THE DECLINE OF THE BRITISH LIBERAL PARTY: A COMPARATIVE AND THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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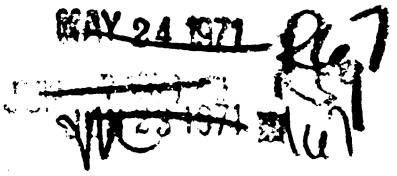
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ABSTRACT

THE DECLINE OF THE BRITISH LIBERAL PARTY:
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by Thomas W. Casstevens

This dissertation seeks a satisfactory answer to the question: Why did the British Liberal Party decline in the twentieth century?

The problem is analyzed from an historical and from a comparative point of view. The historical perspective focuses upon the British elections from 1900 through 1931, upon the Liberal Party's schism (and the concomitant upsurge of the Labour Party) from 1916 to 1923, and upon the Liberal Party's leadership selection (and deposition) process from William Gladstone to Lloyd George. Extensive use is made of British statistics on the condition of the economy from 1885 through 1914, on voting in parliamentary elections from 1900 through 1931, and on voting in the House of Commons from 1919 through 1922. The comparative perspective focuses upon the schisms in the Canadian Liberal Party, the Australian Labor Party, and the United States Republican Party, as well as upon the subsequent rise of the Canadian Progressive, Australian Country, and United States (Bull Moose) Progressive parties. The magnitudes of these schisms,

and the degree of success of the rising parties, are estimated and compared with the schism in the British Liberal Party and the rise of the British Labour Party.

Without a theoretical decision about what constituted the Liberal Party, the question ' Why did the British Liberal Party decline? ' cannot be answered unequivocally. The decision to exclude or include Lloyd George's followers, from 1918 to 1923, is especially critical. This study justifies the (theoretical) exclusion of Lloyd George's group from the Liberal Party, and as a result, the decline of the Liberal Party was rather obviously a consequence of the 1918 schism in the Party. From a comparative point of view, the Liberal Party's schism was unusually severe, and the Labour Party was unusually successful. From the perspective of the Liberal Party's traditional leadership selection process, Herbert Asquith erred by not resigning as Leader of the Party in 1916. Asquith's error probably accentuated the magnitude of the Liberal Party's 1918 schism, and the magnitude of that schism caused the decline of the Liberal Party.

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By

Thomas W. Casstevens

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INTRODUCTION

I. Stability and Change

Since the era of William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli, the British political arena has usually been dominated by a pair of political parties: Her Majesty's Government (Party) and Her Majesty's Opposition (Party). These leviathans, buttressed by rival organizations in hundreds of constituencies, have virtually monopolized parliamentary and ministerial positions. Independents and minor parties, although not totally devoid of influence, have typically been dwarfed by two major parties.[1]

A two-party battle occurred in the general election of 1880, the last general election that featured both Gladstone and Disraeli (the latter as Lord Beaconsfield), and in the general election of 1964, the most recent general election (at the time this is written). But although the number of leading roles remained the same, the cast of actors changed between 1880 and 1964. In 1880 Gladstone led the

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[1] "Britain may fairly be called the classic home of two-party government." Leslie Lipson, "The Two-Party System in British Politics," American Political Science Review, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, (June, 1953), p. 337.

Liberal Party to victory over the governing Conservative Party; in 1964 Harold Wilson led the Labour Party to victory over the governing Conservative Party.

The displacement of the Liberal Party by the Labour Party, as the alternative to a Conservative Government, is especially striking[2] since the Liberal Party seemed to have been well established.[3] This decline of the Liberal Party is the focal point of the present study.

II. Historical Background

A study of so controversial a subject as the decline of the Liberal Party can hardly expound the accepted ideas about its subject for there scarcely are any. Economists, sociologists, political scientists, historians, politicians and journalists have written about the subject, with different points of view. Commentaries have ranged

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[2]"The most striking change since the turn of the century has been the virtual elimination of the Liberal Party as a political force [. . .]." David C. Marsh, The Changing Social Structure of England and Wales, 1871-1951 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1958), p. 180.

[3]"Here was a party that had every advantage--money, prestige, able leadership, a glorious history, and a large body of devoted followers--yet it was strangled [. . .]." E. E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), p. 79.

[4]This section is a background sketch, neither a history nor an historiography.

from personal apologia to abstract theory. The subject has been approached from an historical perspective focusing upon the British political tradition and from a comparative perspective focusing upon elements shared with other parties in other countries. The pertinent literature is vast, diverse, growing, and neither a definitive history nor a generally accepted theory has been published. Perhaps the only premise shared by all, or nearly all, writers is that the decline of the Liberal Party was somehow intimately linked to the rise of the Labour Party.

After it became widely recognized that the Liberal Party not only had declined but also was unlikely to recover, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a trio of explanations of the decline rapidly became conventional. Although none of these interpretations has been distinguished by general acceptance, the trio have remained conventional. These explanations, as a matter of convenience in this study, are called the center party thesis, the electoral system thesis, and the split thesis.

The center party thesis was advanced in 1935 by the historian, George Dangerfield,[5] and has recently been given a

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[5]George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910-1914 (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961). This volume was originally published in 1935.

comparative-theoretical formulation by the economist, Anthony Downs.[6] The center party doctrine is to the effect that the Liberal Party declined because its policy position was between the Labour Party's on the Left and the Conservative Party's on the Right. This has been called the "conventional explanation"[7] of the decline of the Liberal Party.

The electoral system thesis was proposed in 1930 by the historian Ramsay Muir,[8] and in recent years has been given a comparative-theoretical development by the political scientist, Maurice Duverger.[9] The electoral system doctrine is to the effect that the Liberal Party declined because, after it became a third party, the electoral system operated to its disadvantage. This has been said to be the "usual argument"[10] accounting for the decline of the Liberal Party.

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[6]Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1957).

[7]Henry R. Winkler, Great Britain in the Twentieth Century, Publication Number 28 of the Service Center for Teachers of History (Washington: American Historical Association, 1960), p. 14.

[8]Ramsay Muir, How Britain is Governed (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1930).

[9]Maurice Duverger, Political Parties, trans. Barbara and Robert North (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1955).

[10]The original quotation literally reads "usually argued." Harry H. Eckstein, "The British Political System," in Samuel Beer

The split thesis was adumbrated in 1926 by the Leader of the Liberal Party, Herbert Asquith,[11] and has more recently been endorsed by the historian, Charles Mowat,[12] but apparently has not been investigated from a comparative-theoretical perspective. The split doctrine contends, roughly speaking, that the split between Asquith and David Lloyd George, dating from 1916, was fatal for the Liberal Party.

An analysis of these explanations is deferred to later chapters, but it should be noted at this point that 'the decline of the Liberal Party' does not have the same meaning for each doctrine. The Liberal Party's transition from a position as first or second party to a position as third[13] party was in some sense a decline, but although this sense may be encompassed by the center party and split theses, it is excluded by the electoral system thesis. This conceptual problem is complicated by the Liberal Party's kaleidoscopic history

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and Adam Ulam (eds.), Patterns of Government (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 132.

[11]Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Memories and Reflections (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928), II. The reference is Asquith's letter of resignation in 1926.

[12]Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955).

[13]That is, the party that ranks third in terms of the total national vote.

of alliances and schisms. The most significant of these alliances and schisms were the following:

(1) After the general election of 1880, the Liberal M.P.s contained a contingent of Irish Home Rulers who became followers of Charles Parnell, the Leader of the nascent Irish Nationalist Party, and began to harass the Liberal Government in the House of Commons. Parliamentary harassment became outright opposition in the general election of 1885, but with Gladstone's espousal of Home Rule for Ireland, a working alliance developed between the Irish Nationalist Party and Liberal Party in 1886. This alliance was durable,[14] and the Irish Nationalist M.P.s gave crucial support to minority Liberal Governments in 1892-1895 and 1910-1914. The Irish Nationalist Party was destroyed in the 1918 general election.

(2) In 1886 two groups of Liberal M.P.s, the Whig followers of Lord Hartington and the Radical followers of Joseph Chamberlain, combined with the Conservatives to defeat Gladstone's Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons and to defeat the (Gladstonian) Liberal Party-Irish Nationalist Party alliance in the general election. Although a few Liberal Unionists (as the followers of Hartington and

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[14]The cohesiveness of, and distribution of power within, the alliance is perhaps best indicated by the fact that Gladstone was able (successfully) to insist upon Parnell's ouster as Leader of the Irish Nationalist Party in 1891.

Chamberlain became known) returned to the (Gladstonian) Liberal Party, most Liberal Unionists remained allied with the Conservative Party.[15] This alliance became an official merger of the Liberal Unionist and Conservative parties in 1912.

(3) In 1903 the leaders of the Liberal Party and the Labour Party[16] negotiated a secret alliance. Under the terms of this agreement, contests between the two parties were minimized in the general election of 1906. Although not covered by the terms of the agreement, Labour Party M. P. s tended to support the Liberal Government between 1906 and 1910. The agreement was substantially perpetuated[17] in the general elections of 1910, and the Labour Party M. P. s gave support to the minority Liberal Governments of 1910-1914. The Labour Party terminated this alliance in 1918.

(4) After Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in 1916, the Liberal supporters of Lloyd George and the Liberal followers of Asquith became estranged. In 1918 the Lloyd Georgian Liberals, calling themselves Coalition Liberals, fought the general

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[15]Liberal Unionists and Conservatives shared ministerial posts in 1886-1892 and 1895-1905.

[16]Strictly speaking, the Labour Representation Committee, founded in 1900. In 1906 it was baptized as "the Labour Party."

[17]Apparently, no official agreement existed in 1910 but rather the arrangements of 1906 were continued as a matter of convenience, in a number of constituencies.

election in harness with the Conservatives, in opposition to the (Asquithian) Liberal Party. After the Coalition was dissolved in 1922, the Lloyd Georgian Liberals fought the 1922 general election as National Liberals but merged with the (Asquithian) Liberal Party for the 1923 and subsequent general elections.

(5) During the events associated with the formation of the National Ministry and the general election of 1931, the Liberal Party divided into three fragments, viz., a few followers of Lloyd George who refused to support the National Ministry, the Liberal Party under Sir Herbert Samuel who withdrew from the National Ministry in 1932, and Liberal Nationals under Sir John Simon who remained in the National Ministry and allied with the Conservative Party.

Thus the meaning of the fundamental concept 'Liberal Party' depends upon the interpretation of a complicated history of alliances and schisms. An interpretation is crucial for explaining the decline of the Liberal Party. The electoral system thesis, for example, pivots about when the Liberal Party became a third party. If we accept Asquith's view that the Coalition Liberals were not part of the Liberal Party,[18] then the Liberal Party became a third party in

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[18]Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, pp. 284-288. Asquith also excludes the National Liberals of 1922-1923 from the Liberal Party.

1918, but if we accept Duverger's view that the Coalition Liberals were part of the Liberal Party,[19] then the Liberal Party became a third party in 1922. Despite these significantly divergent views, a systematic explication of the concept 'Liberal Party' has not previously been published.

III. The Structure of This Study

This study stresses the conceptual and comparative-theoretical aspects of the decline of the Liberal Party, and in essence, the broad argument of the study is a version of the split thesis. Chapter II clears the decks for the construction of the argument, with an empirical critique of the center party and electoral system theses,[20] and establishes the critical fact that the Liberal Party manifested no signs of declining before the First World War. Chapter III is an historical exposition of the split thesis, stressing the pivotal nature of the dispute between Asquith and Lloyd George as well as suggesting historical parallels with other party systems. Chapters IV and V amplify two facets of the split thesis: Chapter IV presents the split thesis as a comparative theory of the rise and

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[19]Duverger, op. cit., pp. 225, 227. Duverger also includes the National Liberals of 1922-1923 in the Liberal Party.

[20]A rational critique of the two theses is presented in Appendix 1.

decline of major parties in two-party systems. Chapter V reconsiders the roles of Asquith and Lloyd George, from an historial perspective. The conclusions of the study are presented in the final chapter. It should be noted that this structure entails that some information is repeated in the course of the exposition, but in such instances, the initial presentation is usually somewhat lengthy and subsequent references are rather brief.

CHAPTER II

RATIONAL VOTERS AND THE PARTY SYSTEM, 1900-1914

I. Introduction

"[T]he death of Liberalism was pronounced [when] it was no longer the Left."[1] "The Liberal party [. . .] was destroyed by the statistical tendency of the single-member district system."[2] Those statements are exceptionally pithy formulations, respectively, of the center party and electoral system theses, conventional explanations of the decline of the Liberal Party.[3]

Despite the widespread acceptance of these explanations, as this essay seeks to show, the explanations are neither very clear nor very plausible. A close consideration of each doctrine, with especial reference to the period 1900-1914, not only illustrates the shortcomings

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[1]George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910-1914 (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), p. 10.

[2]E. E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), p. 79.

[3]See Henry R. Winkler, Great Britain in the Twentieth Century, Publication Number 28 of the Service Center for Teachers of History (Washington: American Historical Association, 1960), p. 14; Harry H. Eckstein, "The British Political System," in Samuel Beer and Adam Ulam (eds.), Patterns of Government (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 132.

of the explanations but also illuminates the condition of the Liberal Party on the eve of the First World War.

II. A Critique of the Center Party Thesis

The center party thesis is fundamentally a theory about economic classes and politics, a theory with an ancient pedigree and enormous variations. When applied to the decline of the Liberal Party, it has been given a Syndicalist,[4] a Marxist,[5] and a Utilitarian[6] guise. The Syndicalist and Marxist versions are closely allied to the view that the decline of the Liberal Party was inevitable,[7] that the Liberal Party performed its historic role (whatever that may be) and then perished.[8] From this perspective, the replacement of the Bourgeois Liberal Party by the Socialist Labour Party was the

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[4]Dangerfield, op. cit., Part II, Chapter IV.

[5]Maurice Duverger, Political Parties, trans. Barbara and Robert North (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1955), pp. 213-214.

[6]Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1957), pp. 48-49, 128-129.

[7]"There have been a number of attempts, notably in Mr. George Dangerfield's brilliant work The Strange Death of Liberal England, to present the death of the Liberal Party as having been an inevitable political development." Colin Cross, The Liberals in Power (1905-1914) (London: Barrie and Rockliff with Pall Mall Press, 1963), p. 188.

[8]The Liberal Party "has been killed by success." Sir Henry Slesser, "The Liberal Party: History," in Sydney D. Bailev (ed.),

result of the natural evolution of the socio-economic-political system.[9] These deterministic interpretations, although stimulating, are essentially metaphysical, incapable of confirmation or refutation.[10] The present chapter is concerned with testable interpretations of the center party doctrine, and since there is no canonical version, several formulations are considered.

Perhaps the classic version of the center party thesis has been advanced by George Dangerfield:

> By 1910, [according to Dangerfield] the Liberals had reached a point where they could no longer advance; before them stood a barrier of Capital which they dared not attack. [. . .] The 1906 elections [. . . had] resulted in a Liberal

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The British Party System (2nd ed.; London: The Hansard Society, 1953), p. 84.

[9]In Britain "the two-party system suffered a period of eclipse [. . .] to be reborn later in a new guise approximately in conformity with the class-struggle pattern of Marxist doctrine: opposition between a Bourgeois and a Socialist party." Duverger, op. cit., p. 213. For an acute analysis of Duverger's use of the ideas of nature and natural evolution, see Aaron B. Wildavsky, "A Methodological Critique of Duverger's Political Parties," Journal of Politics, Vol. XXI (1959), pp. 303-318.

[10]The argument that the decline of the Liberal party was inevitable seems to be a particular application of what Karl R. Popper has called "historicism" and of what W. H. Walsh has called "meaning in history;" roughly speaking, of the view that human history passes through pre-determined stages to a pre-determined end. See Karl R. Popper, "Prediction and Prophecy in the Social Sciences," in Patrick Gardiner (ed.), Theories of History (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 276-285; W. H. Walsh, "'Meaning' in History," in Ibid., pp. 296-307.

> landslide. But the Liberal Party which came back to Westminister with an overwhelming majority was already doomed. It was like an army protected at all points except for one vital position on its flank. With the election of fifty-three Labor representatives, the death of Liberalism was pronounced; it was no longer the Left. The Conservatives might have consoled themselves with the fact that they represented a logical Right [. . .].[11]

A slightly different, but equally brief, version of the doctrine has been articulated by Maurice Duverger:

> [T]he Liberals [Duverger contended . . .] had realized the essentials of their programme and so found themselves constrained to adopt a conservative attitude: the appearance of a Socialist party naturally took from them a section of their left-wing support, whilst fear of the 'Reds' threw another section into the arms of the Conservatives [. . .].[12]

The most complete formulation of the center party thesis, apparently, has recently been presented by Anthony Downs:

> Before 1900, [according to Downs] there were two major British parties, the Liberals [. . .] and the Tories [. . .]. They were under the usual two-party pressure to converge. However, the enfranchisement of the working class in the late nineteenth century had shifted the center of voter distribution far to the left of its old position. And the Liberal Party, even after it moved to the left, was to the right of the new center of gravity, although it was the more left of the two parties. The founders of the Labour Party correctly guessed that they could outflank the Liberals by forming a new party [. . .] to the left of the latter, which they did. This trapped the Liberals between the two modes of the electorate, and their support rapidly diminished to

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[11] Dangerfield, op. cit., pp. 8, 10.

[12] Duverger, op. cit., p. 214.

> insignificant size. The crucial factor in this case was the shift of the electorate's distribution along the political scale as the result of the extension of the suffrage to a vast number of new voters, many of whom were near the extreme left. Whenever such a radical change in the distribution of voters occurs, existent parties will probably be unable to adjust rapidly because they are ideologically immobile.[13]

From the preceding three formulations, the center party thesis may be characterized as follows: The Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 enfranchised workingmen in sufficient numbers to constitute a majority of the electors, but even after these Acts, neither the Liberal Party nor the Unionist Party[14] represented the interests of the working class, although the reformist Liberal Party was more representative of workingmen than the conservative Unionist Party. Furthermore, even after the Labour Party was formed to represent the interests of the working class, neither the Liberal Party nor the Unionist Party pre-empted the program of the Labour Party. Thus workingmen naturally transferred their votes to the Labour Party as the only party representing their class interests, and since most

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[13]Downs, op. cit., pp. 128-129. "This is roughly what happened in the case of the Labour Party." Ibid., p. 129.

[14]The Unionist Party is called the Conservative Party or Tory Party by most writers--e.g., apparently by Dangerfield, Duverger, and Downs--but the distinction between the Unionist Party and the Conservative Party is of some significance for the electoral system thesis. This point is discussed below in Section III of the present chapter.

workingmen had previously voted for the Liberal Party, the Liberal Party declined. That decline was accentuated by the appearance of revolutionary socialism, with the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which frightened some more voters away from the reformist Liberal Party to the avowedly conservative Unionist Party. This argument is sometimes supplemented with additional considerations, some of which are discussed below, but the core of the argument is the presumption that most working class electors voted for their class interests.

The center party thesis, as interpreted above, is testable in principle, but in practice, a decisive test is difficult (perhaps impossible) since the extant historical data are limited. For example, the thesis is "in principle" susceptible to testing by survey methods, but pertinent survey data are non-existent.[15] Nevertheless, since Downs has developed the doctrine as a general theory that is supposedly applicable to other times and other places, an imaginary survey test deserves consideration before turning to the task of testing the thesis with actual data. This hypothetical survey elucidates the logic

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[15]The history of scientific election surveys is customarily dated from the Gallup Poll of 1936 in the United States. See Robert A. Alford, Party and Society (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963).

of the thesis and, perhaps, may prove suggestive for comparative tests of the general theory.[16]

An actual questionnaire, of course, should be extensively pre-tested and the results should be subjected to tests for statistical significance. But for an imaginary questionnaire to have been used in a survey (let us say) in 1910, it is sufficient to sketch the general intent of the key questions and the broad nature of the analysis. The crucial questions would be of the following type:

1. People often speak of the working class, the middle class, the upper class, and so forth. To which class do you belong?

2. (a) Which party do you believe best represents the interests of the _____ class? (b) Which party do you believe least represents the interests of the _____ class?

3. Did you vote in yesterday's election? (a) For which party did you vote? [AND IF APPROPRIATE.] (b) The _____ party did not run a candidate in your parliamentary district in yesterday's election. If the _____ party had run a candidate, would you have voted for that candidate?

A questionnaire of this type pivots about the self-definition of the respondent and might be criticized by a Marxist or a Freudian for not elucidating the real class or true class interests of the

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[16]For a critical analysis of the general theory in the light of recent survey data from the United States, see Donald E. Stokes, "Spatial Models of Party Competition," American Political Science Review, Vol. LVII, No. 2 (June, 1963), pp. 368-377.

respondent.[17] However, to the extent that the center party thesis is about the voter's subjective rather than objective situation, this type of questionnaire, administered to a representative sample of the total British electorate in 1910, would have been fairly decisive. If the center party thesis is valid, then the following sort of results would have been expected, i.e., would have confirmed the thesis:

> (1) Persons who answer "working class" to question (1) should respond "Labour Party" to question (2a) and "Unionist Party" to question (2b). Persons who answer "upper class" to question (1) should respond "Unionist Party" to question (2a) and "Labour Party" to question (2b). Persons who answer "middle class" to question (1) should respond (less solidly) "Liberal Party" to question (2a) and be divided between "Labour Party" and "Unionist Party" in responding to question (2b). These results would establish the Left-Right continuum for the parties that is assumed by the center party thesis and also would establish the postulated connection between the parties' continuum and the class structure.
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> (2) Persons who answer "Labour Party" to question (2a) should respond "Labour Party" to question (3a) if the Labour Party ran a candidate in their district; otherwise, they should respond "yes" to question (3b). An analogously consistent result should occur for persons who answer "Liberal Party" or "Unionist Party" to question (2a). The response given to question (2b) should never be given to question (3a); these results would establish that the electors voted for their class interests as assumed by the center party thesis.

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[17]The Marxist doctrine of false class consciousness is well-known. Dangerfield, op. cit., p. 235, repeatedly referred to unconscious impulses and instinct. These views often seem to function as deux ex machina.

If some of these results did not appear in the hypothetical survey analysis, then the center party thesis would be suspect.

The center party thesis may be more narrowly and precisely stated in terms of the hypothetical questionnaire: Persons who would have answered "working class" to question (1), would also have answered "Labour Party" to questions (2a) and (3a) or "yes" to (3b). (Question (3b) is especially important for the imaginary 1910 survey since in 1910 the Labour Party fielded candidates for only about ten percent of the seats in the House of Commons.) When stated in these terms, the center party thesis is perhaps less plausible than usual, but this imaginary survey is hardly persuasive.

Although in practice the validity of the center party thesis cannot be directly examined by survey methods, the doctrine can be assessed by other, less direct and less conclusive, means. The nub of the center party explanation of the Liberal Party's decline is the working class elector who, when given the opportunity, "naturally"[18] transferred his vote from the Liberal Party to the Labour Party. That vote transfer was at least accelerated and at most caused, so the explanation runs, by the Liberal Government's failure to "steal

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[18]Duverger, op. cit., p. 214.

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the thunder" of the Labour Party[19] and by the deterioration of the conditions of working class life under the Liberal Government from 1906 to 1914.[20] These supplementary hypotheses of the doctrine are examined before turning to a consideration of the putative vote switching.

The social reform program of the last Liberal Government has frequently been both under-estimated and over-estimated by proponents of the center party explanation: Its magnitude has been under-estimated; its doctrinal content has been over-estimated. The volume of social legislation enacted was immense, and the content, rather than forming a completed doctrinaire program, was quite pragmatic, dependent upon the personalities in the Liberal Cabinet.[21]

"That the Liberals did move to the left in the years 1906-1914 cannot be denied."[22]

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[19]The Liberal Government "dared not attack [. . .] Capital," was "constrained to adopt a conservative attitude," and was "ideologically immobile." Respectively, Dangerfield, op. cit., p. 8; Duverger, op. cit., p. 214; Downs, op. cit., p. 129.

[20]Marxist doctrine, of course, postulates such a deterioration. Dangerfield, op. cit., Part II, Chapter IV, argued that it actually occurred.

[21]For a general history, emphasizing the social legislation of the Liberal Government, see Cross, op. cit.

[22]Anthony King, "The Decline of the British Liberal Party," A paper read at the American Political Science Meeting, 1962, p. 5. "The acts passed by Liberals in power since the end of 1905

> This was the period of what Professor Beer has called the Liberal 'New Deal.' The years before 1914 saw the introduction of old age pensions and medical and unemployment insurance, the extension of workman's compensation, the establishment of minimum wages and maximum hours in a number of industries, and the imposition of hitherto unheard of rates of direct taxation.[23]

When the Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George, introduced the 1909 Budget "[i]t was at once remarked by [Phillip] Snowden and others, that a great many features of the budget seemed to have been 'cribbed' from a pamphlet by Snowden entitled The Socialist Budget."[24] The Budget and its author were praised by some Socialists:

> We shall be quite frank about Mr. Lloyd George's Budget; it is splendid. Two minor defects apart, the Budget is not only more than we had dared to hope [. . .] but almost as

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were moderate experiments in social legislation, but they gave a decisive impulse to state intervention and may perhaps be regarded as the foundations of the Welfare State." Thomas Jones, Lloyd George (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 39.

[23]King, op. cit., pp. 5-6. The reference is to Samuel H. Beer, "Great Britain: From Governing Elite to Organized Mass Parties," in Sigmund Neumann (ed.), Modern Political Parties (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 36. (The above list of enactments is not exhaustive.)

[24]D. C. Somervell, British Politics Since 1900 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 66. Snowden was a Labour Party M. P. in 1909 and became Chancellor of the Exchequer in the minority Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929-1931.

> much as we could have expected from a Socialist Chancellor in his first year of office [. . .]. We cannot deny, and we have no intention of denying that the author of the present Budget is good enough statesman for a Socialist to support during the next five or ten years at any rate.[25]

"There was no period in the long history of Conservative Governments [declared Arthur Henderson, a Labour Party M.P., in 1909] which, in the output of beneficient social legislation, would compare with the last three years."[26]

These legislative achievements have been recognized but discounted by some center party theorists, notably by Dangerfield:

> [The Liberal Government had come forward] with a shining procession of social reforms--a Workmen's Compensation Act, an Old Age Pension Act, a Miners' Eight Hours Act, a Trade Boards Act [.] And yet--what could be the matter? --wages never went up. In fact, they continued to fall. [. . .] [T]he workers of England ['s . . .] political barometer was wages and nothing more [. . .].[27]

This statement, if about the course of money wages, is simply in error.[28] From 1885 to 1914, there was a secular trend of rising

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[25]New Age (Socialist), May 6, 1909. Quoted in S. Macoby, English Radicalism 1886-1914 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953), p. 502n.

[26]Speech at Wigan, April 6, 1909. Quoted in The Liberal Magazine, 1909 (London: The Liberal Publication Department, 1910), p. 255. "The Labour Party had become a sort of admonishing left wing of the Government, supporting its sick policies with all the fidelity of a slightly cantankerous nurse." Dangerfield, op. cit., p. 227.

[27]Ibid., pp. 225, 228.

[28]See below Table 2.2. In fairness to Dangerfield, it should

money wages. In each successive year, from 1910 to 1914,[29] the index for money wages increased. Since the statistics for money wages, given in Table 2.2, relate only to employed persons, the trend in money wages should be considered in connection with the trend in employment. A rough index for the direction of changes in unemployment is presented in Table 2.1. These figures indicate that unemployment was relatively high for 1905-1909 but was relatively low for 1910-1914.[30] A stronger inference is probably not justifiable, given the nature of the unemployment data, but the direction of change for 1905-1914 is significant: During the latter half of the Liberal Government's tenure, the level of unemployment declined.

The course of real wages (i.e., money wages adjusted for the cost of living) is another, perhaps better, indicator of the changing conditions of the working class.[31] With respect to real

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be noted that the standard work on the course of wages--A. L. Bowley, Wages and Income since 1860 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937)--was published after the original publication of Dangerfield's book.

[29]Dangerfield's book focused on 1910-1914.

[30]See below Table 2.1; compare 1905-1909 with 1892-1896; also compare 1910-1914 with 1897-1901.

[31]See below Table 2.2.

wages, Dangerfield was probably correct (although the data have a large margin of error) that "in 1910 the English worker was a poorer man than he was in 1900."[32] However, the years 1899-1900 are misleading bases for a comparison: During the Boer War, real wages reached their highest point in the entire period 1885-1914.[33] Real wages, so far as can be reconstructed, were rather stable during the years 1905-1914.

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[32]Dangerfield, op. cit., p. 218. See also below Table 2.2.

[33]See below Table 2.2. Four series--money wages with and without an adjustment for unemployment and real wages with and without an adjustment for unemployment--for 1850 to 1902, constructed by G. H. Wood, also show 1900 as the peak year for the entire period, for each series. See B. R. Mitchell, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 343-344. This selection of an extreme as a base for a comparison is only one of many examples that could be cited concerning Dangerfield's highly selective and quite misleading use of statistics; this particular flaw also vitiates the comments on real wages by G. D. H. Cole, British Working Class Politics 1832-1914 (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1941), pp. 210ff.

TABLE 2.1

PERCENTAGE OF UNEMPLOYED IN CERTAIN BRITISH TRADE UNIONS, 1888-1914*

Year	Percentage	Year	Percentage
1888	4.9	1901	3.3
1889	2.1	1902	4.0
1890	2.1	1903	4.7
1891	3.5	1904	6.0
1892	6.3	1905	5.0
1893	7.5	1906	3.6
1894	6.9	1907	3.7
1895	5.8	1908	7.8
1896	3.3	1909	7.7
1897	3.3	1910	4.7
1898	2.8	1911	3.0
1899	2.0	1912	3.2
1900	2.5	1913	2.1
		1914	3.3

*Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

(a) About these statistics, the source remarks: "Before 1922 there are no general statistics of unemployment. But certain trade unions which paid unemployment benefit to their members, did make returns to the Labour Department, and these returns cover a wide variety of industries back to 1888. [. . .] The percentages computed from these returns have been commonly used as a general indicator of unemployment. In view of the small number of workers covered by them this is obviously a hazardous procedure. They consist almost exclusively of skilled male workers, they tend to over-represent industries which are vulnerable to cyclical employment fluctuations, and they ignore completely some of the more stable industries (agriculture, domestic service, and railways for example). The industries covered by the returns change in relative importance over the period: before 1867 the engineering, metal and shipbuilding trades were preponderant, in the 1880's this group accounted for three-fifths of the totals covered, in the 1920's for two-fifths. Nevertheless the official view of the Ministry of Labour in 1926 (by which time it was possible to check the trade union returns against unemployment insurance data) was that for the period 1881-1925 'the general percentages provide a valuable guide to the direction of the changes in unemployment and a rough indication of the comparative state of employment at different periods, although they cannot be relied upon as an absolute measure of the total amount of unemployment in all industries at any particular date'." Ibid., p. 57. Citation omitted.

TABLE 2.2

MONEY WAGES, COST OF LIVING AND REAL WAGES IN BRITAIN, 1885-1914*

Year	Money Wages	Cost of Living	Real Wages
1885	73	91	81
1886	72	89	81
1887	73	88	84
1888	75	88	86
1889	80	89	90
1890	83	89	93
1891	83	89	92
1892	83	90	92
1893	83	89	94
1894	83	85	98
1895	83	83	100
1896	83	83	100
1897	84	85	98
1898	87	88	99
1899	89	86	104
1900	94	91	103
1901	93	90	102
1902	91	90	101
1903	91	91	99
1904	89	92	97
1905	89	92	97
1906	91	93	98
1907	96	95	101
1908	94	93	101
1909	94	94	100
1910	94	96	98
1911	95	97	97
1912	98	100	97
1913	99	102	97
1914	100	100	100

*Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 344-345. (a) 1914 = 100. (b) The "Real Wages" index is a quotient that, the original compiler (A. L. Bowley) suggests, should be treated as + or - 5. (c) The "Money Wages" index relates only to employed persons. (d) The reduction in hours of work, increase in services provided by the State (especially after 1907), and changes in the quality of items are not considered in the "Cost of Living" index. Ibid., pp. 340-341.

The social reforms of the Liberal Government and the favorable conditions in 1910-1914 of employment and wages, although scarcely consistent with the supplementary hypotheses of the center party thesis, apparently stimulated labour discontent in the industrial field.

> The Trade Unions had secured under the Trade Disputes Act of 1906 the restoration of the right to strike, which had been practically abrogated by the Taff Vale Judgment [1901]; but the depression of 1908 and 1909 had allowed little opportunity of making use of the restored power. Consequently, when trade began to boom, there was an accumulation of working class grievances [. . .].[34]

The increase in industrial strife, as measured by statistics on strikes and lockouts,[35] was accompanied by substantial trade union growth. In each successive year from 1909 through 1914, trade union membership increased.[36] However, whether or not there was concurrent labour discontent in politics manifested by a widespread switching of working class votes from the Liberal to the Labour party, as postulated by the center party thesis, must be separately investigated.

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[34]Cole, op. cit., p. 210. For 1908-1909, see above Table 2.1.

[35]See below Table 2.3. Dangerfield, op. cit., p. 299, interpreted these statistics as follows: "The millstones of Capital and Labor [. . .] grind slowly but exceeding small, and Liberalism was caught between them. It might put off the evil hour, poor old faith, but they would crush it in the end." This tendency to identify an ideology with a party is, perhaps, the major flaw in Dangerfield's analysis.

[36]See below Table 2.4. The Labour Party's affiliated trade union membership increased less regularly, as also shown in Table 2.4.

TABLE 2.3

STRIKES AND LOCK-OUTS IN BRITAIN, BY NUMBER OF LABOUR DISPUTES, WORKPEOPLE DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY INVOLVED, AND AGGREGATE DURATION IN WORKING DAYS, 1893-1914*

Year	Number of Disputes	Number of Workpeople Directly & Indirectly Involved	Aggregate Duration in Working Days
1893	615	634,301	30,467,765
1894	929	325,248	9,529,010
1895	745	263,123	5,724,670
1896	926	198,190	3,746,368
1897	864	230,267	10,345,523
1898	711	253,907	15,289,478
1899	719	180,217	2,516,416
1900	648	188,538	3,152,694
1901	642	179,546	4,142,287
1902	442	256,667	3,479,255
1903	387	116,901	2,338,668
1904	355	87,208	1,484,220
1905	358	93,503	2,470,189
1906	486	217,773	3,028,816
1907	601	147,498	2,162,151
1908	399	295,507	10,834,189
1909	436	300,819	2,773,986
1910	521	514,000	9,867,000
1911	872	952,000	10,155,000
1912	834	1,462,000	40,890,000
1913	1,459	664,000	9,804,000
1914	972	447,000	9,878,000

*Board of Trade (Labour Department), Report on Strikes and Lock-outs (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, [Cd. 5325], 1910), pp. 122-123; Ministry of Labour, Eighteenth Abstract of Labour Statistics of the United Kingdom (London: H. M. S. O., [Cmd. 2740], 1927), pp. 144-145.

(a) Uniform data are not available before 1893. Southern Ireland is included in the totals before 1910 but after 1909 is excluded. This is indicated by the broken line, but for most practical purposes, this break can be ignored. See Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 58, 71.

(b) "Disputes involving less than 10 workpeople, and those which lasted less than one day, have been omitted, except when the aggregate duration exceeded 100 working days." (Cd. 5325, pp. 122-123; Cmd. 2740, pp. 144-145.)

(c) "[W]orkpeople who were on strike or locked-out are termed 'Directly involved,' and other workpeople employed at the establishments where the disputes occurred and thrown out of work thereby, though not themselves parties to the disputes, are termed 'Indirectly Involved.' Workpeople involved in more than one dispute in any year are counted more than once in the totals for that year." (Cmd. 2740, pp. 144-145).

(d) "In computing the aggregate duration of disputes, the days lost by workpeople indirectly involved are included. In the case of disputes extending into two or more years the days lost are included in the total for the year in which they fell." (Cd. 5325, pp. 122-123).

