entailed no observable non-decisions, but rather a number of conscious decisions which excluded the option of public ownership, followed by another

decision which adopted it. As with the water undertaking, therefore, it is necessary to ask, after the fashion of Goodin, not only why municipalisation occurred in the 1890's, but also why it did not happen before then. Here the national context is important, particularly the legislative framework enshrined in the Electric Lighting Act of 1882 and the amendment of that Act in 1888. This legislative framework was the result of a successful mobilisation of political bias by the local authorities at Westminster, and did much to set the political agenda in their favour right up to the mass take-overs at the height of the municipal trading movement in the 1890's.

The 1882 Act, for example, was the outcome of a power struggle between private and municipal traders in which the latter did not wish at that time to undertake the provision of electricity themselves, partly because electricity, unlike for example water, was not seen as a necessity. Furthermore, the technology was rudimentary and untested and councils wished to avoid public expenditure, higher rates and ratepayer opposition. Local authorities therefore wanted private venture capital to initiate experiments, but under onerous and restrictive conditions which would keep the companies weak and thus enable cheap public buy-outs or rival municipal schemes. The councils found a sympathetic response to their wishes from Joseph Chamberlain, the government minister responsible for the passage of the Act of 1882. That Act was therefore very restrictive of private enterprise, and few companies operated under its

provisions. It is unclear whether the terms of the Act or the uncertainties and difficulties of operating the infant technology were the reason for this, but private entrepreneurs argued strongly that it was the former. In any event, by the time of the 1888 Act the local authorities were in a more conciliatory mood, and were prepared to make such concessions to the companies as were necessary to get them to initiate operations. The 1888 Act, therefore, loosened the shackles on free enterprise. Its terms, however, still gave municipalities the effective power to dictate the political agenda and to force local buy-outs on terms favourable to themselves. It is, indeed, difficult to envisage a clearer case of what Parry and Morriss would categorise as the manipulation of the rules of the game than the decisive influence of the local authorities over the terms of the Acts of 1882 and 1888. To repeat the point, however, such manipulation cannot usefully be categorised, as it might have been, for example, in the early work of Bachrach and Baratz, as operating within the realms of the "non- decision."

These national conflicts were reflected in Birmingham. The Town Clerk and the General Purposes Committee argued that the council should not begin a municipal supply under the terms of the 1882 Act, but should allow a private company to apply for a franchise. However, it was argued that this company should be restricted as far as possible with regard to the number of years of its concession and the area over which it was allowed to operate. Again, the Town Clerk's report advocated the advantages

to the council of dictating the rules of the game, and of retaining to itself the ultimate control over the political agenda, with the utmost clarity. His argument was accepted as official policy, but, unfortunately for the council, they had overplayed their hand. Under the restrictions envisaged, no private company succeeded in operating successfully in the city, an outcome which was scarcely satisfactory to municipal rulers given that there was a universal agreement that the introduction of the new technology was potentially progressive, and likely to have a beneficial effect upon local life.

A similar lack of private initiative under the onerous restrictions of the 1882 Act was observable all over the country, and it was clearly not only Birmingham which appeared to have gone too far in its anti-company stance. In Birmingham, after the 1888 Act, the council adopted a more conciliatory approach to private enterprise, and soon a company was successfully launched. The council approved of this development, but still continued in its attempts to curb the company's activities and to control the political agenda. A factor inducing a more conciliatory attitude in this case, however, appears to have been the desire of important business interests in the city centre to get access to the new illuminant. On one interpretation, this might be seen as pressure from Molotch's local growth machine to secure an improvement in the city's infrastructure and the benefits of a

new technology. If there was such a growth machine, however, it does not appear that, in accordance with Molotch's theories, it was linked to landed interests.

When the new company was established, the council remained consistent to its policy of retaining to itself the control of the political agenda, and it continued in its attempts to prevent the company from operating without its good will. It remained unwilling, for example, to countenance any increase in the company's potential profitability, and, for example, in 1892 and 1893, raised obstacles to its applications to extend its area of supply. When the financial success of the company was clearly established, and at the height of the municipal trading movement nationally, the council decided to buy out the company. The usual game playing in bargaining and negotiations commenced, but the success of the Corporation in keeping the company on a tight rein was readily apparent in the takeover terms, which closely followed the council's initial offer to the company. As will be seen, however, the initial shareholders still did well, and it may indeed be that the venture capitalists who launched the company accepted from the beginning their role as junior partners and municipal stalking horses, and envisaged and willingly anticipated a council takeover as a way to "cut and run" with a sizeable profit. Certainly, private enterprise was throughout subservient to municipal interests. As will be seen later, for

example, Vaudrey, the managing director of the city's electricity supply company, was later happy to accept a position as the city's electrical engineer.

Another theme of the present chapter is that the ownership of the electricity supply industry, unlike the provision of pure water, raised no urgent issues of life and death. It is, indeed, plausible to argue that it was in the real interests of the citizens of Birmingham to be provided with a supply of electricity for domestic and industrial use. But, in reality, the "real" or "welfare" interests of most citizens, as defined by Lukes, were scarcely touched. The impact on jobs was marginal, since, at that time, there was little use of electricity for purposes of industrial power. Even the peripheral creature comforts of the majority of people were only marginally affected, since until 1914 electric lighting was very much an illuminant for the rich. Thus neither the initial decision to entrust the industry to a private company, nor the subsequent decision to municipalise that company was forced upon the council. Instead, policy was determined by contemporary attitudes to municipal ownership, and by the relative political influence of the companies and the local authorities as reflected, for example, in the relevant acts of Parliament. The case thus stands in sharp contrast to that of water, where the council was responding to an urgent biological necessity which seriously affected the "real interests", in Lukes' terminology, of all the local population.

It is also suggested, as indicated above, that the national debate between the proponents of private and municipal enterprise had no discernable impact in Birmingham where ratepayers were more tolerant of acquiring an income-generating asset than of building a network of expensive Welsh dams. In any case, the national debate only became fierce after 1900, by which time Birmingham's electricity supply was safely in council hands. As for the Gas Committee, the argument that its members opposed the introduction of electricity cannot be substantiated, partly because, until the turn of the century, the balance of technological advantage seemed tilted firmly in favour of gas.

After 1900, the increasing use of electricity for purposes of power and heating, instead of merely as an illuminant, and the improved technology of high voltage generation for distribution over larger geographic areas were to cause a number of structural and organisational problems in the electricity industry. Such difficulties exacerbated the acrimonious debate between the local authorities and the companies. Even then, however, the problems were greatest, not in the big cities such as Birmingham, but in the areas served by the smaller local authorities. At any event, such developments post-dated, and had no influence upon, the municipalisation of the Birmingham supply.

2. The National Context before Municipalisation.

The general history of electricity supply before the First World War has been fairly extensively documented.[1] The story can be dated from 1877, when Jablockhoff invented the carbon lamp. Soon, after the development of much improved lamps by Swan and Edison, the new illuminant was showing signs of commercial viability.[2] A flurry of Stock Exchange excitement followed the public demonstration of the electric light at the Paris Exhibition of 1881 and at the Sydenham Crystal Palace in 1882. Soon speculative companies sprang up paying large sums for patent rights for filaments and dynamos, the licences to use these inventions in specified areas being farmed out to subsidiary concerns.[3]

The crucially important aspect for the present study, however, is the political rivalry between the companies and the local authorities. In this power struggle, the main motive of the companies was to secure a rapid and profitable development of the electricity industry under private ownership. In contrast, the municipalities wished to keep the companies subordinate to themselves, and to retain the ability to buy out private interests at will. In its early stages, the battle was fought out at Westminster where the newly-formed companies deposited numerous bills sponsoring their plans. Although, as stated, the major objectives of the local authorities were to retain control of the political agenda on the question of electricity supply, and to keep the companies subservient to themselves, other

motives were also in evidence. One municipal preference was to prevent indiscriminate breaking-up of streets. In addition, some corporations in towns where gas was privately-owned applied for legislative sanction for their own schemes in an attempt to secure a publicly-owned rival to gas.[4] It must be stressed, however, that many corporations seem to have been already considering municipalisation at some future date, and wished to keep the companies on a tight rein and under their own political influence. As will be seen, for example, this was throughout a major policy objective of the Corporation in Birmingham.

Local authority interest in the possibility of publicly owned electricity enterprises was seen in 1879 when a Parliamentary Committee was set up, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Lyon Playfair, M.P., a former chemistry professor,[5] "to consider whether it is desirable to authorise municipal corporations or other local authorities to adopt any schemes for electric lighting". Their conclusions were: that no parliamentary action was yet needed; that local authorities should be allowed to experiment; that gas companies should be given no privileged rights to supply electricity; and that private companies should be required to gain the consent of local authorities before breaking up streets.[6] The evidence presented to the Playfair Committee indicated that electricity was still at a very rudimentary stage of technological development.[7]

By 1882 legislation was considered necessary, and Birmingham's famous son, Joseph Chamberlain, then at the Board of Trade, was the government minister responsible for introducing it. At this time, according to Ballin, "the Board of Trade was ... in favour of private enterprise entering the field of electricity supply." [8] It appeared, however, that, in the words of Hannah, "Chamberlain ... had in mind that the difficult course followed earlier in relation to the public control of the gas industry should be avoided." Thus, although he "did later caution that corporation trading ventures ... should not be indiscriminately extended", Chamberlain expressed a quite different opinion in this case: "The supply of gas and of water, electric lighting, and the establishment of tramways (he wrote) must be confined to very few contractors. They involve interference with the streets, and with the rights and privileges of individuals. They cannot ... be thrown open to free competition. It is most desirable that, in all these cases, the municipality should control the supply, in order that the general interest of the whole population may be the only object pursued." [9] By expressing these sentiments, Chamberlain, formerly a distinguished local politician, was clearly aligning himself with local authority interests. In what Schattschneider would term the "mobilisation of bias" by the municipalities his support was clearly an important political resource, and one which helped to swing the decisional outcome in their favour. The result, expressed in the terms of Lukes' first dimensional analysis, was that the councils exercised power over the

companies, in a non-trivial matter, by forcing them to do something which they would not otherwise have done, namely to establish private electricity operations on terms which were largely unfavourable to themselves. This, however, is insofar as, between 1882 and 1888, the companies established any operations at all. As is seen below, one effect of the restrictive terms of the 1882 Act was to choke off private enterprise altogether. This could, somewhat unprofitably, be categorised as the municipalities forcing a series of non-decisions upon the companies. A more viable depiction might be that, in the face of local authority opposition, company interests made a series of conscious decisions not to begin operations. The complicated nature of the analysis, in what prima facie might appear to be a simple and straightforward case, is yet another example of the sophisticated theorising which is necessary if we are to apply the apparently neat and watertight formulations of political theorists to the world of empirical reality.

Given Chamberlain's predilections, it is hardly surprising that his Electric Lighting Act of 1882 attempted to curb and control the private electricity companies in the interests of the municipalities. In doing this, he was clearly reflecting political opinion in Birmingham which was also, as will be seen, eager to restrict the local electricity company's area of supply and the period of its concession, so that any future agreed purchase price might be lowered accordingly. The extent of the

local authorities victory can be judged from the terms of the Act. Under it, the Board of Trade was to grant licences not exceeding seven years for the supply of electricity to local authorities. Any licence granted to companies or private persons had normally to be with local authority consent. The Board could also grant provisional orders not exceeding twenty- one years to local authorities or to companies or private persons without local authority sanction. No restrictions were imposed on profits, dividends or the raising of new capital. Local authorities, however, were given the right of purchase of the companies' undertakings, after the expiration of the provisional orders, at the market value of the plant.[10] This clear violation of the rights and freedoms of private property, enacted by a Liberal government usually depicted as being under the powerful influence of laissez- faire economic doctrines, might well seem remarkable to Marxists and others who see the state in a free enterprise economy as invariably acting in the interests of a capitalist class. Originally, Chamberlain had attempted to go even further, and impose a fifteen year period on the companies before forcing them to offer their operations for purchase by the local authorities. The limit, however, was extended to twenty- one years following vigorous company opposition.[11]

Naturally enough, the companies were deeply dissatisfied with the 1882 Act, and under the onerous restrictions imposed upon them few successful ventures were launched. Meanwhile, the

complicated first dimensional power struggle between the companies and the municipalities continued at Westminster. In 1885, a committee chaired by Lord Thurlow, presumably in an attempt to galvanise the companies into action, recommended the repeal of the provisions for compulsory municipal purchase.[12] Three bills, including one government measure, were all unsuccessfully canvassed in 1886. Finally, in 1888 the Electric Lighting Act introduced important new provisions. The big change was that the maximum period before compulsory purchase was extended to 42 years. This was certainly an important concession to the companies, and, together with the continued development of an improved technology of supply, was sufficient to stimulate a significant number of them into commencing operations. On the other hand, local authority permission was now required before the granting of any provisional order. True, this was subject to the power of the Local Government Board to overrule any local objections which it deemed unreasonable. But this power was unlikely to be exercised very regularly, given the formidable influence of municipal interests at Westminster as demonstrated above. Furthermore, the terms of any compulsory purchase remained for the most part the same as those of 1882.[13] This compromise would seem to reflect an emerging view among municipalities that they had overplayed their hand in 1882, and that some concessions to the companies were needed if any electricity supplies were to be provided at all. The aim, however, still seemed to be to give away only so much as was necessary, and to retain important powers of control and

interference in their own hands. Again, for Marxists and other socialists who see the state in capitalist society as the instrument of free enterprise these continuing curbs on the business community might well seem curious. They are, indeed, a strong indication of the political influence which local authorities were able to exert on national government.

Although the details of the power struggle at Westminster between the municipalities and the companies are agreed among scholars, there are differing opinions regarding its effects on the development of the electricity industry. Hinton accuses the Playfair Committee of 1879 of an unwise bias towards the local authorities, and asserts that "the Act of 1882 ... put shackles on the development of the electricity supply industry."^[14] Hennessey, likewise, after some ironic comments on the Playfair Committee, quotes from contemporary issues of The Statist and the Electrician to the effect that the 1882 Act had killed off all private initiative. According to The Times, he adds, the measure was so restrictive that it would "deprive the public of the benefits of electric lighting."^[15] These interpretations are consistent with the analysis here, since such a weakening of the forces of free enterprise would seem to be exactly what was intended by municipal interests. Later, however, Hennessey, whilst criticising "the dog- in- the- manger attitude that led nearly 250 local authorities to sit on Provisional Orders without

using them", expresses "some doubt ... that the 1882 Act was solely responsible for Great Britain's slow start as an electricity- using society." [16]

This latter opinion is endorsed by Ballin. According to his figures, 69 provisional orders to supply electricity were granted in 1883, 55 of them to private companies. None of these was acted on. In 1884, 4 orders were granted and in 1886 another 1, but there were no more until 1888. Ballin denies, however, that this "falling off in enterprise" is attributable to the 1882 Act, ascribing it instead to "electric company mongering" by dishonest promoters, and to the trade depression of the early 1880's. [17] He does add, however, that the revision of the 1882 Act in 1888 had "great psychological importance" for companies who had considered it "the only cause of their failure." [18] Later, Ballin affirms that early legislation "at the time was well adapted to the technical conditions". [19] It would appear, indeed, that for most of the 1880's, technological developments in the electricity industry were at too rudimentary a stage to enable assured profits to be made. What this means, of course, is that the years after 1882 would have seen little progress in the supply of electricity whatever the legislative framework. This assertion is not susceptible to empirical investigation because the relevant counterfactual, namely a re- run of history in which the 1882 Act was inoperative or altered, cannot be applied. Ballin's view is endorsed by Hannah and Byatt. [20] None of these interpretations, however, challenge or invalidate

the claim here made that an important influence on the Acts of 1882 and 1888 was the desire of municipalities to curb the power of private electricity companies. Their aim in this, as mentioned above, was clearly, in the terms used by Schattschneider and by Bachrach and Baratz, to use the mobilisation of bias deriving from their considerable political influence to set and control the agenda for their future relations with the companies. They did this, however, by means of an effective lobby at Westminster to influence the legislative decisions of Parliament, and not by participation in a number of "non- decisions" as postulated by Bachrach and Baratz in their early work.

According to Hannah, until the mid 1890's, "companies still remained dominant in the industry. By 1895 their accumulated investment in electricity supply amounted to £4.3m., more than twice that of the municipalities." This is in line with the perceived preference of local authorities to let the companies develop the industry under controls which were as strict as were practicable. But then, quite suddenly, the climate changed and as the municipal trading movement gathered pace from the late 1880's onwards, a number of municipalities began to use their strong bargaining position to take over the supply of electricity from the companies. In 1889, for example, Hannah records that Bradford became the first municipal owner of an electricity enterprise, being followed by St. Pancras in 1891 and Portsmouth, Hampstead and Ealing in 1894.[21] In 1896 the corporations of

Bath, Liverpool and Southampton purchased their local electricity companies, with Sheffield and Leeds following suit in 1898.[22] Municipal purchases of the local company also occurred in Glasgow, Sheffield and elsewhere, so that, by around the turn of the century, "outside ... London ... only Newcastle, Preston, Bournemouth and Northampton among the large towns were still controlled by companies." [23] Thus, according to Waller, "when the industry did develop from the 1890's municipal undertakings accounted for two-thirds of the organisation and distribution." [24] There was, indeed, a company presence, but it was mainly in the more rural areas. Detailed figures are given by Ballin: "Up to 1900 ... 639 provisional orders had been granted of which 518 were still in force. Of these 354 were held by local authorities and 164 by companies. In the three years from 1895/98 alone investment in municipal electricity increased from £1,772,000 to £6,979,000 whilst the corresponding figures for companies were £4,335,000 and £7,996,000 respectively, showing an impressive growth of municipal activity". [25] The ease with which municipalities were able to take over such an important industry in its infancy, despite the absence of coercive legislation, is strong evidence (to use Schattschneider's phrase once again) of their successful "mobilisation of bias" against the companies from before the 1882 Act onwards.

For Birmingham, the demonstration effect of municipalisations in other towns seems to have influenced local policy makers. The climax of the municipal trading movement, which clearly affected the timing of these various municipal take-overs, would thus appear to be a relevant aspect of the national political culture. A feature of all the municipal purchases, however, is that, like the Corporation's land purchases in the Elan valley, they do not fit very neatly into the first dimensional decision-making scenarios postulated by Dahl and Lukes. Dahl, in his study of New Haven, saw the exercise of power in terms of conflict and of individual successes and defeats. Lukes, too, sees power in his first dimension as being exercised when A prevails over B in a situation of conflict. In a negotiated purchase, of course, conflict is still present over the terms of the deal even though both parties reach agreement in co-operative discussions. The situation can thus be analysed after the fashion postulated by Dahl and Lukes, since the terms of the agreement are clearly influenced by the power relationships between A and B, and the relative strength of their bargaining positions. The analysis, however, is more convoluted than may have been imagined. Yet again, to an empiricist the facts may appear to be perfectly clear. For him, the complexities might seem to arise, not from the situation itself, but from the (possibly unnecessary) attempt to contain reality within the categories delineated for it by the political theorist.

According to Falkus, "there is on the whole no evidence that, at any rate before 1914, municipalities ran their undertakings less efficiently than private companies",[26] a conclusion which is in general endorsed by Byatt.[27] Byatt adds, however, that in the period after 1900 there were a number of difficulties arising, among other things, from the fact that the scale of electrical technology was outstripping the size of municipal areas,[28] a problem which is further investigated below. Byatt adds that rivalry between municipalities and companies (among other things) "led to unsatisfactory and expensive compromises which had to be totally re-cast after the First World War." [29] This was not the case in Birmingham, where the local authority had an effective monopoly of supply which lasted until the nationalisation of 1948. What is clear, however, is that Newton's injunction, referred to in Chapter 1, to place local politics in its national setting is clearly useful to an understanding of the decision to municipalise Birmingham's electricity supply.

3. Birmingham and the 1882 Act.

The Gas Committee in Birmingham had suspended consideration of the private bills relating to the city until after the passage of the Government's measure. With the Bill itself they were largely satisfied, refusing to join other local authorities in

attempts to gain further concessions to local authority interests after it had passed the Commons Select Committee. This decision was amply endorsed by subsequent experience, since, as was soon discovered, the 1882 Act favoured the municipalities so strongly that its opponents claimed it was killing off entrepreneurial initiative. Meanwhile, in Birmingham, six notices of intent to apply for provisional orders to undertake electricity supplies were soon lodged and the council itself had received two requests for sanction. A council meeting was therefore convened for 31st October, 1882, at which the Gas Committee was to present a Special Report.[30]

Local authorities all over the country were faced with the same problem. Many corporations, particularly those owning their own gas undertakings, took alarm at the prospect of the creation of a privately-owned and possibly highly lucrative monopoly within their areas and themselves applied for licences.[31] In other towns, too, support was expressed for the creation of municipal electricity enterprises. In Birmingham, there was a similar ground-swell of opinion and a number of premature prophets clearly voiced the doctrine of municipal trading. At the special council meeting, for example, councillor Lawson Tait referred to "the too great enthusiasm which existed now on the question of the electric light" among the local people. The Mayor himself, Alderman Avery, admitted that his first reaction was that "an expenditure of £50,000 or even a larger sum would not be at all too much to employ upon a practical experiment of

such magnitude and where the interests involved so widely affected the convenience and comfort of the community." [32] Thus initially, on the analysis of Molotch and the growth machine theorists summarised in Chapter 1, the Mayor viewed the electricity supply as an important part of the city's infrastructure which would be more effectively developed by the council than by private enterprise. According to Molotch, local newspapers tend to support the local growth machine and to act as propagandists on its behalf. At first the Birmingham Daily Post, true to Molotch's delineation, agreed with Avery. It discerned "a general feeling that for the purpose of preventing the creation of a new monopoly in private hands, to ensure the control of the streets, and thus to promote public convenience, and also to limit as far as possible injurious competition with Corporation gas- lighting, the supply of electric light ought to be in the hands of the local governing authority." Among the other large authorities, continued the Post, Manchester had already obtained powers to supply the electric light and Liverpool intended to apply for a provisional order. The estimates of the Gas Committee as to the cost of an experiment along these lines were "much too high" and until they had been investigated by electrical experts "the Town Council will hardly be in a position to decide whether it should or should not ask for a provisional order on account of the town." [33]

But the time for the implementation of such ideas had not yet arrived, and the Town Clerk and the Gas Committee took a different view. The Town Clerk, Edward Orford Smith, in his report to the Gas Committee on the question, enunciated the views expressed by municipal interests at Westminster with his usual incisiveness. He concluded that "it may ... be the wiser course to permit speculators to try the experiment at their own risk, taking care that stringent provisions are inserted in the Provisional Order with reference to the breaking up of the streets, the area and conditions of supply, and the shortening as far as possible of the period of 21 years for the compulsory purchase of the undertaking, in the event of its proving commercially successful." No clearer statement of the local authority view, attacked by the companies nationally as a dog-in-the-manger attitude, could have been made. But the Town Clerk's argument did not stop there. The effect of Section 27 of the Act, he continued, was "to place the local authority in a position to purchase upon the most favourable terms, in the event of the supply of Electricity providing a useful and profitable undertaking." At that time there was "absolutely no evidence as to the commercial value of Electric Lighting" and "equal uncertainty respecting the restrictions and obligations which a Provisional Order might impose". Although "the hand of every important local authority in the United Kingdom is at present being forced by certain speculative companies or individuals who have served applications for licences and notices for Provisional Orders in a wholesale manner throughout the country",

nevertheless "there is an utter absence of all the information that would appear to be desirable in the case of a municipal authority before embarking upon these unknown powers and responsibilities." The implication, entirely consistent with the restrictive attitude of municipalities towards private companies at Westminster, was clear. Let private enterprise take the risks and do the onerous preparatory work under the most stringent conditions that could be obtained. The local council could then step in later with its own schemes if this was thought desirable. The initial decision not to develop a municipal supply of electricity would thus seem to have been tactical rather than strategic. It implied no long term rejection of that doctrine of municipal socialism first clearly enunciated and implemented by Chamberlain in the 1870's.[34] At any event, the importance of Bachrach and Baratz's emphasis upon the control of the political agenda could scarcely have been more clearly demonstrated. The local authority, in Schattschneider's phrase, had mobilised its political bias and had succeeded in retaining control over the political agenda for the future development of the electricity supply. As explained, however, all this had occurred within Lukes' first dimension rather than in some second dimension of presumed non- decisions.

The Gas Committee, in their report to the council, agreed with the Town Clerk. The clauses of the new Act would effectively prevent the creation of a private monopoly since, as the Town Clerk had already argued, "more than one undertaking may

be authorized in the same area", a licence could only be granted with local authority approval, local authority consent also being required to renew the licence after seven years, and even a provisional order would only run for a maximum of 21 years, after which the local authority could purchase "on favourable terms."^[35] If a private company undertook the supply, satisfactory arrangements could in all likelihood be made by which the local authorities themselves would be contracted to break up the streets. The Gas Committee were also dissuaded from advocating local authority initiative because of the likely estimated cost, although no specific mention was made of the fear of a backlash from the ratepayers. At this stage this is perhaps not surprising since, as has been seen, it was the high cost of the Welsh water scheme later, in the 1890's, which did so much to exacerbate ratepayer resentment and undermine the buoyant optimism of the civic gospel.

A factor which may have been more significant at that time, however, although no specific evidence for it was found, was the depression of trade from about 1873 to 1896. Significantly, it was immediately after the upswing of the British and the world economy from the mid- 1890's that the municipal trading movement reached its height and the electricity supply in Birmingham was municipalised. On the other hand, it has also been argued that, although some of the older Birmingham industries "never recovered

from ...the depression" which began in the 1870's, the city, from the mid 1880's, "attracted to itself a multitude of new industries" largely based upon new technology.[36]

In 1882 the Gas Committee argued that "the minimum amount of capital that will be required" for a municipal electricity scheme "must considerably exceed £4 per lamp" and would be accompanied by onerous obligations and responsibilities. For example, by Section 19 of the Act, "it may be contended that the Undertakers will be under an obligation to supply electricity in any part of the selected area", an obligation which could "involve the laying of conductors over the whole area for a very limited consumption." There was also the problem of finding a "practical self-regulating Electric Meter." The Committee concluded "that no sufficient reason can be shown to induce the Corporation to enter on a work which cannot fail to bring it anxieties, difficulties, and arduous labours, without the recompense of contributing to the welfare of the community as a whole, and which would involve financial responsibilities with the uncertainty of adequate, if any, return", especially when the companies could be forced to undertake the work on terms extremely favourable to the Corporation. The Committee recommended that the council make no application to undertake the supply but that, instead, the Committee should be authorised to negotiate with interested companies to secure such points as control of the streets, adequate safety provisions and the limitation of the term of the concession and that, on the basis

of these negotiations, the Committee should be authorised to support or oppose the applications made by private companies to the Board of Trade. This complete endorsement by the Gas Committee of the recommendations made to it by the Town Clerk clearly indicates either that Orford Smith was an influential local political actor, or that he was sensitively reflecting and anticipating views which he knew would find acceptance, or both. In any event, the Gas Committee, like the Town Clerk and the municipal lobby at Westminster, clearly considered the companies as useful leg- men and stalking horses, to be used as convenient and discarded at will. In capitalist Britain, the local state, to adopt a Marxist analysis, like the government in Westminster, seemed, despite the absence of an influential party of labour, to be prepared to ride roughshod over private capitalism rather than to serve its interests.[37]

The powerful influence of committees is clearly observable in the unanimous support which the Gas Committee's report received from the full council. Alderman Kenrick, proposing the report's adoption, expressed himself "exceedingly surprised to find the line of policy which had been pursued by so many corporations" in applying for powers of supply themselves, naming Liverpool and Manchester as examples. He even discerned "a distinct advantage in the two kinds of illuminant being managed by distinct bodies" since this would promote healthy competition. The Mayor, Alderman Avery, had by now concluded that "few people who were paying £10 per year for gas would care to pay £40 or

more for the increased advantages of electricity" and councillor Hart hoped that the brevity of the discussion "would not in after years be quoted as another example of the tyranny of the caucus." So convincing were the Report's arguments that the resolution adopting it was passed by 54 votes to nil. The municipality had thus reached a tactical conclusion. For the moment, and on the available technological and other evidence, electricity was best developed by a strictly regulated and heavily circumscribed private company. That company, however, was not going to be allowed to control the political agenda, and the council intended to mobilise its political bias to keep the company weak and the municipal option open.[38]

These events in the council chamber were met, for the most part, by silence on the part of the citizenry, and there is no evidence that an elite of councillors was editing out of the political agenda a publicly popular issue. There was virtually no correspondence on the subject in the local press and the newspaper editorials in general concurred with the council's action. As soon as the Report of the Gas Committee was published, the Birmingham Daily Mail commended its authors as being "most wise and discriminating in their determination"[39] and, after the special council meeting, another Mail editorial described the Report as "masterly" and the result of the discussion as "completely satisfactory".[40] In addition, the Post had, by now, changed its former opinion, an editorial just before the council meeting recording that "though at one time we

thought it would be better for the Corporation to obtain immediately control of the new light, we are now convinced - reluctantly convinced - that it will be better to try the experiment by means of liberal arrangements with ... the companies." [41] As might have been expected, however, the Post, a staunch supporter of the majority on the council, did not follow up this conciliatory phraseology with any systematic display of support for private interests.

4. Electricity in Birmingham, 1882-1897.

From 1882 to 1897 the policy of the council towards the electricity supply, a policy which was carried through more or less exclusively within the parameters of Lukes' first or decision-making dimension of power, underwent no major strategic change. The recommendation of the Town Clerk and the Gas Committee as endorsed by the full council in 1882 was consistently followed. In accordance with it, the municipality took no action itself to supply electricity but kept the municipal option open by imposing arduous and restrictive conditions on private companies. Tactically, however, while curbing private enterprise as much as possible, the council was later prepared to make certain limited concessions to company interests. This was done after it became clear than previous policies had failed to attract any successful company initiatives

at all. A major motive in this change of course appears to have been a desire to meet the wishes of city centre business interests keen to get access to the new illuminant. In 1893, however, the council wrongly concluded that a municipal electricity enterprise was non-viable and made the expensive mistake of allowing the company to strengthen its position by expanding its area of supply. The result was a new share issue which the council was forced to buy up at over twice its face value when municipalisation was decided on a few years later.

To a contemporary, however, writing shortly after 1882, subsequent events in the town had proved "an entire justification of the wisdom of the Committee" in refusing to endorse a municipal scheme for the supply of electricity. The Gas Committee's Report, it was argued, had already "had a marked influence on the action of other Corporations, nearly all of whom proceeded to withdraw their applications for authority to supply, and to leave the field in the possession of the companies."^[42] The unanimity with which all local authorities ultimately refused to set up municipal electricity works under the terms of the 1882 Act raises the question of whether they acted in collusion, or at least were guided by the actions of other councils. No direct evidence of this, however, was discovered in the present research.

In Birmingham only the Incandescent Lighting Company (Limited) persisted with its application, obtaining, after agreement with the Gas Committee, a provisional order to light the town centre for 16 years, an order which subsequently lapsed because of inactivity on the part of the company.[43] As argued above, at this stage it is likely that the rudimentary and untested nature of the new technology was a major cause of failure, although the onerous terms of the company's licence may also have been a factor.

In Chapter 1 the stress laid by Goodin on the timing of decisions was invoked. As indicated above, this is of relevance here, since it is necessary to explain, not only why electricity was municipalised in the late 1890's, but also why it was not municipalised earlier. A number of relevant factors explaining this have already been considered. One of the more important of these was the problem of developing an infant technology, which continued to weigh heavily with the municipal authorities and was a major reason for their unwillingness, in this period, to set up publicly- owned enterprises. With regard to the initiation of a private supply too, however, the timing was important, and here, as stated above, the legislative framework was clearly of relevance since immediately after the more liberal Act of 1888 the firm of Chamberlain and Hookham applied for a provisional order to undertake the Birmingham supply. The Electric Lighting Sub- Committee reported on this development to the General Purposes Committee meeting of 28 January 1889, and, in their

continued rejection of the municipal option, gave precedence to technological arguments. They were "of the opinion that it is not now desirable for the Corporation of Birmingham, as the local authority, themselves to acquire the power to supply Electricity within the city." Referring to the precedent of 1882 they were still of the opinion that "it would be unwise in the present state of electrical science to embark the money of the ratepayers in the establishment of an electrical installation." The Sub-Committee argued that, although the promoters had offered the Corporation an option to purchase the entire undertaking after a lapse of only two years, "there is nothing in this offer that would induce them to recommend the council to avail themselves of it." On the technological aspects of the case, a Mr. Henry Lea, of the firm of Lea and Thornbery, Birmingham, had been consulted and he had come out strongly against the likely profitability of a number of small stations scattered throughout the town, such as Chamberlain and Hookham envisaged. No public money should be spent on electric lighting, he stated, until the success of the Deptford Generating Station, then in course of construction, had been ascertained. "Should this project prove successful ... the Local Authority of Birmingham may do wisely to give serious consideration to the proposal to themselves undertake the supply of electricity from some outlying station where land, coal and water are abundant and cheap, and where noise and vibration are of no moment; but until a successful experiment of the kind indicated has been made, I think that the Local Authority should properly abstain from becoming their own manufacturers of

electricity."[44] This powerful technological argument, added to the armoury of debating points stockpiled in 1882, appears to have carried considerable weight, and the Sub- Committee succeeded in inducing the General Purposes Committee to adopt their report word for word, the Mayor presenting it to the council at their meeting of February 6th 1889. These explanations would thus appear to answer the point derived from Goodin as to why electricity was not municipalised in 1888. Again, however, the anti- municipalisation policy manifested itself in a conscious decision to endorse the creation of a private company, rather than in a metaphysical non- decision positioned in some alleged second dimension of power. There was, however, still no rejection of the general principle of municipal trading and the way remained clear for a change of policy if the evidence suggested that this was justified.[45]

The bulk of the discussion at the council meeting, however, was taken up not with a consideration of the merits of municipalisation, which almost everyone agreed was at that time undesirable, but with the serious differences of opinion as to the wording of the proposed Provisional Order. This question had taken up the second half of the Electric Lighting Sub- Committee's Report and the issues were exactly the same as in 1882. The municipality still wanted to control the political agenda, and to reserve its own position by imposing the most onerous terms possible upon private enterprise. The dispute in this case had two aspects: the proposed capital and the proposed

area. The council wanted to tie the company to raising £100,000 to light a small area of the town centre, while the company insisted on half of that capital to light a substantially larger district.[46] The council finally agreed to a capital of £50,000, but this was the lesser point. As became apparent later, a large share issue was actually undesirable from their point of view since, if municipalisation were decided upon, the shares would be more expensive to buy up. The council's motive in attempting to secure a higher level of investment is thus somewhat unclear, but appears to be related to what Molotch might refer to as its role as a local growth machine. Thus, the Corporation seems to have been concerned that an important addition to the amenities and infrastructure of the city should be properly funded, and that customers should receive an adequate level of provision. On the more substantive point, the council succeeded in confining the company to the smaller area of supply. This prevented them, for the moment, from appropriating all the most profitable areas thereby prejudicing the success of a council experiment or a municipal buy-out later.[47]

However, a new manifestation of Molotch's growth machine had now entered the field. Business interests in the city centre were clearly eager to adopt the new illuminant. Thus Alderman Powell Williams, M.P., the General Purposes Committee's main critic, "thoroughly agreed with the report that it would not be desirable for the City of Birmingham, on its own responsibility, to establish the supply of the electric light, but he was at

variance with the committee in relation to other parts of its recommendations." For him the question was urgent. "He had read a memorial signed by 228 shopkeepers in Birmingham who were willing to receive the light, including Messrs. Holliday and Sons, Chamberlain, King and Jones, Lloyds Bank, the Birmingham Gazette Company, the Theatre Royal, the Queen's Hotel, the Great Western Hotel, and a considerable number of private consumers, some of them outside the area proposed by the committee." The signatories were some of the city's largest ratepayers, and in the circumstances he considered it appropriate to propose an amendment (subsequently withdrawn) that Chamberlain and Hookham's application should be approved, with the Board of Trade left to arbitrate as to the precise terms.

The day of municipal electricity had clearly not dawned, but councillor Barclay had the honour of being a prophet before his time. During a speech unsuccessfully attempting to refer the whole matter back to committee he affirmed that "if the venture was likely to prove a success when undertaken by a company, it would be equally likely to do so under the management of the Corporation." The Committee's report was carried unanimously, however, only Alderman Powell Williams and his seconder declining to vote.[48] Over the issue of municipalisation, the local press solidly concurred with the opinion of the General Purposes Committee and of the council and rejected the views of Barclay. The Gazette thought that an experiment in electric lighting "is good enough, perhaps, for speculative investment of private

capital, but not good enough to justify the risking of public funds."[49] The Post, in a direct reference to Barclay's speech, noted "one thing ... with satisfaction - namely that no encouragement was given yesterday to a proposal which distinctly pointed to the corporation itself undertaking the supply of electric light. We have already too many enterprises on hand to justify even the thought of another of such magnitude."[50] Such statements, however, like the similar opinion of the council, were again clearly tactical rather than strategic, and nowhere in the press was the general principle of municipal socialism attacked or criticised.

The press, however, acting, on Molotch's categorisation, as the spokesmen of a local growth machine, firmly agreed with Powell Williams, and levelled strong criticisms at the General Purposes Committee for doing too little to encourage the introduction of the new illuminant. For the Mail, "the provision of the electric light on a more extended scale is becoming an absolute necessity if we are not alter our motto on the new coat of arms to Backward. ...The shopkeepers who ask for the electric light do possess a claim upon the attention of the Council, comprising as they do the directors of some of the most important retail houses in Birmingham."[51] The Post was concerned "that speculators are not likely to be tempted to enter the field. ... We have waited for years, and until now nobody has come forward; and, under the conditions imposed by the council, we doubt if anybody will make another attempt in a hurry."[52]

In practice, such arguments, like those of Alderman Powell Williams, implied a more conciliatory attitude by the council to the company, and the desire of shopkeepers and businessmen in the town centre for the electric light seems to have been one of the key factors in influencing the General Purposes Committee to reach a compromise with the company. Such pressure, aimed as it was at improving the city's electrical infrastructure and providing access to the benefits of a new technology, might, similarly to the council's attempt to see that the expansion of the supply was properly capitalised, and to newspaper criticism of the anti-company stance of the General Purposes Committee, be categorised as coming from a local "growth machine." But in this particular case the nature of the support for the petition demonstrates quite conclusively that the material basis for any such growth machine was commercial interests and not groups associated with land ownership as argued by Molotch. As far as the city council was concerned, however, the main objective, as subsequent events demonstrated, was still to grant only such concessions to company interests as were necessary to secure the desired improvement in the city's infrastructure, whilst retaining in the hands of the municipality the ultimate power to determine the nature of the supply.

The ultimate settlement of the differences between the council and the company over the terms of the Provisional Order was enshrined in a bill confirming the Birmingham Electric

Lighting Order, 1889, which received the Royal Assent on the 12th August of that year. Chamberlain and Hookham then promptly transferred their concession to Messrs. Holmes and Vaudrey of Liverpool who, early in 1890, succeeded in promoting the Birmingham Electric Supply Company to supply light to the city under the terms of the Provisional Order.[53] The company pushed ahead at once with the construction of a central generating station which was officially opened by the Mayor, Alderman Clayton, on April 22nd, 1891.[54]

As indicated above, there is little evidence, either in the general literature or from this case study of Birmingham, that municipal gas committees launched any direct challenge to the establishment of private electricity companies. According to Hinton, "none of the witnesses from the gas suppliers" who appeared before the Playfair Committee in 1879 was worried by the prospect of competition."[55] In the short term, at least, technology, coupled with effective business organisation and an absence of profiteering, appeared to justify such complacency. As Hannah records: "Lighting by gas was distinctly cheaper than electricity until the end of the nineteenth century. ...The Welsbach mantle (invented in 1886 and becoming more popular in the 1890's) extended the principle of incandescence to gas lighting so that gas could now provide a steadier, whiter light than the older fish- tail gas lights had been able to offer. Moreover, the British gas companies were extremely efficient by international standards, and government control or municipal

management had virtually eliminated excessive profits." By comparison, adds Hannah: "Early electric development was largely confined to high- income areas such as the central commercial and residential districts of London and provincial cities. Clubs, theatres and fashionable shops predominated among pioneer users, and most public supply undertakings could number their consumers in tens or hundreds rather than in thousands." [56] If anything, argues Falkus, before 1900 the threat of a rival spurred on municipal gas committees to enforce their superiority ever more effectively: "The vigour with which many municipalities promoted their gas undertakings after 1880, introducing rapidly the new incandescent mantles and slot- meters and hiring cooking and heating apparatus to consumers, can be attributed in part to a commercially- inspired reaction against the threat posed by electricity." [57]

Finer mentions as one local authority motive in the 1870's and '80's an "anxiety for ...investments in gas undertakings threatened by this new source of light." But he then promptly turns the argument on its head: "Some local authorities who did not themselves own a gas undertaking assumed electricity powers, among other reasons, in order to beat down the company's price of gas." [58] Indeed, several writers point out that, during electricity's early days, the position of the companies was, if anything, strengthened by the unwillingness of the local authorities to compete against themselves. Ballin, for example, asks of the ratepayer "was it not grossly unfair to force him

into subsidising rate- aided undertakings which might actually compete with his own work?"[59] "Most municipalities", states Hannah, were at first "... unwilling to start up a new enterprise which would compete with their lucrative municipal gas undertakings."[60] The point is repeated, in a more general context, by Falkus: "Municipalities which had invested heavily on one enterprise might be unwilling to develop adequately a competing industry."[61] There is no evidence from Birmingham to support such arguments, however. The reasons for not initiating a municipal supply of electricity, as enunciated at the time, did not include a desire to avoid the creation of a municipal rival to gas. Later, when a municipal electricity supply was considered desirable, such a rival was readily created.

In Birmingham, as elsewhere, the argument that the Gas Committee opposed the introduction of electricity cannot be substantiated. The General Purposes Committee which rejected Chamberlain and Hookham's original scheme contained only two members of the Gas Committee[62] and Alderman Pollack, the Gas Committee Chairman, had blandly asserted at the council meeting of February 5th, 1889, that, although "the electric light might ...at some future period interfere with the consumption of gas", nevertheless, "the scheme of Messrs. Chamberlain and Hookham had no dangers for the Gas Committee" since they were talking in terms of 2,000 lights, equivalent to a consumption of 50 million cubic feet of gas, out of a total supplied by the Gas Committee of 3,500 million.[63] At the time the strongest charge levelled

at the Gas Committee was that "they think a little too fondly of their gas" and that their lack of a healthy self-critical faculty made them rather too indifferent as to whether electricity was introduced or not.[64] Certainly, the council, while keeping the company in a subordinate position, was quite prepared to encourage it to improve the amenities of the city in healthy competition with gas. For example, the Mayor, Alderman Clayton, in his speech at the opening of the company's generating station in April, 1891, affirmed, perhaps somewhat patronisingly, that "the new company would put the Gas Department on their mettle, and that, in its turn, would put the Electric Light Company on theirs, and thus the two concerns would work hand in hand for the benefit of the town." [65] Such friendly rivalry, however, was only to last as long as the success of the new technology of electricity stood in doubt. After the steady and sustained success of the company throughout the 1890's the council was to decide on quite a different policy.

