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**Mr Newcastle:**  
**The Career of T Dan Smith**

**J F Griffiths**

**PhD**

**2019**

**Mr Newcastle:**  
**The Career of T Dan Smith**

**John Francis Griffiths**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of the University of  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the political career of the socialist politician Thomas Daniel Smith (1915-1993). It considers the origins and development of his ideology and ideas, examines his record as leader of Newcastle City Council, Chairman of the Northern Region Economic Planning Council and the Aycliffe & Peterlee Development Corporations, and also examines the circumstances surrounding his gaoling on corruption charges. Smith was a significant figure in local government and in the brief flourishing of political regionalism in the 1960s; this study casts light on his actions and provides a new perspective on developments in local government and regionalism.

The research primarily rests on examination of written archive resources - those of Smith, his political collaborators, political parties and government departments. This is supplemented by oral testimonies from taped interviews with Smith and others.

A number of original insights into Smith's career have emerged from this research. These include his early activity in the Independent Labour Party and Workers' International League. The thesis shows how Smith moved 1948-1959 from a Trotskyist to a Labour Revisionist stance, and how that affected his plans for the redevelopment of Newcastle and the regeneration of northern England. It shows the origins of the 1963 redevelopment plan for Newcastle were strongly influenced by the 1955 plan for Fort Worth, Texas. It demonstrates the extent of Smith's efforts to reform urban administration in Newcastle to make fulfilment of his ideas possible. It shows in detail how Smith's ambitions for Peterlee came close to success in its designation as Britain's first government-recognised 'science campus'. It demonstrates how several of the criminal charges laid against Smith in 1973 show major flaws. These findings are important in illuminating a number of areas. They offer a new perspective on the history of the wartime Trotskyist movement. They cast new light on the impact of revisionism in the postwar Labour Party. They contribute to the history of 20th century urban redevelopment by identifying the intellectual origins of the influential Newcastle plan. The findings on Peterlee

provide a case study of science policy in a postwar new town. The examination of the criminal charges casts doubt on the stereotyped portrayal of Smith as a 'corrupt city boss'. Overall, the research shows Smith to be an influential and innovative if highly controversial politician whose career offers fresh perspectives on local government, regional policy, and the postwar Labour Party.

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I wish to dedicate this work with love and gratitude to my parents, Bernard Griffiths (1919-1994) and Riet Griffiths.

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved and is in accordance with the Research Ethics Framework of the School of Arts and Social Sciences, as approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee on 13 February 2008.

**I declare that the word count of this thesis is 103,256 words.**

Name: John Francis Griffiths

Signature:

Date: 29 January 2020





## **Introduction**

Thomas Daniel Smith (1915-1993), popularly known as T Dan Smith, was a socialist politician in north east England who rose to fame in the early 1960s as a result of his dynamic leadership of Newcastle City Council. As council leader he cleared many of Newcastle's remaining slums, introduced in the city a new style of civic-led urban regeneration, piloted the first of a new wave of modernistic city development plans, and a pioneering administrative structure, led by a chief executive, which was to be a model for future developments in England. As well as council leader, he was the first chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Council, chairman of the Aycliffe and Peterlee new town development corporations, a member of the steering committee for the Buchanan Report on Traffic in Towns, of the Sports Council, and of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England. He was one of the most significant figures in British local government in the last hundred years, or even longer: a successor leader of Newcastle was to describe him posthumously as a figure to rank alongside Joseph Chamberlain and Herbert Morrison.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis takes the form of a critical biography examining the political career of Dan Smith. It covers the period from his youth until his conviction and gaoling on charges of corruption in 1974, looking in detail at the social, ideological and political influences that affected his thinking and his actions over the course of his active career.

## **Outline**

The account falls into two main phases. The first is a formative period lasting from his youth up to 1958, when the Labour Party gained power in Newcastle City Council. With a background in Marxism learned from his father, and Christian Socialism imbued from his mother, and tempered by hardship and frequent unemployment during the 1930s, Smith sought an understanding of the modern world and how it could be improved, moving from the Christian Socialism of his youth, to the peace movement in the late 1930s. His pacifism led him into the anti-

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sir Jeremy (now Lord) Beecham, 3 January 2008

war Independent Labour Party in the early war years, but in the ILP he rapidly began espousing a radically left-wing viewpoint, and, while rising high in the party's hierarchy, becoming a regional organiser and the North East England representative on the ILP's ruling council, he also became a covert member of the Workers' International League, a Trotskyist group seeking to infiltrate the ILP. Expelled from the ILP in 1945, Smith was openly a member of the WIL's successor party, the Revolutionary Communist Party, until he was expelled from that, too, in 1947. Disillusioned with revolutionary socialism, and influenced by reading *The Managerial Revolution* by American ex-Trotskyist James Burnham, he joined the Labour Party and in 1950 was elected to Newcastle City Council. There, in eight years in opposition, he was able to build up a group of supporters, based not upon institutional power (he did not, for example, have a strong trade union power base in the local party) nor upon factional political support (the number of former, or current Trotskyists on the council was small), but on his ability to form and communicate coherent policies and plans for Labour in Newcastle. At the same time, although many of his political activities in the 1950s could be described as Bevanite, his ideals and aspirations moved away from the 'old Labourism' focus on a heavy industrial base (a position common in NE England, where the economy was still heavily based on coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding and engineering), and towards the revisionist, modernising position associated with Anthony Crosland and exemplified in Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*.<sup>2</sup>

The second key period covers the twelve years when Smith occupied positions of power and influence, and lasts from 1958 until January 1970. Labour gained control of Newcastle in 1958, and Smith became leader of the Labour group – in effect, leader of the council – a year later. As group leader until 1965, and as chair of the major committees at different times over the 1958-65 period, Smith piloted major reforms through the council, covering housing, education, city planning and administration. While many of these policies, especially in planning and administration, were extremely innovative and put the city in the national media spotlight, Smith's view was not just municipal. He believed that the changes being made in Newcastle were essential for the modernisation of the wider north east

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<sup>2</sup> Crosland, Anthony, *The Future of Socialism* (1956; reissued London 2006)

region, and while leader sought co-operation with neighbouring authorities on numerous issues, simultaneously campaigning for local government reform and the creation of an all-Tyneside authority and other regional and sub-regional structures. In 1965, when the new Labour government established regional Economic Planning Councils, Smith became chairman of the Northern EPC, believing that the bodies would have an influence on regional and national economic policy and would form the groundwork for devolved regional government. He resigned from Newcastle city council in 1966. However, he rapidly became disillusioned with his work for the NEPC and in 1968 was appointed chairman of the Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporation. This position allowed greater scope for his abilities and enthusiasms, aimed at developing the New Town of Peterlee into a hub for scientific and technical research. In a remarkable double achievement, he was able to persuade IBM to open a research facility in Peterlee, and persuaded the government to announce that Peterlee was to be the officially-supported science campus for the north of England – the first such designation in the UK. But in early 1970 Smith was to step down from his official positions after being arrested on corruption charges relating to the London Borough of Wandsworth; the impetus to develop other advanced research facilities in Peterlee was lost, and the planned Centre for the Arts and Humanities in the town was to become a central factor in the charges brought against Smith in 1974: Poulson had been selected as the preferred architect.

The thesis will concentrate on this core of Smith's political career. Among other issues, it will provide a close examination of the activities of the Independent Labour Party and its Trotskyist rivals in the wartime North East of England – a history not previously addressed in detail . It will show how Smith was influenced by the managerialist theories of James Burnham and advocated policies strikingly similar to the revisionism in the later 1950s Labour Party of Gaitskell and Crosland. It will argue against the portrayal of Smith as an American-style 'city boss' but show how he was not greedy for personal power, but rather, setting up rival poles of power within the city administration of Newcastle. And it will argue that Smith's ideals for city and regional development, based on looking forward to new technologies and by seeing education and culture as key factors in social and economic development, anticipated by decades the 'culture led regeneration' policies of the 1990s and subsequently.

These ideals formed a coherent vision for North East England. He believed that the staple industries of the region, and particularly coal mining and shipbuilding, were in decline and that their disappearance was not necessarily a disaster since science and technology, aided by regional and national economic planning, would be able to fill the gap. This he attempted to do in Newcastle by the redevelopment of the city and the encouragement of culture: a twentieth century version of a renaissance city would, he believe, attract forward-thinking entrepreneurs; in Peterlee he placed advanced technology at the top of his agenda, and briefly succeeded in having to town recognised as the first officially recognised 'science campus' in Britain.

The planning of a new social and economic order required the development of institutions appropriate for this task. This lay behind his campaigns for the reform of outdated local authority areas and the creation of a new regional level of government able to deliver plans at the regional level; and it lay behind his work in modernising and streamlining the administration of Newcastle City Council. He believed in the power of art and culture to improve everyday lives, and to form an environment conducive to new economic development, and in both Newcastle and Peterlee cultural policy formed an integral and important part of his thinking. And, closely linked to his commitment to the arts and culture, he believed that city redevelopment would bring about a greatly improved environment for people to live, work and play in: "I wanted to see the creation of a 20<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of Dobson's masterpiece, and its integration into the historic framework of the city."<sup>3</sup> He admired the modern and brought celebrated architects to the city, and steered through council and Whitehall an innovative development plan that sought to remove traffic from the city centre and create a 'walkable city'.

Elements of this vision will recur, explicitly and implicitly, throughout this thesis, and its successful and unsuccessful aspects addressed.

To date the only published biographies of Smith have been his 1970 autobiography, *Dan Smith. An Autobiography*, and a biography by journalist Chris Foote Wood, *T*

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, T Dan, *Dan Smith. An Autobiography* (Newcastle 1970) p46

Dan Smith. *“Voice of the North - Downfall of a Visionary.”*<sup>4</sup> This thesis arrives at a timely moment for an academic examination of Smith’s career, in a period where Newcastle and North East England is passing through a period of change and a time when his life, career and impact is being reassessed. It aims to provide a critical re-examination of the career of a politician whose reputation has too often been overshadowed by the circumstances of his fall from grace.

Is a perceived need for critical re-examination a sufficient reason? Patrick O’Brien would argue not. He sees political biographers as treating their subjects as either “extraordinary and omnipotent”, or as or as predictable and typical representatives of a particular government (his essay assumes that subjects of political biography are holders of an office of state, or, at least, MPs).<sup>5</sup> The career of individuals cannot be seen as typical of a political class, and biographies cannot hope to fulfil the “core aspirations” of political history: “a proper understanding of evolving political institutions and processes, and an appreciation of the lasting achievements of significant individuals operating within those systems.”<sup>6</sup> The use of the life story as a framework for biography means adopting “a literary and rhetorically persuasive device for writing about, and all too often exaggerating, the significance of its subject” and biographers “seek acclaim and significance for the people they study.”<sup>7</sup> Political biography – while it has its uses – is not, O’Brien argues, “a serious enough genre to engage the attention of academic historians.”<sup>8</sup>

Such views are far from unique, Maurice Cowling, for example, arguing that biography almost always misleads, by abstracting the individual focus of a study from a political system of complex relationships.<sup>9</sup> Tosh argues that Cowling’s arguments lose much of their force in systems where power is concentrated in one man.<sup>10</sup> And Smith, while a democratic politician working in a democratic political

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*; Foote Wood, Chris, *T Dan Smith. “Voice of the North” – Downfall of a Visionary* (Bishop Auckland 2010).

<sup>5</sup> O’Brien, Patrick, ‘Is Political Biography a Good Thing?’, *Contemporary British History* 10 4 (1996) pp 60-61

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* pp60-61

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* pp64, 65

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* p61

<sup>9</sup> Cited in Tosh, John, *The Pursuit of History* (5<sup>th</sup> ed 2010) p68

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* pp68-69

system, was nevertheless – through ideas and personality rather than force or legal power – a dominating political figure for several years at the peak of his career.

O'Brien's vigorous denunciation of a complete genre of historical writing does contain some useful correctives, most notably the danger of exaggerating the significance of one's subject, but his implication that the only proper field for the study is "evolving institutions and processes" forms what Croft describes as an "extremely rigid definition of political history."<sup>11</sup> Croft takes issue to with O'Brien's argument that individuals should have lasting achievements to merit study, arguing that the second rate and the lesser figures can also be illuminating, and that O'Brien's narrow criteria exclude also most women.<sup>12</sup> Might one suggest that it would also exclude a regional politician whose career ended in disgrace?

John Derry also stands up for the values of academic political biography: an interpretation of character and circumstances, contextualisation, the relation of political career to political structure, a thorough critical knowledge of sources and a capacity to evaluate relevant literature being the "preconditions for successful biography."<sup>13</sup>

Some of the difficulties are highlighted by Ben Pimlott: historical biography is a hybrid, based in the historical method but frequently drawing upon other disciplines: "the biographer needs to be a jack-of-all-trades, and hence is liable to be considered the master of none."<sup>14</sup> But what O'Brien might consider a drawback Pimlott sees as a benefit: biographers are not, he argues, tied by conventions -to follow a life from birth to death, to regard biography as "an encyclopaedia of school report", to draw distinctions between public and private life, even "to ferret out the 'whole truth' about a character". The biographer, he says, "is tied by the truth, and has a duty to seek it out and not suppress it. But that does not make him primarily an investigative reporter... The main job of the biographer is to tell a story that will make the reader

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<sup>11</sup> Croft, Pauline, Political Biography: A Defence (1), *Contemporary British History* 10 (4) (1996) p68

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* pp70-71

<sup>13</sup> Derry, John, 'Political Biography: A Defence (2), *Contemporary British History* 10 (4) (1996) p76

<sup>14</sup> Pimlott, Ben, Pimlott, Ben, *Frustrate Their Knavish Tricks. Writings on Biography, History and Politics* (London 1995) p150 [from an article 'The Future of Political Biography' first published in *Political Quarterly* 61 (2) (1990)]

happier, sadder, even a bit wiser. Here his purpose is no different from that of the novelist, and this is the only convention that matters.”<sup>15</sup>

Pimlott argues that the biographer should pursue not “the abstraction truth” but understanding. In seeking truth the writer risks “an obsessive pursuit of sources, and biographies will get longer and longer...”; rather, “[t]he aim should be to understand an individual life, the forces that shape it and the motives that drive it, in the context in which it is shaped.”<sup>16</sup> And if understanding is the aim, then all parts of a life, ‘public’ and ‘private’ are relevant: “everything goes into the pot”.<sup>17</sup> If that is the case, then this thesis can only be at best a partial biography, for I have largely passed over the private life of my subject – for which the available sources of information are in any case limited – and much else, in order to retain focus around a central thread tracing Smith’s political development and how this affected his actions. It may well be that a ‘total’ portrait, with ‘everything in the pot’, might have enabled greater understanding of Smith’s career, but that presupposes that there existed ingredients to go into the pot.

This thesis therefore exists within limits. It provides an account of one individual’s political development, but it attempts to contextualise this in the changing political and social circumstances from the 1920s to the 1970s; and it is written on the premise that the career of Dan Smith provides a lens through which far left-wing politics in the 1940s, the ideological battles within the Labour Party of the 1950s, and the urban planning and regionalist movements of the 1960s can be viewed.

The thesis also examines the circumstances of his fall from power in 1970 and gaoling on corruption charges in 1974. A description of Smith’s public relations career, his relationship with the architect John Poulson, and his gaoling for corruption – part of Chapter 6 and all of chapter 7 - may be open to criticisms of superfluity or irrelevance in a thesis that is presented as a political biography. A good deal of discussion and consideration was given to this question in the planning

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* p152

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* pp157-158

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid* p158



of the thesis, and I eventually decided that these issues did merit inclusion in some detail, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, very many, perhaps nearly all mentions of Smith, in histories, newspaper and magazine articles and in the broadcast media, refer to his gaoling and in very many cases define him by the circumstances of his fall: the ‘disgraced councillor’ trope, addressed below. To ignore the circumstances of his fall, even in a politically focussed account, could seem perverse – Hamlet without the prince - and might also lead to the charge that the thesis might be attempting to whitewash Smith’s reputation.

Secondly, Smith’s business interests and his involvement with Poulson were of a part with what might be described as his modernising mission. Smith was good at communicating. It was natural that when in the 1960s he sought ways to make money he should use his communications skills in the field of public relations; and he had a genuine admiration for Poulson, seeing Poulson’s creation of a multidisciplinary practice in conflict the conventions of the architectural establishment and his work in developing modern town centres, housing, leisure and educational facilities as similar to Smith’s attempts to remodel the environment of the city and the organisation of local government. To that extent, Smith’s business career can be seen as an extension of his career in politics and public service, and not as a separate part of his life. In addition, the 1970 corruption charges that brought an end to his public life had a particular impact in Peterlee, where the impetus behind his plans to create a science campus was lost and the town’s administration returned to a more conventional development path.

Thirdly, an examination the charges laid against Smith before the 1974 trial arguably raised questions about their fairness, in particular the charge relating to Peterlee. Once these were raised during the research for this thesis, it would be unjust to a balanced portrait of Smith’s life not to have included a discussion of the issue in this narrative.

## Myths

A further aim of the thesis is to counter the many myths which have grown up about Smith and which obscure understanding of his career and the history of Newcastle and NE England in that period. In most of the country beyond north east England he is not remembered, if at all, for his achievements. Instead, his name has become inextricably linked with that of the architect John Poulson; 'T Dan Smith' has become shorthand for local government corruption, and the truth about his career in public and commercial life has become subsumed into modern political myth which portrays the irredeemably corrupt local councillor doing the bidding of his paymaster.

Christopher Flood in *Political Myth* defines political myth - as opposed to sacred myth - as "an ideologically marked account of past, present or predicted political events" which needs to be accepted as true by a community or social group – whether the account is factually accurate or not is immaterial.<sup>18</sup> However, in the case of Smith the most pervading myths do incorporate falsehoods or deliberate absences and evasions over and above issues of selection and interpretation of facts. A survey of press articles and other sources in recent years provides numerous examples. Smith's obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* is typical, containing the following:

Known as 'Mr Newcastle', Smith was the nearest Britain has had to a Chicago style city mayor. He controlled all the key committees on the city council, which he used to further the interests of John Poulson, a corrupt architect and developer who was the chief client of Smith's public relations firm.<sup>19</sup>

The cliché of 'Chicago style city mayor' – Smith differed in his style of leadership from Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley in far more ways than the two men were similar – is frequently encountered, and began long before his fall; but there were also rebuttals of this: a newspaper profile in 1965 arguing that "The portrait of Dan Smith as the town boss, a provincial dictator, is a myth created by remote metropolitan journalists out of touch with the facts. His achievements have been

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<sup>18</sup> Flood, Christopher G., *Political Myth* (London 1996) pp42-44

<sup>19</sup> Massingberd, Hugh, *The Daily Telegraph Fourth Book of Obituaries: Rogues* (London 1999) pp223-227

gained within the tortuous framework of local government...”.<sup>20</sup>

The Telegraph obituary is incorrect in saying that Smith used his public office in Newcastle to benefit Poulson, whose companies undertook no work in Newcastle while Smith was in a position on the council to help him. John Ardagh’s *A Tale of Five Cities* went further:

“At [Smith’s] trial in Leeds, it was proven that he had misused his public posts - on the city council and later the NEPC [Northern Economic Planning Council] - to award building contracts to big national firms from whom he took large sums of money as commission.”<sup>21</sup>

No charges were related to his Newcastle role; and Smith’s role as Chairman of the NEPC was purely advisory and held no power to award building contracts.