TABLE 2.4

NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE UNIONS IN BRITAIN, AND NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE LABOUR PARTY, 1900-1914*

Year	Total Number of Trade Unions	Total Number of Trade Unions Affiliated with the Labour Party	Total Trade Union Membership	Total Membership of Trade Unions Affiliated with the Labour Party
1900	1,323	41	2,022,000	353,070
1901	1,322	65	2,025,000	455,450
1902	1,297	127	2,013,000	847,315
1903	1,285	165	1,994,000	956,025
1904	1,256	158	1,967,000	855,270
1905	1,244	158	1,997,000	904,496
1906	1,282	176	2,210,000	975,182
1907	1,283	181	2,513,000	1,049,673
1908	1,268	176	2,485,000	1,127,035
1909	1,260	172	2,477,000	1,450,648
1910	1,269	151	2,565,000	1,394,402
1911	1,290	141	3,139,000	1,501,783
1912	1,252	130	3,416,000	1,858,178
1913	1,269	---	4,135,000	---------
1914	1,260	102	4,145,000	1,572,391

*For trade union statistics, Mitchell, op. cit., p. 68; for Labour Party statistics, Cole, op. cit., p. 306. The missing 1913 figures are non-existent because the Osborne Judgment prohibited the expenditure of Trade Union funds on political activities. The Osborne Judgment was superseded by the Trade Unions Act of 1913, but the basis of affiliation was changed. Thus 1913 marks a substantial break in two series.

When given the opportunity, according to the center party explanation, the working-class elector "naturally" transferred his vote from the Liberal Party to the Labour Party. Since working class electors had constituted a majority of the electorate after 1867[37] and since universal manhood suffrage had existed after 1885,[38] the gross national voting returns might be presumed to reflect the postulated shift in working class votes. This presumption is not warranted, however, since the Labour Party (nee Labour Representation Committee) ran relatively few candidates and since the agreement between J. R. MacDonald (L.R.C. Secretary) and Herbert Gladstone (Liberal Chief Whip) reduced the number of Labour-Liberal contests before the First World War.[39] However, the voting

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[37] See Lord Derby's comment. Quoted in R. T. McKenzie, British Political Parties (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955), p. 147.

[38] The franchise was not changed between 1885 and 1918. Scholars have differed in their judgments about whether or not Britain had universal manhood suffrage, but according to the National Agent of the Labour Party in 1914, if a party made a systematic effort to register men, "practically speaking manhood suffrage has now been obtained [. . .]." Report of the Special and Annual Conferences of the Labour Party, 1914, p. 31. For differing scholarly interpretations, ranging from agreement with the National Agent's judgment to strong dissent, compare A. Lawrence Lowell, The Government of England (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), I, p. 213; Sir Ivor Jennings, Party Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), I, p. 59; Elie Halevy, The Rule of Democracy, trans. E. I. Watkin (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1961), p. 442.

[39] For the MacDonald-Gladstone entente, see Frank Bealey and Henry Pelling, Labour and Politics, 1900-1906 (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1958), Chapter VI, Appendix C.

in three-cornered races--viz., purely Liberal, Labour, and Unionist contests for single seats--is pertinent. In terms of the center party explanation, three-cornered contests found the Liberal Party competing with Labour on the Left and Unionists on the Right. If the center party thesis is correct, in three-cornered races, there should have been a progressive decrease in the Liberal vote and increase in the Labour vote. (A change in the Unionist vote, apparently, has not been definitely stipulated by the theory.)[40]

Between the formation of the Labour Party in 1900 and the beginning of the wartime party truce in 1914, there were eighty-seven purely three-cornered races.[41] The total vote in these contests was 1,142,458; 470,111 Liberal, 254,760 Labour, and 417,587 Unionist. The parties' average vote per contest was 5,404 Liberal; 2,928 Labour; and 4,800 Unionist. The percentage distribution of the total vote was 41.1 Liberal, 22.3 Labour, and 36.6 Unionist.

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[40]However, Duverger's and Downs' expositions of the center party explanation seem to suggest an increase. See Duverger, op. cit., p. 214; Downs, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

[41]Each of these eighty-seven cases had three and only three candidates (Labour, Liberal, Unionist) competing for a single seat. (1) Candidates who ran as Socialists rather than Labour Party nominees are excluded from consideration. Since Socialists fared worse than Labourites at the polls on the average, (i) there seems to have been no sizable switch to the far Left, and (ii) the calculations in this analysis give the most favorable picture of Labour's position. (2) The coalition of the Conservative and Liberal Unionist parties is treated, in the customary fashion, as a single party.

These statistics are summarized in Table 2.5 and furnish a benchmark for a trend analysis.

TABLE 2.5

SUMMARY OF VOTING IN THREE-CORNERED CONTESTS IN BRITISH ELECTIONS, BY PARTY, 1900-1914*

	Liberal Party	Labour Party	Unionist Party	Totals
Aggregate Vote	470,111	254,760	417,587	1,142,458
Average Vote (N = 87)	5,404	2,928	4,800	13,132
Percentage of Total Vote	41.1	22.3	36.6	100.0

*Bealey and Pelling, op. cit., Appendices A and B; Cole, op. cit., pp. 275-301.

(a) For 1900 through the 1906 general election, the Labour Representation Committee figures and Scottish Workers Representation Committee data in Bealey and Pelling have been used, with the following exceptions: The 1906 Liberal vote in South Leeds has been taken as 6,200 (Bealey and Pelling: 6,620) and in North Ayrshire has been taken as 4,587 (Bealey and Pelling: 4,687) since these are Cole's figures and agree with The Liberal Year Book for 1918 (London: The Liberal Publication Department, 1918), pp. 195, 287.

(b) From 1906 through 1914, Cole's data for the Labour Party has been used with the following exceptions: The December 1910 Liberal vote in Chatham has been taken as 4,302 (Cole: 6,989) and the December 1910 Unionist vote in Chatham has been taken as 6,989 (Cole: 4,302) in conformity with the Liberal Year Book, 1918, p. 215; the December 1910 N.E. Lanarkshire contest in Cole is omitted in compiling the Table since Cole repeats exactly the same data as a 1911 by-election and since it is also listed as a 1911 by-election in the Liberal Year Book, 1918, p. 279.

(c) The following discrepancies have been noted, but in each case, Cole's information was used for this Table:

Constituency and Election	Cole	Liberal Year Book, 1918
Huddersfield (1906, By-)	Union: 4,818	Union: 4,844
Montrose (1908, By-)	Lib: 3,803	Lib: 3,083
Salford, W. (Jan. 1910, G.E.)	Labour	Socialist
Spen Valley (Jan. 1910, G.E.)	Lab: 2,914	Lab: 2,514
Bow & Bromley (J. 1910, G.E.)	Labour	Socialist
Glouchester, N. (J. 1910, G.E.)	Labour	Socialist
Swansea Town (J. 1910, G.E.)	Union: 4,375	Union: 4,379
Swansea Town (J. 1910, G.E.)	Labour	Socialist
Lanark, Govan (J. 1910, G.E.)	Union: 5,128	Union: 5,127
Lanark, Govan (J. 1910, G.E.)	Lib: 6,558	Lib: 6,556
Lanark, Govan (J. 1910, G.E.)	Lab: 3,543	Lab: 3,545

The three-cornered contests are initially grouped, in Table 2.6, in seven chronological periods: (1) the general election of 1900, (2) the by-elections of 1900-1905, (3) the general election of 1906, (4) the by-elections of 1906-1909, (5) the first general election of 1910, (6) the second general election of 1910, and (7) the by-elections of 1911-1914. With this classification, the Liberal Party's percentage of the vote was above its average in periods (5) and (6), and the Labour Party's percentage of the vote was above its average in periods (2) and (3). This classification is, of course, very rough since the number of cases per period varies from three to twenty-nine. This variation can be reduced, as indicated in Table 2.6, by making a simpler temporal classification. A dichotomous classification, with thirty-five and fifty-two cases, is achieved by grouping periods (1)-(4) and by grouping periods (5)-(7). With this simpler temporal classification, the Liberal Party's percentage of the vote increased from the pre-1910 to the post-1910 period, and the Labour Party's percentage of the vote decreased from the pre-1910 to the post-1910 period.

With the seven category temporal classification, in Table 2.7, the Liberal Party's average vote initially fluctuated but beginning with period (3) steadily increased; the Labour Party's average vote fluctuated more widely and is bi-modal with peaks in periods (2)-(3)

and (6)-(7). When the seven categories are reduced to two, as indicated in Table 2.7, the Liberal Party's average vote increased by more than thirteen hundred from the pre-1910 to the post-1910 period, and the Labour Party's average vote increased by only nine from the pre-1910 to the post-1910 period.[42]

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[42] These figures are especially striking since turnout (votes/registered electors) in the three-cornered races was higher in the post-1910 period (85.6%) than in the pre-1910 period (83.7%) and since the average three-cornered contest attracted 1,718 more votes in the post-1910 period than in the pre-1910 period.

TABLE 2.6

VOTING IN THREE-CORNERED RACES, BY PERIOD AND BY PARTY PERCENTAGES*

Election and Number of Cases	Liberal Percentage	Labour Percentage	Unionist Percentage
1900 General Election (3)	37.7	11.9	50.3
1900-1905 By-Elections (4)	39.7	23.1	37.2
1906 General Election (20)	36.8	27.5	35.8
1906-1909 By-Elections (8)	39.9	19.8	40.2
1910 I General Election (29)	44.5	20.2	35.3
1910 II General Election (9)	42.5	22.3	35.2
1910-1914 By-Elections (14)	40.7	22.3	37.0
1900-1909 Inclusive (35)	38.0	24.1	37.9
1910-1914 Inclusive (52)	43.0	21.2	35.8

*For sources, see above Table 2.5. The percentages involve rounding in some cases.

TABLE 2.7

VOTING IN THREE-CORNERED RACES,
BY PERIOD AND BY PARTY AVERAGE*

Election and Number of Cases	Liberal Average	Labour Average	Unionist Average
1900 General Election (3)	3,057	968	4,080
1900-1905 By-Elections (4)	5,443	3,174	5,107
1906 General Election (20)	4,434	3,309	4,309
1906-1909 By-Elections (8)	5,161	2,566	5,204
1910 I General Election (29)	5,769	2,614	4,568
1910 II General Election (9)	6,092	3,201	5,041
1910-1914 By-Elections (14)	6,219	3,418	5,662
1900-1909 Inclusive (35)	4,597	2,923	4,585
1910-1914 Inclusive (52)	5,946	2,932	4,944

*For sources, see above Table 2.5. The averages involve rounding in some cases.

All eighty-seven of the three-cornered contests for single seats, in 1900-1914, have been summarized in Tables 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7. With forty-four of these races, the trend in voting results can be examined, holding the individual constituencies constant. Sixteen districts had two three-cornered contests during this period. When the first race is compared with the second race, the results are: In six districts the Liberal vote rose and the Labour vote fell. In three districts both the Liberal and Labour vote declined. In two districts both the Liberal and Labour vote increased. In five districts the Liberal vote fell and the Labour vote rose. Three constituencies had, respectively, three, four and five three-cornered contests. When the first race is compared with the last race, the results are: In all three constituencies the Labour vote declined. In two constituencies the Liberal vote increased, and although the Liberal vote declined in the third constituency, it fell less than the Labour vote.[43]

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[43]These Labour figures are especially striking since the registered electorate increased between the first and last races in fifteen of the nineteen districts with multiple contests; in two districts the number of registered electors remained constant between the first and last races. Since these nineteen constituencies are particularly noteworthy, they are listed, complete with voting returns, as Appendix 2 of this dissertation.

When measured either in percentage or absolute terms, with and without holding individual districts constant, in three-cornered contests the Labour Party's vote did not markedly or uniformly increase and the Liberal Party's vote did not markedly or uniformly decrease. From 1906 to 1914, if anything, the reverse tended to be true. This result conflicts with the center party explanation, strikingly so since three-cornered contests are prima facie paradigmatic cases for that thesis. Since this result conflicts with the center party thesis, it should be remarked that the analysis is not necessarily conclusive because the tri-cornered constituencies cannot be presumed to be representative of the entire country and because individual voting behavior cannot be strictly inferred from constituency election returns. However, these theoretical caveats should be tempered by two observations: First, if the three-cornered races are not representative of the country, then those races probably over-represent the Labour Party's appeal since, with a quite limited number of candidates, the Labour Party almost certainly tended to contest districts that were judged to be particularly favorable. Second, although individual vote switching cannot be deduced from constituency returns, the stability of Labour's absolute vote in the three-cornered contests indicates that if some voters switched to the Labour Party, then other voters switched away from the Labour

Party.[44] Thus, although the data do not conclusively refute the center party thesis, the data do make its validity quite improbable.

III. An Empirical Critique of the Electoral System Thesis

The electoral system thesis is a quasi-mathematical theory, a set of hypotheses about parties' probabilities of winning seats and about the relative magnitudes of parties' percentages of votes and of seats, as well as a psychological theory of the voter's reactions to these mathematical entities. The general theory purports to explain why "[a]n almost complete correlation is observable between the simple-majority single-ballot system and the two-party system: dualist countries use the simple-majority vote and simple-majority vote countries are dualist."[45]

A vivid summary of the electoral system explanation of the Liberal Party's decline has been presented by E. E. Schattschneider:

> Here was a party [according to Schattschneider] that had every advantage--money, prestige, able leadership, a glorious history, and a large body of devoted followers--yet it was strangled by the election system. The Liberal party had the great misfortune to become a <u>third</u> party, and

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[44]The nineteen districts, with more than one three-cornered race, some of which were only a few months apart, are particularly pertinent. It should be noted that a change from voting Labour to not voting, is a switch away from Labour.

[45]Duverger, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 217.

> once caught in this position, was destroyed by the statistical tendency of the single-member district system.[46]

The general theory has been stated in considerable detail by Duverger:

> [There are, according to Duverger, two factors involved] a mechanical and a psychological factor. The mechanical factor consists in the 'under-representation' of the third, i.e., the weakest party, its percentage of seats being inferior to its percentage of the poll. [. . .] The psychological factor is [. . . that] [i]n cases where there are three parties operating under the simple-majority single-ballot system the electors soon realize that their votes are wasted if they continue to give them to the third party: whence their natural tendency to transfer their vote to the less evil of its two adversaries in order to prevent the success of the greater evil. This 'polarization' effect [. . .] operates in fact in the same way as 'under-representation' [. . .] under-representation generally being the earlier, for a certain lapse of time is required before the electors become aware of the decline of a party and transfer their votes to another.[47]

Since Duverger's formulation has virtually achieved canonical status,[48] this analysis focuses upon it.

The voters' perceptions of and judgments about the degree of under-representation (or over-representation) of the parties, and about the chances of a particular party capturing a particular seat,

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[46]Schattschneider, op. cit., p. 79.

[47]Duverger, op. cit., pp. 225-226.

[48]The electoral system theory has been called the "Duverger Doctrine" by Colin Leys, "Models, Theories and the Theory of Political Parties," Political Studies, Vol. VII, No. 2 (1959), p. 127.

cannot be investigated in the absence of survey data for the relevant period.[49] The imaginary 1910 survey, which was discussed above, could have contributed crucial information with the following sorts of questions:

1. (a) Which party do you most prefer? (b) Which party do you least prefer?

2. (a) Which party do you believe has the best chance of winning your district's seat in tomorrow's election for the House of Commons? (b) Which party do you believe has the least chance of winning your district's seat in tomorrow's election for the House of Commons?

3. Was the _____[(1a)] party under-represented in the last general election, that is, was its percentage of the total seats less than its percentage of the national vote?

4. [ASKED ONE WEEK LATER] For which party did you vote in last week's election for the House of Commons?

The electoral system theory can be interpreted, in terms of these questions, as asserting: There is a high probability that a respondent's answer to question (1a), if it is also the answer to question (2b) and if the answer to question (3) is "yes," will not be the respondent's answer to question (4).[50] This hypothesis may or may not seem plausible, but it is not evidence.

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[49] The importance of the distinction between the actual state of affairs and the voters' perceptions, with respect to the Duverger Doctrine, has been stressed by Donald V. Smiley, "The Two-Party System and One-Party Dominance in the Liberal Democratic State," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. XXIV, No. 3 (August, 1958), p. 316.

[50] The two intervening conditions, the "if" clauses in the

Although the voters' views cannot be ascertained for the period under review, certain objective aspects of the electoral system theory can be investigated. From the formation of the Labour Party (L.R.C.) in 1900 to the advent of the First World War, there were four British general elections. These may be construed as four test cases for the electoral system theory's hypotheses about the over- and under-representation of various types of parties.

"[I]n a simple-majority system with two parties the vanquished is always under-represented by comparison with the victor [. . .]."[51] This is perhaps the electoral system theory's central hypothesis is about the over- and under-representation of parties, but since ostensibly five significant British parties existed in 1900-1912,[52] a corollary is more pertinent in the present context. "[I]n cases where there is a third party [i.e., third in terms of the total national vote] it is under-represented to an even greater extent than

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hypothesis, are independent. The electoral system theory seems to contain an internal contradiction if only one of the conditions happens to hold. This point is discussed below.

[51] Duverger, op. cit., p. 227. The word 'always' is too strong; see Grumm, "Theories of Electoral Systems," Midwest Journal of Political Science, Vol. II (1958), pp. 357-376.

[52] Viz., the Liberal, Labour, Conservative, Liberal Unionist, and Irish Nationalist parties.

the less favoured of the other two."[53] This corollary encompasses the British party system before 1912, if extended to fourth and fifth parties.[54] A strong extension is: When there is a fourth party, it is under-represented to an even greater extent than the third party. Etc. A weak extension is: When there is a fourth party, it is under-represented to an even greater extent than the second party. Etc. All of these hypotheses fail to stipulate the meaning of 'degree of under-representation' and, indeed, Duverger did not offer a unique measure for under-representation. Two measures were proposed: (1) A party's percentage of the total vote minus the party's percentage of the total seats, and (2) the first measure [i.e., (1)] divided by the party's percentage of the total vote.[55] Since Duverger did not elucidate these matters of detail, the present analysis may be viewed not only as a test of the electoral system theory but also as an attempted extension and clarification of that theory.

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[53]Duverger, op. cit., p. 226.

[54]Although proponents of the theory clearly seem to imply that the theory can be extended, so far as the present writer is aware, the extension has not been worked out in detail by an exponent of the theory.

[55]Duverger, op. cit., p. 225. For convenience in the present analysis, the two measures are called the absolute degree of under-representation and the percentage degree of under-representation, respectively.

When the general elections of 1900-1910 are used to test the electoral system theory, perhaps the pivotal point of the test involves determining the number of parties. There were, as mentioned above, ostensibly five significant British parties in 1900-1912, viz., the Liberal, Labour, Conservative, Liberal Unionist, and Irish Nationalist parties. The operational number of parties, in an analysis, has depended upon a decision by the analyst. These decisions have varied and the number of parties has ranged from two to five, in published studies. When reduced to two, the parties were: (1) the Liberal, Labour and Irish Nationalist alliance and (2) the Conservative and Liberal Unionist coalition. Since the two party view is especially easy to check, for convenience this analysis begins with that perspective and subsequently increases the number of parties.

The results of 1900-1910 general elections, when viewed as contests between two broad coalition parties, fit the expected pattern: The alliance with the most votes, in each general election, received a higher proportion of seats than votes.[56]

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[56]See below Table 2.8.

TABLE 2.8

PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF BRITISH GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1900-1910, FOR TWO COALITION PARTIES*

General Election	Liberal, Labour and Irish Nationalist Coalition Party		Conservative and Liberal Unionist Coalition Party	
	Percentages		Percentages	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
1900	48.9	40.0	51.1	60.0
1906	55.9	76.6	43.7	23.4
1910 (Jan.)	53.0	59.3	46.9	40.7
1910 (Dec.)	53.5	59.1	46.4	40.9

*Constitutional Year Book for 1920 (London: National Unionist Association, 1920), pp. 220-221.
(a) Independents, according to the source, polled 0.4% of the vote in the 1906 general election and 0.1% of the vote in each of the 1910 general elections. All results should be regarded as approximations and are computed from the source's data.

There are eight possible ways to decompose these two broad alliances.[57] Since these are not all equally interesting for the present analysis, but may be of interest to the reader, a complete decomposition--viz., five separate parties--is presented in Table 2.9.[58]

[57]Viz., (1) Liberal-Labour vs. Irish Nationalist vs. Conservative-Liberal Unionist, (2) Liberal-Irish Nationalist vs. Labour vs. Conservative-Liberal Unionist, (3) Labour-Irish Nationalist vs. Liberal vs. Conservative-Liberal Unionist, (4) Liberal vs. Irish Nationalist vs. Labour vs. Conservative-Liberal Unionist; (5)-(8) are the same as the preceding sequence, treating Conservative-Liberal Unionist as Conservative vs. Liberal Unionist.

[58]This permits the reader to combine the parties as he may desire.

TABLE 2.9

PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF BRITISH GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1900-1910, FOR FIVE PARTIES*

Political Party	1900 Percentages Votes	1900 Percentages Seats	1906 Percentages Votes	1906 Percentages Seats	1910 (Jan.) Percentages Votes	1910 (Jan.) Percentages Seats	1910 (Dec.) Percentages Votes	1910 (Dec.) Percentages Seats
Liberal	44.4	27.5	49.3	59.9	43.1	41.0	43.8	40.3
Labour	2.0	0.3	6.0	4.3	8.0	6.0	7.3	6.3
Irish Nationalist	2.5	12.2	0.6	12.4	1.9	12.2	2.5	12.5
Liberal Unionist	9.3	10.1	7.9	3.4	8.0	4.6	8.0	5.1
Conservative	41.8	49.9	35.8	20.0	38.9	36.1	38.4	35.8

*Constitutional Year Book, 1920, pp. 220-222; Bealey and Pelling, op. cit., Appendices A and B; Liberal Year Book, 1918, pp. 190-375.

(a) The Constitutional Year Book, 1920 was the basic source, with the adjustments noted in (b) and (c) below. The source's 1910 "Labour and Socialist" is "Labour" in this Table. See also the note to Table 2.8.

(b) The Labour Party (L.R.C. and S.W.R.C.) vote and seat totals for 1900 and 1906 were computed from Bealey and Pelling, op. cit., and were used to adjust data presented in the Consitutional Year Book, 1920.

(c) The Liberal Unionist vote for each general election was computed from the district-by-district results in the Liberal Year Book, 1918 and was used to adjust data presented in the Constitutional Year Book, 1920. Since these vote totals, apparently, are not readily available elsewhere, they are given here: (1900) 305,123; (1906) 445,032; (Jan. 1910) 534,134; (Dec. 1910) 419,142. The 1906 figure includes the 817 votes received by an Independent Liberal Unionist.

(d) In this Table, in January 1910, the Liberal Unionist Party was the third party, i.e., it polled slightly more votes than the Labour Party. The margin (1,327 votes) is so small that it, perhaps, should not be insisted upon.

Although the figures in Table 2.9 are only approximations, the number of discrepancies with the electoral system theory is too large to be dismissed as the result of marginal errors in the data: In three elections (1900, 1910), the first (Liberal) party was under-represented.[59] In one election (1900), the second (Conservative) party was over-represented. In one election (1900), the third (Liberal Unionist) party was over-represented. In one election (1900), the fourth (Irish Nationalist) party was over-represented. In three elections (1906, 1910), the fifth (Irish Nationalist) party was over-represented. With five parties, the straight-forward over- and under-representation hypotheses fail to fit any of the four general elections.[60]

The electoral system theory is confirmed if there were only two coalition parties; the theory is infirmed if there were five parties.

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[59] The Liberal Party in December 1910, according to Duverger, won 43.7 percent of the vote and 47.74 percent of the seats. (See Duverger, op. cit., p. 227.) The proportion of votes (43.7%) agrees with the figure (43.8%) in Table 2.9, but the proportion of seats (47.74%) differs greatly from the figure (40.3%) in Table 2.9. Sources differ in detail, of course, but the latter difference is too large to be attributed to a minor variation among sources. Duverger has, I believe, erred in the Liberal Party's proportion of the seats, but since he did not list a source for his data, the nature of the error must be somewhat doubtful. However, I suspect that Duverger counted the Labour Party M.P.s with the Liberal Party M.P.s (in Table 2.9, a combined percentage of 46.6%) but did not count the Labour Party's vote with the Liberal Party's vote.

[60] The degree of under-representation is also troublesome, given the data in Table 2.9.

The tentative suggestion that the pivotal point in testing the theory is determining the number of political parties, seems justified and is adopted as a firm conclusion.

A decision about the number of parties cannot be avoided if the electoral system theory is to be tested, and if the decision is not to be ad hoc or arbitrary, it should be based upon an explicit, reasonable criterion. A suitable, rather natural and quite general[61] criterion--viz., treating a parliamentary-electoral alliance as a single party--can be justified by a brief reference to the history of British parties from 1886 to 1910. The Conservative and Liberal Unionist parties carefully avoided rival candidacies in the constituencies and jointly supported (or opposed, as the case might be) the Government in the House of Commons, beginning in 1886.[62] This coalition may reasonably be viewed as functionally a single party.[63] Exactly the same argument provides justification for viewing the Liberal and Irish Nationalist alliance as a single party.[64] With this

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[61]See below Chapter IV.

[62]For voting in the House of Commons, see Lowell, op. cit., II, Chapter XXXV. For constituency candidacies, see the Liberal Year Book, 1905, pp. 160-321; Liberal Year Book, 1918, pp. 190-375.

[63]This is the conventional view, and the term "Unionist Party" denotes this coalition in the present dissertation.

[64]See the sources cited above in footnote 62. There is a confusion rather than a convention about this view, illustrated by Albert

criterion, the Labour Party cannot be considered a part of the Liberal-Irish Nationalist coalition party[65] since (despite the MacDonald-Gladstone pact) rival Liberal and Labour candidacies were frequent.[66] From this perspective, there were three parties in Britain[67] from 1900 to 1910.

When the 1900-1910 general elections are viewed as a three party battle, the fit between the theory and data is better than the five party but not so good as the two party perspective. In two elections (1900, 1906), the first (Conservative-Liberal Unionist, Liberal-Irish Nationalist) party was over-represented and the second (Liberal-Irish Nationalist, Conservative-Liberal Unionist) party was

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Mabileau's counting the vote received by Irish Nationalists (in 1906-1910) as part of the Liberal vote but not counting the seats received by Irish Nationalists as part of the Liberal seats. Albert Mabileau, Le Parti Liberal Dans Le Systeme Constitutionnel Britannique (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1953), p. 107.

[65]There was a Liberal-Labour-Irish Nationalist coalition in the House of Commons, but this only meets one of the two parts of the proposed criterion.

[66]See above Table 2.6. The Labour Party (L.R.C. and S.W.R.C.) ran 55 candidates in 1906, for example, and 20 of them in single-member districts had Liberal opponents and 3 of them in two-member districts had a pair of Liberal opponents. Bealey and Pelling, op. cit., Appendices A and B.

[67]The term 'Britain' or 'British' in the present study, refers to the United Kingdom as a whole, as constituted at the various dates under discussion.

under-represented. In one election (December 1910), the margin (4,895 votes) between the first (Conservative-Liberal Unionist) party and second (Liberal-Irish Nationalist) party is so slight (0.1% of their combined vote) that the attribution of first and second place may properly be suspended.[68] In one election (January 1910), however, the first (Conservative-Liberal Unionist) party was under-represented and the second (Liberal-Irish Nationalist) party was over-represented. Thus one out of four cases clearly contravenes the electoral system theory's hypotheses about first and second parties. Since the theory is a statistical theory, with unspecified values for the probabilities,[69] this result may be regarded as consistent with the theory.

The third (Labour) party was clearly and consistently under-represented in 1900-1910 although it did not obviously decline, as shown in Table 2.9. The former but not the latter, is consistent with the electoral system theory.

The third party's absolute degree of under-representation (% votes - % seats) was never as great as the absolute degree of

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[68]There is no accepted theory of honest error in these matters. Perhaps one could be developed by a statistical study of recounts.

[69]The probabilities might be specified by generalizing from one or more long series of election data, for example, from British general elections of 1885 to the present.

under-representation suffered by the other under-represented (not necessarily the second) party.[70] In two elections (1910), the third party's percentage degree of under-representation [(% votes - % seats) / % votes][71] was greater than that of the other under-represented party, but these cases are perhaps not covered by the theory since the other under-represented (Conservative-Liberal Unionist) party should have been over-represented. In one election (1900), the third party's percentage degree of under-representation was greater than the percentage degree of under-representation suffered by the second and other under-represented (Liberal-Irish Nationalist) party. And in one election (1906), the third party's percentage degree of under-representation was less than the second and other under-represented (Conservative-Liberal Unionist) party's percentage degree of under-representation. Thus it appears that '% votes - % seats' is not a suitable measure for the degree of under-representation but that '(% votes - % seats) / % votes' might be a suitable measure.

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[70] The statement in the text is based upon the out-of-context equivocation in the phrase "the less favoured of the other two." Duverger, op. cit., p. 226.

[71] For brevity the dash '-' is used to indicate subtraction and the slash '/' is used to indicate division.

With the evidence that has been surveyed, firm conclusions about the truth of the under-representation hypotheses, perhaps, are not justified. The purpose of these hypotheses, however, should be noted. If a third party's degree of under-representation exceeds the second party's degree of under-representation, then "the chances of any 'third' party gaining an absolute majority of seats are severely reduced, and its remoteness from power is made dramatically obvious, by its exaggeratedly small share of seats."[72] Therefore, according to the electoral system theory, third party voters switch their votes. That conclusion is examined elsewhere in this analysis; at this point, a third party's obvious remoteness from an absolute majority is pertinent. When a third party does not run candidates for an absolute majority of seats, the third party's remoteness from an absolute majority is obvious before election day, and the hypothesis about the third party's degree of under-representation is not functionally necessary for the electoral system theory. These remarks have served to introduce an amendment of the electoral system theory: "[T]he under-representation theory [. . . L. C. Webb has remarked] applies only to a situation in which three or more nationally organized parties are contesting most of the electorates."[73]

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[72]Leys, op. cit., p. 143.

[73]L. C. Webb, "The Australian Party System," in S. R. Davis, W. McMahon, A. A. Calwell, and L. C. Webb, The Australian Political Party System (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1954), pp. 89-90.

This condition was not satisfied in Britain before the First World War.[74] If Webb's very functional amendment is adopted,[75] then the preceding data may be dismissed as not germane to the electoral system theory.

The under- and over-representation hypotheses were the mechanical factor in Duverger's theory of the electoral system; the psychological factor is that "the electors soon realize that their votes are wasted if they continue to give them to the third party; whence their natural tendency to transfer their vote to the less evil of its two adversaries [. . .]."[76] Since "the true effect of the [. . . psychological factor] is limited to local bipartism[,]"[77] the term

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[74]The Irish Nationalist Party, in 1900-1910, failed to field candidates for a majority of the seats in the House of Commons. Similar statements are true of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Labour Party, respectively.

[75]The truth of the revised theory is not at issue in this context. The utility of Webb's suggestion is that it provides an inter-subjectively operational criterion to exorcise the deus ex machina of "regional", "sectional" or "inherently local" parties. For the presumed necessity of the latter for the electoral system theory, see Schattschneider, op. cit., p. 75; Duverger, op. cit., p. 223; Leys, op. cit., pp. 143-144.

[76]Duverger, op. cit., p. 226.

[77]Ibid., p. 223.

'third party' refers, in the following context, to the third party in a district rather than the third party in the nation.

The psychological factor, as formulated by Duverger, implies the perpetuation of the status quo within a district so long as the first and second parties continue to run candidates in the district. From this perspective, the theory is as compatible with national multi-partism as with national bi-partism.[78]

> If, to begin with, there are five parties represented in the legislature, at least five will always survive [so long as they continue to run candidates for the seats they now hold], since five come first in at least one constituency each: not to mention those which may also come second in one or more constituencies, although winning none.[79]

The psychological factor's potential national multi-partism has been criticized as inconsistent with the mechanical factor's putative national two-partism,[80] but the two factors are not necessarily inconsistent since the psychological factor presumably continues to operate in some individual districts even if the mechanical factor does not operate nationally because no third party runs

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[78]This has been noted by Smiley, op. cit., p. 317.

[79]Leys, op. cit., p. 133. Caveat added about candidates; it is obviously essential.

[80]A logical inconsistency is, perhaps, not claimed, but at least, it is claimed that the electoral system theory is poorly integrated. In addition to the articles by Smiley and Leys, see Wildavsky, op. cit., pp. 306-308.

candidates for a majority of the seats.[81] The validity of Duverger's psychological factor, thus construed, can be tested with certain three-cornered races in the British general elections of 1900-1910.

There were eleven three-cornered (Labour-Liberal-Unionist) races in successive general elections, holding constituencies constant, in 1900-1910.[82] In eight of these constituencies, the Labour Party was the third party in the first general election, and in seven of these eight cases, the Labour Party's absolute vote decreased between the first and second general election. (For a statistical hypothesis, albeit the value of the probability is not specified, a 7/8 distribution of test results is quite striking.)[83] However, in the remaining three districts, the Unionist Party was the third party in the first general election, and in all three of these cases, the Unionist Party's absolute vote increased between the first and second general election.

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[81] The statement involves the acceptance of Webb's amendment and quite possibly involves a greater degree of consistency and rigor than Duverger intended.

[82] See Appendix 2 for the detailed election returns in these eleven districts. By-elections are omitted in the present discussion, and the successive general elections are either 1906 and January 1910 or January 1910 and December 1910.

[83] Although confirming the electoral system theory, this distribution is inconsistent with the increasingly class-conscious voter, and increasing Labour vote, assumed by some versions of the center party explanation.

These eleven cases may be interpreted as confirming, with a 7/11 distribution of results, Duverger's psychological factor, but that interpretation ignores the sharply partisan asymetry of the test results. An obvious substitute hypothesis, fitting this partisan asymetry, is: The third party in a district loses votes from one general election to the next, assuming the first and second parties continue to run candidates, in the district if (and only if?) it is also the third party nationally.[84]

With the amended version of the psychological factor and Webb's revision of the mechanical factor, the electoral system theory's two sets of hypotheses form a better integrated whole, consistent with British general election data from 1900 through 1910. Thus the theory has, in a sense, survived this empirical critique.

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[84]The hypothesis is, of course, statistical in form. A similar hypothesis has been advanced by Leys: "polarization occurs in favour not of the two parties which are in the lead locally, but in favor of the two parties which have the largest number of seats in Parliament, regardless of their local strength." (Leys, op. cit., p. 142. Emphasis omitted.) Leys' hypothesis is not strictly equivalent to the present proposal. First, his hypothesis suggests the district vote received by the nationally first (and second) party increases and does not directly refer (although he apparently intended it to refer) to a decrease in the third (local and national) party's district vote. (Possible changes in the number of total voters in a district are the critical point.) Second, his hypothesis assumes the validity of the electoral system theory's equation of the first (and second) party in the national poll with the first (and second) party in the legislature. (The present proposal does not assume this equivalence but rather focuses directly upon votes.)

Nevertheless, the theory does not and cannot explain why the Liberal Party declined to the position of a national or local third party; at most, the theory explains the Party's decline after it became a third party. An exogenous variable is necessary to explain the preliminary step.

IV. Conclusions

Neither the center party theory nor the electoral system theory, as originally formulated, fits the British experience from 1900 through 1910.[85] "When certain consequences of a theory are struck by experimental contradiction, we learn that this theory should be modified but we are not told by the experiment what must be changed."[86] These theories cannot be rescued, in the present writer's judgment, without being drastically reconstructed.[87]

The fact should be accepted that the Liberal Party, measured by any of the voting indices presented in this chapter, was doing very

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[85]Indeed, neither theory is as rational as is often assumed. See Appendix 1.

[86]Pierre Duhem, The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory, trans. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Atheneum, 1962), p. 216.

[87]A tentative reconstruction of the electoral system theory was proposed in this chapter; its adequacy is examined below in Chapter IV. This reconstruction was made possible by the fertility and precision of the electoral system theory in suggesting hypotheses about British elections in 1900-1914. The center party theory, by contrast, seems relatively infertile in suggesting precise and pragmatically testable hypotheses about British elections in 1900-1914.

well indeed as recently as four years before it became a national third party.[88] A tenable theory that explains why the Liberal Party declined to the position of a national third party, is required.[89] "No absolute principle directs this inquiry, which different [theorists] may conduct in very different ways without having the right to accuse one another of illogicality."[90]

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[88]Since a party truce existed between 1914 and 1918, this four year lapse is pragmatically irreducible, for test purposes.