In 1892 and 1893, the main issue between the Corporation and the new company was the question of the extension of the area of supply. In an entirely consistent continuation of its previous policies, the council was unwilling to accede to this. The reason, clearly stated at the time, was that it would strengthen the company's position and thus raise the cost of any future municipal purchase. Thus, towards the end of 1892, the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee of the General Purposes Committee met with a deputation from the directors of the company who explained

that they intended to apply for a new Provisional Order extending the area of supply to include the Jewellery Quarter and the suburb of Edgbaston. "The Sub- Committee came to the conclusion that at present there was not sufficient evidence of the commercial results of the Company's operations within the City to enable the Corporation to form a reliable judgment as to the advisability of themselves undertaking the supply of electricity, and as, pending such judgement, it was manifestly unwise to allow the Company to appropriate the most profitable districts, they could not advise the council to sanction the company's application for a further Order." [66] This refreshingly honest and forthright assertion, very similar to the clear and trenchant opinion of the Town Clerk as expressed in 1882, indicates that the preferred policy was to stall on the issue of municipalisation until more definite evidence became available, and in the meantime to keep the company on the usual tight rein. The General Purposes Committee again adopted wholesale the report of its Sub- Committee and successfully passed it through the council meeting of 6th December, 1892, with hardly any discussion. The company for their part recognised the reality of municipal power and, in the face of such formidable opposition to an extension of their area of supply, withdrew their application.

Yet again, all of these developments occurred within Lukes' first, or decision- making dimension of power. In a series of conscious decisions (such, for example, as the decision to endorse the General Purposes Committee's recommendation described

above) the council continued to mobilise its political bias, in Schattschneider's phrase, with a view to controlling the political agenda and preventing the company from determining the future of the city's electricity supply. The case provides yet another indication that Lukes' ascription of the mobilisation of bias and of agenda setting to some alleged second dimension of power is ill- advised.

In 1892 there was still no evidence of an impending municipal take- over. As in 1889 councillor Barclay's was the sole voice raised in favour of a possible Corporation scheme, he having "no doubt whatever that if the Corporation would take the manufacture of the light into their own hands, they would be able to charge less than other people." [67] The Mayor, Alderman Lawley Parker, however, in moving the adoption of the General Purposes Committee Report, clearly re- iterated once again the policy set out in 1882. Caution, he said, was needed until the profitability of the new illuminant became known. [68]

The question of the extension of the company's area of supply, however, was soon raised again. In their Report to the council meeting of July 15th, 1893, the General Purposes Committee recorded that they had received another notice from the company of their intention to apply for a Provisional Order to extend their operations into the Jewellery Quarter and the suburb of Edgbaston. Meanwhile the Electric Lighting Sub- Committee had collected information on the progress of electricity in other

towns. "From these returns ...and from an examination of the balance sheets of the principal London Companies, your committee find that at present, at all events, the profits made from the supply of electricity are inconsiderable." The only justifiable motive for thwarting the company would be the council's desire to undertake the supply in the new areas themselves, a scheme which would, in any case, entail the purchase of the company's existing undertaking. There were sufficient safeguards against damage to the streets and "it can scarcely be expected that there will be any economy in working expenses in the hands of the Corporation." In Birmingham, electricity faced "serious competition with a cheaper gas supply" and a Corporation scheme "would necessitate a large addition to capital expenditure ... and it is not likely that this expenditure would be highly remunerative." The company's application should, therefore, only be opposed on clauses and should be referred back to the General Purposes Committee to act on as they thought fit.[69] This report might be said to be the nadir of council confidence in the municipal option. It comes out against a publicly- owned supply as a practical long term policy objective more strongly than any other authoritative statement since 1882. In retrospect it seems clear that the Electric Lighting Sub- Committee had come to the quite erroneous conclusion that the previous uncertainty was being dispelled and that electric lighting was not a viable municipal enterprise. They were thus prepared, in Molotch's phraseology, to act out their role as the protagonists of the local growth machine by encouraging the private electricity company to improve

the city's infrastructure. The problem was, however, that, contrary to what they argued, the electricity supply industry was dynamic and potentially profitable. The result of the Subcommittee's false insight was that the company were granted an important concession which enlarged and strengthened it and made the subsequent council take-over more expensive. The policy adopted would have been correct if the evidence on which it was based had been correct. In practice, however, the evidence was false and the decision was contrary to the logic of received council wisdom since 1882. It must be considered, from the council's own viewpoint, a mistake. With the benefit of hindsight it would seem that a better and more consistent policy in 1893 would have been to have vigorously opposed an extension of the company's area of supply while at the same time initiating the negotiations for a council buy-out.

The power of the committee system to secure the adoption even of policies of dubious wisdom, however, was speedily demonstrated, and, in moving the approval of this report before the council, the Mayor, Alderman Lawley Parker, had little difficulty in carrying the majority of the members with him. Alderman Johnson, echoing the factual inaccuracies in the report, pointed to the three drawbacks of "(1) no profit; (2) an immediate large expenditure of money; and (3) an immediate addition to their work" as arguments against a council scheme. The intervention of Alderman Pollack, the Gas Committee Chairman, was similarly unhelpful. He asserted that "in considering the

question, the interests of the Gas Department might be left out" and supported this contention with some figures of gas consumption in Market Hall Ward, an area which incorporated most of the city centre. These purported to demonstrate that the introduction of the electric light there had had little effect on the sale of his own product. It would thus seem that the false conclusions arrived at in the report were given further credibility by complacent and questionable arguments from the Gas Committee Chairman.

Councillor Barclay, however, in an impressive display of consistency, remained unconvinced by the negative report and recommendation, and his voice continued to cry in the wilderness: "They were making a great mistake, and ... the lessons of the past in reference to the gas and water undertaking should have taught them different ... He felt convinced that the Birmingham Corporation might well undertake electric lighting now, and he was quite satisfied that they should not lose money by it. Gas did not compare with it for indoor lighting." At the end of the debate, however, councillor Barclay's hand alone was raised in opposition.[70] The next day the Mail editorial, in a statement which was at least more optimistic for the future of the new illuminant than the report of the General Purposes Committee, agreed that "Mr. Barclay is ... quite right in anticipating a time when the Corporation will have to buy up these company rights." The Mail somewhat illogically concluded, however, that "the General Purposes Committee are acting with a wise caution in

refusing to enter on any such project at present", thereby failing to recognise the force of Barclay's argument that if municipalisation were to be the final outcome, the sooner it was done the cheaper it would be.[71] The ultimate outcome was a triumph for the company which, in the absence of council opposition, went on to obtain sanction for its enlarged area by another Order of 1894. As some compensation for its gaffe, the Corporation obtained, in return for its assent, certain reductions in the costs charged to consumers.[72]

The falsity of the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee's assertions on the unprofitability of electricity in 1893 were illustrated by the subsequent performance of the company. During the next few years it underwent a period of steady expansion, profits swelling from £5,859 in 1895 to £9,181 in 1896 and £12,962 in 1897.[73] To enable the Directors to undertake the supply of light in the Jewellery Quarter, a resolution was successfully introduced at the Annual Shareholders' Meeting of 7th March, 1895, authorising the issue of another £100,000 worth of £5 shares and, thereby, increasing the company's nominal capital to £200,000.[74] As will be seen, from a financial point of view it would have been better for the council if these shares had never been issued, since a few years later they had to be bought up at more than double their issue price. In their report submitted to shareholders on 12th March, 1896, the directors were able to state that the new stations at Newhall Street and Edgbaston, built to supply the two newly sanctioned areas, were

already "in full working order." In Edgbaston "orders already received are encouraging", while in the Jewellery Quarter "the demand for current, both for lighting and power purposes, ... is most satisfactory." [75]

Every year brought additions to the company's works and the number of 16 c.p. (candle power) lamps or their equivalent to order increased from 12,138 on December 31st, 1894, to 18,199 at the end of 1895, to 25,876 for 1896 and to 39,232 for 1897. In 1896, a modified scale of charges was introduced for the use of motors and, in 1897, general reductions of charges were made which, argued the directors, "have been amply justified by the greatly increased demand for current." [76] This steady boom in company business was a complete vindication of the arguments of Barclay. Corporation policy was about to undergo an abrupt volte face when, on the 4th May, 1897, the electricity question was raised once again at the Quarterly Meeting of the council. [77]

5. Municipalisation, 1897-1900.

The events which culminated in the municipalisation of the electricity supply, like most of the phenomena investigated in this study, occurred mainly within Lukes' first dimension of power. Thus, even if Lukes' second dimension is taken to include so-called "non-decisions" which are, in effect, decisions to do

nothing or to do something else, the time for such decisions was now over. This, together with the effective exclusion of detailed consideration of power in the third dimension from the research plan for the reasons explained in Chapter 1, means that investigation of the events surrounding the municipal take-over of the electricity company can best be viewed as occurring almost exclusively within Lukes' first dimension.

As in many other cases discussed, however, the political analysis needs to be fairly sophisticated and complicated if Lukes' dimensional categories are to be applied. One of the difficulties, alluded to above, is that Lukes' first dimension is postulated upon the decision-making scenario described by Dahl. This, as seen in Chapter 1, envisages a situation where "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do." Using this and similar characterisations, Dahl is able to draw up tables of the alleged "successes" and "defeats" of political actors. The fundamental assumption, according to Lukes, is that power during the decision-making process (i.e. power exercised within the parameters of his first dimension) cannot be perceived except in situations of conflict. Conflict there certainly was in this case, as has been seen, and power was undoubtedly being exercised. The analysis, therefore, can be pursued. But there are complicating factors. One of these was that the conflict cannot be accurately represented as a zero sum game in which the winner takes all and the loser loses everything. What happened

was that there was a variable sum game whereby recompense was given to the company's shareholders for the sale of their shares, a recompense with which the bigger shareholders at least appear to have been fairly happy. There was certainly a conflict over the price, and the position of subservience in which the council had kept the company almost certainly strengthened its own bargaining stance. It may thus have been the case that the local authority prevailed over the company's shareholders to do something which they would not otherwise have done, namely sell out at one price when they would have preferred another, and higher, one. But, because of the compensation which was given, the case cannot simply be looked at in terms of winners and losers, as, for example, can the defeat of the recalcitrant ratepayers by the promoters of the 1892 Water Bill.

It is, perhaps, most profitable to view the first dimensional exercise of decision-making power culminating in the council's take-over of the electricity company as a bargaining game. As with the land purchases in the Elan valley, both sides adopted negotiating stances in an attempt to maximise their own benefits. The balance of power, however, was clearly tilted in the council's favour, and when once they had made an offer which they considered reasonable, they were able to stick to it. All the attempts of the company to get further concessions, even small ones, were successfully met with a polite but firm refusal. Eventually, after some wriggling on the hook, the company bowed

to the inevitable and accepted the corporation's offer. The final terms were more or less exactly the same as had been originally offered.

There is little evidence for it, but it seems that by the early months of 1897 influential local politicians had decided that they would like to municipalise Birmingham's electricity supply. They thus initiated a first dimensional game aimed at securing the desired decisional outcome. As shrewd bargainers and negotiators they at first kept their true intentions secret and feigned a public indifference and hostility to a policy which they had secretly espoused. According to a press report at the end of April, 1897, therefore, the members of the General Purposes Committee were represented as being "somewhat adverse" to raising the question and "a strong feeling upon the part of other members of the City Council" was put forward as the main motive force leading to a reconsideration of the matter.[78] A suitable stalking horse was found in councillor Thomas Fletcher, who, while himself taking care to avoid seeming too eager, proposed the necessary resolution in the council chamber. He was not a member of the General Purposes Committee, and this gave the Committee an excellent opportunity to appear luke-warm, with the clear motive of firming up their bargaining stance with the company.

It was thus the clandestine preferences of significant political actors to pursue the municipal option which seem to have initiated the first dimensional decision-making process. In the council chamber, Fletcher proposed "that it be an instruction to the General Purposes Committee to consider and report as to the desirability or otherwise of the council purchasing the undertaking of the Birmingham Electric Supply Company Limited; also to ascertain and report whether and upon what terms the company are willing to transfer their undertaking to the Council." [79] Early in the debate, the Lord Mayor, councillor James Smith, diplomatically stated that "the General Purposes Committee were prepared to adopt Mr. Fletcher's suggestion and he hoped the Council would refrain from further consideration until they had the whole matter fully before them". Shortly afterwards, the resolution was carried unanimously, even councillor Howard Lane, the arch-enemy of municipal socialism and Corporation trading, opining that "he did not think ... any harm would be done by making inquiries." [80] "The members of the Council", according to the Post's interpretation, "recognised that it would be wiser to postpone discussion until a complete statement of facts and arguments had been laid before them." [81] In reality, as will be seen, the General Purposes Committee's subsequent report went much further than this, embodying nothing less than a detailed and comprehensive set of terms for the transfer of the undertaking to the Corporation. Councillor Fletcher himself seems to have been well briefed, and he played out his role of stalking horse with commendable astuteness. He

was clearly more aware of the sharp edge to his motion than was councillor Howard Lane, and, throughout his speech, he was careful not to give the company ammunition for the coming negotiations. "The business of the Electric Supply had not", he commented in deprecating fashion, "judged from financial results, been a great success." However, "his proposal, if carried out on reasonable terms, embodied a commercial undertaking not only of great public utility, but also possibly yielding sufficient profit to justify the expenditure." [82] The desire not to prejudice the council's case in the coming negotiations also seems to have been an important reason for cutting council discussion short. [83] Clearly, the first dimensional process was still in an early stage, the stage of diplomatic manoeuvring and negotiating postures.

Meanwhile, local press opinion was undergoing a rather spectacular volte face, the Gazette now claiming that "we advised municipalisation at the outset, and we are still in favour of the principle", [84] while the Mail, breaking its silence of 1889 with regard to the municipalisation issue, confessed to "a feeling of surprise that the matter has not reached the City Council's agenda paper long before this." [85] From the council's viewpoint a little enthusiasm was, perhaps, desirable from the two junior local papers, since it helped to give the desired impression that the municipality was reluctantly responding to public pressure. In any event, it is unlikely that the local authority could control such editorial comment.

The most prestigious and influential local organ, however, was the Post. Historically the paper had been the loyal champion of council interests. It is highly probable that it was amenable to influence and representations from significant political actors, and, like councillor Fletcher, there are signs that it was being "squared" by the wily corporate fathers as part of their first dimensional manoeuvring. Either that, or else the General Purposes Committee knew that it could count upon the Post's loyal and intelligent support, even without its being canvassed. We can, perhaps, never fully know what clandestine soundings, if any, occurred in the corridors of power to ensure the Post's effective co-operation. For whatever reasons, however, the paper clearly thought it appropriate to join in the bargaining games and the jockeying for position on the side of the municipality. It thus pointed out, in staunch negative fashion, that the current price of the company's shares was inflated, and that its future profitability was threatened by "the advent of the incandescent gas mantle." Nor, it claimed, had the company's operations been a great success, judging from the fact that "less than half of the shops in New Street and High Street and Corporation Street are lighted with electricity." [86] There was, however, no editorial criticism of the general principle of municipalisation, and no attempt to discredit a policy which had by now been decided upon by important municipal politicians. Again, all this might, perhaps, have been expected of the council's loyal supporter. The Post, like councillor

Fletcher, the Lord Mayor and the members of the General Purposes Committee, seems to have presented itself as luke- warm so as not to harm the council's bargaining stance.

Councillor Fletcher's resolution represented, in Parry's characterisation, part of the initial stage of the first dimensional process in which support for the project was mobilised by public actions and by private bargaining and exhortation. This stage was continued when the council's resolution was considered by the General Purposes Committee at their meeting on the 17th May, 1897. At that meeting it was decided to refer the whole matter to a Sub- Committee consisting of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen Cook, Johnson and Pollack so that the private bargaining could formally commence.[87] This newly constituted Electric Lighting Sub- Committee held its first meeting on the 21st May, 1897, appointing Alderman Johnson as its Chairman.[88] It was also decided to invite the chairman and directors of the company to meet the Sub- Committee on the 31st May, 1897, to state whether they were prepared to sell and, if so, at what price.[89]

Clearly, the first stage of the decision- making process as characterised by Parry had already started to merge into the second stage of authoritative consideration by authorised actors. The directors of the company considered the Sub- Committee's invitation at their meeting of 27th May, 1897, when it was decided that Vaudrey, the Managing Director, together with

George Albright, a director, and Pinsent, the company's solicitor, should be in attendance as suggested but that it was "essential that (the Sub-) Committee should first name the price which (the) General Purposes Committee will unanimously and heartily recommend Council to pay" and that "if the price (is) one which (the) Company's shareholders will probably not accept then ... negotiations fall through." [90] Clearly, the company was entering into the spirit of the negotiating game, and was about to secure the best deal it could for itself by shrewd bargaining. The meeting took place as arranged on the 31st May, 1897, when the question of municipalisation was informally discussed. [91]

There was then a lengthy interval before the next stage of the first dimensional, decision- making process. Between the 31st May, 1897, and the 4th January, 1898, the Electric Lighting Sub- Committee of the General Purpose Committee did not meet and the Town Clerk made use of this time to collect some figures concerning municipalisation in other towns. His report sheds considerable light on the aspect highlighted by Goodin, namely the reason why municipalisation occurred when it did rather than earlier or later. On this occasion the evidence presented by the Town Clerk was in sharp contrast to that set out in the gloomy report of 1893. It thus provides a further indication of the erroneous nature of the analysis made at that time. Now it was discovered that Liverpool had municipalised in 1896, obtaining Parliamentary sanction for a period of 42 years to repay the

necessary £500,000 loan and, by the end of 1896, had shown a profit of £11,375 on the venture. Manchester had obtained its own order to supply in 1892 and its municipalised undertaking had amassed a profit of £16,812 for the year ending 31st March, 1897.[92] The second half of the 1890's was the heyday of the municipal trading movement. Local public enterprise was fashionable, and the council in Birmingham appears to have been influenced by the general trend. The Sub- Committee, in any event, was clearly encouraged by these figures and instructed the Lord Mayor to obtain further information from the company as to the possibility of a buy- out.[93]

The company directors, for their part, at their meeting on January 27th, 1898, reconstituted their own negotiating committee, authorising it to conclude a preliminary agreement on the terms suggested at the meeting of 31st May, 1897.[94] Precisely what these terms were that had been provisionally arranged the previous May is not known. The complete lull in negotiations between May, 1897, and January, 1898, is however readily explicable. It may have been partly caused by the Town Clerk's fact- finding mission referred to above. A factor of more significance, however, appears to have been the Stock Exchange speculation in the company's shares which is discussed below. £12 per share was too much to expect the shrewd and competent city fathers to pay, and they clearly thought a cooling off period was desirable to let the price slip back a little. The company directors, for their move, now played the game of

imposing deadlines to secure a swift and favourable outcome. Any provisional arrangement, they stipulated, must be agreed by 15th May, 1898.[95] On 25th February, 1898, the Lord Mayor, Alderman Beale, was instructed by the Electric Lighting Sub- Committee to ascertain whether the company directors were willing to sell on the basis of 10. 10s. 0d. per share subject to certain conditions,[96] and he subsequently despatched a lengthy letter to the company's solicitor.

In this letter, dated the 28th February, 1898, the Lord Mayor stated that the Sub- Committee "recognise the necessity of taking market price as the basis for fixing the purchase" and, as well as agreeing to pay the 10 guineas per share, or £420,000, for the undertaking, also offered to leave the company enough capital to pay a five per cent dividend for 1897.[97] In return, he asked for an independent valuation of the company's plant and for the right to withdraw from the bargain if Parliament imposed terms upon the Corporation which it was unable to accept.[98] On this point, as will be seen, the Corporation was anxious to obtain 42 years for the repayment of the necessary loan, as in the case of Liverpool. On the same day, the company solicitor replied on behalf of the company's negotiating Sub- Committee, agreeing to most of the Lord Mayor's proposals and suggesting that Sir Frederick Bramwell should undertake the independent valuation. Clearly, negotiating differences were now at the margin, but the company continued to fight for the best possible deal. £425,000, it was stated, was the minimum price which the

Sub- Committee was willing to recommend to the full board.[99] The broad pattern of agreement which was beginning to evolve, however, was consolidated by extensive personal discussions between the Lord Mayor and the company representatives, and the company's Sub- Committee reported to the directors at their meeting of 10th March, 1898, that although the council, unlike the company, had left themselves an easy loophole through which to escape, they were not likely to make use of it, even if the favourable period of 42 years, which the council was asking Parliament to sanction for the repayment of the loan, could not be obtained. The directors then "fully discussed" the report and authorised the Sub- Committee to continue their negotiations on condition that the Corporation agreed to rescind the agreement only if they could not obtain from Parliament suitable loan terms.[100] To this, the Electric Lighting Sub- Committee agreed on the 31st March, 1898, but they remained adamant that the purchase money should remain at 10. 10s. 0d. per share.[101] Meanwhile, on 11th March, the company solicitor, Pinsent, had attempted to raise the price again to £427,500 in order to finance gifts to the company's directors and employees.[102] The Lord Mayor reaffirmed the council's offer in a letter to the company's solicitor dated April 1st, 1898, and he also stated that any compensation or gratuities must come out of the purchase money. [103] This offer was endorsed by the full Electric Lighting Sub- Committee at their meeting of 18th April, 1898, but they too refused to accept a suggestion of the company that the Corporation should provide £3,000 compensation for Vaudrey, the

company's managing director.[104] The company directors were clearly making no headway in their attempts to gain a few extra thousands of pounds on the selling price. In the face of the powerful bargaining position of the council however (a position which had been steadily and assiduously consolidated since 1882, with the single exception of the misguided concession of 1893) they decided to surrender gracefully. After a full discussion they agreed, with Mr. J. F. Albright as the sole dissentient, to accept the price of £420,000 and to pay Vaudrey's compensation themselves.[105]

The major actors in the decision-making conflict had thus reached a mutually acceptable agreement, but some people of less influence had unwisely got their fingers burnt, and were unhappy at the proposed deal. There were thus several letters of protest in the Birmingham Post from a minority of small shareholders who had bought shares after the early talk of municipalisation in May, 1897, at prices of up to £12 each. It was the opinion of "Shareholder", for example, that, in selling at ten guineas, "the directors would simply be throwing over the small holders in the public interest, let us say, or perhaps, what is worse, in the interest of the large holders. The large holders may see a profit now after having had a chance to unload some of their shares at higher prices." [106] Meanwhile, "Dissatisfied" had "also purchased ... shares at a higher price than that offered", while "Fairness" thought that "the price suggested compares most unfavourably with the prices paid by Manchester and Sheffield

Corporations."[107] "Bought and Sold", echoing "'Dissatisfied", wrote ruefully that "about fifteen months ago I was induced to buy shares in the company at about £12."[108]

But such objections to the first dimensional decisional outcome were destined to go unheeded. The independent engineers, Bramwell and Harris, reported on the 20th May, 1898, that "the Corporation of Birmingham in acquiring the Undertaking of the Electric Supply Company of that City, are exercising a discriminating and wise judgment ... they will obtain a most satisfactory means of generating and supplying electrical energy to the citizens for all purposes for which such energy can be used."[109] On the 25th May, 1898, the General Purposes Committee accepted a report of the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee incorporating the provisional agreement with the company and decided to recommend the council to purchase on the terms stated.[110]

The provisional agreement between the two confirming bodies was ratified without difficulty. At the council meeting of the 14th June, 1898, the Lord Mayor was the only speaker to refer to the proposed municipalisation at length, alluding in his opening remarks to "the total absence of adverse criticism" and going on to outline all the well-worn arguments in favour of municipalisation, adding the important point that heavy additional capital expenditure in the near future would not be necessary, since plant in course of construction at Water Street

would allow them to double the present output. The Lord Mayor, however, as a shrewd negotiator, continued to play his part with diplomacy and tact. He was clearly impressed with the need to placate the forthcoming shareholders' meeting, and, secure in the anticipated support of his own side, he made a number of disparaging references to the terms of the agreement with the company. "Personally" he claimed, "he could not justify ten guineas on any calculation of what the concern was worth intrinsically ... they were not buying a gold mine, or anything like it", a reference to the mark up from the £5 issue price of the shares to the 10 guineas now offered. There was no overt opposition to the deal from anyone, however, not even from councillor Howard Lane, who confined himself to suggesting that "such an undertaking, like matrimony, should not be lightly approached" and to hinting that the loss in the first year might be over £8,000, rather than the £4,000 suggested by the Lord Mayor. The opponents of municipal enterprise, it seems, feeling the current force of the municipal trading movement, were not prepared to waste their energies in a futile direct assault on an impregnable fortress, and acted in accordance with the law of anticipated reactions. The necessary resolution was passed with no opposing votes, councillor Lane and four shareholders of the company abstaining.[111] Again, it is perhaps worth noting, as part of the more general questioning of the utility of Lukes' second dimension, that Howard Lane's action is best described, not as some metaphysical "non- decision" to eschew vigorous opposition, but as an empirically verifiable decision to abstain,

rather than to vote against, the proposition to municipalise.

Three days later, the shareholders of the company held an extraordinary meeting, at which they were addressed by their chairman, Mr. Henry Buckley, who, with the negotiations with the council now concluded, addressed himself to winning over his own side. In his speech, he stated that "if we possessed a monopoly of electric lighting in the three areas which we have, we never should have sold." But ultimately, he claimed, if the provisional agreement fell through, the Corporation would apply for their own order. "The question in our mind was, if such an order was applied for, could we successfully resist it? We were of the opinion that we could not." The present attitude of the Board of Trade had been illustrated, he added, by the Provisional Orders for Bermondsey and Marylebone now before Parliament, where the Board had sanctioned applications by those two local authorities to supply electricity in competition with companies and had left to Parliament the task of deciding whether that sanction should be allowed to stand. As the above analysis makes clear, there was clearly some force in Buckley's assertions about the strong bargaining position of the council. The spectre of a rival council scheme operating in the same areas as the company, however, was speculative, and appears to have been aimed at winning over any waverers. The Bill relating to Bermondsey and Marylebone, for example, was subsequently thrown out in committee. Mr. J. E. Wilson added that, for him, "the negotiation ... is an eminently wise and practicable one that

certainly all of us who have held their shares for a considerable time ought to consider is a reasonable one for ourselves." But then Wilson described himself as having "always been a pretty large shareholder" and therefore held a different view from those late-comers mentioned above who had paid up to £12 per share and were receiving only £10. 10s. in return.[112] Most of those present agreed with Wilson, and the motion approving the provisional agreement was carried with only three dissenting votes.[113] "Seldom", wrote the Mail, "has there been a more harmonious meeting of shareholders." Moreover, with the negotiations concluded, the Post, and, perhaps, the other papers as well, could now abandon their diplomatic stances and their negotiating postures. The Mail added that "the rate-payers may congratulate themselves upon the acquisition of a highly profitable undertaking" and editorial comment in the Post and the Gazette was now firmly in favour of municipalisation.[114]

Ratification by the council and the company's shareholders of the provisional agreement effectively settled the first dimensional issue of municipalisation, and all that was now required was to put into effect the third and final stage of the decision-making process as characterised by Parry, namely the formal implementation of the agreement. On November 22nd, 1898, the council approved a draft Bill embodying the proposals for purchase. At this meeting councillor Howard Lane again proved troublesome, obtaining the support of alderman Fallows and councillor Randall to discuss the Bill clause by clause. But he

could only, for example, find one other supporter for his amendment to reduce the purchase price to £250,000 plus a 25 per cent bonus.[115] At the public meeting of the ratepayers on November 16th, 1898, necessary under Section 288 of the Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act, 1883, "the proceedings were purely formal in character." Fewer than twenty ratepayers attended, excluding officials and the councillors on the platform. There was no dissent or criticism and the resolution approving the purchase was carried unanimously. Councillors Howard Lane and Randall preferred to mingle with the public rather than sit with their colleagues, but they raised no voice of protest. The opponents of municipal enterprise had again seemingly concluded that compliance was preferable to a hopeless fight.[116] In this case too, however, their unwilling compliance is best seen as a first dimensional decision to offer only token resistance rather than as a second dimensional non-decision not to protest with greater vigour.

This unanimous acquiescence on the part of the ratepayers is worth further analysis. It is in sharp contrast to the vigorous opposition from a vociferous minority to the Elan valley proposals. It suggests that the sharp national debate on the merits or otherwise of municipal ownership, a debate which, as will be seen, intensified after 1900, had no discernable influence in Birmingham, at least as far as the propaganda work of free enterprise groups such as the Liberty and Property Defence League was concerned. It also indicates that an

appropriate gloss is required on Hennock's research on ratepayers' revolts in the nineteenth century.[117] Ratepayers appear to have taken a pragmatic view on the issue of municipalisation, particularly where, as in this case, there was a prospect of the local authority making a profit or, at worst, a limited loss, on the deal.

The ideas of making a profit and of, wherever possible, avoiding a loss on municipal trading had a long history in Birmingham. At the time of the municipalisation of the gas industry in 1874, for example, the then mayor, Joseph Chamberlain, like the ratepayers of the 1890's, drew a distinction between water supply, which concerned "the health of the town", and the municipalisation of the gas company, which was about "the profits of the town." [118] In this case, similar considerations seem to have influenced council policy makers, firstly against, and later in favour of, a municipal buy-out of the electricity company. In the national context, according to Falkus, "roughly one-third of local borrowing was raised for municipal trading - reproductive undertakings as they were termed sometimes in Parliamentary returns." In Birmingham, however, out of a total municipal debt of £17.7 million in 1909, 80 per cent was sunk in trading ventures, although some of these, such as the water undertaking, were not expected to generate surplus revenue.[119] According to Finer, one of the motives of the local authorities at the time of the Electric Lighting Act of 1882 was "the wish to obtain a profitable enterprise." [120] As a

more general explanation of the dynamics of municipal trading in Leeds Barber mentions "the prospect of acquiring an additional source of revenue" which "was as persuasive in Leeds as it was, for example, ...in Birmingham." [121]

The obverse of this argument, of course, is that until it became clear that electricity was a sound investment, there was insufficient support from councillors and ratepayers for a policy of municipalisation. In the 1870's and '80's, according to Finer, "the technical possibilities were still unplumbed. Any losses would fall on the rates, and fear of this is a severe restraint on the taking of risks." [122] Ballin likewise records that "even a progressive city like Birmingham decided in 1882 against supplying electricity owing to the great difficulties involved," and goes on to mention "the justifiable desire of corporations to spare the ratepayer." [123] Such interpretations are consistent with the evidence uncovered by the present research, especially with the recommendations of the Town Clerk and the relevant council committees in the years immediately after 1882.

From the 1890's onwards, however, after the profit-making potential of electricity had become apparent, the industry seemed eminently suitable for municipalisation. Knoop, for example, in his handbook for municipal traders published in 1912, alludes to the common "attitude ... which sees in municipal trading an opportunity of securing sums in relief of the rates". He adds

that: "electricity ... cannot be regarded as a necessity, nor is it consumed by the majority of ratepayers. Where a local authority generates electric current, it does so in order to provide for a particular class of ratepayers, who, generally speaking, are selected from the richer rather than from the poorer portion of the community, a fact which the local authority should bear in mind, in conjunction with the fact that sanitary conditions hardly apply when it decides upon the selling policy to be adopted." [124] It must be added, however, that there was no evidence of this Fabian proclivity to ride roughshod over the interests of the rich in nineteenth century Birmingham. On the contrary, and as has been seen, when the leading businesses in the city centre expressed a desire to receive the electric light, the council softened its bargaining stance and speedily acceded to the establishment of a private supply.

The way was thus clear for the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee, charged with the task of sponsoring the application to Parliament, [125] to take the necessary legal and administrative measures. The Birmingham Corporation Bill received its first reading in the Commons on February 14th, 1899, [126] its second on February 20th, 1899, [127] and its third (after committee stage and amendments) on 16th May, 1899. [128] On June 1st 1899 the Bill as introduced into the House of Lords was formally ratified by the company shareholders [129] and, on July 11th, the Lords themselves approved the measure. [130] The final draft obtained the Royal Assent on August 1st, 1899, the 42 year period

for the repayment of the necessary Corporation loan having been successfully obtained.[131] and, on the 9th November 1899, the first Electric Supply Committee of the council was constituted and appointed.[132] On January 1st, 1900, a small final ceremony took place at the Midland Bank, New Street, when C. H. Clare, the acting City Treasurer, handed over a cheque for £420,000 to the company representatives and E. V. Hiley, the Deputy Town Clerk, received from them the conveyance and title deeds.[133] councillor Johnson was the first chairman of the Electric Lighting Committee and J. C. Vaudrey, formerly the company's managing director, became the city electrical engineer. Vaudrey, it will be recalled, was one of the two Liverpool entrepreneurs who first floated the private electricity supply company within the city. His willingness to serve the Corporation may thus be taken as a final indication that, at this time, capitalists in the electricity supply industry were held in subordination by the powerful forces of municipal socialism.

The above account attempts to explain the successful implementation of the council's decision to municipalise the electricity company and of the decisions which followed on from it and which ended with the electricity supply in public hands. To end this section, it may be noted that the increasing confidence of the local authorities in the future of electricity, which led them to municipalise a large number of undertakings from the 1890's onwards, was well founded. In Birmingham, for example, at the time of municipalisation, the Lord Mayor was able

to give the encouraging news that sales were 54 per cent up on the previous year, and that the concern would thus be taken over on a self-supporting basis.[134] Ballin, citing the examples of Edinburgh, Sheffield and (most notably) Manchester, records that the enormous increase in the demand for electricity was, in the short term, only met with extreme difficulty, if at all.[135] From another viewpoint this evidence reinforces the argument above that the council's pessimism of 1893, and its subsequent concession to the company, were misguided and damaging to its own interests.

6. Birmingham's Electricity Supply from 1900 to 1914.

The growth and development of the electricity supply in Birmingham between 1900 and 1914 gave further evidence of the wisdom of municipalisation and of the falseness of the pessimistic prognostications presented to the council in 1893. The number of electrical units sold for lighting and power purposes rose from roughly three million in 1900-01 to over nine million in 1907-8 and to more than fifty-eight million in 1914-15. In addition, electric traction was used for tramway purposes from 1906-7 onwards, the total amount consumed for traction rising from nearly four million units in that year to over twenty-four million in 1914-15. Soon after 1900, of course, the tramways were also municipalised. At the time of the

takeover of the electricity company, however, no- one argued that the council should generate electrical power for its own, or for anybody else's, trams. Before 1914 there was also a remarkable increase in the use of electricity to drive motors, another aspect which received no attention in the debate over municipalisation.[136]

This great expansion necessitated substantial additions to capital works and, on the 10th October, 1906, the Lord Mayor opened the new power station at Summer Lane, which covered four acres, cost over a quarter of million pounds to build, and had an initial capacity of 8,500 kilowatts.[137] A series of sub-stations was set up to distribute power from the generators and, throughout the period, plant was being constantly extended and replaced, the total expenditure on capital account rising from just under half a million pounds in 1899-1900 to over two and a quarter million in 1913-14. Meanwhile, technical improvements and economies of scale enabled the Committee to reduce the average price per unit from 4.37d in 1900-01 to 1.125d. in 1914-15, further evidence that the Corporation made no systematic attempt to overcharge business and rich private subscribers to fund the municipality, as recommended by Knoop.[138]

7. The National Context After Municipalisation.

There is general agreement among scholars that the growing scale of technology after about 1900 put an increasing strain upon the organisation of the electricity supply industry which had emerged from the Acts of 1882 and 1888. This was the period when, according to Ballin, "the successful development of electric supply called for units larger than local government areas".[139] He adds that "after the turn of the century the new technique of large-scale production of electricity called for a re-adjustment of the industry, either on the basis of large public bodies or of co-operation between the existing authorities and the new power companies".[140] Hannah also stresses that "it was the second wave of innovations ... which marked the real foundation of the modern industry." [141] By the time these innovations had been developed, however, "the division of ownership between company and municipal undertakings ... was becoming firmly entrenched," and "the possibility of co-operation between the two sectors seemed to be receding with a growing mutual distrust." [142] Byatt likewise records that "after 1900 ... the structure and motivation of local authorities and the position granted to them by Parliament became generally disadvantageous for electrical utilities. Although the optimal area for electricity supply grew, the local authorities made little effort to co-operate with each other and were particularly reluctant to co-operate with private companies in adjacent areas." [143] The technological background to these organisational problems is highlighted by Hennessey: "Large-scale AC transmission, made possible by the powerful turbo-

alternator sets that were being constructed by 1900, was the single technological stroke that cut the ground from beneath the 1882-8 system, simply by destroying its technical rationale." [144]

The private enterprise response to these technical advances was to attempt to set up power companies on the arguments that "there was a fundamental difference between electricity for power and for lighting purposes," and that "direct current was largely used for lighting but was unsuitable for power." From the beginning, however, the promoters of power companies found themselves in conflict with the municipalities, so that such arguments "were stressed more to overcome political opposition than from any fundamental belief in the wisdom of separating lighting and power supplies. [145]

The first attempt to set up a power company was enshrined in a Parliamentary Bill of 1898 promoted by the "General Power Distribution Company" of Chesterfield. It was opposed, among others, by the municipalities of Sheffield and Nottingham, so that their areas of supply were excluded from its provisions. It was an important test case since, as Ballin states, "if this Bill had passed through Parliament, similar Bills would have been proposed for the whole of the United Kingdom, and the value of the 200 provisional orders held by local authorities would thereby have been seriously reduced." [146] The Bill was at first suspended, then re-introduced in 1899, but a conference of

municipal corporations agreed to oppose it, and, understandably given the power of the municipal lobby at Westminster highlighted above, it was defeated.[147]

This was to be the beginning of a long struggle. Already, in 1898, a Parliamentary Committee chaired by Viscount Cross had concluded, in Hannah's words, that "the situation envisaged by early legislation ... had substantially changed, and the requirements of a bulk supply of energy for industrial purposes could not be considered on the same plane as the local lighting function." The Committee had suggested a number of proposals to strengthen the position of company promoters vis- a- vis local authorities.[148] In 1900, a Commons Committee chaired by Sir James Kitson considered five separate bills proposed by the promoters of power companies in various parts of the country and, after hearing extensive evidence, suggested a somewhat elaborate compromise between the company promoters and the municipalities.[149]

Eventually, amid growing controversy, the Government set up a Joint Select Committee on Municipal Trading which, however, was prevented from reporting by lack of time. When it was at last reconstituted in 1903, it listed a number of anodyne conclusions which sidestepped the main question of the proper respective roles of the companies and the municipalities.[150]

The full story of this political struggle is beyond the scope of the present chapter.[151] It may be noted, however, that in the face of municipal rivalry, "the only power company which was an early and thorough success was the Newcastle-on-Tyne Electric Supply Company." [152] With this exception, states Byatt, they "were financially unsuccessful", the business performance of the power company in South Wales being particularly disastrous.[153] Furthermore, in the words of Hannah, "the issue of private enterprise versus collectivism was to dog the industry's future until it was finally resolved in 1948 by full nationalisation." [154] Moreover, even that resolution, as we now know, was not final.

A more rational organisation of the industry on municipal lines might have been possible if local government had been reformed into larger administrative units. Although this did not occur on the scale required to bring any lasting solution to the problem, Hannah records a case in the Potteries where six boroughs were merged with Stoke-on-Trent in 1910. "As their suburbs spread", he adds, "the bigger cities also frequently extended their municipal boundaries and at the same time the electricity franchise was normally extended." [155] In the years immediately before the First World War, the creation of Greater Birmingham was a case in point. Another possibility, joint enterprises by a number of different municipalities, appears in general to have been prevented by parochial pride, but Hannah does cite one example from Lancashire of such co-operation. [156]

A lively debate, termed by Ballin "the municipal trading controversy" accompanied these developments.[157] The argument encompassed not only electrical supply, but all aspects of municipal trading. On the one side were the municipalities and their ideological defenders, the Fabian Society.[158] Opposed to them were the power companies, their spokesmen such as Emil Garcke, and various pressure groups such as the Industrial Freedom League and the Liberty and Property Defence League.[159] Byatt's conclusion, consistent with the findings here, is that "the rise of the municipal trading movement ... reached its peak around 1900." It "had been a powerful movement sweeping away many laissez- faire ideas; it had aroused tremendous opposition and defeated it. But by 1900 much of its force was spent." [160] On January 1st, 1900, however, the electricity industry in Birmingham had been taken into municipal ownership. The subsequent fulminations of laissez- faire capitalists against municipal enterprise had no effect on that decision, and were in sharp contrast to the unanimous if somewhat apathetic acceptance of local public ownership by the Birmingham ratepayers.

8. Conclusion.

This chapter, like those on water supply and housing, has attempted to do two things: to see what light the dimensional approach of Lukes throws on Birmingham community power around 1900; and to see what the attempt to apply it tells us about the usefulness of the approach itself.

With regard to the first objective, the application of Lukes' approach, especially if it is coupled with a rudimentary game-theoretical analysis of the relationships between the Corporation and the electricity company, would seem to sharpen our perceptions of what was happening. It enables us to understand more clearly, for example, the conflict of interest between the Corporation and private capitalists. The roles played by both sets of negotiators and by actors such as Councillor Fletcher and the Post newspaper are also thrown into sharper relief. Thus, in cases where there is a clash of interests, the emphasis on conflict within Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories is of heuristic value. A more sophisticated analysis, however, is needed in a situation such as this, where there was not a zero sum game in which the winner took all, but a variable sum game in which one side was, at least to some extent, compensated by the other for the transfer of a benefit. In this case, the balance of political and other resources in the mobilisation of bias by the two opposing sides clearly favoured the Corporation in a number of important respects, and this almost certainly meant that the company got a worse deal than it would have liked. The problem,

however, is to evaluate and analyse the impact of this superiority on the decision-making process, and the case is not so straightforward as the defeat, in a zero sum game, of the ratepayers who opposed the 1892 Water Bill.

The application of Lukes' approach tells us that the relevant decisions regarding the municipalisation of the electricity supply were made predominantly within his first dimension of power. However, the concepts of mobilisation of bias, and, in particular, of control of the political agenda, which are normally associated with Lukes' second dimension, are highly relevant here if seen as operating within his first. A major objective of the Corporation was to keep the municipal option open by, in Schattschneider's phrase, mobilising their political bias in order to curb the operations of electrical entrepreneurs. The aim was to retain control of the political agenda so that, if and when it was deemed suitable by the local authority, the electricity supply could be municipalised on terms favourable to the municipality. This hostility of public men in Birmingham to the development of electricity by private interests can be judged by the restrictive conditions placed on the companies by Birmingham's most distinguished politician, Joseph Chamberlain, then at the Board of Trade, in his Electric Lighting Act of 1882. Within Birmingham, the Town Clerk and the council were eager to confine the local electricity company's area of operation and the period of its concession in order to strengthen the hand of municipal negotiators in any future take-over discussions. This

policy was consistently pursued except for a hiccup in 1893. In that year it was wrongly concluded that electricity was insufficiently profitable to justify municipalisation. A concession was therefore made to the company which increased the cost of the final buy-out. There is no substantive evidence that the Gas Committee opposed the introduction of electricity which, until after 1900, for technical reasons, was not a serious competitor.