A further aspect of the Smith/Poulson myth consists of its localisation as a north eastern affair. Thus: “... the Poulson scandal of the 1960s - when members of the party’s finest in the North-east were found to have taken backhanders from a venal architect...”<sup>22</sup>; and “The Poulson scandal in the north east of England involved the payment of bribes to politicians in exchange for building contracts”<sup>23</sup> Such judgements ignore the fact that Poulson’s network extended throughout the United Kingdom and overseas. Among the *dramatis personae* were John Cordle, Conservative MP for Bournemouth East & Christchurch, and Reginald Maudling, Tory former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Herbert Butcher, clerk of West Riding County Council, Alfred Roberts, MP for Normanton, and George Pottinger, under-secretary at the Scottish Office in Edinburgh. Poulson’s interests spread to Angola, Nigeria, Malta, Egypt, Greece and the Middle East. In Britain Smith, working for Poulson, had connections from Scotland to Margate (over 200 authorities in all being approached. It was very far from being a local north eastern problem.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> DF/TDS Box 3839: Tom Little, ‘A View from Tyneside’, *Northern Echo* 27 February 1965

<sup>21</sup> Ardagh, John, *A Tale of Five Cities* (London 1979) p207

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, D J, *The Independent on Sunday* 14 June 2009

<sup>23</sup> Johnston, Philip, *Daily Telegraph* 14 May 2009

<sup>24</sup> The most comprehensive existing survey of the Poulson affair is Fitzwalter, Raymond & Taylor, David, *Web of Corruption. The Story of J G L Poulson and T Dan Smith* (London 1981)

To a metropolitan-centred media and political establishment the north east of England may seem far away and irrelevant. A corruption scandal in this distant province remains just that, rather than a reflection on the moral health of the nation as a whole. Portrayal of the north east as the wayward ‘other’ can bring, and continues to bring, complacency, so three decades after the Poulson scandal, the myth still has its uses. Journalist Leo McKinstry wrote, regarding allegations regarding the Labour Party in 2007:

Nothing better exposes the sleaziness within the Labour-dominated political culture of the North East than the party’s latest financial scandal.<sup>25</sup> This is a region where abuse of office, self-enrichment, nepotism, dodgy payouts and favouritism have been going on for decades. Indeed, it is this northern climate of sharp practice which led to the biggest political corruption scandal in British history... Smith had presided over epic abuses in the city’s development programme...”<sup>26</sup>

Or Ben MacIntyre, writing about the same matter in *The Times*:

...the whiff of scandal blowing off the Tyne is a familiar story of big money, local business and political funding, the outcome of a political culture where one party has dominated for generations... some have not been able to resist recalling the most notorious scandal of the 1970s, the jailing of T Dan Smith... and the architect John Poulson, for their part in huge bribery web [sic] relating to the award of building contracts in the North East... T Dan Smith, the leader of Newcastle council, was probably the closest thing this country has ever had to a US-style Big City Boss... Linking up with the architect John Poulson, Smith was responsible for an astonishing abuse of the city’s development programme, encouraging local councillors to push through Poulson’s building schemes, and earning an illegal fortune estimated at £156,000 in the process.<sup>27</sup>

More serious still is the way that myth can infect the writing of history, and prevent a balanced assessment of events and careers. One guide to local government referred to Poulson’s “mediocre municipal architecture ... none more famous than the work he undertook for T Dan Smith’s Newcastle”, continuing that Smith sought to

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<sup>25</sup> The supposed irregularity of a loan made by a Newcastle businessman to the Labour Party.

<sup>26</sup> McKinstry, Leo, *Daily Mail*, 28 November 2007

<sup>27</sup> Macintyre, Ben, *The Times* 3 December 2007. As stated earlier, Smith’s contacts on behalf of Poulson covered the whole of Britain, and Poulson played no role in Newcastle’s city developments. Smith’s PR companies earned a total of £156,000 in payments from Poulson for PR services in the 1960s; this figure does not represent Smith’s personal gain.

influence other authorities “relying on corrupt practices and Masonic networks to further this.”<sup>28</sup>

Likewise, Dominic Sandbrook: “...Newcastle’s council boss, T Dan Smith... turned out to be up to his neck in the Poulson corruption scandal, having pocketed generous kickbacks in return for approving miles of tower blocks.”<sup>29</sup>

These examples are given as some justification for this work. While myths, and the purposes behind them, can be studied as evidence of attitudes and states of mind in history, I would argue that myth itself can be the enemy of history, albeit often a beguiling enemy.<sup>30</sup> This is a contentious view. In this I am at one with those historians who, argue Samuel and Thompson, “are apt to see myth, if the notice it at all, as an impediment to their true work.”<sup>31</sup> Myth is, they argue fundamental to human thought and historians are by no means immune to using myth in the form of ‘symbolic categories’ such as ‘the nation’ or ‘the common people’.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, they continue, referencing Elizabeth Tonkin, “too many of us weigh evidence with an instinctive naivety which rests on our failure to recognize rationalistic realism as the special myth of our own Western culture.”<sup>33</sup> Tonkin argues that the view of myth and history as opposites is a false dichotomy.<sup>34</sup> Commenting on oral histories, but emphasising that her arguments apply equally to written histories, Tonkin argues that “representations of pastness” are dependent on the *genre* or manner of discourse, and that one cannot fully interpret such a representation unless familiar with the *genre*. “It follows that professional historians who use the recollections of others cannot just scan them for useful facts to pick out, like currants from a cake. Any such facts are so embedded in the representation that it directs an interpretation of them,

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<sup>28</sup> Stevens, Andrew *The Politico’s Guide to Local Government* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed London 2006) p 26. Poulson did no work in Newcastle while Smith was leader; nor was Smith a Freemason; the issue of whether Smith was corrupt will be addressed later in this thesis.

<sup>29</sup> Sandbrook, Dominic, *State of Emergency. The Way We Were: Britain, 1970-1974* (London 2010) p 26. The only place where Smith had the power to approve housing developments was in Newcastle, where Poulson received no contracts.

<sup>30</sup> One political biographer who I had contacted for advice emailed to me – tongue in cheek - that “I hope you don’t disprove too many of the legends that have grown up about Dan”

<sup>31</sup> Samuel, R & Thompson, P, ‘Introduction’ in Samuel, R & Thompson, P (eds), *The Myths we Live By* (London 1990) p3

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* p4

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid* p4

<sup>34</sup> Tonkin, Elizabeth, ‘History and the myth of realism’ in Samuel & Thompson *op cit* p25

and its very ordering, its plotting, and its metaphors bear meaning too.”<sup>35</sup> Meaning is only transparent if the conventions of the author are shared; while “‘myth’ is recognized as an unfamiliar code for representing changes and events”.<sup>36</sup>

Were this thesis a study of popular or media perceptions of Smith, or of twentieth century planning, or of the Poulson affair or of local government corruption, then the study of the myths I have cited would be justified and would be useful evidence. But in a political biography seeking to establish, as far as possible, the facts about Smith’s career and to put those facts in context, they are largely valueless.

Moreover, myth allows the truth, or at any rate objective and verifiable facts, to be distorted or denied for political ends: as Margaret Macmillan wrote, “Political and other leaders too often get away with misusing or abusing history for their own ends because the rest of us do not know enough to challenge them.”<sup>37</sup> The Mephistophelean image of Dan Smith created and perpetuated by the myth-makers is a distortion and over-simplification of an often complex reality, replete with contradictions, and – Macmillan again – “We must contest the one-sided, even false, histories that are out there in the public domain. If we do not, we allow our leaders and opinion-makers to use history to bolster false claims and justify bad and foolish policies.”<sup>38</sup>

Macmillan’s comments apply equally well, however, to another myth which affects a balanced consideration of Smith’s career: the self-mythologising of his autobiographical writings which form an important source for a study of his life. The mythical element, argues Peneff, forms the framework on which individuals create their life stories, turning “incoherent and arbitrary” facts and memories into a structured narrative.<sup>39</sup> And, as Samuel and Thompson write, “Any life story, written or oral, is in one sense a personal mythology, a self-justification. And all embody and illustrate character ideals: the desire for independence, say, in those who

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid* p27

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid* p27

<sup>37</sup> Macmillan, Margaret, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (London 2009) p 36

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid* p37

<sup>39</sup> Peneff, Jean, ‘Myths in Life Stories’, in Samuel & Thompson *op cit* p37

celebrate their childhood for its moments of freedom, or filial loyalty for those who fetishize family tradition.”<sup>40</sup>

Smith’s 1970 autobiography shows such character ideals and self-justification in large measure. In recounting his achievements and even his failures, he presents himself as fair minded and in the right, generous with his energies, and magnanimous.<sup>41</sup> In the final pages, he attempts to “look in on my own character, make-up and aspirations...”.<sup>42</sup> Of his public life, he muses: “What has prompted me to spend such a lot of time, and so much energy on it? If I had devoted the equivalent... time and energy to my business career, I might by now be a rich man... So what has motivated me? Three things, I believe. The desire to serve, the challenge presented by problems, and my interest in people.”<sup>43</sup>

On the final page, he refers to “the sensitive part of me which wanted to be understood. Not thanked, or revered, or liked. Just understood.”<sup>44</sup>

The presentation of a misunderstood paragon is in itself a self-created myth, notwithstanding that the claims made by Smith for his achievements in the 1970 autobiography were largely factual. But self-mythologising can also involve omission or blurring of facts. His account of his wartime activity in the peace movement and the ILP portrays agitation for a better post-war world; his treatment of his activities in the ILP, the controversy they aroused, and his career in the Trotskyist Workers’ International League/Revolutionary Communist Party - in which he was the led an undercover Trotskyist group within the ILP working for the WIL/RCP – is covered the bald statement that “I had been a member of the ILP and, for a brief spell, had become a Trotskyite. I had been expelled from both organisations.”<sup>45</sup> An account of his somewhat Machiavellian activities during this period, covered in chapter 2, might not have fitted with the impression of the idealist

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<sup>40</sup> Samuel, R & Thompson, P, ‘Introduction’ in Samuel & Thompson op cit p10

<sup>41</sup> Smith, T Dan, *Dan Smith. An Autobiography* (Newcastle 1970). On magnanimity, for example, p151: “...if some people have responded by thinking the worst of me, I can only repeat I bear no ill will towards them, or indeed to anyone.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid* p150

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid* p150

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid* p151

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid* p30

and rebel that he was seemingly trying to create.<sup>46</sup> As sociologist Jean Peneff writes, “Many people let themselves off lightly in telling their life story, so that shameful behaviour is seldom recalled...”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Peneff argues that the mythical element is central to the recounted life stories of individuals, with common elements recurring in particular types of person, the ‘self-made’ businessman, for example. Accounts of family life are “always tinged with fiction, whether we run it down or embellish it,” and no life story should be accepted as an accurate account, but subject to close examination, with “searches for deceptions and mistakes, criticisms of probability or good sense.”<sup>48</sup> In dealing with autobiographical accounts, he continues, one has to distinguish between imagination and observation, to realise “by experience or intuition” where the subject will be a good or vague source, and that a narrator can display both these qualities, “since detachment, a sense of objectivity, and an aptitude for realism of perception can coexist with blindness to what is portrayed, a wish to pass over critical moments of existence, or a tendency to systematic misrepresentation.”<sup>49</sup>

The history of Smith’s career remains an intensely controversial and political issue in the north east, marked by private debate, controversy in newspaper pages, and still invoked in debate on issues of polity. Clearing away the myths that obscure and prevent a proper understanding of Smith’s career might in itself be a sufficient justification for this work.

A critical assessment of Smith’s career is timely for other reasons. Smith was a powerful advocate for regional administration, an issue which periodically appears on the national political agenda. Government policy in recent years of encouraging major cities to adopt the ‘elected mayor’ model of governance, and ‘regional mayors’ in charge of municipal agglomerations is also focusing political and media attention on the issues faced by regional conurbations. Such matters are better understood with an appreciation of the history that lies behind them; and an assessment of Smith’s career forms one part of that history.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid* p 30: “...I was conscious of having been a rebel for 20 years... [Labour Party members looked on Smith as] ...a sort of devil incarnate who would not accept party discipline. They were sure that I would do what I wanted to do and say what I wanted to say. They were dead right!”

<sup>47</sup> Peneff *op cit* p39

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid* pp36-42

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid* p42



A critical biography of Smith would also contribute to an understanding of the regional history of northern England and of responses to the decline in its staple industries, as well as illuminating and explaining many of the changes that occurred in the regional capital, Newcastle, during the 1960s and 1970s. Regional history may currently be in the position occupied by the discipline of urban history forty years ago, and “with equally daunting methodological and conceptual problems” but it is expanding in scope.<sup>50</sup> Its overlaps with disciplines such as geography and political science may be obvious; there is room, too, for biography in assessing the role of significant individuals.

As an examination of Smith’s core political career, the thesis will not describe his business career, except (as mentioned above) insofar as it was to bring about the end of his career through his relationship with John Poulson. Nor will it examine the other criminal trials faced by Smith – the Sporle case in Wandsworth in 1970-71, in which he was acquitted, and the 1975 trial in Birmingham in which corruption charges were brought against Smith and his colleague Ron Dilleigh, among others; Smith was found not guilty on the instructions of the trial judge. The thesis will not look at his personal and family life, nor his time in gaol, or his post-prison activities.<sup>51</sup>

### **Sources: published material**

The thesis draws upon a wide range of sources. Smith wrote two autobiographies. One – *Dan Smith. An Autobiography* - was published in 1970.<sup>52</sup> Later he wrote a second autobiography which was not published.<sup>53</sup> I treat with caution both these autobiographies, and other autobiographical fragments: these may be useful on his feelings and opinions, but can be factually inaccurate and are unreliable about episodes such as Smith’s wartime political activity. In addition, as referred to above,

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<sup>50</sup> Lancaster, B, Newton, D & Vall, N (eds), *An Agenda for Regional History* (Newcastle 2007) p vii

<sup>51</sup> Many of these aspects are covered in Foote Wood, C, *T Dan Smith “Voice of the North” - Downfall of a Visionary* (Bishop Auckland 2010)

<sup>52</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit*

<sup>53</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography (n.d.). This is held by the Amber Film and Photography Collective in Newcastle, and consists of a typescript approximately 400 pages long (there are anomalies in the pagination). It has no title or date but has references to events up to 1977; Smith appeared in and was to a large extent the subject of the Amber film *T Dan Smith. A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Utopia* released in 1987, and it might not be unreasonable to assume the manuscript was produced between 1977 and 1987. It has recently been digitised and is available at [amber-online.com/collections/t-dan-smith-autobiography/](http://amber-online.com/collections/t-dan-smith-autobiography/)

in Smith's own writings, as well as recorded interviews, he is not immune from self-mythologising. The autobiographies of a number of his contemporaries and associates have also been used; similar caveats apply, perhaps most of all to the autobiography of John Poulson<sup>54</sup>.

Published material focussing on Smith's career consists of the 1970 autobiography referred to above, and *T Dan Smith. "Voice of the North" – Downfall of a Visionary* (Bishop Auckland 2010) by regional journalist and local government leader Chris Foote Wood.<sup>55</sup> Foote Wood's account is primarily a factual survey without a great deal of contextualisation or analysis, based largely (albeit not completely) on secondary sources, presenting a generally positive impression of Smith. Journal articles examining Smith's career consist of Elliott's 1975 study 'T Dan Smith in Newcastle-upon-Tyne' in *Public Administration* and articles in a special edition in 1994 of *North East Labour History Bulletin*.<sup>56</sup>

Elliott's account, published at the nadir of Smith's fortunes, portrays Smith's leadership of Newcastle City Council in glowing terms, verging at times on the hagiographic, and sometimes at variance with Smith's own accounts: for example, describing Smith's ability to build up support in the local Labour Party where Smith, in his autobiography, stresses his 'outsider' status.<sup>57</sup> Elliott, in describing the changes wrought in and by Newcastle City Council during Smith's leadership emphasises above all the importance of leadership: "The position of leader will vary in power and prestige according to the use to which it is put by the man elected to serve. If he is energetic and talented, with definite ideas, he will be able to use the position to put the ideas into practice; he will, in fact, lead."<sup>58</sup> Smith was able to apply these leadership qualities as Labour group leader and as the head of the various council committees he chaired; in making organisational changes to the council; and in bringing about "changes in attitudes and expectancy" by appointing progressive

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<sup>54</sup> Poulson, J G L, *The Price. The Autobiography of John Poulson, Architect* (London 1981)

<sup>55</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit*; Foote Wood *op cit*. Chris Foote Wood, a former Liberal Democrat councillor, was for several years leader of Wear Valley District Council in County Durham, and was an elected member of the County Council (*ibid* p345).

<sup>56</sup> Elliott, J, 'T Dan Smith in Newcastle-upon-Tyne', *Local Government Studies* 1(2) April 1975 pp33-43; *North East Labour History Society Bulletin* 28 (1994)

<sup>57</sup> Elliott (1975) *op cit* pp33-34; Smith, T Dan *op cit* pp30-32

<sup>58</sup> Elliott (1975) *op cit* p35

officials and in winning the support of councillors and officers to his ideas.<sup>59</sup> Smith gained authority from his “forceful, dynamic personality, his ability and hard work”, but at the same time had “an engaging and stimulating personality” and was a good listener, willing to engage with groups outside the council.<sup>60</sup> Opposition to Smith and his proposals is portrayed as relatively minor, or capable of being dissolved by his persuasive oratory.<sup>61</sup>

Elliott does address Smith’s faults, but in a much more perfunctory way: cutting corners and riding rough-shod over opposition, discouragement of critical discussion, a tendency to select prestige projects, gloss over difficulties, not think things through, and excessive trust in ‘experts’ are among the factors listed in the single negative paragraph.<sup>62</sup>

The 1994 *North East Labour History Society Bulletin* offers a greater diversity of views. ‘T Dan Smith. The Youthful Revolutionary’ by Ray Challinor is an uncritical survey of Smith’s early political career, arguing (with some exaggeration) that he “emerged as a political figure of significance” during the war years. More realistically, Challinor points out that it was in this period that Smith developed his talents for oratory, organisation and tactics.<sup>63</sup> David Byrne takes a rather different view in ‘T Dan Smith. The Disastrous Impact of a Liberal, Authoritarian Moderniser’.<sup>64</sup> Byrne asserts that Smith’s aim in entering local government was to gain council contracts ; that he became rich by corrupt activities; but also that he “did the greatest harm when he was trying to do good for others as well as for himself” – in the redevelopment of Newcastle.<sup>65</sup> This was carried out in a manner described by Byrne as “an authoritarianism of the insiders against the outsiders.”<sup>66</sup> Smith, Byrne concludes, shared the contempt for democracy that, in “socialist analysis”, is a feature of right-wing social democracy and the “derivatives of

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid* p36

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* p37

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid* pp 34, 36, 37, 39-40

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid* pp 40-41

<sup>63</sup> Challinor, Ray, ‘T Dan Smith. The Youthful Revolutionary’, *North East Labour History Bulletin* 28 (1994) pp15-18.

<sup>64</sup> Byrne, David, ‘T Dan Smith. The Disastrous Impact of a Liberal, Authoritarian Moderniser’, *North East Labour History Society Bulletin* 28 (1994) pp19-26

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*; quote from p25.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*.

Leninism” – both traditions having influenced Smith. He concludes that Smith – influenced both by “the derivatives of Leninism” and “right wing social democracy”, shared the contempt for democratic process that (in “socialist analysis”) is a feature of both.<sup>67</sup>

A more measured assessment is given by Nigel Todd, in his essay ‘Ambition and Harsh Reality. Local Politics... Local Politicians’. Todd sees Smith as a figure of many contradictions: “fierce commitment” to state education, yet sending his own children to private school, concern for social justice for the poor with what Todd describes (somewhat arguably) as “a lavish personal lifestyle”.<sup>68</sup> Todd argues that the price for Smith’s modernisation of the city was “too high” and muses about Smith’s motivations. “Was he a Socialist idealist who felt that his ends justified the means and got lost along the way? Was he an authoritarian town hall ‘boss’ advancing the interests of builders and planners...? Or was he simply ‘on the make’? The answer probably combines each of these elements, but the root of the enigma lies in what proportions.”<sup>69</sup> These arguments are to some extent based upon a belief in Smith’s guiltiness of corruption charges, an issue I examine in chapter 7.

The literature of planning history contains a number of works that focus – if not on Smith – on the plans for Newcastle introduced by him, in whole or in significant chapters. This lies on a continuum from technocratic celebration to later condemnation, and a swing back towards revisionism and reappraisal.