[89]The electoral system theory, of course, does not purport to explain how the Liberal Party became a national third party. The possibility that these theories do explain the further decline of the Liberal Party, after it became a national third party, is considered below in Chapter IV.

[90]Duhem, op. cit., p. 216.

CHAPTER III

THE DECLINE OF THE BRITISH LIBERAL PARTY

I. Introduction

"The War broke the power of the Liberal Party through the intense personal quarrels that arose between Asquith and Lloyd George. Lloyd George's 'coupon' Election of 1918 almost wiped out the Asquithian Liberals."[1] Herbert Asquith, the last traditional Leader of the Liberal Party,[2] has himself endorsed this split thesis:

> The disintegration of the Liberal Party began with the Coupon election of December, 1918. It then received a blow from which it has never since recovered. I myself was turned out of a seat which I had held against the Tories for thirty-two years. All my leading colleagues in the House of Commons suffered the same fate. The Liberal members in the new House were reduced to a handful of little more than thirty. The bulk of the old Liberal parliamentary party deserted to the Coalition.[3]

Despite Asquith's august authority, this interpretation of the decline of the Liberal Party has been controversial and has not been

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[1] John Parker, Labour Marches On (New York: Penguin Books, 1947), p. 20.

[2] Asquith was the last Liberal to be simultaneously Leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister.

[3] Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Memories and Reflections (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928), II, p. 284.

generally accepted. The truth of the split thesis has, perhaps, for its adherents, seemed too self-evident to require extensive justification. Extant expositions tend to be aphoristic[4] and parochial.[5] When these flaws are corrected, the split thesis is, as this study attempts to show, a viable explanation of the decline of the British Liberal Party.

II. The State of the Parties in 1914

The condition of the parties in 1914, on the eve of the First World War, is a benchmark for measuring the effects of the schism in the Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party. In 1914 a Liberal Cabinet had been continuously in office for more than eight years. From 1906 to 1910, supported by the largest party majority in then recent history,[6]

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[4]"The split between Asquith and Lloyd George, dating from 1916, was fatal [. . .]." Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 8.

[5]This is a serious shortcoming since the leading alternative interpretations--the center party and electoral system theses--have (at least superficially) been buttressed by comparative data from several nations. However, as shown below, this weakness is only an expository flaw since comparative information does exist to support the split thesis.

[6]A minimum of 376 and a maximum of 401 of the 670 members of the House of Commons were Liberals, after the general election of 1906. The exact figure depends upon the classification of 25 so-called 'Lib-Labs'--trade unionists who accepted the Liberal whip--either

the Liberals could have governed without the support of their Irish Nationalist allies, but after the electoral reversals of 1910, that support became indispensable. However, although shorn of its parliamentary majority by the two general elections of 1910, the Liberal Party sustained its electoral support: Forty-nine percent of the electors[7] had voted Liberal in 1906, while forty-three percent voted Liberal in the first general election of 1910.[8] The proportion rose slightly to forty-four percent in the second general election of 1910, and in the contested by-elections of 1911-1914, rose again to forty-five percent.[9] "Nobody could possible imagine, in 1914, that there would never again be a Liberal Government."[10]

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with the Labour Party or with the Liberal Party. After the miners' union affiliated with the Labour Party in 1909, 14 of the Lib-Labs accepted the Labour whip. See M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1953), II, p. 339.

[7]'Electors' does not denote individual voters since plural voting was still widespread.

[8]This swing was within the traditional range of oscillations. For example, in 1900 the Unionist Party polled fifty-one percent (51.1%) of the total vote but in 1906 polled only forty-four percent (43.7%) of the total vote. See above Table 2.9.

[9]See below Tables 3.3 and 3.4.

[10]Sir Ivor Jennings, Party Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), II, p. 252. This, the second volume of Jennings' trilogy, is the best one-volume history of the British party system.

The Irish Nationalist Party. In 1914 the Irish Nationalist Party seemed within sight of its cherished goal, Home Rule for Ireland. The House of Lords' categorical veto had been removed by the Parliament Act of 1911, and a Home Rule Bill was proceeding through the necessary stages to override the Lords' suspensory veto. The Irish Nationalists were limited (and limited themselves) to Ireland,[11] but with the exception of Ulster, their position in Ireland was virtually incontestable. Since 1885 some eighty Irish Nationalist M.P.s had been returned, most without a contest,[12] at each general election.

The Labour Party. "Labour's political fortunes in 1914 were on the ebb, and the hopes aroused by the advent of the party in 1906 had suffered a sad reverse."[13] Despite protestations of independence, the Labour M.P.s were dependent upon the Liberal Party both in Parliament and in the constituencies. For the passage of social

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[11]With the exception of Liverpool, Scotland. T.P. O'Connor, M.P., had held that seat as an Irish Nationalist, without Liberal opposition but with regular Unionist opposition, since the general election of 1885. See The Liberal Year Book for 1905 (London: The Liberal Publication Department, n.d.), pp. 250-251; Liberal Year Book, 1911, pp. 200, 307.

[12]Since a poll was not held for an uncontested seat, the Irish Nationalist Party's percentage of the total vote usually was an inaccurate indicator of its strength.

[13]G. D. H. Cole, A History of the Labour Party from 1914 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951), p. 3.

legislation, the Labour Party usually required Liberal votes in the House of Commons, and for the election of Labour M.P.s, the absence of a Liberal candidate was typically a prerequisite.[14] The Labour Party's proportions of the electorate had not manifested a secular trend in Labour's favor: Six percent of the electors had voted for Labour in 1906, while eight percent voted Labour in the first general election of 1910.[15] The proportion dropped slightly to seven percent in the second general election of 1910, and in the contested by-elections of 1911-1914, rose again to eight percent. Although Labour's proportion of the total vote in contested by-elections was virtually identical with the Party's percentage of the poll in the two preceding general elections, the Labour Party failed to win a single contested by-election.[16] In 1914 J. R. Clynes, M.P., told a Labour Party Conference that "they had been turned away by their own class.

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[14]This was recognized, at the time, by the Labour Party's leaders. See Philip, Viscount Snowden, An Autobiography (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), I, p. 319. According to Anthony King, Labour won only six seats against Liberal opposition in the 1906 general election, one seat in the first general election of 1910 and one seat in the second general election of 1910. Anthony King, "The Decline of the British Liberal Party," Paper read before the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Table II.

[15]See above Table 2.9.

[16]See below Tables 3.3 and 3.4.

Was it said they were turned away because they were not advanced enough? Surely it was because they were too far ahead."[17]

The Unionist Party. In 1914, despite three successive general election defeats, the Unionist Party was the largest party (with a single name)[18] in the House of Commons. However, although the Unionist Party had immensely augmented its ranks in the House of Commons,[19] the Party's proportion of the electorate had increased only slightly: Forty-four percent of the electors had voted Unionist in 1906, while forty-seven percent voted Unionist in the first general election of 1910.[20] The proportion dropped very slightly to forty-six percent in the second general election of 1910, and in the contested by-elections of 1911-1914, decreased again to forty-five percent.[21]

This picture of relative stability within the party system, on the eve of the War, is not inconsistent with the picture of potential

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[17]Report of the Special and Annual Conferences of the Labour Party, 1914, p. 79.

[18]The Conservative Party and the Liberal Unionist Party officially merged in 1912.

[19]From 157 in 1906 to 273 and then 274 in 1910. The Constitutional Year Book for 1920 (London: National Unionist Association, 1920), p. 220.

[20]See above Table 2.9.

[21]See below Tables 3.3 and 3.4.

crisis painted by some authors, notably by George Dangerfield.[22] The party system and the traditions of parliamentary government itself, as Dangerfield contended, were being challenged by suffragettes casting eggs at Cabinet Ministers, by Ulstermen arming in anticipation of Home Rule for Ireland, and by Syndicalists outside the Trade Union Congress. But these were militants contesting the entire system. The picture of relative stability, within the party system, is broadly accurate and may be reinforced by a perusal of Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 These tables present some pertinent statistics on the general and by-elections of 1910-1914.

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[22]George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910-1914 (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961). Dangerfield's picture is brilliant but over-drawn. An antidote, for the history of the Liberal Party in 1906-1914, is provided by Colin Cross, The Liberals in Power (1906-1914) (London: Barrie and Rockliff with Pall Mall Press, 1963).

TABLE 3.1

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN THE 1910 GENERAL ELECTIONS, BY PARTY*

Political Party	General Election January 1910	General Election December 1910
Liberal	511	465
Unionist	595	448
Labour and Socialist	92	61
Irish Nationalist	85	78
Other	30	29
Totals	1313	1081

*Liberal Year Book, 1918, pp. 189-375.

TABLE 3.2

AGGREGATE RESULTS OF THE 1910 GENERAL ELECTIONS, BY PARTY*

Political Party	General Election January, 1910	General Election December, 1910
Liberal		
Votes	2,873,251	2,290,020
Seats	275	270
Unionist		
Votes	3,127,887	2,426,635
Seats	273	274
Labour and Socialist		
Votes	532,807	381,024
Seats	40	42
Irish Nationalist		
Votes	126,647	131,720
Seats	82	84
Independent		
Votes	6,812	4,894
Seats	0	0
Totals		
Votes	6,667,404	5,234,293
Seats	670	670

*Constitutional Year Book, 1920, pp. 220-222. (a) The source remarks that "the following return gives, approximately, the number of votes polled in contested constituencies [. . .]." Ibid., p. 221. There is no polling in uncontested constituencies. Another remark is relevant and should also be noted: "It must always be borne in mind that the above is a statement as to votes cast, not of voters. [. . .] In a speech in the House of Commons on December 3rd, 1906, Mr. F. E. Smith, M.P., estimated the number of plural votes cast at a General Election to be 400,000. At a minimum calculation 300,000 of these would be Unionist, which would leave 100,000 to be deducted from the Liberal total." Liberal Year Book, 1911, p. 194. (b) The number of seats is only approximate for a session since it is affected by deaths, resignations, secessions, etc.

TABLE 3.3

PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF THE 1910 GENERAL ELECTIONS, BY PARTY*

Political Party	General Election January, 1910	General Election December, 1910
Liberal		
Votes	43.1	43.8
Seats	41.0	40.3
Unionist		
Votes	46.9	46.4
Seats	40.7	40.9
Labour and Socialist		
Votes	8.0	7.3
Seats	6.0	6.3
Irish Nationalist		
Votes	1.9	2.5
Seats	12.2	12.5
Independent		
Votes	0.1	0.1
Seats	0.0	0.0
Totals		
Votes	100.0	100.0
Seats	100.0	100.0

*Computed from Table 3.2. Percentages in this and other tables have been "rounded up from 5" and "rounded down if less than 5."

TABLE 3.4

TOTAL AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF CONTESTED BY-ELECTIONS IN 1911-1914, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Liberal		
Votes	353,123	45.0
Seats	37	52.9
Unionist		
Votes	356,124	45.4
Seats	32	45.7
Labour and Socialist		
Votes	65,434	8.3
Seats	0	0.0
Irish Nationalist		
Votes	1,588	0.2
Seats	0	0.0
Independent		
Votes	8,593	1.1
Seats	1	1.4
Totals		
Votes	784,862	100.0
Seats	70	100.0

*Liberal Year Book, 1918, pp. 185-375. For by-elections in England, Scotland and Wales, see Ibid., pp. 185-186. For a list of by-elections in Ireland, see Ibid., p. 187. For the figures on by-elections in Ireland, see Ibid., pp. 190-375. (a) In this table, the 'independent' category only includes two Independent Conservatives who opposed a Unionist Party Candidate, one Independent Irish Nationalist candidate who opposed (and beat) an Irish Nationalist Party candidate, and two independent candidates who were not identified with any party; if an independent candidate was identified with a party and was not opposed by a candidate of that party, then the so-called independent has been classed with his party. (b) Individual by-elections are notoriously unrepresentative, but since the factors causing by-elections--deaths, resignation, etc.--are very roughly random, a large sample of by-elections may be presumed to be broadly representative of the "average" state of opinion during a period.

III. The Origins of the Liberal Schism, 1916-1918

The First World War dwarfed existing partisan politics, submerging schismatic tendencies in the Unionist Party and seriously dividing the Labour Party.[23] The Liberal Cabinet divided as the War began, but with the German invasion of Belgium and Britain's entry into the conflict, the Cabinet solidified.[24] A party truce was arranged,[25] and with general support in Parliament, the Liberal Government continued in office.

The early months of the War were "a frustrating and vexatious period"[26] for the Unionist Party committed to support the Liberal Government but excluded from the direction of affairs. This situation was remedied in 1915. On May 19, 1915 it was announced in the House of Commons that a Coalition Government would be formed. The First

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[23]James Ramsay MacDonald resigned as Chairman of the Labour M.P.s because of his pacifist views. Within the Labour Party, the pacifist wing was large and vocal throughout the War but a spirit of tolerance prevailed.

[24]John Morley and John Burns quietly resigned from the Cabinet.

[25]The party truce was tacitly continued until 1918.

[26]Robert Blake, Unrepentant Tory, The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1956), p. 120. Blake's statement about Bonar Law is generally true of Bonar Law's Party.

Coalition Cabinet contained twelve Liberals, eight Unionists, one Labourite, and one non-party member (Lord Kitchener). (The Irish Nationalist Party remained aloof from but did not oppose the Coalition Cabinet.) The leaders of the three parties were members: Herbert Asquith, the Leader of the Liberal Party, was Prime Minister. Bonar Law, the Unionist leader in the House of Commons, was Colonial Secretary. Arthur Henderson, who had succeeded J. R. MacDonald as Chairman of the Labour Parliamentary Party, was President of the Board of Education.

Although the open politics of electioneering were suspended, the closed politics of committees thrived during the life of the First Coalition.[27] Within the Cabinet, the divisions were sometimes partisan, sometimes personal.[28] In this contentious situation, Asquith sought "general consent" before making major changes in policy.[29] This self-appointed task, admirable for a peacetime Prime

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[27]The distinction between open and closed politics is borrowed from C. P. Snow, Science and Government (New York: Mentor Books, 1962), pp. 52-60.

[28]For example, the Derby Report on military recruitment provoked Cabinet discussion along party lines, but Lloyd George and Reginald McKenna, both Liberals, were frequently "fighting like fishwives." Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, pp. 135, 85.

[29]Ibid., II, p. 150.

Minister,[30] often forestalled the prompt resolution of conflicts and slowed the pace of decision-making. With each military-diplomatic reversal, the conviction grew, in some quarters,

> that so long as we keep Asquith as Prime Minister we shall never go to war. And this is a most dangerous thing. He will do nothing himself and will not allow anyone else to do anything.[31]

As Asquith's reputation declined, Lloyd George's reputation as a man of action increased. The Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, author of the famous "People's Budget" of 1909, became the Minister for Munitions and then Minister for War in the Coalition.[32] By the end of 1916, in the judgment of his Liberal colleagues in the Cabinet, the First Coalition could not carry on without Lloyd George.[33]

Lord Crewe, the Liberal Lord President of the Council, in a contemporary memorandum, has succinctly described the political situation in November-December, 1916:

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[30]For a judicious assessment of Asquith as Prime Minister, see Jennings, op. cit., II, p. 253.

[31]Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, p. 150, quoting General Wilson's Diary of January 30, 1916.

[32]He also officially became Deputy Leader in the House of Commons. See Lord Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War 1914-1916 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1928), pp. 156-157.

[33]Viscount Samuel, Memoirs (London: Cresset Press, 1945), p. 122.

> [N]o member of the Government was undisturbed by a conviction that a prompt change in methods was demanded. [. . .] [I]ll-success in war always encourages heart-searchings at home and the increasingly venomous assaults by part of the Press on the Prime Minister, Lord Grey [the Liberal Foreign Secretary], and Mr. Balfour [the Unionist First Lord of the Admiralty], made it clear that the atmosphere was becoming more and more highly charged.[34]

The Unionist Ministers, with mixed intentions, proposed that all existing Ministers, including Asquith, should resign and the Government should be reconstructed.[35] Lloyd George concretely proposed that a War Committee consisting of three members, including himself but not including the Prime Minister, "should have full powers, subject to the supreme control of the Prime Minister, to direct all questions connected with war."[36] Asquith hoped to achieve agreement on the reconstruction of the Government, without resigning as Prime Minister,[37] but when Lloyd George insisted upon his proposal and the Unionist Ministers insisted upon everyone's resignation, Asquith resigned on December 5, 1916.

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[34]Quoted in Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, pp. 152-153. Crewe's memorandum is dated December 20, 1916.

[35]December 3, 1916. See Blake, op. cit., pp. 312-341.

[36]Letter to Asquith, dated December 1, 1916. The Asquith-Lloyd George correspondence is quoted in Hamilton Fyfe, The British Liberal Party (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928), pp. 208-219.

[37]Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, p. 157.

Lloyd George and Bonar Law were the possible alternative Prime Ministers, and Asquith advised the King to send for Bonar Law. Since Asquith was not willing to serve under Bonar Law and Bonar Law considered himself unable to form a Government without Asquith,[38] Bonar Law was unsuccessful. After the King consulted with the leaders of the three Coalition parties, Lloyd George was asked to undertake the task. The retiring Liberal Cabinet Ministers were unwilling to serve under Lloyd George, but with the assistance of Dr. Christopher Addison, a Liberal M.P., Lloyd George rallied considerable support among the Liberal M.P.s.[39] When the Unionist and Labour parties accepted office, Lloyd George was able to form the Second Coalition Government, with a small War Cabinet.

The schism in the Liberal Party began with the formation of the Second Coalition. Lloyd George, with the support of a majority of Liberal M.P.s,[40] was in control of the Government as Prime

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[38]Asquith was not willing to serve under either Bonar Law or Lloyd George. Bonar Law and Lloyd George were unwilling to serve under Asquith. Lloyd George was willing to serve under Bonar Law, and as the events proved, the reverse was also the case.

[39]Christopher Addison, Politics From Within, 1911-1918 (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, n.d.), I, pp. 270-271.

[40]See Asquith's comment, quoted above, in connection with footnote 3 of this chapter.

Minister. Asquith, with the support of a minority of Liberal M.P.s, continued in control of the Party organization as Leader of the Liberal Party.[41] The official position of the Liberal Party, as expressed by a meeting of Liberal M.P.s and repeated by the organs of the National Liberal Federation, was:

> That this meeting records its thanks to Mr. Asquith for his long and magnificent services to the nation, its unabated confidence in him as leader of the Liberal Party, and its determination to give support to the King's Government engaged in the effective prosecution of the war.[42]

This resolution, to be meaningful, presupposed cooperation between Asquith and Lloyd George.[43]

Asquith, and his Liberal colleagues from the late Cabinet, retired to the Front Opposition Bench. They were pledged to give qualified support of Lloyd George's Government, "criticizing when

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[41]For an analysis of these events from the perspective of the traditional leadership selection process in the Liberal Party, see below Chapter V.

[42]Liberal Magazine, 1916, (London: Liberal Publication Department, 1917), pp. 629, 636-638. The resolution of the Welsh National Council was an exception, failing to endorse Asquith's continued Leadership of the Party.

[43]At the December 8, 1916 meeting of the Liberal M.P.s, one of Lloyd George's supporters (Handel Booth, M.P.; for his factional affiliation, see the Liberal Year Book, 1919, p. 170) questioned the feasibility of implementing the resolution. Nevertheless, the resolution passed unanimously. The Times, December 9,1916, p. 10. Many of Lloyd George's supporters, notably Lloyd George himself, did not attend the meeting. See the lists published in the Liberal Magazine, 1916, pp. 620, 631-635.

necessary, and in the last resort offering an alternative administration [. . .]."[44] Since military-diplomatic reversals did not cease with the change of Prime Ministers, Asquith and his associates had ample opportunity for criticism.

The Liberal M.P.s who supported Lloyd George expected to be rejected by the Liberal constituency organizations and pressed Lloyd George to establish an organization in the country.[45] Although a distinct Coalition Liberal Whips Office was formed[46] and the Coalition Liberals caucused weekly with Lloyd George in 1917,[47] a full-scale organization was not established until 1922.[48]

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[44]Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, p. 163. The quotation is from Crewe's memorandum, but Asquith's remarks at the December 8, 1916 Party meeting are equally suggestive, containing such phrases as: "I propose [. . .] to support [the Government], in so far as they carry on [. . .] with vigour and determination the prosecution of the war. [. . .] It is an intense personal relief to me that [. . .] I am able to lay down for a time the burden of supreme and ultimate responsibility." Liberal Magazine, 1916, p. 629. Emphasis added.

[45]Addison, op. cit., I, p. 275; II, p. 163.

[46]In 1917, when a Coalition Liberal resigned the South Edinburgh seat, the Coalition Liberals sought to have the prospective Coalition Liberal Chief Whip (Sir George McCrae who did not have a seat in the House of Commons) nominated by the local Liberal Association. The Liberal Association refused to cooperate and nominated an Asquithian Liberal candidate. See the Liberal Magazine, 1917, p. 214.

[47]Addison, op. cit., II, p. 164.

[48]Ibid., II, p. 166. See below Section V.

The conflict extended from the parliamentary leadership to the constituency organizations.[49] Coalition Liberals suggested, sometimes in public, that Asquith should retire from active politics:

> [H]e would be doing himself an injury and an injustice if he attempted in any large measure to shoulder the colossal responsibilities of the period of national reconstruction and revival which will follow the war. [. . .] [I]t will be in the councils of the 'elder statesmen' rather than in the hurly-burly of politics that he will best serve the national interest.[50]

But Asquith, who was increasingly irritated with the "carefully-engineered conspiracy"[51] that had turned him out of office, and his colleagues were determined to retain control of the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party was split asunder for the first time since the Liberal Unionists, after unsuccessfully challenging Prime Minister Gladstone's Leadership of the Liberal Party, turned Gladstone out of office by allying themselves with the Conservative Party.[52] Sir John

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[49]See above footnote 46 for an important and early constituency dispute.

[50]The statement was formally issued in a newsletter of September 24, 1917 by a Coalition Liberal M.P., J. W. Pratt. When the statement became common knowledge, Pratt issued a disavowal of active responsibility. See the Liberal Magazine, 1917, pp. 532-533.

[51]Asquith's phrase at the December 8, 1916 Party meeting. See the Liberal Magazine, 1916, p. 621. For Asquith's increasing bitterness in 1917, especially with Lloyd George, see George Macaulay Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), p. 377.

[52]See below Section V and Chapter V.

Simon, M.P., in an address to the office-bearers of the London Liberal Federation, noted this parallel:

> There was a famous occasion in the history of the Liberal Party, at a time [in 1886] when some people were hinting that Mr. Gladstone was about to give up his leadership, when Mr. John Morley roused great enthusiasm at a Federation meeting by declaring 'there is no vacancy'! We say the same of Mr. Asquith today.[53]

The Liberals on the Front Opposition Bench launched their first major attack upon the Government on February 12, 1918. Herbert Samuel, speaking in the House of Commons, pointedly criticized Lloyd George's innovation of the small War Cabinet and suggested that a superior change would have been made if Asquith had remained as Prime Minister:

> After fourteen months' experience he could not see that the War Cabinet had proved successful. It had not delivered the goods. He did not suggest that the system of the old Cabinet was the right system. It was recognized that there ought to be a home committee consisting of Ministers dealing with home problems, who should do for domestic questions what the War Committee did for strategy and foreign policy, and the question of names was under discussion by the late Prime Minister when steps were taken which resulted in the resignation of the Cabinet.[54]

Asquith himself provoked a "crisis"[55] by questioning Lloyd George

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[53]January 15, 1918. Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 4. Simon had been a Liberal member of the First Coalition Cabinet.

[54]Ibid., p. 68. Samuel had been a Liberal member of the First Coalition Cabinet.

[55]The term is Asquith's. Desmond MacCarthy (ed.), H.H.A.:

"in his best Old Bailey manner,"[56] on the powers and decisions of the Allied War Council. A parliamentary sequel was the Maurice Debate.[57]

On May 7, 1918 a letter from General Frederick Maurice appeared in the Press. The letter created a sensation, stating in part:

> On April 9th the Prime Minister said:--'What was the position at the beginning of the battle? Notwithstanding the heavy casualties in 1917, the Army in France was considerably stronger on January 1st, 1918, than on January 1st 1917.'--(Hansard, Vol. 104, No. 24, p. 1,328.) That statement implies that Sir Douglas Haig's fighting strength on the eve of the great battle which began on March 21st had not been diminished. That is not correct.[58]

When Asquith asked what the Government proposed to do to allow an investigation of this (and other) charges, Bonar Law replied that secret documents were involved and that the Government proposed to have two Judges inquire into the charges. Bonar Law added: "'I

Letters of the Earl of Oxford and Asquith to a Friend (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1933), First Series, 1915-1922, p. 60.

[56]Addison, op. cit., II, pp. 234-235.

[57]Another sequel was, of course, greater bitterness between the Liberal factions. On February 25, 1918, in a public speech, the Liberal Lord Loreburn remarked that "I should be very sorry to be a party to the restoration to office of the small handful of men who mismanaged this war for two and a half years." Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 72.

[58]Ibid., p. 252.

shall be glad to allow the right hon. gentleman [Asquith] to select them, if he desires,' to which Mr. Asquith replied by a shake of the head in the negative."[59] On May 9, 1918 Asquith moved that a Select Committee of the House of Commons be appointed to investigate the charges. Despite Asquith's protestations to the contrary, the Government treated this motion as involving a vote of confidence. After Lloyd George made a detailed rebuttal of Maurice's allegations,[60] Asquith was asked not to press the motion to a division. Nevertheless, Asquith persisted. The motion was defeated by 295 votes to 108, and the idea of any inquiry was abandoned.

Although Lloyd George subsequently offered a Cabinet post to Asquith[61] and Asquith appealed to Coalition Liberals to rejoin the regular Liberal Party,[62] the vote in the Maurice Debate proved to be decisive. Those Liberals who had voted for Asquith's motion were ostracized by Lloyd George in the general election of 1918.

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[59] Ibid., p. 253.

[60] For an evaluation of the charges and rebuttal, see Thomas Jones, Lloyd George (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 147-152.

[61] Liberal Magazine, 1918, pp. 651-652; Addison, op. cit., II, p. 250.

[62] Liberal Magazine, 1918, pp. 530-531.

TABLE 3.5

VOTING ON ASQUITH'S MOTION FOR A SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE GENERAL MAURICE'S ALLEGATIONS, BY PARTY *

Political Party	For the Motion	Against the Motion
Liberal	98	71
Labour	9	15
Unionist	1	206
Others	0	3
Totals	108	295

*Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 244. "None of the Nationalists voted in the division, the members of the party being still in Ireland."

IV. The Reconstruction of the Labour Party and the Decline of the Liberal Party

"Only during the war years did the Labour Party reorganize itself on a truly national basis, with the aim of taking over from the divided Liberals the position which they had forfeited."[63] "The opportunity was obvious, owing to the completely divided state of the Liberal Party."[64]

Despite auspicious conditions, beginning in December 1916, the actual reconstruction of the Labour Party did not begin until Henderson was forced to resign from the War Cabinet in August 1917. After his resignation, "Henderson worked [. . .] at very high pressure"[65] to prepare a new Constitution for the Labour Party, to activate and expand the Party's organization.

In January 1918 the new Constitution, with provisions for individual membership and an explicit avowal of socialist purposes, was submitted to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party for approval. Henderson, as Secretary of the Party, moved its adoption,

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[63]Cole, op. cit., p. ix.

[64]Henry Pelling, A Short History of the Labour Party (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 42.

[65]Mary Agnes Hamilton, Arthur Henderson, A Biography (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1938), p. 176.

stating that under it the Labour Party, for the first time, could and would make a bid for power:

> They had never in the proper sense claimed to be a national political party. [. . .] They were not going to get it [i.e., "hold of the machinery of Government in this country"] by running 56 or 78 candidates, and 78 was the highest number the Party had ever run. They were only going to get it when they brought their political machine up to date and offered candidates under proper conditions. He could not exaggerate the opportunity that would be presented at the next General Election.[66]

Henderson also stressed the importance of the expansion of the franchise that was contemplated in the Reform Act of 1918:

> They must organise and so place their candidates as to give the greatest number of the 16,000,000 electors an opportunity of voting Labour, not at the second election or third, but at the first election. All experience went to show that once people were allowed to get attached to another political organization--as would be the case if candidates were not provided at the first election--they had to be weaned away from their allegiance [. . .].[67]

When Robert Smillie, Miner's Federation, moved that the Constitution be referred back for further discussion, W. C. Anderson, M.P., responded by emphasizing the urgency of the reorganization:

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[66] Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, January 23-25, 1918, pp. 99-101.

[67] Ibid. Women's suffrage was the major innovation. The Labour Party's National Agent, as early as 1914, had noted that, if a party made a systematic effort to register men, "practically speaking manhood suffrage has now been obtained [. . .]." Report of the Special and Annual Conferences of the Labour Party, 1914, p. 31. However, the Reform Act of 1918 obviated the need for a systematic partisan registration effort.

> This was a matter of grave urgency and of vital importance to the Party. It would make a real difference to the fortunes of the Party if the matter was held up for the next three or four months or more than that. [. . .] The time had come for saying what the great mass of the people were saying now: that the old parties were dead and done for, that the old rulers stood condemned, and that democracy had got to come into its own.[68]

Although Smillie's motion was carried, action was rapid: The new Constitution was adopted by another Party Conference on February 26, 1918.

The rapidity and magnitude of Labour's organizational effort was sketched by Henderson in his report to the Annual Conference in June 1918:

> During the few months that had elapsed since the Constitution was passed in its present form they had been doing everything in their power to set machinery in motion under that Constitution so as to enable the Party to cope with the position it would presently have to face at a General Election. [. . .] So far as candidates were concerned, they had already fixed in constituencies, or there were in the process of being fixed, a total of 301 candidates. [. . .] In addition to the 301 constituencies, they had enquiries for something like another 100, and he ought to make it plain that no decision had been reached as to the number of candidates for which the Party would be responsible at the coming General Election. They intended to impose no limit. [. . .] The Executive recognised that this was the most exceptional election that would ever be held in this country.[69]

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[68] Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, January 23-25, 1918, p. 102. Emphasis added.

[69] Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, June, 1918, p. 27.

The Party Executive recommended, and the June Conference approved, "that the existence of the political truce should be no longer recognised."[70] Labour was prepared to fight a general election.

Lloyd George had obliquely indicated in public, as early as April 27, 1917, that the next general election might not be fought on the traditional party lines.[71] In private Bonar Law and Lloyd George frequently discussed the possibility of a Coalition Election, and in a letter dated November 2, 1918, Lloyd George made a formal proposal:

> The more I think of it the more convinced I become that there ought to be a General Election, and that the sooner it can be arranged, subject to the exigencies of the military position, the better. We have discussed this so often that I need not go at length into my reasons for this view. [. . .] If there is to be an Election I think it would be right that it should be a Coalition Election, that is to say, that the country should be definitely invited to return candidates who undertake to support the present Government not only to prosecute the War to its final end and negotiate the peace, but to deal with the problems of reconstruction which must immediately arise directly after an armistice is signed. In other words, the test which in future must decide whether individual candidates will be sustained at the polls by your supporters and mine must be not, as in the past, a pledge to support the Government in the prosecution of the war but a definite pledge to support this Government. I should myself desire to see this arrangement

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[70]However, the Labour Ministers did not immediately resign from the Government. See the Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 333.

[71]"When the task of reconstruction begins we are not going 'to dive into the pigeon-holes of any party for dust-laden precedents and programmes.'" Liberal Magazine, 1917, p. 196. See also Lloyd George's remarks of September 12, 1918. Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 442.

> carried through on personal grounds, for during the last two years I recognise that I have received the whole-hearted support of your Party, and that the Government has had a unity both in aims and in action which has been very remarkable in a Coalition Government.[72]

The proposal was accepted by the Unionist Party, rejected by the Labour Party, and accepted by the Coalition Liberals.[73] The proposal was not tendered to the (Asquithian) Liberal Party.

Since the general election was scheduled for December 14, 1918, the Coalition (Liberal and Unionist) Whips had only a very few weeks to conclude arrangements, including the withdrawal of rival candidates.[74] When it became obvious that the Coalition's endorsement

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[72]The complete letter has often been reprinted. See Constitutional Year Book, 1920, p. 381; Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 585.

[73]November 12, 1918, November 14, 1918, November 12, 1918, respectively. The Coalition Liberals--consisting of Peers, Members of the House of Commons "and a large number of gentlemen who intend to stand at the forthcoming election as Liberal Coalition candidates"--were summoned by the Chief Coalition Liberal Whip and unanimously passed the following resolution: "That this meeting, being convinced of the necessity for a Coalition Government during the coming period of reconstruction, and being satisfied that the programme and policy as stated to-day by the Prime Minister is of such a character as to command the whole-hearted support of Liberals, those present at this meeting pledge themselves respectively to stand as or support Liberal Coalition candidates with the Prime Minister as their leader." Ibid., pp. 578, 580.

[74]Thus it is hardly surprising that the arrangements were sometimes anomalous in individual constituencies. For the confusion, see T. G. Wilson, "The Parliamentary Liberal Party in Britain, 1918-1924," (Oxford University, D. Phil. dissertation, 1959), Part I.

--the so-called 'coupon', a joint letter by Lloyd George and Bonar Law--was not being extended to the (Asquithian) Liberal Party's candidates, but rather was being systematically extended to candidates opposing regular Liberals, the Chief (Asquithian) Liberal Whip protested to Winston Churchill, M.P., a prominent Coalition Liberal:

> I do not know whether you are aware of what is being done by the Government to destroy British Liberalism. At present Scotland has 72 members, of whom 54 are Liberals, 15 are Conservatives, and 3 are Labour--72. Under the new Act Scotland had 74 members. At present your Government has given its blessing in the case of 57 seats. This blessing has been extended to 29 Conservatives and 28 Liberals. [. . .] This is scarcely the way to strengthen British Liberalism, of which you are so proud.[75]

Churchill's reply was a spirited rebuttal, a criticism of the Asquithians and a defense of the Lloyd Georgians:

> The Prime Minister and his Liberal supporters have taken no steps during the two years that have passed to organise a separate party machine, and are to-day absolutely without one, whilst all the time you and your office have busily and tirelessly organised the constituencies in your own sectional interest. Now, when it is apparent that the Prime Minister is supported by considerably more than half of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, to say nothing of the general support accorded him in the constituencies, and when it is obvious that those members who support him are more likely to obtain the votes of the electors than those who oppose him, you conceive yourself aggrieved.[76]

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[75] Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 651.

[76] Ibid., pp. 651-652.

The Coalition Liberals, as Lloyd George candidly stated, were not members of "the Party which consists of followers of my old chief, Mr. Asquith."[77]

The outcome of the general election was hardly doubtful, as Asquith stated during the campaign, "[t]here is no question of displacing [. . .] the present Government [. . .]."[78] Indeed, although exact numbers are merely approximations, only the Coalition ran enough candidates to hope to obtain a majority. The details are given in Table 3.6. For the first time since its formation.[79] the regular Liberal Party offered candidates for only a minority of the seats in the House of Commons. The shortage of (Asquithian) Liberal candidates was partially a function of the schism for, since eighty-eight incumbent Liberal M.P.s ran as Coalition Liberals rather than regular Liberals,[80] the split cost the regular Liberal Party at least

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[77]Ibid., p. 648. Twelve of the one hundred and fifty-four Coalition Liberal Candidates (8%) were opposed by regular (Asquithian) Liberal candidates. Computed from the Liberal Year Book, 1919, pp. 169, 172-275.

[78]Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 663.

[79]The Liberal Party, according to convention, was formed in 1868. See Fyfe, op. cit., p. 11. In the general election of 1900, the regular Liberal Party contested only four hundred seats, the fewest that the Party contested from 1885 to 1910 inclusive. Computed from the Liberal Year Book, 1905, pp. 160-321 and from the Liberal Year Book, 1918, pp. 190-375.