Once discussions between the Corporation and the company commenced, negotiating ploys and bargaining games were indulged in by both sides, but the Corporation's position remained strong, despite the ill-advised decision of 1893 to allow the company to strengthen its hand. In the negotiations, the company failed to shake the Corporation from its initial offer, or even to obtain a few thousand pounds more on the price.

Not a single ratepayer objected to the municipalisation proposals. Thus, unlike with the Welsh water scheme in Birmingham, and with other researched instances elsewhere, there was no "ratepayers' revolt" in this case, seemingly because ratepayers drew a distinction between those enterprises which were expected to prove self-financing or profitable, and those which were not. The acrimonious national debate on the merits of municipal enterprise, and the complicated problems associated

with the attempt to set up new style power companies, largely occurred after 1900, and had no significant influence on the decision to municipalise the Birmingham supply.

The second major objective of this chapter has been to investigate what this attempt to apply Lukes' approach to the municipalisation of electricity in Birmingham tells us about the validity and usefulness of the approach itself. Here, it is worth repeating that, insofar as any insights at all have been gained, the study's decision-making approach is to some extent vindicated, since without that approach it is unlikely that the municipalisation of the electricity supply would have been investigated at all.

With regard to analysis in the first dimension, the present application of Lukes' approach indicates that this is indeed possible, but that it may in practice prove to be quite difficult. Examples of this have been given above. To reiterate one of the more obvious points, the purchase of the electricity supply company was a variable sum game which involved a trade-off of money for shares, and not a zero sum game in which the winner took all. It was thus different from the zero sum game in which the Corporation prevailed over the dissentient ratepayers in the conflict over the 1892 Water Bill, and necessitates a more complicated application of Lukes' definitional categories. To illustrate this point further, an

analysis in terms of actors and preferences is attempted below.

This is not intended to be definitive, but to illustrate the complexities which arise during the analytical process.

The game- theoretical analysis might be investigated at four different dates, namely: after the Act of 1882; in 1888 when the Corporation agreed to the establishment of a private company; in 1893 when the company acquired an extended area of supply; and from 1897 onwards when municipalisation was decided upon and carried out. The Corporation was an actor throughout, and was joined after 1888 by the company. The kind of company characteristics that the Corporation would have preferred, around 1882, 1888 and 1893, from the highest preference down to the lowest, could be represented as:

1. a short term lease and a small area of supply;
2. a short term lease and a large area of supply;
3. a long term lease and a small area of supply;
4. a long term lease and a large area of supply.

The company, or, before it was established, those wishing to set a company up, might be represented as listing these preferences in reverse order.

To continue the analysis, after 1882 the Corporation went for company type 1 but overplayed its hand both in Birmingham and before that, in collaboration with other local authorities, at

Westminster. Thus no company was established. In 1888, the Corporation appeared to concede ground, possibly in the light of the changed situation both nationally and locally: the less restrictive Act of that year; the continuing perceived rudimentary state of electrical technology; and the representations from commercial interests in the city centre in favour of the new illuminant. This concession allowed the establishment of a company which lay somewhere between types 2 and 3: a company with a medium term lease and a medium sized area of supply. In 1893 the Corporation miscalculated and concluded that municipalisation was not desirable in the immediate future. It therefore agreed to a bigger area of supply on a medium term lease: in other words to a company which was now moving towards type 4.

Given Corporation control over the political agenda, company interests played no direct part in this decision-making. The options available to them were either to join the game on the Corporation's terms or not to play at all. In 1882 they pursued the latter option partly because electrical technology was still rudimentary and partly because the Corporation and its associates, both in Westminster and in Birmingham, overplayed their hand. From 1888, however, the concessions made by the Corporation were sufficient to induce company interests to enter the game. In 1893 the company may be reasonably represented as being pleased with the Corporation's concession of a larger area

of supply. Even so, this concession still left the Corporation in a strong position. It did not prevent municipalisation, but merely made it more expensive.

At the time of municipalisation, in the period from 1897, the preferences may be differently expressed. The Corporation at that time may be represented as having the following preferences, again ranked in order of priority:

1. municipalise cheap;
2. municipalise dear;
3. do not municipalise.

Again, the company may be represented as having the same preferences, but in reverse order of priority. The Corporation was the most powerful actor in the negotiations. Because of its ill advised compromise of 1893, however, it failed to gain preference 1 in its entirety. Instead, it had to make do with a position somewhere between preference 1 and preference 2, namely with a municipalisation which was more expensive than it would have been without the 1893 concession. Given the balance of political and other resources possessed by both sides in the mobilisation of opposing biases, at no stage was the implementation of priority 3 a likely outcome. The Corporation was now clearly determined to municipalise, a determination acknowledged by the company. The recognised strategic control over the political agenda by the Corporation left the company

with only one tactical option, namely to seek to gain the best price possible. Within the company there was, as has been seen, some minor dispute between large and small shareholders as to what the purchase price should be, but no small shareholders articulated an objection to the principle of municipalisation, but only to the terms of the proposed deal. Under the law of anticipated reactions the company accepted (with one possible exception) that the strategic option of continuing private ownership was excluded from the political agenda by the Corporation's firm commitment to municipalisation.[161] The direction of the battle had been conceded. All that remained were rearguard actions at the margin.

Thus, in the negotiations, as is usually found in the analysis of variable sum games, neither party gained its first preference. Instead, a bargain was struck where both parties satisfied a lower ranking preference. Of course, the attribution of preferences, and above all the ranking of those preferences, might be contested. For example, it may well be that, to the company, the apparently unwelcome prospect of municipalisation became progressively more welcome according to the terms offered. Thus, the company may be postulated as calculating the future profitability of continued private ownership and comparing this with the benefits of the cash in hand offered by the Corporation. Conversely, the appeal of municipalisation to the Corporation would be contingent on the terms of any purchase and on calculations of whether municipalisation would generate profits

which might offset the rates burden. All this is hardly surprising. After all, the municipalisation debate of that time is merely the mirror image of the privatisation debate of the 1980's and '90's. Then as now arguments over principle are sometimes difficult to disentangle from those over the terms of the deals.

What the analysis in this chapter indicates, however, is that control over the political agenda was decisive in establishing perceptions of the possible political games to be played. Given that this agenda was perceived as being set by a determined Corporation, company interests throughout recognised that they were constrained by that agenda to tactical rather than strategic options. The negotiating game could be played only within rules dictated by the Corporation.

Even within the Corporation itself, this control over the political agenda was seen as overwhelming. For example, a very small group of councillors, including Howard Lane and Randall, were opposed to Corporation trading as a point of principle. But the political agenda was set so firmly against them, and the mobilisation of bias in favour of a contrary policy was so strong, that they offered only token resistance. This lack of opposition was manifested, for example, in Howard Lane's decision to abstain rather than to vote against municipalisation. Even within the council, dissenting members had to accept that on this issue, as indeed on many others, the agenda was set by the

majority group on the council, and particularly, in this case, by the General Purposes Committee, probably the most powerful of all council committees, composed as it was of the chairmen of all the other committees. Potential dissidents, therefore, like the company itself, followed the law of anticipated reactions and launched no sustained attack on either the terms or the principle of municipalisation.

This control over the political agenda concerning the municipalisation of the electricity supply, and specific aspects of that control such as the decisive role played by the General Purposes Committee, can all be examined within Lukes' first or decision-making dimension of power. There is no need, as this thesis has maintained throughout, to see agenda setting and the mobilisation of bias as operating within some putative second dimension of non-decision-making. For instance, the extent to which the General Purposes Committee constituted an elite within the council can be readily illustrated by examining the council decision of 1893 whereby, as seen above, a General Purposes Committee report was accepted on the nod even though the analysis contained within it was quite false.

Goodin's point concerning the timing of decisions is illustrated once more in this chapter. Indeed, in these negotiations the correct time was, as it usually is, particularly significant. The art of negotiation is to strike not only the best deal in the circumstances (in this case in circumstances

dictated by the Corporation) but also the best deal in the circumstances at that particular time. For the Corporation, the art of timing in this case was to allow the company time to test the viability and profitability of the new illuminant before deciding whether or not to municipalise. Yet again, the stranglehold of the Corporation over the political agenda extended to the dictation of relevant time scales. Once more, the company not only had to play the Corporation's game, but the length of the game was also set by the Corporation. All this was possible only because of the disparity in bargaining power between the Corporation and the company. As the overplaying of the Corporation's hand in 1882 illustrates, this overwhelming superiority could easily result in the dictation of terms which included time-scales that were too onerous to induce company interests to enter the game at all. Hence the significance of the period of lease in negotiations between the Corporation and the company. The company was placed in the odd position of either not playing at all, playing successfully and being municipalised, or playing badly, avoiding municipalisation but being commercially unsuccessful. In other words, the company had to choose not between best and worst outcomes, but between least worst outcomes. Playing well and being municipalised offered the limited but acceptable prospect of some return to shareholders. Accepting the status of a junior partner was preferable to being no partner at all, especially, perhaps, to the company's managing director, Vaudrey, who, as has been seen, subsequently became the city's electrical engineer. The option of becoming joint senior

partner and running a wholly private operation, or, perhaps, running a semi-private company with Corporation share ownership and involvement, was, from the outset, either recognised as being foreclosed or not recognised at all. Of course, the Corporation in this case could afford to be relatively indifferent to the success or failure of the venture, and to the time-scales of its operation, since unlike with the water supply no pressing and immediate issues of public health were involved. Perhaps, therefore, as suggested below, technological possibilities rather than urgent social needs had a more significant bearing in this case.

The allusion to urgent social needs raises again the questions of real or welfare interests, and of Lukes' third dimension of power. In accordance with the research scheme, and for the reasons explained in Chapter 1, the present chapter makes no attempt at the systematic analysis of power in Lukes' third dimension. Consequently no direct judgment as to the utility of this dimension can be made. The study does, however, endorse the usefulness of the third dimensional concept of real or welfare interests. To summarise, the decision to municipalise the Birmingham electricity supply, unlike the decision to seek an ample supply of pure water from Wales, had no great effect on the real interests of the people of Birmingham. It raised, for example, no fundamental issues of public health. Indeed, before 1914 electricity tended to be sold to a comparatively small number of commercial or rich private customers. Consequently the

decision to municipalise was not forced on the Corporation. Rather, it occurred at a time when the viability of the new illuminant and power source was becoming increasingly obvious. It was also a time when the municipal trading movement was at its zenith, and when a large number of other important municipalities were buying out their local electricity companies. Finally, a major reason for the timing of municipalisation appears to have been technological. It was not until the second half of the 1890's, for example, that production and distribution techniques enabled assured profits to be made. Indeed, one reason for the Corporation's misjudgment in 1893 appears to have been an inadequate understanding of the dynamic technical changes that were transforming the industry. Thus, the fact that the real or welfare interests of the citizens were less powerfully bound up with the ownership of the electricity supply than they were, for example, with the provision of pure water, helps to explain why the Corporation had a freer hand, and a longer period of time, in which to determine what its policy should be.

As a rider to this chapter, it may briefly be recapitulated that once again the utility of the perspectives of Molotch and the "growth machine" school of elite theorists is endorsed. Molotch's linking of the growth machine to local landed interests, however, must be questioned in this case, as it was in the case of the water supply, since the main lobbyists for the improvement of the city's electrical infrastructure were business and commercial interests in the city centre. From statements at

the time, though, it is also clear that local politicians were eager to develop the city's electrical supply, whether under private or municipal control, especially when, as in 1889, they were prompted to do so by a section of the business community. In their response to the business pressure of 1889, there is evidence that, as Molotch indicates, the city's newspapers were prominent spokesmen for a local "growth machine."

Notes and References.

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2. Ballin, op. cit., pp. 6-7.
3. See John Thackeray Bunce, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Volume 2, Birmingham, 1885, pp. 381-6.
4. Idem.
5. Hannah, op. cit., p. 5.
6. Ballin, op. cit., p. 7.
7. See Hinton, op. cit., pp. 15-18.
8. Op. cit., p. 8.
9. Op. cit., p. 23.
10. Bunce, loc. cit.
11. Ballin, pp. 8-9.
12. Idem., pp. 12-14.
13. Charles Anthony Vince, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Volume 3, Birmingham, 1902 (henceforth referred to as V3), pp. 283-4.
14. Op. cit., pp. 22-3.
15. Op. cit., pp. 31-3.
16. Idem., pp. 34-5.
17. Op. cit., pp. 11-12.

18. Idem, p. 14.
19. Op. cit., p. 21.
20. Hannah, op. cit., pp. 5-6; Byatt, op. cit., pp. 202-3.
21. Op. cit., p. 8.
22. Byatt, op. cit., p. 105.
23. Hannah, op. cit., p. 22.
24. P. J. Waller, Town, City and Nation: England, 1850-1914, 1983, p. 301.
25. Op. cit., p. 15 Ballin adds, however, that "nearly one-third of the orders granted to local authorities had not been proceeded with by 1900." - Idem.
26. Op. cit., p. 157.
27. Op. cit., pp. 204-5.
28. Idem.
29. Idem, p. 10.
30. Bunce, loc. cit.
31. Idem.
32. Both from the Birmingham Daily Gazette, (henceforth referred to as G.), 1.11.1882.
33. Birmingham Daily Post, (henceforth referred to as P.), 23.10.1882.
34. Report of the Town Clerk to the Gas Committee on the Electric Lighting Act, (Borough of Birmingham), 1882, Ref: 130491.
35. It is doubtful, however, if all of these assumptions were justified. Soon afterwards Chamberlain himself, addressing a delegation of local authorities from the Midlands, excluding Birmingham, at the Board of Trade, stated that "the Board of Trade could issue more than one provisional order for the same area, but it was not probable that they would. ... In the event of a second application, the Board would see how far the existing undertakers had performed their obligations, and if it was found that they had faithfully performed them and expended a large sum of money, their interests would not be overlooked." - G.2.11.1882.

36. G.C. Allen, British Industry and Economic Policy, 1979, p. 17. For a more detailed treatment see Parts 3 and 4 of G.C. Allen, The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country, 1860-1927, 1929, reprinted 1966, pp. 175-369.
37. Report of the Gas Committee to be presented to a Special Meeting of the Council, 31st October, 1882, [on Electric Lighting], (Borough of Birmingham), 1882, Ref: 130490.
38. G.1.11.1882.
39. Birmingham Daily Mail, (henceforth referred to as M.), 23.10.1882.
40. M. 1.11.1882.
41. P. 31.10.1882.
42. Bunce, op. cit., pp. 385-6.
43. V3, loc. cit.
44. General Purposes Committee, Minute No. 6,367. The Council Minutes cited in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are from Minute Books now lodged in the Archive Department of Birmingham Reference Library.
45. General Purposes Committee, Minutes Nos. 6,474 and 6,386.
46. G. 1.2.1889.
47. V3, p. 285.
48. G.6.2.1889.
49. G.1.1.1889.
50. P.6.2.1889.
51. M.6.2.1889. Birmingham's real motto, of course, is "Forward".
52. P.6.2.1889.
53. V3, pp. 285-6.
54. J. C. Vaudrey, A Few Notes on the Public Supply of Electricity in Birmingham to 1899, (1899), Ref: 157785, p. 5.
55. Op. cit., p. 20.
56. Op. cit., p. 9.

57. Op. cit., pp. 157-8.
58. Op. cit., p. 56.
59. Op. cit., p. 29.
60. Op. cit., p. 8.
61. Op. cit., p. 157.
62. G.6.2.1889.
63. Idem.
64. M.6.2.1889.
65. J. C. Vaudrey, loc. cit.
66. General Purposes Committee, Minute 6,877.
67. G.7.12.1892.
68. Idem.
69. General Purposes Committee, Minute 6,948. Briggs wrongly dates this report in 1895 instead of in 1893. He adds that "a minority argued that it would be wiser to take over the undertaking in its infancy." As the present research makes clear, this was, in fact, a minority of one (councillor Barclay) - A. Briggs, History of Birmingham, Volume 2, Borough and City, 1865-1938, Oxford, 1952, p. 98.
70. G.26.7.1893.
71. M.26.7.1893.
72. V3, pp. 286-7.
73. Idem.
74. The Birmingham Electric Supply Company Ltd. Directors' Minutes, 1889-1900, Ref:418525. Report interleaved between pp. 227 and 228. For 10,000 of these shares there was a total application of 21,176. - Idem, Minute 729.
75. The Birmingham Electric Supply Company Ltd. Shareholders' Minutes, 1890-1899, Ref:418526, reports interleaved between pp. 25 and 40.
76. Idem.
77. V3, p. 287.
78. M.27.4.1897.

79. G.30.4.1897.
80. G.5.5.1897.
81. P.5.5.1897.
82. G.5.5.1897.
83. M.5.5.1897.
84. G.28.4.1897.
85. M.27.4.1897.
86. P.6.5.1897.
87. General Purposes Committee, Minute 7,389.
88. Electric Lighting Sub- Committee (of the General Purposes Committee), Minute 2.
89. Idem, Minute 4.
90. Directors' Minutes, pp. 329-30.
91. Electric Lighting Sub- Committee, Minute 5.
92. Idem, Minute 9.
93. Idem, Minute 10.
94. Directors' Minutes, p. 349.
95. Idem.
96. Electric Lighting Sub- Committee, Minute 13.
97. Directors' Minutes, p. 361.
98. Idem. p. 362.
99. Idem, p. 363.
100. Idem, pp. 365-6.
101. Electric Lighting Sub- Committee, Minute 15.
102. Idem, Minute 14, letter before above resolution.
103. Idem, Minute 17.
104. Idem, Minutes 18 and 19.

105. Directors' Minutes, p. 372.
106. P.23.5.1898.
107. P.24.5.1898.
108. P.26.5.1898.
109. The Birmingham Electric Supply Co. Ltd. and the Birmingham Corporation, Report of Messrs. Bramwell and Harris, (1898), Ref: 662100 LF 49.22, p. 7.
110. General Purposes Committee, Minute 7,507. For full conditions of purchase, see the Report above this Minute.
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112. Vaudrey, op. cit., pp. 8-9 and 11.
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115. G. 23.11.1898.
116. Council Minute 17,748 quoted above General Purposes Committee Minute 7,565; G.28.11.1898.
117. E. P. Hennock, "Finance and Politics in Urban Local Government in England, 1835-1900", in The Historical Journal, 6, no. 2 (1963): 212-225.
118. Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities, 1963, p. 221.
119. Op. cit., p. 134.
120. Op. cit., p. 56.
121. B. J. Barber, "Aspects of Municipal Government, 1835-1914", in Derek Fraser (ed.), A History of Modern Leeds, 1980, pp. 301-326. The quotation is from p. 324.
122. Op. cit., p. 57.
123. Op. cit., pp. 7-8.
124. Douglas Knoop, Principles and Methods of Municipal Trading, 1912, pp. 41-2.
125. Electric Lighting Sub- Committee, Minute 33.
126. Journals of the House of Commons, Volume 154, (1899), p. 35.

127. Idem, p. 48.
128. Idem, pp. 196 and 207.
129. Shareholders' Minutes, Minute 82.
130. Lords Journals, 131. 62 Vict. 63 Vict. p. 295.
131. P.2.8.1899; (62 and 63 Vict.), Birmingham Corporation Act, 1899, (Ch. cixix.), Public Record Office, BT31/4616/30296, Clause 25-(1).
132. V3, p. 288. See also C. A. Vince, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Volume 4, Birmingham, 1923, (henceforth referred to as V4), p. 416, footnote. The Minutes of this Committee have apparently been lost, probably around the time of the nationalisation of the electricity supply industry in 1948.
133. G.2.1.1900.
134. G.23.11.1898.
135. Op. cit., p. 106.
136. V4, p. 417.
137. Idem. pp. 410-11. See also City of Birmingham Electric Supply Department. Official opening of Summer Lane Generating Station, October, 1906. Description of works and electrical exhibits, (1906), Ref: 199539.
138. Idem, pp. 418-30. On Knoop, see above.
139. Op. cit., p. 21.
140. Idem., p. 33.
141. Op. cit., p. 10.
142. Op. cit., p. 39.
143. Op. cit., p. 9.
144. Op. cit., p. 35.
145. Self and Watson, op. cit., p. 26.
146. Ballin, op. cit., pp. 42-3.
147. Idem.
148. Hannah, op. cit., p. 25.

149. Idem, pp. 25-6.
150. Ballin, op. cit., p. 25.
151. For a full account, see, for example, Ballin, op. cit., chapters 2 and 3.
152. Ballin, op. cit., p. 55.
153. Op. cit., p. 155.
154. Op. cit., p. 27.
155. Op. cit., pp. 39-40.
156. Idem, p. 39.
157. Ballin, op. cit., p. 22. The phrase forms the title heading of Ballin's Chapter 2 (pp. 22-33).
158. On the Fabians, see A. M. McBriar, Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918, Cambridge, 1962. Pages 225, 231-3 and 344 contain references to electricity. For contemporary Fabian Tracts on the electricity supply industry, see S. G. Hobson, Public Control of Electrical Power and Transit, Fabian Tract number 119, 1905 and C. A. Baker, Private Versus Public Electricity Supply, Fabian Tract number 173, 1913.
159. Hannah, op. cit., pp. 24-27. On the Liberty and Property Defence League, see: N. Seldon, "Laissez- Faire as Dogma: The Liberty and Property Defence League, 1882-1914", in Kenneth D. Brown, Essays in Anti- Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain, 1974, pp. 208-233; and Edward Bristow, "The Liberty and Property Defence League and Individualism", Historical Journal, 18 (1975): 761-789.
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161. The possible exception was the company director Albright who, as has been seen, voted against the final deal. It is unclear, however, whether he merely objected to the proposed terms, or whether he opposed municipalisation on principle.

CHAPTER 4. HOUSING.

1. Introduction.

In this, the last case study, the two main objectives remain the same. Again, therefore, the same two questions are asked: what does the application of Lukes' approach tell us firstly about Birmingham's local history; and secondly about the utility of the approach itself?

With regard to the first of these objectives, it will be found that the application of Lukes' approach does seem to sharpen our perceptions of what was going on. In particular, the role of political actors such as the churchman, Thomas Bass, the church newspaper, the Gazette, and of the small group of labour movement councillors becomes clearer. In particular, the concepts of mobilisation of bias and of control of the political agenda are useful in explaining how proposals to construct council housing were rejected and how the issue was edited out of the political agenda by procedural changes aimed at blocking its progress.

With regard to the chapter's second objective, the findings are similar to those of the other two substantive chapters. Yet again, this treatment of housing policy, largely because of the critique of his second dimension restated below, is mostly

confined to Lukes' first dimension of power. The definitional categories of this dimension are again found to be adequate for purposes of empirical analysis. On occasion, however, the analysis is quite complicated, and the question must again be asked as to whether it yields results which are worth the effort expended. For example, the assumption of conflict, which is behind the decision-making definitional terminology of both Dahl and Lukes, is indeed applicable to the decisions not to build council housing. However, the decisions to improve unfit houses and to open up courts were widely accepted, even though ridiculed by some as inadequate. The broad consensus on these decisions, therefore, makes it difficult to apply Lukes' theories to them in any very direct way. There are also analytical problems which arise from the fact that some relevant interest groups, such as the slum-dwellers and the ratepayers, were not direct participants in the decision-making process but were represented by self-appointed proxies.

In the present chapter, the rejection of Lukes' concept of a separate second dimension of power is, if anything, even more prominent than in the rest of the study. It would indeed be possible, if unproductive, to reposition much of the analysis into Lukes' second dimension. This is because the most significant single question to be addressed is why, in the period before 1914, the council did not pursue its later policy of the large scale construction of municipal dwellings. Ostensibly

there was a non- decision in the second dimension which was in sharp contrast to the decisions in the first dimension after 1918 to build council houses in great numbers.

When the question is investigated in detail, however, it is found that this "non- decision" is best described as a number of actual decisions to do something else (by improving the slums), to do nothing (by rejecting proposed schemes), and to change the rules and procedures of the decision- making process (by transferring control of the housing agenda from a Health Committee which supported council construction to a new Housing Committee which opposed it.) In understanding these developments, the concepts of mobilisation of bias and control of the political agenda, which Lukes adapts from Schattschneider and from Bachrach and Baratz, are frequently invoked, but, as throughout the research, they are seen as operating within the first dimensional world of actual decisions, rather than in some putative and metaphysical second dimension of power where something fails to happen.

Yet again, the nature of the research scheme precludes any extended analysis of Lukes' third dimension of power, but, as in the other two case studies, the concept of real or welfare interests is found to be heuristically useful. Housing is clearly central to human health and well- being, and widely acceptable if empirically unverifiable and value laden assumptions can be made with regard to it.

Before investigating housing policy in detail, an initial summary of the main developments may perhaps be useful.

In Birmingham before 1914 there was an extensive and vigorous local debate on housing policy, and a growing awareness of the appalling conditions in the slums. Birmingham's city council, however, only succeeded in tinkering with the problem. At this time three main housing policies were developed. Two of these, the enforcement of housing improvements upon landlords and the initiative to open up courts, were accepted by all significant political actors, although the first was opposed by some landlords. The second, the restriction of council housing to schemes which were largely experimental, was more contentious.

Decisions with regard to the enforcement of improvements took place largely within Lukes' first dimension of power. In order to prevent the adoption of council housing as a major policy option influential local politicians used the mobilisation of bias and the control and manipulation of the political agenda, practices identified by Lukes with his second dimension of power. On one characterisation of events, a number of non- decisions in the second dimension resulted from this. As indicated above, however, it is more useful to conceptualise what happened as a series of first dimensional and empirically verifiable decisions to do something else, to do nothing, or to change the rules and procedures of the decision- making process. Examples of this,

as has been indicated, were the rejection of the proposed municipal building schemes (at Potter Street and Bordesley Green), and the transfer of control over housing policy from the Health Committee to a new Housing Committee.

On the question of council houses, Goodin's stress on the timing of decisions is clearly important, since in the period after 1918 Birmingham built more municipal housing than any other provincial local authority. The nature of the mobilisation of bias to prevent this happening earlier is thus worthy of careful study. An important aspect of it was the comparative weakness of the organised labour movement, the staunchest advocate of municipal housing. Another aspect, from the point of view of the theorists of the growth machine, was that housing reform, on Dye's classification, was a redistributive policy, which the growth machine would be likely to edit out of the political agenda, and not a developmental policy, which it would be likely to support. In this it is in sharp contrast to electricity supply and the provision of water. In this respect, a significant difference after 1918 was probably the money available from central government for local housing reform. These funds meant that the redistributive aspects of housing reform, at least in the purely local context, were less significant for municipal policy makers. This, together with the erosion of ratepayer influence by franchise extensions, and the greater political influence of the labour movement which

accompanied those extensions (factors which are further investigated below) helped to place the building of municipal dwellings onto the local political agenda.

As might be expected, a discussion of housing throws up third dimensional considerations with regard to real or welfare interests since, on any reasonable definition, these include the enjoyment of satisfactory housing conditions. In Birmingham at this time, therefore, there is a "conflict", in Lukes' terminology, arising from "a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude", although in this case the conflict is scarcely "latent." A relevant consideration here is that housing, unlike water supply, is, or at that time was considered to be, to some extent a private rather than a public good. It is true that society as a whole may benefit from housing improvements if these bring in their wake less disease, less crime and fewer paupers in need of support. But, on the other hand, the main advantages will often go to those individuals who are re-housed. Thus any improvements in conditions are in the real interests of the direct recipients, but may be perceived as being against the real interests of those who are to some extent unaffected by them but who have to pay. Here, this was manifested in ratepayer resentment at high levels of council expenditure, a resentment which was increasingly heeded by policy-makers. This resentment also partly explains the attempt to off-load the financial burden onto others by forcing landlords to repair and maintain

unfit houses at their own cost. Again, a factor mitigating this resentment after 1918, and thus making the adoption of large-scale housing reforms possible, may well have been the introduction of government subsidies.

A number of other policies relevant to housing were pursued. These included the encouragement of owner occupation and the provision of better transport facilities to open up the suburbs. Such policies, it is argued here, were either peripheral, or were intended to pay for themselves. On the aspect of the timing of decisions mentioned by Goodin, the systematic development of the suburbs was difficult before the advent of the motor omnibus. There was also a movement towards a town planning solution, but this initiative tended to lose the problem by placing it in a wider context. Another policy, which went hand in hand with the enforcement of improvements on landlords, was the attempt to improve the slums by opening up courts. However, the amount of money spent on this, as was openly boasted at the time, was comparatively insignificant. These piecemeal and for the most part inconsequential responses to what was widely agreed to be a serious problem are a further indication of how the mobilisation of bias was effectively stifling effective housing reform at this time.

In sharp contrast to such inactivity were the major municipal building programmes after 1918. These were made possible partly by government sponsorship and the opening up of

adjacent areas by the motor omnibus mentioned above, and partly by the more positive attitude to housing reform enshrined in Lloyd George's widely accepted principle of the need to provide "homes fit for heroes." [1]

With housing, as with the other case studies, it is important to remember Newton's injunction to see local politics in its national context. Here the legislative framework provided by the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890 and the subsequent amendments of that Act in 1900, 1903 and 1909 is particularly significant. [2] As will be seen, Birmingham made no systematic attempt to adopt Part 3 of the 1890 Act, which made provision for municipal building. The city also eventually eschewed the use of Part 1, entitled "Unhealthy Areas", in favour of an attempt under Section 2 on "Unhealthy Dwelling Houses" to force landlords to maintain their property in good shape. Part 1, indeed, came in for widespread criticism from local authorities. In July 1900, for example, a conference in London of representatives from county and urban districts agreed that "the present method of dealing with insanitary areas is extravagant and unsatisfactory." Parliament, it added, should "provide some less expensive and more expeditious mode of procedure." [3]

The main developments in the field of housing policy in early twentieth century Birmingham may be briefly summarised. [4] In 1900, the Corporation's Health Committee purchased a plot of land at Bordesley Green for the erection of workmen's dwellings.

In June 1901 proposals were submitted to the council to erect 621 houses on this site and to build a number of flats in Potter Street. The Potter Street scheme, however, was withdrawn in the face of hostile criticism, and the Bordesley Green plan was referred to a new Housing Committee, which was subsequently established in the following November. In the terminology of Parry and Morriss this was an exercise in "strengthening and reshaping the mobilisation of bias" by "the introduction of new procedural barriers to change." As they point out it is not particularly useful to categorise such ploys as non- decisions as do Bachrach and Baratz in their early work since "the invocation of procedures to thwart or redirect innovation" is, in fact, "a decision." [5] In March, 1902, on the recommendation of the new Housing Committee, the Council's plans at Bordesley Green were abandoned. The Housing Committee then attempted to lease the land for the private development of workmen's dwellings, but the proposed agreement with a local builder fell through in April 1905. In June, 1902, the Committee's report against the Potter Street scheme in particular, and municipal building in general, was approved by the council.

Meanwhile, representations had been made to the council by a local clergyman, Thomas Bass, and others concerning the state of the Oxygen Street area. A council debate of March 1902 on whether to deal with this area under Section 1 or Section 2 of the 1890 Act was adjourned, but, partly under the influence of councillor Nettlefold, the Housing Committee's energetic

chairman, action under Part 2 was later accepted. The council policy of pressurising owners to improve and maintain unfit properties, in the Oxygen Street area and elsewhere, was thereafter greatly extended, to the annoyance and anger of many local landlords. In addition, loans totalling £3,000 were approved in 1903 to open up courts and compensate owners for the opening up of courts by the removal of obstructive buildings. In October, 1903, the Housing Committee presented to council a report which included a general statement of policy and an attempt to justify its new initiatives. Meanwhile, a number of other ideas were being developed by local policy makers. There was, for example, a growing enthusiasm for the concept of town planning.

2. The Problem of the Slums.

Part of the background to the first dimensional debate on housing in Birmingham around 1900 was a widespread feeling that the slums constituted a serious problem which urgently needed to be remedied. This was an important part of the political culture in which decision-makers operated, and it needs to be investigated and analysed if housing decisions are to be properly understood.

The local press was decidedly of the opinion that something needed to be done to tackle the problem of bad housing. For the Post, the "rookeries... where families are crowded together under conditions resulting in disease and death ... need to be cleared away." [6] The lead among local newspapers, however, was taken by the Gazette with a series of articles by a journalist called Cuming Walters entitled "Scenes from Slum-land." [7] The writing was graphic: "Walk through Vauxhall, once famous for its pretty gardens, Duddeston, Nechells or Gosta Green. There shall you behold in two hours sights that make the heart sore." [8] In these areas "at the street corners cluster groups of men, out of work or unwilling to work, hanging about listlessly. ... Sickness is prevalent ... the death rate is appalling." [9] In a later article the author describes the "narrow alleys ... leading into gloomy squares seldom reached by the rays of the sun, reeking with slush and slime." In such slums, concluded the author, "the poor ... are cared for less than stabled and kennelled beasts." [10] The articles were underpinned by the editorial columns of the paper where it was asserted that "no great city in the country has done so little as Birmingham to provide decent and healthy homes for the very poor." [11] Such sentiments from the city's leading organ of the established church is an example of a more general concern felt by many Christians and people of goodwill. Indeed, as will be seen, the two main sources of progressive opinion on housing at this time were religious and socialist.

There was wide agreement with the Gazette's housing campaign, and the misgivings of concerned citizens can be traced back well into the nineteenth century. A survey of a number of public reports on Birmingham's housing published in the 1840's, for example, has been carried out by Hopkins. His conclusion is that Birmingham compared quite well with other towns, but that housing standards were uneven, and worst among the poor. The jerry-built property, in particular, rapidly degenerated, so that, in the words of a contemporary, "district after district is vitiated." Thus the condition of the older courts was a matter of increasing concern.[12] As time went on the old property at the cheapest end of the market seems to have deteriorated further. In 1868, for example, the slum problem was highlighted in a paper read to a meeting in Birmingham of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science by the Rev. Micaiah Hill.[13] A generation later, Christians and churchmen were still echoing the same concern. In May, 1901, a deputation of Birmingham clergymen led by the Bishop of Worcester presented the Lord Mayor with a copy of a resolution which they had passed on the subject of the slums.[14] Earlier, from the Evangelical Mission, J. Stead had written that in his "25 years' experience of labouring in the slums" he had "never known a time of such urgently needed help as at the present." [15]

In 1903 "the housing problem in Birmingham" was the subject of a 40 page pamphlet written by May C. Staveley, the warden of the Women's Settlement in Summer Lane.[16] Meanwhile, the

problems of the slums were highlighted by a number of witnesses who presented evidence to the Housing Committee on the "housing of the working classes" in 1903. Among these was A.H. Barker, the Secretary of the Birmingham Mission, who was particularly concerned about overcrowding, and about the inability of the poorest people to pay even the cheapest rents.[17] Dr. Wilson, the Mission's Medical Superintendent, made mention of the "meanness, sordidness, decaying walls, patched windows, unhinged doors ... filthy and exposed public conveniences and litter." [18] If anything, spokesmen from the labour movement, such as J.A. Fallows and C.E. Smith, were even more forthright.[19] Against such a wide coalition of like-minded people, A. Gough for the local property owners, arguing that small dirty houses were not necessarily slums, and that "smallness of houses ...is a positive good" was like a voice crying in the wilderness.[20]

Official opinion too agreed that the slums were a serious problem. The Health Committee vigorously denigrated the deprivations suffered by the poor. In a report presented to the council in July 1901, for example, a number of problems were highlighted. These included the iniquities arising from short leases and the consequent difficulties in securing repairs, and the "unpaved and dirty" condition of many of the city's 6,000 courts.[21] The Housing Committee, too, in a report of 1906, attacked "the unnecessary miseries of life in Birmingham." [22] Councillor Nettlefold himself, the Housing Committee chairman, whatever criticisms were made of his policies, echoed the general

concern with apparent sincerity. "No man with any decent feelings could rest quietly in his bed at night", he said, "unless he felt he were endeavouring to do something to grapple with this great evil." [23] Such sentiments were part of a long municipal tradition. As early as 1875, for example, Joseph Chamberlain had called a sanitary conference in Birmingham, and had told it that there were about 3,000 preventable deaths in the town every year. [24] On the eve of the First World War, the official concern continued, with the Special Housing Inquiry of 1913-14 painting a graphic and critical picture of slum life, and of "the bugbear of ...the back- to- back house." [25]

During the debate on slum conditions, various aspects of the housing problem which seemed to contemporaries to be particularly serious were frequently alluded to. One of these was the problem of the back- to- backs referred to above. Another was the difficulty posed by a number of specific nuisances, such, for example, as foul and defective ash- pits and yards, and leaky spouting. These, when they came to the notice of the authorities, were dealt with by the Health Committee under powers granted to them by statute law. [26] A third problem was posed by the recent introduction of water closets. These, as the Housing Committee acknowledged, were a great improvement on the old pan system, [27] but they brought difficulties of their own, since they were usually inadequate in number and frequently "in a condition of indescribable nastiness." [28] A fourth difficulty arose from the condition of what were referred to as common

lodging houses, where the poorest and most destitute citizens were forced to live. This matter was again under the remit of the Health Committee, which, for example, in May 1904, resolved to prosecute a total of 11 keepers of lodgings "for ...not causing the houses to be thoroughly cleansed and well and sufficiently lime- washed." [29] Finally, underlying the entire debate was the connection, which contemporaries took to be obvious and self- evident, between dilapidation and crime. [30]

Few council houses were built until after 1918, and, given the importance of the timing of decisions highlighted by Goodin, this needs explanation. But to understand the context in which housing decisions were made in the period around 1900 we also need to ask why, at that time, any initiatives at all were taken to improve the housing stock, given that very little reform had occurred previously. The evidence above suggests one significant factor. People, for whatever reason, felt the need for reform with increasing passion and vehemence. The policy initiatives of the early twentieth century, inadequate as they may now seem, were thus in part a response to higher expectations, and may be linked to that growing sentiment for social improvement which was shortly to find renewed expression in the Liberal welfare reforms of 1906-14. Increased public concern, however, cannot be ascribed to a widespread deterioration of the housing stock, since there is clear evidence that conditions in Birmingham were no worse than elsewhere, and, with the possible exception of the older courts, were showing signs of definite improvement. A

writer to the Gazette, for example, argued that conditions in all the big cities were bad, and that Birmingham, if anything, was better than London, Liverpool and Glasgow. He at the same time, however, expressed solidarity with the newspaper's housing campaign.[31] The general improvement in conditions was pointed to officially by the Health Committee, by the committee's chairman alderman Cook, and by Dr. Hill, the Medical Officer of Health.[32] Such official claims were endorsed by witnesses presenting evidence to the Housing Committee, including the Rev. Thomas Bass, one of the council's greatest critics.[33]

3. Other Aspects of the Debate on Housing.

One significant aspect of the housing debate in Birmingham around 1900 was undoubtedly the increasing concern over slum conditions summarised in the previous section. This section looks at three other aspects: the housing reformers, particularly those in the Christian tradition; the fear of a backlash by the ratepayers against expensive housing reform; and the disagreement over whether flats were a desirable solution to the problem of bad housing.

As stated above, the housing reform movement at this time had two main sources, Christian and socialist. As will be seen, of these two groups the socialists had official representation on

the city council and positions of formal influence which were lacking to Christians, at least when they were acting as a pressure group on the housing question. The problem, therefore, for Christians and other people of goodwill was to maximise their political influence on the first dimensional decision-making processes from outside the formal structures of power. An interesting case study of how marginal actors can effectively mobilise, in Schattschneider's phrase, such political bias as is available to them is provided by the Rev. Thomas Bass. He was the Vicar of St. Laurence's parish in Birmingham, and he played an important role in the initiation of an intensified debate on housing conditions after 1900.[34] Together with the Gazette, the local organ of the established church, Bass, a local Anglican vicar, spearheaded a more general Christian campaign. He sometimes acted alone. Another of his favoured methods, however, was to mobilise support by pressure group action, although the groups which he used seem to have been ad hoc and informal. On 4 June 1901, for example, Bass and eleven co-signatories sent an official complaint to the Medical Officer of Health asking him to inspect the neighbourhood around Oxygen Street with a view to representing it as an unhealthy area. Bass's object was to have the district dealt with as an "improvement area" under Part 1 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890. In his report to the Housing Committee, Hill, the Medical Officer of Health, after giving a detailed analysis of the area and of the death rates within it, concurred with Bass's opinion: "The evils ...cannot be effectually remedied other than by an improvement scheme." [35]

In January 1902 Bass wrote to the Housing Committee complaining of their slowness in tackling his complaint[36] and followed this up shortly afterwards with another letter together with a copy of a resolution passed at a public meeting held at a local school.[37]

The decisional outcome of Bass's agitation, however, demonstrates once more the great power, within the first dimensional decision-making process defined by Lukes, of council committees, and of committee chairmen. His plea for action under Part 1 of the 1890 Act was unacceptable to Nettlefold and the Housing Committee, and they recommended the council to proceed instead under Part 2. As will be seen, this mobilisation of bias was successful. It cannot usefully be described, however, in the terminology of Bachrach and Baratz, as a non-decision. It was, rather, an actual decision to do something else.[38] Bass appears to have accepted that this piece of agenda setting by decisive political actors was not reversible, and, in accordance with the law of anticipated reactions, he launched no frontal attack upon it. Instead, he seemed to accept the marginality of his political position and the comparative dearth of political resources at his disposal, and vigorously continued the fight on the new battlefield. In November 1902 he and his associates again wrote to the Medical Officer of Health about another area adjacent to Oxygen Street. Hill was sympathetic, despite a legal blunder by Bass, and inspected all the houses in the area referred to. Bass, for his part, gratefully acknowledged that

some houses in the area were now "being dealt with." [39] According to the Housing Committee these totalled 202 by 15 October 1902. [40] Bass was still not satisfied, however, and in April 1903 wrote again to Hill, this time specifying the precise properties complained of in correct legal fashion. Again, his complaint was investigated and a number of properties were declared unfit dwellings, with the owners being instructed to put them in order. [41] Meanwhile, Bass kept up the pressure by complaining about the Oxygen Street area to the Local Government Board in London, [42] and opposing a council proposal to spend some of the money earmarked for the Oxygen Street area in other parts of the city. [43] After the retirement of Hill, Bass and his associates continued to bombard the new Medical Officer of Health, Dr. John Robertson, with further lists of allegedly unfit dwellings. [44] Six years after the start of his campaign, Bass was still fighting valiantly on behalf of his less fortunate parishioners, [45] even enlisting two local J.P.'s to intercede with him on their behalf. [46] His complaints continued to be investigated and acted on, and, as well as the sympathy of Hill, he could also count on the grudging admiration of Nettlefold, who on at least one occasion interceded to prevent "that somewhat peculiar cleric from being put out of court by his own mistake." [47]

Thus, as an attempt to influence the decision-making processes subsumed within Lukes' first dimension of power, Bass's campaign was carried out with considerable skill, and was

something of an object lesson in how marginal political actors can maximise their potential influence. He was affable and courteous wherever possible, for example to the sympathetic Hill, but was not afraid to raise, or to threaten to raise, his grievances with higher or other authorities, such as the Local Government Board and the Justices of the Peace, if this seemed expedient. His campaign appears to have had some success at the margin, but two qualifications need to be made. Firstly, as explained above, he was acting in a climate of general concern at bad housing conditions and of sympathy for his cause. Secondly, he lacked the political resources to make a decisive impact, and was thus forced to work within the agenda dictated by Nettlefold, the Housing Committee and the council.