Key among the technocratic works are Burns, *Newcastle. A Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne* and Holliday (ed), *City Centre Redevelopment*.<sup>70</sup> In the former, Wilfred Burns describes in detail his city redevelopment plan, and an essay in the latter by Burns’ successor as City Planning Officer Kenneth Galley takes the story forward to the early 1970s.<sup>71</sup> Both, naturally enough given their authors’ profession,

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid* p26

<sup>68</sup> Todd, Nigel, ‘Ambition and Harsh Reality. Local Politics... Local Politicians’ in Flowers, Anna & Histon, Vanessa (eds) *Water under the Bridges: Newcastle’s Twentieth Century* (Newcastle 1999) p99

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid* p99

<sup>70</sup> Burns, Wilfred, *Newcastle. A Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne* (London 1967); Holliday, John (ed), *City Centre Redevelopment* (London 1973)

<sup>71</sup> Galley, Kenneth, ‘Newcastle upon Tyne’ in Holliday *op cit* pp207-233

are uncritically accepting of the policy of large scale urban redevelopment. A more qualified, though largely positive, assessment of the Smith-Burns era occupies a chapter in Lionel Esher's *A Broken Wave. The Rebuilding of England 1940-1980*.<sup>72</sup>

Two works deal with the aftermath of the optimistic municipal housing programme of the 1960s. Elizabeth Gittus' *Flats, Families and the Under-Fives* is a case study of provision of housing for young families in the Cruddas Park area of Newcastle, developed in the early 1960s, drawing attention to the problems of high-rise accommodation for parents with young children.<sup>73</sup> *The Evangelistic Bureaucrat* by Jon Gower Davies examined housing policy in the Rye Hill area of west Newcastle, relating how a policy originally intended to retain and improve nineteenth century houses (hailed by Smith as 'Operation Revitalise' and covered in chapter 4) led to 'planning blight' and the eventual demolition of the properties, and examining the culture of the city's planning department, which he described as a "charismatic self conception".<sup>74</sup>

David Byrne argued in 'The Reconstruction of Newcastle' that the 1960s replanning was carried out in the interests of the commercial elite of the city, and failed the interests of the working class people of Newcastle.<sup>75</sup> Smith was, states Byrne, the "leading groupie" of technocratic planners: "What drove him was a sense of 'vision' - vision not so much of social justice as of the 'new' as 'good'... There was no political vision of any kind set against the technical vision of the planners."<sup>76</sup> An argument that Smith completely lacked a political vision for the changes he urged is at complete odds with the purpose of this thesis, which in tracing Smith's political career attempts to show how his beliefs led him to seek change and modernisation at the civic and regional level (and by doing so to influence change at the national and international level), and how his political vision embraced more than economic determinism and management but also art, science and the environment.

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<sup>72</sup> Esher, Lionel, *A Broken Wave. The Rebuilding of England 1940-1980* (Harmondsworth 1983): Chapter 4 pp172-93 on Newcastle.

<sup>73</sup> Gittus, Elizabeth, *Flats, Families and the Under-Fives* (London 1976)

<sup>74</sup> Davies, Jon Gower, *The Evangelistic Bureaucrat: A Study of a Planning Exercise in Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (London 1972); quotation from p121.

<sup>75</sup> Byrne, David 'The Reconstruction of Newcastle. Planning since 1945' in Colls, Robert & Lancaster, Bill, (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History* (Chichester 2001) pp 341-360

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid* p350

More positive views of Smith's legacy have also been voiced. John Pendlebury has drawn attention to the pioneering work of Burns and Smith in establishing proto-conservation areas in Newcastle.<sup>77</sup> A nuanced portrait of Newcastle by urbanist Owen Hatherley sees the ideals of 1960s Newcastle as "an intriguing fusion of regionalism – devolution, fierce local pride – and internationalism, achieved by looking out towards Europe and the Third World for ideas both architectural and political."<sup>78</sup> This was, continues Hatherley, "a potential enclave, a genuine city state" which Smith and his allies were attempting to create.<sup>79</sup>

The broad range of subject areas addressed in this thesis, including social history, political history, local government, planning history, regional development, means that distinct literature groups are relevant to the various chapters in Smith's career. I have therefore adopted the approach of an embedded literature review, where the sources are addressed and discussed within the relevant chapters.

### **Sources: oral history recordings and transcripts**

Similar caveats apply to recorded interviews with Smith's contemporaries. By the time research began in 2007, few were still alive, and of the survivors, many had failing memories of events taking place forty, fifty or more years previously. Some of his contemporaries were unwilling to be interviewed and I believe that in many cases this was because of the controversy which Smith's career was still felt to stimulate.

The use of oral history evidence falls into two categories. One is the interviews that I conducted in the course of my research. In these, I was able to direct the questioning towards areas in which I was interested, with varying degrees of success. The other category was of interviews conducted by others. Most of these formed part of the large collection of taped interviews conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s by Peter McTigue and Chris Ford for abortive book projects with Smith. Brief

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<sup>77</sup> Pendlebury, John 'Alas Smith and Burns? Conservation Planning in Newcastle City Centre, 1959-1968', *Planning Perspectives* 16(2) (2001)

<sup>78</sup> Hatherley, Owen, *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (London 2010) p177

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid* pp177-178

summaries of the tapes used were prepared by the late Bill Griffiths, but no transcripts were available for the several dozen hours of recordings. In these interviews, I was obviously reliant on the questions which McTigue and Ford wished to ask, together with Smith's own control of the course the conversation took.

Another significant oral source was the collection of recorded and transcribed interviews with Dan Smith, Ken Sketheway, and Jack Johnston by Murray Martin and Steve Trafford of Amber Collective conducted for the film *T Dan Smith. A Funny Thing Happened on the Road to Utopia* (1987).

Oral history is a contentious methodology, and a relatively young one: although one might perhaps describe a writer and journalist such as Henry Mayhew, whose work *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-52), together with articles in the *Morning Post*, included much testimony from individuals, as an 'oral historian', and other social investigators of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also used oral evidence, the practice only really gained popularity with the availability of (relatively) cheap and portable recording equipment in the post-1945 era.<sup>80</sup> Two principal schools of practice emerged: historians employing oral history as a form of archival practice, and social historians, many with socialist views, attempting to create 'history from below', empowering and giving voice to the voiceless: women, ethnic minorities, and other disempowered minority groups.<sup>81</sup>

But as a methodology it had shortcomings; Eric Hobsbawm described oral history as "a remarkably slippery medium for preserving facts."<sup>82</sup> Arthur M Schlesinger Jr saw oral history as "essentially supplementary evidence. What it is good at is to give a sense of the relations among people – who worked with whom, who liked whom, who influenced whom... the recollected material cannot pretend to the exactitude of... the White House tapes of the Nixon years."<sup>83</sup> These drawbacks reflect the level

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<sup>80</sup> Thompson, E P & Yeo, Eileen, *The Unknown Mayhew* (Harmondsworth 1973); Grele, Ronald J, 'Oral History as Evidence' in Charlton, T L, Myers, L E & Sharpless, R, *Handbook of Oral History* (Lanham, MD 2008) p 48

<sup>81</sup> Grele *op cit* pp 48-49; Green, Anna & Troup, Katherine, *The Houses of History. A critical reader in twentieth-century history and theory* (Manchester 1999) p231; MacRaild, Donald M & Taylor, Avram, *Social Theory and Social History* (Basingstoke 2004) pp126-127

<sup>82</sup> Green & Troup *op cit* p230

<sup>83</sup> Greele *op cit* p45

of usefulness of oral testimony in this thesis. So far as my own interviews are concerned, I was not preparing a social history where exactness about dates or events was not expected. Nor was I interviewing people out of interest in their own lives; I sought mainly information about my subject, Dan Smith, and the milieu in which he operated. Failing memories, the passage of time, perhaps faults with my interviewing technique may all have contributed to what were, by and large, fairly disappointing results from my point of view.

Interviews conducted by others likewise had drawbacks. Most of the material in this category consisted of interviews with Smith. He was a voluble interviewee and his words were often difficult to transcribe in a useful (to me) way, as his responses to questions or comments would become long, unstructured replies moving from topic to topic in a way that was almost stream of consciousness. It was also important to bear certain factors in mind when listening to Smith talk. He was speaking in the 1980s and 1990s of events that had taken place between the 1920s and the 1970s. How good was his memory of those events, how accurate was the information he related? Was he presenting his actions in a positive light? To what extent was he unconsciously mythologizing his past actions to fit an appropriate narrative for the behaviour of a socialist in mid-twentieth century Tyneside? This last question recalls particularly the work of Alistair Thompson whose work with ANZAC veterans on their experiences of the First World War applied a theory of 'composure' developed by the Popular Memory Group at Birmingham University. This argues that people compose their personal memories to make sense of past and present, composing memories that give comfort and repressing those that are painful or unsafe, to conform more nearly with a national memory or myth, in this case that of the heroic ANZAC soldier, courageous but egalitarian, motivated by 'mateship'.<sup>84</sup>

### **Sources: written archival material**

The main archive source used were the papers of Dan Smith held at Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums. The great bulk of this large collection contains Smith's papers from the mid-1950s onwards, with only a very little earlier material. It is

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<sup>84</sup> Green & Troup *op cit* p237; Thompson, A, 'ANZAC Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia' in Green & Troup *op cit* pp239-252., Thompson, A, 'The Anzac legend: exploring national myth and memory in Australia' in [Samuel & Thompson *op cit*



complemented by material currently in my possession, donated by the Smith family and by Peter McTigue.

On Smith's wartime and immediate postwar career, other main sources used were the Jock Haston papers at the University of Hull Library, the ILP archives at the London School of Economics Library, the Glasgow Caledonian Archive of the Trotskyist Tradition (GCATT) at Glasgow Caledonian University, the Working Class Movement Library, Salford, the papers of the Communist Party of Great Britain at the Labour History Archives in Manchester, and the papers of Jimmy Deane at the Modern Records Centre, Warwick University.

For his career in the Labour Party, as council leader, NEPC chairman and Peterlee chairman, key resources include the Labour Party archives at the Labour History Archives, and archives of a number of Government departments held at The National Archives: principally the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the Department of Economic Affairs, and the Ministry of Technology.

On corruption allegations, extensive use has been made of the transcripts of the Poulson bankruptcy hearings held at West Yorkshire Archives, Wakefield, and the case files of Leeds Crown Court held The National Archives.

In addition to archive material, use was made of contemporary newspapers and periodicals, especially those periodicals relating to politics, local government, and urban/regional planning news and issues.

Sources:

### **Structure**

The structure of the thesis is broadly chronological, with chapters laid out as follows:

**Chapter 1** examines Smith's childhood and youth. It will consider his family background in the context of the debate about roughness and respectability in the working class; and examine the influences on his thinking and political awareness: his autodidact father, his rudimentary board school education; his spasmodic work as a jobbing painter, night classes and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

and National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), and his move into the Peace Pledge Union.

**Chapter 2** examines Smith's political career between the late 1930s and the immediate post-war period: his career in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and his advancement in that organisation; his secret membership of the Trotskyist Workers' International League (WIL), his expulsion from the ILP, and his subsequent expulsion from the WIL's successor organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). As well as giving a detailed insight into the workings of the ILP and the Trotskyist movement in the wartime north east, it demonstrates how Smith's activities in this period were a formative apprenticeship for his future political career.

**Chapter 3** examines Smith's political career between his abandonment of Trotskyism in 1947 and the accession of the Labour Party to power in Newcastle in 1958. While building a private business career, he was simultaneously rebuilding his political career as a Labour councillor. The nature of the local Labour Party and its opponents, the Progressive Party (a group of anti-Labour councillors), are examined, as are Smith's efforts to build support in the party. The chapter also looks at Smith's ideological development in this period: the influence of James Burnham on his thinking, and Smith's position in the swirling currents of Bevanism and Revisionism.

**Chapter 4** examines the six years during which Smith served as de facto leader of Newcastle City Council. In that period he introduced plans that changed the face of the city and made significant changes to the way it was run. This chapter examines some of these changes, focusing on the physical replanning of the city centre (set in a historical context of planning in Newcastle) and the inspirations for the plan, the role of arts and leisure in his plans, Smith's views on the role of Newcastle as a regional capital, and – importantly – his innovative creation of administrative structures and processes to implement change – in particular the creation of the powerful new posts of Chief Planning Officer and Principal City Officer. It will also consider the failure of the plans to be carried through to completion.

**Chapter 5** examines the origins and development of regionalist policies, and Smith's role in advancing the regionalist debate and his work as chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Council (NEPC) and member of the Redcliffe-Maud Commission on local government reform. It concludes that his efforts to advance regional structures by means of his stewardship of the NEPC were wasted as he had taken on a position with no power and waning influence, as central government lost interest in regional planning.

**Chapter 6** Dan Smith was involved with the Peterlee New Town for eight years, initially as a public relations consultant and subsequently as chairman of its development corporation. At Peterlee the different strands of his career came together with, for Smith, catastrophic consequences. The episode is worth examining in detail for the light it casts upon his methods of work: as a networker, as a lobbyist for his business clients and for the New Town, as a 'quangocrat', as a 'visionary' able to inspire senior business executives with his futuristic ambitions, and as a capable player of the political game even in the corridors of Whitehall.<sup>85</sup> It involves an assessment of how realistic was the proposal for Peterlee to become a pioneering science centre. Close examination of the network of relationships between Smith, senior officials at Peterlee, and the architect John Poulson also, I believe, offers a further corrective to the 'T Dan Smith myth' outlined below and questions the Peterlee-related charge against him.<sup>86</sup>

**Chapter 7** examines the development of Smith's role as PR consultant for with the architect John Poulson, including his trial for corruption in 1974. It considers the nature of the charges laid against Smith, concluding that his association with Poulson was located in "an ill-defined borderland" where lobbying shades into inducement, at a time when the moral borderline was shifting as a result of publicity engendered by the Poulson affair.

**Chapter 8** draws together thoughts and conclusions about Smith's career and its significance.

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<sup>85</sup> I am grateful to Professor Keith Shaw for introducing the useful neologism 'quangocrat' to me.

<sup>86</sup> This re-examination was suggested to me by Foote Wood *op cit* pp195-206

## Chapter 1: A Wallsend Upbringing

### Family background

Thomas Daniel Smith was born on 11 May 1915 at 62 Holly Avenue, Wallsend, a shipbuilding and mining town lying on the north bank of the River Tyne east of Newcastle. His father, Robert Smith, was a coal miner born in County Durham; his mother, born Ada Clifford, was a farmer's daughter from Cumberland, formerly in service.<sup>87</sup> Ada was one of eleven children - ten sisters and a brother. After her father's death, Ada, her mother and some of her sisters moved to Coundon in County Durham, where her mother remarried and ran the *Parkhead* public house.<sup>88</sup> Around 1910 Robert Smith and Ada, now his wife, moved from Middlestone Moor in County Durham to Wallsend, where Robert had secured a job in the Wallsend Colliery 'G' pit.<sup>89</sup> With them came Robert's father, Daniel, and brother George. Robert and Ada settled on Holly Avenue, where a daughter, Lucy was born, and around three years later they had a son, Thomas Daniel.<sup>90</sup> The couple had no other surviving children.

### Christian Socialism

Robert and Ada Smith were both socialists and practicing members of the Church of England. In the early twentieth century the rector of the principal Anglican church in Wallsend, St Peters, was a renowned radical high church cleric, Canon Charles Osborne (in office 1906-36). Although Dan Smith was baptised at St Luke's church in Wallsend, closer to home, the Smith family attended St Peters as well.<sup>91</sup> Smith was to recollect in his published autobiography that Osborne "was a socialist. He was not terribly popular, but he was a well-known figure and impressed me tremendously with what I was pleased to call his speeches."<sup>92</sup> The St Peters parish

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<sup>87</sup> Robert Smith was born 31 October 1878, Ada around twelve years later: TDS Archive Disk 5B

<sup>88</sup> TDS Archive disk 5A

<sup>89</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography (n.d.) p1

<sup>90</sup> He was named Thomas Daniel after his maternal and paternal grandfathers respectively. Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p15

<sup>91</sup> North Shields Library, Baptism Register, St Luke Wallsend. Dan Smith was baptised on 26 May 1915 by the Rev A G Davidson

<sup>92</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p5

magazine in the interwar period makes numerous references to social issues, pacifism and disarmament, the Peace Ballot, industrial reconciliation, the Unemployment Welfare Association, and the work of Henry Mess and the Tyneside Council for Social Service.<sup>93</sup>

One might – perhaps - excuse as naivety the canon’s 1933 encomium of the new German Chancellor: “[Nazism] is not mainly a militarist movement. There is a splendid feature in the ‘conscription’ of all able bodied men and youths, whether rich or poor, for hard manual work... Hitler is dealing drastically with the cinema, stopping all lewd cinema advertisements. Also books advocating free love are consigned to the flames... Hitler is strong for healthy and moral family life. There are no slums as in England. Of course there is another side to his movement. It is not carried out with kid gloves...”<sup>94</sup>

It seems likely that Ada Smith was the more devout; Dan Smith recalls that it was on her insistence that he attended church; his father went “not to listen to the sermon, but because he liked singing”.<sup>95</sup>

Robert Smith was, in his son’s recollection, “on the whole very well read”<sup>96</sup>. Although it is unlikely that he had received anything other than the rudimentary education deemed appropriate for a pitman’s son, he was something of an autodidact. He had a bent for philosophy and would read, and discuss with his son, the works of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Marx, H G Wells, Bernard Shaw; he would take the young Dan to performances at the People’s Theatre, and to see Chaliapin perform at the City Hall.<sup>97</sup> At the same time music was important to the family - Robert Smith introducing his son to the performances (on shellac) of Caruso and Clara Butt; Lucy Smith became a talented amateur pianist, and Dan a boy soprano.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Northumberland Archives EP44/77/29 *Wallsend S. Peters Magazine*, various

<sup>94</sup> Northumberland Archives EP44/77/29 *Wallsend S. Peters Magazine* vol 33 no 9 (September 1933)

<sup>95</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit*, p5

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid* p2

<sup>97</sup> Smith, T D, *An Autobiography* (Newcastle upon Tyne 1970) p10; TDS Archive Disk 5B; TDS Archive disk 42A. The People’s Theatre was founded in 1911 by members of the Independent Labour Party in Newcastle. The Russian opera singer Feodor Chaliapin (1873-1938) sang at the City Hall on Tuesday 27 November 1928 (*Newcastle Daily Journal and North Star* 28 November 1928 p9)

<sup>98</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* pp3,5

It would be a mistake, however, to assume from this cultural activity that the Smith family was necessarily part of the ‘respectable’ side of the ‘respectable’ *versus* ‘rough’ model of working class society. This issue has exercised historians and cultural commentators for decades; indeed since the emergence of a new working class identity in the late nineteenth century as charted by Gareth Stedman Jones. Stedman Jones portrays the working class culture that emerged in London in the years 1870-1900 in terms of a distinctive new pattern, hedonistic, apolitical, and introverted, but the picture he paints is essentially homogeneous.<sup>99</sup> Other historians have described working class divisions in terms of a simple dichotomy of rough and respectable - according to Standish Meacham, describing a similar period to Stedman Jones, a “concrete and ready-to hand distinction” well known to the working class, in which respectability could be ensured by adherence to “a strict but uncomplicated list of ‘don’ts’”.<sup>100</sup>

Jackson and Marsden cite a twentieth century grammar-school-educated working class interviewee who gave a succinct definition of the difference: “There are two kinds of working class - the ones who swear, and the ones who don’t, in the bus queues.”<sup>101</sup> They also add another category, the ‘sunken’ or ‘submerged’ middle class, to their working class typology. John Clarke offers a similar, twofold analysis: “The rough-respectable division has been firmly lodged in the visible signs of the home, street, neighbourhood and patterns of consumption... These repertoires have also been drawn on, added to and solidified by particular forms of ideological and political addresses to the class - the respectable trade unionists, the conservative appeal to freedom and family life of Britain, the stigma of the visit from the welfare, school board man or social worker, the rough neighbourhood’s reputation, the ‘scroungers’ and so on.”<sup>102</sup>

Ross McKibbin posits a kind of continuum of “three kinds of people, ‘rough’,

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<sup>99</sup> Stedman Jones, G, *Languages of Class. Studies in Working Class History 1832-1932* (Cambridge 1983) pp179-238

<sup>100</sup> Meacham, S, *A Life Apart. The English Working Class 1890-1914* (London 1977) pp25-29. The ‘don’ts’ were: “swearing, except at work; drinking, in excess of an occasional weekend pint or two; gambling; persistent rowing; sexual promiscuity on the part of mother or daughters.”