[80]Computed from the Liberal Year Book, 1919, pp. 157-158,

eighty-eight candidates. The Labour Party, for the first time, fielded more candidates than the Liberal Party.

174-275 and from the Liberal Year Book, 1918, pp. 42-80. Ninety incumbent Liberal M.P.s ran for re-election as regular (Asquithian) Liberals. Computed from the Constitutional Year Book,1920, pp. 160-189 and from the Liberal Magazine, 1919, p. 89 and from the Liberal Year Book, 1919, pp. 170, 172, and from the Liberal Year Book, 1918, pp. 42-80. (Although these calculations were carefully done, the multiplicity of sources needed for each calculation and the resultant possibilities for error, not only in the sources but also in the calculations, make the figures less than certain. Both calculations assume thirty-four regular Liberals were elected.) Only two incumbent Liberal M.P.s contested the 1918 general election as Labour Party or Independent Labour Party candidates. Constitutional Year Book, 1920, p. 234. There were two hundred and sixty Liberal M.P.s of all types, when Parliament was dissolved. Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 637.

TABLE 3.6

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN THE 1918 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Number of Candidates
Coalition	
Unionist	363
Liberal	154
Labour	18
Irish Nationalist	60
Sinn Fein	103
Unionist	75
Liberal	258
Labour and Socialist	400
Other	194
Total	1625

*Liberal Year Book, 1919, p. 169.

(a) The source's 'Coalition National Democratic Party' is called 'Coalition Labour' in this table.

(b) Candidates "received (in a few cases without asking) the credentials of the Coalition. [. . .] It must be noted that in the official list of [. . .] Coalition Liberals were the names of several who repudiated the coupon." Ibid., p. 169.

(c) This general election was particularly confusing; so this and the subsequent table on the 1918 general election should always be regarded as approximations.

Although the redistribution of parliamentary seats precludes a controlled comparison with preceding general elections, the results of the 1918 general election were obviously unusual.[81] The Irish Nationalists, having failed to obtain Home Rule for Ireland,[82] were supplanted as the chief Irish party by the more militant Sinn Fein. The Coalition's parliamentary majority, augmented by the Unionists who accepted the Coalition Unionist Whip and by the Sinn Fein's refusal to attend the House of Commons, was unprecedented.[83] But perhaps the most striking result was the reversal, within the party system, of the relative positions of the Liberal and Labour parties. By almost any quantitative measure--number of candidates, number of votes received, number of seats obtained--the Labour Party did roughly twice as well as the Liberal Party in 1918.

The results of the 1918 general election were disastrous for the Liberal Party. "Mr. Asquith, all his ex-Cabinet Colleagues, the entire Liberal Whips' office, and nearly every Liberal ex-Minister

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[81]See below Table 3.7 for the results of the 1918 general election.

[82]The Home Rule Bill had been suspended as part of the party truce.

[83]The Coalition itself was not so unusual. The Liberal Unionist Party and the Conservative Party had operated a coalition between 1886 and 1912, before officially merging.

were defeated."[84] The magnitude of this disaster has frequently been under-estimated since, contrary to Lloyd George's and Asquith's views,[85] the Coalition Liberals have often been classified with (or as a part of) the Liberal Party. Indeed, when presenting the results of the 1918 general election, some scholars have violated their own explicit criteria. For example, in an informative book on voting in democracies, Enid Lakeman and James Lambert have remarked:

> 'Conservative' includes Liberal Unionist, National, and other categories habitually voting with the Conservatives. Professor Hermens (Europe between Democracy and Anarchy, pp. 18 and 19) gives incorrect figures for 1950; his Conservative seats include the 17 seats won by allies of the Conservative Party, standing under various titles such as National Liberal or Liberal and Conservative, but the corresponding figure he gives for votes is that of votes for avowedly Conservative candidates only. Nearly one million votes cast for their allies are neglected.[86]

This remark is an explanatory footnote setting forth the criterion followed in constructing the authors' table of British general election

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[84] Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 634. Sixty-eight of the Liberal M. P. s who ran for re-election as regular Liberals were defeated. Liberal Year Book, 1919, p. 170. See also above footnote 80.

[85] See above footnotes 3, 73, 77 as well as related quotations and discussions in the text. "One further comment. It is of little value to distinguish between votes given to Coalition Unionists, Coalition Liberals, and Coalition Labour [. . .]." John H. Humphreys, "The Alternative Vote or Proportional Representation," Liberal Year Book, 1919, p. 168.

[86] Enid Lakeman and James D. Lambert, Voting in Democracies (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 26.

results from 1885 to 1951. Nevertheless, for the 1918 general election, Lakeman and Lambert classified the Coalition Liberals with the Liberal Party rather than with the Unionist ("Conservative") Party.[87]

The Liberal Party should not include the Coalition Liberals. This perspective is the core of the split thesis. If the Liberal Party's twelve percent of the national poll and four percent of the parliamentary seats are recognized as all the Liberal Party won, then rather obviously the schism in the Liberal Party, dating from 1916, caused the decline of the Liberal Party in 1918. After 1918 the Liberal Party was a third party and suffered the typical fate of third parties in two-party systems.

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[87]This flaw also appears in Maurice Duverger, Political Parties, trans. Barbara and Robert North (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1955), pp. 225, 227.

TABLE 3.7

AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF THE 1918 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Coalition		
Unionist		
Votes	3,471,908	32.2
Seats	333	47.1
Liberal		
Votes	1,502,311	13.9
Seats	139	19.7
Labour		
Votes	206,422	1.9
Seats	13	1.8
Irish Nationalist		
Votes	233,690	2.2
Seats	7	1.0
Sinn Fein		
Votes	496,961	4.6
Seats	73	10.3
Unionist		
Votes	664,613	6.2
Seats	48	6.8
Liberal		
Votes	1,314,357	12.2
Seats	28	4.0
Labour and Socialist		
Votes	2,398,377	22.2
Seats	61	8.6
Other		
Votes	494,048	4.6
Seats	5	0.7
Totals		
Votes	10,782,687	100.0
Seats	707	100.0

*Constitutional Year Book, 1920, pp. 220, 223. (a) In this table the 'Coalition Labour' vote includes the source's 'Coalition National Democratic Party' vote. (b) Sources differ in detail. For the Coalition Liberals and the Liberal Party, the following figures are given by the Liberal Year Book, 1919: Liberal Party 1,374,834 votes, 34 seats; Coalition Liberals 1,396,140 votes, 127 seats. Ibid., pp. 171-172. (c) Almost one-half of the Unionist votes (297,437 out of 668,411 votes, according to the Liberal Year Book, 1919, p. 171) were polled in Irish districts that were not contested by the Coalition.

V. The Liberal Party as a Third Party, 1918-1931

"[T]he greatest debacle which ever befel the Liberal Party,"[88] discouraged the survivors as well as the vanquished among the Liberal M.P.s. Sir Donald Maclean has starking described the Party meeting of the twenty-three[89] Liberal M.P.s "on the day before the House [of Commons] met after the 1918 election:"

> We were all sore and disheartened, blaming everybody and everything, and we were united only on one thing, and that was on the moral iniquity of the election. Francis Acland took the chair, and somebody proposed that 'We do not form a party.' After this hopeful and cheerful beginning, which stimulated everybody--(laughter)--we had a long and heated discussion. After that had lasted about three or four hours, I pointed out that if we went out of the door without passing a resolution to form a party, Liberalism would go under for a generation. Thereupon the resolution to form a party was carried by a large majority. By this time everyone was so exhausted by the debate that someone seized the opportunity to propose me as chairman, and it was carried nem con. The next day we faced a House hostile and, indeed, derisive.[90]

This small band of Liberal M.P.s countered the larger Labour Party's claim to be the official Opposition, and within the House of Commons,

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[88]From Sir Donald Maclean's remarks of April 26, 1920 at a dinner honoring him for his service as Chairman of the Parliamentary Liberal Party, 1919-1920. Quoted in the Liberal Magazine, 1920, p. 221. Maclean had previously served as a junior Liberal Whip and then as Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.

[89]Maclean spoke of "[a]bout twenty-eight [. . .]." Ibid., p. 220. However, only twenty-three names are listed in the Liberal Magazine, 1919, p. 89.

[90]Liberal Magazine, 1920, p. 220. The fact that the resolution to select Liberal Whips was carried only "by a large majority" rather than by acclamation is noteworthy.

Maclean was soon unofficially recognized as the Leader of the Opposition.[91]

The chief divisions in the House of Commons found the Liberal and Labour parties united in opposition to the Coalition Government from 1919 to 1922,[92] but this cooperation did not extend to the constituencies. Liberal and Labour contests in by-elections, more often won by Labour, were relatively frequent. In January-February, 1920 Lord Haldane, the former Liberal Lord Chancellor and future Labour Lord Chancellor, publicly addressed himself to the relationship of Liberalism and Labour: "There are some who believe that Liberalism and Labour might be got to work together, but that is plainly impossible. [. . .] And it is with Labour that the hope lies tomorrow."[93] Haldane took "the numerical representation in the House of Commons at the moment and the success of Labour in recent by-elections as his justification,"[94] but his remarks were contested by Asquith:

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[91]See Bonar Law's remark in the House of Commons on May 14, 1919. Liberal Magazine, 1919, pp. 283-284. This was partially a result of Maclean's skill as a parliamentarian and partially a result of the fact that, due to the defeat of Labour's most distinguished parliamentarians in 1918, the Chairman of the Labour M.P.s was "the obviously incompetent Adamson [. . .]." Pelling, op. cit., p. 49.

[92]See below Tables 3.8 and 3.9.

[93]Newspaper interview of February 5, 1920. Liberal Magazine, 1920, p. 86.

[94]Reference to Haldane's speeches of January 13, 1920 at the

> What does Lord Haldane say? What is his advice to the young politician? He tells you [. . .] that Labour has captured the heights and that we Liberals are on the plains below. [. . .] Let me say [. . .] that the battle of politics is carried on, not on the heights, but in the plains.[95]

Edinburgh Liberal Club. Ibid., p. 23. In those speeches, Haldane said that the Labour Party had "out-sped" the Liberal Party, that the Liberal Party "was only the third party in the State," and that the "Liberalism of the future was Liberalism of the spirit." Ibid., pp. 23-24. Emphasis added.

[95]Speech at Cambridge, January 23, 1920. Ibid., p. 25. Asquith's reply, a play upon Haldane's metaphor of the "heights and plains," could hardly be rationally persuasive. Indeed, when due allowance is made for Asquith's position as Leader of the Liberal Party, Asquith had already said much the same thing as Haldane: "I am quite aware--evidence reaches me from many different quarters--that some among the more ardent of our younger spirits are tempted, under present conditions, to doff their old uniforms, and to migrate to the Labour camp. The Labour Party and ourselves have many aims in common, and in not a few of the controversies, actual or imminent, of the immediate future, we shall, I am certain, find in them, as they find in us, associates, and more than associates, allies; but I desire to say, with the utmost clearness and emphasis, that I regard the maintenance, with its separate identity and its separate traditions, of the Liberal Party, as of the first importance to the State. We are not, and we never have been, a party of iron-clad dogmas or exclusive tests. We have always been ready, and I hope we always shall be, to profit by the teaching of experience, both international and domestic, in this, which is an ever-changing and ever-developing world." Asquith's speech to the Yorkshire Liberal Federation, June 19, 1919. Liberal Magazine, 1919, p. 362. Emphasis added. In a speech of November 15, 1919 to the Oxford University Liberal Club, Asquith stated that "[s]ome people seemed to think, quite honestly, that the future of this country would lie between two combinations--Labour upon one side, and for want of a better term, what he might call a Bourgeois Party on the other, and that this was the only choice before us. [. . .] 'If one were disposed to be a pessimist [recent events in the Liberal Party] would fill one with despair. And if I am not pessimistic--as I am not--it is because I

Despite Asquith's protestations, the by-election results supported Haldane's conclusion. When the results of the contested by-elections of 1919-1922 are compared with the results of the 1918 general election, the Liberal Party's proportion of the total poll increased slightly from twelve to sixteen percent, but the Labour Party's proportion of the total poll rose sharply from twenty-two to thirty-three percent.[96]

The Coalition Government was not seriously threatened by either the Liberal Opposition or the Labour Opposition.[97] Within Parliament, the Coalition Liberals and Unionist Party not only had a

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have faith and hope in the new generation of which this club is going to be to this ancient university the centre and rallying point. My advice to them and my final word to them at this their inaugural meeting is very simple and plain, but, as I think, very urgent. Keep your Liberalism clean, firm, resolute, buoyant, and be assured that so long as you do that you have with you, whatever may be the passing accidents of the hour, the promise of the future.'" Ibid., pp. 625-626. (Oxford University, of course, was the traditional source of young Liberal politicians.) Perhaps Asquith was not literally pessimistic, but he certainly was discouraged, as he himself later admitted. See Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, p. 284. Haldane's remark about the impossibility of Liberal and Labour fusion was also consistent with Asquith's earlier statement that "we are not [. . .], and we do not intend to be, a wing either of the Tory or Labour Parties." Speech to the National Liberal Federation, November 28, 1919. Liberal Magazine, 1919, p. 628.

[96]See above Table 3.7 and below Table 3.10

[97]There was no single official Opposition, hence the unusual capitalization.

substantial majority but also were quite cohesive, as was reflected by the endemic talk of permanent fusion[98] and by the chief divisions in the House of Commons.[99] Furthermore, the Coalitions, proportion of the total poll, when the 1919-1922 by-elections are compared with the 1918 general election, declined only from forty-eight to forty-four percent.[100] Nevertheless, the Coalition Party[101] had difficulties with constituency organizations.

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[98]Leaders of both wings of the Coalition favored closer cooperation. For the point of view of the Coalition Liberal leadership, see the Liberal Magazine, 1919, pp. 427-429; Liberal Magazine, 1920, pp. 147-148; Liberal Magazine, 1921, pp. 87-89; Liberal Magazine, 1922, pp. 33, 42-43. For the point of view of the Unionist Party leadership, see R. T. McKenzie, British Political Parties (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955), pp. 83-109.

[99]See below Tables 3.8 and 3.9.

[100]See above Table 3.7 and below Table 3.10.

[101]The Coalition was quite commonly regarded as a single party. For example, see Austen Chamberlain's remark, quoted in McKenzie, op. cit., pp. 92-93. See also the Liberal Magazine, 1922, p. 212.

TABLE 3.8

ARITHMETIC MEANS OF THE COEFFICIENTS OF COHESION FOR THE COALITION, LABOUR AND LIBERAL PARTIES IN THE CHIEF DIVISIONS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, 1919-1922*

Political Party	1919 N = 20	1920 N = 25	1921 N = 32	1922 N = 46
Coalition	.769	.776	.827	.832
Unionist	.870	.801	.868	.850
Coalition Liberal	.632	.805	.679	.760
Labour	.925	.940	.956	.961
Liberal	.870	.873	.907	.896

*For the method of calculating coefficients of cohesion and of likeness, see Stuart A. Rice, Quantitative Methods in Politics (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928). The voting breakdowns were drawn from the regular monthly section, "The Divisions of the Month," in the Liberal Magazine, 1919-1922, beginning with the July 1919 issue and ending with the September 1922 issue. The Liberal Magazine, an official publication of the Liberal Party, called these divisions "the more important divisions," "the chief divisions in the House of Commons." (In the Liberal Magazine, 1919, the curiosity on page 390 was omitted and the breakdowns on pages 337-341 were included.)

TABLE 3.9

ARITHMETIC MEANS OF THE COEFFICIENTS OF LIKENESS OF ALL POSSIBLE PARTIES IN THE CHIEF DIVISIONS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, 1919-1922*

Political Party	1919 N = 20	1920 N = 25	1921 N = 32	1922 N = 46
Liberal-Labour	.903	.847	.936	.946
Unionist-Coalition Liberal	.818	.856	.869	.873
Labour-Coalition Liberal	.344	.262	.248	.231
Liberal-Coalition Liberal	.297	.249	.271	.271
Labour-Coalition	.235	.206	.157	.153
Liberal-Coalition	.212	.198	.180	.194
Labour-Unionist	.207	.179	.131	.130
Liberal-Unionist	.175	.182	.135	.172

*See the note to above Table 3.8. The 'Coalition' in these tables is the source's 'Unionists' combined with the source's 'Coalition Liberals.'

TABLE 3.10

TOTAL AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF CONTESTED BY-ELECTIONS IN 1919-1922, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Coalition		
Votes	737,828	43.8
Seats	42	55.3
Liberal		
Votes	271,186	16.1
Seats	7	9.2
Labour		
Votes	554,484	32.9
Seats	21	27.6
Other		
Votes	122,509	7.3
Seats	6	7.9
Totals		
Votes	1,686,007	100.0
Seats	76	100.0

*Liberal Year Book, 1923, p. 164.

The Coalition Liberals attempted to capture the constituency units (local Liberal Associations) of the National Liberal Federation. This effort was contested since the National Liberal Federation adopted the policy

> that every Liberal Association should jealously guard its independence, and should, without loss of time, cause it to be clearly understood that at the next general election its countenance and support will only be given to a Liberal candidate who is independent of other political ties and claims.[102]

In Wales, where Lloyd George was President of the Welsh National Liberal Council, the Coalition Liberals succeeded and excluded every (Asquithian) Liberal from the Executive Committee of the Welsh National Liberal Council. The Liberal Party countered by setting up a rival organization, the Welsh Liberal Federation.[103] Elsewhere, with isolated exceptions, the Coalition Liberals were repulsed by the (Asquithian) Liberals.[104] The Coalition Liberals, expelled from the

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[102]Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the National Liberal Federation, 1919, p. 16.

[103]Liberal Magazine, 1921, pp. 20-25. For Wales, see also above footnote 42.

[104]For an early example, see above footnote 46. The Spen Valley by-election of December 20, 1919 provided another relatively early and especially noteworthy case. The by-election resulted from the death of Sir Thomas Whittaker, M.P., a Coalition Liberal. By a majority vote the Spen Valley Liberal Association decided not to nominate a Coalition Liberal and, subsequently, by an unanimous vote nominated Sir John Simon. The Coalition Liberal Whips found a candidate to stand as a Coalition Liberal, and this action provoked a widespread protest from Liberal Associations and Clubs. The Labour

Liberal Party,[105] formed a National Liberal Council in January 1922, with Lloyd George as President and Churchill as Vice President. Since the die-hard Unionists were virulently criticizing the Coalition by this time, the National Liberal Council had a dual purpose, indicated by Sir Gordon Hewart, M.P.:

> [I]t is of vital importance that we should have a strong Liberal organization in existence so long as the Coalition continues. [. . .] [I]t is no less vitally important we should have a strong Liberal organization in being when the Coalition comes to an end.[106]

Austen Chamberlain, who had succeeded Bonar Law as Unionist leader in the House of Commons, and the Unionist members of the Cabinet, with the exception of Stanley Baldwin, were loyal to

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Party candidate won the by-election; the Coalition Liberal finished third and last. See the Liberal Magazine, 1919, pp. 712-715.

[105]"Although the statement that the Coalitionists have been 'expelled' is not literally true, we may as well make them a present of this point. What is literally true is that they and their actions during the past three years have been repudiated by general Liberal opinion. The local Liberal Associations refuse to nominate them for another election unless they come out of the Coalition." Liberal Magazine, 1922, p. 28. "Mr. Lloyd George's 'unforgivable sin' is plainly visible to everyone. It is the fact that he has supported Tories against Liberals, that he has done so deliberately, repeatedly, and consistently for more than three years, and still continues to do so." Ibid., p. 31.

[106]Ibid., p. 31. For a detailed description of the founding Conference of the National Liberal Council, see Ibid., pp. 28-43.

Lloyd George,[107] but die-hard Unionists, critical of the Coalition, were powerful in the Unionist constituency organizations and the National Unionist Federation. Chamberlain agreed to meet his critics at a meeting of the Unionist M. P. s, scheduled for October 19, 1922. When, contrary to Chamberlain's advice, the Party meeting voted--187 to 87--to fight the next general election as an independent Party, the Coalition Government resigned. Bonar Law, who had come out of retirement to address the Party meeting and who favored independence, became Prime Minister and Leader of the Unionist Party.[108]

The general election of November 1922 was contested by four significant parties: The Unionist Party, Liberal Party, Labour Party, and National Liberal Party.[109] Since some prominent Unionists were

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[107]"Chamberlain's willingness to consider fusion seems to have been much influenced by his early experience of fusion between the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists." McKenzie, op. cit., p. 92n. The earlier parallel was also noticed by contemporary Liberals: "It is in vain that Coalitionists who speak for Mr. Lloyd George's half of that lop-sided body profess and call themselves Liberals. They are precisely in the same position as the 'Liberal' Unionists of 1886 onwards--lost to the Party to which they once owned allegiance, and in process of being absorbed by another." Liberal Magazine, 1921, p. 87.

[108]For an excellent analysis of these events, see McKenzie, op. cit., pp. 83-109. Although the term 'Conservative' had replaced the term 'Unionist' by this time, the latter term is consistently used in this chapter.

[109]With the independence of Southern Ireland, a significant

not only benevolently aloof from the Unionist Government but also were benevolently inclined towards Lloyd George, Bonar law did not sanction official Unionist opponents for the National Liberals, but Lord Beaverbrook helped launch some fifty-six unofficial Unionists against Lloyd George's partisans.[110] The Liberal and Labour parties, encumbered by neither official nor unofficial alliances, were sturdily independent.

There was little pretense that the Liberal Party could win the general election of 1922. Reginald McKenna, the former Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer and future Unionist Chancellor-designate, publicly endorsed Bonar Law's Government on October 24, 1922 and averred "that there was no alternative Government except a Labour Government [. . .]."[111] Viscount Grey, the former Liberal Foreign

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Irish party was not involved for the first time since 1885.

[110]Lord Beaverbrook, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1963), pp. 213-214. Lord Beaverbrook also noted that, when faced with Unionist opponents, "only two of the Lloyd George candidates were successful." Ibid., p. 214.

[111]Liberal Magazine, 1922, p. 754. The quotation is not direct. In a public speech, during the campaign, Asquith indirectly conceded the accuracy of McKenna's comment: "He [McKenna] told them [the Unionists] some things that were very true--in fact I know of no things that were not true--but nothing that was very new." Ibid., p. 761. Emphasis added. Presumably, Asquith had mainly in mind McKenna's views about fiscal responsibility, but at a minimum, the emphasized phrase is a revealing slip of the tongue.

Secretary and a loyal follower of Asquith, speaking at a public meeting on October 24, 1922, was also quite candid about the Liberal Party's prospects:

> [A] Liberal Goverment is what I would prefer [. . .] Well, people say to me, 'Oh you know that is not really practical politics; the Liberal Party has so few seats and has to gain so many before it could get a majority that it cannot really have a practical prospect of getting an independent majority and making an Independent Liberal Government such as we used to have.' My answer to that is that we need not stop to think about the chances. [. . .] If we are to get--as I hope we shall and think we must get--a better House of Commons as the result of this election, one which is more thoroughly representative of feeling in the country, it is essential that in that House of Commons there should be a very largely increased Liberal representation. That is enough for us at the moment, and it is enough for every Liberal candidate.[112]

The number of candidates run by each party, given in Table 3.11, supports McKenna's conclusion and emphasizes Grey's modest hopes. The Liberal Party needed to elect virtually all of its candidates to obtain a working parliamentary majority; only the Unionist and Labour parties fielded enough candidates to reasonably hope to obtain a majority in the new House of Commons. The results of the general election, given in Table 3.12, further confirmed McKenna's view. The Liberal Party polled only nineteen percent of the total vote. The National Liberal Party received ten percent of the total vote. The Unionist Party, with thirty-nine percent of the poll,

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[112] Ibid., p. 744. Emphasis added.

continued to form the Government. The Labour Party, with thirty percent of the vote, became the official Opposition in the new House of Commons.

TABLE 3.11

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN THE 1922 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Number of Candidates
Unionist	491
Liberal	331
Labour	411
National Liberal	139
Others	47
Total	1419

*Liberal Year Book, 1923, p. 182.

TABLE 3.12

AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF THE 1922 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Unionist		
Votes	5,565,843	38.7
Seats	347	56.4
Liberal		
Votes	2,683,371	18.7
Seats	64	10.4
Labour		
Votes	4,251,011	29.6
Seats	142	23.1
National Liberal		
Votes	1,429,641	9.9
Seats	53	8.6
Other		
Votes	446,492	3.1
Seats	9	1.5
Totals		
Votes	14,376,358	100.0
Seats	615	100.0

*Liberal Year Book, 1923, p. 184. (a) "There were 253 contests in which more than two candidates competed for one seat. Some of these were three-cornered, and some four- and even five-cornered." 139 won by Unionists; 76 won by Labourites; 20 won by Liberals; 18 won by National Liberals. Ibid., p. 184. (b) Forty-four percent (61/139) of the National Liberal Party candidates were opposed by Liberal Party candidates; this includes 17 straight fights between the two parties. Computed from Ibid., pp. 190-292. Nevertheless, some scholars have added the National Liberal vote and the Liberal vote, treating the result as the vote received by a single party. See, for example, Lakeman and Lambert, op. cit., p. 26; Duverger, op. cit.,

The Unionist Party majority in the House of Commons was substantial after the 1922 general election, but "a number of the best minds in the party were outside the Government [. . .]."[113] When Baldwin succeeded Bonar Law as Prime Minister and Leader of the Unionist Party in May 1923, the Party was far from united since the pro-Coalition Unionists, such as Austen Chamberlain, had not broken their informal political alliance with Lloyd George's National Liberals. Baldwin's decision to fight a general election in 1923 on the issue of Protection drove a wedge between the pro-Coalition Unionists and the National Liberals, reuniting the Unionist Party: Austen Chamberlain rallied to the cause of his father and enthusiastically supported Baldwin's appeal. Lloyd George and the National Liberals, with individual exceptions,[114] merged with the Liberal Party and fought the general election as Free Traders. The Labour Party also challenged the Unionist Government's tariff policy and denied Baldwin's claim that tariffs were a remedy for unemployment.[115]

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pp. 225, 227. The Lakeman-Lambert classification, in the opinion of the present writer, is a gross error.
(c) The Constitutional Year Book, 1923 gives the following figures for the Liberal Party: 2,530,822 votes, 53 seats. Ibid., pp. 254, 248.

[113]McKenzie, op. cit., p. 110.

[114]Winston Churchill was the most distinguished exception.

[115]See the Labour Party's Manifesto, reprinted in the Liberal

The Liberal Party, for the first time since the second general election of 1910, made a serious bid for power in the 1923 general election.[116] "After some preliminary conversations, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Alfred Mond, and Sir John Simon held a consultation on November 13th, and came to a complete agreement for united action."[117] The following official statement was issued to the Press:

> Arrangements are now completed for all Liberals to fight the coming election as a united party. Both in the constituencies and at headquarters all candidates will be adopted and described as Liberals, and will be supported by the whole strength of the party without regard to any past differences. Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George at their meeting this morning settled plans for the campaign in common, and it is already certain that Liberal candidates will go to the poll in such numbers as to make united Liberalism a practical alternative to the present Government. [. . .][118]

The results of this united action represent an astonishing achievement for a third party in a two-party system: The Liberal Party's

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Magazine, 1923, pp. 719-721; Liberal Year Book, 1924, pp. 173-175. Perhaps, the Labour Party's confidence in 1923 is best illustrated by the Manifesto's phrase: "When Labour rules [. . .]." Ibid., p. 175.

[116]For the first time since 1910, the Liberal Party ran candidates for more than fifty-four percent of the seats in the House of Commons. Indeed, for the first time since 1910, the Liberal Party fielded more candidates than the Labour Party. See above Tables 3.1, 3.6, 3.11 and below Table 3.13.

[117]Liberal Magazine, 1923, p. 710; Liberal Year Book, 1924, p. 168.

[118]Liberal Magazine, 1923, p. 710; Liberal Year Book, 1924, p. 168.

proportion of the total poll rose markedly from nineteen percent in 1922 to thirty percent in 1923.[119] This achievement, rather obviously, was made possible by the 1922 split in the Coalition Party which led Lloyd George and his National Liberal Party to fuse with the Liberal Party.[120]

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[119]See above Table 3.12 and below Table 3.14.

[120]For the comparative significance of such splits, see below Section VI.

TABLE 3.13

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN THE 1923 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Number of Candidates
Unionist	536
Labour	423
Liberal	454
Other	31
Totals	1444

*Liberal Year Book, 1924, p. 176.

TABLE 3.14

AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF THE 1923 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Unionist		
Votes	5,544,540	38.1
Seats	258	42.0
Labour		
Votes	4,508,504	31.0
Seats	191	31.1
Liberal		
Votes	4,314,202	29.6
Seats	158	25.7
Other		
Votes	196,789	1.4
Seats	8	1.3
Totals		
Votes	14,564,035	100.0
Seats	615	100.0

*Liberal Year Book, 1924, p. 179.

Despite the Liberals' bid for power, the Labour Party also increased its percentage of the total vote between 1922 and 1923. The Unionist Party's proportion of the poll declined only slightly, but its proportion of seats fell sharply. The verdict of the electorate was against Protection, and as the more successful Free Trade party, the Labour Party formed its first (minority) Government.[121] Thereafter the Liberal Party's fortunes fell (albeit not uniformly) until the Party had no reasonable hope of returning to power after 1931. That history may be briefly recounted, augmented by the statistics in Tables 3.15 through 3.22.

The general election of 1924 was tragic for the Liberal Party: The number of Liberal candidates fell sharply to three hundred forty-two, and the Party's proportion of the total poll dropped to eighteen percent.[122] "On the other hand, though the (Labourite)

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[121]For the results of the 1923 general election, see above Table 3.14.

[122]For the 1924 general election, see below Tables 3.15 and 3.16. "In 222 of the contested seats [. . .] there was unfortunately no Liberal candidate; and in these constituencies there is no doubt that the Labour poll was considerably swelled by the votes of Liberals who had no Liberal candidate to vote for [. . .] But why did so many people, in the 300 constituencies where there was a choice, vote Conservative rather than Liberal? [Partly] because they perceived that the Liberals had not put enough candidates in the field to ensure the formation of an independent Government." Liberal Year Book, 1925, p. 175. (See also the Liberal Magazine, 1924,

strength in the House of Commons had been reduced, their electoral strength in the country had increased by more than a million. It was plain that Labour would come again."[123]

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p. 634). "The situation [. . .] was attributed by Asquithians to Lloyd George's stinginess in allocating the rich resources of the Party Fund." Jones, op. cit., p. 211. "Lloyd George insisted that the reason for contesting so few seats in the Election had not been shortage of funds but of 'eligible candidates.'" Frank Owen, Tempestuous Journey, Lloyd George His Life and Times (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1955), p. 685.

[123] Ibid., p. 684.

TABLE 3.15

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN THE 1924 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Number of Candidates
Unionist	534
Labour	516
Liberal	342
Other	29
Totals	1421

*Liberal Year Book, 1925, p. 176.

TABLE 3.16

AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF THE 1924 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Unionist		
Votes	7,838,225	47.8
Seats	415	67.5
Labour		
Votes	5,423,589	33.1
Seats	152	24.7
Liberal		
Votes	2,925,142	17.9
Seats	42	6.8
Other		
Votes	197,673	1.2
Seats	6	
Totals		
Votes	16,384,629	100.0
Seats	615	100.0

*Liberal Year Book, 1925, p. 178.

Despite the dispute between Asquith and Lloyd George, during the course of the General Strike in 1926,[124] the Liberal Party's percentage of the total vote in the contested by-elections of 1924-1929 increased to twenty-seven percent.[125] But in the general election of 1929, although the Party ran 512 candidates, the Liberal proportion of the total poll dropped to twenty-four percent.[126] Once again the Liberal Party held the balance of power in the House of Commons, with a Labour Government in office. The Liberal Party sought to have the Labour Government enact proportional representation,[127] in exchange for support, but before this arrangement could be consummated, the Labour Government broke up under the onslaught of the Great Depression. Prime Minister MacDonald formed a National Ministry, including Liberals and Unionists, and was repudiated by the Labour Party.[128]

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[124]This occasioned Asquith's resignation as Leader of the Liberal Party. See Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, Chapter XXIV.

[125]See below Table 3.17.

[126]For the 1929 General Election, see below Tables 3.18 and 3.19.

[127]After the 1918 general election, the Liberal Party was intensely interested in the enactment of proportional representation.

[128]MacDonald carried only 13 of 262 Labour M.P.s with him. Arthur Henderson became Leader of the Labour Party.

TABLE 3.17

TOTAL AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF CONTESTED BY-ELECTIONS IN 1924-1929, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Unionist		
Votes	630,795	38.1
Seats	29	47.5
Labour		
Votes	567,925	34.3
Seats	22	36.1
Liberal		
Votes	447,834	27.0
Seats	10	16.4
Other		
Votes	10,101	0.6
Seats	0	0.0
Totals		
Votes	1,656,655	100.0
Seats	61	100.0

*Liberal Year Book, 1930, pp. 180-181.

TABLE 3.18

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN THE 1929 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Number of Candidates
Unionist	590
Labour	570
Liberal	512
Other	57
Total	1729

*Liberal Year Book, 1930, p. 178.

TABLE 3.19

AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF THE 1929 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Unionist		
Votes	8,664,243	38.3
Seats	260	42.3
Labour		
Votes	8,379,978	37.0
Seats	288	46.8
Liberal		
Votes	5,301,127	23.4
Seats	59	9.6
Other		
Votes	293,949	1.3
Seats	8	1.3
Totals		
Votes	22,639,297	100.0
Seats	615	100.0

*Liberal Year Book, 1930, p. 176.

TABLE 3.20

TOTAL AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF CONTESTED BY-ELECTIONS IN 1929-1931, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
Unionist		
Votes	470,793	43.4
Seats	16	48.5
Liberal		
Votes	113,293	10.4
Seats	0	0.0
Labour		
Votes	430,776	39.7
Seats	16	48.5
Other		
Votes	69,309	6.4
Seats	1	3.0
Totals		
Votes	1,084,171	100.0
Seats	33	100.0

*Liberal Year Book, 1932, pp. 185-186.

When the National Ministery appealed to the country in the general election of 1931, the Liberal Party was split into three quite distinct segments: The Independent Liberal Party, virtually Lloyd George and his family, totally refused to support the National Government. The regular Liberal Party, under Sir Herbert Samuel, pledged qualified support to the Government. The Liberal Nationalists, under the leadership of Sir John Simon, who had repudiated the Liberal Whip,[129] gave categorical support to the National Ministry. The general election of 1931 was a disaster for all parties, save for the Unionists and factions who supported the National Ministry.[130] The regular Liberal Party was reduced to a small shadow of its former self; it has not since recovered.

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[129]"Sir John Simon, Sir Robert Hutchison, and Mr. Ernest Brown have informed the Chief Liberal Whip that they propose in future severally to act in independence of the Party, and that they therefore do not desire to receive the Liberal Whip. The letters in which the three Members stated their views and Sir Archibald Sinclair's replies were published in the Press on June 29th." Liberal Magazine, 1931, p. 334.

[130]For the 1931 general election, see below Tables 3.21 and 3.22.

TABLE 3.21

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN THE 1931 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Number of Candidates
National	
Unionist	517
Liberal	42
Labour	21
Liberal	111
Labour	513
Independent Liberal	7
Other	75
Total	1286

*Liberal Year Book, 1932, p. 184 and Constitutional Year Book, 1932, pp. 183-246.

(a) The numbers of "National Liberal," "Liberal" and "Independent Liberal" candidates were obtained by a constituency-by-constituency count in the Constitutional Year Book, 1932; the sum total (160) was confirmed by the Liberal Year Book, 1932.

(b) The Unionist Party's differential relationships with National Liberals, Liberals and Independent Liberals are indicated by the following statistics: Twelve percent (5/42) of the National Liberal candidates had a Unionist Party opponent. Seventy percent (78/111) of the Liberal candidates had a Unionist Party opponent. Eighty-six percent (6/7) of the Independent Liberal candidates had a Unionist Party opponent. Computed from Constitutional Year Book, 1932, pp. 183-246.