Bass was not the only Christian who was deeply concerned at the housing and living conditions of the poor. As indicated above, this religious opinion was to a large extent co-ordinated and expressed through the columns of the Birmingham Gazette. Thus any investigation of the role of churchmen and other Christians in the housing reform movement would be incomplete without an analysis of the part played by this newspaper. Although an organ of the established church, the Gazette gained praise from nonconformists, and even from socialists, for its spirited stand on the housing question. Both A.W. Still, the Gazette's editor, and J. Cuming Walters, the author of "Scenes from Slum-land", were invited to a nonconformist symposium on the slums in 1901, and their "unselfish purpose" in pursuing

their campaign was publicly acknowledged.[48] Local socialists, too, admitted that Cuming Walter's articles had "made a deep impression on the public mind" and had helped to galvanise the Health Committee into action.[49] But the Gazette could never entirely shake off liberal and nonconformist suspicions "that at the back of it there was a political intention." [50] Credence was certainly given to this view by the Gazette's publication of a confidential and embarrassing correspondence between the Housing Committee and their opposite numbers in Liverpool.[51] It was reinforced by the Gazette's vigorous attacks on the Health Committee and its Liberal chairman, alderman Cook.[52] These attacks eventually led to lengthy libel proceedings against the newspaper by Cook, and by the Medical Officer of Health, Hill.[53] This apparent willingness of the Gazette, on occasions, to use the housing question to make political points on behalf of its favoured party, the Conservatives, may have divided and weakened the unity of the Christian consensus on housing and alienated Liberal and Liberal Unionist nonconformists. Later on, moreover, as will be seen, the Gazette became alarmed at the projected cost of proposed housing improvements, and sharply backtracked on its previous commitment to the cause.

For the above reasons, the Gazette newspaper, like the churchman Bass, was politically peripheral to decision-making on the housing question. It gained a certain credibility because of the increasingly close liaison between the Liberal Unionist and

Conservative parties. This liaison, dating from the split in the Liberal party over Irish home rule in the 1880's, had been strengthened at national level by the presence of Joseph Chamberlain and other Liberal Unionists in Conservative governments. But in a city where nonconformity was strong, the paper's role as the spokesman for church interests prevented it from being an influential political actor. It is possible, indeed, that Nettlefold and the Housing Committee gained political strength from opposition to their policies by churchmen and by the church newspaper. Putting this into the terms postulated by Schattschneider, and by Bachrach and Baratz, church interests were unable to mobilise a sufficient amount of political bias to influence, in any important way, the agenda for housing reform. In this respect, they occupied a position similar to that of the labour movement in Birmingham in the period before the First World War.

In opposition to the Christians, socialists and others who were urging effective action on the housing problem was a continuing and strong lobby in favour of retrenchment and the containment of rate rises. This was an aspect of the local political culture in Birmingham which clearly had an important impact on the outcome of the first dimensional decision-making struggle over housing reform. In the early years of the century, as was seen in the case study of the Welsh water scheme, the enormous cost of the Elan valley operation made the level of the rates a particularly sensitive political issue.

An influential political actor on the side of dissatisfied ratepayers was the Mail, the most popular and lowbrow of the city's three daily papers. In July 1901, for example, the paper published a number of irate letters and recorded that it was "glad to hear that the proposal to revive the Ratepayers' Association is likely to take practical shape."^[54] A series of editorials on increases in the rates followed, in which it was claimed that "in many cases the amounts on the demand notes have more than doubled in twenty years."^[55] The Mail commended Nettlefold for his policy of patching rather than demolishing the slums, and stressed the need to contain expenditure because of the enormous costs of the Elan valley scheme.^[56] In their anxiety to appease dissatisfied ratepayers, the other newspapers also sympathised with the cry for economy. The Post regularly printed letters from people of an economical disposition. One writer to the paper, for example, commended Nettlefold's "sensible way" as the "one bright oasis in the desert."^[57] The paper for the most part agreed with such correspondents, and, like the Mail, linked the need for economy with the expenditure on the Welsh water scheme.^[58] The Gazette too considered that "new loans should be undertaken with the utmost caution", but it was prepared to judge cases on their merits and give its approval in what it considered to be appropriate instances.^[59] Thus, in Schattschneider's terminology, all three of the city's daily

papers, in varying degrees, helped to mobilise the political bias against the placing of expensive housing projects onto the municipal agenda.

These economical sentiments appear to have had a decided influence upon politicians and policy makers, with even the local socialists asserting that they "(did) not wish to further burden the small shopkeeper and the working classes with increase of rates." [60] The problem was also referred to in the council chamber, with, for example, one speaker arguing that rate increases meant rent rises and asserting that "every committee of the Council was rack renting the inhabitants all the way through." [61] The chairman of the Housing Committee, Nettlefold, appears to have been particularly sensitive to the issue: "The enormous expense incurred by the reformation of small areas has discredited Housing Reform with the general public, and driven the ratepayers as a whole into opposition. Useful members have lost their seats by the economy cry that has ... arisen as a result of extravagant and unnecessary expenditure." [62] In 1911 Nettlefold published a thirty page pamphlet which, in the first part of its title, called for "a campaign for lower rates", something which he thought would be possible by the creation of the larger rating area of Greater Birmingham. [63] Nettlefold's thriftiness was endorsed by his Committee. In their view "the burden on the ratepayers ... is fast becoming more than they can bear." [64] An improvement scheme for the Oxygen Street area was rejected partly because "the finances of the City are so

embarrassed."[65] Likewise, the Bordesley Green Scheme was judged non-viable "in the present state of the finances of the City." [66] The Committee's penchant for economy is seen even in the smallest of matters. When, for example, they heard that the Public Works Committee was thinking of widening Adams Street they arranged for the Medical Officer of Health to consult with the City Engineer so that the condemnation of unfit houses there, together with the consequent reduction in the purchase prices, preceded any council buy-outs.[67] The Committee, indeed, proudly boasted of the "small cost to the Corporation" which its policies entailed.[68]

The emphasis in Lukes' first dimension on conflict is appropriate to the interpretation of housing policy in Birmingham around 1900, since, as has been seen, there was indeed a conflict between Christian, socialist and other reformers and councillors and others fearful of ratepayer opposition to costly housing reforms. As in the other case studies, however, the political analysis is complicated, and the question asked throughout the study as to whether the application of Lukes' approach is worth the trouble may be re-iterated. Here, one of the main difficulties for the political analyst is that those whom one would expect to be the major political actors, namely the slum dwellers and the ratepayers, played little direct part in decision-making, and thus must be presumed to be represented by self-appointed proxies.

With regard to the slum dwellers, the main people purporting to act in what Lukes might refer to as their real or welfare interests were churchmen and socialists. If we take Morriss's point that housing conditions are clearly so vital to human well being that widely acceptable, if contestable, assumptions can be made about them, we can reasonably claim that the advocates of housing reform were accurately reflecting the real interests of slum dwellers. The views of those slum dwellers themselves, however, were never clearly articulated, and it is at least possible that some of them preferred the excitement of the slums, with their public houses, low life and deviant subculture to, for example, a life of healthy but dull isolation in the suburbs. As always, assertions about real or welfare interests are value-laden and not susceptible to empirical verification.

What has been said about the slum-dwellers may be repeated concerning the ratepayers, who mounted no concerted campaigns against actual or projected expenditure on housing such, for example, as that organised by the opponents of the Welsh water scheme. They were far more adequately represented by proxy, however, than were the slum dwellers, and local politicians seem to have assumed that economy on the housing question was vital if an open revolt was to be averted. The political agenda was thus influenced, not only by leading political actors, but what might be called the indirect mobilisation of political bias, namely by public, and in particular ratepayer, opinion. In an era when ratepayers had the vote and many non-ratepayers did not, the

anticipated electoral backlash against expensive municipal policies probably had a greater influence on local politicians than after the subsequent extensions of the franchise. Insofar as it is reasonable to assume that ratepayers were richer than non-ratepayers, and enjoyed superior housing conditions, the effect of the mobilisations of bias which occurred were regressive rather than redistributive. It might plausibly be argued therefore that the enlarged electorate after the First World War had an effect similar to the introduction of government housing subsidies in facilitating the new policy of municipal building. If nothing else it almost certainly contributed to the political rise of the Labour Party, a leading advocate of council housing. None of this, however, affects the fact that political analysis of the housing question in terms of Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories is made more complicated because important political actors exerted their influence in an indirect fashion.

The debate on housing was, to an extent, sidetracked by a conflict, readily susceptible to analysis within the parameters of Lukes' first dimension of power, between supporters and opponents of the flat system. The problem to be solved was widely recognised and agreed upon, namely that, in the words of a nonconformist clergyman, a number of workers needed to be "housed close to their work" near the city centre, where land was scarce[69] In the view of a witness to the Housing Committee, many people "would never leave the slums" for the suburbs and,

because of their poverty, needed rudimentary accommodation in the central areas for not much more than two shillings per week.[70] As late as 1939, indeed, "only 14% of the tenants to be displaced (by slum clearance schemes) were willing to accept accommodation on the outskirts of the city." [71]

Flats, however, were not to prove the answer, and there was a decisive mobilisation of political bias which effectively excluded them from the housing agenda. As with the Welsh water scheme, this bias consisted not only of the influence of important political actors, but also of the strength of the arguments advanced by the opponents of the flat system. It was pointed out, for example, convincingly and at length, that workmen's cottages were both cheaper and healthier.[72] In Berlin, Dresden and Vienna, it was claimed, despite the alleged cleanliness of the occupants, the flat system was associated with rates of infant mortality even higher than in Birmingham.[73] Working people themselves were, for the most part, firmly opposed to flats,[74] as were their socialist representatives.[75] Influential policy-makers and officials such as Nettlefold and Hill were likewise either unenthusiastic or downright hostile,[76] and the building or encouragement of flats was rejected as a policy option.[77] It is perhaps worth stressing that, as in other cases investigated, the failure to encourage the building of flats is best seen, not as some hypothetical non-decision taken in Lukes' second dimension of power, but as an actual decision, clearly articulated in Nettlefold's writings, to

reject that particular policy option. Later, from 1918 to 1939, virtually no flats, either council or private, were built in the city.[78]

Yet, in the conflict over whether or not flats were desirable, their construction was widely advocated. Local supporters of flat building, for example, included the clergyman, the Rev. T. Pipe, and, among the councillors and aldermen, Sir J. Smith, Clayton, Parkes, Cook, Bowater and Hunt.[79] In a series of editorials, the local press added their endorsement of the flat system.[80] However, given the hostility of Nettlefold and his Committee to any municipal building, either of flats or of houses, the issue was effectively excluded from the local political agenda.

4. What is to Be Done? Further Aspects of the Housing Debate in Birmingham Around 1900.

Housing in Birmingham around the turn of the century was a complicated and many sided issue. So far, the problem of the slums has been investigated, together with the conflict between reformers and those of an economical disposition over what should be done. Finally, the debate on the flat system was summarised. Next, before investigating the substantive policy areas relevant to housing, it is necessary to summarise a few more aspects of

the debate. These include the declining popularity of laissez-faire solutions, the marginal impact of the movement towards owner occupation on the housing problem, Liberal Party proposals to tax land values, the difficulties of finding cheap housing in the central areas, where land was expensive, the issue of empty houses, the link between housing reform and transport improvements, and the tendency of some contemporary observers to blame the slum dwellers themselves for their plight and to advocate paternalistic supervision of the poor.

By the early twentieth century, the context of the debate on housing policy, and the parameters for the making of decisions in Lukes' first dimension, were changing. One aspect of this, as has been seen, was the increasing concern about slum conditions manifested in a passionate local debate on the housing question. Another discernable trend was a declining faith in the efficacy of laissez-faire solutions. For example, the common nineteenth century cry that housing reform was a matter for eleemosynary institutions rather than for local or central government had been more or less completely silenced. Local charity workers, such as Stead, the highly esteemed director of the Palmer Street Mission, were praised by press correspondents, and clergymen such as the Rev. J. Orr, who was associated with the Lawley Street Mission Buildings, claimed to be doing all they could to alleviate the distress associated with poverty and poor housing conditions.[81] But no-one, least of all the charity workers themselves, implied that private benefactors were alone sufficient for the task.

This erosion of faith in the power of classical liberal non-interventionism to solve social and political problems appears to have been an increasingly important part of the political culture and of the prevailing political ideology. It was soon to find national expression in the interventionist and regulatory social policies of the pre-war Liberal governments. Locally, it may have helped to create an intellectual climate favourable to large scale council construction after 1918.

A striking aspect of to-day's housing market is the prevalence of owner occupation. In the early twentieth century also this was encouraged, but no municipal housing reforms were linked to it and no one could be found to argue that, even if they were, they would be of any help to the poorest stratum of slum dwellers. Thus the influence of the owner occupation issue on municipal housing decisions was negligible or non-existent. In a report of 1906, however, the Housing Committee mentioned "the desirability of enabling the occupiers of small houses to gradually acquire the houses they live in." It was, they added, Joseph Chamberlain himself who had "introduced the Bill which resulted in the Small Dwellings Acquisition Act" of 1899, and there should be "an effort to encourage its use." [82] Nettlefold agreed that the 1899 Act "should be made use of to enable working men to buy their own houses." [83] Owner occupation, he added, could be a valuable spin off from municipal land purchase schemes. He made favourable reference to Ulm in Germany where the Corporation was assisting schemes for owner occupation, and

commended such a policy for Birmingham.[84] Such an initiative, however, had little impact on municipal housing decisions in Lukes' first dimension of power during this period. The task was seen as properly belonging to the building societies and other financial institutions, with the local authority's role being exhortatory at most.

The first dimensional decision-making context was influenced even less by a Liberal Party idea to improve the nation's housing stock by rating land values. According to a correspondent to the Post if such a policy were adopted "there would be no difficulty in private enterprise meeting all the housing needs of our populous centres." [85] Such a panacea was a matter for national government, however, and, in any case, in a city which had turned its back on political Liberalism, it received little discussion. The policy was also highly contentious, and, for example, a Welsh attempt to have it debated at a municipal housing conference in London failed.[86]

In the early years of the twentieth century, housing reformers were caught on the horns of a dilemma. The problem had two main aspects. Firstly, housing development in the central areas was made difficult by the high cost of land. Secondly, the development of the suburbs was restricted by the lack of adequate transport facilities, particularly the absence of the motor omnibus.

The first of these aspects, the high cost of land in the city centre was clearly a major constraint on policy-makers and on the formulation of housing decisions in Lukes' first dimension of power. It would have been theoretically possible to improve slum life by knocking down bad housing to build new streets, factories, warehouses or offices. Such developments, however, created at least as many problems as they solved, and no contemporary spokesman could be found to argue that they might in themselves abolish the slums. Nevertheless, the construction through the slums of a new road from Montague Street to Garrison Street, in the view of the Public Works Committee, "would be a great sanitary improvement." [87] A London spokesman, however, saw problems: "The commercial value of land in the central districts when cleared was always largely in excess of the value as a site, the use of which was restricted to the erection of dwellings." [88] The same story was heard by a Birmingham deputation to Hull who "were informed that freeholders by pulling down old and dilapidated houses were able almost immediately to obtain a better return by the use of their land for business purposes." [89] In Birmingham, this was clearly one of the reasons why, according to a Housing Committee Report of 1903, "for some years past few houses have been built to let at less than 5s. 6d." [90] It also meant that landlords with short leaseholds were unwilling to comply with orders to improve their property for fear that the freeholder would eject them and raze their houses. [91] And what guarantee, asked councillor Davis, did the council have that money which it spent in opening up and

improving courts would not be similarly wasted?[92] The implications for council housing schemes in the city centre were clear. For Nettlefold, a major objection to improvement schemes under Part 1 of the 1890 Act was that "housing accommodation must be provided ON THE SITE." [93] According to the Housing Inquiry of 1914, it "would involve an immense capital expenditure" to build new houses at the same rent on the sites of the old back-to-backs, and the ultimate result would, in any case, be "far from satisfactory." [94] The socialist Fallows was scathing on the "rebuilding ... for offices and workshops" before 1900, arguing that "the poor have been evicted, and have had to still further increase the crowding in the central slums." [95] On the other hand, it is significant that municipal construction after 1918 was concentrated in the suburbs. It would seem that before 1914 any council building in the city centre was difficult because of high land values, whereas the effective development of the outskirts was limited by the absence of the motor omnibus. The first of these factors still applied after 1918, but the second one did not.

The high price of land in the city centre, and the consequent reduction in the number of dwellings built there, were linked to another aspect of the housing debate. This centred on the question of empty, or, as they were referred to at the time, "void" houses. Nettlefold and the Housing Committee attempted to justify their refusal to build council dwellings by claiming that there was plenty of spare housing capacity. This, indeed, was a

major justification for policies of piecemeal reform. Partly because of the drying up of housing provision in the city centre, however, this assertion became widely discredited over time.

Nettlefold, however, launched a brisk propaganda campaign aimed at demonstrating the superfluity of empty properties. The aim of this campaign, in terms of the conflict over housing decisions in Lukes' first dimension, was to strengthen the mobilisation of political bias against a policy of council building, and thus to keep that policy off the municipal agenda. In this instance too, however, the conflict is best seen as occurring, not in some hypothetical second dimension of non-decisions, but in the real world of actual decisions. The surveys of empty houses on behalf of the Housing Committee, for example, were authorised by minuted committee decisions which were clearly intended to strengthen the political bias against an adventurous housing policy.

In prosecution of his campaign to set the political agenda against radical housing reform Nettlefold told the council in 1903 that "there were 785 void houses in the city at rents of less than 4s. per week, and inspection of them showed that they were not unfit to live in." [96] Later, he quoted the evidence of the council's Artisans' Dwellings Inquiry Committee of 1884. This he claimed had discovered an ample amount of accommodation in the city despite the demolitions associated with the Birmingham Improvement Scheme of 1875. Citing Glasgow as another

example Nettlefold concluded that "you have associated with times of displacement, times of huge provision." [97] His Committee's policy of forcing landlords to keep their property in good repair, he claimed, did not create a "house famine." [98] Indeed, he argued later, as the Housing Committee's policies had been implemented an increasing number of houses had become available, to the chagrin of supporters of municipal housing and irate landlords alike. [99] Nettlefold's claims were endorsed and supported by C.A. Vince, an influential body of council members, and the Birmingham Post. [100]

The main protagonists of Nettlefold's interpretation, however, were the members of his Housing Committee, who vigorously sponsored the views of their energetic chairman. As indicated above, it was the Housing Committee which commissioned the enquiries into the number of empty houses available to Birmingham's citizens, enquiries which were to provide Nettlefold with much of the material to support his arguments. [101] Indeed, the Committee claimed that the surplus of housing was self-evident, and in 1903 they suspended further investigations. [102] For the Housing Committee the policy implication were clear. When, and only when, the existing housing agenda became identified with a condition of scarcity should the construction of council housing be considered. [103]

The problem, however, with such confident assertions by Nettlefold, his Committee, and their supporters, was that, over a period of time, they were proved to be wrong. While opposition was confined to the local landlords, it could, perhaps, be shrugged off.[104] But from the very beginning it was convincingly argued, by competent professional observers, that families often had great difficulty in finding housing because many landlords disliked children.[105] The Gazette launched a broader attack, pointing out, among other things, that many of the houses reported as empty were a considerable distance from the city centre.[106] A correspondent to the paper was even more scathing, referring to the "game of musical chairs" which the Housing Committee seemed to expect a highly mobile population to play in order to keep a roof over their heads.[107] The issue of empty houses also put the Housing Committee at loggerheads with the Health Committee and the Medical Officer of Health, who both unequivocally asserted that there was a housing shortage in the city.[108] Cook, the Health Committee chairman, stated in 1900 that "there were practically no small houses void." [109] A few years later, the figures recorded in the nationally published Housing Handbook corroborated his claim.[110] By 1914 it was palpably obvious to council researchers that Nettlefold's policy caused "demolition rather than repair" and that this "coupled with the cessation of building in the suburbs ... has aggravated the shortage of houses." [111] According to the local labour movement, the short- fall in 1914 was "nearly 5%, or ... nearly 2,700 houses." [112] Such figures perhaps help to explain the

volte face in municipal housing policy, and the large number of council houses which were built after 1918. They also show that the official figures on empty houses were propagandistic rather than scientific. They were, on Bachrach and Baratz's formulation, an attempt to influence the political agenda via the mobilisation of bias. By 1911 even Nettlefold appeared to have lost his old self confidence. "We must not", he now argued, "go too fast" in enforcing improvements, or "we might create a house famine." [113] Such doubts from the originator of the city's drive to improve the slums were highly significant. The rationale for his policies was being destroyed by contrary evidence and Nettlefold, as an able and intelligent politician, seemed to recognise this. But it was perhaps expecting too much for him to admit the falsity of a position which he had hitherto defended so effectively. The debate on empty houses thus illustrates that the successful mobilisation of political bias cannot, in a constitutional political system, always be secured by an exercise of will on the part of powerful political actors. Argument and evidence can play a significant role. As time went on Nettlefold could not effectively dismiss the incredulity of his critics, any more than the ratepayers opposed to the Welsh water scheme could shake the council's claim that it was necessary. Nettlefold was a more influential political actor than they had been, but even his arguments had to be adapted to fit the facts.

For reformers, the second horn of the housing dilemma, as mentioned above, was the inadequacy of the transport system. This, particularly before the advent of the motorised omnibus hampered the development of new housing on the outskirts of the city. In principle, everyone agreed that there was a link between housing reform and transport policy. Transport facilities are an important part of a city's infrastructure, and, as has been seen, Molotch and the theorists of the growth machine lay great stress on their development by local politicians. With this end in view Birmingham's tramways were municipalised in the early twentieth century. One reason widely canvassed at the time for developing the transportation and, in particular, the tramways system, was as a way of improving housing conditions. In 1875 it had been noted that "large estates of model cottages two or three miles from town" were impractical because workers could not afford the travel and did not want to walk or eat meals away from home.[114] In 1884 it was argued that workers would prefer the suburbs but for the lack of "cheap locomotion to and from their work either by train or tram." [115] By the turn of the century, an increasing number of people were calling for "a cheap and quick service of trams to the suburbs", in the words of a speaker at Perry Barr, as one of the "remedies for slum-land." [116] Nor was the demand confined to radicals. A correspondent to the Gazette vigorously denounced the idea of municipal building, and supported improved tramways as an alternative. [117] The point was well put by Staveley: "It is obvious ... that train and tram services must be improved, that

they must run at convenient hours, and that the fares must not exceed the difference in rent between suburb and city." [118] Perhaps one factor was escalating land prices near the city centre which pushed up the price of satisfactory housing there and made the suburbs more attractive despite the transport costs. Rising real wages are also pertinent, since these would give workers a greater disposable income to spend on travel, whether for tram fares or the purchase of a bicycle. Another factor was the long working day of the unskilled labourer. The progressive shortening of this after 1918 meant people were more prepared to tolerate the addition of travel time. Finally, if the worker were to live at a distance from his work, he must be prepared to eat his meal away from home, either by taking a packed lunch, eating out, or using a works canteen. The effect of these various factors, however, is still unclear. In the words of a recent study of "public transport and the journey to work" in the nineteenth century, "the data are too fragmentary to warrant much of a conclusion." [119] The impression gained from the present research, however, is that, in twentieth century Birmingham, transport links such as trams and local railways were not as flexible as motor omnibuses as a means of systematically opening up the suburbs.

Some commentators stressed the links between transport improvements and the need for town planning. At a conference in 1906 at Birmingham, for example, one speaker pointed out that without appropriate bye-laws and building plans, transport

improvements would merely create new slums on the outskirts of the city, and the Bishop of Birmingham agreed that town planning was indeed "the prior question." [120] According to the city's Medical Officer of Health, the main reason for the campaign to create Greater Birmingham in 1911 was to enable a wider spread of population to "thin out the central area." [121]

The emphasis on conflict in Lukes' first dimension of power complicates the analysis of the debate on transport and housing. The problem for the analyst is that the need for transport improvements was universally endorsed, and conflict was therefore confined to details. The local labour movement, for example, although vigorously opposed to much of Nettlefold's housing policy, fully endorsed his stress on transport improvements. The difference in detail (admittedly a substantial one) was that they linked this policy to a demand for municipal building. In 1899 they suggested a model suburb at Sparkhill linked with a city-wide system of electric trams. [122] In 1902, the demand for "municipal colonies" linked to the city centre by tramways was repeated. "Municipal tramways", it was argued, "are an essential feature in any scheme of housing reform." [123] Also in 1902, the socialist Keegan presented a 5,000 signature petition to the council calling for council houses and an extended tramway system. [124] By 1914 the labour movement was arguing against "costly schemes of re-housing in the central wards" on the grounds that better travel facilities were opening up the suburbs, with their purer air and gardens. [125]

While sharply disagreeing with local socialists over the question of municipal building, Nettlefold fully endorsed their advocacy of better transport facilities. "A complete up-to-date system of trams" was a vital ingredient of his housing policies and would enable people to live "where land is cheaper and the air fresher." The need for this, he added, was "so universally admitted that it is unnecessary for me to do more than mention the matter."^[126] Nettlefold agreed, however, with those who argued that town planning must come before trams.^[127] Nettlefold's advocacy of improved tramways was endorsed by C.A. Vince, another firm opponent of council housing.^[128] The Housing Committee's views, likewise, mirrored those of its chairman, almost to the letter.^[129] For them, "improved means of communication" would play an important part in stimulating private construction, thereby avoiding the need for council schemes.^[130]

There was thus a political consensus that the city's transport systems should be improved. The problem, as the case of the Bordesley Green scheme further demonstrated, was that different, not to say contradictory, policy preferences could be based upon this premise. Opponents of the scheme, such as the Gazette, argued that, if tramways were built, council houses at Bordesley Green would not be needed.^[131] More fundamentally, sceptics such as the socialist, alderman Fallows, argued that there were no trams linking Bordesley Green with the city centre,

and that, even if there were, the working classes could not afford the fares.[132] Councillor Whitall and the editorial writer of the Post agreed with him.[133] On the other side, it was argued by councillor Martineau that if the council did build houses at Bordesley Green, the tramways link would swiftly follow.[134] Again, it is perhaps worth repeating that the really significant technological development in opening up the suburbs of Birmingham to housing development, the motor omnibus, played no discernable part in the housing debate before 1914.

A final aspect of the debate on housing in Birmingham around 1900 was the argument, frequently articulated, that many slum dwellers were feckless, drunk and dirty, and needed to be reformed and supervised. This brings us once again to the third dimension of power, and to the claim by middle class moralisers that they had a better conception of the real interests of slum dwellers than the slum dwellers themselves. Attacks on "destructive, dirty and degraded" tenants were, perhaps, to be expected from the landlords.[135] They were frequently repeated by witnesses to the Housing Committee, however, who added several references to the problem of drink.[136] Staveley agreed that "in many cases" the problem lay with "the tenants and not the property." [137] The Mail's opinion of many slum dwellers was that they actually preferred "squalid and dissolute surroundings." [138] Among official spokesmen, Robertson, Hill's successor as Medical Officer of Health, was particularly forceful about the "distinctly dirty ... habits" of some of the

citizenry.[139] Nettlefold himself was a model of tact on the subject, but was prepared to quote others at length when it suited his purpose to the effect that "it is not always the pigsty, but often the pig." [140] In the opinion of his Committee, "drink, gambling and improvidence" were rife and many tenants had "dirty habits." [141] Indeed, even friends of the poor, such as the London researcher Charles Booth and the Birmingham socialist Keegan, appeared to accept such judgments, the latter's assertion that the problem of the slums was not entirely due to drink clearly implying that to some extent it was. [142]

For the landlords, Gough saw no way to "make a silk purse out of a sow's ear", [143] but nearly everyone else was of the opinion that the effort should be made. Some, such as the local clergyman, Pipe, and Nettlefold himself, thought that the slum dwellers must be persuaded to change their attitudes and lifestyles. [144] But virtually no one thought that, by itself, this nostrum would be sufficient, and a variety of more specific remedies were advocated. For some it was a matter for the police, [145] despite the "ferocity" of the "peaky blinder" in his local "thieves' run." [146] Others put their faith in the sanitary inspector and the enforcement of the health by-laws. [147] Nettlefold advocated a school curriculum which included health science and domestic economy, and a reduction in the number of licensed premises. [148] The most frequent suggestion, however, was that Octavia Hill's system of rent

collection by advisory female visitors should be more widely adopted. This was a point frequently made by Nettlefold, who saw it as an extension of the existing system of Health Visitors employed by the Health Committee of the council.[149] The Housing Committee endorsed his view as early as 1903, and by 1906 were recommending its adoption for the council flats at Milk Street, in compliance with previously adopted council policy.[150] The problem was that the council owned very few properties, collected very little rent, and thus could not implement any widespread scheme on its own initiative. Its advocacy of Hill's methods also met with a muted response from private landlords.

In any case, no- one was prepared to argue that supervision alone could cure the problem of the slums. Evidence presented to the Housing Committee suggested that "tenants, especially those who are respectable ... resent too much interference", and Nettlefold himself considered that "the driving forces behind unsound economic conditions are far too strong to be affected to an appreciable degree ... especially in this country where we set so much store by the liberty of the subject." [151]

By 1900, the tendency of the middle and upper classes to blame the poor for their poverty appeared to be on the wane. One of its most persistent manifestations had been temperance propaganda, as endorsed by Nettlefold himself. Sometimes the implication was drawn that the responsibility for securing social

improvements rested with the poor themselves rather than with those who were entrusted with their governance. Even the endeavours of well meaning reformers like Octavia Hill were thus, on one interpretation, a manifestation of the mobilisation of bias which helped to stave off fundamental social reform. Indeed, as will be seen, Hill herself was an opponent of council housing. In defence of such reformers, however, it must be noted that by the early twentieth century most of them envisaged a two pronged attack on society's problems, with self- improvement going hand in hand with political change. They cannot therefore be accused of using the self- improvement issue as a hypocritical attempt, in Bachrach and Baratz's terms, to individualise the problem of the slums and to keep wider political reforms off the agenda.

5. What Is To Be Done? The Initiative against The Owners of Unfit Houses.

As explained above, the background to housing decisions in Birmingham around 1900 was a growing public concern over the problem of the slums. This meant that the traditional municipal policy of doing little or nothing about housing reform became increasingly non- viable. Nearly all significant political actors were agreed that something must be done, and this, in itself, was an important change in the decision- making context

of Lukes' first dimension of power. It cannot be plausibly argued, however, that Nettlefold and the Housing Committee were, in Schattschneider's terms, mobilising their political bias to secure the adoption of inadequate policies in a cynical attempt to exclude more radical reforms from the municipal agenda. As his statements, speeches and publications indicate, Nettlefold shared a deep concern about the plight of slum dwellers. The problem was his belief in classical laissez-faire liberalism, an ideology which was unable to accomplish the improvements he desired. Of course, even if this had been the motive of Nettlefold and his associates, it is best characterised in terms of a first dimensional decision to do something else (improve the slums) rather than as a non- decision in some putative second dimension not to do something (build council housing). Yet again, therefore, analysis of power in Lukes' second dimension, even in this hypothetical instance, is best avoided, and, as throughout this case study, investigation within the parameters of Lukes' first dimension of power is called for.

However, the emphasis on conflict in Lukes' first dimension of power is in some ways inappropriate to the interpretation of the decisions to proceed against the owners of unfit houses. As will be seen, with the exception of the landlord's themselves, almost everyone agreed with the policy, and there was little conflict between significant political actors. The main clash was over whether something else, namely the construction of council dwellings, should be done as well. Thus, yet again, the

attempt to apply Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories to the relevant decisions is possible, but proves to be quite complicated.

Although the campaign against unfit houses consisted mainly of a number of decisions by authorised political actors occurring within Lukes' first dimension of power, the ultimate authority to make these decisions was conferred by statute law. Particularly important were the terms of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890, and much of the debate on the housing question centred upon whether to use Part 1 or Part 2 of that Act to secure improvements in slum conditions. Thus, Newton's injunction to study local history in its national context is yet again relevant.

Briefly summarised, Part 1 of the 1890 Act set out procedures for the identification and condemnation of unhealthy areas and for the drawing up and implementation of improvement schemes to demolish and rebuild them. Part 2 on the other hand dealt not with areas but with unhealthy dwelling houses. It stipulated procedures by which such houses could be represented as unfit for human habitation and, unless improved by the owners, subjected to closing orders and, in appropriate cases, demolished.[152]

To some contemporaries a decision to proceed under Part 1 appeared desirable as likely to provide a more thoroughgoing and less piecemeal solution to the slums. In the first instance, the Rev. Thomas Bass and his associates sought to secure the representation of the Oxygen Street area under Part 1, and Hill, the Medical Officer of Health, endorsed their petition and recommended that the area be condemned under that section.[153] As has been seen, when the decision went against him Bass made no systematic attempt to challenge the mobilisation of political bias against his proposal and the exclusion from the political agenda of action under Part 1. But he went on to threaten "to ask the Local Government Board to enforce Part 1 of the Act" if speedier progress were not made under Part 2.[154] In the council chamber support for Part 1 came from alderman Cook, the Liberal chairman of the Health Committee, who claimed the continuing support of Hill despite the Housing Committee's contrary opinion. Cook also asserted that estimates of £250,000 for a scheme under Part 1 were dubious, and that some of the worst streets at least might have been dealt with under it. He proposed a reference back of the recommendation to pursue action under Part 2 so that the Housing Committee could consider a scheme under Part 1. Councillor Stenbridge seconded.[155] Cook's opinion was endorsed by the Gazette, which denied that, under Part 1, complete demolition was necessary. Staveley, too, considered that, in extreme cases, "the demolition of insanitary areas" was "a public duty." [156] Bowater, a labour movement representative on the Housing Committee, although he did not

openly favour Part 1, disassociated himself from the recommendation to deal with the Oxygen Street area under Part 2.[157] It is perhaps worth recalling that action under Part 1 would not have prevented other, presumably less urgent, areas being dealt with under Part 2, and that no radical housing reformer disagreed with the application of Part 2 in appropriate cases. This factor, as mentioned above, makes it rather complicated to analyse decision-making in a first dimension which, on Lukes' definition, is characterised by conflict.

Significant political actors, however, were successful, in the terms used by Schattschneider and by Bachrach and Baratz, in organising a decisive mobilisation of political bias against Part 1. The Housing Committee concluded that other authorities which had attempted schemes under Part 1 had found them to be "expensive, cumbrous, and subject to delays and hitches of all kinds",[158] an opinion which was endorsed by the local authority at Hull.[159] Financial considerations and the pressure to keep down the rates appear to have been important. Nettlefold consistently attacked Part 1 as overly expensive, adding that, under it, landlords were able to deliberately allow their properties to run down so that they could make a large profit when they were bought out.[160] Because of the problems associated with Part 1, Vince considered that, in all likelihood, it would "fall into disuse",[161] while the Post estimated that to apply Part 1 to Birmingham would probably cost about £500,000.[162] Even Hill was forced to agree that, "as a rule",

in reconstruction schemes under Part 1, "the slum dwellers displaced do not occupy the new houses." [163] In 1914, the council's Housing Inquiry, after a detailed consideration of Part 1 schemes in Liverpool, concluded that similar experiments should not be attempted in Birmingham. [164]

In response, although no radical reformer argued that Part 2 should be eschewed, it was claimed that it was far from ideal. The Gazette disliked it, at least when applied to the exclusion of other approaches. [165] Needless to say, the landlords protested vigorously. According to Gough, Part 2 had been used by Birmingham freeholders to ignore lease- holding landlords and get closing orders so that they could put the land to more profitable use. [166] Even Nettlefold admitted that procedures under Part 2 were "rather lengthy." [167] By 1911, in a seemingly damning indictment of his own position, he was expressing concern that, unless faster progress were made, "they would all be in their graves before a hundredth part of the work is done." [168]

In general, however, Nettlefold vigorously advocated the adoption of Part 2. [169] It had, he argued, worked well in Hull and its application to Birmingham had been endorsed, after inspection, by both the General Purposes Committee and the Royal Sanitary Institute. [170] In 1907 Nettlefold quoted the total cost of Part 2 to Birmingham up to that time, and argued that it was "negligible" compared to expenditure under Part 1. [171] In Practical Housing Nettlefold gave the longest of all his

endorsements of Part 2, concluding that it was both effective and cheap.[172] As usual, the chairman's opinion was endorsed by the Housing Committee, whose recommendation in 1902 to apply Part 2 to the Oxygen Street area was endorsed and adopted by the council,[173] with both the Mail and the Post adding their support.[174]

Along the way, however, there was a little battle to be fought between the Housing Committee chairman and the Medical Officer of Health, whose previous practice had been to report unfit houses to the Health Committee for attention under the terms of the 1875 Public Health Act. The issue culminated in an acrimonious exchange of letters between the two men, in the course of which Nettlefold asserted that the pursuit of this course by Hill was a major reason for the large number of unfit houses which still existed in the city.[175] Thereafter, Hill, in compliance with council policy and the wishes of the Housing Committee chairman, as will be seen, represented a large number of houses under the terms of Part 2 of the 1890 Act.[176] The incident shows, perhaps, that although expert officials were influential in municipal life, they were unable to prevail over their political masters in a direct confrontation on policy. However, Hill, who clearly had more radical views on the housing question than Nettlefold, subsequently engaged in a damage limitation exercise. He accepted that action under Part 1 had

been ruled out of the political agenda by a mobilisation of bias against it, but he attempted to secure the most effective action possible under Part 2.

After the council's endorsement of their application of Part 2 to the city the Housing Committee's work continued, and a large number of first dimensional decisions were taken to proceed against the owners of unfit houses. From 1902 to 30 September 1911, under the supervision of the energetic Hill and his successor Robertson, a total of 5,790 houses were represented under that section, of which 2,819 were rendered habitable and 2,138 demolished.[177] Bass's Oxygen Street area received particular attention, and by the beginning of 1903 202 out of a total of 589 houses within it had been represented.[178] As well as the houses improved after representation, there were a number of others which were voluntarily improved by the owners in negotiation with the Housing Committee. According to Nettlefold, in the period from January 1902 to June 1905 these numbered 225 out of the total of 785 that were rendered habitable.[179]

In investigating the impact of the Housing Committee's decision-making in Lukes first dimension of power it is well to remember the stress laid by Parry and Morriss on the importance of routines. With this stress in mind, the Housing Committee's procedures for dealing with unfit houses may be briefly described. According to Parry and Morriss, as summarised in

Chapter 1, there are at least three kinds of power to look at when investigating the impact of routines, all of them exercised in what Lukes would categorise as the first dimension of power.

The first is the power to set the routine in motion, which, Parry and Morriss argue, is a key decision. In this particular case, however, the policy imperative engendered little conflict except from the landlords, and was not particularly controversial. As has been seen, the power to initiate a campaign against unfit houses was conferred upon the Housing Committee by statute law and confirmed by resolution of the city council.

Parry and Morriss's second kind of power is power used to maintain a routine. This power, they add, is characterised by lesser decisions often determined by custom and precedent, and by well worn incremental procedures. In the case of slum properties this second kind of power was first exercised when premises were represented as unfit for human habitation under Sections 30-31 of the 1890 Act. This representation was undertaken by an official, usually the Medical Officer of Health, who, as Parry and Morriss point out, had not himself laid down the procedure and who did not materially benefit from it. Indeed, as has been seen, Hill would have preferred to have been instructed to use more radical routines. This second kind of power, as defined by Parry and Morriss, continued to be exercised when the case went before the Housing Committee for a decision to be made. In some cases, the

owners were immediately called upon to undertake repairs, with closing orders being sought if they failed to do so satisfactorily. In other cases, after representation, the Visiting Sub- Committee of the Housing Committee would inspect the properties and report on what alterations were needed. In all cases owners were invited to confer with the Committee and its officials before money was spent, even though this was not a requirement imposed upon the Corporation by the 1890 Act. According to Nettlefold, this was to prevent waste of money on unsatisfactory and inadequate work. A specification of required work was only supplied by the Committee after a visit, usually in the company of the owner or his representatives.[180] In this second stage of the exercise of power during the operation of routines, as characterised by Parry and Morriss, other political actors also had a role to play, since to begin with, closing orders were granted by the magistrates. Later, however, by the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909, the Housing Committee itself was empowered to make them.[181] This was a significant addition to the Committee's powers since, as will be seen, the magistrates had previously been able to seriously thwart the improvement programme.

The third and final kind of power which, according to Parry and Morriss, characterises the operation of routines, is the power which follows from the performance of the routine. Here, as will be seen, municipal officials in general and Hill, the Medical Officer of Health, in particular were vigorously

criticised by landlords for their alleged high-handedness. To property owners, Hill and his professional colleagues must have appeared to be very powerful men. But, on the other hand, they were, in the time-worn justification of the criticised official, only obeying orders. Parry and Morriss suggest that, in analysing this third type of power deriving from the operation of routines, one should ask who benefits. In this case, however, no simple answer can be given. The slum-dwellers were the obvious beneficiaries, although, as will be seen, they frequently had to pay higher rents for property improvements undertaken by landlords. Moreover, in the emerging constitutional democracy of early twentieth century Britain, unlike, perhaps, under political systems based on feudalism or dictatorship, the leading political actors, and groups represented by them, appear to have gained no immediate tangible benefit, except insofar as improvement of the housing stock is a semi-public good which benefits everyone by bringing better health, less crime and fewer maintained paupers.

The above analysis of the Housing Committee's attack on unfit dwellings in terms of the three types of power attributed by Parry and Morriss to the operation of routines demonstrates two main things. Firstly, it shows that both Bachrach and Baratz's postulation of "non-decisions" in their early work, and Lukes' delineation of a "second dimension" of power are unnecessary to the analysis of routines and of the political biases and hidden agendas which may be subsumed within them. The sensible approach, therefore, when investigating routines is, as

Parry and Morriss say, to give primacy to the study of actual decisions. Secondly, the interpretation above shows that the first dimensional investigation of decision-making relevant to routines is yet again somewhat convoluted, even in cases which to an empiricist may appear perfectly straightforward. The usual question must therefore be asked as to whether it is always desirable to apply to the facts of the case the sophisticated analytical tools of the political theorist.