<sup>101</sup> Jackson, B, & Marsden, D, *Education and the Working Class* (London 1962) p184

<sup>102</sup> Clarke, J, ‘Capital and Culture: the post-war working class revisited’ in Clarke, J, Critcher, C & Johnson, R (eds), *Working Class Culture. Studies in history and theory* (London 1979) pp246-247

respectable' and those (the largest number) who were a little of both."<sup>103</sup> David Cannadine further expands this classification, citing Thomas Wright's description of the working classes as "not a single-acting, single-idea'd body. They are practically and plurally classes, distinct classes, classes between which there are as decisively marked differences as there are between any one of them and the upper and middle classes."<sup>104</sup>

The relevance of the debate has been challenged, not least by Arthur Marwick who not only believed that a "sense of a common lot swamps what hints there still are of that contrast between 'respectable' and 'roughs' emphasized in... *The Classic Slum*" (Robert Roberts' 1971 account of working class life in early twentieth century Salford) but that "too much weight need not be given" to recollections that emphasised intra-class diversity.<sup>105</sup>

An examination of the Smith family and its social locus does have value not just because, even if one abandons the respectable/rough dichotomy model for a more flexible continuum model, it is not easy to place them at one particular point on the scale. Like most if not all families, the Smiths occupied a number of different and seemingly contradictory points simultaneously.

For all his knowledge of philosophy, Robert Smith "had in many ways the worst features of a Durham miner. He was a gambler; he liked to drink."<sup>106</sup> Dan Smith's memories of his father, and attachment to his hard-working mother, were not untypical. McKibbin records widespread expressions of bitterness or contempt towards their fathers among working class youths in the mid twentieth century: "This was not... Freudian hostility... It was the result in many cases of growing up in poverty in unskilled working class households with an ill-tempered and apparently neglectful husband whose behaviour contrasted unforgettably with the stoicism and

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<sup>103</sup> McKibbin, R, *Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951* (Oxford 1998) pp198-205, citing Mogey, J M, *Family and Neighbourhood: Two Studies of Oxford* (London 1956) and Stacey, M, *Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury* (Oxford 1960)

<sup>104</sup> Cannadine, D, *Class in Britain* (Harmondsworth 2000) p92

<sup>105</sup> Marwick, A, 'Images of the working class since 1930' in Winter, J, (ed) *The Working Class in Modern British History. Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling* (Cambridge 1983) pp215-231; quotation from p224

<sup>106</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p4

self-sacrifice of Mum. For boys raised during the 1920s and 1930s, when their fathers had to cope with pressures their sons could not understand - and frequently coped badly - this contrast was uniquely memorable.”<sup>107</sup> The Smith family relationships clearly fitted this model. Robert Smith would take his son on walks “even if he sometimes left me outside the pub while he went in for a couple of pints. His pleasures in life, measured in physical terms, were simple. He liked to drink, he liked to bet on the horses and he took an interest in following the careers of local boxers...”.<sup>108</sup> Robert Smith would bet on pigeon races, on illegal rabbit and hare coursing, or games of pitch and toss or cards; and these habits were passed on to his son although with his father Dan Smith would play billiards and snooker, or chess and draughts, games “significant in moulding me as a person. I never underestimate the significance of chess in my life because it’s a game where beginning to assess the alternatives creates a kind of discipline...”<sup>109</sup> Ada Smith, meanwhile, was “essentially opposed to drinking and gambling... She steadfastly refused to accept the kind of ‘Christianity’ which allowed my father to drink and gamble while she had to work until she felt like dropping. She always got the best of the arguments and the worst of the marriage deal.”<sup>110</sup> She also had an appreciation of finer living gained from her experience in service; while a cousin of Dan Smith on his father’s side had been a valet to Lord Hambledon, and taught him how to look after his clothes.<sup>111</sup> For all that, Dan Smith later recalled himself as being “essentially working class, primitively working class.”<sup>112</sup>

Holly Avenue still exists: long rows of Tyneside flats facing the embankment of the Newcastle-Tynemouth metro line.<sup>113</sup> That they survive, rather than falling victim to

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<sup>107</sup> McKibbin, R, *Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951* (Oxford 1998) p172. I would suggest that there may also have been elements of Oedipal conflict in Dan Smith’s relationship with his father. Among other things, his rejection of Robert’s ‘Stalinist’ beliefs for those of Stalin’s arch-enemy Trotsky (known as ‘the Old Man’ to his adherents), and his marriage to a woman who, like his mother, bore the name Ada, and both possessed more social refinement and was some years younger than her spouse, offer tantalising possibilities for the psychohistorian.

<sup>108</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p14

<sup>109</sup> TDS Archive Disk 5A

<sup>110</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p14

<sup>111</sup> TDS Archive disk 5A. Hambledon was the heir to the W H Smith dynasty.

<sup>112</sup> TDS Archive Disk 5A

<sup>113</sup> ‘Tyneside flats’ are a housing form characteristic of Tyneside, generally comprising two-storey terraced rows with a flat or maisonette on each storey; the buildings resemble standard terraced cottages at the front, except that they have two front doors rather than one (the most cheaply built were identified by rows of four adjacent front doors; Holly Avenue was not in this class).



slum clearance schemes of the 1930s, 1950s or 1960s, indicates that they were relatively superior housing, but housing for which the Smiths, unlike most north-eastern mining families, had to pay rent to a private landlord. The family moved from number 62 to 75 in 1923, and it was not until 1926 that Robert Smith was offered a (rent-free) colliery house, on Portugal Place, on the western side of Wallsend.<sup>114</sup> “Far from our moving house ushering in a new era of prosperity, it did the reverse” recalled Dan Smith.<sup>115</sup> Portugal Place was environmentally - and socially - a step down from Holly Avenue. As well as pit houses it contained Wallsend Corporation’s cleaning depot and stables, a mortuary, the back entrance to *The Anchor* public house, and a public urinal; there was also a farrier’s shop and a slaughterhouse in the close vicinity.<sup>116</sup> The long postwar decline in the coal industry had begun, and Robert Smith was periodically unemployed. The ‘G’ pit closed in the 1930s; “and when it finished, he finished.”<sup>117</sup> He suffered from vertigo - which ruled out any chances of working in the shipyards, where an ability to work on scaffolding was essential, as it did working for his brother-in-law, who ran a steeplejack business in Glasgow.<sup>118</sup> The advantage of rent-free (if inferior quality) accommodation was lost when the Wallsend & Hebburn Coal Company sold the houses to a private landlord, and the Smiths had to take in lodgers to make ends meet.<sup>119</sup> Worse, Ada Smith had to go to work, as a cleaner - to McKibbin “the... occupation... with the lowest social prestige and poorest rewards” - working at Wallsend telephone exchange in the mornings and the Shell-Mex offices in Newcastle in the evenings.<sup>120</sup> That Ada Smith had to work would have been a further blow to the standing of her husband: as noted by John Clarke, “‘Respectability’ within the working class historically has also been demonstrated by the ability of the man to keep his wife at home, away from the world of work.”<sup>121</sup>

## Work

Young Dan Smith had not excelled at the schools he attended - he did not pass ‘the

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<sup>114</sup> *The Journal* 12 March 1968; T Dan Smith, *An Autobiography* (Newcastle upon Tyne 1970) p6

<sup>115</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p7

<sup>116</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit*, p6; Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography pp7-8. Mrs Smith campaigned successfully to have the urinal removed.

<sup>117</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p6

<sup>118</sup> TDS Archive disks 5B, 5A

<sup>119</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography pp7, 10

<sup>120</sup> McKibbin, *op cit* p110; Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p10

<sup>121</sup> Clarke *op cit* p250

scholarship' - but was highly enough thought of to be chosen to speak at a formal presentation to a retiring headmaster; a former teacher was later to comment that "he was an above average pupil but there was nothing at that time to mark him out as a leader of men."<sup>122</sup> A photograph of the time shows Smith looking intensely at the camera, notably more smartly dressed than most of his classmates. This reflects the influence of his mother, "ambitious for me in the way that mothers in humble families often are." Ada Smith's experience 'in service' had given her an appreciation of finer things and she had ambitions for her son outside Wallsend, variously seeking to persuade him to work in a hotel or to take up farming alongside her brother Tom in Cumberland.<sup>123</sup> But "[o]n one thing we were all agreed. I would never go to work down the pits."<sup>124</sup> Young Smith briefly landed a 'good' job, working in the mail room at the Wigham Richardson shipyard at Wallsend: indoor work, offering a progression up the 'white collar' ladder.<sup>125</sup> This involved leaving school early, at 13 years of age - something seen at the time as a badge of ability.<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately he was sacked after one day, supposedly for failing to address his superiors as 'sir'. "I dreaded the reception which would await me when my mother returned from work..." Smith was to recall, "...more worrying that that were the kind of comments to which I would be subjected by my school-mates if I had to go back to school after holding a job down for only one day."<sup>127</sup> He records throwing himself into the search for work, although it appears that he did have to swallow his pride and return to school for a brief period.

Shortly afterwards he was engaged as an apprentice painter by Ralph Edward Moore of Wallsend, to Robert Smith's disapprobation: "Why go for a job like that, you're sure to get lead poisoning."<sup>128</sup> The "cruel... almost killing" work of loading and

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<sup>122</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit* p8; *The Journal* 12 March 1968

<sup>123</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography pp20-21

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid* p21

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid* p22. The advantages in clerking in terms of status and amenity "were... the first steps on the route out of the working class and not lightly abandoned. They were, furthermore, often compensations for low income: many clerks were less well paid than craftsmen (a fact known to both) and without superiority of status and amenity junior clerical occupations might have been even more dispiriting than they already were." McKibbin, *op cit* p138

<sup>126</sup> Jackson & Marsden, *op cit* pp60-61: the official leaving age was 14; but passing 'the Labour exam' permitted leaving at 13. "Under these former regulations, early leaving was paradoxically associated by working-class people with ability, and longer schooling with dullness."

<sup>127</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography pp22-23

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid* pp 23-24. Smith subsequently did suffer a mild lead poisoning attack, as well as developing a TB spot on one lung.

unloading supplies and hauling fully laden barrows up and down the steep riverside streets, and subsequently of painting “miles” of council house railings was ameliorated by the encouragement given to Smith by his boss’s son, Stan, to attend night classes at Rutherford Technical College in Newcastle.<sup>129</sup> There he learned about the history of art and architecture, as well as technical expertise in identifying, and imitating with a paintbrush, a multitude of types of wood and stone.<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, the search for self-improvement was tempered by the search for pleasure, and Smith would frequently ‘cut’ night classes at Rutherford College to see the boxing at nearby St James’ Hall. Perhaps he was one of the “jeering spectators”, a “bloodthirsty lot” seen by J B Priestley on his visit to the venue while researching *English Journey*: “I... thought I had never seen a crowd of men whose looks pleased me less.”<sup>131</sup>

Stan Moore broadened Smith’s social horizons in other ways, too: “many evenings we would go out together to roller skate, ice skate and certainly we would play football, cricket or whatever sport was available and in season. Winter nights also took us into the billiard halls where we became proficient in that working class game.”<sup>132</sup> However supportive his employers may have been, Smith did not stay with them long, leaving in 1930 to join a Newcastle firm which had the contract to paint signs for the *Evening World* newspaper. The *Evening World* closed in January

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<sup>129</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p25; Smith, T Dan op cit p31

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid* p12; Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography pp29-30

<sup>131</sup> TDS Archive disk 7A; J B Priestley, *English Journey* (London 1934; Harmondsworth 1977) pp 277-278. Priestley did not know, or omitted to say, that some of the “stringy lads, who arrived in the ring wearing overcoats” were probably unemployed youths who would fight for a paltry five shillings, two of which went to the seconds. According to Len Edmondson, a local ILP and trade union activist, “Some of them could box and some of them could not. Those who could not just received a good punching up... One night at the hall there was a man who looked so weak and tired it was obvious he should not have been in the ring. He appeared to have no idea of how to box and was just punched about the ring by his opponent... in the second round [he] was so badly punched-up that when he went down the referee stopped the fight... The crowd were just beginning to voice their disapproval of his poor show when Tommy Murphy, the referee, waved for the crowd to be quiet and explained that the man was on the road, had not had anything to eat all day but had come along to the Hall and volunteered to fight. He was one the many starving unemployed who were tramping around the country looking for work and had volunteered for what he must have known would be a good punching-up to earn no more than sufficient to buy him a good meal that night.” Len Edmondson papers, TWAM DF.ED 4707/4a.

<sup>132</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p28

1932 and Smith was left jobless.<sup>133</sup>

It was probably at this point that Smith, still sixteen years of age, was directed to a Juvenile Instruction Centre or 'dole school' at Jarrow, one of many such centres established at the behest of the Ministry of Labour (but run by local authorities) to provide retraining for unemployed Workers' under eighteen years of age.<sup>134</sup> "I was in my second year City and Guilds painting and decorating course... and it seemed to make sense that I should be able to do my night school work during the day. No such thing. I could choose between becoming a trainee hairdresser or a joiner."<sup>135</sup>

The somewhat desultory training - attendance was for three afternoons a week - also forwarded Smith's political education. In between jokes about getting their education at 'Heaton and Jarrow' Smith and his colleagues would "talk of the 'ruling class' and how we understood their dislike of phrases such as the 'class war'. We did not like the reality of class war - but we certainly [understood] what we meant by the conflict in life styles between the rich and ourselves."<sup>136</sup>

Nevertheless, like many youths he was, despite the high unemployment on Tyneside, able to find work, albeit with periods of unemployment between jobs, a pattern consistent with McKibbin's observation that "[y]ounger men and adolescents, widely thought at the time to be as prone to unemployment as older men, were, in fact, more accustomed to shorter but more frequent periods of unemployment as they moved comparatively rapidly (and often restlessly) from one job to another. The juvenile labour market was unstable, characterized by high turnover and low skill, 'blind-alley' or 'dead-end' jobs, but not usually by prolonged unemployment."<sup>137</sup>

Smith was to work, among other places, at Hood Haggie's rope and cable works at

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<sup>133</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit*, *An Autobiography* (Newcastle upon Tyne 1970) pp13-14; [www.ncle.gov.uk/www/fileroot/localstudies/userguides/UserGuide3Newspapers.pdf](http://www.ncle.gov.uk/www/fileroot/localstudies/userguides/UserGuide3Newspapers.pdf) accessed 10 May 2011. The *Evening World* was a relatively new Tyneside paper. It was started in 1929 by Lord Northcliffe to compete with the established *Evening Chronicle* and folded on 29 January 1932 as part of an agreement with rival press magnate Lord Camrose whereby Camrose would close his evening newspaper in Bristol in return for a free hand in Newcastle. A gable-end sign for the paper - possibly originally painted by Smith - can still be seen in Wallsend, a stone's throw from his childhood home.

<sup>134</sup> Pope, R, 'Dole Schools': The North-East Lancashire Experience, 1930-39', *Journal of Educational Administration and History* v9 no2 (1977) p 26-33. Of the variety of ventures set up to assist the unemployed, comments Pope, dole schools "were, perhaps, the least successful".

<sup>135</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography pp31-32

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid* p 32

<sup>137</sup> McKibbin, *op cit* p114

Willington Quay, east of Wallsend, (where one of the rituals was to ‘lay out’ young Workers’: hold them down and molest them), and painting the passenger quarters on ocean liners being constructed at the Tyne yards. There he was struck by the contrast between the luxury on board and the conditions to which workers were subject: “We had to leave the ship... and heat our cans on a dirty old fire... the sheer brutality, stupidity of the place and the incompetence and inefficiency just left you speechless until you became cynical like everyone else.”<sup>138</sup>

“I found painters to be a strange group of men,” he recalled. “They had no deep trade union tradition and only in the shipyards was trade union membership necessary for a job. Those who were ‘strong’ unionists were normally Labour supporters and active in the party. Most of them were hard drinkers, the theory being that the drink was a good antidote to lead poisoning!”<sup>139</sup>

## Education

He also furthered his general education by attending Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) and National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC) classes on economic and political subjects, while also “learning the skills of debating and public speaking”.<sup>140</sup> The NCLC affected contempt for what it perceived as the bourgeois WEA, which (as stated in one of its pamphlets) “stands for educational collaboration with Liberals and Tories and with the Universities - the great centres of governing class education”<sup>141</sup> Smith recalled the WEA, to which he was introduced through his membership of the International Friendship League, as being “far from working class... It became a kind of middle class insert [*sic*]”, though it is arguable whether at the time he took much notice of the distinction. Jonathan Rose highlights the considerable overlap in membership between the NCLC and the WEA, citing among others one student who argued in 1925 that “The average worker-student does not care two pence about the WEA and NCLC squabble... With most Workers’ it is a matter of chance in which movement they eventually find themselves.”<sup>142</sup> Rose

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<sup>138</sup> TDS Archive disk 7A

<sup>139</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p24

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid* p35

<sup>141</sup> NLSc NCLC Archive Acc 5120 Box 21 File 6, *The NCLC and the WEA. What do you think, Chums?*

<sup>142</sup> Rose, J, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed New Haven 2010) p 272 quoting L C Stone.

also argues that “political militancy was as much at home in the WEA as in the NCLC”, and indeed that the radical image promoted by the NCLC was exaggerated in order to better compete with its rival.<sup>143</sup> WEA radicalism well have been the case in Newcastle, where Smith recalled one lecturer as having been the Italian Consul, an Abyssinian War veteran: “You can imagine that some of the sessions got a bit out of hand...”<sup>144</sup>

Smith was also active in the NCLC, taking classes and subsequently lecturing.<sup>145</sup> Between January and March 1937 for example, the NCLC offered classes in Newcastle on the history and function of trades unions, and local government; at Wallsend, on industrial history, local government and elementary economics.<sup>146</sup> Day and weekend schools were also offered. One such in June 1935, at the Labour Club on Percy Street Newcastle, offered sessions on ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’, ‘Evolution and Revolution’ and ‘Marx after Eighty Years’, while in September the same year a school at the Trevelyan Community Hut in Tynemouth included talks on ‘The Economics of Dictatorship’, ‘Recent Industrial and Social Tendencies’ and ‘The Possibility of State Planning in Britain’.<sup>147</sup>

## Personal

He met the young woman who would become his wife, Ada Simpson, in 1935 at a dance class at the Heaton Assembly Rooms.<sup>148</sup> Four years younger than Smith, she was from an upper working/lower middle class family in the Newcastle suburb of Heaton, and, brought up by a schoolteacher aunt, a “voracious reader”. Her family were essentially apolitical, “Robert Aske Liberals” in Smith’s scornful phrase: supporters of the local Liberal MP, ‘Tea-party Bob’.<sup>149</sup> The couple joined the

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid* pp273, 279-80

<sup>144</sup> TDS Archive disk 7A. On the other hand, a truly radical organisation would not have employed the diplomatic representative of a Fascist state.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*. He states he began to lecture at the age of around 22-24 (ie 1937-39). I have found no evidence to corroborate this; however, he did lecture for the NCLC in the 1950s on local government.

<sup>146</sup> NLSc NCLC Archive Acc 5120 Box 52(4) Division 9. January-March Session 1937. The tutors were named as S Rees (the Divisional Organiser), P Carr, J Hardy, J Watson and C F Henricksen. Stan Rees was one of the 1909 Ruskin College strikers: *The Plebs* vol 38 no 5 (May 1946).

<sup>147</sup> *The Plebs* vol 27 no 6 (June 1935) and vol 27 no 9 (September 1935). Lecturers were T A Jackson and Albert Ellis respectively.

<sup>148</sup> TDS Archive Disk 7A; T Dan Smith, *An Autobiography* (Newcastle upon Tyne 1970) p15

<sup>149</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p17. Sir Robert Aske (1872-1954) was Liberal MP for Newcastle East 1923-24 and 1929-45, from 1931 sitting as a National Liberal.

International Friendship League, enjoying debates and hiking trips in the Lake District; it was in the IFL that Smith met Edward Short, his future council colleague and later Labour MP. “Ted Short... was even then a very skilled debater. More often than not he and I would disagree, but I had a tremendously high regard for his ability and energy, and it did not surprise me when he eventually blossomed forth in politics.”<sup>150</sup>

## Politics

The main organisational outlet for the Smith family’s political activism was through the co-operative movement rather than the Labour Party, and as a boy Smith attended a Socialist Sunday School run at Wallsend Co-op.<sup>151</sup> At home, as well as discussions with his father, there were “thousands of pamphlets” in the home, publications of Gollancz and Lawrence & Wishart, the *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds News*.<sup>152</sup> Public meetings and political speakers were also part of the fabric of the times. An early memory of Smith was of walking with his parents at the time of the 1926 miners’ strike to hear the Miners’ Federation of Great Britain leader A J Cook address a mass meeting at Holystone, near Wallsend. Cook’s pugnacious style - he began his speech ‘You mugs...’ - impressed the young Smith: “I and hundreds of others were spell bound and already I was beginning to be impressed with what was being described, in derogatory terms, as ‘Soap Box Stuff.’”<sup>153</sup> Later, he would listen to, and learn from the soap box orators of Wallsend holding forth at Hedley’s Corner and the Borough Field, Wallsend.<sup>154</sup> Principal among these was Jimmy Stewart, a Scottish baker and formerly a member of the Socialist Labour Party, founder and editor of a monthly paper *The Young Rebel*, the contents of which led to his prosecution and imprisonment in 1918 for spreading disaffection.<sup>155</sup> After his release he rented a shop on Wallsend High Street, where he would sell socialist material and conduct classes in social, economic and industrial history; as Special Branch reported, “He calls his shop a Labour College.”<sup>156</sup> Stewart, who was organiser of the

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid* p17

<sup>151</sup> TDS Archive disk 5A

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid* Lawrence & Wishart was strongly associated with the Communist Party of Great Britain.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*; Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p 17

<sup>154</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p 9. Hedley’s Corner was a crossroads on High Street West, not far from Portugal Place. The Borough Field was an area of open space near Wallsend’s current public library.