(c) The Liberal Nationalists are designated National Liberals in this and the following table, for convenience of classification, but should not be confused with the National Liberals of 1922.

TABLE 3.22

AGGREGATE AND PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF THE 1931 GENERAL ELECTION, BY PARTY*

Political Party	Aggregate Results	Percentage Results
National		
Unionist		
Votes	11,907,870	55.1
Seats	470	76.4
Liberal		
Votes	809,102	3.7
Seats	35	5.7
Labour		
Votes	335,704	1.6
Seats	13	2.1
Liberal		
Votes	1,405,759	6.5
Seats	33	5.4
Labour		
Votes	6,618,316	30.6
Seats	52	8.5
Independent Liberal		
Votes	106,106	0.5
Seats	4	0.7
Other		
Votes	430,938	2.0
Seats	8	1.3
Totals		
Votes	21,613,795	100.0
Seats	615	100.0

*Constitutional Year Book, 1932, pp. 181, 265. (a) The vote listed under "Other" includes: "[Independent] Nationalists" with 62,820 votes. The eight seats listed under "Other" include: "Independent Nationalists" with 5 seats. Ibid., pp. 181, 265. (b) The total vote for all types of Liberals, in this table, is 2,320,967. The Liberal Year Book, 1932 gives the total vote for all types of Liberals as 2,320,310; this is a difference of only 657 votes. Ibid., p. 184.

VI. Comparative Reflections on Major Party Schisms

The parochial (purely British) case for the split thesis rests upon the account that has been given or upon a substantially similar account. In addition, since the break-up of the Coalition Party in 1922 and the upsurge of the Liberal Party in 1923 is suggestively parallel to the split in the Liberal Party and the rise of the Labour Party in 1918, the preceding account has also provided a comparative instance, consistent with the split thesis. In the twentieth century, comparative examples can also be drawn from the two-party systems of Canada, Australia, and the United States.

The Canadian Progressive Party, Australian Country Party, and American (Bull Moose) Progressive Party have been the most successful third parties, in their respective countries, in the twentieth century.[131] The upsurge of each of these parties--in 1921, 1919, and 1912, respectively--was preceded by a schism in one of the country's two major parties. Indeed, the antecedent splits in the Canadian Liberal Party, Australian Labor Party, and the American Republican Party were the most severe schisms that have occurred, in contemporary major parties, in these nations.[132] A summary description

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[131] Degree of success, in the present context, is measured by a party's percentage of the total vote in a general election for the national legislature.

[132] For estimates of the magnitudes of these splits, see below Table 3.23.

of the culmination of each of these schisms is given in the following paragraphs.

The Rise of the Canadian Progressive Party. The Canadian Liberal Party split on the issue of conscription in 1917.[133] When voting on the Conservative Government's Military Service Bill, twenty-six Liberal M.P.s, led by G. P. Graham, the leading Ontario Liberal, supported the Bill's compulsory features.[134] The opposition to the Bill, led by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Leader of the Liberal Party, consisted mainly of Liberal M.P.s from Quebec. "Laurier [. . .] with consummate skill had made the vote an open one. He hoped still to re-unite the party for the forthcoming election."[135] However, "a Union Government of Conservatives and dissident Liberals was

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[133]The connection between this schism and the rise of the Progressive Party has been frequently noted by scholars. For general background, see W. L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1950), pp. 49-60; H. McD. Clokie, Canadian Government and Politics (Toronto: Longmans, Green & Company, 1944), pp. 79, 82, 84-85; Robert MacGregor Dawson, The Government of Canada (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1947), pp. 511-513.

[134]The number is drawn from J. Castell Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1917 (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Company, Limited, 1918), p. 345. A total of eighty-seven Liberal M.P.s had been elected in the preceding general election. See Howard A. Scarrow, Canada Votes (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1962), p. 27. For Graham's vacillation in the subsequent general election, see Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 567, 619.

[135]Morton, op. cit., p. 51.

formed."[136] The Union Government appealed to the country as a coalition and was victorious, sweeping the western provinces, in the general election of 1917. "[T]he fact that Western Canada (normally Liberal) [shook] off its old party allegiance over the conscription issue greatly lessened the difficulty of making a change [. . .]."[137] "A succession of provincial elections between 1919 and 1923 brought into office insurgent parties variously called United Farmers and Progressives in Ontario and the prairie provinces."[138] The national Progressive Party was formed in 1920 and, in the general election of 1921, captured twenty-five percent of the total vote and twenty-eight of the seats in the Dominion House of Commons.[139] From this pinnacle, the Progressive Party gradually declined.

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[136]Clokie, op. cit., p. 82.

[137]Dawson, op. cit., p. 511. Morton remarked that "the conscription issue of 1917 disrupted the national Liberal party and freed the agrarian western wing from the alliance with the conservative Liberals of Quebec." Morton, op. cit., p. 49.

[138]Clokie, op. cit., p. 84.

[139]William Paterson, "The Progressive Political Movement 1919-1930," (University of Toronto, M.A. thesis, 1940), Appendix B. For slightly (but not significantly) different figures, see Scarrow, op. cit., p. 35. The Progressive Party polled fewer votes, but won more seats, than the Conservative Party; the Liberal Party finished first in both votes and seats.

The Rise of the Australian Country Party.[140] The Australian Labor Party split also on the issue of conscription, in 1916. When the Labor Party refused to countenance compulsory service, the Labor Prime Minister, William Hughes, and thirteen Labor Representatives left the Labor Caucus.[141] Frank Tudor, the retiring Labor Minister for Trade and Customs, succeeded Hughes as Leader of the Labor Party. The ex-Laborites merged with the Liberal Party, forming a Nationalist Party, with Hughes as Prime Minister. The Nationalist Government was returned victorious, against Labor opposition, in the general election of 1917. "From January 1918 on, a group of ex-Liberal Nationalists numbering at the most nine were sufficiently dissatisfied with the government to constitute the beginnings of a corner party."[142] These ex-Liberals were allied with conservative agrarian organizations which had traditionally been sympathetic to the Liberal Party but which found Hughes, with his urban brand of Nationalism, to be objectionable.

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[140]The literature on the Country Party is not voluminous. For general background, see Louise Overacker, The Australian Party System (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

[141]Just before the split Labor held forty seats in the House of Representatives. Both numbers are found in Geoffrey Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1901-1929 (Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1956), p. 130.

[142]Ibid., p. 130.

> At the election [. . .] held on 13 December 1919, [. . .] [t]he farmers' organizations in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia endorsed a number of candidates standing solely in their interest, and also gave a separate endorsement to many candidates who carried the endorsement of the Nationalist Party; from members so nominated emerged the Country Party.[143]

After the 1919 general election, with a precarious parliamentary majority, Hughes' Nationalist Government continued in office until 1923. The Country Party held the balance of power after the 1922 general election, with thirteen percent of the electorate's first preferences and nineteen percent of the seats in the House of Representatives,[144] and insisted that Hughes resign. A Nationalist-Country Government was formed, after Hughes' resignation, and the Country Party became "a regional and autonomous extension of the main non-Labour Party."[145]

The Rise of the American (Bull Moose) Progressive Party. The American Republican Party split over its presidential nominee in 1912.[146] When the Republican National Convention renominated

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[143] Ibid., p. 183.

[144] Australia adopted the preferential system of election in 1918. The election statistics are drawn from L. C. Webb, "The Australian Party System," in S. R. Davis, W. McMahon, A. A. Calwell and L. C. Webb, The Australian Political Party System (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1954), p. 97.

[145] Ibid., p. 103.

[146] The connection between this split and the rise of the Progressive Party is so obvious as to require little comment. For general background, see George Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), Chapters 6-9.

President William Howard Taft, Theodore Roosevelt, the Republican ex-President, and many of his four hundred fifty-seven delegates bolted the Republican Party and formed the Progressive (Bull Moose) Party.[147] With Roosevelt as its presidential nominee, the Progressive Party out-polled the Republican Party, but lost to the Democratic Party, in the 1912 presidential election. However, in the 1912 congressional elections, the Progressive Party was less successful, polling somewhat less than twenty-one percent of the total vote and winning about four percent of the seats in the House of Representatives.[148] From this peak, the Progressive Party rapidly declined.

Although these five schisms differ in detail,[149] the broad pattern is the same: A major split in a major party was followed (or accompanied) by the upsurge of a third party. Nevertheless, the British case of 1918 is still unique in one salient respect: The third

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[147]There were one thousand and seventy-eight accredited delegates. Both numbers can be found in Victor Rosewater, Back Stage in 1912 (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, Inc., 1932), Chapter 16. See also Mowry, op. cit., pp. 252-253.

[148]These figures are probably more closely comparable than the presidential results, for institutional reasons, to the British, Canadian and Australian data. The figures are drawn from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1960).

[149]A rigorous comparison of these cases presupposes a systematic conceptual framework. For an experimental framework, possibly suitable for this purpose, see below Chapter IV.

party (Labour) surpassed an existing major party (Liberal).[150] Since this feature is critical and unique, further comparative conclusions must be somewhat tentative. There is, however, another unusual feature of the 1918 British case that should be noticed: The Liberal Party's broad leadership corps, when compared with the other cases, split most severely, the dissident faction was proportionally the largest.[151] This unusual magnitude, perhaps, accounts for the third party's unique success.

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[150]The measure, in the present context, is a party's percentage of the total poll in a general election for the national legislature. See above footnotes 131, 139, and 148.

[151]See below Table 3.23.

TABLE 3.23

FIVE MAJOR SCHISMS, BY PARTY, MAGNITUDE, AND THIRD PARTY BENEFICIARY*

Major Party and Date of Schism	Magnitude		Third Party
	Regulars	Dissidents	Beneficiary
British Liberal Party, 1918	50-%	50+%	Labour
British Coalition Party, 1922	57	43	Liberal
U.S. Republican Party, 1912	58	42	Progressive
Australian Labor Party, 1916	65	35	Country
Canadian Liberal Party, 1917	70	30	Progressive

*For the derivation of this table, see the following notes:
(a) For the British Liberal Party in 1918, the regulars are the Asquithian M.P.s and the dissidents are the Lloyd Georgian M.P.s. The percentage division is estimated from Asquith's and Churchill's remarks, quoted above in connection with footnotes 3 and 76.
(b) For the British Coalition Party in 1922, the regulars are the Coalition Unionist M.P.s who favored independence and the dissidents are the Coalition (87 Unionist, all Liberal) M.P.s favoring fusion.
(c) For the U.S. Republican Party in 1912, the dissidents are Roosevelt's delegates. The percentage division is estimated from the information in above footnote 147 and related text.
(d) For the Australian Labor Party in 1916, the dissidents are Hughes and the other thirteen Labor Representatives who left the Labor Caucus. For the basis of the percentage division, see above footnote 141 and related text.
(e) For the Canadian Liberal Party in 1917, the dissidents are the twenty-six Liberal M.P.s who opposed Laurier on conscription. For the basis of the percentage estimates, see above footnote 134 and related text.

VII. Conclusions

The split thesis argues, roughly speaking, that the British Liberal Party declined because "[t]he bulk of the old Liberal parliamentary party deserted to the Coalition."[152] This study has essayed to show that the split thesis fits not only the decline of the Liberal Party (and the upsurge of the Labour Party) but also the rise of major third parties in comparable two-party systems. From a comparative perspective, the schism in the British Liberal Party was unusually severe and the British Labour Party was unusually successful. The association of this pair of unique features, in the 1918 British case, seems hardly accidental.

The validity of the split thesis has not been widely recognized by scholars,[153] perhaps because the magnitude of the 1918 debacle for the British Liberal Party has often been under-estimated and because the existence of comparable cases has frequently been over looked. Nevertheless, the split thesis is a viable explanation of the decline of the British Liberal Party.

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[152]Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, p. 284.

[153]Curiously enough, contemporary politicians saw the situation with greater accuracy. This has been illustrated above, but for another illustration, see Snowden, op. cit., I, pp. 319, 495.

CHAPTER IV

A THEORY OF HOMEOSTATIC TWO-PARTY SYSTEMS

I. Introduction

A description of the decline of the British Liberal Party could scarcely avoid scholarly controversy since 'decline' and 'British Liberal Party' have no conventionally fixed meanings.[1] And without a description of the decline of the British Liberal Party, a general explanation[2] of the decline could hardly be proposed since the phenomenon to be explained would not be specified. Since theory and description are wedded by shared concepts, any systematic description of the decline of the British Liberal Party implicitly has theoretical content.

The preceeding chapter has essayed a systematic description of the decline of the British Liberal Party, and the present chapter constructs a theory of homeostatic two-party systems which is

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[1] See above Chapters I, II and III

[2] By 'general explanation' the author means 'explanation by deductive subsumption under generalizations'. This is commonly equated with 'scientific explanation'. See Carl G. Hempel, "Deductive-Nomological vs. Statistical Explanation," in Herbert Feigl and Grover Maxwell (eds.), Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), III, pp. 98-169.

consistent with that description.[3] Theories about political parties can be constructed in many different ways and on many different conceptual bases. The present theory is not advanced as a complete theory of two-party systems; much less is it a complete theory of political parties; at most it is one way to elucidate the homeostatic character of stable two-party systems.

II. Conceptual Foundations

The conceptual foundations for the theory are three concepts, viz., 'two-party system', 'major party', and 'political party'. Since these concepts are fundamental, explicit definitions are proposed after selective reviews of existing scholarly usage.

Two-Party System. The distinctions between two-party and single-party systems and between two-party and multi-party systems are commonly judged to be fundamental[4] but are not uniformly drawn

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[3]From the present perspective, it can be seen that Chapter II represented a "clearing of the decks" for the constructions in Chapters III and IV.

[4]"The contrast between the multi-party and the single-party systems has become a commonplace in discussions [. . .] the contrast between the two-party and the multi-party systems is of much less importance [. . .] however, it is undeniably a fundamental distinction." Maurice Duverger, Political Parties, trans. Barbara and Robert North (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1955), p. 206. "One-, Two-, and multi-party systems [. . .] the classic trichotomy of party classification." Charles W. Anderson, "Central American Political Parties: A Functional Approach," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. XV (1962), p. 127.

in scholarly analyses of party systems. A cursory survey of the literature shows that the Turkish party system has been dubbed a 'two-party system'[5] and a 'multi-party system';[6] the Japanese party system has been labeled a 'two-party system' and a one-and-a-half party system';[7] the Australian party system has been termed a 'two-party system', [8] a 'duet in function and a trio in form[9] and a 'three-party

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[5]Duverger, op. cit., pp. 211, 218; H. B. Sharabi, Governments and Politics in the Middle East in the Twentieth Century (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 54-61. Unless otherwise indicated, in the present essay, all comments about Turkey refer to the period between the end of the Second World War and the 1960 Coup.

[6]Kemal H. Karpat, Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-party System (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); Kemal H. Karpat, "The Turkish Elections of 1957," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. XIV (1961), pp. 436-459.

[7]"In formal terms perhaps, Japan has a two-party system. In broad political terms, that system is really a one-and-one-half party system. But in the most basic functional sense, it is a system of federations--a system of one dominant federation and one minority federation, with each having multiparties constantly in flux." Robert A. Scalapino and Junnosuke Masumi, Parties and Politics in Contemporary Japan (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), p. 81. "Japan may well be what Professor Robert Scalapino has called a one and one-half party state or what we call a six quarter-parties state." Ardath W. Burks, The Government of Japan (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1961), p. 76.

[8]Gwendolen M. Carter, "The Commonwealth Overseas: Variations on a British Theme," in Sigmund Neumann (ed.), Modern Political Parties (University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 58.

[9]Leslie Lipson, "Party Systems in the United Kingdom and the Older Commonwealth: Causes, Resemblances, and Variations," Political Studies, Vol. VII (1959), pp. 17, 27.

system';[10] the British party system has been called a 'two-party system',[11] a 'two-and-a-half party system'[12] and a 'three-party system'.[13] This variegated usage is paralleled by numerous definitions of 'two-party system'.

A few writers have had a very literal conception of the two-party system, viz.: "A two-party system is a party system with two and only two political parties."[14] Perhaps from a narrow linguistic perspective, this definition has the merit of simplicity, but from an empirical perspective, the definition is simultaneously too broad and too narrow. The definition is too broad because it encompasses some

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[10]Duverger, op. cit., p. 235.

[11]"As an example of the two-party system, the United Kingdom is probably most often quoted." Gunnar Heckscher, The Study of Comparative Government and Politics (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 153.

[12]Carl J. Friedrich, Constitutional Government and Democracy (rev. ed.; Boston: Ginn and Company, 1950). p. 414.

[13]The other citations refer rather generally to the British party system in the twentieth century, but this one refers to the period from 1918 to 1931. Leslie Lipson, "The Two-Party System in British Politics," American Political Science Review, Vol. XLVII, No. 2 (June, 1953), p. 339.

[14]"With regard to the number of parties, there was a definite trend towards a two-party system, although attempts were made to introduce other parties." George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (2nd ed.; Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 151-152. The reference is to Turkey and is related to above footnotes 5 and 6.

single-party systems.[15] A system with a single perpetually dominant party and with a single minor opposition party, would be called a 'two-party system'. Thus "Mexico's one-party system,"[16] for example, would be classed as a two-party system. The definition is too narrow because it excludes some two-party systems. A system with two and only two major parties that alternate in power, but with transient minor parties, would not be called a 'two-party system'. Thus "the two-party system in the United States,"[17] for example, would not be classed as a two-party system.

Several writers have adopted the view that the number of major parties is the distinguishing feature of two-party systems, viz: "A two-party system is a party system with two and only two major parties."[18] This definition has the advantage of not grossly conflicting

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[15]This type of statement is frequently made in the present essay and is an appeal to intuitive adequacy. Definitions, of course, may be insisted upon despite such appeals. See Carl G. Hempel, Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 11-12.

[16]L. Vincent Padgett, "Mexico's One-Party System: A Re-Evaluation," American Political Science Review, Vol. LI (1957), pp. 955-975.

[17]William Goodman, The Two-Party System in the United States (2nd ed.; Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1960).

[18]"[T]he two-party system means that there are only two major parties [. . .]." E. E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), p. 68. "It is not always easy to make the distinction between two-party and multi-party systems

with ordinary scholarly usage but, perhaps, is also too narrow and yet too broad. The definition is rather narrow because it excludes party systems that usually have two and only two major parties but that occasionally have three major parties for brief periods. Thus the Canadian two-party system, for example, would not be classed as a two-party system in some years of the twentieth century.[19] This difficulty has been circumvented by a less stringent definition, viz.: "A two-party system is a party system that usually has two and only

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because there exist alongside the major parties a number of small groups." Duverger, op. cit., p. 207. Duverger's remark is also suggestive about the inter-locking nature of the three concepts being discussed in the present essay.

[19]"Although the Canadian two-party system has repeatedly broken down, it has never been replaced by a permanent multi-party system." Seymour Martin Lipset, "Party Systems and the Representation of Social Groups," European Journal of Sociology, Vol. I, No. 1 (1960), p. 23. Compare with the more usual view that Canada "has basically a two-party system." Carter, op. cit., p. 58. "Whatever the theoretical justification of the two-party system Canada, ever since the emergence of national parties, has endorsed it consistently [. . .]." Robert MacGregor Dawson, The Government of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947), p. 497. But compare also with the reference to "[t]he former national multipartism of Canada," by Colin Leys, "Models, Theories, and the Theory of Political Parties," Political Studies, Vol. VII, No. 2 (1959), p. 145. A systematic resolution of these conflicting views, of course, presupposes an operational definition of 'major party'; a suitable definition is proposed below, but at this point, it may be observed that the Canadian dilemma also occurs for the United States during the heyday of the Progressive (Bull Moose) Party and for Great Britain during part of the 1920s. Furthermore, if Schattschneider's definition (see above footnote 18) is adopted, then two-party systems cannot be homeostatic but must be static with respect to the number of major political parties.

two major parties."[20] This revised definition is liberal in the desired fashion, at the cost of increased vagueness, but perhaps is too broad. Both versions of the definition are rather broad because they encompass party systems that have two major parties in a perpetual coalition government, or one perpetually governing and one perpetually opposition party. Thus "the trend[s] toward a two-party system" in the postwar Austrian and West German party systems, for example, would be prematurely classed as two-party systems.[21]

The number (statistical or categorical) of political parties (major or minor) is insufficient to denote[22] the contemporary two-party

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[20]"[A] two-party system[,] [t]hat is, there are usually two major parties [. . .]." Carter, op. cit., p. 58. See also Dawson, op. cit., pp. 496-497.

[21]For Austria, see Charles A. Gulick, "Austria's Socialists in the Trend toward a Two-Party System: An Interpretation of Postwar Elections," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. XI (1958), pp. 539-562; Otto Kirchheimer, "The Waning of Opposition in Parliamentary Regimes," Social Research, Vol. XXIV (1957), p. 140. For West Germany, see Duverger, op. cit., p. 211; Arnold J. Heidenheimer, The Governments of Germany (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1961), p. 62; W. Phillips Davison, "Trends in West German Public Opinion," in Hans Speier and W. Phillips Davison (eds.), West German Leadership and Foreign Policy (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957), p. 301. With respect to a stable majority-minority party situation, the postwar Japanese party system is somewhat similar to the postwar West German party system. See above footnote 7 and the sources cited therein.

[22]In the language of philosophy, this essay is concerned with the denotation rather than the connotation of terms, that is, with the concepts' empirical referents rather than with the concepts' intrinsic meanings.

systems. Since the number of parties per se is inadequate to define two-party systems, the number of parties might be viewed as an empirical regularity rather than a definitional characteristic, but this possibility has received scant attention in the literature. The number of parties has typically been augmented by additional definitional requirements.

A complex definition has been proposed by Leslie Lipson and adopted by some subsequent writers,[23] viz.:

> A state has a two-party system if it satisfies the following conditions: (1) Not more than two parties at any given time have a genuine chance to gain power. (2) One of these is able to win the requisite majority and stay in office without help from a third party. (3) Over a number of decades two parties alternate in power.[24]

This definition has the virtue of excluding permanent coalitions as well as stable majority-minority systems but is too stringent. A system with a 250-249-1-1 distribution of legislative seats, among two major and two minor parties, would not be called a 'two-party system'. Thus the British party system, "the classic home of two-party government [,]"[25] for example, would often not be classed as

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[23]For example, by Gulick, op. cit., p. 539n. For a criticism, see L. C. Webb, "The Australian Party System," in S. R. Davis, W. McMahon, A. A. Caldwell, and L. C. Webb, The Australian Political Party System (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1954), pp. 86-87.

[24]Lipson, "The Two-Party System in British Politics," p. 338.

[25]Ibid., p. 337.

a two-party system.[26] The first condition, a tacit restriction of a two-party system to two and only two major parties, is also troublesome, as indicated above. These strict conditions might be relaxed with another definition, viz.: "A two-party system is a party system that usually has two and only two major parties and major parties usually alternate as majority parties in the legislature."[27] This definition is so vague as to be virtually impervious to empirical criticism and, as a result, although perhaps "true" in some sense, should not be accepted.

Lipson's definition, although inadequate, is suggestive. A similar definition, proposed and adopted below, stipulates that, roughly speaking, if a party system has satisfied Lipson's three conditions in some past period, then the party system has been a two-party system

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[26]Lipson himself equivocated on this point. "Judged by these criteria, Britain may be said to have operated the two-party system for two and a half centuries. [. . .] A three-party system existed in the latter decades of the nineteenth century [. . .] and again in the 1920s [. . .] [b]ut the two-party system reasserted itself after each of these seeming [sic] deviations." Ibid., pp. 338-339. (The problem also exists for classifying the party systems of Canada and the United States.) Lipson's remark about "two and a half centuries" also obscures the importance of the democratic prerequisites for a two-party system. These have been tacitly assumed in the present essay but are explicitly discussed below.

[27]See the sources cited above in footnote 20. In some of the studies that have been cited, as in this case, the distinction between definition and description is not clearly or explicitly drawn.

since that period. Before giving a formal statement of the proposed definition, it is helpful to distinguish between a two-party system and the environment of a two-party system.

In this essay, it is taken as axiomatic that the environment of a two-party system is and must be democratic. The elements of democracy are somewhat difficult to exhaustively enumerate but include bona fide competition for elective legislative office, a broad and fair suffrage as well as a secret ballot.[28] Every two-party system operates and can only operate within such an environment. If the environment is disrupted by revolution or civil war, for example, then a two-party system is destroyed, if it exists at the time of the

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[28]Even the conditions that have been mentioned are difficult to specify in detail. 'One Man, One Vote, One Value' and 'Universal Manhood Suffrage' have been rallying cries for the broad and fair suffrage requirement, for example, but these historic slogans are somewhat vague. [See James Mill, An Essay on Government (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), Section VIII; Joseph Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy (3rd ed.; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950), Chapters XXII-XXIII.] Furthermore, curiously enough, bona fide competition does not necessarily mean that more than one person is a candidate for a single office since, with some methods of voting, 'no candidate' should be treated as the name of a candidate. [See Duncan Black, The Theory of Committees and Elections (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 3-4, 189.] With respect to the tolerable proportions of uncontested seats, plural votes and unequal districts, as empirical approximations of what is intended, the author should remark that he considers Britain to have acquired a democratic environment in 1885 and to have had a democratic environment continuously since 1885. This is the conventional view. [See Henry Pelling, Modern Britain, 1885-1955 (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1960), pp. 5-9.]

disruption, although it may be succeeded after the disruption by another two-party system. Every democratic environment, of course, does not have a two-party system. A democracy might have a single-party or multi-party system and, indeed, a no-party system is a theoretical possibility.[29]

Given a democratic environment, a two-party system is defined by its formative cycle. In the formative period, there are two and only two major parties, the same pair for the entire formative period. For convenience, these parties are Party A and Party B and the general elections[30] of the formative period are Election 1, Election 2, etc. The two-party system's formative cycle is: In Election 1, Party A wins a majority (at least fifty percent) of the legislative seats and proceeds to organize the legislature. In Election 2 (since time-lags are permitted, this might be Election 3, etc.), Party B wins a

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[29] "Dictatorial countries have no political parties in the original sense of the word [. . .]." Herman Finer, Theory and Practice of Modern Government (rev. ed.; New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1949), p. 302.

[30] Second chambers and executives are so diverse as to be troublesome referents in a comparative study. General elections for the so-called 'first chamber' of the national legislature are used in this study since there is some institutional comparability between, for example, a general election for the British House of Commons and a general election for the United States House of Representatives.

majority of the legislative seats and proceeds to organize the legislature. In Election 3 (with a permissible time-lag, this might be Election 4, etc.), Party A wins a majority of the legislative seats and proceeds to organize the legislature. This is the formative cycle of a two-party system. After the cycle is completed, a two-party system exists and continues to exist as long as the democratic environment is not disrupted.[31]

Two concrete examples may be used to illustrate the definition of 'two party system'. (1) The British party system has had a continuously functioning democratic environment since 1885. In the general election of 1885, the Liberal Party won fifty percent of the seats and organized the House of Commons. In the general election of 1886, the Conservative Party (with its Liberal Unionist allies)[32] won a large majority of seats and organized the House of Commons. In the general election of 1892, the Liberal Party (with its Irish Nationalist allies) again won a majority of seats and organized the House of Commons. Since the Liberal and Conservative

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[31] With this definition, the usual number of major parties--viz., two--becomes an empirical regularity rather than a definitional characteristic. A major purpose of the present essay is to suggest the conditions under which three major parties will exist in a two-party system and to indicate which of the three major parties will decline (i.e., cease to be a major party) as the system returns to its usual state.

[32] This example anticipates the definition of 'political party' that is given below, viz., certain types of coalitions are to be viewed as de facto single parties.

parties were the only major parties between 1885 and 1892, the British two-party system began in 1892.[33] (2) The Turkish party system had (let us say) a democratic environment after 1946. In the general election of 1946, the Republican People's Party captured a majority of the seats and continued to organize the Grand National Assembly. In the general election of 1950, the Democrat Party won a majority of seats and organized the Grand National Assembly. Since the Republican People's and Democrat parties were the only major parties between 1946 and 1960, if the Republican People's Party had again won a majority of seats and organized the Grand National Assembly, then a two-party system would have been established in Turkey. There was, however, a considerable fear that the Democrat Party had no intention of following the "democratic rules of the game" and permitting a loss of power in a general election. A military coup ousted the Democrat Party from power in 1960, disrupting the democratic environment, and the postwar Turkish party system did not quite become a two-party system.[34]

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[33]The Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, United States and perhaps other party systems are also two-party systems.

[34]For an illuminating discussion of the Turkish party system during these years, see Sharabi, op. cit., Chapter 5. The Austrian, Japanese, West German and perhaps other party systems are also "almost but not quite" two-party systems.

This definition seems to extensionally correspond to the predominate usage of scholars in describing particular party systems as two-party or non-two-party systems. Furthermore, the definition provides (empirically, not definitionally) for important facets of the psychology of politicians and voters. First, the requirement of a full alternation in power, with each party winning and then losing power, conditions the politicians to accept the critical practice of relinquishing the perquisites of power.[35] Second, the requirement of at least three general elections, with the same two (and only two) major parties, conditions the voters to expect a two-party battle and (probably) inculcates habitual voting for the same party.[36] Finally, elections have demonstrably "made a difference" for both politicians and voters, under the proposed definition, since a complete alternation in power has occurred during the formative cycle of the two-party system.[37]

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[35]The fear that the governing party would not yield power in accordance with the "democratic rules of the game" has frequently caused scholars to be reluctant to classify systems, with two and only two major parties, as two-party systems. See Duverger, op. cit., p. 214; Burks, op. cit., p. 76.

[36]For the importance of habitual partisan voting, for the stability of two-party systems, see Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, The American Voter (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960), p. 553.

[37]It is not the purpose of this essay to develop a systematic classification of party systems, but the material in the text can obviously (and, perhaps, usefully) be extended as follows: (1) It should be noted that the definition of 'two-party system' denotes those

Major Parties and Political Parties. The definition of 'two-party system' presupposed the concepts 'major party' and 'political party', but these concepts can scarcely be taken for granted since

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party systems that are usually regarded as stable two-party systems. A class of stable three-party, four-party, . . . , N-party systems can be generated by relaxing the definition of 'two-party system'. The revised and general definition may be briefly illustrated by reference to a formation cycle for a three-party system: We assume a democratic environment and a constant three major parties--A, B, and C--during the formative period. After Election 1, Parties A and B form a parliamentary coalition to organize the legislature. After Election 2, parties A and C form a parliamentary coalition to organize the legislature. After Election 3, parties C and B form a parliamentary coalition to organize the legislature. After Election 4, parties A and B form a parliamentary coalition to organize the legislature. Then the three-party system is established. (This is a sketch; minority governments are permissable; the key point is that each party has and then loses power during the formative cycle.) [The Swedish party system, often mentioned as an unusually stable multi-party system, apparently becomes a stable four-party system with this generalized definition. See Dankwart A. Rustow, The Politics of Compromise (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), Appendix.] (2) From the foregoing, consistent with a common view, a stable one-party or no-party system is not possible, and a stable three-party system is less probable a priori than a stable two-party system because more power shifts are necessary for the formative cycle. (3) In addition to the stable two-party, . . . , N-party systems, another class of party systems--viz., no-party, one-party, . . . , N-party systems--can be generated by defining them in terms of the number of major parties in the system (and, of course, by excluding those systems that satisfy the generalized definition of a stable N-party system). (4) With this two-fold classification, the stable party systems can be viewed as absorbing states in a Markov Chain. Transition probabilities, conditional upon the non-disruption of the democratic environment and using general elections as the unit of time, could be estimated by an historical survey of election results. [For the mathematical aspects of Markov Chains, see John G. Kemeny and J. Laurie Snell, Finite Markov Chains (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1960.]

their variable content is almost proverbial.[38] A sample[39] of the literature shows that the 1948 States Rights (Dixiecrat) Party of the United States was a party[40] and a non-party;[41] the French National Center of Independents after 1954 was a major party[42] and a non-party;[43] the British Labour Party was a party,[44] a pressure group[45] and "an appendage to the Liberal party after 1910;"[46] and the British

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[38]One man's party is another man's faction. "The study of party politics has been remarkably confused by the poverty of the English language as far as the vocabulary of politics is concerned. Organizations called 'parties' at various times and in various places have in fact been fundamentally dissimilar, but all alike have been called parties for want of a sufficient variety of words corresponding to the diversity of realities." Schattschneider, op. cit., p. 65. "[E]ven the basic referents, such as the party, are at variance [. . .]." Carl J. Friedrich, "Review of Contemporary Political Science," American Political Science Review, Vol. XLVII, No. 2 (June, 1953), p. 540.

[39]Once again no claim is pretended to an exhaustive or representative sample of the literature.

[40]Wilfred E. Binkley, American Political Parties, Their Natural History (3rd ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), p. 405.

[41]Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1957), p. 128.

[42]Roy C. Macridis and Bernard E. Brown, The De Gaulle Republic (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, Inc., 1960), pp. 17-18.

[43]Dorothy Pickles, The Fifth French Republic (rev. ed.; New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1962), p. 65.

[44]Downs, op. cit., pp. 128-129.

[45]Henry Pelling, A Short History of the Labour Party (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1961), Chapter II.

[46]Sir Ivor Jennings, Party Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge

Liberal Party was a major party for the last time in 1918,[47] in 1931,[48] and in 1935.[49] This confusion can be elucidated by examining a common definition of 'political party'.

Perhaps the most widely accepted definition of 'political party' stresses the electoral activity and presumed goals of certain organizations, viz.: "A party is an organization that contests elections and seeks to control the government."[50] This definition, in effect, abolishes the distinction between major and minor parties, by relegating most minor parties to the category of non-parties.[51] Even major

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University Press, 1961), II, p. 251. See also Hiram Miller Stout, British Government (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 165.

[47]Schattschneider, op. cit., pp. 68, 79-80. By inference; logically sound but perhaps not intended by Schattschneider. If such inferences are allowed, then there must be numerous "one-half" parties since so many authors refer to "two-and-a-half" party systems.

[48]See above footnote 26. By inference and consistent with Lipson's apparent intent.

[49]Duverger, op. cit., p. 208. By inference and consistent with Duverger's apparent intent.

[50]"A political party is a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election." Downs, op. cit., p. 25. "Political parties are autonomous organized groups that make nominations and contest elections in the hope of eventually gaining and exercising control of the personnel and policies of government." Austin Ranney and Willmoore Kendall, Democracy and the American Party System (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 85. See also Schattschneider, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

[51]Schattschneider has been one of the few writers to recognize (and accept) the definition's implication that most minor parties are

parties occasionally do not aim to control the government but rather seek to minimize a foreseeable electoral misfortune.[52]

Some writers have preserved the distinction between major and minor parties by stipulating that a major party not only contests an election but also has a genuine chance to win the election, viz.: "At any given time, a party is an organization that contests an election and a major party is a party that has a genuine chance to gain power through the election."[53] But this definition is also restrictive since a major party, with obvious prospects of obtaining thirty or forty

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not really parties: "Only when an organization is in control of the government or is able to create and maintain a widespread expectation that it will take over the government soon does it become a major party or a real party." Ibid., p. 36. Schattschneider strongly stresses this point.

[52]When directing the British Labour Party's campaign in 1931, the Leader of the Party, Arthur Henderson, frequently told his younger colleagues that winning a majority in the House of Commons would be a task for the next generation. [See Mary Agnes Hamilton, Arthur Henderson, A Biography (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1938), passim.] It might be suggested that this difficulty could be avoided by postulating long-run as well as short-run goals, but this suggestion is virtually useless since very little is known about the goals (short-run or long-run) or, indeed, other characteristics of many minor parties. The definition, in fact, implicitly contains a terribly impoverished theory of human motivation, an almost Hobbesian theory of lusting after power. Even under excellent research conditions, the specification and measurement of an organization's goals are extremely difficult and involve contentious philosophical issues about the measurement of values. [See C. West Churchman, Prediction and Optimal Decision (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961).]