The Housing Committee's Minute Books confirm that much of the Committee's time was spent in pursuing the campaign against unfit houses. By 1914, the system had changed slightly, since by then the Health and Housing Committees had been merged to form the Public Health and Housing Committee, and this new Committee was working under Sections 17 and 18 of the Act of 1909.[182] This merger would, of course, have been unnecessary if, in 1900, the powers of the Health Committee had been expanded to include the application of the 1890 Act to the city, and the management of any council building schemes. As it was, in the years after 1900 there existed a serious overlap of responsibilities whereby, for example, the Health Committee sometimes dealt separately with "nuisances." This meant that properties not sufficiently dilapidated to be closed were referred to the Health Committee by the Housing Committee, who in return were given some of the more serious "nuisance" cases by their colleagues.[183] The committee structure established in 1900 was thus not intended to secure efficiency of administration, but to prevent the introduction of

unwanted policies of municipal construction. It possessed no other rationale and was later abandoned. In the meantime, as has been seen, unnecessary duplication and uncertainty about how to divide up the work had helped to cause a serious clash of personalities between Nettlefold and Hill. It is thus clear that the motive for the mobilisation of bias which ended in the establishment of a separate Housing Committee, and for the alteration of the political agenda which resulted from it, had been to gain the adoption of preferred policy options rather than to secure the efficient prosecution of council business. To politicians who wanted to avoid radical action, indeed, a little bureaucratic muddle and rivalry may have been seen as tolerable. Certainly, his political opponents seem to have seen the creation of the Housing Committee under a vigorous chairman as a useful way of trimming the political sails of alderman Cook, the radical and card carrying Liberal who chaired the Health Committee. While the ploy was in operation it was, in the words of Parry and Morriss, an effective "introduction of new procedural barriers to change", although it was achieved by a first dimensional decision rather than a non- decision in the second dimension.[184] Before the merger of the two committees, the Health Committee derived its powers not only from the Public Health Act of 1875 but also from certain provisions contained within the Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act of 1883. Their work was quite extensive. In 1913, according to the City's Special Housing Inquiry, the recently formed Health and Housing Committee dealt with 28,265 houses under the provisions of these two Acts

alone.[185]

As detailed above, opinion in the city was divided on the respective merits of proceeding under Part 1 or under Part 2 of the 1890 Act. The same was also true regarding the actual implementation of the Part 2 policy. In his speeches and writings, Nettlefold spent much of his time justifying his strategy, and highlighting its positive features. For him, the "vicious circle ...of drink- slumland- slumland- drink" could be broken "by mending or ending the bad houses." [186] The "black spots" were "gradually being removed by steady, strenuous work", [187] and "things have been done that people think it worth while to travel long distances to see." [188] Nettlefold's judgment was endorsed by residents of the Oxygen Street area and other witnesses who presented evidence to the Housing Committee in 1903, as well as by the editorial writer of the Post. [189] Furthermore, as mentioned above, and as Nettlefold stressed, the policy was cheap, so that "every pound spent by the Corporation has resulted in at least £10 being spent by the property owners." [190]

Other observers were less convinced, however. Local socialists pointed out in 1905 that closures and demolitions had forced people into overcrowded accommodation elsewhere, that a considerable amount of money had been spent in hiring extra staff to implement the policy, and, more generally, that under this "policy of patches ... the housing of the people of Birmingham is

little or no better than it was three years ago." [191] The Gazette, too, from the other end of the political spectrum, argued that the additional staff were excessive and, on the point discussed above, duplicated those of the Health Committee. [192] Moreover, the policy was associated with rises in rents estimated by the Housing Committee to be of the order of 7d. per week. [193] Nettlefold seemed comparatively unconcerned about this, arguing that the rent for a good house should be higher than for a bad one, and noting that tenants were prepared to pay more. [194] Perhaps he saw the incentive of higher rents as an inducement to landlords to keep their properties in better repair, or to accept forced improvements with good grace. To adapt the concept central to Lukes' third dimension of power, Nettlefold was prepared to assume that it was in the real or welfare interests of slum dwellers to pay more rent for an improved property, and his Committee agreed, as did some of the witnesses before it. It is always debateable, however, whether anyone else is a good judge of a person's real interests, and Nettlefold's willingness to countenance rent increases came in for attack. Some witnesses before the Housing Committee, for example, claimed that, for a worker earning about £1 per week, "this increase is a serious matter." [195] Local socialists were also concerned at the rent rises, as were Bass and Staveley. [196]

Bass also opposed the Part 2 policy on the grounds that it was ineffective, and a considerable amount of the Housing Committee's time was taken up in investigating his allegations

that the repairs undertaken by landlords were unsatisfactory.[197] A more fundamental criticism of the policy, however, hinged on the fact, freely admitted by Nettlefold, that "many houses have been demolished." [198] As the section on empty houses above demonstrates, Nettlefold's assertions that such demolitions would not cause a condition of scarcity in housing became thoroughly discredited over time. Soon the Local Government Board were advising the council to use Section 15 of the 1909 Act, rather than Section 17, on the grounds that the enforcement of the latter Section caused displacement of people. The council's Special Housing Inquiry of 1914, likewise, recommended the use of the 1875 and 1883 Acts for the same reason.[199]

The most contentious aspect of the Part 2 policy, however, was its enforcement upon landlords. Not surprisingly, local socialists were fully in favour of this, arguing that "slum houses must be repaired at the owners' expense, ... never at the ratepayers' ... as has been done in the past", and asking the council "to insist upon the complete renovation of insanitary property." [200] One press correspondent went further, calling for the confiscation without compensation of all unfit dwellings.[201] More moderate voices were also decidedly outspoken on the matter, with Vince re-iterating that the council should "strike hard, by the strenuous employment of municipal powers for repairing, closing, and demolishing insanitary dwellings." [202] The most forthright official

spokesman of all, however, was Nettlefold himself. His policy was, he claimed, "firm, but fair and friendly." However, his writings are littered with attacks on "those who for many years have been taking as much money as they can out of the property, and putting in the least possible." He added that such people, by contributing to "the present national physical degeneration" were "the cause of serious national loss" and must be firmly dealt with.[203] Nettlefold's Committee agreed that "the Corporation should ... if necessary compel ... landlords," and its Minutes show it doing just that at more or less every one of its meetings, although, very occasionally, leniency was shown in cases of extreme hardship.[204] In 1914 Nettlefold's firm stand was endorsed by the Special Housing Inquiry, which asserted that "the evils complained of would all have been avoided if owners had fulfilled their moral obligations."[205]

Nevertheless, the alleged evils were complained about most vociferously, despite Nettlefold's assertion that his Department had "often been specially thanked by property owners for the trouble taken and consideration shown."[206] These complaints of property owners against the Housing Department centred on three main issues: the standards demanded for repair work, which it was claimed were unreasonably stringent; the consequent high cost of such work; and the allegedly high handed and unreasonable attitude of Departmental staff.

With regard to the specifications for repair work, according to Gough "a standard of efficiency was set which scarcely a house in Birmingham could comply with." This must have come as a nasty shock since "for ten years" after 1890 "the Act was practically a dead letter" in the city.[207] Indeed, the report of 1909 commissioned by local solicitors, auctioneers and architects claimed that the requirements exceeded the provisions of the 1890 Act and were of dubious legality.[208] The Housing Committee stood firm, however. In particular, Nettlefold held up the example of unsupervised work done under adjournments granted by the magistrates which, he claimed, was of a most unsatisfactory nature.[209]

As to the cost of repair work, it should be noted that, unlike Part 1, Part 2 of the 1890 Act made no provision for compensation to landlords from public funds. Thus, in the words of Vince, "Part 1 inflicts loss on the ... ratepayers, who are many, but imperfectly organised. ... Part 2 inflicts loss on the owners of slum property, who are few ..., but vigilant in defence of their interests." [210] Indeed, as stated above, this aspect was seen as a positive gain for the Corporation. Thus Nettlefold openly boasted that repairs were typically carried out "at a cost to the owner varying from £200 to £1,400 per property, without any expenditure by the Corporation." [211] Moreover, if houses were not repaired, but pulled down, the landlord often incurred a financial penalty. One plaintiff before the Housing Committee claimed that he was losing £700 in this way. [212] Gough asserted

that, in another case, the Housing Committee's requirements would have cost £1,500, five times as much as the work recommended by the landlord's architect. With only 17 years of his lease left, the landlord was forced to back out and forego an income of £100 per annum.[213]

Finally, with regard to the attitude of the Department and its officials, landlords were of the opinion that "the property owner has not ... received fair and reasonable treatment." [214] "Local Authorities", wrote Gough, with their enormous resources and access to the public purse, should remember that "it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but tyrannous to use it like a giant." [215] Thus press correspondents complained that they were being held liable "for the negligence of their tenants" and that "a little more consideration by our officials" was needed. [216] One landlord disliked what he considered the high handed legalistic approach of Hill who, instead of merely giving "an intimation or a call", had "dumped down" on him a "sheaf of notices" of closure. [217] Another source of friction stemmed from the fact, alluded to above, that the 1890 Act, unlike the Act of 1875, did not require the Department to specify in writing the details of the repairs which it demanded, thus giving it a freer hand in negotiations with landlords. [218] The problem, however, was that confusions and misunderstandings could arise. Thus one plaintiff before the magistrates argued that "he was led

to believe that all that was required was the introduction of damp courses" but that "much more than this" was now being demanded.[219]

The Minutes of nearly every meeting of the Housing Committee include details of the battle between the Department and the landlords. There were also, as recorded by Nettlefold, "many tussles in the Birmingham Police Court between the Corporation and owners" in which "the Corporation has not always got its own way." [220] Of these, the most celebrated was undoubtedly the Roderick case of 1904-5 in which the magistrates, to the disgust and alarm of Nettlefold and his Committee, eventually dismissed the summonses against the landlord and ordered each side to pay its own costs.[221] To Gough and the landlords Roderick was a hero.[222] Later, Nettlefold could dismiss the case as "merely a passing episode." [223] At the time, however, the Housing Committee thought the matter sufficiently important to publish a verbatim report of the proceedings as part of their propaganda campaign against insanitary dwellings.[224]

The friction between the landlords and the Housing Committee has been detailed at some length because of the light which it sheds upon Birmingham community power at that time. Given the importance highlighted by Goodin of the timing of decisions, it must be explained why, on Gough's evidence detailed above, Part 2 of the 1890 Act was largely unenforced within the city for ten years. The reason for this would appear to be the increasing

public concern over housing conditions epitomised by the Gazette's "Scenes from Slum- land" published at that time. Policy- makers recognised that something needed to be done, but, given the fear of a backlash from the ratepayers, were looking for a cheap solution. The landlords were thus seized upon as an allegedly irresponsible element within society whose selfishness had done much to cause the problem. They should therefore, it was argued, be made to pay for repairs made necessary because of their own negligence. In a sense this is a version of the tactic described by Parry and Morriss and discussed in Chapter 1 of "calling on the norms of society to limit demands or even render them illegitimate by regarding the control of business as outside the realm of politics and as part of the free enterprise system." In this case, the argument of Nettlefold, a believer in classical economics, seems to have been that bad housing conditions should not be tackled by the construction of municipal dwellings but that the local community did possess a legitimate right to lay down and enforce reasonable standards on the private sector. The campaign against the landlords can thus be seen as another aspect of the mobilisation of bias whereby a more interventionist alternative was excluded from the political agenda.

The political helplessness of the landlords, and the decisive and near unanimous nature of the alliance against them, is also worthy of note, since it would appear to be contrary to the analysis of Molotch and the theorists of the growth machine which ascribes a primacy to landed interests in municipal life.

One possible explanation of this, which is touched upon but not systematically investigated in the present research scheme, is that there was a conflict of interests between the freeholders and the lease- holding landlords in which the latter were intent on maximising rents whereas the former wished to drive rented property operations out of the city centre so that they could re-possess the land and put it to more profitable business use. A recent summary of the question of ground rents and associated issues at this time, however, makes no mention of this possible conflict.[225] Another possibility is that in this particular historical case the analysis of Molotch and his followers is wrong.

This conflict between the municipality and the landlords can be readily analysed in terms of Lukes' first dimension, and his emphasis on conflict over decision- making in that dimension is appropriate. Here, indeed, unlike in some of the trickier instances discussed, there is a classic case where, in the terms of Dahl and Lukes, one side (the Housing Committee) exercises power over another side (the landlords), in a situation of conflict, to get them to do something (improve slum properties) that they would not otherwise have done. Even here, however, the process cannot accurately be depicted as a zero sum game in which one side wins and the other side loses. For instance, it was slum dwellers rather than the Housing Committee who directly benefited, so that the Committee has, in part, to be seen as acting as a proxy on their behalf. Furthermore, as explained

above, the landlords were, at least to an extent, compensated for their expenditure by an increase in rents. Finally, the conflict over the policy, as explained above, was largely limited to the tussle between the Housing Committee and the landlords. Virtually no-one else disagreed with what was being done, although some argued that it was not being done effectively, or that something else, usually in the shape of a more radical programme of reform, should be undertaken as well. Lukes' emphasis on conflict over decision-making in his first dimension makes the analysis of this broad consensus quite complicated.

6. What More is To Be Done? The Policy of Opening Up Courts.

Another initiative by the Housing Committee in its campaign against the slums was the attempt to open up enclosed courtyards. This policy was mainly adopted and implemented by a series of decisions in Lukes' first dimension of power. It could be argued, at the level of Lukes' second dimension, however, that the policy was also part of the more general programme of slum patching which was consciously adopted as part of the mobilisation of bias aimed at securing the "non-decision" to exclude the construction of council houses from the political agenda. This bias, however, was mobilised by a series of actual decisions, in Lukes' first dimension, to do something else, rather than by a non-decision, in some supposed second

dimension, not to implement a policy seen as undesirable. Yet again, therefore, it is argued that analysis of power in Lukes' second dimension is best avoided, and that the heuristically useful concepts of mobilisation of bias and of agenda setting are best translated to his first dimension.

Yet again the framework for the making of decisions in Lukes' first dimension was provided by the system of statute law. Yet again, therefore, we must be careful to heed Newton's advice to place local decision-making into its national context. The legislation enacted by national government which empowered the Housing Committee to open up courts was Section 38 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890. This provided for so-called obstructive buildings to be represented as such by the Medical Officer of Health and subsequently removed, with compensation being paid to the owners.[226] In Birmingham, the application of Section 38, according to Nettlefold, led to the removal of 338 obstructive buildings and the opening up to the street of 147 courts between 1902 and 1911. Despite compensation payments, he added, the total cost to the ratepayers, not just of this initiative but of the entire housing policy, including administration, was £26,085, or less than a 0.25d rate.[227] The cost to the ratepayer of each building removed between 1902 and 1908, he recorded, was £24.[228] Indeed, "in some instances", reported the Housing Committee, "owners ... voluntarily remove houses without asking for compensation." [229]

The first dimensional decision-making was again characterised by the operation of routines. The typical procedure was for the Medical Officer of Health to represent buildings as obstructive under Section 38 and for the Visiting Sub-Committee of the Housing Committee to follow up his inspection.[230] Next, if appropriate, the Housing Committee resolved to try to get the buildings removed as quickly and as cheaply as possible.[231] Negotiations with the owners were then undertaken, and if these were successful the Town Clerk drew up and completed the necessary legal agreements. Under these, the owners removed the buildings in return for the compensation.[232] Sometimes the deals could be finalised beforehand, so that the Medical Officer's representations, the lists of properties, and the compensation amounts could all be endorsed by the Housing Committee at the same time, with the Corporate Seal being affixed to conclude the business.[233] Because of the delicate and open ended nature of the negotiations, the Committee succeeded in gaining lump sums in advance from the council to carry on the work. This practice encountered hostility in the council chamber. The nature of the opposition, however, and the fact that the leaders of it included the socialists Keegan and Stevens, indicates that the main objective was to make the Housing Committee more democratically accountable, rather than to save the rates.[234]

Whether or not the decisions which led to the opening up of courts did much for the cause of housing reform was hotly contested, and it is necessary to look at both sides of the argument in some detail. It must again be noted, however, that the conflict was over the policy's effectiveness, and not over whether it should be pursued. For all the ridicule from the Liberal Club, the socialist group of councillors and others, the policy's greatest critics were prepared to accept that it did little harm, and might even do a bit of good. As with the campaign against unfit houses, the arguments were that the policy should be pursued with greater vigour, and/or supplemented by more radical reform. Unlike the enforcement of improvements discussed above, indeed, not even the landlords launched any sustained attack on a policy by which they were paid compensation for any loss which they suffered. Thus, yet again, political analysis in Lukes' terms whereby one side prevails over the other, in a situation of conflict, to do something which it would not otherwise have done is complicated. Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories can be applied, but the application is not straightforward.

Support for a policy of opening up courtyards can be dated back to 1842 at least, when a House of Lords report had argued that, in Birmingham, "it would be of the greatest advantage if the entries to courts were not covered in ... as this ... would afford ... a freer ventilation."^[235] Nettlefold, sixty years later, agreed that the increased "light and fresh air" was

desirable, adding that opening up the courts also allowed "a certain amount of supervision from the street." Moreover, useful sanitary improvements often accompanied the work, as did the paving of some of the yards under the direction of the Department. Moreover, freeholders could on occasion be persuaded to extend leases, and altogether, for every £1 invested by the Corporation in the removal of obstructive buildings, landlords spent another £10 in associated improvements.[236] Since Nettlefold wished "to encourage and assist people to spread themselves out over a larger area of land",[237] he was not even very worried about the demolitions. Indeed, the removal of obstructive and unfit houses did something to increase the amount of open space in which children might play.[238]

Throughout his writings, on this and on other aspects of the housing question, Nettlefold exhibited the typical disdain of the manufacturing industrialist for the small- minded and blinkered landlord: "There has been plenty of time to write off all the capital expenditure incurred, and in any well- managed business this would have been done long ago, but the owners of small house property have seldom had a sound business education, and therefore some allowance should be made for their business inaptitude. This necessity is recognised by Section 38." [239] This raises two interesting points. Firstly, this unequivocal denigration is difficult to reconcile with the prestige and influence ascribed by Molotch and the theorists of the growth machine to landed and associated interests in municipal politics.

Secondly, the third dimensional concept of real interests is again relevant, since Nettlefold clearly thought that he knew better than the landlords themselves what was in their real economic interests. It would seem plausible to argue against this, however, that landlords who feared re- possession after the expiry of their leases had a real economic interest in neglecting their property while squeezing the greatest amount possible from it.

Yet again, the Housing Committee echoed their chairman on the desirability of "letting light and air into crowded courts" and of creating "several small open spaces and playgrounds in the poorer parts of Birmingham." [240] As a result of their policy, they claimed, "courts, which readily become nests of disease and a menace to the neighbourhood, are completely transformed at very little cost." [241] Soon, the Committee refined its policy by encouraging "the substitution of unclimbable iron fencing for high walls, which in many cases divide the courts, and prevent the admission of light and the free circulation of air." [242] A few years later there had been "a few instances" where the Committee had succeeded in creating "open spaces and playgrounds for the children" on sites cleared of insanitary houses. [243]

The Medical Officer of Health agreed that the opening up of courts "cannot fail to confer many advantages from both a sanitary and a moral point of view", and the Chief Inspector at the Health Department concurred. [244] For the Chief Constable,

it was "a matter of the greatest ... importance" since "a policeman risks his life by venturing into such (courts) at night." [245] Similar sentiments were expressed by Bass, Staveley and other witnesses who presented evidence to the Housing Committee in 1903, several of whom argued that opening up the courts would facilitate a more adequate supervision of their inhabitants. [246] In the council chamber, Lawley Parker, Tonks and Beale, among others, spoke in support of the policy, while Cook, the Health Committee chairman, admitted that it was at least a step in the right direction. [247] For the Mail the policy was cheap, practical and worthwhile. [248] By 1928, according to one writer on the housing question, Nettlefold's method had "become historic as a means of alleviating conditions." [249]

At the time, however, it was argued, on the other side, that the policy, like the initiative against unfit houses, was mere tinkering. One complaint, that of Gough that the landlords were being given inadequate compensation, was such that Nettlefold was more likely to consider it a compliment. [250] Most critics, however, claimed that, although the policy did no harm, it needed to be supplemented and/or replaced by more ambitious policies which would do more good. Progress was certainly slow. In the first six years, for example, there were, according to the Housing Committee, 91 courts opened and converted into terraces, a rate of 15 per annum. [251] And yet, as Nettlefold admitted, there were between 30,000 and 40,000 back- to- back houses in the

city, a fact which made his estimate of ten years for the completion of the work look distinctly optimistic.[252] One problem was the "long and tedious" procedure whereby it was "often found ... necessary to deal with freeholder, lessee, sub-lessee and mortgagees." [253] Delays were also caused by compensation demands which the Department considered excessive, and by "the great expense and difficulty incurred in removing houses without endangering the adjoining buildings." [254]

Thus, whenever the policy of opening up courts came before the council, Nettlefold was subjected to systematic criticism and ridicule. The socialist and Housing Committee member, Bowater, for example, pointed out that, to complete the policy, 10,000 obstructive buildings would need to be removed from 6,000 courts, a task that they were coming nowhere near to achieving.[255] The Potter Street scheme, he added later, would have built 76 dwellings for £160 a year to the rates, but this "quack remedy" aimed to spend £2,000 and pull down 44. It "reminded him of ... the old lady (who) tried to sweep up the waves of the Atlantic with her mop." Bowater's fellow socialist, Stevens, wanted to know what was to happen to "the poor creatures" who would be unhoused, given that the Committee "did not propose to put up other houses at similar rents." The socialists Keegan and Fallows also opposed such "half measures" on the grounds that they led to the "unhousing" of the populace, and they were joined by the more moderate Middleton, and by councillors Walthall, Barrow and Kelly.[256] Again, the Gazette sided with its

socialist opponents, and lambasted Nettlefold and his policy in a series of scorching attacks.[257] The paper's readers, judging from its letters columns, were also unimpressed.[258]

An interesting aspect of opening up the courts was its influence, if any, on death rates. According to councillor Bowater, the policy would not reduce these, but would merely "enable passers- by to see funerals start from the houses." [259] The Housing Committee, however, reported that "the small cost ... will ... be justified by a reduction in the death rate." [260] Nettlefold added that his Committee "had taken special care to see that the effect of their work in the St. Laurence area should be tested by the death rate before and after. Observations would be taken, and would be communicated to the council." [261] No conclusive and scientifically watertight evidence was ever forthcoming, however. Staveley quoted a study of mortality in back- to- backs as compared with through houses, which found that it was lower in the latter. But presumably richer, cleaner and better fed people would in any case have been found in the superior through housing. [262] In his writings, Nettlefold gave general and comparative figures for death rates in Birmingham. [263] But nowhere does he include figures purporting to prove that the opening up of courts had saved people's lives. This, as an accomplished propagandist, he surely would have done if the point could have been plausibly made. The housing enquiry of 1914 gave no figures of death rates, merely cross-referring briefly to witnesses who had claimed an improvement in

health and morals.[264] It would seem that, in their emphasis on light and fresh air, many contemporaries did not sufficiently stress the link between poor health and the lack of a properly balanced diet.[265]

The final judgment on the policy of improving unfit houses and opening up courts, therefore, must be that it was, for a time, a partially successful nostrum which helped to reinforce the mobilisation of political bias aimed at excluding more radical measures from the political agenda. However, the verdict of E.D. Simon, whose book on How to Abolish the Slums was published in 1929, would appear to be justified. "Birmingham", he wrote, "... is in this question of reconditioning a generation behind Manchester" despite some good work carried out by Nettlefold and his Committee. "But all this can only be regarded as a palliative. However thoroughly it is done, the houses will still be unsatisfactory from a modern point of view, as is proved by the fact that thousands of such reconditioned houses in Manchester are to-day condemned as unfit for human habitation. ... There is only one way of dealing effectively with our slum areas: to demolish them. And this can only be done when suitable and adequate alternative accommodation has been provided." [266] It was to the credit of the small group of socialists in the council chamber, with their emphasis on municipal building and their contempt for Nettlefold's policies

of slum patching, that they realised this far more clearly than the local political establishment. On this question, at least, their voice may be regarded as the voice of the future.

By way of a concluding summary, it may be added that the decisions relevant to the Housing Committee's policy of opening up courts occurred more or less exclusively within the first dimension of power as defined by Lukes. There was, however, no significant attempt to reverse the policy, and most opponents merely argued that it was inadequate. Therefore, Lukes' definitions of the operation of power during the decision-making process, with their emphasis on conflict, can only be applied to the case with some difficulty. Finally, it may be noted that the political actors who castigated the policy as inadequate were not particularly influential during this period. This was true, for example, of the small group of socialist councillors, of the Liberal Party member Cook, and of the Gazette newspaper. An analysis of the debate, however, demonstrates that Nettlefold's opponents were able to make some shrewd criticisms which he found it difficult to answer. Thus, the weight of argument was a political resource which could influence the mobilisation of bias, at least for the future. Nettlefold had great personal influence over housing policy, and in this period was able to secure the adoption of his preferred policy. But he never successfully discredited his opponents' case, and this may well have strengthened the mobilisation of political bias in favour of more radical measures after 1918.

7. Building Bye- Laws and the Movement towards Town Planning.

In the early years of the twentieth century, as has been seen, the exclusion of municipal building from the political agenda was reinforced by the adoption of alternative and less radical policies such as slum improvements and the opening up of courts. Birmingham was also at the forefront of the burgeoning movement in favour of town planning, and this cause was likewise espoused, particularly by Nettlefold who, as Townroe records, was one of the first national leaders of the movement.[267]. However, at that time the council lacked the necessary legal powers to undertake effective town planning, so that the endorsement of the new fashion entailed a further mobilisation of political bias against radical housing solutions. For example, one effect was to remove the housing problem from the local context by stressing the need for national legislation and initiatives. Not surprisingly, therefore, as Thompson suggested, and as the record of limited housing achievement detailed above indicates, the city had a greater claim to fame for its support of town planning than for "actual improvements accomplished." [268]

The issue area of town planning is best seen as falling within Lukes' first, or decision-making, dimension of power. This is because, on this issue as on all the others, it is unhelpful to conceptualise a second dimension of power as the realm of the non-decision. Yet again, any "non-decisions" were either non-events which by their nature are not susceptible to empirical enquiry, or else actual decisions, in this case, for example, to adopt town planning initiatives as part of a wider process of excluding radical slum clearance policies from the municipal agenda. As throughout the study there is, perhaps because of the nature of the research scheme, no observable instance of the operation of power in Lukes' third dimension. In other words, there does not appear to have been, in the formulation of Lukes as summarised in Chapter 1, "a latent conflict, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude."

For these reasons, therefore, it is necessary to concentrate on an analysis of town planning decisions in Lukes' first dimension, with the concepts of mobilisation of bias and of agenda setting being seen as influencing actual decisions within that dimension. Here too, however, as in previous cases, the analysis is quite complex. For one thing, as intimated above, Birmingham's city council before 1914 had few town planning powers and made no significant town planning decisions. Another factor to bear in mind is that the town planning initiative, like

the campaigns against unfit houses and the opening up of courts, was comparatively uncontentious, so that the application of first dimensional definitions which stress the role of conflict is possible but difficult.

Town planning in Britain, according to Nettlefold, was "an inspiration from Germany", and his writings, and the statements of the Housing Committee, contain numerous references to the use in that country of "the town extension plan." [269] One of the first men to popularise town planning in England was T.C. Horsfall of Manchester, and it was Manchester which held the first conference of local authorities on the subject. Birmingham City Council, however, was the first to formally approve the principle, on the recommendation of the Housing Committee, in July, 1906. Later in 1906 Nettlefold chaired a Midland Conference on the subject, under the auspices of the National Housing Reform Council, which attracted delegates from all over the country. [270] Soon, a new Birmingham and District Town Planning and Housing Association was established with Joseph Chamberlain as a vice-president. [271] There was also a Birmingham and District Housing Reform Association, linked to the National Housing Reform Council, which was set up in 1907 and presided over by the Lord Mayor. [272] In 1911 the City Council established a separate Town Planning Committee, under the chairmanship of Neville Chamberlain. [273] None of these first dimensional decisions, it will be noted, actually introduced town

planning into Birmingham. They were mainly endorsements of the general principle or attempts to sponsor that principle by the creation of new organisational structures.

In any case, even if town plans had been implemented, they would have been mainly concerned with new construction rather than with the most urgent problem facing housing reformers in Birmingham, namely the slums. Thus, in Nettlefold's view, town planning was "a very important and urgent question" if new slums were to be prevented.[274] Without it "land- sweating - that is the reckless overcrowding of human beings", and injury to "the vitality ... of large numbers of Englishmen" was inevitable.[275] Its first objective, he wrote, was to arrange "the constituent parts of a modern town ... in such a way that the result shall show an ordered harmony." As part of this process, the authorities should reserve enough land to allow wide main roads, and open spaces on 10 per cent of all newly developed land. The number of new dwellings per acre, he added, should be restricted, if possible to an optimum number of ten.[276]

The mobilisation of political bias in favour of town planning thus left the problem of the existing slums untouched, and effective action against them remained firmly excluded from the political agenda. Nearly all of these slums had been built before the Public Health Act of 1875 and the building bye- laws introduced under its provisions in 1876.[277] Thus the problem was, as the Health Committee noted, "that though much ...

property ... is below the standard of present- day requirements, its erection was permitted by the then existing law." [278] Nettlefold added that, if the current bye- laws were applied retrospectively to such premises, it "would result in many houses being demolished" and a "large reduction in the supply of small houses", [279] the very reason why the Housing Committee was unwilling to proceed vigorously against unfit dwellings. As it was, the town planners had to wait until 1909 before the Housing and Town Planning Act gave them any locus standi at all, and even then the law was extremely complicated, and did not apply to built up areas but only to construction on green field sites. [280] Simon records that, in 1929, the latter problem had still not been resolved. [281]

As seen above, in the years immediately before 1914, Nettlefold's campaigns to improve unfit dwellings and to open up courts were running into difficulties. Furthermore, his liberal laissez- faire ideology and fear of a ratepayers' backlash prevented him from advocating more interventionist and expensive solutions. In these circumstances, it is perhaps understandable that he should seek refuge in a cause which was undoubtedly fashionable and progressive, but which might be expected to deflect the attention of himself and others from the slum areas. It may be added in Nettlefold's defence, however, that if this was one of his motives, there is no evidence that he pursued it cynically. His enthusiasm for town planning appears, from his speeches and writings, to have been completely genuine.

Even on the periphery of the town the town planning initiative had a minimal impact before 1914. According to Gauldie, an attempt back in the 1870's to force factories out of the central areas of Birmingham had been frustrated by the large amounts of compensation claimed by the owners.[282] To be effective the planning of the outskirts would almost certainly need a systematic policy of municipal land purchase, if only to see that the land was redistributed to private owners in accordance with planning priorities. In July 1906 the Corporation accepted this principle as a possibility, but at that stage needed "greater freedom ... granted to them by Parliament." [283] Nettlefold supported the general idea,[284] but, in an interesting exercise in buck passing, ascribed the lack of progress to a medieval monarch and his Parliament. He was, he said, "dead against the Birmingham City Council adopting a policy of wholesale land purchase until the Statute of Mortmain, passed in the reign of Edward III, has been repealed." [285] In 1914 the Special Housing Inquiry reported that it was awaiting ratification of its recommendations before even considering the "powers required for the purchase and development of estates on town planning lines." [286] As Vince reports, there were a number of town planning initiatives undertaken by the council on the outskirts of the city immediately before the First World War. [287] However, by 1914 housing construction there had virtually ceased. [288]

Thus, as stated above, a problem of analysing town planning decisions in early twentieth century Birmingham, and of applying Lukes' first dimensional concepts to them, is that nothing very much was decided. The constraints on policy-makers, however, can be investigated via a consideration of the application of the building bye-laws. For it was a remarkable feature of the town planning movement that it was preceded and accompanied by a number of official decisions to undermine and weaken the existing safeguards against shoddy dwellings and infrastructure enshrined in the building bye-laws. The background to this development was the need to build new houses at low rents, something which, it was forcibly argued, was impossible given the stringency of the existing regulations. Letters to the press on the subject, for example, included claims that house building was being stopped by officialdom, and that the requirements of the City Surveyor's Department, especially the updated regulations of 1897, were exorbitant and excessive. Builders, it was alleged, were now having to spend 100 per cent more on the construction of roads and 150 per cent more on drainage systems, and it was no wonder that people found it impossible to move out of the slums.[289] The editorial columns of the Mail and the Post endorsed the views of such correspondents, as did Vince.[290] One of the objects of the Birmingham and District Housing Reform Association was "to promote the universal adoption of ... a bye-law ... which permits the local authority to reduce their requirement as to the width

of the metalled portion of roads other than main roads." This, it was added, was to "allow ... the building of decent working-class houses at a moderate cost."[291]

Such arguments were fully accepted by Nettlefold, and his writings contained numerous references to "the excessive stringency of some of the bye-laws, which increased the cost without increasing the efficiency of the houses built."[292] Nettlefold also frequently linked the advancement of town planning to the slackening of building regulations, arguing that there needed to be a trade off between the two. In order to get builders to reduce the number of houses per acre, and to provide parks, concessions must be granted in the cost of estate development.[293] As usual, the Housing Committee endorsed their chairman's view, reporting that, while the bye laws did not stop jerry building, they unnecessarily raised rents by insisting on extravagant road building in working class areas.[294] The Committee's opinion was endorsed by Parker, the Chief Inspector at the Health Department.[295]

Thus, a number of decisions were taken, in Lukes' first dimension, to weaken the impact of the bye-laws. The offending regulations were, in Nettlefold's words, "altered in accordance with practical common sense,"[296] and a number of other policy initiatives were taken to make life easier for the commercial builder and developer. In January 1902 the Housing Committee resolved to request the Public Works Committee to reduce the

stipulated thickness for house walls.[297] In December a sub-committee was appointed to investigate the building bye-laws for small house properties.[298] This sub-committee, in July 1903, arranged a meeting with the Public Works Committee.[299] By October, the bye-laws had been modified.[300] The chairman of the Public Works Committee was again lobbied in 1906 with a view to securing a reduction in road widths,[301] and, when it was discovered that a private proposal to develop the Bordesley Green site disregarded the bye-laws, Nettlefold agreed to try to fix things with the Local Government Board.[302]

It is difficult to judge whether complaints about the bye-laws were ever justified. By 1914, however, it was reported, on the authority of a prominent local builder, that they clearly were not.[303] It would thus seem that the drying up of building activity by 1914 could not be significantly attributed to official restrictions.[304] Even in 1902, the socialist Keegan would appear to have been justified in his claim that private enterprise had failed, but that the bye-laws were not the reason.[305] At the time his view was endorsed by a local landlord who flatly denied that "high rents ... are caused by the high cost of road making and drainage."[306] It is likely, therefore, that the decisions taken by the Housing Committee and others to alter the bye-laws eroded building specifications, lowered the housing and environmental standards of the citizens, and did nothing to stimulate new building.

The adoption of the cause of town planning by significant political actors in Birmingham before 1914 thus had a negligible effect on the process of housing reform, and the watering down of the building bye-laws was probably regressive. Both phenomena, however, have been investigated in some detail because of what they tell us about the mobilisation of bias and the control of the local political agenda on the housing question. Significantly, Nettlefold was now happy to convert himself from a local reformer to a national spokesman for what was then a somewhat futuristic cause. Even if the necessary enabling legislation could have been obtained, the problem of the slums would not have been directly addressed. The espousal of town planning was therefore an attempt partly to shift the problem onto national legislators and partly to address other problems, such as the development of the suburbs, which at that time were peripheral. It is possible but difficult to analyse the town planning initiative in terms of Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories, since those categories stress the role of conflict, and, at the time, virtually no-one disagreed with the decisions taken. Town planning may, perhaps, be said to have played a progressive role since 1900. But since its espousal in early twentieth century Birmingham was not accompanied by different and more radical initiatives to tackle the slums, its effect, like the effect of the campaigns to improve unfit houses and to open up courts, was to sidestep the main problem.

8. The rejection of Council Housing as an Important Policy Option.

At first sight, the failure to build significant numbers of council houses in early twentieth century Birmingham would appear to be highly suitable for analysis as a non- decision taken in Lukes' second dimension of power. However, in this case too, the concept of a non- decision as formulated by Bachrach and Baratz in their early work is found to be unhelpful. This is because, as in the other instances discussed, this seeming non- decision can only be empirically investigated if it is conceptualised as an actual decision to do nothing, to do something else, or to change the rules and procedures governing the decision- making process. There were thus a number of conscious decisions, for example to reject two specific schemes of council construction at Potter Street and Bordesley Green. Particularly significant was the decision in 1900 to adopt the tactic described by Parry and Morriss of changing the decision- making context. This was done by transferring control of housing policy from the Health Committee, which supported council housing, to a new Housing Committee, which opposed it. The analysis below, therefore, apart from the occasional utilisation of Lukes' third dimensional concept of real or welfare interests, is largely confined to the first, or decision- making, dimension of power. As in other cases investigated, however, the concepts utilised by Schattschneider, by Bachrach and Baratz, and by Lukes, of the manipulation of bias and of the control of the political agenda

form an important part of the interpretation, although, yet again, they are seen as operating within Luke's first dimension. Given that there was a dynamic era of council house building after 1918, it is necessary to raise yet again Goodin's point about the importance of the timing of decisions, and to look at why council houses were not built in significant numbers before the First World War. An attempt is made to do this below by investigating the nature and the extent of the political bias against municipal housing in the years immediately after 1900. There then follows an analysis of how this bias was mobilised in specific cases.

Most of the housing reform policies discussed so far have been characterised as valid but inadequate. It has also been argued that they were adopted as an alternative to more radical measures. The most obvious of these was the large scale construction of council housing. As mentioned above, in Birmingham after the First World War there was a fast and furious programme of house building by the local authority. By 1930, the city's 30,000th council house was officially opened, and the figures were showing that the amount of municipal construction in Birmingham, and the number of municipal houses per 1,000 of population, were greater than in any other provincial city.[307] By 1933 Neville Chamberlain was opening the 40,000th municipal house,[308] and by 1939 the 50,000th property had been built.[309] The present study makes no systematic attempt to carry the analysis beyond 1914 and does not fully investigate the

reasons for these large programmes of municipal building, or the role of new statute law and of the recently introduced government subsidies in stimulating it.[310]

Clearly, therefore, before 1914, there was a decisive mobilisation of political bias in Birmingham against the adoption of large scale schemes for municipal housing. It is also clear that council housing was being edited out of the local political agenda by policy makers in other provincial towns, with the exception of one or two such as Liverpool and Sheffield.[311] Thompson, after a systematic statistical review of the evidence, concluded that "outside London ... in 20 years little more was spent" by local authorities "on housing the working classes than the cost of two battleships." Moreover, "about half (of) this was spent on slum- buying" rather than on "providing new dwellings." [312]

In Birmingham the bias against municipal housing was articulated in the speeches and writings of Nettlefold, the single most influential political actor in the formulation of municipal housing policy at this time. He had, he said, "very grave objections to this remedy", many of them deriving from his belief in classical laissez- faire liberalism. Thus, he claimed, provision of housing by the municipality severely discouraged private enterprise. It entailed a charge upon the rates which might keep rents down but did not benefit the worker because it was met by a pro rata reduction of wages by the capitalist. And

it could only provide for a very small number of favoured tenants, who were thus unfairly subsidised at the expense of the rest of the citizenry. It was preferable, he argued, to leave the field to private philanthropists, such as Ruskin in London,[313] and for the council "to improve existing dwellings in the first instance."[314] Later, in his writings, Nettlefold reaffirmed that "municipal house building will hinder and not ... help the solution of the housing problem."[315] An entire chapter of one of his books was devoted to a discussion of his "objections to municipal building."[316] In this Chapter, Nettlefold added to his previous objections the arguments that council houses did not go to those in greatest need, and that "municipal purity" might be jeopardised by council tenants voting for low rents in local elections. Finally, "the rock on which municipal house builders have split is the desire to regulate rent."[317] Instead of a programme of council building Nettlefold advocated, as has been seen, a policy of municipal land purchase and the provision by the council of housing estates where the frontages were developed by private enterprise and philanthropic endeavours.[318] Among local philanthropists, Nettlefold particularly commended George Cadbury's "great work" at Bournville Village, not least because his Trust insisted upon a commercial return of 4 per cent on all monies invested as a source of funds for further charitable works.[319] These and similar sentiments were repeated many times by Nettlefold during the course of his public life.[320]

Nettlefold's central role in the formulation of housing policy meant that his opposition to municipal building was of considerable political importance. Perhaps most significant of all given the power of the council's committee system was the fact that Nettlefold's views were echoed to the letter by the Housing Committee. In its reports his detailed objections to council building were listed and endorsed and his alternative policies based upon municipal land purchase were vigorously supported.[321] But the Housing Committee were not merely reproducing the opinions of their chairman. They further claimed that their objections to council housing were shared by a number of prominent national figures, including Octavia Hill and Charles Booth.[322] Of the local witnesses consulted by the Housing Committee, every one who expressed an opinion on the matter concurred that municipal building was undesirable.[323] Typical was the view of Staveley who agreed that artificial rent reductions meant wage cuts[324] and that the votes of council tenants might distort the operation of local democracy.[325]

Thus, although the bias against council houses was given its most authoritative expression and its most decisive mobilisation by Nettlefold and the Housing Committee their views were far from atypical, and it cannot be argued that they were foisted upon an unwilling city. Among the councillors, for example, Hunt saw "a danger of ...(council) houses being let to respectable artisans, and not to labourers." [326] and other familiar objections were raised by Godlee, Bates, Kenrick and Myers.[327] As for Vince,

the need to detail "the case against municipal house- building" was the major motive for the writing of his pamphlet, as its subtitle and contents indicate.[328] Among the local press, the Mail was consistently hostile to municipal construction,[329] and was followed, after some hesitation, by the Post. [330] The Post's editorial hostility was endorsed in its letters column.[331]

The political bias against council houses in Birmingham was also strengthened by the fact that it had a long and continuing tradition. In 1876 Heath had declared public building to be undesirable, and argued instead for private philanthropy.[332] The official Artisans' Dwellings Inquiry of 1884 also came down against council provision and in favour of private enterprise.[333] Thirty years later, in 1914, the city's Special Housing Inquiry, while endorsing council construction as a last resort, was "not prepared to recommend this course at present", and favoured instead Nettlefold's policy of estates planned by the council but with plots leased to private and charitable builders.[334] Given this overwhelming endorsement of the virtues of private over municipal enterprise, local property owners saw no need for the systematic defence of their position until after the First World War.[335]

The general conclusion is thus clear. In Birmingham before 1914 there was, in Schattschneider's terminology, an overwhelming bias against municipal housing schemes which effectively removed

them from the political agenda. For a short while from 1889 onwards a few small scale experiments were attempted, but when the Health Committee went further than this the predominant bias was swiftly and effectively mobilised to squash its schemes, and to take control of housing policy out of its hands.