<sup>155</sup> Challinor, R, ‘Jimmy Stewart and his Revolting Children’, *North East Labour History* volume 17 (1983) pp 8-9

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid* p 10; Challinor, R, *The Origins of British Bolshevism* (London 1977) p 196

North East Labour College, went on to become a long-time teacher for the NCLC at Wallsend, described in 1936, upon his departure for South Shields, as “the father of the NCLCers at Wallsend for many years.”<sup>157</sup> Dan Smith may well have come into contact with him in this capacity, but it was as a public speaker that Stewart had most impact on the younger man.

### **Pacifism**

The Smith family abhorred war and imperialism; the young Smith was instructed “never to stand for the National Anthem, and when we had our Empire Day parades, when the whole school mustered in the playground and all boys proudly wore their fathers’ medals and saluted the flag, I used to go bereft of medals and with the guilty feeling that I shouldn’t really enjoy singing then patriotic songs.”<sup>158</sup> One might question how exceptional Smith was: not only would many of his classmates have been the children of miners and shipyard Workers’ - reserved occupations unrewarded by medals - but genuine popular enthusiasm for Empire is questionable at best. Popular working class attitudes towards the Boer War, far from being jingoistic, were deeply ambivalent: supportive of local men in the army, while ignorant, or condemnatory, of, the policies that had sent them abroad to fight.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, accounts of Empire Day collated by Rose largely express confusion, indifference or cynicism rather than the patriotic spirit the day was intended to promote.<sup>160</sup>

Throughout the later 1930s Smith was concerned with issues of war and peace, and, it seems, agonising about his ebbing Christian faith. He was excited by the Oxford Union ‘King and Country’ debate of 1933. “I felt that this was a critical point of time because although I was becoming disillusioned about the church, I believed fervently that Christ would not have gone to war; Christ would not have tolerated

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<sup>157</sup> *The Plebs* vol 28 no 11 (November 1936). An anonymous contributor to Judith Devons (ed) *Where the Wall Ends. Recollections of a Tyneside Town* (Wallsend 1977) states that Stewart was also a Wallsend councillor and recalls attending his NCLC classes on Sunday afternoons, and subsequently joining the WEA. Stewart “did a lot of good organising people.” The contributor went on at Stewart’s request in 1932-33 to teach economic geography for the NCLC. “I did that for quite a while till they gradually eased off and stopped coming. That was when things got better. There were lots of militant socialists till they started working. Then they weren’t.” (p41)

<sup>158</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit* p9

<sup>159</sup> Rose *op cit* pp335-341

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid* pp335-341



bloodshed.”<sup>161</sup> “I resolved my own thinking of war, and became one of the founder members of the Peace Pledge Union. Dick Shepherd... came north to meet a few of us. I remember there was Large the printer, Sadler of Byker and, I think, Richardson of a leather firm.”<sup>162</sup> In fact, Newcastle was rather tardy in organising a PPU branch. At the start of 1937 there were branches in Morpeth, Sunderland, Durham and Middlesbrough, but only in July of that year did *Peace News* announce that “Newcastle is going to have a PPU group at last!”<sup>163</sup> Dan Smith may well have been an active member but he seems not to have held any office within the PPU that brought his name to the attention of *Peace News*.<sup>164</sup> He recollected that “most of my energies were taken up with anti-war campaigning... we built up a unique war resistance movement in Newcastle. I carried on meetings in the open air and indoors...”.<sup>165</sup> He was “in touch with” Czech and Basque refugees on Tyneside.<sup>166</sup> Activities carried out by the Newcastle PPU included numerous public meetings (including a number at the City Hall, Newcastle’s largest public hall at the time), a house to house canvas petitioning for a new peace conference (January 1939), a ‘poster parade’ through Newcastle to coincide with a trial civil defence blackout (May 1939), and a PPU marquee at the Hoppings (the annual funfair held on Newcastle’s Town Moor).<sup>167</sup> PPU members were active in setting up advisory bureaux to help those wishing to claim exemption from conscription.<sup>168</sup> By April 1941 *Peace News* carried words of praise of the activity in Newcastle: “Newcastle has a very active and devoted War Resisters’ Section, and there is a magnificent spirit prevailing... Thomas Large and other active leaders having recently left to take up farming work and a gap was left which was not easy to fill. That it has been filled is a tribute to past inspiration and present determination.”<sup>169</sup> By that time, however,

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<sup>161</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit* p17

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid* p 17. Dick Shepherd (1880-1937) founded the Peace Pledge Union in 1936.

<sup>163</sup> *Peace News* 6 March 1937 p 4: ‘Map showing groups of the Peace Pledge Union up to January 25, 1937’; *Peace News* 31 July 1937 p 4.

<sup>164</sup> His name is not mentioned in *Peace News* in the editions I have examined, covering 1937 and 1939-41. Numerous other local activists were named.

<sup>165</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* pp18-19

<sup>166</sup> The Aid Spain campaign was very active on Tyneside. 20 Basque boys, refugees from Spain, were sent to Tynemouth in August 1937. Watson, D, & Corcoran, J, *An Inspiring Example. The North East of England and the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (The McGuffin Press, 1996) pp 73-84

<sup>167</sup> *Peace News* passim; house canvas, 20 January 1939 p 10; poster parade, 28 April 1939 p 12; marquee 23 June 1939 p 10 and 7 July 1939 p 6.

<sup>168</sup> The contact for the Newcastle bureau was Thomas Large, who was also the NE representative on the PPU’s National Council. *Peace News* 4 August 1939, 15 September 1939, 29 September 1939.

<sup>169</sup> *Peace News* 6 June 1941 p 3

Dan Smith's interests were turning to a new path.

### **Team Valley Trading Estate**

Although he makes no special reference to it in his writings or recorded interviews, the late twenties and thirties saw Dan Smith's earliest exposure to concrete expressions of regionalism and modernist urban design. In 1929 Newcastle hosted the North East Coast Exhibition, to Byrne and Benneworth the first expression of political regionalism "in which local government and local industry came together to 'promote' the region in a time of structural adjustment."<sup>170</sup> Opened by the Prince of Wales, the exhibition occupied a number of large pavilions in Newcastle's Exhibition Park: Palaces of Industry, Engineering and Arts, a Festival Hall, the Empire Marketing Board Pavilion, an 'African Village' and a Great Water Chute, laid out in the best City Beautiful manner along a boulevard leading to and spanning an artificial lake. Exhibits in the Palace of Industry included two enormous models showing the industrial Rivers Tyne and Tees respectively, as conurbations united by their rivers rather than - as the administrative map would have shown - divided into numerous independent, frequently squabbling municipalities.<sup>171</sup> There is no firm evidence that Dan Smith was among the four-and-a-half million visitors to the exhibition. But it is barely conceivable that the lively-minded adolescent, accustomed to attending cultural events in Newcastle, would not have visited; and among the impressions received, even if subliminally, would have been of Tyneside as a distinct urban community, within the equally distinct industrial region of the north east.

A few years later he was to work as a painter on 'advance factories' (speculative factories) being built on the Team Valley Trading Estate (TVTE) in Gateshead. The TVTE was the first Government-sponsored trading estate (industrial estate) in Britain, its creation authorised by the National Government a pre-election sweetener

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<sup>170</sup> Byrne, D, & Benneworth, P, 'Where and What is the North East of England?' in Hardill, I, Benneworth, P, Baker, M, & Budd, L (eds) *The Rise of the English Regions?* (Abingdon 2006) p109

<sup>171</sup> *Smith's Dock Journal: North East Exhibition Souvenir Number*, September 1929; Baglee, C, *The North East Coast Exhibition, Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle upon Tyne 1979). Exhibition Park had been named for the 1887 Jubilee Exhibition. The 1929 pavilions were all demolished after the closure of the exhibition in October 1929 with the exception of the Palace of Arts, which served as museum space for many decades, but is now home to the Wylam Brewery.

by Neville Chamberlain in 1935. The estate was designed by William Holford, of whose work Cherry and Penny commented “[n]o architect had subjected a British industrial estate to such strict discipline before, and probably none has done so since.”<sup>172</sup> The buildings were deliberately simple in style, spare in detail, while the layout of the estate (in the view of Cherry and Penny) echoed le Corbusier’s *Ville Radieuse* as well as drawing on Holford’s training at Liverpool University with its beaux arts tradition, and perhaps on his experience of California, “the only place where Holford had seen long, low, floodlit buildings, well back from wide and well-lit roads, on a scale sufficiently large for it to register with him as a distinct visual image”.<sup>173</sup> The plans envisaged the provision of sports and recreational facilities, canteens and kiosks for the benefit of Workers’.<sup>174</sup> Team Valley was the concrete representation of a new future for the north east. Just as “the industrial surveys of the depressed areas represented a modernist narrative showing industry’s fall from grace, the new industrial districts of the south and the Midlands were, by contrast, positively inscribed with modernist motifs... The social construction of these industrial districts established them as new fields for Fordism. By the 1930s, sublime depictions of these industries emphasized their technological and progressive nature”<sup>175</sup> Team Valley was to be an outpost of this New England, a location with good road and rail connections and an attractive environment which, according to K C Appleyard, chairman of North-Eastern Trading Estates Ltd, “will give people the feeling they are going into a rural atmosphere...”<sup>176</sup>. Appleyard would present the project as a modern miracle, boasting “like a supercharged Soviet commissar” about his “small army of men, civil engineers, architects, contractors, builders and electricians, creating an ideal city within 700 acres of pasture land” and how Kingsway, the main artery of the TVTE, would make London’s Great West Road seem “a mere pup” by comparison.<sup>177</sup> The former Labour Party leader J R Clynes

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<sup>172</sup> Cherry, G E, & Penny, L, *Holford: a study in architecture, planning and civic design* (London 1986) p74

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid* pp78-79

<sup>174</sup> Taylor, S, & Lovie, D, *Gateshead. Architecture in a Changing English Urban Landscape* (London 2004) p 8-9

<sup>175</sup> Linehan, D, ‘A New England: Landscape, Exhibition and Remaking Industrial Space in the 1930s’ in Gilbert, D, Matless, D, and Short, B (eds), *Geographies of British Modernity. Space and Society in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford 2003) p135

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid* p142

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid* p143-144. The ‘commissar’ quote is by Linehan; the other cites quotations are Appleyard’s. At the time of construction, Kingsway was reputedly the widest road in the United Kingdom.

told a local newspaper that the TVTE project was “very much like turning a rubbish heap into an industrial garden...if other national projects could be planned in this way, the world would be a better place in which to live.”<sup>178</sup> As a foot soldier in Appleyard’s army, Smith was aware of the significance of what was going on; many years later, he would recall meeting and talking to Holford as the architect toured his creation.<sup>179</sup>

His most fundamental exposure to modernist ideas of design and technology may well, however, have come from his work as a painter in the shipyards, particularly working on passenger liners, seen as a symbol of process by the modernist movement and in particular by Le Corbusier: “A seriously minded architect, looking at it as an architect (ie a creator of organisms), will find in a steamship his freedom from an age-long but contemptible enslavement to the past... The house of the earth-man is the expression of a circumscribed world. The steamship is the first stage in the realization of a world organized according to the new spirit.”<sup>180</sup>

Further exposure to new ideas came when Smith’s sister Lucy moved to Coventry to train as a nurse. On visits to his sister, Smith “got to know accidentally” Donald Gibson, Coventry’s City Architect. According to Tiratsoo, Gibson’s education at the Liverpool University School of Architecture had “led him, if not to out and out modernism, at least to a strong belief that good architecture was desirable not just in terms of aesthetic improvement but also in terms of social reform. At the same time, he vigorously believed in the need for, and efficacy of, trained experts, who could operate free from bureaucratic niceties, views which again closely matched those prevalent amongst key local Labour politicians.”<sup>181</sup> Coventry was one of the great boom towns of the interwar period; its population rose by 75% in the period 1921-1939 as Workers’ flooded in to work in the new industries of motor manufacturing (and associated trades) and engineering (especially electrical engineering).<sup>182</sup> But this ‘Klondike’ atmosphere drew thousands of immigrants from northern England,

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid* p147, citing *North Mail and Newcastle Daily Chronicle* 2 March 1938.

<sup>179</sup> TDS Archive disk 42A

<sup>180</sup> Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Etchells, F, 1931 (repr New York 1986) p103

<sup>181</sup> Tiratsoo, N, *Reconstruction, affluence and Labour politics: Coventry 1945-60* (London 1990) p 9

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid* p7; Thoms, D W, & Donnelly, B T, ‘Coventry’s Industrial Economy, 1880-1980’ in Lancaster, B, & Mason, T (eds), *Life and Labour in a Twentieth Century City: the Experience of Coventry* (Coventry 1986) pp 21-37

Wales, Scotland and Ireland to a city unprepared socially or spatially for such an influx. Its small medieval centre was surrounded by a ring of slum housing and small factories and workshops, units in which cycle workshops, the progenitors of Coventry's industrial greatness, had been born.<sup>183</sup>

But considerations of social reform and new ways of living would have to wait. By 1939 Dan Smith was immersed in the peace movement. "Ordinary people were clearer in their aspirations and were in no mood to keep retreating before Hitler or reactionaries at home" he was to recall later. "There was no clear socialist alternative on offer in the years preceding the outbreak of war. This meant that when war broke out in 1939 and as I had made up my mind to be anti-war and to campaign against the politicians who I saw as the 'friends of Hitler', I faced at best a long, hard, bleak and isolated political struggle."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> As Priestley put it, "[The] picturesque remains of the old Coventry are besieged by an army of nuts, bolts, hammers, spanners, gauges, drills and machine lathes, for in a thick ring round this ancient centre are the motor-car and cycle factories, the machine tool makers, the magneto manufacturers, and the electrical companies." Priestley, J B, *English Journey* (London 1934; Harmondsworth 1977) p71

<sup>184</sup> Amber, T Dan Smith unpublished autobiography p37

## Chapter 2: Dan's War

### “A plague on both your houses”

“[My] own inclination politically was to say, ‘A plague on both your houses.’ That was why I became a pacifist and a socialist.”<sup>185</sup> As the 1930s progressed, Dan Smith, sporadically in work and frequently unemployed, began to articulate political opinions. According to his own recollections, he became an active pacifist, involved - or interested - in a range of organisations including the Christian pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation, the No Conscription League and the Comintern-inspired League Against Imperialism.<sup>186</sup> This range of organisations, from the FoR, reminiscent of the Anglicanism of his youth, to the League Against Imperialism, linked to the Stalinism of his father against which he was rebelling, indicates a continuing confusion of belief. At the time of the Abyssinian War in 1935 he even considered joining the Friends Ambulance Unit.<sup>187</sup> He subsequently claimed to be one of the “founding members” of the Peace Pledge Union.<sup>188</sup>

[Shepherd] came north to meet a few of us. I remember there was Large the printer, Sadler of Byker and, I think, Richardson of a leather firm. There were half a dozen of us who met in Mundella Terrace at Heaton. Old Jack Sadler had been a conscientious objector in the first world war and we took it upon ourselves to organise, as best we could the Peace Pledge Union in the North. We were excited by the current Oxford Students' Union debate in which a resolution renouncing war had been passed. I felt that this was a critical point of time because although I was becoming disillusioned about the church, I believed fervently that Christ would not have gone to war; Christ would not have tolerated bloodshed. It was very much that kind of fervour which directed me to the Peace Pledge Union. I felt that I would be strong enough, if it came to the crunch, to reject a military solution to any problem. So the black and white of things fell into place for me.<sup>189</sup>

Despite being “torn” over the pacifist issue, “thinking about the Spanish war”, he

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<sup>185</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p18

<sup>186</sup> TDS Archive disc 42A

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>188</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p17

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid* pp17-18. ‘Shepherd’ is Dick Shepherd, founder of the PPU. Heaton is a district of east Newcastle, not far from Wallsend. Dan was to work for the Sadler family of Byker, prominent in the local pacifist movement. The Richardson family was a prominent Newcastle Quaker family which ran Richardson's Leather Works in Elswick, west Newcastle. The ‘King and Country’ debate at the Oxford Union had taken place some time earlier, on 9 February 1933.

was, by the outbreak of war (and newly married, in July 1939), convinced by the absolutist argument about refusing service. However, a bout of scarlet fever in 1936 had left him deaf in one ear, and medically unfit for service.<sup>190</sup>

Around this time, however, Smith began “to meet revolutionaries”. The location for this was the Socialist Café in the Royal Arcade, a faded Regency arcade on the fringes of Newcastle city centre which was to later years to be a major point of dispute in Smith’s plans to rebuild the city.<sup>191</sup> The Socialist Café (or Socialist Club) was for decades an important meeting place for left wing political and cultural circles on Tyneside.<sup>192</sup> Bill Hunter, later a prominent Trotskyist activist, began visiting the café in early 1940, cycling from his home in Stanley: “...a group of us used to meet there. There were at first five or six of us, Roy Tearse and Dan Smith among them, who met with a member of the Workers’ International League, George Brown. All of them joined the WIL except me; in the middle of 1940 I went back to London.”<sup>193</sup>

George Brown was one of the earliest Trotskyists in Newcastle, a former member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), who resigned his membership at a CP public meeting on the day that the Soviet Union invaded Poland, in protest at the party’s war policy. Present at that meeting was the pacifist Mark Sadler, who recalled inviting Brown to attend a meeting of local War Resisters. He subsequently invited “several of [the] young men” from that pacifist group to his home for a political discussion, forming a group which met weekly for six months, with a claimed attendance of twenty-five. “With the exception of Comrades Rawlings [sic], Brown, a Carlisle comrade and myself, the meeting was composed of pacifists among whom could be counted Comrades Tearse, Smith, Sketheway and Johnstone

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<sup>190</sup> It is frequently written that Smith was a Conscientious Objector. However, having initially refused to register for war service, he recalled having changed his position, registered, was medically examined and found unfit to serve. TDS Archive disc 42A; *Newcastle Journal and North Mail* 12 March 1941 p5

<sup>191</sup> It was located in what is now a roundabout above the A167(M) Central Motorway, the site occupied by the 55° North building (formerly Swan House)

<sup>192</sup> *Evening Chronicle*, 4 October 1957, p11: ‘City Socialist Hall to Close After 40 Years’.

<sup>193</sup> Hunter, B, *Lifelong Apprenticeship: The Life and Times of a Revolutionary Volume 1 1920-1959* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed London 1998) p 57.