[53]See above footnote 24 and quotation in the text.

percent of the vote but with no obvious prospects of obtaining a majority of seats, would not be called a 'major party'. Thus the Republican Party in the United States in 1964[54] and the British Labour Party in 1931,[55] for example, would not be classed as major parties.[56]

From an operational point of view, the preceding definitions of 'major party' and 'political party', if adopted, are difficult to use. Chances (genuine or otherwise) are more difficult to ascertain than the results of a general election. Seeking control of the government

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[54]A somewhat less obvious case occurred with the Democratic Party's landslide victory in 1936. The Republican Party polled forty percent of the total vote cast in the general election of the United States House of Representatives in 1936. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), series y 146-149.

[55]The Labour Party polled thirty-one percent of the total vote cast in the general election of the British House of Commons in 1931. The Constitutional Year Book, 1932 (London: The National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, 1932), p. 265.

[56]Although the phrase "a genuine chance to gain power" is vague, the two examples seem to be plain cases. It might be suggested that this difficulty could be avoided by postulating long-run as well as short-run chances, but this suggestion is virtually useless without a predictive theory about long-run chances since, without such a theory, only hindsight could systematically ascertain whether or not a particular party was a major party at a particular time. For example, a party might be said to have (at time 1) a genuine long-run chance of gaining power, and hence might be said to be a major party (at time 1), if it actually gained power in an election within a subsequent period of twenty years (by time 1 + 20). This exemplary definition is systematic but is useful only for historians; retrodiction but not prediction would be possible with it.

is more obscure than seeking legislative office. These comments suggest the approach followed in this essay's definitions of 'major party' and 'political party'.

A crucial difference between major and minor parties is that major parties do better than minor parties, in general elections. This difference is measurable either by the parties' percentages of the total vote or by the parties' percentages of the total seats, but institutional variations complicate the task of selecting a particular percentage as the point of demarcation between major and minor parties. Since this essay is concerned with two-party systems, the problem may be simplified by focusing upon simple-majority single-ballot electoral systems.[57]

Given a simple-majority single-ballot system of election, the parties' percentages of the total vote are the more suitable and stable quantitative measure to differentiate between major and minor parties.[58] A definitionally stipulated percentage must be somewhat arbitrary,

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[57]Duverger's comment (op. cit., p. 217) that "[a]n almost complete correlation is observable between the simple-majority single-ballot system and the two-party system [. . .]" is well known.

[58]The parties' percentages of the total seats manifest great and rapid changes, without corresponding changes in the parties' percentages of the total vote. See Enid Lakeman and James D. Lambert, Voting in Democracies (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), Chapter II.

but the present definition demarcates the obviously major and minor parties and also provides a systematic and fairly precise decision rule for marginal cases: "If a party polls at least nineteen or twenty percent of the total vote in a general election, then the party is a major party through the next general election."[59] Although this definition is useful for the subsequent theory of homeostasis, its general suitability may appropriately be investigated in other studies; perhaps, the definition will prove to be a convenient indicator for a variety of characteristic differences between major and minor parties.

Two concrete examples may be used to illustrate the definition of 'major party'. (1) Since the British Liberal Party polled only twelve percent of the total vote in the 1918 general election, the Liberal Party ceased to be a major party and became a minor party in 1918.[60] (2) Since the Canadian Co-operative Commonwealth Federation

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[59]Several comments are appropriate. (1) The definition refers only to general elections for the legislature in countries using the simple-majority single-ballot system of election. (2) The percentage requirement cannot simply be transposed or translated to a system of preferential voting or proportional representation since a theory of equivalents does not exist to effectuate the translation. The development of such a theory--(for example, is 15% of the first preferences in a preferential system comparable to 20% of the votes in the simple-majority single-ballot system?)--is beyond the scope of the present study. (3) The 19 or 20 latitude in the definition reflects the approximate nature of most election records and the fact that Britain does not but the United States does hold a poll for an uncontested seat.

[60]See above footnote 47 and related text. This example anticipates the definition of 'political party' that is given below, viz., certain types of coalitions are to be treated as single parties.

polled only sixteen percent of the total vote in the 1945 general election, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation remained a minor party in 1945.[61]

A minimal definition of 'political party' is adequate for the present study, viz.: "A party is a number of candidates who cooperate in a general election and who, if elected, (would) vote together in the legislature."[62] This definition should be interpreted in a broad fashion: Parliamentary-electoral coalitions should be viewed as a single party, even if nominally composed of more than one party.[63]

Two concrete examples may be used to illustrate the proposed definition of 'political party'. (1) In 1916-1918 the British Liberal

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[61]See Carter, op. cit., p. 104.

[62]It seems probable that this definition would be acceptable as a minimal definition to most scholars, with the exception of those persons who equate major parties and political parties. A necessary (but, perhaps, not sufficient) condition for cooperation is a relative absence of rival candidacies in the general election. The notion of voting together in the legislature could also be stipulated in statistical terms as a certain minimal level of cohesion; see Stuart A. Rice, Quantitative Methods in Politics (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), pp. 210-211. The temporal sequence implicit in the definition is intended by the author and is important for dating the origin of any particular party.

[63]Conversely, more than one party (as defined above) may be lumped together under a single name in ordinary discourse. The definition focuses upon behavior, not conventional labels.

Party divided between the regular Liberal Party led by Asquith and the Coalition Liberals led by Lloyd George. The Coalition Liberals cooperated with the Unionist Party in the general election of 1918 and voted with the Unionists in the 1919-1922 House of Commons, and concurrently, opposed the regular Liberal Party in the general election and in the House of Commons. Thus, by definition, the Coalition Liberals and the Unionist Party constituted a single party in 1918-1922, and the regular Liberal Party did not include the Coalition Liberals.[64] (2) During the Second World War, the British Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties formed a Coalition Government. Partisan electionneering was suspended; most by-elections were filled without a contest by the party that had held the seat. Nevertheless, since this cooperation did not extend to a general election, this Coalition should not be viewed as a single party.[65]

III. The Theory

The homeostatic theory of two-party systems is a comparative theory of the rise and fall of major parties in two-party systems.[66]

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[64]See above Chapter III. For additional examples, see above Chapter II.

[65]For another example, viz., Liberal-Labour in 1906-1910, see above Chapter II.

[66]The existence of the two-party system is taken as a given in the present theory. A theory of the origins of two-party systems is beyond the scope of the present essay, but if the proposed definition

The concrete parties for the comparative analysis are the Canadian Progressive Party, the Progressive (Bull Moose) Party of the United States, and the British Liberal and Labour Parties.[67] (A suggestive, but less compelling, comparison is also made with the so-called British Liberal Unionist Party.[68]) These parties were major parties and their fortunes illuminate (although, perhaps, do not explain) the homeostatic character of two-party systems.

The Rise of a New or Third Major Party. The analysis of the rise of new major parties[69] may conveniently proceed under three

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of 'two-party system' (with its emphasis on the formative cycle) is accepted, then the present study may contribute to the specification of the phenomenon to be explained by a theory of the origins of two-party systems.

[67]The only other pertinent case, so far as this writer is aware, is the split in the Australian Labor Party and the rise of the Australian Country Party. (See above Chapter III.) The theory fits this case also, if the Country Party was a major party in 1922. [Some writers have apparently endorsed the view that the Country Party was a major party. See Geoffrey Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901-1929 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1956), p. 183.] But since Australia adopted a preferential system of voting in 1918, the definition of 'major party' adopted in this essay does not apply and it seems advisable to avoid an ad hoc extension of the definition. Thus this case is cited as a possible but subtle conceptual-empirical test for the present theory.

[68]Since the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives formed a parliamentary-electoral coalition immediately after the Liberal Unionists left the Liberal Party, the Liberal Unionist Party does not meet the definition of 'political party' adopted in the present study. Except for the early date (1886), this view is consistent with standard works. See A. Lawrence Lowell, The Government of England (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), II, pp. 16-17.

[69]The new major parties may be, and in some cases are, old parties that are newly major.

broad headings, viz., the conditions for the rise of a new major party, the sources of those conditions, and the voter's reaction to those conditions.

Two and only two major parties constitute the normal state of a two-party system. The existence of three major parties is a deviation for the system. When the electoral histories of the contemporary British, Canadian and American two-party systems are surveyed,[70] the infrequency and brevity of three-major-party[71] deviations is striking. Britain had three major parties--viz., Liberal, Labour, Unionist--from the general election of 1923 through the general election of 1931. Canada had three major parties--viz., Progressive, Conservative, Liberal--from the general election of 1921 through the general election of 1925. The United States had three major parties--viz., Bull Moose,[72] Republican, Democratic--from the general election of 1912 through the general election of 1914. These were the

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[70]For election returns, see the Constitutional Year Book, 1932, pp. 257-265; Howard A. Scarrow, Canada Votes (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1962), passim; Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957, series y 146-149.

[71]This locution is awkward, but the term 'third major party' is reserved for the major party that finished third in the total national vote.

[72]This nickname is used for convenience, to distinguish it from later Progressive parties in the United States and from the Canadian Progressive Party.

only three-major-party deviations in these two-party systems and were occasioned by the rise of the British Liberal, Canadian Progressive and American Bull Moose parties to major party status in 1923, 1921, and 1912, respectively. In addition, the British Labour Party rose to major party status in 1918, but this rise was not accompanied by a subsequent three-major-party deviation since the British Liberal Party simultaneously declined (i.e., ceased to be a major party).

Scholars have frequently noted that a connection existed between the upsurge of each of these four parties and the preceding schisms in the 1922 British Coalition (Unionist-Coalition Liberal) Party, the 1917 Canadian Liberal Party, the 1912 American Republican Party, and the 1918 British Liberal Party, respectively.[73] This correlation suggests the first hypothesis of the theory, viz.:

> In a two-party system, a severe split in an existing major party is a necessary condition for the rise of a new major party.

The additional observation that these were the most severe schisms to be experienced by major parties, in these two-party systems, suggests the second hypothesis of the theory, viz.:

> In a two-party system, a severe split in an existing major party is a sufficient condition for the rise of a new major party.

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[73]For citations and additional detail, see above Chapter III.

Although estimates of the magnitudes of these four schisms can only be approximations, the 1918 split in the British Liberal Party seems to have been the most severe and the 1917 split in the Canadian Liberal Party apparently was the least severe.[74] The magnitude of the schism in the Canadian Liberal Party, in fact, seems to have been near the lower bound for the class of severe splits. A comparison, with the 1886 schism in the British Liberal Party, is suggestive:[75] (1) The British Liberal Party divided in 1886 over the issue of Home Rule for Ireland, when about twenty-eight percent of the Liberal M.P.s deserted the Leader of the Liberal Party and formed a coalition with the Conservative Party.[76] (2) The Canadian Liberal Party divided in 1917 over the issue of conscription, when about thirty percent of the Liberal M.P.s deserted the Leader of the Liberal Party and formed a coalition with the Conservative Party.[77] The comparative (proportional) size of these two deserting factions

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[74]See above Chapter III, Table 3.23.

[75]Since Britain did not have a two-party system in 1886, as defined above, the comparison is not compelling.

[76]A detailed account of the development of this split is by J. L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1933), II, Chapters XXX-XXXIII. The roll call details may be found in Roy Jenkins, Sir Charles Dilke (London: Collins, 1959), p. 259.

[77]See above Chapter III.

is especially noteworthy since the former schism was not, but the latter schism was, followed by the appearance of a new major party. The 1886 split, in short, although important, was not of sufficient magnitude to be a severe split.

These four severe schisms originated in party policy disputes that were inextricably involved with the personalities of the splitting parties' top leadership. The official leader of the party (Lloyd George, Wilfrid Laurier, William Taft, Herbert Asquith) was opposed, on a fundamental issue, by the man who was probably the second most important, if not the foremost, man in the party (Bonar Law, G. P. Graham, Theodore Roosevelt, Lloyd George). However, although perhaps prerequisites, these top-level divisions do not seem sufficient to account for the severity of the splits. A comparison, with the 1931 split in the British Labour Party, is pertinent: The British Labour Party divided in 1931 over the issue of a coalition ministry, when the Leader of the Party (J. R. MacDonald) formed a National Government without the support of the Secretary of the Party (Arthur Henderson), but only about five percent of the Labour M. P. s deserted with MacDonald from the Labour Party.[78] This split, of course, had

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[78]For voluminous detail, see Reginald Bassett, Nineteen Thirty-one Political Crisis (London: Macmillan, 1958).

grave consequences but, although preceded by a top-level disagreement, was not large enough to be a severe split and was not followed by the appearance of a new major party. Thus a top leadership dispute may be a necessary but is not a sufficient condition for the occurrence of a severe split.

The voters' reactions to severe splits are difficult to assess since sample surveys postdate the occurrence of these four schisms. However, the psychology of voting may, perhaps, be elucidated by reference to a relatively minor split, in the 1955 Australian Labor Party, that has been subjected to survey analysis.[79] A strongly anti-Communist, largely Catholic, faction left (or was expelled from) the Labor Party in 1955 and formed the minor Democratic Labor Party. This split per se seems to have cost the Labor Party votes,[80] and more importantly, the split apparently activated the voting expression of previously latent economic-class differences among Labor Party supporters, leading some Labor Party voters to switch their votes.[81] The broad result was a tendency to break down the traditional allegience of Labor Party voters.[82] These findings, even if valid for the

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[79]See Robert R. Alford, Party and Society, The Anglo-American Democracies (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1963), pp. 197-218.

[80]Ibid., p. 200.

[81]Ibid., p. 201.

[82]Ibid., p. 304.

1955 schism in the Australian Labor Party, are hardly decisive for the theory about severe splits. Nevertheless, the example is suggestive since it may plausibly be conjectured that the changes which have been noted would be accentuated by a more severe split.

The tentative nature of these remarks about the magnitude and origins of, as well as the voters' reactions to, severe splits should not be allowed to obscure the fundamental correlation that underlies the two hypotheses about the rise of new major parties in two-party systems: New major parties have arisen after (and only after) an existing major party has suffered a severe split, in the contemporary two-party systems of Britain, Canada and the United States.

The Decline of a Major Party. The advent of a new major party does not destroy a two-party system; the system adjusts by the concurrent or subsequent decline of a major party. Judging from the preceding four cases,[83] this homeostatic process conforms to the following hypothesis:

> Those two (and only those two) parties survive, as major parties, that poll the largest number of votes in the general election which ushers in the new(ly) major party.[84]

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[83]Viz., the advent, as a major party, of the British Liberal Party in 1923, the Canadian Progressive Party in 1921, the American Bull Moose Party in 1912, and the British Labour Party in 1918.

[84]The hypothesis fits all four cases; it should be noted that the hypothesis itself implicitly defines 'survive'.

The 1918 decline of the British Liberal Party was the only one of the four adjustments that was concurrent with the advent of a new major party; the remaining three adjustments--viz., the 1931 decline of the British Liberal Party, the 1925 decline of the Canadian Progressive Party, and the 1914 decline of the American Bull Moose Party--occurred subsequent to the advent of a new major party. If attention is restricted to the latter three cases, then the following regularity is evident: The new major party soon declined.[85] These three instances of three-major-party deviations merit closer examination since this comparative perspective permits a broader assessment of two leading theses about the decline of the British Liberal Party.

From this viewpoint, the center party thesis that the British Liberal Party declined because it was a Center party along the classic Left-Right continuum, is not an adequate general explantion. Even proponents of this explanation confess that the classic Left-Right continuum has little if any applicability to the major parties of Canada and the United States.[86] Furthermore, if the continuum may reasonably

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[85]This statement, of course, is not valid for the 1918 British case.

[86]Duverger, op. cit., pp. 418 (for the admission) and 214 (for the original explanation). For another version of the explanation, see Downs, op. cit., pp. 128-129. For a trenchant criticism of Downs' viewpoint, with especial reference to the United States, see Donald E. Stokes, "Spatial Models of Party Competition," American

be applied, the Canadian Liberal Party would probably be judged a Center party between the Progressive Left and the Conservative Right,[87] and the American Democratic Party might be judged a Center party between the Bull Moose Left and the Republican Right.[88] Thus, given a three-major party deviation, the Center party did not always decline as the two-party system returned to its normal state.[89]

Political Science Review, Vol. LVII, No. 2 (June, 1963), pp. 368-377. For the assertion that the "[p]olitical parties in the Anglo-American countries, more than those in most others, fall along the classic Left-Right continuum" and the immediate qualification that "[i]deological characterizations are more difficult for the American parties (both United States and Canadian) [. . .]," see Alford, op. cit., pp. 11, 14n. See also the recent essay by Howard A. Scarrow, "Distinguishing Between Political Parties--the Case of Canada," Midwest Journal of Political Science, Vol. IX, No. 1 (February, 1965), pp. 61-76. For a critique, of the explanation's validity as an explanation of the 1918 decline of the British Liberal Party, see above Chapter II.

[87]See Alford, op. cit., p. 13; Dawson, op. cit., p. 512.

[88]Professor Joseph A. Schlesinger has remarked, in conversations with the present writer, about the fact that the British Center (Liberal) Party has declined while the American Center (Democratic) Party has survived. Schlesinger has a comparative study of "center parties" in process.

[89]It should be noted that the definite and permanent location of the British Liberal Party as the center party between the Labour and Conservative parties, is somewhat doubtful since Keynesian political economics were first introduced into the British political arena by the Liberal Party in 1929. [John Maynard Keynes was a Liberal and his policy proposals antedated the theory presented in his General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1936).] The Liberal Party was actually to the Left of the Labour Party in 1929, according to D. C. Somervell, British Politics Since 1900 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 183.

From the same viewpoint, the electoral system thesis that the British Liberal Party declined because it was under-represented, as a third party, is also defective as a general explanation. The British Liberal Party and the American Bull Moose parties were under-represented[90] but the Canadian Progressive Party was not under-represented, as third parties.[91] Indeed, the Progressive Party was over-represented and the Conservative Party was under-represented,[92]

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[90]In 1923 the British Liberal Party won thirty percent of the vote and twenty-six percent of the seats; in 1912 the American Bull Moose Party captured very roughly twenty-one percent of the vote and four percent of the seats. Constitutional Year Book, 1932, pp. 256, 262; Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957, series y 139-141, 146-149. (This under-representation per se was hardly "dramatically obvious" in the 1923 Liberal case. See Leys, op. cit., p. 143.)

[91]The Canadian Progressive Party in 1921 should not be dismissed as merely a regional, sectional or inherently local party. The following figures, by province for the 1921 general election, indicate the Progressives were a bona fide national party: Prince Edward Island 4 seats and 3 Progressive candidates; Nova Scotia, 16 seats and 8 Progressive candidates; New Brunswick, 11 seats and 5 Progressive candidates; Quebec, 65 seats and 18 Progressive candidates; Ontario, 82 seats and 71 Progressive candidates; Manitoba, 15 seats and 12 Progressive candidates; Saskatchewan, 16 seats and 16 Progressive candidates; Alberta, 12 seats and 11 Progressive candidates; British Columbia, 13 seats and 5 Progressive candidates; Yukon, 1 seat and no Progressive candidates. In summary, of the 235 seats in the House of Commons, 149 were sought by Progressive candidates. Scarrow, Canada Votes, p. 36. For the conventional electoral system theory which permits regional parties to be exceptions, see Schattschneider, op. cit., p. 75; Duverger, op. cit., p. 223; Leys, op. cit., pp. 143-144, but compare with Webb, op. cit., pp. 89-90. See also above Chapter II.

[92]The results of the 1921 Canadian general election were:

but the Progressive Party declined and the Conservative Party survived. Thus, given a three-major-party deviation, the third major party was not always under-represented and the under-represented party did not always decline as the two-party system returned to its normal state.

The center party and electoral system theses are not necessarily falsified by these cases since the counter-examples might be dismissed as irrelevant for a number of reasons.[93] Nevertheless, the theories do not explain why the new and third major party declined in all three cases. That regularity is, however, consistent with (and, perhaps explained by) the broad findings of survey research into the psychology of voting.

The typical voter, in a two-party system in its normal state, is psychologically attached to one of the two major parties. This

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Liberal Party, 40.7 percent of the vote and 49.4 percent of the seats; Conservative Party, 30.3 percent of the vote and 21.3 percent of the seats; Progressive Party, 23.1 percent of the vote and 27.7 percent of the seats; Other, 5.9 percent of the vote and 1.7 percent of the seats. Scarrow, Canada Votes, p. 35.

[93]For example, the claims might be advanced that (1) since the classic Left-Right continuum was weak (or non-existent) in Canada and the United States, the center party explanation simply does not apply to the decline of the Progressive and Bull Moose parties and that (2) since the under-representation hypothesis is statistical, the Progressive Party case does not falsify it.

allegiance to a major party is not only typical but also durable,[94] often passed from generation-to-generation in a family[95] and quite resistant to short-term change. The frequency and stability of these psychological identifications are especially striking in a two-party system, by comparison with multi-party systems.[96]

Party identification is accompanied, in a two-party system in a normal state, by a high frequency of habitual (or, at least, recurrent) voting for the same major party. This is a serious obstacle for a party that seeks to challenge the existing two major parties. "The conserving influence of party identification makes it extremely difficult for a third party to rise suddenly and with enough popular support to challenge the existing parties."[97]

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[94]See Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller, The Voter Decides (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1954), p. 111.

[95]R. S. Milne and H. C. Mackenzie, Straight Fight (London: The Hansard Society, 1954), pp. 44-45; Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, The People's Choice (2nd ed.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), pp. 140-145. Although comparative survey data are lacking, there is no evidence that traditional loyalties are neither so frequent nor so strong in Canada as in Britain and the United States. See Scarrow, "Distinguishing Between Political Parties --the Case of Canada," pp. 72-76.

[96]See Philip E. Converse and George Dupeux, "Politicization of the Electorate in France and the United States," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. XXVI (Spring, 1962), pp. 1-23; Angus Campbell and Henry Valen, "Party Identification in Norway and the United States," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. XXV (Winter, 1961), p. 524.

[97]Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, op. cit., p. 553.

A newly major party must make a sustained effort for a continuous series of general elections since its initial success, when it becomes a major party, is not sufficient to capture the traditional (habitual) loyalties of the voter. The 1923 British Liberal Party, the 1921 Canadian Progressive Party and the 1912 American Bull Moose Party failed to make such a sustained effort: After the initial success, in the next general election, the number of candidates fielded by these new major parties declined precipitously.[98] The established major parties, by contrast, continued to run a virtually full slate of candidates, quite regularly.[99] Thus, with these three-major-party deviations, the opportunity was available for the reactivation of traditional allegiances but was not available for the formation of new voting habits.

The British Labour Party did make a sustained effort in the general elections of 1918, 1922 and subsequently. And the British Liberal Party, deserted by the bulk of the Liberal M. P. s, failed to field a slate of candidates for many of the seats in the general elections

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[98]The statement is not valid for the British Labour Party, as a new major party, in the general elections of 1918 and 1922. See also the following footnote.

[99]The statement is not true of the British Liberal Party, when it ceased to be a major party, in the general elections of 1918 and 1922. See the subsequent discussion in the text.

of 1918 and 1922.[100] Thus, in the 1918 British case, the electorate had an opportunity to form new habits, without an opportunity to rapidly re-affirm old loyalties. The Liberal Party's failure to run full slates of candidates, a direct result of the extreme severity of its 1918 schism,[101] was critical for the psychology of voting.

These remarks about the psychology of voting have been suggestive rather than definitive since survey research postdates the decline of the 1931 British Liberal Party, the 1925 Canadian Progressive Party, the 1914 American Bull Moose Party and the 1918 British Liberal Party. The interpretation, nevertheless, is plausibly consistent with the recent surveys of voting behavior in two-party systems and indicates why the two largest parties[102] survived the advent of a new major party.

Perhaps a biosocial metaphor is an appropriate informal summary of this comparative analysis of the rise and decline of major

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[100]For the number of candidates, see above Chapter III.

[101]See above Chapter III.

[102]Viz., the two parties with the most votes in the general election that ushers in the new major party as a major party. Political calculations by aspiring politicians--calculating the odds for a political career--and tendencies towards social conformity by voters probably also affected the future availability of candidates and votes for the third major party, on the morrow of that general election.

parties in two-party systems: If (and only if) a major party attempts suicide, some heir will appear; if the attempt succeeds, the heir will inherit.

IV. Conclusions and a Formal Model of the Theory

This homeostatic theory of two-party systems can be translated into a formal model. The model selected for this purpose has been proposed by Carl G. Hempel in his critique of the logic of functional analysis:

> [T]he predictive significance of functional analysis is practically nil--except in those cases where suitable hypotheses of self-regulation can be established. Such a hypothesis would be to the effect that within a specified range C of circumstances, a given system s (or: any system of a certain kind S, of which s is an instance) is self-regulating relative to a specified range R of states; i.e., after a disturbance which moves s into a state outside R, but which does not shift the internal and external circumstances of s out of the specified range C, the system s will return to a state in R. A system satisfying a hypothesis of this kind might be called self-regulating with respect to R.[103]

The broad hypothesis of the present essay is that two-party systems are self-regulating with respect to the number of major parties. It is also posited that the following connections hold between Hempel's formal model and this comparative theory: (1) "C" is the democratic

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[103]Carl G. Hempel, "The Logic of Functional Analysis," in Llewellyn Gross (ed.), Symposium on Sociological Theory (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1959), pp. 296-297.

environment of two-party systems. (2) "S" is the class of two-party systems. (3) "R" is the condition of having two and only two major parties. (4) A severe split in a major party is a "disturbance." Furthermore, the theory permits the prediction of the particular major party (viz., the one with the lowest vote in the general election that sees the advent of a newly major party) that will decline as the self-regulating two-party system returns to its normal state. Thus the theory is a modest contribution to "one of the most important tasks of functional analysis in psychology and the social sciences [viz.] to ascertain to what extent such phenomena of self-regulation can be found, and clearly represented by laws of self-regulation, in these fields."[104]

From another perspective, the theory shows that the so-called 'decline of the British Liberal Party' was a two-stage process pivoting about 1918 and 1931. This view sharply contrasts with the conventional picture of the decline as a one-stage (albeit lengthy) process. An implication of this contrast, perhaps, deserves a concluding emphasis: The theory not only simplifies but also complicates (conventional) reality.

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[104] Ibid., p. 297.

CHAPTER V

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE BRITISH LIBERAL PARTY, 1868-1917

I. Introduction

Previous chapters have argued that the conflict between Asquith and Lloyd George was of decisive importance for the history of the Liberal Party. This chapter attempts to illuminate and evaluate that leadership conflict by elucidating the pattern of leadership selection in the Liberal Party.

II. The Selection of Liberal Leaders, 1868-1908

Gladstone's succession to the Leadership[1] of the Liberal Party is a natural starting point for this inquiry since the formation of the Party is conventionally dated from his ascension to power in 1868.[2]

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[1] This paper focuses upon three positions: The Leader of the Liberal Party. The Liberal leader in the House of Commons. The Liberal leader in the House of Lords. A capital 'L' designates only the Leader of the Liberal Party.

[2] R. J. Cruikshank, The Liberal Party (London: Collins, 1948), p. 26; Hamilton Fyfe, The British Liberal Party (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928), p. 11; Albert Mabileau, Le Parti Liberal Dans Le Systeme Constitutionnel Britannique (Paris: Libraire Armand Colin, 1953), p. 11; W. E. Williams, The Rise of Gladstone to the Leadership of the Liberal Party (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), pp. 3, 4, 179.

Gladstone was the heir apparent for several years before he became Leader of the Party. After Lord Palmerston's death, Lord Russell became Prime Minister and Leader of the Party. Since Russell was a member of the House of Lords, "Lord Granville was relieved of the immediate duties of leadership in the House of Lords, [although] his real responsibilities were but slightly diminished."[3] Gladstone became the Liberal leader in the House of Commons, and William (later, Sir William) Harcourt wrote to Lord Houghton that Gladstone's "position in the H[ouse] of C[ommons] will be so great and his succession so certain I don't see what more he could desire."[4]

In 1867, when a Conservative Government was in office, Russell announced his intention not again to "take office." This announcement, in letters to Gladstone and Granville,[5] was interpreted as Russell's resignation as Leader of the Party. A biographer has stated that "he [Russell] formally resigned the leadership of the party

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[3]Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, The Life of Granville George Leveson Gower, Second Earl Granville (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), I, p. 497.

[4]Letter dated, from internal evidence, about October 20, 1865. Quoted in A. G. Gardiner, The Life of Sir William Harcourt (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1923), I, p. 169.

[5]Letters of Christmas, 1867 and January 2, 1868, respectively. See John Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), II, p. 243; Fitzmaurice, op. cit., I p. 518.

to Gladstone and Granville,"[6] but in fact, the process was informal and somewhat confused.[7] Russell proposed to continue to exercise some of the Leader's prerogatives, and while the general election campaign was in progress, there was some rather elaborate fencing about who would hold the Party dinner before the opening of the new session of Parliament.

> Although Lord Russell had abandoned all wish or expectation of again being Prime Minister, he was nevertheless proposing to invite the Liberal peers to dinner at the commencement of the autumn session of Parliament, thereby apparently intimating that he still considered himself technically to be the leader of the Liberal party, at least in the House of Lords; although Lord Granville had understood that the committal of the Suspensory Bill into his hands a few months before had been intended to mark the time and hour of Lord Russell's final retirement.[8]

During the 1868 general election campaign, the Liberal candidates "adopted with a wonderful unaminity"[9] Russell's declaration that Gladstone must undertake the task of forming the next Liberal

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[6]A. Wyatt Tilby, Lord John Russell (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1930), p. 252. Emphasis added.

[7]See the discrepant references to Gladstone's position in Dowager Duchess of Argyll (ed.), George Douglas, Eighth Duke of Argyll: Autobiography and Memoirs (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1906), II, pp. 242, 346.

[8]Fitzmaurice, op. cit., I, p. 530.

[9]Granville to Russell, November 21, 1868. Quoted in Ibid., I, p. 533. Apparently, this was not a motion adopted at a Party meeting but rather was Granville's personal assessment.

administration. "It is possible in these circumstances," Granville wrote to Russell, "that he [Gladstone] would prefer having the little meeting in his own house, and that the Commons would like it better."[10] After the Liberal victory in the general election, the Queen, as a matter of course, commissioned Gladstone to form a Government. The meeting of a "select few"[11] at Gladstone's house, a fortnight later, may be regarded as the Party's formal recognition of Gladstone's succession to the role of Leader of the Party, after becoming Prime Minister.[12]

Gladstone's position as Leader of the Party was secure during the life of the "great administration,"[13] and even after the electoral defeat of 1874, despite some discontented elements in the Party.[14] His colleagues were taken by surprise, at the last meeting of the Cabinet,

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] "At the end of April 1868, Mr. Gladstone [was] fully recognised leader of the party." Bernard Holland, The Life of Spencer Compton, Eighth Duke of Devonshire (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), I, p. 70. Emphasis added. The conflict between Holland's view and Fitzmaurice's detailed account is further evidence of the informal neature of the leadership selection process. Fitzmaurice's account, in this writer's opinion, is more accurate.

[13] Fyfe's description of Gladstone's first administration, 1868-1874. Fyfe, op. cit., Chapter III.

[14] In particular, Russell and Harcourt were disgruntled with Gladstone. See Holland, op. cit., I, p. 132; Gardiner, op. cit., I, p. 286.

when there came "the startling announcement that Gladstone would no longer retain the leadership of the liberal party, nor resume it, unless the party had settled its differences."[15] Robert Lowe, a member of the Cabinet, immediately protested "against the anarchical experiment."[16] A final decision was postponed for some months, during which time there was an "intense and natural and righteous desire to see Gladstone back again."[17] Nevertheless, Gladstone, who deemed himself "unable to hold it [the Party] together,"[18] persisted in his intention. At the last minute, a meeting of the ex-Cabinet was held to bring pressure to bear upon Gladstone. When the effort failed, Granville expressed the fear "that the Liberal Party will fall to pieces in consequence of his [Gladstone's] decision."[19]

Gladstone's view was that, upon his (Gladstone's) retirement, Granville would automatically become Leader of the Party as well as

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[15]A Cabinet member's description. Quoted in Morley, Gladstone, II, pp. 497-498.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Goschen to Granville, in early 1875. Quoted in Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, pp. 138-139.

[18]A fragment, dated February 12, 1874. Quoted in Morley, Gladstone, II, pp. 498-499.

[19]Granville to the Duke of Argyll, January 14, 1875. Quoted in Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, p. 141. Gladstone's official resignation was dated January 13, 1875.

continuing as Liberal leader in the House of Lords.[20] This view was shared by Harcourt[21] and Dr. Lyon Flayfair,[22] members of the "great administration." Granville himself "took the opposite view, and took it decidedly, that [. . .] the question of the leadership of the party would have [. . .] to be adjourned to the day when [. . .] the choice of the Sovereign created a Liberal Prime Minister."[23] Despite this disagreement,[24] a consensus developed about the need to select a Liberal leader for the House of Commons.[25]

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[20]Morley, Gladstone, II, pp. 621-624; Agatha Ramm (ed.), The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-1886 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), I, p. 108.

[21]Holland, op. cit., I, p. 142.

[22]Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, p. 147.

[23]Ibid., II, pp. 148-149.

[24]This disagreement was never officially resolved, although the evolution of the Party's customs favored Granville's view that only a Liberal Prime Minister or ex-Prime Minister could be Leader of the Liberal Party. J. A. Spender has stated that this was a "cherished part of Liberal theory" as early as 1896. J. A. Spender, The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d. [c. 1923]), I, p. 212. However, Spender has also contended that this only "tided over the emergency of 1896 and became part of the unwritten constitution of the party in subsequent years." J. A. Spender, Sir Robert Hudson (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1930), p. 53. For convenience of exposition, Granville's view is adopted throughout the present paper, but this does not affect the paper's conclusions.

[25]This consensus did not exist immediately after Gladstone's retirement. See Gladstone's letter to Granville, March 12, 1874. Quoted in Henry W. Lucy, The Right Honorable W. E. Gladstone (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1895), pp. 80-81. See also Hartington's correspondence. Quoted in Holland, op. cit., I, pp. 140-144.

John Bright, a member of the ex-Cabinet, recommended that "a leader should step into his place by general consent--he should be indicated by his own great qualities."[26] However, Punch depicted five candidates: Lord Hartington, Sir William Harcourt, George Goschen, Robert Lowe, and W. E. Forster.[27] There were, in fact, only two candidates since Harcourt,[28] Goschen,[29] and Lowe[30] were supporting Hartington. Harcourt proposed that the ex-Cabinet should make a recommendation to the Party,[31] but some of Forster's supporters protested, asserting "that they would resist any attempt to nominate a leader without consultation of the whole body of the Liberal party in the House."[32]

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[26]Bright to Granville, January 15, 1875. Quoted in Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, pp. 142-143.

[27]Gardiner, op. cit., I, p. 288.

[28]Ibid., I, p. 290.

[29]Hon. Arthur D. Elliott, The Life of George Joachim Goschen, First Viscount Goschen (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1911), I, p. 157.

[30]Ibid., I, pp. 156-157.

[31]Gardiner, op. cit., I, p. 290; Holland, op. cit., I, p. 142.

[32]Playfair to Granville, January 15, 1875. Quoted in Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, pp. 145-146.

With Granville's approval, the Liberal Whip in the House of Commons called a meeting of the Liberal members of the Commons for February 3, 1875, at the Reform Club. Granville himself played the key role in negotiating "general consent," before the "whole body of the Liberal party in the House" was consulted at the Party meeting. Neither Hartington nor Forster actively sought the position; each was willing to withdraw rather than have an open contest for the leadership.[33] Forster's candidacy suffered from several handicaps. He was disliked by some Whigs because he had "bad manners and inferior education"[34] and by some Radicals because he had sponsored the Education Act of 1870.[35] Most members of the ex-Cabinet also opposed Forster and favored Hartington.[36] After consulting with Granville, Forster withdrew.[37] When Bright took the chair at the

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[33]Ibid., II, pp. 147-152; Holland, op. cit., I, pp. 144-146. T. Wemyss Reid, Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster (London: Chapman and Hall, Limited, 1888), II, p. 96.

[34]Lowe to Goschen, January 23, 1875. Quoted in Elliott, op. cit., I, pp. 156-157. See also Henry W. Lucy, A Diary of Two Parliaments: The Disraeli Parliament 1874-1880 (2nd ed.; London: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1885), p. 113.

[35]Roy Jenkins, Sir Charles Dilke (London: Collins, 1958), p. 96; J. L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1932), I, p. 222.