In view of the Corporation's abrupt post-war volte face on the question of municipal building it might be enquired as to who opposed the predominant bias and argued for this then unfashionable policy prior to 1914. Among the local press, the Gazette's position was sympathetic but equivocal. At first the newspaper seemed overawed at "the enormous responsibility of supplanting private enterprise."^[336] Soon, however, it was arguing "that if insanitary areas ... are to be cleared ... the Council will have to build."^[337] As its own housing campaign developed the Gazette became ever more strident on the question, arguing vigorously that "private enterprise ... fails entirely to deal with the poor labourers" and that municipal building schemes were urgently needed.^[338] Thereafter the paper appeared to be making common cause with labour movement figures such as Keegan and Bowater on the question, and mercilessly ridiculed the Housing Committee's "not a brick" policy, referring to its main protagonist, Nettlefold, as "an impertinent upstart", and to Birmingham as "a disgrace to the great cities of the Empire" unless the council's policies speedily changed.^[339] The Gazette's letters columns carried the same message, with one labour movement correspondent using Birmingham's leading organ of

conservatism and clericalism to launch a withering, Marxist-style critique of the role of private enterprise in the field of housing.[340] However, any socialist or progressive who might have hoped that the Gazette would continue to pursue a line of radical conservatism in the tradition of Disraeli and Randolph Churchill was destined to be disappointed. From the beginning the paper's correspondence column was open to opponents of municipal building.[341] Finally, in 1904, shaken by a report of the council's Finance Committee concerning the cost of the small number of council dwellings erected up to that time, the Gazette abruptly changed its line. "Anything like a complete system of municipal housing", it now argued, "would involve an expense to the ratepayers which is quite out of the question." [342]

As the section on the Bordesley Green scheme below demonstrates, the Health Committee and its chairman, alderman Cook, were supporters of municipal building, and this, it has been argued, was the main reason why responsibility for housing policy was removed from them and placed in the hands of Nettlefold and the rival Housing Committee. When the result of this coup was seen to be the rejection of the Health Committee's proposals to build at Bordesley Green and Potter Street, they expressed "regret that their recommendations did not receive the approval of the Council." [343] As for alderman Cook, whenever the housing question was debated in the council chamber he could always be relied upon to speak in support of municipal building, despite the fact that, according to one of his critics, he had

himself been opposed to it in 1874.[344] By now, however, Cook had lost all faith in the ability of free enterprise to tackle the housing problem on the grounds that, since 1890, the private builder had failed to provide a single house at a rent of less than 5s. per week.[345] Cook's views were shared by councillors Jephcott and D. Davis.[346]

The most vigorous opponents of the prevailing bias against municipal housing, however, were the representatives of the labour movement. Early in its life, the new Housing Committee received a harbinger of things to come in the shape of a communication in favour of council dwellings from the Workmen's National Housing Council in London.[347] Later came correspondence from Birmingham Trades Council along similar lines.[348] Meanwhile, a group of labour representatives, including Bowater, Keegan, Stevens and Fallows subjected the "not a brick" policy to a sustained and vigorous attack at council meetings. At one stage, in furtherance of the campaign, Keegan presented a 5,000 signature petition "appealing to the Council to take immediate steps to erect houses." He was supported by Stevens, who accused Nettlefold of putting private enterprise before public health.[349] As has been seen, Bowater managed to secure nomination to the Housing Committee, or the "Unhousing Committee" as he preferred to call it.[350] The same was true of Keegan, who used his position as a platform from which to dissent from the majority of his fellow members.[351] In the council chamber, Fallows, too, "spoke strongly in favour of municipal

house building",[352] and followed up his advocacy with the writing and co- authoring of socialist pamphlets.[353] In 1914, the evidence presented by the labour movement in Birmingham to the council's Special Housing Inquiry also argued in favour of municipal house building, although a stated preference for co-operative building schemes where these were viable gave an opportunity for the Inquiry to claim, somewhat misleadingly, that the opposite was the case.[354]

Before the First World War this labour movement agitation went largely unheeded. As pointed out in Chapter 1 the position appears to have been similar to that discovered more recently in Kensington and Chelsea. There Dearlove showed that the controlling Conservative Party exhibited a systematic bias in favour of groups with which it was ideologically sympathetic. In this somewhat analogous case, Housing Committee members appear to have taken little notice of their ideological opponents in the trades union and labour movement. In contrast, from 1919 to 1945, the views of the labour movement were well heeded but labour politicians were forced to sit on the political sidelines and watch their opponents implement one of their pet policies. It must be asked therefore whether the adoption of a massive municipal building programme by the non- socialist majority after 1918 was an attempt to undermine their adversaries by what Parry and Morriss refer to as "the technique of the pre- emptive strike of stealing the Whigs' clothing." If it was, it may be likened to a similar ploy adopted by the Mayor of Baltimore in Bachrach

and Baratz's study of race relations in that city. They describe it as a "direct case of non- decision- making", but as Parry and Morriss point out, "if ever there was one, here was a decision taken by the authoritative political leader in a constitutional manner." The change of direction in housing policy in Birmingham, if indeed it was similarly motivated, also demonstrates the difficulties of categorising and investigating so- called non- decisions in Lukes' second dimension of power.[355]

Having thus investigated the nature of the predominant bias against council housing before 1914, and of the opposition to that bias, it is now necessary to see how these opposing political forces interacted to bring about specific decisions in actual cases. First, however, it is necessary yet again to invoke Newton's injunction to see municipal politics within its national context, and especially, in this instance, within its framework of statute law. This is particularly the case since much of the debate summarised above was conducted in general terms, and without reference to the legal position. It should be noted, therefore, that before 1914 public housing schemes were allowed under both Part 2 and Part 3 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890. The rejection of schemes under Part 2 has been detailed above. In contrast to Part 2, Part 3, in the words of Nettlefold, "enables Local Authorities to buy land and build houses in undeveloped districts." [356] Under it, "the London County Council have been very busy", [357] and the land for

Birmingham's abortive Bordesley Green proposal was purchased under its provisions.[358] Otherwise, however, Part 3 remained a dead letter within the city, and cries from the labour movement to use it for "building on a large scale" fell on deaf ears.[359]

The specific cases to be discussed fall into two broad categories. On the one hand, three municipal schemes, Ryder Street, Lawrence Street and Milk Street, had been constructed by the early years of the century, and were under council administration. On the other hand, two projected schemes, at Potter Street and Bordesley Green, were both the subject of vigorous verbal conflict before they were rejected.

The first proposal for a municipal housing scheme, for a block of flats in Dalton Street, had been rejected in 1885, and, during the course of the council discussion, the arguments for and against the proposal were remarkably similar to those voiced fifteen to twenty years later.[360] In 1889, however, the council accepted a plan to build 22 cottages at Ryder Street. In 1891 a further proposal to add 82 cottages in nearby Lawrence Street was endorsed, and 81 of these were subsequently built.[361] Both of these schemes were initiated under the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act passed by Disraeli's Conservative administration in 1875.[362] The only dwellings ever built in pre- 1914 Birmingham under Part 1 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890 were the flats in Milk Street.[363] The proposal to construct these was first presented

to the council in 1894, but encountered fierce opposition and was only finally approved in 1898.[364] By the end of 1900, 61 tenements had been built and let out.[365] All these properties were administered by the Estates Committee, and an attempt by the Housing Committee to gain the management of the Milk Street flats was rejected by the council.[366]

After 1900 the schemes at Ryder Street, Lawrence Street and Milk Street were all faits accomplis and discussion of them had largely abated except insofar as the opponents of municipal building pointed to the alleged failure of these experiments in an attempt to strengthen the prevailing political bias, and the supporters of council housing attempted to counter their arguments. The main point made by the opponents of public housing was that the cost was far too great and that all the projects were running at a loss. Various reasons were put forward in explanation of this, including assertions that the land, near the city centre, was too expensive, that slum owners were over-compensated and that the cost of repairs was excessive.[367] According to Nettlefold, the Estates Committee's financial figures were incorrect because they omitted the cost of land purchase, a point which was not picked up by their critics until 1901.[368] The result, claimed Nettlefold, was, for example, that each Milk Street tenement was costing the ratepayers 2 shillings a week.[369] In reply, Fallows brought out alternative figures purporting to demonstrate that Birmingham municipal housing was "financially profitable."[370] But no

working class spokesman in the city, perhaps because of the fear of a backlash from the ratepayers, was prepared to argue, with a supporter of municipal building from Liverpool, that "it seemed fair and right" for a local authority to "spend a few thousands in ... providing sanitary dwellings." [371] Labour spokesmen also made no reply to the arguments of their opponents that the council's housing accommodation was tenanted by respectable artisans and not by ex- slum dwellers. [372] Everyone, however, was agreed that such schemes were inconsiderable in scale and experimental in nature. They proved to Vince that such tinkering did "more harm than good", [373] and to Fallows that it was "hopelessly inadequate." [374] Labour spokesmen, however, could draw comfort from the fact that, by 1914, the city's Special Housing Inquiry agreed that "municipal housing ... to be successful ... must be carried out on a large scale." [375]

The history of the abortive schemes for Bordesley Green and Potter Street can be dated from a decision, in Lukes' first dimension, of 31 July 1900. On that date a proposal from the Health Committee to purchase land for municipal housing at Bordesley Green was accepted by the council by 46 votes to 8. Given the predominant bias against municipal housing detailed above, this decision may appear somewhat strange. It may, perhaps, be partly explained by the power of the council committee system and by the strong inbuilt tendency for council to accept authoritative recommendations from its committees on the nod. The decision also occurred, however, at the height of

the agitation, spearheaded by the Gazette, against the evils of "Slum- land." In the same report, the Committee stated that plans were being prepared to build two blocks of flats in Potter Street at an estimated cost of £12,900. When definite proposals to develop the two sites were presented to the council on 18 June 1900, however, the opponents of the Health Committee succeeded, by 32 votes to 30, in securing an amendment by which the scheme was to be referred to a new Housing Committee to be appointed in the following November. At the same meeting the Potter Street scheme was withdrawn by Cook, the Health Committee chairman. The effect of the decisions taken was thus to delay both schemes and, more significantly, to transfer control of housing policy from a committee which supported municipal house building to another committee which, as has been seen, was to oppose it. The vote was thus the biggest single political victory achieved in pre-1914 Birmingham by the opponents of council housing. As discussed above, the predominant bias against council housing had been effectively mobilised in two ways. Firstly, two specific proposals for municipal building schemes had been thwarted. Secondly, the mobilisation of bias had been strengthened by the creation of new ground rules and an extra impediment to innovation. Finally, it is clear from the above investigation that all this had not occurred in some second dimension of non-decision-making, even though Lukes sees the mobilisation of political bias and the control of the political agenda as operating in such a dimension. Clear and observable decisions had been made in Lukes' first dimension of power.

An interesting political gloss was placed upon this development by the local satirical publication, The Dart, which stated: "It is extremely unfortunate that the leading members of the Health Committee are Gladstonians ... A new committee ... composed of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists would ... have greater force."^[376] In the opinion of Fallows, the Bordesley Green scheme was "thwarted by a political ruse."^[377] This may be the case, but the ruse was only successful because it had widespread political support.

It only remained for the new Housing Committee, once it had refined its "not a brick" policy, to knock the nails into the two schemes' coffins via a number of other first dimensional decisions. A slight setback was sustained in March, 1902, when the Housing Committee was instructed by council, by 32 votes to 27, to bring out plans for flats at Potter Street within two months. Again, the reasons for this decision are somewhat unclear, but it seems that this small scale scheme for flats in the city centre may have had more supporters than the more ambitious and contentious plan to erect a large estate of houses in the outskirts at Bordesley Green. In any event, Nettlefold and his supporters now had control of the relevant committee, and were able to use this powerful institutional weapon to their advantage. They thus prepared a scheme, as instructed, but said they did not agree with it, and would accept no responsibility for it.^[378] At the council meeting of 3 June 1902 an amendment

from Bowater to refer back that section of the Housing Committee's report which dealt with Potter Street was defeated by 26 votes to 18, and the report was subsequently approved.[379] Thus, "the Potter Street scheme", as Vince reported triumphantly in his official history of the Corporation, "followed the Dalton Street scheme into oblivion."[380]

The first dimensional decision to bury the Bordesley Green proposals had a lengthier aftermath, and demonstrated the weakness of the alternative policy of encouraging private enterprise as advocated by the opponents of municipal building. In March 1902 the Housing Committee's recommendation not to continue with a council scheme at Bordesley Green, but instead to lease the land to the private sector for suitable housing development, was accepted by the council. This effectively defeated the protagonists of municipal building, but the question remained as to who should lease the land. It was over four years before the Housing Committee were able to recommend the first proposed deal, with a Mr. Taylor, on 4 April 1905.[381] In the council chamber, however, the section of the Committee's report dealing with Bordesley Green was withdrawn after a fierce attack upon it, not only from Keegan, Stevens and the representatives of labour, but also from councillors at the other end of the political spectrum who claimed that the proposed agreement was a bad business deal for the council.[382] The next candidates for leasing the land were the Birmingham Mutual Sick Benefit and Old Age Society, whose president was alderman Kenrick. After

protracted negotiations, however, this deal fell through.[383] It was thus not until 15 January 1907 that an agreement with another charity, the Ideal Benefit Society, to lease the land for the construction of workmen's dwellings, was ratified by the council, and even then the deal had not been finalised.[384] By the time it was, it was 25 March, 1908.[385] Clearly, on this evidence, it would prove difficult for opponents of municipal house- building to find a sufficient amount of private and eleemosynary initiative to compensate for council inaction.

The conflict over the first dimensional decisions to reject the Potter Street and Bordesley Green schemes added little that was new to the debate on municipal housing.[386] The two proposals were, of course, very different, since Potter Street aimed to provide flats in the city centre and Bordesley Green houses on the outskirts.

With regard to Potter Street, the most decisive opponent of the scheme was the Housing Committee, which argued that every house would receive a subsidy of over 1s. a week, that private enterprise could more fittingly act in the case, that there were already plenty of empty houses anyway, and that council construction would undermine the Committee's policy of improving the slums.[387] Private enterprise, added Nettlefold, would build more flats than envisaged in the municipal scheme, thereby increasing the housing stock.[388] Among the local press, the Post approved the rejection of the Potter Street scheme on what

it claimed were "sound business principles",[389] an opinion which was endorsed by the Mail[390] and by various press correspondents.[391] It is worth noting that at that time no important political actors were arguing that the provision of public goods such as libraries and parks should be self financing. The difference with housing was apparently that it was, in part, a private good, and that the benefit of any reforms was enjoyed largely by the tenants of the improved or newly constructed dwellings. At the time, the possible public benefits of housing reform, such as improvements in health, reduction of crime and fewer paupers to maintain appear to have had no significant influence on decision- makers. On the other side, the Trades Council and the local labour movement supported the scheme, as did the Gazette and a number of newspaper correspondents.[392] However, against the decisive mobilisation of political bias by Nettlefold and the Housing Committee, as endorsed by council, they were helpless.

On the Bordesley Green scheme, the line up of opinion was similar, with, again, the Trades Council and labour movement in favour and the Post and the Mail against.[393] The most interesting editorial comment was to be found in the Mail, which argued that the recent bicycle boom had caused overproduction of houses at 5s. to 6s. a week in the suburbs, many of which were now untenanted. Besides, continued the paper, such houses were attractive to artisans but not to slum workers, who did not wish to add travel time to long hours of toil, nor to slum loafers,

who would never desert their local street corners and pubs. The Mail, however, seemed to accept such preferences as valid, and did not presume, as Nettlefold sometimes did, to know the real interests of others better than they did themselves.[394] Later, the Mail added that a further disincentive was the tram fare required to get from Bordesley Green to work.[395] These, and other familiar objections, were endorsed by witnesses presenting evidence to the Housing Committee, by speeches at a conference of local nonconformist clergy, and by Staveley.[396] Among writers to the press, the scheme provoked a vigorous debate, both for and against.[397] Finally, the Gazette, despite its support for the Potter Street scheme, consistently opposed proposals for municipal building at Bordesley Green, arguing that it was too far from the city centre and that the plans were half baked and poorly researched.[398] The fundamental reason for the rejection of the Bordesley Green scheme, however, like the Potter Street scheme before it, is not to be found in this press debate, but in the mobilisation of bias against them by Nettlefold and the Housing Committee and their consequent exclusion from the political agenda.

In summary, it may be noted that many council houses were built in Birmingham after 1918. Before the First World War, however, there was a predominant mobilisation of bias which effectively thwarted municipal construction. There were a number of reasons for this, foremost among which appears to have been a belief that public money should only be spent on public goods.

At that time housing improvement (wrongly, perhaps, to some extent) seems to have been considered as a private good, the benefits of which were enjoyed largely by private individuals. It thus seems to have been assumed, although it was not often stated in such terms, that housing reforms should be self-financing. In the case of the important political actor Nettlefold such considerations were reinforced by his personal commitment to the principles of classical laissez-faire economics. Added to this was the fear of ratepayer resentment described in Section 3 above. If, as after the First World War, money had been made available from the Exchequer the policy outcomes might have been different, but the relevant counterfactuals for this, as explained in Chapter 1, cannot be scientifically applied. The outcome, however, was clear. Since it was thought, on the evidence of the experimental projects at Milk Street and elsewhere, that council construction could not be made to break even that policy was excluded from the political agenda. Instead a number of largely inadequate palliatives were attempted in its place.

9. Conclusion.

As in the other two case studies, the present Chapter attempts to do two main things, namely to investigate what the application of Lukes' dimensional approach to the study of power tells us, firstly about community power in Birmingham around 1900, and secondly about the validity of the approach itself.

With regard to the first objective, a number of aspects of housing policy would appear to be thrown into sharper relief by the application to them of Lukes' dimensional perspectives. These include, for example, the role of churchmen such as Thomas Bass, of the church newspaper, the Gazette, and of the local labour movement. In addition, a first dimensional decision-making analysis of the debate surrounding the formulation of housing policy helps to explain why housing reforms before 1914 were largely palliatives and why the dominant policy of the period after 1918, namely the large scale construction of council houses, was eschewed. Furthermore, the concepts, adapted and used by Lukes, of mobilisation of bias and agenda control, are useful in explaining the decision to move control over housing policy from the Health Committee, which favoured council housing, to a new Housing Committee, which did not. This, however, is only to formulate in more specific terms the claim, periodically repeated throughout the study, that if any new insights at all have been gained from this research the decision-making methodology is to some extent vindicated.

To summarise the findings relevant to the local history of Birmingham, housing policy in the city before 1914 was acted out predominantly in Lukes' first, or decision-making dimension of power. There were two significant aspects of this policy. The first was the attempt to improve the slums by enforcing improvements on landlords and by opening up courts. The second was the rejection of large scale schemes of municipal housing construction.

The improvement of the slums was implemented in Lukes' first dimension via a series of decisions by a council committee as endorsed by the full council. As in the other case studies, the relevant council committee, the Housing Committee, was powerful and authoritative and, subject to the approval of its recommendations by the full council, it largely controlled housing policy. In addition, however, an important part was played by national institutions, particularly by the system of statute law enacted by Parliament.

As indicated in section 1 above, the present chapter endorses the judgment of Vince that in the early years of the twentieth century "no municipal question provoked such acute differences of opinion, or was discussed with so much acrimony, as the housing question."^[399] This acrimony arose largely from the dichotomy between a Housing Committee and a city council resolved to pursue a limited policy of piecemeal reform, and a minority opinion that more radical measures were needed. This

resulted in a mobilisation of bias against radical reform which was decisive but contentious. At first, the most prominent advocates of reform were churchmen such as Thomas Bass, and the church newspaper, the Gazette. Their agitation helped to win over the Health Committee and its leader, alderman Cook. Later, however, the labour movement, which had a small but vociferous group of councillors to sponsor its views, emerged as the leading protagonist of change.

The debate centred decisively, not upon the programme of urban renewal in the slums, with which everyone except the property owners agreed, but upon whether or not the council should construct municipal dwellings. At this time, powerful forces inside the council chamber, centred upon councillor Nettlefold, were opposed to this initiative and, in order to prevent its adoption, transferred control of housing policy from the Health Committee to a new Housing Committee, an example of the mobilisation of bias in which new procedural barriers to change were erected. The main motives for opposition to municipal housing appear to have been an unwillingness to incur financial loss in the provision of private as opposed to public goods, an ideological commitment to laissez-faire capitalism and a desire to save the rates. In view of the massive programme of council construction after 1918, therefore, the most significant aspect of housing policy in the early years of the century would

appear to be the decision (which cannot usefully be described as a non- decision because of its conscious nature) to build no further municipal dwellings.

The second major objective of this chapter has been to investigate what this attempted empirical application tells us about the validity of Lukes' approach to the study of power. Here there was yet again some difficulty in applying Lukes' first dimensional definitional categories, with their emphasis on conflict, to the study of decisions some of which were largely uncontentious. These included the decisions relevant to the improvement of unfit houses and to the opening up of courts. The first of these was opposed only by the landlords, and the second by virtually nobody. Almost no- one opposed or attempted to reverse the decisions to introduce these policies. They were indeed criticised, but largely on the grounds that they were inadequate and were being applied with insufficient rigour. There are also various other problems in the straightforward application of Lukes' first dimensional approach. For example, two groups who were directly affected, namely the slum dwellers and the ratepayers, were not significant political actors, and their interests were represented by proxies. Therefore, yet again, Lukes' approach can indeed be applied, but it necessitates a complicated and somewhat convoluted political analysis which is arguably more trouble than it is worth.

The present case study throws into sharp relief the shortcomings of Lukes' second dimension of power. Particularly significant here was what might seem to be a classic "non-decision", in Bachrach and Baratz's terminology, to not build municipal housing. It is true that this resulted, in Bachrach and Baratz's words, from a successful mobilisation of bias which excluded this particular policy option from the political agenda. Prima facie, therefore, this development occurred in Lukes' second dimension of power, the dimension of non-decisions. In reality, however, most of these seeming non-decisions, as anticipated in Chapter 1, were actual decisions, for example to do nothing, or to do something else, or to erect new procedural barriers to change. The analysis presented here therefore endorses Parry and Morriss's critique of the early work of Bachrach and Baratz, the leading theorists of the non-decision. On the other hand the concepts of the mobilisation of bias and of the control of the political agenda, as developed by Schattschneider and by Bachrach and Baratz, are useful in their present application provided that they are seen as occurring within Lukes' first, or decision-making, dimension of power. Thus, the present chapter endorses the view propounded in Chapter 1 that Lukes' second dimension of power collapses into his first and to a lesser extent into his third dimension.

With regard to Lukes third dimension of power, yet again no example of its operation was discovered, perhaps because of the nature of the research scheme. It is not difficult, as Morriss's

analysis suggests, to postulate plausible definitions of real interests in an area of life so vital to personal health and happiness as housing. Lukes' definition, however, specifies a link between the exercise of power in the third dimension and a state of false consciousness on the part of the ruled. Thus there is, on his definition as quoted in Chapter 1, "a latent conflict, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude." In the present study, there is no indication that slum dwellers were misled in this way, or that they had a false perception of their own real interests. On the other hand, Nettlefold and various other reformers did presume to know better than the slum dweller himself where his own real interests lay, and sometimes attempted to supervise and control him for his own good. There were also various references to slum loafers and the problem of drink which implied that slum dwellers had an incorrect appreciation of their own real interests, but, as pointed out in Chapter 1, there is always a subjective and contestable element in such assessments. The present case study thus discovered no example of the exercise of power in Lukes' third dimension, but has endorsed his third dimensional concept of real interests as heuristically useful.

Notes and References.

1. For a treatment of "the homes fit for heroes campaign", together with a summary of "housing and the state before 1914", see Mark Swenarton, Homes Fit for Heroes: the Politics and Architecture of Early State Housing in Britain, 1981. (The quotations are taken from p. 27.)
2. For the full text of the Act, see Thompson (W.) The Housing Handbook (hereafter referred to as Thompson, HH) and Housing- up- to- date (hereafter referred to as Thompson, HUTD), 2 volumes, 1903 and 1907, Ref: 175395, Appendix to Thompson, HH, pp. 1 ff. See Thompson, HUDT, pp. 12-13 for a legislative summary of the position after the Act of 1903. For a summary of the changes brought about by the Act of 1909, see Green (R.) Institute of Sanitary Engineers, Birmingham and Midland Section, Housing, Town Planning, etc. Act, 1909, Presidential Address delivered in Birmingham, Dec. 13, 1910. Ref: 481950, pp. 3-12. For a general discussion on the legislative background and the contemporary debate on housing, see: A.E. Holmans, Housing Policy in Britain: A History, 1987, Chapter 2, The Pre-1914 Antecedents of Housing Policy, pp. 21-49; and Enid Gaudie, Cruel Habitations: A History of Working- Class Housing 1780-1918, 1974, Part 5, pp. 239-310.
3. P.31.7.1900. The question is alluded to again below, in the section on the Housing Committee's campaign against unfit houses.
4. For further details, see Charles Anthony Vince, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Volume 4 (1900-1915), Birmingham, 1923, (hereafter referred to as V4), pp. 181-199 and 510 ff.
5. Geraint Parry and Peter Morriss, "When is a Decision not a Decision?" in Ivor Crewe (ed.), British Political Sociology Yearbook, Volume 1, Elites in Western Democracy, 1974, pp. 326-7.
6. P.1.8.1900.
7. G.19.6.1901. For the articles themselves, see G.4.3.1901 and the issues following it. They were also printed in pamphlet form. See Walters (John Cuming), Scenes in Slum-Land: Pen Pictures of the Black Spots in Birmingham, 2 vols, 1901. Ref: 156671. Briggs records the wrong date of publication for this source. - A. Briggs, History of Birmingham, Volume 2, Borough and City, 1865-1938, Oxford, 1952, p. 85.
8. G.4.3.1901.

9. Idem.
10. G.6.3.1901.
11. Idem.
12. Eric Hopkins, "Working- Class Housing in Birmingham during the Industrial Revolution", International Review of Social History, 31 (1986): 80-94. The quotation is from p. 89. For more information about housing in Birmingham in the early nineteenth century see also the relevant pages of Eric Hopkins, Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World 1760-1840, 1989. For another study of working class housing in Birmingham in the mid- nineteenth century, see James E. Vance Jr., "Housing the Worker: Determinative and Contingent Ties in Nineteenth Century Birmingham", Economic Geography, 42, 2 (April 1967): 95-127. For a popular, illustrated treatment of "The Housing Problem" around 1900, see Chapter 1 in Carl Chinn, Homes For People: 100 Years of Council Housing in Birmingham, Birmingham and Exeter, 1991, pp. 1-30. For further historical photographs and illustrations of housing in Birmingham, see Birmingham City Council Development Department, Developing Birmingham: 100 years of City Planning, 1889 to 1989, Birmingham, 1989.
13. Hill (M.), "On the dwellings of the labouring poor of Birmingham", Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Birmingham Meeting, 1868, (1869): 623-5, Ref:12145.
14. Health Committee Minute 6,933. The Health Committee Minute books are lodged in the Archive Department of Birmingham Reference Library.
15. G.6.3.1901.
16. Stavelly (May C.) The Housing Problem in Birmingham, 1903, Ref:175613. See also Housing Committee, Reports to Council, 1901-07, Ref:278199, etc., L41.8, Appendix to Report of 20.10.1903, p. 9.
17. Idem.
18. Thompson, HUTD, p. 22.
19. Fallows (J.A.) Facts for Birmingham. The Housing of the Poor. (Pamphlets on Economic Questions, issued by the Birmingham Socialist Centre, No. 1, 1899. Ref:150067; Smith (C.E.), Memorandum on the Housing Question submitted to the Housing Enquiry Committee of the Birmingham City Council, on behalf of the Birmingham Socialist Centre, the Trades Council, and the Labour Representation Council, 1914, Ref:254463. Fallows' pamphlet is cited by Briggs, but with no allusion to its socialist publishers. Indeed, Briggs'

- summary of the housing debate and of housing policy at this time makes no mention of the labour movement - Briggs, 1952, op. cit., pp. 83-7.
20. Gough (A.), Objections to the Housing and Town- Planning Bill...(etc.)...: a paper read at a meeting of the Birmingham and District Trades and Property Association, 1908, Ref:319810.
 21. Health Committee Minute 6,933.
 22. City of Birmingham. Housing Committee, Report, presented to the Council 3rd July, 1906, (1906). Ref:195161.
 23. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., verbatim report of Nettlefold's speech, 20.10.1903, p. 1.
 24. Heath (F.R.) Artizans' Dwellings and the Birmingham Improvement Scheme, 1876, Ref:63683.
 25. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, 1913-14. Report of Committee for the Council, 20 Oct. 1914, Ref: 254385 LF 41.8. The quotation is from p. 3. The concern, of course, continued after the war. See, for example, Lane-Clayton (Janet E.) The Child Welfare Movement, 1920, pp. 303-315, "Housing and Sanitary Conditions in Relation to Mortality Rates in Birmingham. Extract from the Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1918."
 26. See, for example, Health Committee Minute 6,668 from 1901.
 27. Housing Committee Minute 45. The Housing Committee Minute books, like those of the Health Committee, are lodged in the Archive Department of Birmingham Reference Library.
 28. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 31.
 29. Health Committee Minute 8,660.
 30. See, for example, the letter from the Chief Constable above Housing Committee Minute 1,016.
 31. G.18.6.1901. According to Nettlefold, the death rate in Birmingham was about average for the 15 biggest towns in the country. See Nettlefold (J.S.) A Housing Policy; to which is added a Lecture on Housing Reform, 1906, Ref:278322, pp. 68-9. For a summary of conditions in general see also, Thompson, HH, pp. 4ff.
 32. Health Committee Minute 8167; P.29.7.1903; Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903, p. 35.

33. Idem, pp. 29 and 20. For a general treatment of lower class housing conditions from 1850 to 1914, see John Burnett, A Social History of Housing, 1815-1985, second edition, 1986, Chapter 5, Housing the Labourer, pp. 121-139 and Chapter 6, Housing the Multitude, pp. 140-187. For a survey of the secondary literature on housing conditions up until the time it was published, which makes reference to Birmingham, see Anthony Sutcliffe, "Working Class Housing in Nineteenth Century Britain: A Review of Recent Research", Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History 24 (1972), pp. 40-51.
34. V4, p. 187. Vince adds that Bass also forced the council to complete Corporation Street.
35. Housing Committee Minute 14.
36. Housing Committee Minute 92.
37. Housing Committee Minute 122.
38. Housing Committee Minute 134, and see below.
39. Housing Committee Minute 459.
40. City of Birmingham. Report of the Housing Committee, 6th of January, 1903, (interleaved at Housing Committee Minute 516), p. 7.
41. Housing Committee Minute 646.
42. Housing Committee Minute 707.
43. Housing Committee Minute 986.
44. Housing Committee Minutes 989 and 1,072-3. In addition, the requisition mentioned in Minute 1,399 would appear to have come from Bass.
45. Housing Committee Minutes 1,546 and 1,791.
46. Housing Committee Minute 1,789. For a comparison of the death rates in the Oxygen Street area before and towards the end of Bass's campaign, see Minute 1,610.
47. P.1.4.1904.
48. G.22.10.1901.
49. Fallows (J.A.) and Hughes (F.) The Housing Question in Birmingham, 1905, Ref:278198 L41.8, p. 1.
50. G.18.6.1901.

51. Housing Committee Minutes 607 and 621.
52. See, for example, G.18.6.1901.
53. G.3.8.1901, and subsequent issues.
54. M. 30.7.1901.
55. M.22.10.1901.
56. E.g. M.12.3.1902 and M.4.6.1902. For the link with the Elan Valley, see, for e.g., M.5.3.1902 and M.29.7.1903.
57. P.3.6.1902.
58. P.4.6.1902.
59. G.30.3.1904.
60. Fallows, Facts for Birmingham, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
61. P.29.7.1903.
62. Nettlefold (J.S.), Practical Housing, popular edn. 1910, Ref:221222, pp. 14-15.
63. Nettlefold (J.S.), A Campaign for Lower Rates and a Better Birmingham, 1911, Ref:233613, especially pp. 18-20.
64. City of Birmingham, Report of the Housing Committee, 3 June 1902, (interleaved at Housing Committee Minute 255), p. 11.
65. City of Birmingham, Report of the Housing Committee, 4 March 1902, (interleaved at Housing Minute 110), p. 8.
66. Idem, p. 12.
67. Housing Committee Minute 808.
68. City of Birmingham, Housing Committee Report, 3 July 1906, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
69. G.18.6.1901.
70. Housing Committee Reports, *op. cit.*, 20.10.1903, p. 22.
71. Sutcliffe, Anthony Richard, The Production of Municipal Houses in Birmingham, 1939-1966, (University of Birmingham School of History, History of Birmingham Project, Research Paper No. 5), 1968, Ref:663437 LF41.8, p. 6
72. Birmingham Housing Committee, Report of Representatives attending the 9th International Housing Congress, Vienna, 1910, 1910, Ref:229367, pp. 52-62.

73. Idem, p. 26. Virtually no contemporary observer noted the correlation, universally accepted by modern scholars, between poor health and the lack of a properly balanced diet. For a summary of the evidence on this, see Stephen Constantine, Social Conditions in Britain, 1918-1939, 1983, pp. 34-7.
74. Borough of Birmingham, Report of the Artizans' Dwellings Inquiry Committee, for presentation to the Council, 3rd June, 1884, 1884, Ref:155942 L41.8, p. 19; Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903, pp. 7 and 8.
75. See, for example, The Housing of the Labouring Classes, Public Debate (between J.V. Stevens and J. Moore Bayley) in the Central Hall Birmingham, 1901, Ref:156537.
76. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1906, op. cit., pp. 68 and 70; Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 24 and 38; Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903, pp. 25-6.
77. Housing Reform in Birmingham (a booklet) prepared for the information of visitors, Birmingham Housing Committee, c.1908, Ref:524288 LP 41.8, p. 5.
78. Sutcliffe, op. cit., p. 5.
79. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903, pp. 16-17; P.1.8.1900; P.4.6.1902; P.21.10.1903. Interestingly, Bowater, a socialist and a Housing Committee member who frequently disagreed with the Committee, appears instead to have disagreed with his fellow socialist Stevens on this question.
80. P.1.8.1900; G.6.3.1901; M.1.8.1900; M.19.6.1901; M.12.3.1902. For further information, see Anthony Sutcliffe, "Chapter 7: A Century of Flats in Birmingham, 1875-1973", in Anthony Sutcliffe (ed.), Multi-Storey Living: The British Working Class Experience, 1974, pp. 181-206.
81. G.18.6.1901; G.20.6.1901.
82. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 12.6.1906, pp. 8-9.
83. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, Ref:190259, p. 44.
84. Nettlefold, Housing Reform, op. cit., pp. 11, 14-15, and 18.
85. P.1.8.1900.
86. P.31.7.1900.
87. Housing Committee Minute 1,463.

88. P.31.7.1900.
89. Housing Committee Minutes 247-8.
90. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903, p. 3.
91. Gough, Objections, op. cit., p. 4; Housing Committee Minute 1,803.
92. P.29.7.1903.
93. Nettlefold (John Sutton), "Housing problem: present powers of local authorities", reprinted from the Local Government Officer and Contractor, Oct.5, 1907, (1907), Ref:661868 Lp 41.8, p. 2. Capitals in the original.
94. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 17.
95. Fallows, Facts, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
96. P.21.10.1903.
97. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 10-12. For the original 1884 Report, see Borough of Birmingham, Report of the Artizans' Dwellings Inquiry Committee, for presentation to the Council, 3rd June, 1884, 1884, Ref:155942 L41.8.
98. Nettlefold, Housing Problem, op. cit., p. 2.
99. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 43-4.
100. [Vince (C.A.), Notes on the Housing question in Birmingham, including the case against municipal house- building. Reprinted from the Birmingham Daily Mail. 1902. Ref:169358 L41.8. For the views of councillors see, for example, P.1.8.1900, speech by Cllr. Jones, P.4.6.1902, speech by Cllr. Stevens and G.29.7.1903, speech by Cllr. Hulse. For the Post's view see the editorial in P.4.6.1902. For an assenting view from the public, see Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to Report of 20.10.1903, p. 16.
101. Housing Committee Minutes 105, 119, 484 and 688; Housing Committee Report 3.6.1902, interleaved at Minute 255, pp. 8-10.
102. Housing Committee Report 6.1.1903, interleaved at Minute 516, p. 6.
103. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903, p. 7.
104. Gough, Objections, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

105. Housing Committee Reports, Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 9 and 31.
106. G.4.6.1902.
107. G.20.10.1903.
108. Health Committee Minute 6,933.
109. P.1.8.1900.
110. Thompson, HH, p. 4.
111. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 5. See also p. 17 and, for the detailed figures, pp. 10-13. The First World War, of course, made things even worse. See Robertson, ([Sir] J.), Housing and the Public Health, 1919, Ref: 277004, p. 141.
112. Smith, Memorandum, op. cit., p. 3.
113. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 24.
114. Heath, Artizans' Dwellings, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
115. Borough of Birmingham, 1884, op. cit., p. 19.
116. G.13.11.1901.
117. G.18.6.1901.
118. Staveley, op. cit., p. 24.
119. Richard Dennis, English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography, Cambridge, 1984, Chapter 4, pp. 110-140. The quotation is from p. 140.
120. Midland Conference held in the Council Chamber, Birmingham, October 27th, 1906. 1906. Ref:278323 L41.8, pp. 13-14 and 19.
121. Lane- Claypon, op. cit., pp. 303-4.
122. Fallows, Facts, op. cit., p. 15.
123. The Housing Question, A Leaflet issued by J.A.Fallows, M.A., for the Bordesley Independent Labour Party, Birmingham, March 1902. In Fallows (John Arthur), [A Collection of leaflets issued by J.A. Fallows. With Midland Socialist Pamphlets], 1902-5, Ref: 150067, pp. 1 and 2.
124. P.4.6.1902.

125. Smith, Memorandum, op. cit., p. 6.
126. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 45 and 83.
127. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 18.
128. Vince, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
129. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 3.12.1901, p. 7.
130. Housing Committee Report, 4.3.1902, loc. cit., p. 12.
131. G.23.10.1901.
132. P.1.8.1900.
133. P.21.10.1903.
134. P.19.6.1901.
135. Gough, Objections, op. cit., p. 7. See also The Housing Question in Birmingham, Report of the Committee appointed at a Meeting of Solicitors, Auctioneers, Architects, etc. interested in the Housing Question in Birmingham, Feb. 1909, 1909, Ref:320289, pp. 8-9.
136. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 23-4 and 32-4.
137. Staveley, op. cit., p. 36.
138. M.1.8.1900.
139. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., p. 24.
140. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Verbatim speech, 20.10.1903, p. 3.
141. Idem, 20.10.1903, p. 2.
142. Townroe (B.S.) The Slum Problem, 1928, Ref:350589, p. 42; P.21.10.1903.
143. Gough, Objections, op. cit., p. 8.
144. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 13-14; Nettlefold, Housing Problem, op. cit., p. 1.
145. P.11.3.1902, letter from Griggs.
146. G.20.6.1901. The "peaky blinders" were ruffians who were named after the razor blades which they stuck into the peaks of their caps.

147. G.18.6.1901; P.18.6.1901; P.8.3.1902.
148. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 43, 82 and 85-6.
149. Nettlefold, Housing Reform, op. cit., p. 1. See also Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 51ff. and 82-3.
150. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903. p. 8; City of Birmingham, Housing Committee Report ...1906, op. cit., pp. 4-5. On Octavia Hill, see Harry Barnes, The Slum: Its Story and Solution, 1931, pp. 142-155.
151. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903. p. 8; Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 65.
152. For the full text of Parts 1 and 2 of the Act see Thompson, HH, Appendix, pp. 1-25. As discussed below, Part 2 also made provision for the removal of obstructive buildings.
153. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, p. 17.
154. Housing Committee Minute 707.
155. P.5.3.1902.
156. G.5.3.1902; Staveley, op. cit., p. 21. For the Gazette's views, see also G.4.3.1902 and G.12.3.1902.
157. P.5.3.1902.
158. Thompson, HUTD, p. 27.
159. P.31.7.1900.
160. Nettlefold, Housing Problem, op. cit., p. 2; P.7.1.1903.
161. Vince, op. cit., p. 10.
162. P.12.3.1902.
163. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 26-7.
164. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., pp. 6-8.
165. G.4.3.1902.
166. Gough, Objections, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

167. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., p. 41.
168. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 23.
169. P.5.13.1902.
170. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 39-42.
171. Nettlefold, Housing Problem, op. cit., p. 3.
172. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 17-39.
173. Housing Committee Minute 134.
174. M.4.3.1902; P.12.3.1902.
175. Housing Committee Minute 304.
176. See, for example, Housing Committee Minute 358, plus other Minutes cited below. For a summary and condemnation by Nettlefold of the actions of the Health Committee under the terms of the 1875 Act, see Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 14-15. For a national summary of expenditures under Parts 1 and 2 of the 1890 Act, see Thompson, HUTD, pp. 19-20.
177. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 5. A number of cases were pending, or the houses were still undergoing repair, or had been converted to workshops.
178. Housing Committee Report, 6.1.1903, loc. cit., p. 2.
179. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., p. 45. See also Housing Committee Report, 28.7.1903, interleaved at Housing Committee Minute 773, p. 5.
180. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 143.
181. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 1.
182. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 4.
183. Health Committee Minute 7,099; Housing Committee Minute 646. For a summary of the work undertaken by the Health Committee before the establishment of the Housing Committee, including a small number of cases which they dealt with under the 1890 Act, see Health Committee Minute 6,933.
184. Parry and Morriss, op. cit., p. 326.
185. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 4. This figure, however, is suspiciously high, and may be a misprint.

186. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Verbatim Speech, 20.10.1903, p. 3.
187. Nettlefold, Housing Reform, op. cit., p. 2.
188. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 1.
189. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 6ff; P.4.6.1902.
190. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Verbatim Speech, 20.10.1903, p. 5. See also, Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 19. For some detailed figures see City of Birmingham, Housing Committee Report ... 1906, op. cit., p. 9.
191. Fallows and Hughes, op. cit., p. 2.
192. G.6.1.1903; G.7.1.1903.
193. Housing Reform in Birmingham, op. cit., p. 3.
194. Nettlefold, Housing Reform, op. cit., p. 8; Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Verbatim Speech, 20.10.1903, p. 3.
195. Idem, 20.10.1903, p. 2; Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 6-8, 28, and 32.
196. Fallows and Hughes, op. cit., p. 2; Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, p. 21; Staveley, op. cit., p. 14.
197. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 18-19; Housing Committee Minutes 980, 1,071-3, 1,546-7, and 1,789-92.
198. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., p. 51.
199. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., pp. 8 and 17.
200. The Housing Question, op. cit., p. 2.; P.4.6.1902.
201. P.11.3.1902. Nettlefold considered that "this contention is not illogical," arguing that it was precisely what happened with bad food. However, he added that "public opinion is not yet ready for such drastic action." - Practical Housing, op. cit., p40.
202. Vince, op. cit., p. 19.

203. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., p. 41;
Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1906, op. cit., p. 68;
Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 42 and 46. See
also, Idem, pp. 17, and 40-1; Nettlefold, A Campaign, op.
cit., pp. 5 and 23-4.
204. Housing Committee Reports to Council, op. cit., 20.10.1903,
p. 7. For proceedings against landlords, see Housing
Committee Minutes, passim. Minutes 1,803 and 1,919 detail
cases where the Committee stayed its hand on grounds of
hardship. Nettlefold, however, clearly disliked the
exercise of discretion in such cases. See Nettlefold,
Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 41-2.
205. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 5.
206. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 43.
207. Gough, op. cit., p. 3.
208. The Housing Question in Birmingham, op. cit., p. 6. The
report has an interesting quotation from Nettlefold in
support of its claim. For the details of the Department's
requirements, see Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit.,
pp. 143-4.
209. Nettlefold, Housing Reform, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
210. Vince, op. cit., p. 12.
211. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., p. 46.
212. Housing Committee Minute 902.
213. Gough, op. cit., p. 7.
214. The Housing Question in Birmingham, op. cit., p. 4.
215. Gough, op. cit., p. 5.
216. P.8.3.1902.
217. Housing Committee Minute 586.
218. Housing Committee Report, 6.1.1903, loc. cit., p. 2. This
greater freedom was one reason why Nettlefold instructed
Hill to use the 1890 Act and not the Act of 1875 - see
above.
219. Housing Committee Minute 732.
220. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 47.

221. Housing Committee Report, 6.2.1906, (interleaved at Housing Committee Minute 1418), pp. 2-7.
222. Gough, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
223. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 49.
224. Housing Committee Report, 6.2.1906, loc. cit., p. 7; Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, Birmingham Corporation (Housing Committee) v. John Roderick (re dwelling houses in No.14 Court, Navigation Street), Victoria Courts, Birmingham, July 28th, 1905, (1905), Ref:278510. In the metropolis around the turn of the century the Progressives on the London County Council also began by putting pressure on landlords, but later moved on, firstly to slum clearance and inner city construction, and later to the development of the suburbs. See Y.A. Yelling, "L.C.C. Slum Clearance Policies, 1889-1907", Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, new series, 7 (1982): 292-303. For more on the London's slums, and on policies to combat them, see: Anthony S. Wohl, The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London, 1977; and Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society, new edition, Harmondsworth, 1984, Chapter 9, pp. 179-196 and Chapter 10, pp. 197-214.
225. M.J. Daunton, House and Home in the Victorian City: Working Class Housing, 1850-1914, 1983, pp. 92-7.
226. For the full text of Section 38, see Thompson, HH, Appendix, pp. 15-17.
227. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 5.
228. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 144.
229. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 29.3.1904, p. 4.
230. Housing Committee Minute 390.
231. Housing Committee Minute 53.
232. Housing Committee Minutes 520 and 513.
233. Housing Committee Minutes 528-9.
234. Housing Committee Minute 987; P.7.1.1903; P.30.3.1904.
235. Report on the State of the Public Health in the Borough of Birmingham, by a Committee of Physicians and Surgeons, House of Lords, Reports on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of England, Sanitary Inquiry, 1842, (photostat copy), Ref:663359 L46.01., p. 195.

236. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 25-6, 40, 46, and 50.
237. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 16.
238. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1906, op. cit., pp. 66-7.
239. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
240. City of Birmingham Housing Committee Report, ... 1906, op. cit., p. 4.
241. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 29.3.1904, p. 5.
242. Housing Committee Report, 4.3.1902, loc. cit., p. 11.
243. Housing Reform in Birmingham, op. cit., p. 5.
244. Housing Committee Minutes, correspondence above Minute 37.
245. Idem.
246. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, passim. On Staveley's views, see also, Staveley, op. cit., pp. 21-24.
247. P.7.1.1903; P.29.7.1903.
248. M.29.7.1903.
249. Townroe, op. cit., pp. 54-5.
250. Gough, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
251. Housing Reform in Birmingham, op. cit., p. 7.
252. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 25-6; P.30.3.1904. The scale of the problem, as indicated above, also caused Nettlefold increasing anxiety with regard to the renovation of unfit houses. Townroe gives a figure of 44,000 back- to- backs which still existed in Birmingham in 1928, despite the fact that further construction of them was prohibited by the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909. - Townroe, op. cit., pp. 8 and 42. In Birmingham, the erection of back- to- backs was banned by the building bye-laws of 1876 - see below and P.12.3.1902, letter from Goodman.
253. Idem, pp. 49-50.
254. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 29.3.1904, p. 4.
255. P.5.3.1902.

256. P.7.1.1903; G.28.7.1903. On the socialist position, see also Fallows and Hughes, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
257. G.6.1.1903; G.7.1.1903; G.21.10.1903.
258. G.20.10.1903; G.23.10.1903; G.31.3.1904.
259. P.5.3.1902.
260. Housing Committee Report, 28.7.1903, loc. cit., p. 4.
261. P.30.3.1904.
262. Staveley, op. cit., p. 23.
263. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1906, op. cit., pp. 68-9.
264. City of Birmingham Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 5.
265. Again, for a summary of the evidence on this in the context of the inter- war period, see Constantine, loc. cit.
266. E.D. Simon, How to Abolish the Slums, 1929, Ref:354909, pp. 32-3. As noted below, there was a particular problem with old houses which had been constructed before the advent of building bye- laws and municipal controls.
267. Townroe, op. cit., p. 55.
268. Thompson, HUDT, p. 99.
269. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 26; Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1906, op. cit., pp. 70-6; Nettlefold, Housing Reform, op. cit., pp. 10-16 and 18; City of Birmingham, Housing Committee Report ... 1906, op. cit., p. 4.
270. Midland Conference, op. cit.
271. Thompson, HUDT, p. 99.
272. Birmingham and District Housing Reform Association, Objects, 1907, Ref:278483.
273. V4, p. 181.
274. Nettlefold, Housing Problem, op. cit., p. 4.
275. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 4.
276. Idem, pp. 55-6; Nettlefold, A Campaign, p. 6.

277. Borough of Birmingham, 1884, op. cit., pp. 9 and 15. The bye-laws were further tightened under the provisions of the Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act of 1883 - idem.
278. Health Committee Minute 6,933.
279. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, p. 48.
280. Green, op. cit., pp. 12-13; City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
281. Simon, op. cit., p. 98. According to Vince, the council refused to approve the draft Bill which led to the 1909 Act - V4, pp. 199-200.
282. Gauldie, op. cit., p. 151.
283. Midland Conference, op. cit., p. 5.
284. Nettlefold, Housing Reform, op. cit., p. 15.
285. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., p. 27.
286. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 18.
287. V4, pp. 199-208.
288. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 5. See also the section on empty houses above.
289. G.20.6.1901; P.4.3.1902; P.6.3.1902; P.8.3.1902; P.11.3.1902; P.12.3.1902.
290. M.5.3.1902; P.4.6.1902; Vince, op. cit., pp. 6 and 19.
291. Birmingham and District Housing Reform Association, loc. cit.
292. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., p. 17. See also: idem, pp. 43 and 83-4; Midland Conference, op. cit., p. 4; Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 62-3; P.4.6.1902.
293. Nettlefold, A Campaign, op. cit., pp. 6 and 25. See also Nettlefold, Practical Housing, pp. 5, and 7-12.
294. City of Birmingham, Housing Committee Report ...1906, op. cit., p. 6. See also, Housing Committee Report, 4.3.1902, loc. cit., pp. 12-13; and Housing Committee Report, 3.6.1902, loc. cit., p. 11.
295. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, p. 35.

296. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, p. 17.
297. Housing Committee Minute 63.
298. Housing Committee Minute 470A.
299. Housing Committee Minute 734 (wrongly numbered 744).
300. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903, pp. 3 and 7.
301. Housing Committee Minute 1,609.
302. Housing Committee Minute 1,827.
303. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 15. It was added, however, that the interpretation of the bye-laws on streets might more reasonably be complained of.
304. Idem, p. 11.
305. P.4.6.1902.
306. P.6.3.1902. The correspondent went on to give a number of other reasons which sound much more plausible.
307. City of Birmingham Municipal Housing Schemes, Opening of the 30,000th Municipal House, by the Rt. Hon. A. Greenwood, July 25th, 1930, Programme, 1930, Ref:375528, and press cutting from P.24.7.1930 inserted at end of volume.
308. City of Birmingham Municipal Housing Schemes, Opening of the 40,000th Municipal House, by (A.) N. Chamberlain, 23rd October, 1933, Ref: L41.8 413142.
309. Manzoni (H.J.) The Production of Fifty Thousand Municipal Houses, 1939, Ref:502242.
310. The latter factor was frequently alluded to at the time. See, for example, City of Birmingham Municipal Housing Schemes, Opening of the 40,000th Municipal House, op. cit., p. 34. For a pictorial history of the city's municipal housing, see Chapters 2 to 4 in Chinn, op. cit., pp. 31-131. For a detailed consideration of housing policy in the city which concentrates on the 1920's and which investigates the reasons for the policy changes of those years, see Philip E. S. Potter, "State Housing for General Needs: Policy and Practice in Birmingham, 1900-1935", M. Phil. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1983. In the United States of America, too, the First World War appears to have marked a watershed in housing reform policy. See Robert B. Fairbanks, "From Better Dwellings to Better Community: Changing Approaches to the Low-Cost Housing Problem,

- 1890-1925", Journal of Urban History, 11, 3 (May 1985), pp. 314-334. For a general discussion of municipal dwellings between the wars, see Burnett, op. cit., Ch. 8 Council Housing, 1918-1939, pp. 219-249.
311. P.31.7.1900.
312. Thompson, HUTD, p. 20. Italics in original. For the detailed evidence, see also idem, pp. 19 and 61-3, and Thompson, HH, pp. 44-6, 51-3, 76ff and 172.
313. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Verbatim Speech, 20.10.1903, pp. 4-7.
314. P.23.10.1901.
315. Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., p. 8.
316. Idem, pp. 28-38.
317. Idem, pp. 34, 38 and 36. Interestingly enough, however, Nettlefold's free market principles did not prevent him from urging "trades union leaders" to "assist by using their great influence to keep down the cost of building." - Idem, p. 87. On Nettlefold's assertion that municipal properties were not tenanted by the most needy, see the evidence on early council tenants in London in Gill Burke, Housing and Social Justice: The Role of Policy in British Housing, 1981, pp. 168-9.
318. Idem, pp. 84-5. After the First World War, there were serious allegations of waste and extravagance relating to such estate development, although it is unclear to what extent such charges helped to swing opinion behind schemes that were 100 per cent council controlled. See, for example, Housing Enquiry Committee, 1921-22, Newspaper cuttings collected by Sir David Brooks relating to Special Housing Enquiry Committee, Birmingham, 1921-2. (1921-2). Ref: 1439870.
319. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 61 and 63.
320. See, for example, Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., pp. 39, 45, 55 and 153-5; Nettlefold, A Campaign ..., op. cit., pp. 6, 19 and 23.
321. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., 20.10.1903, pp. 4-7; City of Birmingham, Housing Committee Report 3.6.1902, loc. cit., p. 12.
322. Idem, p. 11.
323. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 24, 28 and 33-4.

324. Idem, p. 12.
325. Staveley, op. cit., p. 31. For a fuller statement, see idem, pp. 29-35.
326. M.1.8.1900.
327. P.1.8.1900; P.4.6.1902; P.7.1.1903; P.21.10.1903.
328. Vince, op. cit., passim.
329. M.31.7.1900; M.5.3.1902; M.12.3.1902; M.4.6.1902; M.29.7.1903; M.20.10.1903.
330. P.1.8.1900; P.21.10.1901; P.12.3.1902; P.4.6.1902; P.21.10.1903.
331. P.1.8.1900; P.18.6.1901; P.11.3.1901.
332. Heath, Artisans' Dwellings, op. cit., pp. 8-9 and 11-12.
333. Borough of Birmingham, 1884, op. cit., p. 20.
334. City of Birmingham Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., pp. 13-15 and 17-18.
335. The Housing Question, No fads but good and cheap houses, Let Birmingham lead by avoiding land purchase and building, etc. Published by Birmingham and District Property Owners' Association, 1920, Ref:481605.
336. G.1.8.1900.
337. G.23.10.1901. See also G.11.11.1901.
338. G.4.3.1902. See also G.5.3.1902 and G.12.3.1902.
339. G.3.6.1902; G.4.6.1902. In the edition of 4.6.1902 even the Gazette's old Liberal adversary Alderman Cook was praised as "a mighty advocate of progress" in comparison to Nettlefold.
340. G.23.10.1903.
341. G.20.6.1901.
342. G.29.3.1904.
343. Health Committee Minute 6,933.
344. P.4.6.1902.
345. P.1.8.1900; P.4.6.1902. See also P.19.6.1901.

346. P.1.8.1900; P.29.7.1903.
347. Housing Committee Minute 31.
348. Housing Committee Minutes 561 and 1,747.
349. P.4.6.1902.
350. P.5.3.1902.
351. Housing Committee Minutes 71 and 76.
352. P.21.10.1903.
353. The Housing Question, op. cit., pp. 1-2; Fallows and Hughes, op. cit., pp. 2-4.
354. Smith, Memorandum, op. cit. pp. 4-12; City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit. p. 13.
355. Parry and Morriss, op. cit., p. 326. For a discussion of certain aspects of the debate on council housing which this study omits as peripheral to its main purpose, see the photocopied typescript of Powell, John Stocks, Unfit for Habitation: Being a Study into Municipal Attitudes towards the Provision of Housing in Birmingham, 1875-1914, 1976, Ref:LF 41.8 985520.
356. Nettlefold, Practical Housing, op. cit., p. 20.
357. Idem.
358. Housing Committee Report, 4.4.1905 (interleaved at Housing Committee Minute 1,299), p. 2.
359. G.31.3.1904. For the full text of Part 3, see Thompson, HH, pp. 25 ff.
360. Charles Anthony Vince, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Volume 3 (1885-1899), Birmingham, 1902, (hereafter referred to as V3), pp. 354-6.
361. Idem, pp. 356-9.
362. Vince, op. cit., p. 7. For a detailed consideration of the 1875 Act, together with an analysis of its implementation in London, see J.A. Yelling, Slums and Slum Clearance in Victorian London, 1986, especially pp. 9-30.
363. Idem. This record was, at least, better than in many other towns, including Oldham. There, according to Bedale, "under the 1890 Act, the local authority ... acquired no land and built no houses, a situation typical of most local

authorities at that time." See Caroline Bedale, "Property Relations and Housing Policy: Oldham in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", in Joseph Melling (ed.), Housing, Social Policy and the State, 1980, pp. 37-72. The quotation is from p. 47.

364. V3, pp. 359-363.

365. V4, p. 182. For further details, statistics and financial figures of the Ryder Street, Lawrence Street and Milk Street schemes, see V3 and V4, loc. cit., Thompson, HH, pp. 76 and 108-9, Thompson, HUTD, pp. 50, 54, 63 and 99.

366. Vince, op. cit., p. 31; Housing Committee Minutes 1,185 and 1,663.

367. Vince, op. cit., pp. 6-8; Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, op. cit., pp. 12-14 and 31-4.

368. Idem, pp. 31-2.

369. Idem, p. 13.

370. Fallows, Facts, op. cit., p. 14.

371. P.31.7.1900.

372. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 16 and 29-30; Nettlefold, A Housing Policy, 1905, p. 13.

373. Vince, op. cit., p. 4.

374. Fallows, Facts, op. cit., p. 14.

375. City of Birmingham, Special Housing Inquiry, op. cit., p. 6.

376. Quoted in G.21.6.1901.

377. The Housing Question, op. cit., p. 1.

378. Housing Committee Report, 3.6.1902, loc. cit., pp. 2-8.

379. P.4.6.1902.

380. V4, p. 188. Unreferenced information concerning Potter Street and Bordesley Green in this study is taken from V4, pp. 184-9.

381. Housing Committee Report, 4.4.1905, loc. cit., pp. 3-11.

382. P.5.4.1905.

383. Housing Committee Minutes 1,634, 1,664, 1,718 and 1,827.

384. Housing Committee Minutes 1,847 and 1,915.
385. V4, p. 189.
386. See, for example, the full reports of the Council discussions in P.19.6.1901; P.12.3.1902; P.4.6.1902; P.21.10.1903; and P.5.4.1905.
387. Housing Committee Report, 3.6.1902, loc. cit., pp. 8-10.
388. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Verbatim Speech, 20.10.1903, p. 6.
389. P.4.6.1902.
390. M.4.6.1902.
391. E.g. G.18.6.1901.
392. Housing Committee Minute 1,073; Fallows and Hughes, op. cit., p. 1; G.12.3.1902; P.4.3.1902; G.3.6.1902.
393. Housing Committee Minute 1,073; Fallows and Hughes, op. cit., pp. 1-3; P.12.3.1902; P.21.10.1903; M.12.3.1902. At first the Post had endorsed the scheme, and the Mail had reserved judgment on it - P.1.8.1900; P.19.6.1901; M.1.8.1900.
394. M.19.6.1901.
395. M.12.3.1902.
396. Housing Committee Reports, op. cit., Appendix to 20.10.1903, pp. 30-1; G.18.6.1901; Staveley, op. cit., p. 30.
397. G.20.6.1901; P.18.6.1901; G.6.4.1905.
398. G.1.8.1900; G.19.6.1901.
399. V4, p. 181.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.

In this concluding summary the two main objectives remain the same as throughout the study, namely to see what this application of Lukes' approach tells us, firstly about the local history of Birmingham and secondly about the validity of the approach itself.

With regard to the first objective, the claim periodically made in the previous chapters is here reaffirmed. If anything of value at all has been learned about the local history of Birmingham, then the research scheme is to some extent vindicated, since without that scheme the research would not have been undertaken in its present form in the first place. The research scheme is certainly unusual. In the field of British municipal history decision-making studies in Lukes' first dimension are rare. More prevalent are what would probably be categorised in Lukes' terminology as second dimensional positional studies of local elites and of the backgrounds of councillors and other important decision-makers. In addition, institutional studies of local governmental structures, of political parties, and of ratepayers' movements, etc., are fairly common. The question to be addressed, therefore, is whether this somewhat atypical research scheme, with its emphasis on issues and decisions, yields new findings about British local history which are worthy of the effort expended.

Two of the standard tests of the usefulness of a research technique are firstly whether it qualifies existing perspectives to be found in other secondary sources and secondly whether it generates new knowledge. The decision-making approach adopted here, it is claimed, does both of these things, though how significantly is perhaps open to debate. In isolation, it has been argued, any single approach to local history is inadequate. This was affirmed in Chapter 1 on the authority of Briggs, Morriss and others, and is here reiterated. To overcome this, the present study has tried, as far as possible, to adopt an eclectic methodology. But even so all aspects cannot be adequately investigated simultaneously, as is seen throughout this study in the less than comprehensive application of the theories associated with Molotch's "growth machine."

With regard to the ways in which this research modifies current interpretations, it is admitted that the study of decision-making in isolation may lead to a partial and unbalanced understanding. But so too may the study of political elites if the decision-making process is ignored. In general, the emphasis placed by previous scholars on positional studies of elites is endorsed in the present research. Throughout, for example, a powerful role is played by the municipal council and its attendant committees. With the exception of the urgent issue of the water supply there was also some scope for policy options and choices. In such cases, the distribution of political power among the members of a small elite may have influenced decision-

making, as indeed may other factors such as social class, religion, the structure of municipal government, and the intervention of political parties.

But an emphasis on the study of elites, even very powerful ones, can lead to difficulties. This was seen in Chapter 1 in the discussion of Linda Jones's investigation of the members of Birmingham Corporation in the late nineteenth century. She concludes (correctly) that laissez-faire business interests were important on the council. She then (correctly) attempts to calculate the effect of this on Corporation policy. But since she has (again correctly) confined her researches to manageable parameters she reaches conclusions which, on the evidence presented here, are not as reliable as the apparent correctness of her approach might lead one to suppose. For, as the chapters above demonstrate, the assumption of the primacy of laissez-faire doctrine on municipal policies is broadly correct in the case of housing, but only partly correct in the case of electricity, and largely inapplicable in the case of the water supply.

In Chapter 2 similar qualifications were made to the conclusions drawn by Hennock from his study of the backgrounds of local councillors in Birmingham and other cities. In the same chapter, various institutional and descriptive treatments of ratepayers' revolts were discussed, and their interpretations modified in the light of the ratepayer opposition to the

Corporation's decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill. Likewise, at various points in the study qualifications were suggested to some standard interpretations of a number of other subjects. These are too numerous for full recapitulation, but a few of the more significant ones relate to the role of the Conservative Party in local government, the position of the official and expert in municipal life, and the waning of an expansive belief in municipal reform after the great age of Chamberlain. Throughout, the aim has been to see the search for historical understanding as an eclectic and many-sided process. In this process, as indeed in the study of decision-making, it is neither possible nor desirable for there to be any single orthodoxy.

Overlapping these qualifications to some of the interpretations in the secondary literature are the new insights into the primary sources which have resulted from this application to Birmingham's local history of Lukes' dimensional approach. This has two main aspects. Firstly, a number of discoveries were made which were specifically relevant to the three case studies of water, electricity and housing. And secondly, some general conclusions were arrived at.

The application of Lukes' first dimensional perspectives to the conflict over Birmingham's Welsh water scheme throws into sharper relief the urgent constraints under which the municipality was acting. It indicates that in such cases, where,

in Lukes' terminology, vital real or welfare interests are involved, reluctant political actors may be constrained to act by the force of necessity. In this case, the nature of the issue itself played a significant role in the mobilisation of political bias, and influenced the decision arrived at. In this case indeed it is difficult to see any viable policy alternatives. When once this point is established, it becomes possible to characterise the dissentient ratepayers as reactionary and irrational, since for narrow and sectarian reasons they attempted to block a necessary reform. The emphasis placed by Dahl on decision-making conflict is criticised by Lukes but incorporated nonetheless into his delineation of the first or decision-making dimension of power. It is appropriate to the case study of the water supply where Lukes' first dimensional perspectives sharpen our understanding of struggle surrounding the decision to build the Welsh dams. Finally, in the chapter on water supply, light is shed on a number of topics which are not directly related to the perspectives of Lukes. These include a number of case studies of civic pride, an indication that a local bill from an important ministerial caucus may have influenced the timing of the 1892 general election, and glosses on the local history of London and on the history of Welsh nationalism.

The decision to municipalise the electricity supply industry, unlike the decision to construct the Elan valley waterworks, could have gone either way, and public ownership resulted, in Birmingham as in most other English towns, at the

height of the municipal trading movement and for reasons which might not have applied in different circumstances. Again, although the political analysis is sometimes complicated, Lukes' emphasis on conflict in the first dimensional decision-making process is appropriate to the case. It helps us to understand better the fundamental clash of interests between the municipalities and the private companies at Westminster, and the bargaining process in Birmingham by which the Corporation takeover was effected. Again, a number of side issues, largely incidental to Lukes' perspectives, were thrown up. These included the rudimentary technology of supply, the restricted nature of the customer base for the new illuminant and (perhaps surprisingly for Marxists) the cavalier treatment by the non-socialist Corporation of private capitalist interests.

The housing issue is more difficult to interpret within Lukes' first dimension for a variety of reasons. One of these is the problem of investigating the seeming "non- decision" to not build council houses. By altering and rejigging Lukes' definitional categories, however, (as is done throughout the study) a somewhat complicated analysis is possible. Added insights are also provided by the application of Lukes' third dimensional concept of real or welfare interests to the case, especially if this is linked to the distinction, as perceived at the time, between a public and a private good. Thus, an improved water supply would benefit many if not all local people, as would the more effective development of the infrastructure of

electricity supply which it was assumed would result from municipalisation. Housing reform, on the other hand, was thought by contemporaries (rightly or wrongly) to benefit mainly the private individuals to whom it applied. One might therefore expect support for it to be less broadly based, and, given the comparative weakness of the labour movement at that time, for radical housing reform to be edited out of the local political agenda, as, indeed, in this period, it was. As in the other case studies, if this analysis has any value, then so has the application of Lukes' perspectives from which it is derived. In the housing case study too, a number of aspects are illuminated which are not directly related to the application of Lukes' approach. These included the growing consensus in favour of slum reform, the role of Christians and socialists within the reform movement, the link between housing reform and transport improvements and the early history of the town planning movement.

As well as the findings pertinent to the three substantive chapters, the application of Lukes' approach has highlighted a number of more general factors relevant to Birmingham local history around 1900. Two of these have already been alluded to. Firstly, there was the concentration of local political power on the municipal council and its concomitant committees. Secondly, the Corporation's decision-making tended, to various degrees, to be constrained and influenced by the nature of the issue addressed. In addition, a third general factor, pointed to by Newton, has emerged. In all three case studies it is clearly

impossible to study municipal decision- making in a purely local context. Much of the opposition to the Elan valley proposals, for example, came from outside Birmingham. The Corporation's attempt to purchase the electricity supply undertaking was successful partly because of the weak bargaining position bequeathed to the company by the Electric Lighting Acts of 1882 and 1888. In the field of housing the legislative framework of the 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act exercised a powerful influence.

The second objective of this research has been to see what the application of Lukes approach tells us about its validity. Here it is necessary to stress that, within the wider eclectic methodology, Lukes' perspectives have been altered, and selectively utilised. For example, the study is mainly centred on Lukes' first dimension. It is thus for the most part a study of decision- making. The advantage of such an approach is that it means that practical research plans can be designed. By contrast, empirical investigations in the second and third dimensions are much more difficult. Thus, even before they were applied at all, it was found desirable to adapt and re- interpret Lukes' original conceptualisation of his three dimensions of power.

With regard to the first or decision- making dimension of power Lukes' definitional categories adequately covered all cases encountered. Sometimes, as with the conflict between the

Corporation and the dissentient ratepayers over the decision to promote the 1892 Water Bill, the analysis was fairly straightforward. Other instances, however, were less simple. For example, as demonstrated in the substantive chapters, the opposition of the L.C.C. to the Welsh water scheme and the indirect participation of actors such as slum dwellers and ratepayers in the housing debate, necessitate an abstruse and complicated analysis which, it could be argued, does not entirely justify the effort expended. First dimensional analysis in the form adapted from Dahl and postulated by Lukes might also have become somewhat simplistic. In the present study, therefore, an attempt was made to incorporate into it the concepts of mobilisation of bias and agenda control, both of which form part of the conceptual trappings of Lukes' second dimension.

It is argued that it would have been better if Lukes had never postulated his second dimension, the dimension of the so-called "non- decision", as a separate category. Most "non- decisions", as defined by Bachrach and Baratz in their early work, are, as Parry and Morriss point out, incapable of empirical investigation except in cases where they can be classified as decisions to do nothing, to do something else, or to change the rules and procedures of the decision- making process. Therefore, throughout the study, it is argued that Lukes' second dimension collapses in to his first, or, less commonly, into his third. A number of ostensible "non- decisions" were investigated in the course of the enquiry, but these were re- classified as actual

decisions of one sort or another. A particularly common category related to the timing of decisions, and on a number of occasions it had to be asked, after the fashion of Goodin, why decisions were not made either sooner or later. Thus the Corporation's failure, for twenty years, to act on a report of 1871 recommending the Elan valley as a source of water is not seen as some metaphysical "non- decision" in a supposed second dimension. Instead it is envisaged in terms of one or more actual decisions, either to shelve the recommendation and/or to develop local sources of supply instead. The Corporation's failure to municipalise the electricity supply company until the late 1890's is similarly characterised as an initial decision to endorse the establishment of a private supply company and thereby rule out, for the time being, the municipal option. And the council's apparent "non- decision" to not build a large number of council dwellings until after the First World War is seen in terms of actual decisions, in the pre- war period, to reject proposed municipal schemes for their construction.

However, two ideas developed by Schattschneider and by Bachrach and Baratz, and associated by Lukes with his second dimension of power, have been found most useful. These are the concepts of mobilisation of bias and of control of the political agenda. These are seen, however, as influencing actual decision-making within Lukes' first dimension of power. Thus, to give but one of many possible examples, in 1892 the Corporation mobilised an overwhelming political bias against the dissentient ratepayers

to secure the endorsement and implementation of the first dimensional decision to promote the Welsh water scheme. Since the concepts of mobilisation of bias and of agenda control are used here in a way different from that originally postulated, it has been found necessary to adapt and refine them to the purpose in hand. For example, given the stress laid Dahl on the role of conflict in the decision-making process (a stress which, as stated above, is criticised by Lukes but incorporated nevertheless into his first dimensional definitional categories) the mobilisation of two opposing biases (for example, the Corporation versus the recalcitrant ratepayers) has normally been postulated. This, it was found, adapted the concept to the facts of the case and enabled a sharper political analysis to be undertaken. The power to control the political agenda is likewise usually seen as the prize going to the victor in a decision-making conflict. For example, the Water Committee's victory over the Birmingham opponents enabled it to put the building of the Welsh dams onto the political agenda, and the Housing Committee's victory over local socialists and others enabled it to exclude large scale construction of municipal dwellings from it.

Although Lukes' categorisation of a second dimension of power is rejected, discussion of that dimension would seem an appropriate time to mention the role of elites. This is because these are often seen as operating at the level of the "non-decision", usually by mobilising their political bias to keep

radical change off the agenda. As explained in Chapter 1 the decision-making approach was not originated by Lukes but by Robert Dahl and the so-called pluralist school of political scientists based in the United States of America. As has been seen, a new spirit of ecumenism now appears to be influencing the previously bitter conflict in the U.S.A. between pluralists and elitists. For over twenty years, however, Dahl's decision-making approach was widely considered to underpin a liberal pluralist view of democracy and to discredit interpretations of American society based upon socialist theories of class. Lukes, however, asserts that the adoption of a pluralist methodology can lead to non-pluralist conclusions, and his claim is endorsed by the present research. In Birmingham around 1900 this decision-making study has shown that the power to influence political decisions was not spread widely among the population. In the cases of the water and electricity supplies and of Corporation housing policy it was centred upon the municipal council and its attendant committees and experts. It is not, therefore, possible to argue, as Dahl has been represented as doing in the case of modern New Haven, that the widespread democratic participation of others prevented elites and small groups of decision-makers from wielding effective power. To this extent, as explained above, the emphasis which previous research has placed upon the study of small groups of leaders is vindicated.

A further conclusion, frequently alluded to in this research, is that of all the varieties of elite theory on offer, that of Molotch's growth machine seems to be the most heuristically useful to the student of British local history. In the case of historic Birmingham, however, it appears, prima facie that any such local growth machine, contrary to the analysis of Molotch, was based on industrial rather than on landed interests. Given the interest which Molotch's theories have generated in the U.S.A. it seems strange that no other British local historian appears as yet to have mentioned them.

Perhaps because of the nature of the research scheme no examples of the operation of power in the third dimension, as defined by Lukes and studied by Gaventa, were discovered. In other words, there appeared to be no case where politicians, by the manipulation of false consciousness or by other means, prevailed upon people to act against their own real interests. In an indirect reference to the concept of real interests Parry and Morriss point out that not all non- decisions can be re-classified as decisions. A minority, they add, mostly those involving false consciousness, are of a different kind. These, it is claimed here, are best placed in Lukes' third dimension of power, thus completing the collapse of his ill- fated second dimension. It is worth adding, perhaps, that no examples of such non- decisions were discovered in the course of the present research. Thus, perhaps because of the nature of the research scheme, direct analysis of third dimensional power is absent from

this study. In the case of the Welsh water scheme, in fact, Lukes' scenario is neatly stood on its head. In that particular case, the Corporation forced their Birmingham opponents, against their own preferences, to act in their own real or welfare interests and to pay higher water rates for the benefit of their health rather than lower ones to their health's detriment.

The main problem with investigating power in Lukes' third dimension is that it necessitates making contestable assertions about real interests. As Morriss, and Lukes in his later work, point out, however, with welfare interests, such as those relevant to water supply and housing, widely acceptable assumptions about real interests can be made. Despite the absence of third dimensional analysis, therefore, the concept of real interests was found to be of value and was utilised as appropriate. For example, the irrationality and baselessness of the opposition to the Welsh water scheme was partly predicated upon subjective judgments concerning the real or welfare interests of the dissentient ratepayers.

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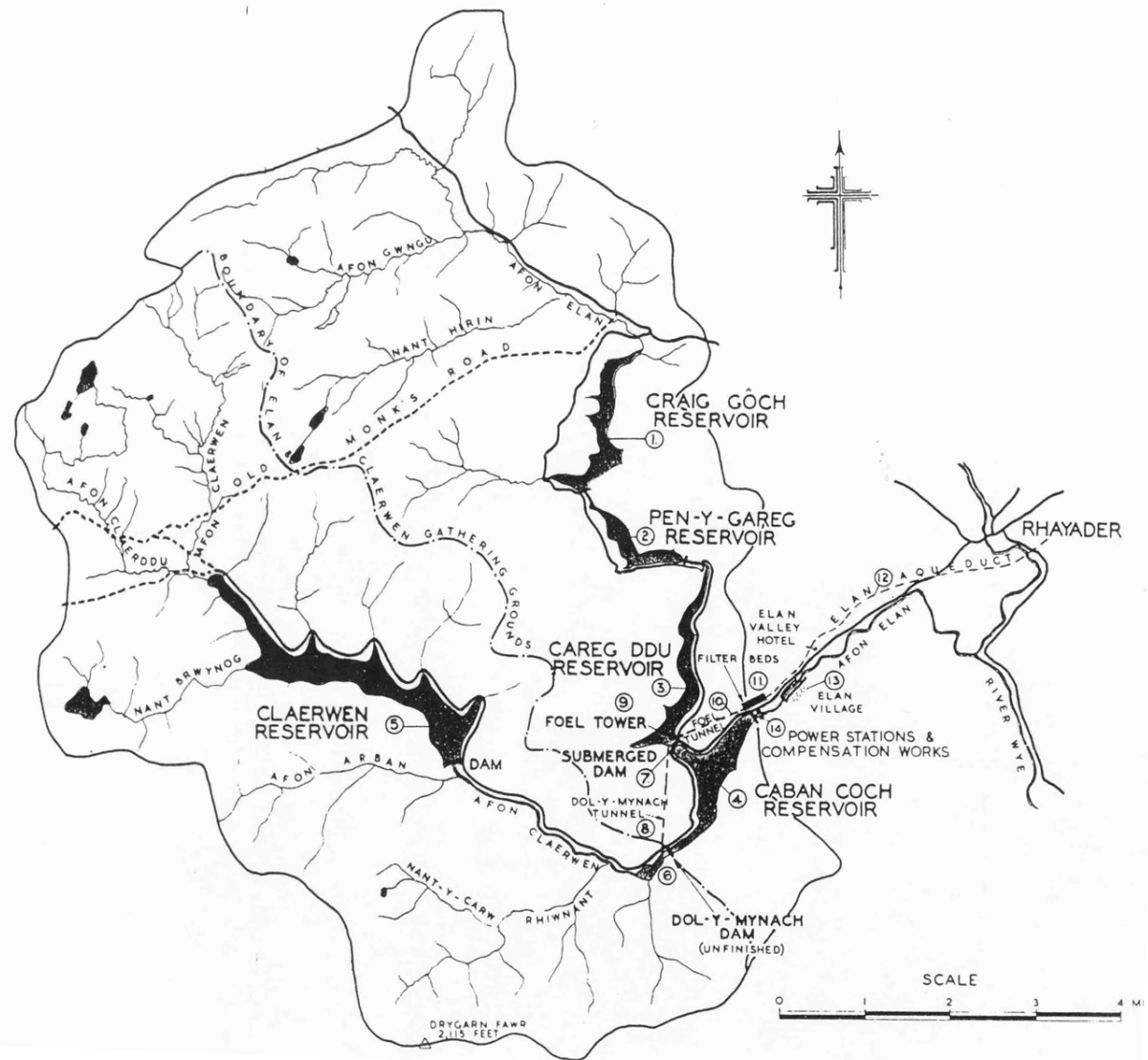
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Appendix 1

GATHERING GROUNDS OF RIVERS ELAN & CLAERWEN

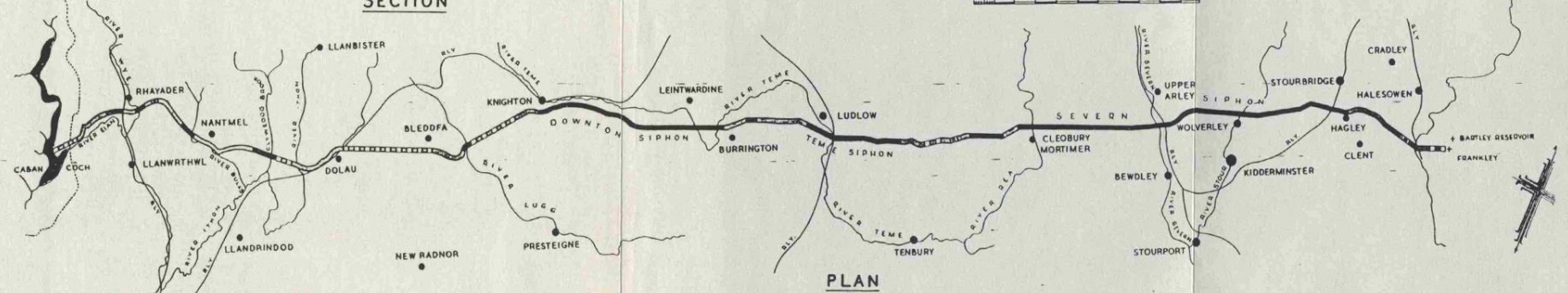
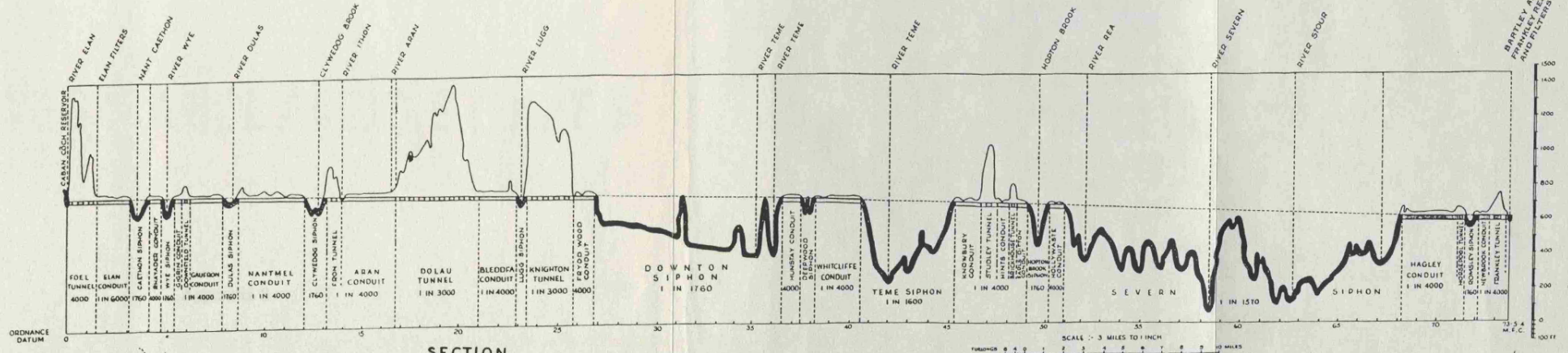
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Reproduced from City of Birmingham Waterworks: A Short History of the Development of the Undertaking, with a Description of the Existing Works and Sources of Supply. Printed by James Upton Limited, Birmingham. No date. Opposite page 28.



Appendix 2

ELAN AQUEDUCT



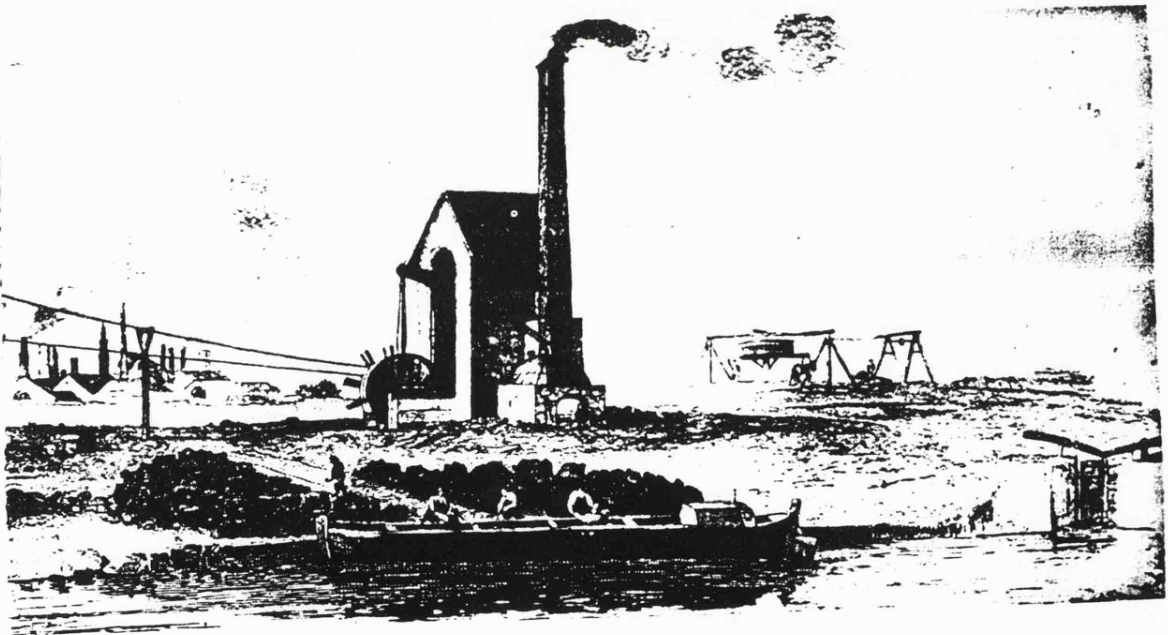
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Appendix 3



The POLYTECHNIC
WOLVERHAMPTON

WEST MIDLANDS STUDIES



VOLUME 13

1980

The Municipalization of the Electricity Supply Industry in Birmingham

by L. W. Jones *

The 1882 Act

Between 1882 and 1888, the legal framework within which the debate about the municipalization of Birmingham's electricity supply took place was that set up by Chamberlain (then at the Board of Trade) in his **Electric Lighting Act of 1882**. A flurry of Stock Exchange excitement had followed the public demonstration of the utility of the electric light at the Paris Exhibition of 1881 and at the Sydenham Crystal Palace in 1882. Speculative companies sprang up paying large sums for patent rights for filaments and dynamos, the right to use these inventions in specified areas being farmed out to subsidiary concerns. At Westminster, the newly-formed companies deposited numerous bills sponsoring their plans and a complicated pattern of competing interests emerged, the electrical pressure groups being opposed by public and private gas companies fearing competition and by local corporations determined to prevent indiscriminate breaking-up of their streets. Some Corporations in towns where gas was privately-owned applied for legislative sanction for their own schemes in an attempt to secure a publicly-owned rival to gas. The 1882 Act was an attempt to impose order on this confused situation. Under it, the Board of Trade was to grant licences not exceeding seven years for the supply of electricity to local authorities or, with local authority consent, to companies or private persons. The Board could also grant provisional orders not exceeding twenty-one years to local authorities or to companies or private persons without local authority sanction. No restrictions were imposed on profits, dividends or the raising of new capital but local authorities were given the right of purchase of the companies' undertakings, after the expiration of the provisional orders, at the market value of the plant.