[sic].”<sup>194</sup>

Brown rapidly joined the Trotskyist Workers’ International League and, according to Sadler, “as a result of cultivating comrades Smith, Skethaway [sic] and Tearse and Johnstone [sic], persuade[d] them that they had done the wrong thing being classified as conscientious objectors and they subsequently submitted to medical examination.”<sup>195</sup>

Around this time the Newcastle Central branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was reformed. The ILP had never been particularly strong in Newcastle, the dominating figure in the 1920s being Sir Charles Trevelyan who “at his country seat at Wallington patronised another, more fey cultural strand popular in some ILP circles. Folk dancing and music on the lawn created a sort of arts and craft version of a teetotal and herbivorous Merrie England.”<sup>196</sup> Erosion of support began in the 1920s, although there were still pockets of support such as Gateshead and Darlington, and, argues A.W. Purdue, “North East party members were... rather moderate or realistic in ILP terms.”<sup>197</sup>

Most of Sadler’s group appear to have joined, seemingly still pacifist at this stage.<sup>198</sup> Roy Tearse recalled:

Together with one or two of the older people we reconstituted the Newcastle

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<sup>194</sup> Independent Labour Party, *Report of Enquiry held at Newcastle, May 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> 1943* p18. George Brown - no relation to Harold Wilson’s bibulous deputy - was, according to various accounts an optician or a sugar boiler. Shortly after his role at the outbreak of war he was conscripted. He was the father of Labour MP Audrey Wise and the grandfather of Labour MP Valerie Wise. Jack Rawling, from Wallsend, was a long time Socialist, a member of the WIL, RCP, Labour Party and Militant. His cousin Rawling (‘Roy’) Tearse, also from Wallsend, was after a brief spell in the ILP a senior member of the WIL and RCP, and was gaoled in 1944 for his role in the Apprentices Strike. Ken Sketheway - reputed to sleep with a portrait of Lenin hanging over his bed - was a member of the ILP, WIL and RCP, and later a long-standing Labour councillor in Newcastle and member of Militant. Jack Johnston was also in the ILP and Labour Party, serving as a Labour councillor in Newcastle until he was deselected after expressing dissent over the party’s handling of the Crudens scandal in the early 1960s.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid* p18. Smith appeared at a Conscientious Objectors’ Tribunal on 11 March 1941 *Newcastle Journal and North Mail* 12 March 1941 p5

<sup>196</sup> Purdue, A.W., ‘The ILP in the North of England’ in James, David, Jowitt, Tony, Laybourne, Keith (eds) *The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party* (Halifax 1992) p38

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid* p39. Purdue states that “As late as the immediate post-war period some of the North East branches remained active. I Ashington meetings were well attended and lively.” However, he ignores the wartime growth of the ILP in the NE and the cataclysm that engulfed it in 1945.

<sup>198</sup> Independent Labour Party, *Report of Enquiry held at Newcastle, May 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> 1943* p18.



branch of the I.L.P that had been dead for several years, and hadn't been dismantled. There were people like Jack Rawlings [sic], Dan Smith (you have probably heard of Dan Smith!) - much more of a Tory in recent years - Alec Auld, myself and some others... We knocked together a platform. We started holding meetings in Bigg Market in Newcastle selling the *New Leader*, and so on. In fact, apart from the Communist party in Newcastle, we were the only really active group at that time. Anyway, this is telescoping a tremendous amount in a short period of time, but this was of course 1939.<sup>199</sup>

### **The Independent Labour Party**

The ILP was founded in 1893 to strive for political representation for working class people, to supplement industrial action by the trades union movement, and in 1900 it combined with the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation to form the Labour Representation Committee (from 1906, the Labour Party).<sup>200</sup> It espoused a non-Marxist socialism, with what Winter describes as a “very ethical, indeed evangelical approach”, and came to be considered the ‘socialist conscience’ of the Labour Party, within which it retained a separate existence.<sup>201</sup> By the 1920s many ILP members were expressing frustration at the perceived gradualism of the national Labour leadership and its failure of the second MacDonald government to provide a radical programme. Parliamentary rebellion by ILP MPs led to a dispute about ILP acceptance of the Labour Party whip in the House of Commons, and this issue was to prompt a debate about disaffiliation from the Labour Party. At a special conference in March 1932 the party membership voted to leave the Labour Party.<sup>202</sup>

By the summer of 1939 the ILP was a group living off the prestige of its past, and preparing for a humiliating climb-down by considering requesting reaffiliation to the Labour Party. The history of the ILP during the 1930s has been the subject of a number of studies, largely echoing the view taken by R.E. Dowse that disaffiliation was a catastrophic error that led to the marginalisation of the party.<sup>203</sup> A study by

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<sup>199</sup> Bornstein, S & Richardson, A, *War and the International: A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1937-1949* (London 1986). Alec Auld was a long-standing member of the ILP, and later of the RCP. Bigg Market, today the epicentre of Newcastle's ‘party city’ nightlife, was formerly the city's ‘Speakers’ Corner’. *New Leader* was the ILP newspaper.

<sup>200</sup> Winter, Barry, *The ILP Past & Present* (Leeds 1996) pp3-5

<sup>201</sup> Stevens, Richard, ‘Rapid Demise or Slow Death?’ *The Independent Labour Party in Derby, 1932-1945*, *Midlands History* vol 22 (1997) pp113; Winter *op cit* p9

<sup>202</sup> Stevens *op cit* p113; Winter *op cit* pp19-22; Dowse, R.E., *Left in the Centre: The Independent Labour Party 1893-1940* (London 1966) p184

<sup>203</sup> Dowse *op cit*. See also Littlejohns, G.N.R., *The Decline of the Independent Labour Party 1929-1939* (Unpublished MPhil Thesis, University of Nottingham 1979),

Gidon Cohen presents a politely revisionist alternative, arguing that the decision to disaffiliate was dictated by logic rather than sentiment (or a collective rush of blood to the head), and that the 1930s did not see as universal a decline in the party's fortunes as had been previously presented; rather, that it was engaged in a battle for political 'space' on the left from which it emerged in the late 1930s with greater ideological focus than it had possessed in 1932.<sup>204</sup>

Cohen stresses that while the party saw a great fall both in membership and in branch numbers during the 1930s, this decline was neither continuous nor universal. Major losses in some of the ILP's more important divisions, such as Scotland and Lancashire, allowed smaller divisions to gain in relative importance, and while No. 2 Division (Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland and Cleveland) was one of the smallest divisions, and had lost heavily in the immediate aftermath of disaffiliation, it did experience some growth in the mid 1930s, particularly in Cumberland. This occurred through the influence of the Divisional Chairman, Tom Stephenson, a well-known and well-respected leader of the Cumberland Miners' Association (and one of the few senior ILP figures with significant trade union influence).<sup>205</sup> However, the growth seems to have halted by the end of the decade; in mid-1940, Mark Simpson of the NE Divisional Council was to write to the party secretary, John McNair, that "We have had very few new members in recent years. The Newcastle branch is our only success in that respect (36 new members)." <sup>206</sup> Cohen's arguments notwithstanding, membership figures for the ILP nationally did show a catastrophic decline in the course of the decade, from an estimated 16,773 in 1932 to just 2,441 in 1939.<sup>207</sup> The greatest falls occurred not in the immediate period after disaffiliation, but subsequently (1933 saw membership fall by 34% from the previous year; in 1934 losses rose to 35% and in 1935 39%). In 1936-37 the rate of loss stabilised (if a leakage of 10% in 1937 can be so defined), but began to accelerate again in the

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<sup>204</sup> Cohen, G, *The Failure of a Dream. The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II* (London 2007)

<sup>205</sup> Ibid pp32-33, 35-36. Divisional membership grew by 25% in 1936. Cohen gives the East Anglian Division, and in particular the Norwich branch, as another exemplar of vigorous growth, while Richard Stevens, in one of the very few studies of the ILP at a local level in England, depicts the vigorous Derby Branch, exerting influence through the local Trades Council. Stevens *op cit* pp113-130.

<sup>206</sup> LSE Archives ILP 10/1/6 Mark Simpson to John McNair, response to a circular issued 20 June.

<sup>207</sup> Cohen *op cit* Table on p 31. Cohen gives the estimated membership figures as follows: 1932: 16,773; 1933: 11,092; 1934: 7,166; 1935: 4,392; 1936: 3,680; 1937: 3,319; 1938: 2,948; 1939: 2,441.

closing years of the decade.<sup>208</sup>

While the 1932 disaffiliation may have ‘lanced the boil’ as far as the issue of continued membership of the Labour Party was concerned, any argument that the following eight years saw the ILP emerge as a more focused, disciplined party must be treated with reservations.<sup>209</sup> The remainder of the 1930s saw almost continual internal turmoil, the defection of sizeable segments of the party (in particular, that of Elijah Sandham with the major part of the hitherto powerful Lancashire Division in May 1934, and of the pro-Communist Revolutionary Policy Committee and its supporters in 1935), and lacerating internal debates over the question of war and pacifism, prompted by the Abyssinian crisis in 1935-36 and the Munich crisis in 1938. This all took place against the background of an on-off flirtation with the Communist Party, where the ILP’s ideological confusion and unwillingness to openly attack the CPGB (taking seriously that party’s status as the “British embodiment of Marxism”) made it prey to the more disciplined Communists.<sup>210</sup> There was a further danger from the infant British Trotskyist movement (see below) which was being encouraged by Trotsky to enter the ILP and introduce political vigour into that ‘centrist’ party, seen as wavering between revolutionary and reformist politics.<sup>211</sup> Robert Dowse’s assessment of the period was that “[t]hree years in the wilderness had reduced the party to a shambles, a sectarian shadow of its former self, the happy hunting ground of the crank and the C.P. Worse was to follow... In the mid-1930s it was true beyond question that the I.L.P. and its revolutionary posturing had to make way for the Communist Party. Then the C.P. attracted the left-wing intellectuals while the I.L.P. attracted nobody.”<sup>212</sup> In 1931 the CPGB had 2,500 members, by 1939 18,000; the ILP, by contrast, had fallen from 16,000 in 1932 to 2,500 in 1939.

### **In the Newcastle ILP**

This was the failing party that Smith and his comrades chose to enter at the outbreak

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>209</sup> Dowse *op cit* p184

<sup>210</sup> Dowse *op cit* pp 186-197, 200-202

<sup>211</sup> Callaghan, J, *The Far Left in British Politics* (Oxford 1987) pp41-42. Only eleven Trotskyists entered the ILP as a result.

<sup>212</sup> Dowse *op cit* pp193-194

of war. It is ironic that the outbreak of war simultaneously deprived the ILP of its best opportunity to re-enter its natural home in the Labour Party, and allowed it a swan-song in terms of membership, morale and publicity. “War gave the ILP a chance to return to the great simplicities.”<sup>213</sup> With three Members of Parliament, the ILP was the only organised parliamentary party to oppose British participation in the war, and as such - particularly after the Labour Party entered the coalition government in May 1940 - it acted as a kind of minuscule official opposition, often with comical effect. The wartime electoral truce enabled it to make creditable showings at by-elections (which also allowed valuable propaganda efforts), even outside Scotland, although it failed to capitalise on a popular wish for unspecified ‘change’ which Sir Richard Acland’s Common Wealth Party later exploited so adroitly. It was also able to draw support from those who opposed the war, whether pacifist, pacificist or revolutionary, and after the Soviet Union entered the war “the ILP, the new Common Wealth Party, and even WIL derived growth from defiance of the consensus”<sup>214</sup>

In his 1970 autobiography Smith recalls the building up of the anti-war movement in Newcastle, with open-air and indoor meetings and arguing that “the defeat of fascism and the kind of society that one sought to establish came back to the ability of political leaders to enthuse the people about causes for which people would be prepared to die. Good, positive causes, rather than to strike a pose by being anti-German.”<sup>215</sup>

The ILP is barely mentioned in this short memoir, but Smith made a rapid rise in its ranks, and the Newcastle Central branch was, for a time, the darling of the party hierarchy. “For a while everything went along quite harmoniously. Street canvassing of *New Leaders* was undertaken, the branch held public meetings in the Bigg Market and a large meeting in the City Hall” noted Mark Sadler in 1943.<sup>216</sup> ILP General Secretary John McNair, writing on branch news in the *New Leader*, lavished praise

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<sup>213</sup> Upham, M, *The History of British Trotskyism to 1949* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hull 1980) Accessed at <http://www.revolutionary-history.co.uk/Upham/upmen.html> 23 September 2007  
Appendix F: ‘Trotskyism and the ILP’

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, Appendix F: ‘Trotskyism and the ILP’

<sup>215</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit*, pp19-20

<sup>216</sup> Independent Labour Party, *Report of Enquiry held at Newcastle, May 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> 1943* p18

on “the Tyneside boys” and their activities, including their disruption of a public meeting at the City Hall at which War Minister Oliver Stanley was presenting the Government’s case to the Tyneside public. “What has been the result of this militancy and initiative on the part of the Newcastle Branch? Thirty-five new members during the last month and branches being formed in Wallsend and even in Cullercoats... the lads are all working to get Charlie Smith [C.A. Smith] the biggest and best meeting ever. I say lads advisedly. The chairman, aged 22; Tom McChesnay, the secretary, aged 19, and the treasurer an old man of 26! These are the torch bearers, so we middle-agers can work ourselves out knowing there are others to better our efforts!”<sup>217</sup>

The Newcastle branch was taking an increasingly strident left-wing political approach. In the autumn of 1940 the Newcastle branch passed a resolution attacking the ILP Chairman CA Smith, who had in the theoretical journal *Left* and in the party’s internal discussion bulletin *Between Ourselves* criticised the party’s attitude towards the war, in which, he argued, “the issue has been narrowed down to the survival of the British state, with perhaps the liberation of Europe from Nazidom, or the destruction of Britain’s independence, and the establishment in a Fascist Europe of a vassal British state... the latter alternative entails the destruction of every hope for each single thing for which the I.L.P stands.” The war was no longer a simple inter-imperialist struggle, and “[w]e can regard the outcome... with indifference only if we believe that Hitlerism is not worse than British capitalism, or, at least, not worse than British capitalism would be after a victorious war. Any man who says that Hitlerism is no worse than British Capitalism of 1939 (or 1940) is either a fool or a Fascist.” Socialists should desire the defeat of Hitler, by a working class revolution in Germany if possible, and accompanied by revolutions in Britain and France. “In the absence of these, we prefer him to be defeated by the British State

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<sup>217</sup> *New Leader*, 23 February 1940. Smith was 24 years old at the time. Other 1940 references in *NL* include 9 February (“The Tyneside is humming.”), 23 May (on a meeting addressed by James Maxton and John McNair), 26 September and 7 December, praising a leaflet drawn up by the Newcastle branch attacking the CPGB-sponsored People’s Convention. Cullercoats is a middle-class seaside district of Tyneside. The regional Conservative Party Chairman Cuthbert Headlam was present at the Oliver Stanley meeting and noted in his diary that “about half a dozen I.L.P., Pacifists and Mosleyites were ejected...”, Ball, S (ed) *Parliament and Politics in the Age of Churchill and Attlee. The Headlam Diaries 1935-1951* (Cambridge University Press 1999) p180.

rather than be victorious over it.”<sup>218</sup>

Newcastle’s response was to accuse CA Smith of writing “piffle” and stated “He implies that we must choose between British Imperialism and German Nazism... he falls into the same trap as the leaders of the Labour Party fell into long ago – i.e., he asks us to recognize two forces, they are both Capitalist-Imperialist, and ignore the fact that there are only two forces that count – Capitalist-Imperialism and Workers’ Power. There is no distinction to be made between Capitalisms, whether British or German, as the Capitalist whole must be opposed, whatever the consequences, and we must work for only one thing – Workers’ Power... The slogan for British Socialists... at the present time should be that of Karl Liebknecht [sic], “The main enemy is at home”, and the sooner we disregard the irrational choice left to us by C.A. Smith, the better.”<sup>219</sup> C A Smith’s response was that it was “plain daftness” of Newcastle to claim no difference between British and German capitalism; “...quickly would the Newcastle comrades realise this if they were transported to Germany. If they can’t distinguish Nazism from British capitalism, they should form a study group and get down to the facts of the situation before being guilty of such imbecile statements.”<sup>220</sup>

Shortly afterwards Dan Smith and Roy Tearse wrote a fiery article in *Between Ourselves* – the first time that Smith seems to have appeared in that bulletin - attacking the ‘People’s Convention’, an attempt by the CPGB to build an anti-war united front, headed by the independent Labour (not ILP) MP D N Pritt with the aim of establishing a ‘People’s Government’. Smith and Tearse criticised the ostensible class inclusivity of the Convention, arguing that “the experiences in France and Spain have shown that the People’s Front is an anti-working class policy and must always mean the ... subordination of the Workers’ to non-working class interests...it is... the Workers’ alone who lose in the outcome of any action by a ‘People’s Convention’ and anyone who supports it must of necessity be contributing to a

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<sup>218</sup> Working Class Movement Library, C A Smith, ‘ILP Policy: A Critical Survey’ *Between Ourselves* July-August 1940 pp 1-8

<sup>219</sup> Working Class Movement Library, Newcastle Branch, ‘The Case in Support of the Resolution on C A Smith’, *Between Ourselves* September-October 1940 pp 6-7

<sup>220</sup> Working Class Movement Library, C A Smith, ‘Replies to Critics’, *Between Ourselves* November 1940 p5. CA Smith resigned from his Chairmanship in the spring of 1941.

further betrayal of the masses.” As to action, “the only policy to be carried out by a Worker’s Party basing its programme on Marxism is that of the Workers’” Front... As far as the People’s Convention is concerned... a policy of isolation and complete indifference is useless. The Convention should be attacked and exposed both from within and without... Our one aim is the overthrowal [sic] of Capitalism, accompanied by the complete annihilation and shattering of the existing state machinery. This policy alone can rid us of the causes of war.”<sup>221</sup> These aims were not dissimilar to those of the Trotskyist Workers’ International League, although the WIL did manage to insert members into the People’s Convention who were trades union delegates.<sup>222</sup>

Smith is first mentioned in the pages of the ILP newspaper *New Leader* in April 1942, supporting an amendment to an annual conference resolution on war aims, and later in the month he is reported as expressing hopes for the establishment of a branch at Hartford, Northumberland.<sup>223</sup> In May, “[s]ome of the Tyneside boys are doing splendid work in the outlying pit villages...”, and in July 1942 “excellent meetings” in some pit villages were “undertaken by our energetic comrades, Alex Auld, Jack Johnston and Dan Smith”.<sup>224</sup> The Newcastle branch was continuing its left-wing political approach, and prior to the 1942 National Conference it had tabled a resolution taking issue with a statement that the ILP’s ‘Socialist Britain Now’ programme might be achieved through Parliamentary means: “...only by the development of independent working class action with the sole aim of smashing the existing Capitalist system can Socialism be achieved.”<sup>225</sup>

However, it seems apparent that Smith was already making a name for himself before this, and to be developing Trotskyist sympathies. In the spring of 1941 Harry Ratner, a middle class Trotskyist with strong links to the French Trotskyist leaders Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank, “managed to make a trip to Newcastle to talk to

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<sup>221</sup> Working Class Movement Library, Roy Tearse & Dan Smith, “‘Go To It’!”, *Between Ourselves* December 1940 pp16-18. Underlinings as in original.

<sup>222</sup> Bornstein & Richardson *op cit* p16; Grant, T, *History of British Trotskyism* (London 2002) p74. The People’s Convention collapsed after the German invasion of the USSR on 22 June 1941.

<sup>223</sup> *New Leader* 11 April 1942 p5; 24 April 1942 p3.

<sup>224</sup> *New Leader* 23 May 1942; 18 July 1942 p5.

<sup>225</sup> LSE Archive ILP 5/1942/10 Final Agenda of Resolutions and Amendments, 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference (the motion was withdrawn in favour of another similarly-worded). See also *New Leader* 14 February 1942, on the NE Divisional Conference at which this motion had been passed.

T Dan Smith who was then active in the Newcastle ILP. I stayed a couple of nights at his home in Spittal [sic] Tongues. He introduced me to Roy Tearse. I found them to be basically in agreement with the Trotskyist positions on the war, the Soviet Union and other issues. I suggested that whether they stayed in the ILP or not they should nevertheless be in contact with the Workers' International League and work with it."<sup>226</sup>

Tearse himself recalled having been introduced to Trotskyism by an article he read in early 1940.

I don't remember which journal it was [in], but I remember that it made such an impression on me that I discussed it with one or two others, that I decided - and the others agreed - that we must try and contact the Trotskyist movement. We didn't know where it existed. The first Trotskyist contact that we had was really a farce. I don't know whether we had written to someone, but this young chap came to Newcastle with a sealed letter. He was actually sent by the R.S.L. [Revolutionary Socialist League] and the letter actually said that we should take no notice of this bloke, that he was a bit of a bloody fool anyway - and this was to introduce the organisation to us! This put us completely off, and we had in the meantime heard about the Workers' International League, and it was decided we should make contact.<sup>227</sup>

Tearse and a colleague travelled to London and met Jock Haston, Millie Lee and other Workers' International League (WIL) leaders. On returning to Newcastle, contact was maintained with WIL, but Tearse wanted to get closer to the heart of the movement and in 1941 moved to London, getting a job at De Havilland in Middlesex.<sup>228</sup>

## **Trotskyism**

From the death of Lenin in 1924, supporters of Trotsky had been increasingly marginalised and dissent suppressed within the Soviet Union, but Trotsky continued, even in exile, to urge his supporters to work within communist parties and the Third

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<sup>226</sup> Ratner, H, *Reluctant Revolutionary. Memoirs of a Trotskyist 1936-1960* (London 1994) p32. Ratner (b. 1919), the son of a London fur merchant, spent much of his upbringing in Paris, escaping in 1940 and being fined for illegally sheltering Frank in his London flat. He visited Smith in 1941 shortly before being conscripted into the Pioneer Corps. After the war he became an adherent of Gerry Healy.