[36]Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, p. 148; Morley, Gladstone, II, pp. 503-504.

[37]Reid, op. cit., II, p. 96; Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, pp. 147-150.

Party meeting, Hartington was unopposed and unanimously elected leader of the Party in the House of Commons.

Hartington's diffidence about the leadership, apparently, was genuine.[38] His desultory attendance in the House of Commons, and his dislike of Party organization, did not change after his election as leader. When Joseph Chamberlain extended an invitation for Hartington to address the first annual conference of the National Liberal Federation in 1878, Hartington refused on the grounds that "he did not like any Caucus; and saw that this one must strengthen the Radicals in the party."[39] When Chamberlain attempted in 1879 to have flogging prohibited in the army, a characteristic absence from the House of Commons caused Hartington to appear to criticize the effort. Chamberlain's response was caustic:

> The noble Lord had not, unfortunately, been in the House during a greater portion of the discussion--a thing which had been very much noticed on previous occasions. It was rather inconvenient that they should have so little of the presence of the noble Lord, lately the Leader of the Opposition, but now the Leader of a section only.[40]

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[38]Lucy, A Diary, pp. 183-185; Holland, op. cit., I, p. 148. Since Gladstone and Granville contemplated a possible future comeback by Gladstone, perhaps Hartington's diffidence was consequential in their decisions to support Hartington for the vacant post.

[39]Garvin, op. cit., I, p. 267. See also Holland, op. cit., I, pp. 245-248.

[40]Hansard, 3rd Series, Vol. CCXLVII, 1806-1807 (July 7, 1879).

The quarrel subsided, when Hartington himself moved the abolition of corporal punishment, but "in [Sir Charles] Dilke's view substantially damaged Hartington's position and destroyed the possibility of his retaining the leadership."[41]

The "row with Chamberlain and the Radicals"[42] was unpleasant, but the great disturbing factor for Hartington's leadership was the uncertainty about Gladstone's intentions. After Gladstone began his furious assault upon the Conservative Government's foreign policy, Hartington proposed to resign, to officially recognize Gladstone's actual leadership.

> The fact is [Hartington wrote to Granville] that when he chooses to lead, he must be the leader of the party, and that since the autumn, and now, he has chosen to lead, and no amount of disclaimers will alter the fact, though they may in his opinion relieve him of some of the responsibility which attaches naturally to leadership.[43]

Gladstone, however, wrote to Hartington saying that "he hoped nothing would be said [. . .] about his being a leader, or he shall be obliged to be very explicit in an opposite sense."[44]

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[41] Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

[42] Hartington's description of the 1879 clash. Quoted in Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, p. 182.

[43] May 25, 1877. Quoted in Ibid., II, p. 172.

[44] Ibid.

> Doubtless the difficulty is as you put it. [Forster wrote to Granville.] [If Hartington] makes himself a declaration, unless it be irrevocable, it would appear--and might be--useless. But, if irrevocable, G[ladstone] might meet it with a refusal, and the party might be left leaderless in the Commons, which would be the worst possible result, and in fact fatal.[45]

During Gladstones' Midlothian campaign, as the prospects for a Liberal victory increased, the difficulty became more acute.

Hartington could not "conceive any arrangement [with Gladstone holding a subordinate office] lasting, or indeed any arrangement when Gladstone would be in the House and not leader."[46]

> It is clear [Hartington wrote to Granville] that a great majority of the party will not be satisfied unless Mr. G[ladstone] is the next Liberal Premier and leader of the House; and it is natural that it should be so. [. . .] [T]here is not room for argument about the proposition that the man who leads the Liberal party out of doors ought to lead it in Parliament. The remarkable feeling which has been excited by his late speeches is to a great extent the expression of this conviction in the mind of the party. If we are convinced, as I think that we must be, that Mr. G[ladstone] is the only possible Prime Minister, it seems to me that it is only fair to the Queen, to the country, to the party, and to myself that this should be acknowledged at once. [. . .] [I]f he refuses to resume the nominal position which he now occupies virtually, the responsibility of leaving the party without leadership does not rest with me, but with the man who has created the position.[47]

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[45]December 14, 1879. Quoted in Ibid., II, p. 187.

[46]Hartington to Granville, October 28, 1879. Quoted in Ibid., II, p. 182.

[47]December 7, 1879. Quoted in Ibid., II, pp. 184-185.

By stressing the uncertainty about Gladstone's reaction, Granville dissuaded Hartington from resigning. Although Granville favored Gladstone's return as Prime Minister, Granville was aware that '[u]p to now, we have done well; H[artington]'s official leadership keeping with us the moderates, and G[ladstone] exciting the enthusiasts [. . .]."[48] Thus, during the Midlothian campaign, despite Gladstone's scrupulous avowals that Granville and Hartington were the Party's leaders, Gladstone's return as Prime Minister and Leader of the Party was expected.

After the Liberal Party was victorious in the general election of 1880, the Queen asked Hartington, as a responsible leader of the victorious party, to form a Government. Hartington replied that a satisfactory Government could not be formed without Gladstone, that Gladstone would accept office (if at all) only as Prime Minister, and that Her Majesty should call for Gladstone. The Queen did not immediately accept Hartington's advice[49] but pressed him to ascertain

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[48]Forster to Granville, December 9, 1879. Quoted in Ibid., II, pp. 186-187. "The question after all is this--Is he [Gladstone] or not the real leader? If so, he ought to take the responsibility." Ibid. See also M. A. Fitzsimons, "Midlothian: The Triumph and Frustration of the British Liberal Party," The Review of Politics, Vol. 22, No. 2 (April, 1960), pp. 187-201.

[49]This is easily explained by the Queen's antipathy for Gladstone. "She will sooner abdicate than send for or have anything to do with that half-mad fire-brand who would soon ruin everything,

directly Gladstone's attitude. Hartington had an interview with Gladstone, with the result that he (Hartington) had foreseen, and reported this to Her Majesty. The Queen then consulted with both Hartington and Granville, and after both strongly advised that Gladstone be called, Her Majesty reluctantly commissioned Gladstone to form a Government.[50]

Gladstone remained Leader of the Liberal Party for fourteen years after the Queen's reluctant call in 1880. During that period he was undoubtedly the dominant figure in the Party, and except for the Home Rule crisis of 1886, his Leadership was not seriously challenged.[51]

The Irish Question plagued Gladstone's second administration. Under the leadership of Charles Parnell, M.P., the different strands

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and be a Dictator." Quoted in Philip Magnus, Gladstone, A Biography (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1954), p. 270.

[50]Gladstone's lengthy memoranda, written at the time, are quoted in Morley, Gladstone, II, pp. 621-628. Sir Algernon West, apparently, is in error when he claims that Hartington attempted to form a Government. See Sir Algernon West, Recollections, 1832-1886 (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1899), II, p. 103.

[51]J. A. Spender's sweeping claim--"no Liberal would for a moment have disputed that Mr. Gladstone was the leader of the party from the day that he became Prime Minister for the second time in 1880 down to his final retirement in 1894"--is in error, individual exceptions aside, when applied to the Home Rule crisis. See Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, I, p. 212.

of Irish nationalist activity came to be joined.[52] The Irish M.P.s began to follow a policy of systematic obstruction in the House of Commons, and the conduct of public business was made possible only by a change in the parliamentary rules, permitting closure.[53] With Gladstone's knowledge, Chamberlain negotiated with Parnell, through an intermediary,[54] in an effort to establish an acceptable, conciliatory policy. Chamberlain's efforts resulted in a local government scheme designed to appease (if not satisfy) the Irish demand for Home Rule. The local government plan was rejected, however, by a majority of the Cabinet: "It was supported by all the Commoners except Hartington, and opposed by all the Peers except Granville."[55] When the Liberal Government resigned, the Irish Question was still pending.

During the general election of 1885, Liberal divisions were manifest. Chamberlain and the Radicals advocated a modest measure of Home Rule for Ireland and socio-economic reforms. Hartington

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[52]See F. S. L. Lyons, The Irish Parliamentary Party 1890-1910 (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1951), Chapter V.

[53]Morley, Gladstone, III, pp. 52-53; A. Lawrence Lowell, The Government of England (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), I, Chapter XV.

[54]The intermediary was Captain O'Shea, M.P., the husband of Parnell's mistress.

[55]Joseph Chamberlain, A Political Memoir, 1880-92, edited by C. H. D. Howard (London: The Batchworth Press, 1953), p. 149.

and the Whigs resolutely opposed both Home Rule and social reform. Gladstone was uncommonly silent, during the campaign, hoping to avoid an irrevocable split in the Liberal Party.

The election results imposed a severe strain upon the parliamentary system. Without allies, the Conservative Government could not continue, and given the problems of perpetually marshalling a majority, even with the Irish as allies, the Conservatives could not carry on in the face of determined Liberal opposition. The Liberals, conversely, could not form a Government without at least tacit support from either the Conservatives or the Irish. Unless the Conservatives and Liberals formed a temporary alliance, the Irish Nationalist M.P.s would, as the pivotal bloc, exercise great power in the new House of Commons.

Gladstone suggested privately that the Conservative Government bring in a Home Rule measure with tacit Liberal support. This proposal was rejected by the Conservative Cabinet,[56] chary of a severe split in the Conservative Party.[57] The Conservative

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[56]Winston Spencer Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), II, p. 30.

[57]"We can have nothing to do with any advances towards the Home Rulers. The latter course would be contrary to our convictions and our pledges, and would be quite fatal to the cohesion of our party." Lord Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill, December 9, 1885. Quoted in Ibid., II, p. 14.

Government was speedily defeated by a coalition of Irish Nationalists and Liberals. Gladstone returned to office, committed

> to examine whether it is or is not practicable to comply with the desire widely prevalent in Ireland [. . .] for the establishment by statute of a legislative body to sit in Dublin, and to deal with Irish as distinguished from imperial affairs [. . .].[58]

Hartington refused to join a Government constituted on this basis, and with a few exceptions, the Whigs withdrew from the Liberal Party.

Perhaps the split with Hartington's Whigs was inevitable,[59] but the split with Chamberlain's Radicals could have been avoided. Chamberlain and George Trevelyan resigned from the Cabinet, when Gladstone refused Chamberlain's proposal for a continuation of Irish representation in the imperial Parliament.[60] A majority of the Cabinet supported Gladstone's policy, and when Chamberlain carried the fight to the National Liberal Federation, a majority of the Federation's General Committee also supported Gladstone's views.[61]

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[58]A memorandum which Gladstone read to each person whom he hoped to include in the Cabinet. Quoted in Morley, Gladstone, III, p. 292.

[59]Gladstone, however, was less fatalistic and considered several possibilities, including his own resignation. "I do not see how I could survive a gratuitous declaration of opposition to me such as Hartington appears to meditate," Gladstone wrote to Granville in the early months of 1886. Quoted in Ibid., III, pp. 282-283.

[60]Chamberlain, op. cit., p. 212. Gladstone, it would seem, could have yielded the point to Chamberlain. For Gladstone's views, see Morley, Gladstone, III, p. 307.

[61]Spender, Hudson, pp. 10-12, 38-41. The headquarters of the Federation was soon moved to London, and under Chamberlain's influence, some local units withdrew.

> In the face of ever-growing embarrassments and importunities, recourse was had to the usual device of a meeting of the party at the foreign office (May 27). The circular calling the meeting was addressed to those liberals who, while retaining full freedom on all particulars in the bill, were 'in favour of the establishment of a legislative body in Dublin for the management of affairs specifically and exclusively Irish.' This was henceforth to be the test of party membership.[62]

Although "in the course of the evening [of the Party meeting] a score of waverers were found to have been satisfied,"[63] Hartington's Whigs and Chamberlain's Radicals remained recalcitrant. Gladstone continued to refuse the continuation of Irish representation at London.

A coalition of Chamberlain's Radicals and Hartington's Whigs, voting with the Conservatives, defeated the Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons. These Liberals were purged from the Liberal Party, but in the general election of 1886, hasty electoral arrangements that developed into a permanent coalition with the Conservative Party saved many of them from defeat.[64] After the purge, to use J. A. Spender's phrase, "no Liberal would for a moment have disputed that Mr. Gladstone was the leader of the party [. . .] down to his final retirement in 1894."[65]

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[62]Morley, Gladstone, III, p. 332-333.

[63]Ibid., III, p. 334.

[64]See Gordon L. Goodman, "The Liberal Unionist Party 1886-1895," (University of Chicago, Ph.D. dissertation, 1956).

[65]See above footnote 51.

Gladstone became Prime Minister for the last time in 1892 and resigned within two years. The official reasons for his retirement were that, at eighty-four years of age, his eyesight and hearing were failing.[66] These very real infirmities, however, were not the immediate stimulus for his retirement. Gladstone's relations with his Cabinets had deteriorated over the years, and in 1894 the Cabinet united against him on the issue of an increase in the naval estimates.[67] Gladstone considered the proposed increase to be "Mad--mad,"[68] but when he addressed his colleagues for nearly an hour on January 9, 1894, "he convinced no-one, except the First Commissioner of Works, J. G. Shaw-Lefevre."[69] Both the Prime Minister and the Cabinet remained adamant. The Cabinet's telegraphic response to Gladstone's proposal for a dissolution of Parliament was terse: "Your suggestion is impossible."[70] After Gladstone's return from a holiday in France,

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[66]See Gladstone's formal letter to the Queen. Quoted in Morley, Gladstone, III, pp. 514-515.

[67]Granville's death in 1891 is significant, in this respect, since Granville served as a buffer or mediator between Gladstone and his (Gladstone's) colleagues. Ramm, op. cit., I, pp. xxx-xxxii. Granville was succeeded, as Liberal leader in the House of Lords, by Lord Kimberley. Fitzmaurice, op. cit., II, p. 505.

[68]Horace G. Hutchinson (ed.), Private Diaries of the Rt. Hon. Sir Algernon West (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1922), p. 238.

[69]Magnus, op. cit., p. 417.

[70]Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 271.

he resigned as Prime Minister, and this resignation was considered to be a resignation of the Leadership of the Party as well. "Resigned! I did not resign--I was put out."[71] Gladstone later exclaimed. "I had lost power in my own Cabinet."[72]

Lord Rosebery, the Foreign Secetary, and Sir William Harcourt, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were widely regarded as the two leading possibilities to succeed Gladstone.[73] Both in age and service, Harcourt was senior. Furthermore, Harcourt was probably more acceptable to the National Liberal Federation, and there "was a growing feeling in the H[ouse] of C[ommons] against a peer."[74] Harcourt's fatal handicap was the Queen's and the Cabinet's, virtually unanimous, preference for Rosebery.[75] Sir Algernon West, the

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[71]Quoted in J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, Life of Lord Oxford and Asquith (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1932), I, p. 89.

[72]Quoted in John, Viscount Morley, Recollections (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), II, pp. 3-4.

[73]"Mr. Gladstone's Resignation," The Spectator, Vol. 72, (March 3, 1894), pp. 288-289.

[74]The Marquess of Crewe, Lord Rosebery (London: John Murray, 1931), II, p. 441. See also Gardiner, op. cit., II, p. 276.

[75]Morley, Recollections, II, p. 11; Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1926), I, Chapter XXXVI. Gladstone favored Lord Spencer; Harcourt favored Harcourt; the other Cabinet members either favored Rosebery or their preferences are unknown.

Cabinet's confidant, with the responsibility of informing the Prince of Wales about Cabinet proceedings, reflected the dominant sentiment in the Cabinet: "[S]end for Rosebery," West advised Sir Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's secretary.[76]

Rosebery became Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Party. At Rosebery's request, Harcourt, who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had informally served as Gladstone's deputy leader in the House of Commons, became the Liberal leader in the House of Commons. On March 12, 1894, the two leaders addressed a meeting of the Party's M.P.s at the foreign office.[77] The meeting went well, but consistent with the unofficial nature of the Leader's position, Rosebery was not formally elected at the meeting. He was simply tacitly accepted as the Leader of the Party.[78]

Relations between the new leaders were strained.[79] "There [were] no other difficulties," according to Sir Henry

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[76]Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 285. For the leadership conflicts in the 1890's, see Peter Stansky, Ambitions and Strategies: The struggle for the leadership of the Liberal Party in the 1890s (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Stansky's volume, published after the present study was completed, contains a surfeit of detail.

[77]Gardiner, op. cit., II, pp. 275-277; Crewe, op. cit., II, p. 444. Such a meeting seems to have been an innovation.

[78]Rosebery was never formally elected Leader of the Party. See his letter to Asquith, dated January 29, 1896. Quoted in Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, pp. 116-117.

[79]"It would hardly be human nature, and certainly not Sir

Campbell-Bannerman, the Minister for War.[80] Campbell-Bannerman's "view was very definitely that Sir William ought either to have retired or to have made up his mind to work amicably with the new Prime Minister."[81]

Rosebery found "his personal position less and less tolerable," and in February, 1895, "called a Cabinet to announce that he must resign unless he were better supported in the House of Commons."[82] Harcourt deprecated Rosebery's resignation, and in Rosebery's opinion,

> the device was successful. It would of course not have been possible for me to resign; but it was the only way in which I could restore any discipline, or deal with the open and insulting disloyalty of one member of the Cabinet.[83]

After the Liberal defeat in the general election of 1895, Rosebery returned to London to reply to the Speech from the Throne, but Scotland, Paris, and Madrid captured him for the remainder of

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William Harcourt's nature to defer to Lord Rosebery as all his younger colleagues deferred to Mr. Gladstone." See above footnote 73.

[80]Letter of February 12, 1895. Quoted in Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, I, pp. 165-166. Emphasis in the original. See also Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., I, pp. 251-255.

[81]Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, I, p. 165.

[82]Crewe, op. cit., II, p. 520.

[83]Rosebery's undated comment. Quoted in Ibid., II, p. 520.

the year.[84] The Spectator soon noted that Rosebery's activities left the Liberal Party "virtually without a leader" and proposed that the leading Liberals in the country, presumably the National Liberal Federation, should get together and insist that a successor be chosen for Rosebery, but nothing of the sort was done.[85] Despite Rosebery's behavior and Press criticism, his resignation of the Leadership was quite unexpected, although, as Asquith later observed, "the final resignation had been preceded by many premonitory signs, and ought not perhaps to have surprised some of us as much as it did."[86] Rosebery had made clear to his colleagues, soon after the general election, that the situation in the recent Cabinet could not continue.[87] When relations between Rosebery and Harcourt did not improve, and Harcourt continued as Liberal leader in the House of Commons, Rosebery resigned the Leadership of the Party. The immediate stimulus and public excuse for the resignation was Gladstone's last public speech, disagreeing with Rosebery's policy toward Armenia.

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[84]For the detailed itinerary, see Ibid., II, pp. 511-516.

[85]"The Deposition of Lord Rosebery," The Spectator, Vol. 77, (September 19, 1896), p. 359-360.

[86]Earl of Oxford and Asquith, op. cit., II, p. 279.

[87]Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, pp. 116-117; Lucien Wolf, Life of the First Marquess of Ripon (London: John Murray, 1921), II, pp. 244-246.

"I hope," Rosebery wrote to Gladstone, "that my retirement may at any rate produce some greater amount of unity in the distracted and honeycombed party called 'Liberal.'"[88]

The Daily News called for the re-election of Rosebery, but as The Spectator observed, "the force of circumstances [was] too strong for that."[89] The Spectator predicted that Harcourt's "pre-eminent position in the House of Commons makes it certain that he will succeed to the leadership of the party."[90] That possibility was feared by several members of the ex-Cabinet, but Harcourt rejected a proposal that he be endorsed by a resolution of the Liberal M.P.s in the House of Commons.[91] "The idiots of the Press," Harcourt wrote to John Morley, a member of the ex-Cabinet, "seem to think every one is ready to cut one another's throat in order to become 'Leader of the Liberal Party.' For my part, if I did not think it currish to bolt in the presence of difficulties, I should take up my hat

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[88]Quoted in Crewe, op. cit., II, p. 527.

[89]"Lord Rosebery's Resignation," The Spectator, Vol. 77 (October 10, 1896), p. 472.

[90]Ibid., p. 472.

[91]For the fears, see Wolf, op. cit., II, p. 248. For Harcourt's action, see Gardiner, op. cit., II, p. 419.

and say good-bye."[92] Harcourt's view seems to have been that the position of Leader of the Party was vacant and that he (Harcourt) simply continued as the Liberal leader in the House of Commons. In any event, this view was adopted by Asquith, Sir Henry Fowler, James Bryce, and Lords Ripon, Spencer, and Kimberley, (members of the ex-Cabinet), as well as by the National Liberal Federation.[93]

When Rosebery also resigned the Leadership of the Liberal Peers in November, 1896, the Liberal Peers proceeded to re-elect Kimberley as Liberal leader in the House of Lords. This was done in a "classic" manner: Agreement on a candidate was reached by the Peers who had been members of the ex-Cabinet, other possible candidates withdrew, and the pre-selected candidate (Kimberley) was unanimously elected at a meeting of the Liberal Peers.[94] Thus following Rosebery's resignations, the Liberals were led by a duumvirate, paralleling the situation in 1875-1880.

Personal relations between Harcourt and Kimberley were harmonious,[95] but this did little to quiet the dissensions in the Party.

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[92]Quoted in Ibid., II, p. 422.

[93]Wolf, op. cit., II, pp. 248-249; Spender, Hudson, p. 53.

[94]Wolf, op. cit., II, pp. 248-249; Crewe, op. cit., II, p. 529.

[95]Wolf, op. cit., II, p. 251.

As policy differences increased between the Liberal Imperialists and the Little Englanders,

> some members of the Imperialist wing fell into the habit of reminding him [Harcourt] that Lord Rosebery's resignation did not settle [the question of a future Liberal Premiership] in his favour or raise him from being leader in the House of Commons to being leader of the Liberal Party.[96]

Harcourt contemplated resignation for some months before taking the decisive step in December, 1898. The resignation took the form of a public letter to Morley who associated himself with Harcourt's withdrawal. "A party rent by sectional disputes and personal interests is one which no man can consent to lead either with credit to himself or advantage to the country," Harcourt noted, "I am not, and I shall not consent, to be a candidate for any contested position."[97]

The general committee of the National Liberal Federation met a few days after Harcourt's resignation was published. Inevitably, the leadership was discussed at the meeting, and two motions were made on the subject. The first requested Harcourt to reconsider, and the second stated "that, in the opinion of this meeting, the question

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[96]Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, I, p. 212. Asquith, a Liberal Imperialist, denied that Rosebery's friends were intriguing against Harcourt's leadership. See Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, pp. 119-122.

[97]The letter is quoted in full in Gardiner, op. cit., II, pp. pp. 472-474.

of the leadership of the Liberal party should be taken into immediate consideration, and calls upon the leaders to close up their ranks." These motions were withdrawn in deference to a strong feeling that they did not come within the functions of the Federation.[98] Asquith, who addressed a mass meeting following the session of the general committee, believed "that the National Federation, which had met there in the afternoon, had conducted itself with great discretion."[99]

Selection of a new Liberal leader in the House of Commons was left to the Liberal members of the Commons. The ex-Cabinet members agreed upon a candidate, and their choice was unanimously elected at a meeting of the M.P.s. After Harcourt's and Morley's withdrawals, only four members of the late Cabinet were still active in the House of Commons: Asquith, Campbell-Bannerman, Fowler, and Bryce. Asquith was asked to undertake the leadership but demurred on personal grounds, namely, his need to continue practice at the Bar.[100] After Asquith's decision, the only difficulty was to persuade

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[98]Lowell, op. cit., I, pp. 546-547.

[99]Quoted in Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, p. 121. Harcourt's view was that the position of Prime Minister and Leader of the Party, "when the time came, would only be filled by the Party in Parliament." Gardiner, op. cit., II, p. 469.

[100]See Asquith's memorandum of December, 1898. Quoted in Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, pp. 119-122.

Campbell-Bannerman to accept. The latter, who remained in Scotland during the negotiations, was soon deluged with letters requesting him to accept the post. "I still hope I shall be mate and not captain,"[101] he wrote to friends, "but if I receive what in kirk sessions we style a 'call,' I am son enough of my country to do my best."[102] After receiving assurances of support from Asquith, Fowler, Bryce, and other leading Liberals, Campbell-Bannerman accepted the "call" and was unanimously elected at a meeting of the Liberal members of the House of Commons.[103]

The unanimous election of Campbell-Bannerman did not remove the serious divisions over foreign policy, and reoccurring rumors stated that the leader would resign because of these divisions.

> All these rumors were baseless. Quite early in the day he had written off resignation, or even the threat of it, as an available weapon for a man in his position. The fact that his two predecessors had resigned would, he felt, have made it ridiculous for him to seek the same way of escape.[104]

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[101]Letter to Sir Ralph Knox, dated January 2, 1899. Quoted in Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, I, p. 216.

[102]Letter to Rosebery, dated January 6, 1899. Quoted in Ibid., I, pp. 217-218.

[103]Extensive detail is provided in Ibid., I, pp. 214-220.

[104]Ibid., I, p. 287.

These divisions become so serious in 1901, however, that Campbell-Bannerman called a Party meeting to confront the question of Party unity.[105] In the course of his speech to the meeting of Liberal members of the House of Commons, Campbell-Bannerman remarked that "this evil [of disunity] can be put down by one force and by one force alone--by the general sense of the party."[106] A resolution of confidence in the leader was passed unanimously, supported by Asquith and Sir Edward Grey, the leading Liberal Imperialists in the House of Commons.[107]

The leadership of the entire Party remained open after the re-affirmation of Campbell-Bannerman's leadership in the House of Commons. Kimberley continued to lead the Liberal Peers, and when

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[105]The division was aggravated by a series of dinner speeches in 1901. "The 'dining history' of the Liberal Party in these weeks was thus summed up by the Westminster Gazette: 'There was a dinner on June 14 at which speeches were made which gave great offense to the Imperialist section of the Liberal Party. There was a dinner on June 20 at which Mr. Asquith answered the speeches which gave offense. There is now to be a dinner in recognition of the speech which answered the speeches which gave offense to the Liberal Imperialists. There will next be a dinner in recognition of the speech which gave the offense which was answered by the speech which led to the dinner in recognition. The Liberal Party will thus dine and counter-dine itself out of existence or else be dissolved in the laughter of that observant man in the street or balancing elector whose suffrages it so greatly desires to obtain." Ibid., I, pp. 339-340n.

[106]A part of the speech is quoted in Ibid., I, pp. 344-345.

[107]Ibid., I, p. 345; Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, pp. 140-141.

he became ill, Spencer acted for him. Upon Kimberley's death in 1902, "Spencer was elected to succeed him on the proposal of Ripon."[108] Speculation existed that Rosebery might attempt to resume the leadership. When Chamberlain launched his tariff campaign in 1903, Ripon wrote to Spencer, "let him [Rosebery] throw himself into this battle, and with his eloquence and his talents he may come out of it our unquestioned leader."[109] Rosebery, however, continued to "plow his own furrow," with no intention of again taking office.[110] His final separation from the Party's leadership came in 1905, when Campbell-Bannerman, after consulting with the Liberal Shadow Cabinet, enunciated the Liberal policy on Home Rule. Leading Liberal Imperialists, such as Asquith, did not support Rosebery's criticism of the policy since Campbell-Bannerman had consulted them about the policy.[111] Rosebery, in effect, removed himself as a possible future Liberal Minister, by his criticisms.

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[108]Wolf, op. cit., II, p. 268 n.

[109]In a letter of May 30, 1903. Quoted in Ibid., II, pp. 270-271.

[110]The phrase is Rosebery's. See his personal memoranda of September 30, 1903, October 14, 1904, and May 2, 1905. Quoted in Crewe, op. cit., II, pp. 585-591.

[111]Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, p. 169.

Harcourt had died in 1903. Since Spencer was ill, Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister and Leader of the Party as a matter of course when the Unionist Cabinet resigned in 1905. Some Liberals had anticipated, and feared, this step because Campbell-Bannerman had not been an impressive Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. A concrete manifestation of these apprehensions was the "Relugas Compact," among Asquith, Grey, and Richard Haldane. The substance of the Compact was that, if Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister, "he should take a peerage, and Asquith should lead in the Commons as Chancellor of the Exchequer."[112] When Campbell-Bannerman refused to take a peerage, Asquith immediately accepted office as Chancellor of the Exchequer, arguing that the circumstances envisaged by the Compact did not exist.[113] At Asquith's and Campbell-Bannerman's urging, both Haldane and Grey also entered the Cabinet on Campbell-Bannerman's terms.[114] The fears that had given rise to the Compact proved to be unfounded: "There

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[112]Richard Burdon Haldane, An Autobiography (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1929), p. 159.

[113]See Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, pp. 174-175.

[114]Grey was the most reluctant to enter the Cabinet. See George Macaulay Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), pp. 108-115.

never was in fact a more miraculous change in the 'form' of a public man than from Campbell-Bannerman as leader of Opposition to Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister."[115]

Campbell-Bannerman was not in good health when he took office, and in February, 1908 became seriously ill. Asquith presided over the Cabinet in the Prime Minister's absence. In March the King left for France but requested Campbell-Bannerman not to resign before his return.[116] In deference to the King's wish, the Cabinet continued to meet without the Prime Minister, but before the King's return, Campbell-Bannerman's health necessitated his retirement. The King had already decided to send for Asquith, when Campbell-Bannerman eventually retired, before the trip to France.[117] After Campbell-Bannerman's retirement, Asquith became Prime Minister as a matter of course. No other possibility was seriously considered. After Asquith became Prime Minister, a unanimous resolution of confidence and support was passed at a meeting of the Party's M.P.s.[118]

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[115]Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, II, p. 404.

[116]Ibid., II, p. 383.

[117]See Spender and Asquith, op. cit., I, p. 195.

[118]The Times, April 30, 1908, p. 8. This seems to have an innovation.

Thus, Asquith succeeded Campbell-Bannerman, "subject to your ratification," he told a later Party meeting, "in the leadership of the Liberal Party."[119]

III. The 1916-1918 Crisis as a Crisis in the Liberal Leadership Selection Process

During the tumultous partisan conflicts over Lloyd George's "People's Budget," House of Lords Reform and Home Rule, Asquith's position as leader of the Liberal Party was secure. Except for the resignations of Morley and John Burns, a united Liberal Cabinet entered the First World War. Despite military reversals, Asquith's position was still so paramount in March 1915 that he was able to quell a quarrel between Lloyd George and Reginald McKenna, by threatening to resign.[120] Less than two years later, Asquith was forced to resign.

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[119] The Liberal Magazine, 1916 (London: The Liberal Publication Department, 1917), p. 621.

[120] When McKenna succeeded Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lloyd George became Minister of Munitions, upon the formation of the First Coalition, relations between the two men were further strained because Lloyd George retained the option to return to the Treasury after the munitions crisis was over. See Frank Owen, Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George His Life and Times (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1955), p. 298. Thomas Jones believed Lloyd George's physical separation from Asquith, and McKenna's physical proximity to Asquith, after the change of offices, contributed to the deterioration in the relations between Asquith and Lloyd George. See Thomas Jones, Lloyd George (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 61.

The details of how Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister are far from clear. Accounts subsequently written by some of the chief actors are often in conflict.[121] The fact that the War was going badly for Britain and that Asquith was being virulently criticized in the Press, in 1916, set the stage for the leadership crisis. Despite these difficulties, however, Asquith's position as Prime Minister was secure, as long as the Cabinet supported him, since the alternative would have been to replace the entire leadership team.[122] However, some leading Cabinet members--notably, Bonar Law, Unionist leader in the House of Commons, and Lloyd George--were becoming critical of Asquith's conduct as a wartime Prime Minister.

After Germany's success in the Balkans in November, 1916, events moved rapidly. On December 3, the Unionist Ministers met and passed a resolution which called for Asquith's resignation. This was verbally, perhaps not clearly, communicated to Asquith by Bonar Law. On December 4, Asquith submitted the resignations of his

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[121]A recent survey of the confused accounts is by Robert Blake, Unrepentant Tory: The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1956), pp. 312-341. Fortunately, given the perspective of the present study, a brief account of these events is sufficient. After May, 1915, the Cabinet was a coalition of Liberal, Labour, and Unionist members, the so-called 'First Coalition.'

[122]The weight of this factor, relative to the Press' presumed influence, has been inadequately appreciated by many writers.

colleagues and attempted to form a new Cabinet. Lloyd George refused to continue to serve under Asquith. On December 5, Lloyd George asked that he be allowed to state publicly the grounds for his resignation. The Unionist Ministers met again and reiterated their demand for Asquith's resignation. Asquith resigned as Prime Minister. The King, who was determined to avoid a general election,[123] asked Bonar Law to form a Government. On December 6, since Asquith refused to accept a subordinate office, Bonar Law informed the King that he (Law) was unable to form a Government. The King met with the leaders of the Liberal, Labour, and Conservative parties, but no agreement was reached. His Majesty asked Lloyd George to form a Government. On December 7, Lloyd George informed the King that he would form a Government.[124]

When Lloyd George accepted the King's commission, his prospects for Labour and Unionist support were uncertain,[125] but the

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[123]The King had sought legal advice and was prepared to refuse a request for a dissolution because of the wartime conditions. Harold Nicolson, King George The Fifth (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1952), pp. 288-289; Dudley Sommer, Haldane of Cloan (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), pp. 342-343.

[124]The above schematic description is intended to be totally neutral. The intentions and motivations of the various actors, except the King, are the subjects of great controversy. See Blake, op. cit. pp. 312-341.

[125]Bonar Law was known to be willing to serve under Lloyd George.

leading Labourites and Unionists in the First (Asquithian) Coalition proceeded to accept office in the Second (Lloyd Georgian) Coalition. Within his own Party, Lloyd George could count only upon second-echelon assistance. Although the Liberal members of the First Coalition Cabinet agreed that a Government could not carry on without Lloyd George,[126] these leading Liberals associated themselves with Asquith who was not willing to serve under Lloyd George.[127] Nevertheless, the evening of December 6, Christopher Addison, a Liberal M.P., informed Lloyd George that he would be supported by a majority of the Liberal M.P.s.

> [O]n Monday [December 4], Kellaway, Glyn Jones and I [Addison] had gone through the list of Members of Parliament which had been made in the summer-time when a crisis was threatened. We divided them into 'doubtfuls' and those whom

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[126]Viscount Samuel, Memoirs (London: Cresset Press, 1945), p. 122. Throughout the period December 3-7, Asquith consulted with his fellow Liberals (with the exception of Lloyd George) in the Cabinet. Samuel attended these meetings, and his Memoirs contain his notes of the meetings, written virtually immediately after each meeting.

[127]Samuel was asked to serve but refused. Although associated with Asquith, perhaps some of the other Liberal members of the First Coalition Cabinet would have served, if they had been asked. Walter Runciman stated that "in reforming the Government the present Prime Minister [Lloyd George] gave an invitation to one Liberal Minister. I was not that one. I have been asked by my constituents already why I did not join the new Government. I can only make the simple reply that it was impossible to accept an invitation which I had not received." Liberal Magazine, 1916, p. 598.

> we thought to be 'for' L.G., and I arranged for a small band of men to canvass round and report through Kellaway. [. . .] Late on Wednesday night I was able to report that L.G.'s following amounted to 49 out-and-out supporters, whatever happened, and 126 others amongst the Liberal Party who would support him if he could form a Government.[128]

During the following months, through the Maurice Debate[129] and the general election of 1918,[130] Lloyd George retained the support of a majority of the Liberal M.P.s.

A Party meeting of the Liberal members of the Houses of Parliament was called for December 8, 1916.

> The suggestion [. . .] got about that there was to be a resolution passed [at the meeting] not only swearing loyalty to Asquith, as leader of the Liberal Party, but suggesting that those who supported L.G. were to be cut off from it.[131]

Addison, and a group of Liberals supporting Lloyd George, protested to the Whips against such a resolution, and somewhat to Addison's

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[128]Christopher Addison, Politics From Within, 1911-1918 (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, n.d.), I, pp. 270-271. This seems to have been slightly misinterpreted by Owen, op. cit., p. 347.

[129]Since 98 Liberal M.P.s supported Asquith's motion in the Maurice Debate and 71 Liberal M.P.s supported Lloyd George's Government, the statement in the text reflects a judgment about how the other Liberals would have voted, if they had voted. The figures are drawn from the Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 244.