The Gas Committee in Birmingham had suspended consideration of the private bills relating to the city until after the passage of the Government's measure. With the Bill itself they were largely satisfied, refusing to join other local authorities in attempts to gain further concessions to local authority interests after it had passed the Commons Select Committee. Since six notices of intent to apply for provisional orders to undertake electricity supplies in Birmingham were soon lodged, however, and the Council itself had received two requests for sanction, a Council Meeting was convened for 31st October, 1882, at which the Gas Committee was to present a Special Report.

Local authorities all over the country were faced with the same problem and it was difficult to delay the issue for long because prompt action was needed on provisional orders granted to local authorities so that they should not be able to exclude the companies whilst taking no action themselves. Many corporations, particularly those owning their own gas undertakings, took alarm at the prospect of the creation of a privately-owned and possibly highly lucrative monopoly within their areas and themselves applied for licences.¹

In Birmingham, there was a groundswell of opinion advocating the same policy. At the Special Council Meeting, Councillor Lawson Tait referred to 'the too great enthusiasm which existed now on the question of the electric light' among

the local people and the Mayor himself, Alderman Avery, admitted that his first reaction was that 'an expenditure of £50,000 or even a larger sum would not be at all too much to employ upon a practical experiment of such magnitude and where the interests involved so widely affected the convenience and comfort of the community.'² The Birmingham Daily Post discerned 'a general feeling that for the purpose of preventing the creation of a new monopoly in private hands, to ensure the control of the streets, and thus to promote public convenience, and also to limit as far as possible, injurious competition with Corporation gas-lighting, the supply of electric light ought to be in the hands of the local governing authority.' Among the other large authorities, continued the Post, Manchester had already obtained powers to supply the electric light and Liverpool intended to apply for a provisional order. The estimates of the Gas Committee as to the cost of an experiment along these lines were 'much too high' and, until they had been investigated by electrical experts, 'the Town Council will hardly be in a position to decide whether it should or should not ask for a provisional order on account of the town.'³

But the opinions of the Town Clerk and the Gas Committee were different. The Town Clerk, Edward Orford Smith, in his report to the Gas Committee on the question, concluded that 'it may . . . be the wiser course to permit speculators to try the experiment at their own risk, taking care that stringent provisions are inserted in the Provisional Order with reference to the breaking up of the streets, the area and conditions of supply, and the shortening as far as possible of the period of 21 years for the compulsory purchase of the undertaking, in the event of its proving commercially successful.' The effect of Section 27 of the Act was 'to place the local authority in a position to purchase upon the most favourable terms, in the event of the supply of Electricity proving a useful and profitable undertaking.' At that time, there was 'absolutely no evidence as to the commercial value of Electric Lighting' and 'equal uncertainty respecting the restrictions and obligations which a Provisional Order might impose.' Although 'the hand of every important local authority in the United Kingdom is at present being forced by certain speculative companies or individuals who have served applications for licences and notices for Provisional Orders in a wholesale manner throughout the country', nevertheless 'there is an utter absence of all the information that would appear to be desirable in the case of a municipal authority before embarking upon these unknown powers and responsibilities.'⁴

The Gas Committee, in their report to the Council, took a similar line. The clauses of the new Act would effectively prevent the creation of a private monopoly since, as the Town Clerk had already argued 'more than one undertaking may be authorized in the same area; a licence could only be granted with local authority approval, local authority consent also being required to renew the licence after seven years and even a provisional order would only run for a maximum of 21½ years, after which the local authority could purchase 'on favourable terms.'⁵ If a

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private company undertook the supply, satisfactory arrangements could in all likelihood be made by which the local authorities themselves would be contracted to break up the streets. The Gas Committee were also dissuaded from advocating local authority initiative because of the likely estimated cost — 'the minimum amount of capital that will be required must considerably exceed £4 per lamp.' — and the onerousness of the likely obligations and responsibilities.⁶ The Committee concluded 'that no sufficient reason can be shown to induce the Corporation to enter on a work which cannot fail to bring it anxieties, difficulties, and arduous labours, without the recompense of contributing to the welfare of the community as a whole, and which would involve financial responsibilities with the uncertainty of adequate, if any, return', especially when the companies could be forced to undertake the work on terms extremely favourable to the Corporation. The Committee recommended that the Council make no application to undertake the supply but that, instead, the Committee should be authorised to negotiate with interested companies to secure such points as control of the streets, adequate safety provisions and the limitation of the term of the concession and that, on the basis of these negotiations, the Committee should be authorised to support or oppose the applications made by private companies to the Board of Trade.⁷

In Council, there was unanimous support for the Gas Committee. Alderman Kenrick, proposing the adoption of their Report, expressed himself 'exceedingly surprised to find the line of policy which had been pursued by so many corporations in applying for powers of supply themselves, naming Liverpool and Manchester as examples. He even discerned 'a distinct advantage in the two kinds of illuminant being managed by distinct bodies' since this would promote healthy competition. The Mayor, Alderman Avery, had by now concluded that 'few people who were paying £10 per year for gas would care to pay £40 or more for the increased advantages of electricity' and Councillor Hart hoped that the brevity of the discussion 'would not in after years be quoted as another example of the tyranny of the caucus.' So convincing were the Report's arguments that the resolution adopting it was passed by 54 votes to nil.⁸

These events in the Council Chamber were met, for the most part, by silence on the part of the citizenry. There was virtually no correspondence on the subject in the local press and the newspaper editorials in general concurred with the Council's action. As soon as the Report of the Gas Committee was published, the *Birmingham Daily Mail* commended its authors as being 'most wise and discriminating in their determination'⁹ and, after the Special Council Meeting, another *Mail* editorial described the Report as 'masterly' and the result of the discussion as 'completely satisfactory.'¹⁰ In addition, the *Post* had, by now, changed its former opinion, an editorial just before the Council Meeting that 'Though at one time we thought it would be better for the Corporation to obtain immediately control of the new light, we are now convinced — reluctantly convinced — that it will be better to try the experiment by means of liberal arrangements with . . . the companies.'¹¹

Electricity in Birmingham, 1882 — 1897

To a contemporary, writing shortly after 1882, subsequent events in the town had proved 'an entire justification of the wisdom of the Committee.' The Gas Committee's Report had already 'had a marked influence on the action of other Corporations, nearly all of whom proceeded to withdraw their applications for authority to supply, and to leave the field in the possession of the companies.'¹²

In Birmingham, only the Incandescent Lighting Company (Limited) persisted with its application, obtaining, after agreement with the Gas Committee, a provisional order to light the town centre for 16 years, an order which subsequently lapsed because of inactivity on the part of the company.

At Westminster, the 1882 Act was not the final settlement of the Electricity question. Three bills, including one government measure, were all unsuccessfully canvassed in 1886 and, in 1888, the *Electric Lighting Act* introduced important new provisions. Local authority permission was now required before the granting of any provisional order, but the Local Government Board had the right to overrule local objections if it deemed them unreasonable. The maximum period before compulsory purchase was extended to 42 years, but the terms of purchase remained for the most part the same as those of 1882.¹³

In Birmingham, the immediate effect of the 1888 Act was to re-open the whole question of electric lighting within the town for, as soon as the Royal Assent had been received for the measure, the firm of Chamberlain and Hookham applied for a provisional order to undertake the Birmingham supply. The Electric Lighting Sub-Committee reported on this development to the General Purpose Committee meeting of 28th January, 1889. They were 'of the opinion that it is not now desirable for the Corporation of Birmingham, as the local authority, themselves to acquire the power to supply Electricity within the city.' Addressing themselves to the precedent of 1882 they were still of the opinion that 'it would be unwise in the present state of electrical science to embark the money of the ratepayers in the establishment of an electrical installation.' The Sub-Committee argued that, although the promoters had offered the Corporation an option to purchase the entire undertaking after a lapse of only two years, 'there is nothing in this offer that would induce them to recommend the Council to avail themselves of it.' A Mr. Henry Lea, of the firm of Lea and Thornbery, Birmingham, had been consulted and he had come out strongly against the likely profitability of a number of small stations scattered throughout the town, such as Chamberlain and Hookham envisaged. No public money should be spent on electric lighting, he stated, until the success of the Deptford Generating Station, then in course of construction, had been ascertained. 'Should this project prove successful . . . the Local Authority of Birmingham may do wisely to give serious consideration to the proposal to themselves undertake the supply of electricity from some outlying station where land, coal and water are abundant and cheap, and where noise and vibration are of no moment; but until a successful experiment of the kind indicated has been made, I think that the Local Authority should properly abstain from becoming their own manufacturers of electricity.'¹⁴ With this powerful technological argument to add to the armoury of debating points stockpiled in 1882, the Sub-Committee succeeded in inducing the General Purposes Committee to adopt their Report word for word, the Mayor presenting it to the Council at their meeting of February 6th, 1889.¹⁵

The bulk of the discussion at the Council Meeting was concerned with the serious differences of opinion as to the wording of the proposed Provisional Order which had taken up the second half of the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee's Report.¹⁶ Alderman Powell Williams, M.P., the General Purposes Committee's main critic, 'thoroughly agreed with the report that it would not be desirable for the City of Birmingham, on its own responsibility, to establish the supply of the electric light, but he was at variance with the committee in relation to other parts of its recommendations.' For him the question was urgent. 'He had read a memorial signed by 228 shopkeepers in Birmingham who were willing

to receive the light, including Messrs. Holliday and Sons, Chamberlain, King and Jones, Lloyds Bank, the Birmingham Gazette Company, the Theatre Royal, the Queen's Hotel, the Great Western Hotel, and a considerable number of private consumers, some of them outside the area proposed by the committee.' In view of these proclivities in some of the city's largest ratepayers, he proposed an amendment (subsequently withdrawn) that Chamberlain and Hookham's application should be approved, with the Board of Trade left to arbitrate as to the precise terms. Only Councillor Barclay, during a speech unsuccessfully attempting to refer the whole matter back to committee to look at the position in other towns, hinted that 'If the venture was likely to prove a success when undertaken by a company, it would be equally likely to do so under the management of the Corporation.' The Committee's report was carried unanimously, only Alderman Powell Williams and his seconder declining to vote.¹⁷

Over the issue of municipalization, the local press solidly concurred with the opinion of the General Purposes Committee and of the Council. The Gazette thought that an experiment in electric lighting 'is good enough, perhaps, for speculative investment of private capital, but not good enough to justify the risking of public funds.'¹⁸ The Post noted 'one thing . . . with satisfaction — namely that no encouragement was given yesterday to a proposal which distinctly pointed to the Corporation itself undertaking the supply of electric light. We have already too many enterprises on hand to justify even the thought of another of such magnitude.'¹⁹ The strong criticisms levelled at the General Purposes Committee by both the Mail and the Post were concerned with the issue of urgency first raised by Alderman Powell Williams. For the Mail, 'The provision of the electric light on a more extended scale is becoming an absolute necessity if we are not to alter our motto on the new coat of arms to "Backward." . . . The shopkeepers who ask for the electric light do possess a claim upon the attention of the Council, comprising as they do, the directors of some of the most important retail houses in Birmingham.'²⁰ The Post was concerned 'That speculators are not likely to be tempted to enter the field . . . We have waited for years, and until now nobody has come forward; and, under the conditions imposed by the Council, we doubt if anybody will make another attempt in a hurry.'²¹ In practice, such arguments, like those of Alderman Powell Williams, implied a more conciliatory attitude by the Council to the Company and the desire of shopkeepers and businessmen in the town centre for the electric light seems to have been one of the key factors in influencing the General Purposes Committee to reach a compromise with the Company over the terms of the Provisional Order.²²

The ultimate settlement of the differences between the Council and the Company over the terms of the Provisional Order was enshrined in a bill confirming the Birmingham Electric Lighting Order, 1889, which received the Royal Assent on the 12th August of that year. Chamberlain and Hookham then promptly transferred their concession to Messrs. Holmes and Vaudrey of Liverpool who, early in 1890, succeeded in promoting the Birmingham Electric Supply Company to supply light to the city under the terms of the Provisional Order.²³ The Company pushed ahead at once with the construction of a central generating station which was officially opened by the Mayor, Alderman Clayton, on April 22nd, 1891. In his speech on this occasion, the Mayor made mention of 'the goodwill of the Corporation towards the newest Birmingham venture', claiming that the Council 'had not adopted any sort of dog-in-the-manger policy . . . The new company

would put the Gas Department on their mettle, and that, in its turn, would put the Electric Light Company on theirs, and thus the two concerns would work hand in hand for the benefit of the town.'²⁴ But the steady and sustained success of the new Company throughout the 1890's was soon to shake Council members from such complacent attitudes.

In 1892 and 1893, the main issue between the Corporation and the new Company was the question of the extension of the area of supply. Towards the end of 1892, the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee of the General Purposes Committee met with a deputation from the Directors of the Company who explained that they intended to apply for a new Provisional Order extending the area of supply to include the Jewellery Quarter and the suburb of Edgbaston. 'The Sub-Committee came to the conclusion that at present there was not sufficient evidence of the commercial results of the Company's operations within the City to enable the Corporation to form a reliable judgment as to the advisability of themselves undertaking the supply of electricity, and as, pending such judgment, it was manifestly unwise to allow the Company to appropriate the most profitable districts, they could not advise the Council to sanction the Company's application for a further Order.'²⁵ The General Purposes Committee again adopted wholesale the report of its Sub-Committee and successfully passed it through the Council meeting of 6th December, 1892, with hardly any discussion. As at the meeting of February 6th, 1889, Councillor Barclay's was the sole voice raised in favour of a possible Corporation scheme, he having 'no doubt whatever that if the Corporation would take the manufacture of the light into their own hands, they would be able to charge less than other people in consequence of the large number of people who would be able to use the power during the day.'²⁶ The Mayor, Alderman Lawley Parker, however, in moving the adoption of the General Purposes Committee Report, successfully argued the need for caution until the profitability of the new illuminant became known²⁷ and, in the face of such formidable opposition, the Company withdrew their application.

The matter, however, was soon raised again. In their Report to the Council Meeting of July 25th, 1893, the General Purposes Committee recorded that they had received another notice from the Company of their intention to apply for a Provisional Order extending their area of supply to cover the Jewellery Quarter and the suburb of Edgbaston. Meanwhile the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee had collected information on the progress of electricity in other towns. 'From these returns . . . and from an examination of the balance sheets of the principal London Companies, your Committee find that at present, at all events, the profits made from the supply of electricity are inconsiderable.' The only justifiable motive for thwarting the Company would be the Council's desire to undertake the supply in the new areas themselves, a scheme which would, in any case, entail the purchase of the Company's existing undertaking. The supply would not constitute a monopoly and electricity, unlike water, was not an 'absolute necessity of existence.' There were sufficient safeguards against damage to the streets and 'it can scarcely be expected that there will be any economy in working expenses in the hands of the Corporation.' In Birmingham, electricity faced 'serious competition with a cheaper gas supply' and a Corporation scheme 'would necessitate a large addition to capital expenditure . . . and it is not likely that this expenditure would be highly remunerative.' The Company's application should, therefore, only be opposed on clauses and should be referred back to the General Purposes Committee to act as they thought fit.²⁸

In moving the adoption of this report before the Council, the Mayor, Alderman Lawley Parker, had little difficulty in carrying the majority of the members with him. Alderman Johnson pointed to the three drawbacks of '(1) no profit; (2) an immediate large expenditure of money; and (3) an immediate addition to their work' as arguments against a Council scheme, while Alderman Pollack, the Gas Committee Chairman, supported his general contention that 'in considering the question, the interests of the Gas Department might be left out' with some figures of gas consumption in Market Hall Ward which purported to demonstrate that the introduction of the electric light there had had little effect on the sale of his own product. Yet again, Councillor Barclay was the voice crying in the wilderness. 'They were making a great mistake, and . . . the lessons of the past in reference to the gas and water undertaking should have taught them different . . . He felt convinced that the Birmingham Corporation might well undertake electric lighting now, and he was quite satisfied that they should not lose money by it. Gas did not compare with it for indoor lighting.' At the end of the debate, Councillor Barclay's hand alone was raised in opposition.²⁹ The next day the *Mail* editorial, while agreeing that 'Mr. Barclay is . . . quite right in anticipating a time when the Corporation will have to buy up these company rights', reaffirmed, after the usual arguments, that 'the General Purposes Committee are acting with a wise caution in refusing to enter on any such project at present.'³⁰ The Company thus obtained sanction for its enlarged area by another Order of 1894, the Corporation obtaining, as a condition of its assent, certain reductions in the costs charged to consumers.³¹

During the next few years, the Company underwent a period of steady expansion, profits swelling from £5,869 in 1895 to £9,181 in 1896 and £12,962 in 1897.³² To enable the Directors to undertake the supply of light in the Jewellery Quarter, a resolution was successfully introduced at the Annual Shareholders' Meeting of 7th March, 1895, authorizing the issue of another £100,000 worth of £5 shares and, thereby, increasing the Company's nominal capital to £200,000.³³ In their Report submitted to Shareholders on 12th March, 1896, the Directors were able to report that the new stations at Newhall Street and Edgbaston, built to supply the two newly sanctioned areas, were already 'in full working order.' In Edgbaston 'orders already received are encouraging', while in the Jewellery Quarter 'the demand for current, both for lighting and power purposes, . . . is most satisfactory.'

Every year brought additions to the Company's works and the number of 16 c.p. (candle power) lamps or their equivalent to order increased from 12,138 on December 31st, 1894, to 18,199 at the end of 1895, to 25,876 for 1896 and to 39,232 for 1897. In 1896, a modified scale of charges was introduced for the use of motors and, in 1897, general reductions of charges were made which, argued the Directors, 'have been amply justified by the greatly increased demand for current.'³⁴ This steady boom in company business led to some reappraisal of Corporation policy and, on the 4th May, 1897, the electricity question was raised once again at the Quarterly Meeting of the Council.³⁵

Municipalization, 1897-1900.

At the end of April, 1897, the members of the General Purposes Committee were evidently 'somewhat adverse' to raising the question of a possible municipalization and 'a strong feeling upon the part of other members of the City Council' appears to have been the main motive force leading to a reconsideration of the matter.³⁶ The necessary motion, introduced before the Council by Councillor Thomas Fletcher,³⁷ proposed 'That it be an instruction to the

General Purposes Committee to consider and report as to the desirability or otherwise of the council purchasing the undertaking of the Birmingham Electric Supply Company Limited; also to ascertain and report whether and upon what terms the company are willing to transfer their undertaking to the Council.'³⁸ Early in the debate, the Lord Mayor, Councillor James Smith, stated that 'the General Purposes Committee were prepared to adopt Mr. Fletcher's suggestion and he hoped the Council would refrain from further consideration until they had the whole matter fully before them' and, shortly afterwards, the resolution was carried unanimously, even Councillor Howard Lane, the arch-enemy of municipal socialism and Corporation trading, opining that 'He did not think . . . any harm would be done by making inquiries.'³⁹ 'The members of the Council', according to the *Post's* interpretation, 'recognised that it would be wiser to postpone discussion until a complete statement of facts and arguments had been laid before them.'⁴⁰

Meanwhile, local press opinion was undergoing a rather spectacular 'volte face' the *Gazette* now opining that 'We advised municipalization at the outset, and we are still in favour of the principle',⁴¹ while the *Mail*, breaking its silence of 1889 with regard to the municipalization issue, confessed to 'a feeling of surprise that the matter has not reached the City Council's agenda paper long before this.'⁴² Only the *Post* seemed undecided, pointing to such factors as the inflated price of the Company's shares, 'the advent of the incandescent gas mantle' and the fact that 'less than half of the shops in New Street and High Street and Corporation Street are lighted with electricity.'⁴³

The Council's resolution was considered by the General Purposes Committee at their meeting on the 17th May, 1897, which decided to refer the whole matter to a Sub-Committee consisting of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen Cook, Johnson and Pollack.⁴⁴ This newly constituted Electric Lighting Sub-Committee held its first meeting on the 21st May, 1897, appointing Alderman Johnson as its Chairman.⁴⁵ It was also decided to invite the Chairman and Directors of the Company to meet the Sub-Committee on the 31st May, 1897, to state whether they were prepared to sell and, if so, at what price.⁴⁶

The Directors of the Company considered the Sub-Committee's invitation at their meeting of 27th May, 1897, when it was decided that Mr. Vaudrey, the Managing Director, together with Mr. George Albright, a Director, and Mr. Pinsent, the Company's Solicitor, should be in attendance as suggested but that it was 'essential that (the Sub-) Committee should first name the price which (the) General Purposes Committee will unanimously and heartily recommend Council to pay' and that 'if that price (is) one which (the) Company's shareholders will probably not accept then . . . negotiations fall through.'⁴⁷ The meeting then took place as arranged on the 31st May, 1897, when the question of municipalization was informally discussed.⁴⁸

Between the 31st May, 1897, and the 4th January, 1898, the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee of the General Purposes Committee did not meet and the Town Clerk made use of this interval to collect some figures concerning municipalization in other towns. Among these, Liverpool had municipalized in 1896, obtaining Parliamentary sanction for a period of 42 years to repay the necessary £500,000 loan and, by the end of 1896, had shown a profit of £11,375 on the venture. Manchester had obtained its own order to supply in 1892 and its concern had amassed a profit of £16,812 for the year ending 31st March, 1897.⁴⁹ Encouraged by these figures, the Sub-Committee instructed the Lord Mayor to obtain further information from the Company as to the possibility of municipalization.⁵⁰

The Company Directors, for their part, at their meeting on January 27th, 1898, reconstituted their own negotiating committee, authorising it to conclude a preliminary agreement on the terms suggested at the meeting of 31st May, 1897.⁵¹ On 25th February, 1898, the Lord Mayor was instructed by the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee to ascertain whether the Company Directors were willing to sell on the basis of £10.10s.0d. per share subject to certain conditions⁵² and the Lord Mayor, Alderman Beale, subsequently despatched a lengthy letter to the Company's solicitor.

In this letter, dated the 28th February, 1898, the Lord Mayor stated that the Sub-Committee 'recognise the necessity of taking market price as the basis for fixing the purchase' and, as well as agreeing to pay the 10 guineas per share, or £420,000, for the undertaking, also offered to leave the Company enough capital to pay a five per cent dividend for 1897.⁵³ In return, the Lord Mayor asked for an independent valuation of the Company's plant and for the right to withdraw from the bargain if Parliament imposed terms upon the Corporation which it was unable to accept.⁵⁴ On the same day, the Company solicitor replied on behalf of the Company's negotiating Sub-Committee, agreeing to most of the Lord Mayor's proposals and suggesting that Sir Frederick Bramwell should undertake the independent valuation. But £425,000 was the minimum price which the Sub-Committee was willing to recommend to the full Board.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the broad pattern of agreement which was beginning to evolve was consolidated by extensive personal discussions between the Lord Mayor and the Company representatives and the Company's Sub-Committee reported to the Directors at their meeting of 10th March, 1898, that, although the Council, unlike the Company, had left themselves an easy loophole through which to escape, they were not likely to make use of it, even if the favourable period of 42 years, which the Council was asking Parliament to sanction for the repayment of the loan, could not be obtained. The Directors then 'fully discussed' the report and authorised the Sub-Committee to continue their negotiations on condition that the Corporation agreed to rescind the agreement only if they could not obtain from Parliament suitable loan terms.⁵⁶ To this, the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee agreed on the 31st March, 1898, but they remained adamant that the purchase money should remain at £10.10s.0d. per share.⁵⁷ This decision was reaffirmed by the Lord Mayor in a letter to the Company's Solicitor dated April 1st, 1898,⁵⁸ and by the full Sub-Committee at their meeting of 18th April, 1898.⁵⁹ The Company Directors discussed the matter at length the same day and finally agreed, with Mr. J.F. Albright as the sole dissident, to accept a price of £420,000.⁶⁰

Not all the Company's shareholders were happy at the decision of their Board and there were several letters of protest in the *Birmingham Post*. The nature of the objections, however, revealed that hostility was likely to be restricted to a minority of smallholders who had bought shares after the early talk of municipalization in May, 1897, at prices of up to £12 each. It was the opinion of 'Shareholder', for example, that, in selling at ten guineas, 'the directors would simply be throwing over the small holders in the public interest, let us say, or perhaps, what is worse, in the interest of the large holders. The large holders may see a profit now after having had a chance to unload some of their shares at higher prices.'⁶¹ Meanwhile, 'Dissatisfied' had 'also purchased . . . shares at a higher price than that offered', while 'Fairness' thought that 'the price suggested compares most unfavourably with the prices paid by Manchester and Sheffield Corporations.'⁶² 'Bought and Sold', echoing 'Dissatisfied', wrote ruefully that 'about fifteen months ago I was induced to buy shares in the company at about £12.'⁶³

But such objections were destined to go unheeded. The independent engineers, Bramwell and Harris, reported on the 20th May, 1898, that 'the Corporation of Birmingham, in acquiring the Undertaking of the Electric Supply Company of that City, are exercising a discriminating and wise judgment . . . they will obtain a most satisfactory means of generating and supplying electrical energy to the citizens for all purposes for which such energy can be used.'⁶⁴ On the 25th May, 1898, the General Purposes Committee accepted a report of the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee incorporating the provisional agreement with the Company and decided to recommend the Council to purchase on the terms stated.⁶⁵

The ratification of the provisional agreement by the two confirming bodies was smoothly achieved. At the Council Meeting of the 14th June, 1898, the Lord Mayor was the only speaker to refer to the proposed municipalization at length, alluding in his opening remarks to 'the total absence of adverse criticism' and going on to outline all the well-worn arguments in favour of municipalization, adding the important point that heavy additional capital expenditure in the near future would not be necessary, since plant in course of construction at Water Street would allow them to double the present output.⁶⁶ Even Councillor Howard Lane confined himself to suggesting that 'such an undertaking, like matrimony, should not be lightly approached' and to hinting that the loss in the first year might be over £8,000, rather than the £4,000 suggested by the Lord Mayor. The necessary resolution was passed with no opposing votes, Councillor Lane and four Shareholders of the Company abstaining.⁶⁷

Three days later, the Shareholders of the Company held an Extraordinary Meeting, at which they were addressed by their Chairman, Mr. Henry Buckley. In his speech, he stated that 'if we possessed a monopoly of electric lighting in the three areas which we have, we never should have sold.' But ultimately, if the provisional agreement fell through, the Corporation would apply for their own Order. 'The question in our mind was, if such an order was applied for, could we successfully resist it? We were of the opinion that we could not.' The present attitude of the Board of Trade had been illustrated, he added, by the Provisional Orders for Bermondsey and Marylebone now before Parliament, where the Board had sanctioned applications by those two local authorities to supply electricity in competition with companies and had left to Parliament the task of deciding whether that sanction should be allowed to stand.⁶⁸ Mr. J.E. Wilson added that, for him, 'the negotiation . . . is an eminently wise and practicable one that certainly all of us who have held their shares for a considerable time ought to consider is a reasonable one for ourselves'⁶⁹ and the motion approving the provisional agreement was carried with only three dissenting votes.⁷⁰ 'Seldom', wrote the *Mail*, 'has there been a more harmonious meeting of shareholders.'⁷¹

Ratification by the Council and the Company's Shareholders of the provisional agreement effectively settled the issue of municipalization. On November 22nd, 1898, the Council approved a draft Bill embodying the proposals for purchase, the Lord Mayor at one point giving the encouraging news that sales were 54 per cent up on the previous year and that the concern could thus be taken over on a self-supporting basis.⁷² At the Public Meeting of the Ratepapers on November 26th, 1898,⁷³ 'the proceedings were purely formal in character.' Fewer than twenty Ratepapers attended. There was no dissent or criticism and the resolution approving the purchase was carried unanimously.⁷⁴ The way was thus clear for the Electric Lighting Sub-Committee, charged with the task of sponsoring the application to

Parliament.⁷⁵ to take the necessary legal and administrative measures. The Birmingham Corporation Bill received its first reading in the Commons on February 14th, 1899,⁷⁶ its second on February 20th, 1899,⁷⁷ and its third (after committee stage and amendments) on 16th May, 1899.⁷⁸ On June 1st, 1899, the Bill as introduced into the House of Lords, was formally ratified by the Company Shareholders⁷⁹ and, on July 11th, the Lords themselves approved the measure.⁸⁰ The final draft obtained the Royal Assent on August 1st, 1899,⁸¹ and, on the 9th November, 1899, the first Electric Supply Committee of the Council was constituted and appointed.⁸² On January 1st, 1900, a small final ceremony took place at the Midland Bank, New Street, when C.H. Clare, the acting City Treasurer, handed over a cheque for £420,000 to the Company representatives and E.V. Hiley, the Deputy Town Clerk, received from them the conveyance and title deeds.⁸³

After Municipalization

The growth and development of the electricity supply in Birmingham between 1900 and 1914 gave ample evidence of the wisdom of municipalization, the number of electrical units sold for lighting and power purposes rising from roughly three million in 1900-01 to over nine million in 1907-8 and to more than fifty-eight million in 1914-15. In addition, electric traction was used for tramway purposes from 1906-7 onwards, the total amount consumed for traction rising from nearly four million units in that year to over twenty-four million in 1914-15.⁸⁴ This great expansion necessitated substantial additions to capital works and, on the 10th October, 1906, the Lord Mayor opened the new power station at Summer Lane, which covered four acres, cost over a quarter of a million pounds to build and had an initial capacity of 8,500 kilowatts.⁸⁵ A series of sub-stations was set up to distribute power from the generators and, throughout the period, plant was being constantly extended and replaced, the total capital expenditure on capital account rising from just under half a million pounds in 1899-1900 to over two and a quarter million in 1913-14. Meanwhile, technical improvements and economies of scale enabled the Committee to reduce the average price per unit from 4.37d. in 1900-01 to 1.125d. in 1914-15.⁸⁶

Notes and References

1. See John Thackeray Bunce, *History of the Corporation of Birmingham*. Volume II. (Birmingham, 1885). 381-6.
2. Both from *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, November 1st, 1882. 6.
3. *Birmingham Daily Post*, October 23rd, 1882. 4.
4. 'Report of the Town Clerk . . . (etc.) . . .', 1882, Ref: 130491. In these footnotes the abbreviation 'Ref:' precedes the accession number of the source quoted in the City of Birmingham's Central Reference Library. Such accession numbers are cited on the first occasion only on which a source is quoted. Accession numbers for newspapers and for the volumes of the *History of the Corporation of Birmingham* by J.T. Bunce and C.A. Vince are not quoted. In other cases (except for Parliamentary and Public Record Office sources), where no accession number is quoted, the source is in the possession of the Birmingham District Council.
5. It is doubtful if this sanguine attitude was fully justified. Soon afterwards Chamberlain himself, addressing a delegation of local authorities from the Midlands, excluding Birmingham, at the Board of Trade, stated that 'the Board of Trade could issue more than one provisional order for the same area, but

it was not probable that they would. . . . In the event of a second application, the Board would see how far the existing undertakers had performed their obligations, and if it was found that they had faithfully performed them and expended a large sum of money, their interests would not be overlooked.' — *Gazette*, November 2nd, 1882. 6.

6. For example, by Section 19 of the Act, 'it may be contended that the Undertakers will be under an obligation to supply electricity in any part of the selected area', an obligation which could 'involve the laying of conductors over the whole area for a very limited consumption.' There was also the problem of finding a 'practical self-regulating Electric Meter.'
7. 'Report of the Gas Committee . . . (etc.) . . .', 1882, Ref: 130490.
8. *Gazette*, November 1st, 1882. 6.
9. October 23rd, 1882. 2.
10. November 1st, 1882. 2.
11. October 31st, 1882. 4.
12. Bunce, *op.cit.* 385-6.
13. Charles Anthony Vince, *History of the Corporation of Birmingham*, Volume III., (Birmingham, 1902). 283-4. Vince also points out that the need for an extension of the length of concessions had been vigorously argued by the companies. It had also been empirically demonstrated after 1882 by the comparatively slow progress made by companies labouring under the onerous conditions of the Act.
14. General Purposes Committee, Minute No. 6367.
15. General Purposes Committee, Minutes Nos. 6374 and 6376.
16. The issue of the terms of the proposed concession to the company is not totally divorced from the issue of municipalization. The dispute had two aspects: the proposed capital and the proposed area. The Council wanted to tie the Company to raising £100,000 to light a small area of the town centre, while the Company insisted on half of that capital to light a substantially larger district. — *Gazette*, February 1st, 1889. 4. Although the Council was ultimately forced to agree to a capital of £50,000, they succeeded in confining the company to the smaller area, thereby preventing them, for the moment, from appropriating all the most profitable areas and so prejudicing the success of a possible Council experiment later. — Vince, *op.cit.* 285.
17. *Gazette*, February 6th, 1889. 6.
18. February 1st, 1889. 4.
19. February 6th, 1889. 4.
20. February 6th, 1889. 2. Birmingham's real motto, of course, is 'Forward'.
21. February 6th, 1889. 4.
22. See note 16 above. A result of the granting of the Provisional Order, of course, was that the Council could not wait until the success or otherwise of the electric light had been demonstrated by other towns before deciding whether or not to apply for a Provisional Order themselves.
23. Vince, *op. cit.* 285-6.

24. J.C. Vaudrey, *A Few Notes on the Public Supply of Electricity in Birmingham to 1899*, (1899), Ref: 157785.5. The argument that the Gas Committee were strong opponents of the introduction of electricity cannot be substantiated. The General Purposes Committee which rejected Chamberlain and Hookham's original scheme contained only two members of the Gas Committee, *Gazette*, February 6th, 1889.6. — and Alderman Pollack, the Gas Committee Chairman, had blandly asserted at the Council Meeting of February 5th, 1889, that, although 'the electric light might . . . at some future period interfere with the consumption of gas', nevertheless, 'the scheme of Messrs. Chamberlain and Hookham had no dangers for the Gas Committee' since they were talking in terms of 2,000 lights or a consumption of 50 million cubic feet of gas, out of a total supplied by the Gas Committee of 3,500 million. — *Idem*. At the time the strongest charge levelled at the Gas Committee was that 'they think a little too fondly of their gas' and that their lack of a healthy self-critical faculty made them rather too indifferent as to whether electricity was introduced or not. *Mail*, February 6th, 1889. 2.
25. General Purposes Committee, Minute No. 6877.
26. *Gazette*, December 7th, 1892. 8. No explanation of the second half of the sentence is given.
27. *Idem*.
28. General Purposes Committee, Minute 6948.
29. *Gazette*, July 26th, 1893. 8.
30. *Mail*, July 26th, 1893.2.
31. Vince, *op.cit.* 286-7.
32. *Idem*.
33. Directors' Minutes, Ref: 418525. Report interleaved between pp. 227 and 228. For 10,000 of these shares there was a total application of 21,176. *Idem*. Minute 79 729.
34. Shareholders' Minutes, Ref: 418526. Reports interleaved between pp. 25 and 40.
35. Vince, *op.cit.* 287.
36. *Mail*, April 27th, 1897. 3.
37. Not a member of the General Purposes Committee. It is uncertain, however, whether the General Purposes Committee was genuinely luke-warm or whether they merely preferred to seem so to strengthen their bargaining stance with the Company.
38. *Gazette*, April 30th, 1897. 6.
39. *Gazette*, May 5th, 1897. 8.
40. 5th May, 1897. 5. In fact, the General Purposes Committee's subsequent report consisted of much more than that, embodying nothing less than a detailed and comprehensive set of terms for the transfer of the undertaking to the Corporation. Councillor Fletcher himself seemed much more aware of the sharp edge to his motion than did Councillor Howard Lane or the *Post*. Throughout this speech, he was careful not to give the Company ammunition for the coming negotiations, stating that 'the business of the Electric Supply had not, judged from financial results, been a great success' and that 'his proposal, if carried out on reasonable terms, embodied a commercial undertaking not only of great public utility, but also possibly yielding sufficient profit to justify the expenditure.' — *Gazette*, May 5th, 1897. 8, emphases added. The desire not to prejudice the Council's case in the coming negotiations also seems to have been an important reason for cutting Council discussion short. — See the *Mail* editorial, May 5th, 1897. 2.
41. April 28th, 1897. 4. Cf. Note 18 above.
42. April 27th, 1897. 3.
43. May 6th, 1897. 5. The reader, however, was left to draw his own conclusion from this and a mass of other data and there was no adverse editorial comment. It is possible, of course, that the *Post*, too, preferred to appear luke-warm so as not to harm the Council's bargaining stance. See Notes 37 and 40 above.
44. General Purposes Committee, Minute 7389.
45. Electric Lighting Sub-Committee, Minute 2.
46. *Idem*, Minute 4.
47. Directors' Minutes. 329-30.
48. Electric Lighting Sub-Committee, Minute 5.
49. *Idem*, Minute 9.
50. *Idem*, Minute 10.
51. Directors' Minutes, p. 349. Precisely what terms had been provisionally arranged the previous May is not known. The complete lull in negotiations between May, 1897, and January, 1898, is also somewhat puzzling but may have been related to the Stock Exchange speculation in the Company's shares. — See below. But the Company Directors now stipulated that any provisional arrangement must be agreed by 15th May, 1898. — *Idem*,
52. Electric Lighting Sub-Committee, Minute 13.
53. Directors' Minutes, p. 361.
54. *Idem*, p. 362. The Corporation was particularly anxious to obtain 42 years for the repayment of the necessary loan, as in the case of Liverpool. See below.
55. *Idem*, p. 363.
56. *Idem*, pp. 365-6.
57. Electric Lighting Sub-Committee, Minute 15. On 11th March, the Company Solicitor, Pinsent, had attempted to raise the price again to £427,500 in order to finance gifts to the Company's Directors and employees. See Minute 14, letter before above resolution.
58. *Idem*, Minute 17. He also stated that any compensation or gratuities must come out of the purchase money.
59. *Idem*, Minutes 18 and 19. The Sub-Committee also refused to accept a suggestion of the Company that the Corporation should provide £3,000 compensation for Vaudrey, the Company's Managing Director.
60. Directors' Minutes, p. 372. They also agreed to pay Vaudrey's compensation themselves.
61. May 23rd, 1898. 7.
62. May 24th, 1898. 7.
63. May 26th, 1898. 8.

64. **The Birmingham Electric Supply Co. Ltd. and the Birmingham Corporation. Report of Messrs. Bramwell and Harris, (1898) Ref: 662100 LF 49.22. p.7.**
65. **General Purposes Committee, Minute 7507.** For full conditions of purchase, see the Report above this Minute.
66. **Gazette, June 15th, 1898. 8.** The Lord Mayor seems to have been more concerned with placating the forthcoming Shareholders' Meeting than with convincing his own Chamber, stating, for example, that 'personally he could not justify ten guineas on any calculation of what the concern was worth intrinsically' and that 'they were not buying a gold mine, or anything like it.' Cf. Notes 37, 40 and 43 above. The shares were, of course, originally priced at £5. each. — See text before Note 33 above.
67. **Idem.** The Shareholders were Alderman Clayton and Councillors Godlee, Johnstone and Tonks.
68. **Vaudrey, op.cit. 8-9.** Vaudrey adds that the Bill relating to Bermondsey and Marylebone was subsequently thrown out in committee and it is difficult to judge whether the Chairman's argument was motivated by genuine concern or by the desire to make an effective debating point.
69. **Idem. 11.** Wilson describes himself as having 'always been a pretty large shareholder.' Cf. the Post correspondence of the malcontents above.
70. **Shareholders' Minutes, Minute 71.**
71. **June 18th, 1898. 2.** The Mail adds that 'The rate-payers may congratulate themselves upon the acquisition of a highly profitable undertaking' and editorial comment in the other papers was by now universally in favour of municipalization. See, for example, **Gazette, June 15th, 1898. 4.** and **Post, June 7th, 1898. 4.**
72. **Gazette, November 23rd, 1898. 6.** At this meeting, however, Councillor Howard Lane again proved troublesome, obtaining the support of Alderman Fallows and Councillor Randall to discuss the Bill clause by clause. But he could only, for example, find one other supporter for his amendment to reduce the purchase to £250,000 plus a 25 per cent bonus.
73. **Necessary under Section 288 of the Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act, 1883.** See Council Minute 17,748, quoted above General Purposes Committee Minute 7565.
74. **Gazette, November 28th, 1898. 7.** The figure of 20 omits Officials and most Councillors but presumably includes Messrs. Randall and Lane who preferred to mingle with the public rather than sit with their colleagues. But they raised no voice of protest.
75. **Electric Lighting Sub-Committee, Minute 33.**
76. **Journals of the House of Commons, Volume 154, (1899). 35.**
77. **Idem. 48.**
78. **Idem. 196 and 207.**
79. **Shareholders' Minutes, Minute 82.**
80. **Lords Journals. 131. 62 Vict. 63 Vict., p.295.**
81. **Post. August 2nd, 1899. 4.** The 42 year period for the repayment of the necessary Corporation loan was successfully obtained — (62 and 63 Vict.,) **Birmingham Corporation Act, 1899. (Ch. clxix.)** Public Record Office, BT31/4616/30296. Clause 25-(1).
82. **Vince, op.cit. p. 288.** Alco C.A. Vince, **History of the Corporation of Birmingham, Volume IV, (Birmingham, 1923). 416, footnote.** The Minutes of this Committee have apparently been lost.
83. **Gazette, January 2nd, 1900. 6.** Councillor Johnson was the first Chairman of the Electric Lighting Committee and J.C. Vaudrey, formerly the Company's Managing Director, became the City Electrical Engineer.
84. **Vince, op.cit. Volume IV. 417.** Note also the remarkable increase in the use of electricity to drive motors, as illustrated in the last column of the statistical table.
85. **Idem. 420-1.** See also **City of Birmingham Electric Supply Department. Official opening of Summer Lane Generating Station, October, 1906 . . . (etc.) . . .**, (1906), Ref: 199539.
86. **Idem. 418-30.** See the later volumes of the **History of the Corporation of Birmingham.** for the story of electricity in the city from 1914 to the nationalization of 1948.

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