<sup>227</sup> Bornstein & Richardson *op cit* p69

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid* p70



Communist International (Comintern), in the belief that Stalinist dominance was not permanent. He changed his stance in 1933. As a result of the Comintern's so-called 'Third Period' policies, communist hostility had for several years focussed on so-called 'social fascists' (social democratic parties), and no countenance given to co-operation against fascism. As a result, the German Communist Party was able to offer no opposition to the Nazi takeover in Germany in January 1933.<sup>229</sup> This, to Trotsky, meant that reform of the Comintern was no longer realistic and a new International, the Fourth, should be established (this took place in 1938) and new parties set up.<sup>230</sup> It is perhaps ironic that, as John Callaghan wrote, Until his death in 1940 Trotsky was both the greatest opponent of Stalin and the greatest defender of the Bolshevik orthodoxies which helped paved the way to Stalinism."<sup>231</sup> And when the Comintern in 1934 abandoned Third Period communism and sought to establish popular front coalition, it was denounced by Trotsky as "the distinction between decaying democracy and murderous fascism disappears in the face of the collapse of the entire system."<sup>232</sup> Trotsky believed that conditions were ripe for revolution and that the leadership of communist and social democratic parties was inhibiting this. In *The Transitional Programme* he declared that the world situation "is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat"; by "freeing the proletariat from the old leadership whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruptions of disintegrating capitalism and represents the chief obstacle to historical progress" Trotsky's supporters could help overcome this crisis, by entering and using other parties if they were unable to build mass parties.<sup>233</sup>

The British Trotskyist movement had emerged in 1932 when the British Section of the Left Opposition, a small group of Trotsky adherents, was expelled from the CPGB; by 1933, now called the Communist League, it had around fifty members and was being urged by Trotsky to enter the ILP, both to gain strength and to give revolutionary vigour to that wavering organisation.<sup>234</sup> The entryist tactic was known

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<sup>229</sup> Callaghan (1987) *op cit* p23

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid* p24

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid* p22

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid* p24

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid* p25

<sup>234</sup> Callaghan (1987) *op cit* pp 41-42

as the ‘French Turn’, having first been applied by Trotskyist activists in France entering the French socialist party the SFIO.<sup>235</sup> The Communist League split over this issue, with eleven members entering the ILP, others, based in south London and known as the ‘Balham Group’ favouring entry into the Labour Party.<sup>236</sup> A further group working in the Labour Party was known openly as the Militant Labour League or Militant Group.<sup>237</sup>

The WIL had been formed in 1937, after a small group, largely composed of South African Trotskyists who had moved to London in the mid 1930s, split from the main existing Trotskyist organisation in the UK, the Militant group.<sup>238</sup> The split had been occasioned by the spreading of false rumours about Ralph Lee, the leader of the dissenting faction, and early members of the resulting WIL (also known as the ‘Lee Group’) were Ralph (Raff) Lee, his wife Mildred (Millie) Lee, Heaton Lee (also South African, but no relation), Ted Grant, and Jock Haston. Soon to be recruited was the Irishman Gerry Healy, who, still a CPGB member, was converted to Trotskyism after a fracas with Haston at Speakers’ Corner in Hyde Park.<sup>239</sup>

The WIL was initially a tiny group concentrated in the Paddington area of west London, hugely outnumbered by the remainder of the Militant Group which renamed itself the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). When the Fourth International was formed in 1938 at Trotsky’s behest, the RSL was formally recognised as the British Section. The WIL, refusing to merge with the RSL, was left out in the cold. Nevertheless, it proved much more skillful at adapting to the changed conditions of wartime than the RSL. The RSL had continued to pursue a policy of entrism into the Labour Party, despite the prohibition by Labour of its front organisation, the Militant Labour League, in 1939 and the near-total cessation of local activity by the mainstream political parties following the electoral truce. It advocated a policy of ‘Revolutionary Defeatism’ as a response to British participation in the war, which may well have alienated potential supporters (whereas the WIL agitated for deep shelter provision against air raids, refused to oppose conscription, and advocated the

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<sup>235</sup> Crick, Michael, *The March of Militant* (London 1986) p22

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*; Crick *op cit* pp21, 23-24

<sup>237</sup> Crick *op cit* pp24-25

<sup>238</sup> Bornstein & Richardson *op cit* pp 2-3

<sup>239</sup> Crick *op cit* p26

more muscular ‘Proletarian Military Policy’, for which it was denounced by the RSL as ‘defencist’). And it was to consume itself in a series of internal splits and feuds. Ted Grant, who was emerging in the early 1940s as a leading theorist in the WIL, was to look back on the RSL of this period with scorn: “This policy of an absolute out-of-this-world sectarianism and ultra-leftism on the question of war was linked to an intransigent need to continue work inside the lifeless Labour Party! This gave them the opportunity in the privacy of each other’s homes of carrying on what they imagined was political activity: debating the contents of internal bulletins.”<sup>240</sup>

The WIL was also abandoning its practice of entrism into the Labour Party – which had to a large extent abandoned normal political activity as a result of the truce – and switching attention to the ILP. Jock Haston advocated such a shift in March 1942, noting that the WIL had gained more new members from the ILP than from other parties and that “There cannot be the slightest doubt that a left swing in the [labour] movement will herald a period of rapid growth for the ILP from among the best sections of the working class... Even if we limit ourselves to this general perspective it imposes on us the need to continue to organise a hard, serious fraction within the ILP, a fraction capable of winning the majority, or at least wide sections of its members to the banner of the Fourth International and into the ranks of W.I.L.”<sup>241</sup>

Roy Tearse, who had become a leading member of the WIL and was in 1943 to become its Industrial Organiser, maintained his links with Tyneside, and Jock Haston, in his role as National Organiser of WIL, would also pay visits to the north east. In a report of 22 April 1942 to the WIL Executive Committee Haston stated “Had discussions with Newcastle and Gateshead I.L.P. members. Two comrades from the former will join us. Prospects for several more: composition: proletarian, politically confused, mainly C.O.’s but not entirely pacifists - can easily be won from this false position.”<sup>242</sup> Reporting on the ILP Conference at Morecambe, which he had attended with Gerry Healy, Haston noted the performance of “our own comrades” who were ILP delegates.

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<sup>240</sup> Grant *op cit* p86. Internal bulletins were journals carrying ideological articles and debates circulated only to party members.

<sup>241</sup> GCATT/WIL/11 Haston, J, Centrism and the Revolutionary Party, WIL *Internal Bulletin* 15 March 1942

<sup>242</sup> Hull University Archives DJH 14B/11a/2 NO’s Report - attached to EC Report 22 April 1942

The main gains of the Conference are that a legal platform is now provided for our fraction work - i.e. Labour to Power; that our comrades had their first baptism under fire in struggle against the pacifist leadership and came out strengthened and with their position enhanced on a national scale; and finally: as a result of our co-ordinated work, we have a good springboard throughout the I.L.P. to conduct our struggle for the coming year. The last conference gained us the support of Newcastle and Cardiff. This conference should reap more rewards than the last. If conditions allow for another conference, there is a good possibility that the pacifists will be completely routed and our platform will receive tremendous support, depending upon our work in the coming period.<sup>243</sup>

A month afterwards, a report of the WIL Central Committee noted “two new members (ILP) DS and KS accepted” – the initials referring beyond reasonable doubt to Dan Smith and Ken Sketheway.<sup>244</sup> By November Haston was able to boast that “The main political work of the group was being conducted in the I.L.P. although the gains had not been spectacular. In the North East our position had been greatly entrenched and we expected to have a sympathiser on the NAC in the near future. In this and in other spheres we felt the lack of trained cadres.”<sup>245</sup> In discussion, Healy commented that “As we penetrate the higher bodies of the ILP the need for political training of our people become urgent”, while Haston remarked that “in the more politically backward areas, such as Notts and Tyneside, there was a correspondingly higher industrial level.”

A requirement to raise the ideological level of their members on Tyneside may account for the move there in 1942 of Robert Shaw, the son of a Leeds doctor, who had been a Methodist lay preacher before joining the ILP and then WIL. One account, by Andy Smith, has Shaw being sent to Tyneside as “organizer” by WIL as a replacement for the conscripted George Brown. The aim was to recruit local ILP members to WIL, and Shaw “struck up a close link” with Smith. Haston visited Newcastle in 1942 and “took Smith under his wing and ‘taught him everything he knew about organizing’”.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Hull University Archives DJH 14B/11a/2 NO’s Report - attached to EC Report 22 April 1942

<sup>244</sup> Hull University Archives DJH 14B/11b/1 CC 23 May 1942. It is not specified, but is overwhelmingly probable that DS refers to Dan Smith and KS Ken Sketheway.

<sup>245</sup> Hull University Archives DJH 14B/11b/7 CC 7 November 1942

<sup>246</sup> Smith, A, *Faces of Labour. The Inside Story* (London 1996) p267

This account may exaggerate Shaw's role, although Barney Markson was to identify Shaw as a WIL District Organiser.<sup>247</sup> According to Shaw's wife Mickie, the couple moved to Newcastle in November 1942 (some months after Smith had joined the WIL), after Shaw had lost his job in the shipyards of Barrow, to work at Hawthorn-Leslie yard in Hebburn. The Tyneside WIL was a small group of three or four, "mostly recruited from the ILP and still retaining their membership of that organisation." Though it may be that Smith's membership of WIL was covert. The date of the formation of the Tyneside branch is uncertain – a WIL Central Committee report of early 1942 suggests a new branch be formed, but the Political Bureau minutes for 10 October 1942 refer to "the lack of a local WIL group" in the area.<sup>248</sup> "Robert frequently clashed with the local branch members whose politics were centrist rather than revolutionary and who were prone to compromise within the ILP. He was also disturbed that the WIL leadership appeared to go along with this centrist group but he did not at the time voice his concern generally in the WIL. The local WIL branch concentrated on working to win recruits from the ILP which had a fairly strong following on Tyneside, conducting a continuous attack on the policies of Stalinism and deepening connections with the industrial Workers'..." In 1943, as Heaton Lee and Ann Keen moved to Newcastle, the Shaws moved to London to take up full-time work for WIL.<sup>249</sup>

Smith, meanwhile, was forging ahead in the ILP. In September 1942 he was appointed full-time organiser for the North East Division, for a trial period of thirteen weeks (in the same month the party appointed organisers in Scotland, Lancashire and the Midlands, the last of these, part-time, being Ted Fletcher, a future

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<sup>247</sup> Independent Labour Party, *Report of Enquiry held at Newcastle, May 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> 1943* p 5

<sup>248</sup> GCATT GCATT/WIL/12 Undated WIL Central Committee minutes, probably c. February 1942; Political Bureau minutes, 10 October 1942.

<sup>249</sup> Shaw, M, *Robert Shaw: Fighter for Trotskyism 1917-1980* (London 1983) pp 57-65. The Shaws went on to become lifelong supporters of Gerry Healy, which may account for Mickie Shaw's jaundiced view of the 'centrist' Tynesiders and the WIL leadership (on whom Healy was to turn in the later 1940s), the latter "a political clique, entering into unprincipled combinations with the petty-bourgeois elements of the former RSL" (p71). Bob Shaw was notoriously humourless, and spent his wedding night in 1940 at a Young Communist League public meeting, attempting to win converts to Trotskyism (p28). Smith seems to have reciprocated the Shaws' antipathy, commenting at the 1943 ILP enquiry "Shaw is hopeless - I don't like him". Independent Labour Party, *Report of Enquiry held at Newcastle, May 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> 1943* p 10

Newcastle councillor and Labour MP).<sup>250</sup> Smith was soon to prove his value, announcing in October 1942 the formation of a new branch at Nelson (Northumberland), and commencing to write for *New Leader*, his first article ‘Why Tyne Struck’ (on the ‘Total Time’ strike in the Tyne shipyards) appearing on 17 October.<sup>251</sup> By the end of the month John McNair was remarking on a meeting of almost one thousand miners addressed by Smith at Ashington, adding: “If there is one modernism I do not like it is ‘cash in’. I can think of no other, however, which can adequately describe our recent work on Tyneside. We disposed of 1,250 “New Leaders” last week-end. Dan Smith tells me that he hopes to get branches “away” (this is Tyneside for “started”) at Heaton, Wallsend, North Shields, South Shields and probably Newbiggin.”<sup>252</sup> Wallsend was the first ‘away’, chaired by Herbert Bell, with Jack Rawling as secretary.<sup>253</sup> Shortly afterwards, Newcastle East (otherwise Heaton) was established, chaired by Harold Knapman.<sup>254</sup> In January 1943 a new branch was formed at Carlisle, which lay within the No. 2 Division area.<sup>255</sup> Smith’s new duties also involved representing the ILP on public platforms and at debates, such as that held in Hartford (Northumberland), with William Allan of the CPGB, on “Should the Working Class Support the War?”<sup>256</sup>

By the North East Divisional Conference in February 1943 Smith was able to boast the formation of four new branches as well as Carlisle, and “emphasised the importance of the shipyards and engineering spheres for activity.”<sup>257</sup>

However, he was also continuing to speak critically of leading ILP members with whom he disagreed: in December 1942 attacking the prolific ILP publicist F A Ridley, who in the *New Leader* on 14 November 1942 had stated that “As an International force Bolshevism is finished”. Ridley railed against the “gratuitous and entirely unprovoked attack” but would “deal only with the essentials of Smith’s position and shall pass over his somewhat tortuous ramblings round history in search

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<sup>250</sup> *New Leader* 5 September 1942 p5; 12 September 1942 p5; 26 September 1942 p5.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid* 17 October 1942.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid* 31 October 1942

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid* 14 November 1942

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid* 28 November 1942.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid* 23 January 1943

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid* 12 December 1942, 2 January 1943 p5

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid* 20 February 1943 p5

of bad arguments to justify an untenable position” and went on to attack Smith’s arguments on the nature of Bolshevism and the Soviet Union under Stalin: “However, say Smith & Co, this is merely Stalinist ‘degeneration’; it is not Bolshevism. The metaphysics of an idealist acrobat! Stalinism is Russian Bolshevism as it has worked out in the actual course of history and, for an historical materialist there is no other criterion.”<sup>258</sup>

At the ILP National Conference in April 1943 (the Jubilee Conference, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the party’s foundation), Smith was elected to the National Administrative Council, the ILP’s ruling body, as divisional representative for the North East, ousting the sitting representative, Norman Winters, of the moderate Gateshead branch.<sup>259</sup>

At this conference the left-leaning Tyneside branches made their presence felt. Wallsend proposed an openly Trotskyist amendment to the ‘Basic Resolution’: the masses being not yet convinced of the “inadequacy and hopelessness” of reformism, and not yet realizing that only revolutionary socialism and the seizure of power by the workers can solve their problems, the ILP should declare that they have no confidence in the programme of the Labour Party but will give “critical support” to Labour Party and trade union leaders taking progressive steps, while “relentlessly criticizing the reformist basis and ideas of the Labour Party.”<sup>260</sup>

This was defeated, one opponent suggesting mildly that Labour members “would not react to the proposed tactic in the manner desired, while the ILP Parliamentary leader James Maxton objected that it would associate the ILP with the Labour leadership in “another debacle”.<sup>261</sup> A further amendment was placed by Smith’s Newcastle Central branch:

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<sup>258</sup> Working Class Movement Library, Ridley, F A, ‘The End of Bolshevism (A Reply to Dan Smith), *Between Ourselves* January 1943 pp 10-12

<sup>259</sup> *New Leader* 1 May 1943 p6. The CPGB were aware of Smith’s WIL membership: “On the new NAC there are 4 WILers, F A Ridley, Don Smith [sic], Bob Edwards, and Don McGregor. These are not openly announced by the WIL but are known to be in continuous political collaboration with Grant, Healey [sic] and other WIL leaders” – GCATT WIL/19 CPGB ‘Report on Trotskyist Activities, May 1943’

<sup>260</sup> LSE Archives ILP 5/1943/7 Final Agenda of Resolutions and Amendments, Jubilee Conference, 24-26 April 1943

<sup>261</sup> *New Leader* 1 May 1943 p4

It naturally follows... that we explain to Trades Unionists and Labour Party members that their leaders can no longer be trusted and must be removed. The fact that they are taking part in the Government assisting the age-long enemies of the working-class is no surprise to the I.L.P. We realise that the best place for such men as these is in the camp of the working-class enemy. We therefore urge the rank and file to repudiate these so-called leaders, but leave them in their present place where they really belong. After electing new leaders, prepare to conduct a struggle for power...<sup>262</sup>

This, too, failed to be carried. A further amendment by Newcastle Central had appeared in the conference's preliminary agenda. This stated:

The Labour Party has demonstrated to the British Workers' that it no longer voices their just right to control the products of their labour. It has allied itself so closely with the aims of the ruling class that it would be political folly to look to it as a guide to Socialist action. It has sunk to an appendage, indeed a prop, of the present system; it can never again be the standard bearer of working-class struggle.<sup>263</sup>

### **"We must not be bloody mugs"**

Smith's rise in the ILP was soon to receive its first check. The harmony in the Tyneside ILP in mid-1940 had, by the end of that year, given way to conflict and, testified Mark Sadler in 1943, "an open hostility was being shown to pacifists by the followers of Comrade Brown. In my opinion some of these left on account of being deliberately snubbed by R. Tearse in particular rather than because of the recruiting speeches of the faction with the military policy."<sup>264</sup> A fall in branch numbers caused by this, and by members moving away for work, continued Sadler, "did not seem to worry the Trotsky faction, who took the view that 'correct socialist policy' was less liable to be outvoted by a small branch."<sup>265</sup> Despite a falling membership roll in Newcastle, Dan Smith suggested the formation of an East End branch, and Sadler, who had also been thinking of such a move, was happy with the proposal for the new branch which might have "a more social atmosphere"<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> LSE Archives ILP 5/1943/7 Final Agenda of Resolutions and Amendments, Jubilee Conference, 24-26 April 1943

<sup>263</sup> LSE Archives ILP 5/1943/9 Preliminary Agenda of Resolutions for the Jubilee Conference, 24-26 April 1943

<sup>264</sup> Independent Labour Party, *Report of Enquiry held at Newcastle, May 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> 1943* p19

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid* p19

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid* p19



Jock Haston had written to the new branch offering a speaker, and in due course Ted Grant arrived in Newcastle, to address a meeting of around nine Newcastle East ILPers, with four guests from the Newcastle Central and Wallsend branches. Smith took the chair, then, recalled Sadler, “for an hour we were regaled with a torrent of denunciation of the leaders of the I.L.P. separately and jointly, Maxton, McGovern, Brockway and Stephens were castigated as traitors to the working class, the Party generally was painted playing a counter-revolutionary role... generally the lecture was a gross abuse of a privilege given in a friendly spirit by the branch who had hoped to benefit from the interchange of views with what we thought were kindred parties.” One party member, Barney Markson, “intensely indignant... gave Grant the trouncing he deserved”; he and Smith had to leave the meeting early, but “[t]he other comrades and myself had a busy time till after midnight hotly contesting the libellous comments of Grant who was ably supported by Comrade Skethaway [sic].”<sup>267</sup> Markson also was the subject of an argument over a withdrawn conference resolution at a Divisional Council meeting, which led to his expulsion from the party.<sup>268</sup> He appealed to the centre against his expulsion. A delegation composed of ILP Chairman Bob Edwards, Secretary John McNair, and Percy Williams, Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee was sent to Newcastle to conduct an enquiry into the affair. This took place on 22/23 May 1943.

The team examined the disputed Divisional Council proceedings, the nomination of Dan Smith as NAC representative, and the issue of ‘Trotsky speakers’ and of Trotskyists in the north east ILP, and the ousting of Norman Winters as NAC representative.