[130]After the 'coupons', i.e., Lloyd George's and Bonar Law's endorsements, were distributed for the 1918 general election, Winston Churchill asserted "that the Prime Minister is supported by considerably more than half the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, to say nothing of the general support accorded to him in the constituencies [.]" Ibid., pp. 651-652.

[131]Addison, op. cit., I, p. 274.

surprise,[132] the Liberal supporters of Lloyd George were not ejected from the Liberal Party.

The Party meeting endorsed the position outlined in Asquith's address:

> Why are we here to-day? We are here to-day because I felt it my duty to resign, not the leadership of our party, though I am quite prepared to do that if I am asked, but I have been compelled to resign the headship of the Government. [. . .] I have been asked and it is a perfectly fair question for you to put to me, why I did not agree to act in a subordinate capacity. [. . .] I really do not think, and my colleagues did not think, that I could as effectually serve the new Government [. . .] as a member of it as I could outside, and outside I am remaining with the sole object [. . .] of lending such help as I can [. . .] to assist them in the great task which lies before us.[133]

Eugene Wason, M.P., moved the following resolution:

> That this meeting records its thanks to Mr. Asquith for his long and magnificent services to the nation, its unabated confidence in him as leader of the Liberal Party, and its determination to give support to the King's Government engaged in the effective prosecution of the war.[134]

Resolutions of a similar character were soon passed by the National Liberal Federation, the nine English District Liberal Federations, the Scottish Liberal Association, the Ulster Liberal Association, and "also be a large number of local Liberal Associations."[135] The

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[132] Ibid., I, p. 275.

[133] Liberal Magazine, 1916, pp. 621, 625.

[134] The Times, December 9, 1916, p. 10.

[135] Liberal Magazine, 1916, p. 638.

Welsh National Liberal Council offered "most cordial congratulations to its fellow-countryman, Mr. Lloyd George," expressed "its deepest gratitude to the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith," but made no mention of unabated confidence in Asquith as Leader of the Party.[136] During the following months, until the general election of 1918, the resolution adopted at the Party meeting of December 8, 1916 remained the official position of the Liberal Party.[137]

The resolution was adopted unanimously at the Party meeting; Lloyd George, his chief Liberal supporters,[138] and the leading Liberal critics of Asquith did not attend.[139] However, Handel Booth, M.P., asked "the mover and seconder of the resolution to be a little more candid [. . .] as to what their ideas are in regard to carrying

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[136]Ibid., p. 638.

[137]On March 22, 1918 the Council of the National Liberal Federation assured Asquith "of its continued and unabated confidence in him as Leader of the Liberal Party [and pledged] the National Liberal Federation to support the King's Government in the effective prosecution of the War." Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the National Liberal Federation, 1919 (London: Liberal Publication Department, 1919), p. 21.

[138]Addison, for example, did not attend. The Liberal M.P.s who attended, including 182 members of the House of Commons, are listed in the Liberal Magazine, 1916, p. 620.

[139]For example, the younger brothers of Lord Northcliffe, whose newspapers had been vigorously criticizing Asquith, did not attend. Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, Northcliffe (London: Cassell, 1959), p. 514.

it out."[140] "With regard to the latter part of the resolution," Booth continued, "when this meeting terminates it is no use avoiding the fact that men will go from it with totally different ideas of what they voted for."[141] In reply to Booth's query, Asquith observed that "what I myself propose to do [. . .] will not affect anybody else [. . .]."[142]

The Liberal Party "suddenly found itself [. . .] splitting in two."[143] Early in 1917, although calling Asquith "the distinguished Leader of the Liberal Party,"[144] Lloyd George instituted weekly breakfast meetings with his own (Lloyd George's) followers among the Liberal M. P. s.[145] However,

> to the end of 1917, it may be said that both in regard to the divisions amongst Liberals and the determination of action in the constituencies, in the event of a general election ensuing, the position was one of drift.[146]

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[140]The Times, December 9, 1916, p. 10.

[141]Ibid., p. 10.

[142]Ibid., p. 10.

[143]Auditor Tantum (anon.), "The New Government," Fortnightly Review, Vol. 107 (January, 1917), p. 44. "The humour of the position is illustrated by the action of two Liberals who on Tuesday reserved seats on both sides of the House. When taken to task by a fellow-member they retorted that they were trying to carry out the spirit of the Reform Club resolution, which pledged them to support the new Government and to continue under Mr. Asquith's leadership at the same time." The Times, December 14, 1916, p. 9.

[144]February 3, 1917. Liberal Magazine, 1917, p. 58.

[145]Addison, op. cit., II, p. 164.

[146]Ibid., II, p. 166.

Early in 1918, Asquith and his supporters sharply criticized Lloyd George's Government [147] and, in the Maurice Debate, moved what Lloyd George considered to be a motion of lack of confidence in the Government. The Government was sustained in the division lobbies by Conservatives, Labourites, and 71 Liberal M.P.s, but 98 Liberal M.P.s supported Asquith's motion for an inquiry into the conflicting troop estimates of General Maurice and Lloyd George.[148] "This division, The Times pointed out, was 'the debut of an organised Opposition, the first step was taken towards what may become a permanent cleavage'".[149]

After the Liberal cleavage in the Maurice Debate and before the general election of 1918, Asquith and Lloyd George each made and refused at least one overture for a reconciliation. During this period, Lloyd George indirectly offered Asquith a Cabinet position,

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[147]February, 1918. See the Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 252; Addison, op. cit., II, pp. 234-235. For Asquith's view that a "crisis" was simmering, with what outcome "no one can say exactly," see Desmond MacCarthy (ed.), H. H. A.: Letters of the Earl of Oxford and Asquith to a Friend (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1933), First Series, 1915-1922, p. 60.

[148]May, 1918. See the Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 244. See also above footnote 129.

[149]Jones, op. cit., p. 150. Jones' volume contains a judicious assessment of the merits of the Maurice Debate.

but the invitation was refused.[150] On November 1, 1918 Asquith reaffirmed his Leadership of the Party and extended an indirect invitation to the dissident Liberals:

> I have been now ten years Leader of the Party. [. . .] During all that time you gave me your confidence. I have no reason to think that you have withdrawn that confidence now. [. . .] so far as I know, there is no disposition in any quarter of the Liberal Party towards the exclusion and ostracism of anybody who is prepared to accept with a whole heart and carry out with conviction the principles of Liberal policy.[151]

On November 2, 1918 Lloyd George formally proposed to Bonar Law that there "should be a Coalition Election [with candidates] pledge[d] to support this Government."[152] The Conservative Party accepted and the Labour Party refused the proposal. On November 12, 1918 Lloyd George met with his supporters among the Liberal Peers and members of the House of Commons, in addition to a large number of "gentlemen who intend to stand at the forthcoming election as Liberal Coalition candidates."[153] A resolution was unanimously carried at

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[150]See the Liberal Magazine, 1918, pp. 651-652, 654; Addison, op. cit., II, p. 250.

[151]Speech at Glasgow. Liberal Magazine, 1918, pp. 530-531. Earlier, on March 22, 1918, Asquith had contended that "I have not resigned that position [i.e., the Leadership]. I am not aware that I have been deposed from it, and until the day comes when my natural faculties desert me--of which event I am sure I shall receive timely warning from one or other of my candid friends--until that time arrives I have no intention." Ibid., p. 154.

[152]Ibid., pp. 585-587.

[153]Ibid., p. 578.

that meeting, stating in part: "Those present at this meeting pledge themselves respectively to stand as or support Liberal Coalition candidates with the Prime Minister as their Leader."[154]

In the general election campaign, calling Asquith "my late chief,"[155] Lloyd George refused to endorse Asquith's supporters.[156] The Liberal headquarters, under Asquith's control, "urged some of the Liberal associations in the constituencies to drop Coalitionist Liberal candidates [. . .]."[157] Lloyd George's Coalition won a sweeping majority in the new House of Commons, and the Liberal Party, under Asquith, was decimated. Asquith, all of his ex-Cabinet

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[154]Ibid., p. 580. Emphasis added.

[155]Ibid., p. 666.

[156]The point may be made more strongly: Lloyd George's endorsement--the so-called 'coupon'--went to many opponents of Asquith's supporters. Those Liberals who had voted for Asquith's motion in the Maurice Debate were, in particular, not given Lloyd George's endorsement. For the most detailed description of the distribution of endorsements, see T. G. Wilson, "The Parliamentary Liberal Party in Britain, 1918-1924," (Oxford University, D. Phil. dissertation, 1959).

[157]Ibid., pp. 15-16. Neither this policy nor Lloyd George's policy of distributing endorsements, as Wilson's study makes clear, was rigidly and systematically followed. After the election, the National Liberal Federation officially adopted the policy that "every Liberal Association should jealously guard its independence, and should, without loss of time, cause it to be clearly understood that at the next election its countenance and support will only be given to a Liberal candidate who is independent of other political ties and claims." Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the National Liberal Federation, 1919, p. 16.

colleagues (except, of course, those who joined with Lloyd George), and the entire Liberal Whips' office were defeated.[158] Perhaps Asquith himself has best summarized the 1918 general election and its aftermath for the Liberal Party:

> The disintegration of the Liberal Party began with the Coupon election of December, 1918. It then received a blow from which it has never since recovered. [. . .] The Liberal members in the new House were reduced to a handful of little more than thirty. The bulk of the old Liberal parliamentary party deserted to the Coalition.[159]

The conventional judgment, by historians and political scientists, is that Lloyd George, rather than Asquith, was primarily responsible for the schism in the Liberal Party, dating from 1916.[160] This judgment is commonly based upon the feeling that Lloyd George did not "play the game according to the rules," when he was neither

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[158] Liberal Magazine, 1918, p. 634.

[159] The quotation is from the 1926 memorandum in which Asquith finally announced his resignation as Leader of the Liberal Party. Quoted in Spender and Asquith, op. cit., II, pp. 369-371. With these comments, Asquith tacitly admits that Lloyd George was supported by a majority ("the bulk") of the Liberal members of the House of Commons and that the Coalition Liberals were not members of ("deserted") the Liberal Party.

[160] See D. C. Somervell, "The Twentieth Century," in Sydney D. Bailey (ed.), The British Party System (2nd ed.; London: The Hansard Society, 1953), p. 39; Samuel H. Beer, "Great Britain: From Governing Elite to Organized Mass Parties," in Sigmund Neumann (ed.), Modern Political Parties (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 16.

loyal to his Leader in 1916[161] nor loyal to his Party in 1918.[162] The thesis of this study is that Asquith, rather than Lloyd George, did not "play the game according to the rules," when he remained the Leader of the Party after 1916.[163] The "game" in this analysis is the traditional leadership selection process from Gladstone to Asquith.[164]

The critical point is that, upon becoming a Liberal Prime Minister, Lloyd George did not automatically become Leader of the Liberal Party.[165] After becoming Liberal Prime Ministers, Gladstone (1868, 1880), Rosebery (1894) and Campbell-Bannerman (1905) were simply recognized as Leaders of the Liberal Party. Asquith's succession as Leader of the Party (1908) was "subject to [the Liberal M. P. s'] ratification,"[166] but Asquith was already (at the time of

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[161]This point is typically made in terms of Lloyd George's allegedly inordinate ambition and/or despicable tactics.

[162]This point is typically made in terms of Lloyd George's decision to issue 'coupons' as he did in 1918.

[163]A corollary of the thesis, that need not be argued here, is that the Liberal schism would not have been so severe--indeed, might have been very minor--if Asquith had gracefully acknowledged that Lloyd George became Leader of the Liberal Party by virtue of becoming Prime Minister in 1916.

[164]Other "games" might, of course, be defined. This one is not advanced as an absolute standard for judgment.

[165]This striking departure from convention was frequently and prominently noted at the time. See, for example, Tantum (anon.), op. cit., p. 35.

[166]Liberal Magazine, 1916, p. 621. The phrase is Asquith's.

"ratification") Leader of the Liberal Party since he was already the Liberal Prime Minister. When Russell (1867) announced his intention not again to take office as Prime Minister and when Gladstone (1894) announced his final retirement as Prime Minister, these announcements were interpreted as also being resignations of the Leadership of the Party.[167] Asquith's resignation as Prime Minister was, by contrast, definitely not a resignation of the Leadership.[168] The position 'Leader of the Liberal Party' was conventionally an honor accorded each Liberal Prime Minister; Asquith violated this tradition.[169]

There was ample precedent for Lloyd George's opposition to Asquith in 1916, since intra-party opposition to the Leader of the Party, although decried, had been rather common.[170] Gladstone,

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[167]The normal resignation of a Prime Minister whose party has suffered an electoral or parliamentary defeat, of course, is a different type.

[168]Asquith's statement that "I am quite prepared to [resign as Leader] if asked," is quite beside the point. See above footnote 133 and related text but compare with above footnote 151.

[169]The motion at the 1916 Party meeting, from the present perspective, should have read: "That this meeting records its thanks to Mr. Asquith for his long and magnificent services to the nation, its [sorrow at his retirement], and its determination to give support to [Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Party] engaged in the effective prosecution of the war." For the text of the actual motion that was adopted, see above in connection with footnote 134.

[170]Campbell-Bannerman (1895) had criticized Harcourt for

Hartington, Rosebery, Harcourt, and Campbell-Bannerman had had virulent (and influential) critics within the Party.[171] When faced with significant opposition from within the Party, the Leader's usual recourse was to resign, but a determined Leader might successfully demand that his critics acknowledge him as their Leader, as Campbell-Bannerman did in 1901, or might purge his critics from the Party, as Gladstone did in 1886. These options functioned, and were often consciously intended, to unify the Party.[172] Asquith did not exercise the traditional options,[173] and the Liberal Party became increasingly estranged.

Bright's (1875) judgment of the ideal conditions for leadership --"a leader should step into [and hold] his place by general consent--"[174] perhaps could not be satisfied in 1916. But Hartington's (1877) judgment of the realities of leadership probably could have

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neither retiring nor working amicably with Rosebery, but Lloyd George cannot be criticized on similar grounds: he resigned.

[171]These examples include Liberal leaders in the House of Commons as well as Leaders of the Liberal Party.

[172]A purge of dissenters is, of course, a drastic tactic for achieving unity.

[173]In 1918, after Lloyd George ostracized the Asquithians, Asquith finally excommunicated the Lloyd Georgians.

[174]See above footnote 26 and related text.

been satisfied in 1916. Hartington was the Liberal leader in the House of Commons and Gladstone was a private member, when Hartington wrote to Granville:

> The fact is that when he [Gladstone] chooses to lead, he must be the leader of the party, [. . .], he has chosen to lead, and no amount of disclaimers will alter the fact, though they may in his opinion relieve him of some of the responsibility which attaches naturally to leadership.[175]

Hartington drew the appropriate inference and tried to resign; but Asquith "[clung] to this barren honour [the Leadership] as a man in a fire might cling to an old coat."[176]

IV. Conclusions[177]

Leaders[178] of the Liberal Party were supposed to lead by general consent. This usually meant, in practice, the general consent of the Cabinet or ex-Cabinet members since the Monarch

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[175]See above footnote 43 and related text.

[176]Blackwood's Magazine, Vol. 201 (1917), p. 137.

[177]For the leadership selection process in the Conservative Party, which is very similar to the traditional Liberal practices, see R. T. McKenzie, British Political Parties (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955), Chapter II. McKenzie finds Churchill's attitude towards Neville Chamberlain and the Leadership of the Conservative Party rather puzzling. This is hardly puzzling, if one recalls that Churchill was a prominent Liberal colleague and friend of Lloyd George during the events described in the present study. See Ibid., p. 51 n.

[178]Liberal leaders in the House of Commons and House of Lords, as well as Leaders of the Liberal Party.

and Liberal M. P. s normally played only a nominal role, and the National Liberal Federation no role, in the traditional leadership selection process. General consent could be, and often was, withdrawn. Leaders usually resigned, when not supported by a consensus, but sometimes the dissenters were repentant or were excommunicated; thus restoring the unity of the Party.

For eight years, Asquith was Leader of the Liberal Party by general consent. When that consent was withdrawn, with Lloyd George's heresy, Asquith kept possession of the Leadership of the Party but neither exacted penitence nor extirpated the dissenters. Thus, from the perspective of the traditional leadership selection process in the Liberal Party, Asquith erred.

The informal (albeit patterned) nature of the leadership selection process facilitated Asquith's error of judgment. If procedures for intra-party conflicts had been institutionalized, if a process for removing a leader had been established, perhaps the contest between Asquith and Lloyd George would have been resolved sooner, with less disastrous consequences.[179] The Liberal Party did not recover from Asquith's error.

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[179]If these comments are justified, then since the Conservative Party's procedures closely resembled the Liberal Party's practices, the Conservative Party's recent adoption of procedures for electing a leader (when the Party is in opposition, by a vote of the Conservatives in the House of Commons) probably has reduced the chances that the Conservative Party might suffer a serious schism such as racked the Liberal Party.

CHAPTER VI

A SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND PREDICTION

The broad thesis of this dissertation has been that the 1918 split was decisive for the decline of the British Liberal Party. This thesis has been supported in a number of ways.

First, the leading alternative explanations have been shown to be less persuasive than is sometimes supposed. From an empirical point of view,[1] a close examination of the 1900-1914 British elections indicated that the center party explanation was probably not valid and that the electoral system explanation (if valid) should have foreshadowed the decline of the Labour Party rather than the decline of the Liberal Party. The last Liberal Government, it was suggested, was more successful than has often been assumed not only in the field of social reform but also in the tri-cornered party competition.

Second, the split thesis has been developed in some historical and comparative detail. The origins of the schism were traced to

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[1] A decision-theoretic model for rational choice behavior by individual voters, presented in Appendix 1, suggests that the center party and electoral system explanations are also not compelling from a purely rational point of view.

Lloyd George's supersession of Asquith as Prime Minister in 1916, but the most crucial point was the interpretation of the 1918 and 1922 general election results. The interpretation advanced by contemporary Liberals, viz., that the Liberal Party did not include Lloyd George's faction, was accepted and buttressed by contrasting the Unionist Party's cooperative relations and the Liberal Party's strident relations with Lloyd George's group. The closely related argument that the 1916-1918 Liberal split gave the Labour Party a unique opportunity to become a full-fledged national party, was supported by reference to the 1918 reconstruction of the Labour Party and reinforced by sketches of comparable schisms and the rise of new major parties in other two-party systems.

Third, since the absence of a conventionally fixed descriptive terminology was noted at several points, explications were proposed for key concepts. These definitions were not only consistent with the split thesis but also were consistent with the usual scholarly descriptions of other (non-British) party systems. With this generalized conceptual base, the split thesis was shown to be a special case of a general comparative theory of the rise and decline of major parties in two-party systems. This homeostatic theory was plausibly consistent with recent survey research into the psychology of voting, but since survey research postdates the known instances of the theory,

a definite supportive connection could not be demonstrated. The theory was, however, translated into a formal model that should facilitate future testing of its validity since the model is sufficiently rigorous to generate specific predictions.[2] A comparative development of the theory also indicated additional shortcomings in the center party and electoral system explanations and suggested that the decline of the Liberal Party was a two-stage rather than single-stage process.

Finally, since the Liberal split originated with Lloyd George's supersession of Asquith as Prime Minister, the pattern of previous Liberal leadership conflicts was examined. That pattern was clear: The leader either resigned or forced an early "showdown" with the dissenter(s). Although the Asquith-Lloyd George conflict was complicated by the existence of coalition conditions, it was evident that Asquith neither resigned as Leader of the Party nor forced an early "showdown" with Lloyd George. Since the earlier leadership conflicts had not eventuated in such severe schisms, Asquith's departure from the traditional pattern suggested that he, rather than Lloyd George, should be considered primarily responsible for the Liberal split.

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[2]See below for a prediction about the future prospects of the Liberal Party.

Thus the split thesis has been supported both by negative and positive considerations, by British and comparative reflections, and by historical and theoretical arguments.

The fundamental conclusion of this analysis is that the split thesis provides the basis for an adequate explanation of the decline of the Liberal Party. Perhaps two aspects of the supporting arguments deserve separate mention as additional conclusions. The first is a matter of leadership; the second is a matter of language.

The power of party leaders has been stressed by political scientists, since Robert Michels formulated his "Iron Law of Oligarchy."[3] The Iron Law stated that power, within a political party, inevitably gravitated to its leaders. Subsequent scholars--notably Robert McKenzie[4] in his excellent study of the distribution of power within the Conservative and Labour parties--have generally confirmed the Iron Law but have stressed the limitations upon the power of the leaders. Most of these studies--McKenzie's, for example--have focused upon the policy-making process within parties, although Michels himself was inclined to emphasize the perquisites and status

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[3]Robert Michels, Political Parties, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958). This book was originally published in 1915.

[4]R. T. McKenzie, British Political Parties (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955).

of the leaders. This study has, in general terms, also confirmed the Iron Law of Oligarchy but, perhaps more importantly, has suggested a relatively unexplored area of the law's application, an area that must raise some doubts about the wisdom of McKenzie's stress upon the limitations of the leaders' power. Within major parties, if the analysis in the preceding chapters may be broadly stated, a few score leaders have the power to endanger the party's survival as a major party. Specifically, within the Liberal Party, perhaps as few as two men--Asquith and Lloyd George--had the power to destroy the Party as a major party. Relative to a political party, this is an awesome power indeed. Informal party practices and internal constraints of conscience, as the Liberal Party's history demonstrates, are not enough to prevent the exercise of that power.

The language of political science is (mainly) ordinary language or, perhaps, the language of politicians. It is a subtle and flexible tool for communication, but as the reference to politicians may have suggested, it is also vague and imprecise. Furthermore, ordinary language is replete with contradictions. The significance of these points for mathematics and science has been stressed by philosophers of science, since the discovery of Russell's paradox.[5] This study has

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[5]See Willard Van Orman Quine, Mathematical Logic (rev. ed.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 163-166.

illustrated the importance of these considerations for political science in particular. For example, ordinary discourse furnishes at least two, contradictory meanings for the phrase "the Liberal Party in 1918-1922," viz., Lloyd George's followers either are or are not excluded from the Party. Both of these meanings cannot be retained in a systematic analysis, upon pain of contradiction, and thus a linguistic decision has theoretical significance. Ordinary language is, perhaps, the starting point for a scientific analysis, but as descriptions of the Liberal Party's history illustrate, it is hardly a suitable ending. For systematic, theoretical purposes ordinary discourse must be refined, if not superseded.

This study may appropriately end with a prediction about the Liberal Party's future prospects. If the homeostatic theory of two-party systems is correct, then assuming the democratic nature of the British political system is not disrupted, the Liberal Party cannot again become a major party unless a severe split racks either the Conservative Party or the Labour Party. Since the Liberal Party has recently been making a serious effort to recoup its lost fortunes, the success or failure of that effort will probably become apparent in the next few years and will serve as a test for the theory that has been advanced in this study.

APPENDIX 1

THE RATIONAL VOTER IN A SINGLE-MEMBER DISTRICT

I

The objective of this note is to present a simplified decision-theoretic model of individual rational voting in single-member districts under the simple-majority single-ballot method of election, and to derive the following theorem from the model: The rational voter votes for the candidate (party) associated with the outcome he (the voter) most prefers. This theorem may interest political scientists for two reasons. First, within the model, rational voting is a very simple thing. The rational voter needs to know neither the numerical probabilities of the outcomes nor the outcomes' numerical utilities for him. Thus, from the perspective of survey research on voting behavior, the model is realistic in the sense that it does not require the rational voter to make elaborate calculations. Second, the theorem contradicts the common argument that "there is one eventuality in a multiparty system that does not arise in a two-party system: a rational voter may at times vote for a party other than the one he most prefers."[1]

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[1] Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New

II

The model adopts the most widely accepted rule for rational decision-making: The voter (decision-maker) maximizes the expected value of utility.[2] The model also assumes a single-member district operating under the simple-majority single-ballot system of elections.[3]

Denote the candidates (parties) by C_1, C_2, ..., C_n. The alternative courses of action available to the voter are to vote for C_1, or to vote for C_2, ..., or to vote for C_n. (The problem is how the voter should vote rather than whether or not he should vote.) These possible votes are denoted by V_1, V_2, ..., V_n. The possible outcomes, ignoring ties,[4] are that C_1 will win, or C_2 will win, ...,

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York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1957), p. 47. See also Maurice Duverger, Political Parties, trans. Barbara and Robert North (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1955), pp. 225-226.

[2]"In fact, use of this criterion is often cited as a necessary (if not sufficient) condition for rational choice." Russell L. Ackoff, Scientific Method (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1962), p. 38. A diffuse intellectual debt is owed to Ackoff's stimulating book.

[3]This assumption is consistent with the works of Anthony Downs and Maurice Duverger but, as Joseph Schlesinger has observed, is typically a great simplification of reality. The assumption fits by-elections (special elections) in Britain, Canada and United States, but the general election situation is more complex in general. See Downs, op. cit., pp. 23-24; Duverger, op. cit., p. 223; Joseph A. Schlesinger, "The Structure of Competition for Office in the American States," Behavioral Science, Vol. 5, No. 3 (July, 1960), p. 197.

[4]Ignoring ties is similar to ignoring the possibility that a coin will fall on its edge. This simplification is convenient since there is no voting choice uniquely associated with a tie outcome.

or C_n will win. Denote these outcomes by $W_1, W_2, \ldots, W_n$. The voter's relative evaluation of these outcomes (his utilities) are designated by $U_1, U_2, \ldots, U_n$.[5]

The (objective) conditional probability that a particular outcome W_i will occur, given a particular vote V_j, can be represented by $P(W_i/V_j)$. The possible outcomes and alternative courses of action, as well as the corresponding conditional probabilities, are represented in the following matrix:

		Possible Outcomes			
		W_1	W_2	...	W_n
Alternate Courses of Action	V_1	$P(W_1/V_1)$	$P(W_2/V_1)$	...	$P(W_n/V_1)$
	V_2	$P(W_1/V_2)$	$P(W_2/V_2)$	...	$P(W_n/V_2)$
	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
	V_n	$P(W_1/V_n)$	$P(W_2/V_n)$	...	$P(W_n/V_n)$

It seems clear that the voter's decision has some (although, perhaps, only a very very slight) effect upon the probabilities, that is, that a particular candidate's chances are somewhat enhanced if the voter decides to vote for that candidate.[6] This means, in formal terms,

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[5]See below footnote 8.

[6]The Shapley-Shubik a priori power index is pertinent. See L. S. Shapley and Martin Shubik, "A Method for Evaluating the

that $P(W_1/V_1) > P(W_1/V_2)$, . . . , $P(W_1/V_1) > P(W_1/V_n)$, and similarly for the probabilities in each of the other columns.

If EV_i is the expected value of the i^{th} course of action, the three-candidate problem is given by the following set of equations:

(1) $[P(W_1/V_1)]U_1 + [P(W_2/V_1)]U_2 + [P(W_3/V_1)]U_3 = EV_1$

(2) $[P(W_1/V_2)]U_1 + [P(W_2/V_2)]U_2 + [P(W_3/V_2)]U_3 = EV_2$

(3) $[P(W_1/V_3)]U_1 + [P(W_2/V_3)]U_2 + [P(W_3/V_3)]U_3 = EV_3$

The voter should select the V_i that maximizes the expected value.

These equations can be simplified by observing that, if the voter changes his decision from V_i to V_j, then the probability of C_i winning decreases and the probability of C_j winning increases, but the probability of C_n winning is not affected.[7] Thus, in the three-candidate case, $P(W_1/V_2) = P(W_1/V_3)$, $P(W_2/V_1) = P(W_2/V_3)$, $P(W_3/V_1) = P(W_3/V_2)$, and the simplified equations are:

(4) $[P(W_1/V_1)]U_1 + [P(W_2/V_1)]U_2 + [P(W_3/V_1)]U_3 = EV_1$

(5) $[P(W_1/V_2)]U_1 + [P(W_2/V_2)]U_2 + [P(W_3/V_1)]U_3 = EV_2$

Distribution of Power in a Committee System," American Political Science Review, Vol. XLVIII (1954), pp. 787-792.

[7]Since this is perhaps counter-intuitive, objective rather than subjective conditional probabilities are used in the model. See the numerical example given below.

$$(6)\ [P(W_1/V_2)]U_1 + [P(W_2/V_1)]U_2 + [P(W_3/V_3)]U_3 = EV_3$$

Subtracting Equation (5) from Equation (4), we obtain:

$$(7)\ [P(W_1/V_1)]U_1 - [P(W_1/V_2)]U_1 + [P(W_2/V_1)]U_2 - [P(W_2/V_2)]U_2 = EV_1 - EV_2$$

When the terms in Equation (7) are recombined, we successively obtain:

$$(8)\ U_1[P(W_1/V_1) - P(W_1/V_2)] + U_2[P(W_2/V_1) - P(W_2/V_2)] = EV_1 - EV_2$$

$$(9)\ U_1[P(W_1/V_1) - P(W_1/V_2)] - U_2[P(W_2/V_2) - P(W_2/V_1)] = EV_1 - EV_2$$

Since the alternative courses of action are assumed to be exclusive and exhaustive, the probabilities in each row of the original matrix have a sum equal to one; and as a result, so do the probabilities in each of the Equations (1) - (6). Thus, with respect to Equations (4) and (5), the following result holds:

$$(10)\ P(W_1/V_1) + P(W_2/V_1) = P(W_1/V_2) + P(W_2/V_2)$$

and transposing we obtain:

$$(11)\ P(W_1/V_1) - P(W_1/V_2) = P(W_2/V_2) - P(W_2/V_1)$$

If $K = P(W_1/V_1) - P(W_1/V_2)$, then K is a positive real number ($K > 0$) and Equation (9) can be reduced to:

$$(12)\ KU_1 - KU_2 = EV_1 - EV_2$$

and recombined as:

$$(13)\ K(U_1 - U_2) = EV_1 - EV_2$$

Therefore, the ordinal ranking of the expected values depends solely upon the ordinal ranking of the utilities. A corollary is that the rational voter does not need to know the (objective) conditional probabilities.

By convention the voter most prefers C_1's winning--$W_1 > W_2$ and $W_1 > W_3$--and, hence, $U_1 > U_2$ and $U_1 > U_3$.[8] Thus, with respect to Equation (13), $EV_1 > EV_2$. The rational voter selects V_1 instead of V_2, and by a similar argument[9] the rational voter selects V_1 instead of V_3. Thus, in the three-candidate situation, the rational voter votes for the candidate (party) associated with the outcome he most prefers. A corollary is that the rational voter does not need to know the numerical values of his utilities. This type of argument is obviously quite general and holds for any number N of candidates in a single-member district using the simple-majority single-ballot system of election.

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[8]Simple preferences are universally accepted as the basis for utilities. The debate pivots about how to transform the non-numerical preferences into numerical utilities, but an isomorphic ordinal ranking is generally accepted as a fundamental characteristic of suitable transformations. See R. Duncan Luce and Howard Raiffa, Games and Decisions (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1957), Chapter 2.

[9]Start by subtracting Equation (6) from Equation (4).

III

The decision rule (viz., maximize the expected value of utility) and the analysis of probabilities are, of course, the core of the present model. These can be illustrated, and the relationship between the model and the traditional theory of political parties can be indicated, by a numerical example. Let us suppose that the voter intends to vote for the third candidate C_3, viz., intends to select V_3 as a course of action, and that the (objective) conditional probabilities are: $P(W_1/V_3) = .40$, $P(W_2/V_3) = .35$ and $P(W_3/V_3) = .25$. Further, let us suppose the voter changes his mind and decides to vote for the second candidate C_2, and that the (objective) conditional probabilities become: $P(W_1/V_2) = .40$, $P(W_2/V_2) = .45$ and $P(W_3/V_2) = .15$. With this hypothetical case, the (let us say) "absolute" probability that C_1 will be elected has not changed but the (let us say) "relative" probability that C_1 will be elected has strikingly changed; the voter's switch makes C_2 rather than C_1 the most likely winner. The theory of political parties seems to have focused upon "relative" probabilities, and its implicit decision rule apparently has been: Never vote for the candidate whose winning you least prefer; of the remaining candidates vote for the one who (if you vote for him) has the best chance of winning. This decision rule may be "rational" in some sense, but it is not the decision rule incorporated in the present model.

The present model has the advantage, from the perspective of the psychology of voting, of not postulating calculations by the rational voter. Thus, perhaps, the difference between rational voters and actual voters is smaller than is commonly assumed. This possibility deserves examination by survey research, but the distinction between preferring a candidate's personality and preferring a candidate's winning must be carefully drawn. A highest preference for a particular candidate's personality or stands on the issues or party, is not equivalent to a highest preference for that candidate's winning; in the language of decision theory, the latter is an outcome, the former are not. If this distinction can be successfully drawn in questionnaires, studies of the psychology of voting might be integrated with studies of rational decision-making, with prospects of theoretical advantages for both types of analysis, by construing the so-called socio-economic determinants of voting choices as determinants of preference structures.

APPENDIX 2

BRITISH DISTRICTS WITH MORE THAN ONE PURELY LIBERAL-LABOUR-UNIONIST CONTEST, 1900-1914*

Name of District	By-Elections 1900-1905		General Election 1906	By-Elections 1906-1909	General Election Jan. 1910	General Election Dec. 1910	By-Elections 1911-1914
Lanarkshire, N.E.							
Liberal	4769	5619	6436		9105		7976
Labour	2900	3984	4658		2160		2879
Unionist	5673	4677	4838		7012		6776
Lancashire, Eccles							
Liberal			5841		7093		
Labour			3985		3511		
Unionist			5246		6682		
Croydon							
Liberal			7573	8041			
Labour			4007	886			
Unionist			8211	11989			
Dewsbury							
Liberal			6764	5594			
Labour			2629	2446			
Unionist			2959	4078			

Name of District	By-Elections 1900-1905	General Election 1906	By-Elections 1906-1909	General Election Jan. 1910	General Election Dec. 1910	By-Elections 1911-1914
Huddersfield						
Liberal		6302	5762	7158	6458	
Labour		5813	5422	5686	4988	
Unionist		4391	4818	5153	5777	
Leeds, S.						
Liberal		6200	5274		6064	
Labour		4030	2451		2706	
Unionist		2126	4915		3804	
Glasgow, Camlachie						
Liberal		2871		2793		
Labour		2568		2443		
Unionist		3119		3227		
Lanarkshire, Goven						
Liberal		5096		6558		
Labour		4212		3543		
Unionist		5224		5128		
Ayrshire, N.						
Liberal		4587		6189		
Labour		2684		1801		
Unionist		5603		5951		

Name of District	By-Elections 1900-1905	General Election 1906	By-Elections 1906-1909	General Election Jan. 1910	General Election Dec. 1910	By-Elections 1911-1914
Lanarkshire, N.W.						
Liberal		4913		8422		
Labour		3291		1718		
Unionist		5588		7528		
Cumberland, Cockermouth						
Liberal			3903	3638		
Labour			1436	1909		
Unionist			4593	4579		
Montrose District						
Liberal			3803	3606		
Labour			1937	1888		
Unionist			1576	1592		
Durham, Jarrow						
Liberal				4885	5097	
Labour				4818	4892	
Unionist				4668	4986	
Cheshire, Crewe						
Liberal				7761		5294
Labour				1380		2485
Unionist				5419		6260

Name of District	By-Elections 1900-1905	General Election 1906	By-Elections 1906-1909	General Election Jan. 1910	General Election Dec. 1910	By-Elections 1911-1914	
Yorkshire, Holmfirth							
Liberal				6339		4749	
Labour				1643		3195	
Unionist				3043		3379	
Durham, Bishop Auckland							
Liberal				5391	4531		
Labour				3579	3993		
Unionist				3841	3519		
Lanarkshire, Mid							
Liberal				5792	6033		
Labour				3864	3847		
Unionist				5401	5702		
Leith District							
Liberal				7146		5143	
Labour				2724		3346	
Unionist				4540		5159	
Keighley							
Liberal						4667	4730
Labour						3452	3646
Unionist						3842	3852

*For sources, see the footnotes to Table 2.5 in Chapter II. In the present table, the temporal sequence is from left to right.

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