Herbie Bell of the Wallsend branch stated that the opposition to Smith as NAC representative was because he was also the organiser, and went on: “I do not think there is much support for Trotskyism. Some of the members may be approaching Trotskyism but as far as the statement that Dan Smith was responsible for Trotskyist speakers, that is ridiculous.” However, Len Edmondson of Gateshead branch, who

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<sup>267</sup> *Ibid* pp19-20

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid* pp1-2. Markson’s letter of allegations was received and discussed at the NAC meeting on 23 April 1943. LSE Archives ILP 3/31.

had been involved in the strike at the Neptune yard, told the enquiry that Robert Shaw had approached him after the strike and identified him as an ILPer, “and... made one or two remarks that made me think that someone in the Party had been passing on information... I suspect Dan Smith of passing on information... I have not been able to find any evidence against Dan Smith except that Haston stays with him”. However, he suspected Smith of leaking information, and he had opposed Smith’s appointment as Divisional Council Secretary, as he was full-time organiser.<sup>269</sup> Another Gateshead member, Maggs, was more open about his views. “The Trotskyists are against the Gateshead branch. On the D.C. [Divisional Council] anything that the Gateshead branch proposes is put down by the Trotskyists on the D.C. Those who take the Trotskyist view on the D.C. are Rawlings [sic], Skethaway [sic] and Dan Smith. Auld recently seems to be taking their line. Auld has been a good member but is he working for the I.L.P. or the W.I.L.? They are definitely trying to turn the I.L.P Trotskyist.”<sup>270</sup>

Barney Markson went still further. After the departure of Brown and Tearse,

Dan Smith then became leader of the Trotskyist element in the I.L.P. He gathered newcomers around him, also Skethaway [sic], Rawlings [sic] and to a great extent, Auld. In 1942 Dan Smith met Haston and from then Dan Smith seemed to work in close collaboration with W.I.L. Haston taught Dan Smith everything he knew about organising. Haston was then advocating that everyone should join the I.L.P. It was about that time that I thought with a little persuasion Haston would break with W.I.L. and become a good worker for the I.L.P. I wrote privately to J. McNair about it. My suggestion was turned down and Dan Smith was made organiser, but right from the beginning he adopted the Trotskyist approach to new members... No-one but Trotskyists and Trotskyist-inclined were encouraged to address new members so that they got a good grip.<sup>271</sup>

In late 1942, Markson went on, the WIL changed its policy to one of attacking the ILP, and sent emissaries to Tyneside: Haston, Harold Atkinson, Shaw (who he identified as District Organiser for the WIL) and Grant. Markson had demanded that Trotskyist speakers be barred but was opposed by Smith and Auld. Eventually, a debate between Markson and Bob Shaw was arranged, but the Gateshead branch was

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<sup>269</sup> Independent Labour Party, *Report of Enquiry held at Newcastle, May 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> 1943* pp 3-4

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid* pp4-5

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid* p5

not informed. “Dan Smith was away, but at other times when I had tackled the Trotskyist sympathisers Dan Smith had always opposed me except at the meeting where Grant was so vile and Dan Smith remained silent... I concluded that Dan Smith was working secretly in co-operation with Shaw.”<sup>272</sup> He had also met Mark Sadler: “He said, ‘From observation I am convinced that the W.I.L. are out to smash the I.L.P. and Dan Smith is the leading instigator on the Tyne’. I found then that the Trotskyists were trying to get all the chief offices in the Division - Sketheway was nominated as Treasurer - Rawlings [sic] was nominated as *New Leader* Organiser, Johnson [sic] was re-nominated as Industrial Organiser and Auld was Newcastle representative on the D.C.”

Norman Winters told a similar story, and alleged that the election of Smith as DC secretary (by 21 votes to 19) was unfair as the Ashington branch votes had not been received. He also criticised the personal nature of the campaigns within the Division against Markson and himself. “Skethaway [sic] and Dan Smith have gone to Gateshead and slandered me... These comrades entered the I.L.P. as 100% Pacifists and now they are 100% revolutionary. I am convinced personally that they cannot be tolerated in the I.L.P because I am certain they will smash the I.L.P.. Sadler says his branch is being disillusioned. They have formed new branches but eventually we shall lose them and probably the old branches as well.”<sup>273</sup>

Smith, by contrast, presented a picture of sweet reason. He was friendly with Haston, “a likeable chap”, and would even have CP people to stay (and debate) with him. He blamed Markson, Sadler and Winters for spreading dissatisfaction. “The reason [the issue of the WIL] is being raised in these three branches is because one member goes to another branch and talks to other members. That is not the general position in the division. The charges that I have disrupted the I.L.P. will not bear inspection. I want to endeavour to prove to you that these complaints are because of the real sabotage of the I.L.P. I do not admit that the Trotskyists have tried to capture offices in the I.L.P.... The allegations that I am a Trotskyist and am trying to seize the I.L.P. is [sic] ridiculous... I believe that the I.L.P. is the future revolutionary Party - that is

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<sup>272</sup> *Ibid* pp5-6

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid* p129

why I stop in the I.L.P. If I believed that W.I.L. were the future revolutionary party I would leave the I.L.P. and go to W.I.L.”<sup>274</sup> At this point Smith had been a member of the WIL for almost exactly one year.

Despite the evidence suggesting malpractice, and displaying the corrosive infighting within the No. 2 Division, the investigating committee chose to ignore most of it. Markson had been unjustly expelled, they felt, but, said McNair, “With regard to Dan Smith, I am not going to insult him by talking about his work - he has done tremendous work. No member of the committee has the slightest suspicion of any underhand work.”<sup>275</sup> The possibility that Smith would become Divisional organiser, Divisional Council Secretary, and NAC representative was seen as an unwelcome development: “It puts too much power in the hands of one member.”<sup>276</sup> An unspecific warning was given about contacts with WIL, “[p]robably our bitterest enemies apart from the C.P.... We know that everywhere W.I.L. has interfered in Party work - they have wrecked the branches - the object of the W.I.L. Group is to smash the I.L.P. We must be tolerant but we must not be bloody mugs.” WIL speakers should not be entertained without adequate defence from ILPers; and members such as Sketheway had supported attacks on the party. But beyond this mention of Ken Sketheway’s role (he and Jack Johnston had refused to give evidence), no official censure of any individual member was made.

The Committee’s report was put before the National Administrative Council on 1 August 1943 and “examined in detail”. “Several members...felt that the phraseology of the report should be sharpened but the general feeling of the Council was that the position had been clearly stated and there was no particular point in modifying the wording...”. Its acceptance was proposed by Fenner Brockway and carried unanimously; and the NAC “requested the North East Division through its representative, Comrade Smith, to do everything possible to implement the recommendations of the report with the object of strengthening the movement in the

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<sup>274</sup> *Ibid* p10

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid* p14

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid* p14

North for the I.L.P. and for Socialism.”<sup>277</sup>

Following this controversy, matters settled down for a few months. In November 1943 it was decided to put forward Dan Smith as ILP parliamentary candidate for the Wallsend Division, and Alex Auld for the Wansbeck Division; at the same NAC meeting, John McNair raised a disagreement over indiscreet and discourteous remarks made by Ken Sketheway in an article for the internal bulletin *Between Ourselves*.<sup>278</sup> As editor of *BO*, McNair had refused to publish the article, and despite visiting Sketheway, had been unable to achieve resolution. Dan Smith supported Sketheway’s case at the NAC, but the committee gave McNair a vote of confidence. As attention turned to the end of the war, and the resumption of electoral activity, the ILP leadership also began to consider an electoral understanding with the left-of-centre Common Wealth Party, which had achieved a number of successes. In February 1944 it was agreed that Fenner Brockway and John McNair should meet CW representatives if conflicts arose. “Dan Smith and Tom Reed registered their opposition to this proposal.”<sup>279</sup> No 2 Division had also written protesting “the unprincipled electoral alliance made by the N.A.C. with Common Wealth. The G.S. [General Secretary] was instructed to point out to these comrades that there was no electoral alliance with Common Wealth but simply an agreement to avoid conflicting candidatures for the time being. He was further instructed to mention that this matter would be fully discussed at Annual Conference.”<sup>280</sup>

### **The Tyneside Apprentices Strike**

By the time of the 1944 Annual Conference, in Leeds, a much greater political issue was occupying Smith’s attention. The strike of engineering and shipyard apprentices on the Tyne (as well as on Clydeside, Blyth, Wearside, Middlesbrough and Huddersfield) in March and April 1944 was the latest incident in a growing wave of industrial unrest which both the ILP and its Trotskyist adversaries sought to encourage and publicise. Trouble in the yards and among the apprentices was

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<sup>277</sup> LSE Archives, ILP 10/1/6 Minutes of NAC, 31 July-1 August 1943. Present at the meeting, held in Durham, were Bob Edwards, James Maxton, Fenner Brockway, F A Ridley, Will Ballantine, David Gibson, Dan Smith, Tom Reed, Fred Barton and John McNair.

<sup>278</sup> LSE Archive ILP 3/31 Minutes of NAC, 6-7 November 1943. The candidature of Smith and Auld was given final endorsement at the NAC meeting of 12-13 February 1944.

<sup>279</sup> LSE Archive ILP 3/32 Minutes of NAC, 12-13 February 1944.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

nothing new, and the ILP, traditionally weakly represented in industry, was on Tyneside trying to establish links.<sup>281</sup> On 9 August 1942, for example, an Industrial Conference was held at Newcastle for engineers and shipbuilders, addressed “by a speaker who works at De Havilland” (almost certainly Roy Tearse).<sup>282</sup> At the 1943 NE Divisional Conference Smith, in his organiser’s report, “emphasised the importance of the shipyard and engineering spheres for activity. During the big Tyneside strike [the ‘Lost Time’ strike] *New Leader* sales were 2,000. Despite lack of organisation, the I.L.P had become well known. There was a call for increased industrial organisation, and [a resolution was] carried unanimously urging the setting up of an I.L.P. Industrial Committee with representatives from the nine divisions of the Party and a National Industrial Secretary.”<sup>283</sup> In March 1943, in an article entitled ‘Storm in the Yards. Why Shipbuilding Workers’ Strike’ Smith wrote that the 1942 strikers returned on the bosses’ terms, “but not without learning tremendous lessons. They kicked out C.P.ers from the Workers’ committees, having seen their anti-working class policy in action, and also established a militant Shop Steward leadership.”<sup>284</sup> The following week, he outlined the programme of ‘Militant Trade Unionists’:

1. For 100 per cent organisation
2. Clear out bosses’ agents in T.U. ranks
3. Strengthen Trades Councils. Every T.U. Branch a delegate.
4. Substitute militant Shop Stewards for reactionary T.U. leadership
5. Develop a fighting national Shop Steward movement
6. Re-establish independence of T.U. Movement
7. Repeal E.W.O. [Essential Work Order] and anti-working-class legislation
8. Confiscate war profits. Open books to T.U. inspection
9. Workers’ control of production<sup>285</sup>

Shortly afterwards, he was to report on a brief strike by engineering apprentices over the loss of a customary Shrove Tuesday half-holiday. Apprentices who had walked out were suspended for three days, but “[their] solidarity was such that the

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<sup>281</sup> Apprentices at Swan, Hunter in Wallsend had struck in 1941: Croucher, R, *Engineers at War* (London 1982) p127. Low wages and the lack of ‘piece work’ benefits contributed to resentment on Tyneside, which found expression in the ‘Total Time’ strike of October 1942 and the Neptune strike of January 1943. Croucher *op cit* 179-180, 181-187, 205-207.

<sup>282</sup> *New Leader* 8 August 1942

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid* 20 February 1943 p5

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid* 6 March 1943 p3

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid* 13 March 1943 p1 ‘Neptune Men Win’

management lifted the suspension after half-a-day's pay had been lost". Attempts to win back the lost pay failed, and the likelihood of an EWO being imposed led the apprentices to submit their claim to arbitration. Commented Smith: "The apprentices have learnt the need to strengthen their ranks and to make contact with older militant trade unionists."<sup>286</sup>

This was a prescient remark. When, in late 1943, Tyneside shipyard and engineering apprentices became worried that the Bevin Ballot Scheme - the plan to divert 10% of all conscripted youth to work in the coal mines - might be applied to them, they began to organise, and rapidly established contact with older, militant political activists and militant union organisers. After an impromptu meeting was held by Grey's Monument in the centre of Newcastle, recalled Jack Rawling,

One or two I.L.P.ers, on their way to the Arcade [the Socialist Club], passed Grey's Monument, and asked what all the fuss was about in the blackout, learned from these kids what they wanted, and took them down to the Arcade, where they could have a meeting - and as good as they could have one in a pub, or as they could have one in a café. It was a political club, so they hoped they could enjoy themselves and listen and discuss with these kids.

I don't know whether they were directed, but one of them asked to see the Committee of the I.L.P. We were having a meeting in a room, so we just suspended the meeting and asked them in. It was young Bill Davy, and he wanted to know whether the I.L.P. would assist them in publicity for their case, and so on. So Dan Smith and Ken Skethaway [sic], and I think Johnston, were sitting at the table, and they had quite a bit of discussion. It was decided that they should also have a discussion with Heaton Lee and Ann Keen, who were distributing the Socialist Appeal. But, of course, we were all very close, we were members of the W.I.L. or close sympathisers. They went along to Walker, and we took them along, and we had a long discussion about the prospects of a strike... and we really told them that at that particular moment the strike would not be very popular with most of the Workers', and they couldn't expect very much sympathy.<sup>287</sup>

The WIL activists and sympathisers provided help and advice to the fledgling Tyne Apprentices Guild, formed by the disgruntled apprentices, while the Militant

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<sup>286</sup> *Ibid* 20 March 1943 p1 'Tyne Lads Win Half-Day'

<sup>287</sup> Interview with Jack Rawling, cited in Bornstein & Richardson *op cit* pp 115-116. Bill Davy was a Young Communist League member who became secretary of the Tyne Apprentices Guild and subsequently a Revolutionary Communist Party activist. Heaton Lee, an engineer with Wimpeys, was district organiser for the WIL. Like Ann Keen, his partner at the time, he was South African. The couple lived at Walker, an east end suburb of Newcastle.

Workers' Federation, of which Roy Tearse was organiser, facilitated contact with apprentices on Clydeside, Barrow and Sheffield.<sup>288</sup> A deputation of apprentices lobbied Parliament, but failed to meet their prime target, the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin. Finally, in March 1944, by an administrative oversight, an apprentice named Martin was sent call-up papers. Although Martin's conscription was rapidly cancelled (on 11 March), a light had been put to the fuse, and, following a further lobby of Parliament on 27 March, on 28 March apprentices struck on the Tyne, Clyde and at Huddersfield, rapidly followed by Blyth, Wearside, and Teesside.<sup>289</sup> The strike petered out after a fortnight; meanwhile, alarmed by the stoppage and by simultaneous, unrelated strikes by coal miners, Ernest Bevin announced a crackdown on disruption, and on 5 April 1944 detectives raided the headquarters of the Revolutionary Communist Party (formed by the merger of the WIL and RSL in March 1944) in London, and homes of members and sympathisers in Glasgow, Nottingham and Tyneside. On Tyneside, the home of Heaton Lee and Ann Keen in Walker was raided, as was that of Bill Davy in Wallsend. The outcome of the subsequent investigation was that four RCP members, Jock Haston, Roy Tearse, Heaton Lee and Ann Keen were tried and convicted under the Trades Disputes Act 1927 of acting in furtherance of a strike. All four were gaoled, for periods ranging from 13 days to one year; in the summer of 1944 the convictions were overturned on a technicality.<sup>290</sup> While Trotskyist historiography presents the strike and the trial as the apex of wartime political activity and a victory for working class agitation, they provoked the first use of the Trades Disputes Act (an act passed in the wake of the General Strike to prohibit political strikes), and the adoption of Defence Regulation 1A(A), which likewise curtailed the right to strike. The number of days lost through strikes - which had been rising steadily since 1942 - dropped sharply. Even the RCP itself - whose inflated self image was epitomised by the hubristic title of the WIL 1942 policy document, *Preparing for Power* - privately saw the outcome of the strike as a defeat: in May 1944, its Political Bureau announced that to challenge 1A(A) would be "the worst form of adventurism. It would be an ultra-left gesture which could only lead to the beheading of the leadership and the smashing of the

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<sup>288</sup> *Shields Evening News*, 14 June 1944 p4. The Militant Workers' Federation was a Trotskyist front organisation formed to advance Trotskyist interests in the trades union movement.

<sup>289</sup> Croucher *op cit* pp230-241

<sup>290</sup> Bornstein & Richardson *op cit* pp114-135; Croucher *op cit* pp230-244; Gale, J, *Class Struggle in the Second World War. The 1944 Police Raid on the RCP* (London 1991);



growing left wing. Our task is to retreat, *but to retreat in good order.*"<sup>291</sup>

Tyneside legend has it that Dan Smith was 'one of the leaders of the Apprentices' Strike'. However, his role may have been more marginal, if useful. As leader of the local ILP he was able to allow its resources be used to help the strikers, and as a correspondent for *New Leader* he produced favourable publicity for their cause. He was also active in the Anti Labour Law Victims Defence Committee (ALLVDC), the body established to campaign for those prosecuted as a result of the apprentices' strike.<sup>292</sup> Assessment of other activity on behalf of the strikers is hampered by a paucity of information. During the security crack-down on the supposed 'hidden hand' behind the strike, his name does not appear in any of the newspaper accounts of the strike or investigations of the Trotskyist movement that I have seen, nor does it appear in such security reports as are available to researchers.<sup>293</sup> His house is not reported as having been raided by Special Branch officers during the investigation, nor does he appear to have been arrested or questioned in connection with it. He certainly was not one of the four Revolutionary Communist Party members charged with furthering the strike. Bill Landles, a member of the Strike Committee and WIL member from *circa* 1943, does not recall Smith playing any role in the strike organisation.<sup>294</sup> That is not to say that Smith was unknown to the security services. As a prominent left-wing, anti-war agitator his activities were monitored by the local Special Branch.<sup>295</sup> However, his undercover membership of WIL may well have remained secret even to other paid-up Trotskyists: Landles recalls being unaware that Dan was a WIL/RCP member prior to his expulsion from the ILP and open 'joining' of the RCP in April 1945.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15B/3 Political Letter from PB 24 May 1944. Italics as in original.

<sup>292</sup> The Trotskyist activist John Byrne recalled the ALLBVDC: "There was... a chap called Smith. You know, this fellow from Newcastle, they held collections, and they got good support from the ILP at the time and in Newcastle a joint committee was set up between the ILP and our own group [the RCP], and they gave a lot of help. Maxton was very good, and he asked questions in the House of Commons about it." *Arguments for a Workers' Republic*, interview of John Byrne by Al Richardson in September 1976. <http://Workers'republic.org/Pages/Ireland/Trotskyism/johnbyrne1.html> accessed 23/12/2008

<sup>293</sup> I have examined for the relevant period the *Daily Express* and *Sunday Express*, the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Worker*, *Newcastle Journal*, *Evening Chronicle* (Newcastle), *The People*, *The Times*, *Shields Evening News*, *Sunday Sun* (Newcastle)

<sup>294</sup> Interview with Bill Landles, 12 December 2008

<sup>295</sup> I am grateful to the Chief Archivist, Tyne & Wear Archive Service, for information on the content of closed files detailing Special Branch activity in wartime Newcastle.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with Bill Landles, 12 December 2008

### **The Trotskyists - Clear Them Out!!!**

Meanwhile, the Trotskyist-dominated No. 2 Division was opposing moves to reaffiliate the ILP to the Labour Party, while simultaneously pushing the RCP slogan 'Labour to Power on a Socialist Programme'.<sup>297</sup> Smith's own Newcastle Central branch went even further at the 1944 Annual Conference, making a text-book Trotskyist amendment "The immediate future of Europe is one of revolution. The creation of a revolutionary Marxist leadership capable of leading the coming revolution to success is the supreme task of the day." The Newcastle and Wallsend branches also jointly proposed that the ILP should approach the Fourth International, the governing body of the Trotskyist movement, established in 1938.<sup>298</sup> However, the 'peace' brokered in 1943 had not lasted even the year. In November 1943 a minor spat between Ken Sketheway and John McNair - over the latter's refusal to print an article by the former in *Between Ourselves* - reached the NAC.<sup>299</sup> A few months later, in April 1944, the NAC was considering protests by various branches "regarding the recent ballot for N.A.C. membership in the No. 2 Division. The Council instructed the G.S. [General Secretary (McNair)] to proceed to Newcastle at the earliest possible moment to examine the matter and report by letter to the N.A.C."<sup>300</sup> In June McNair reported to the NAC: "he said that he thought his report covered the position as far as possible and hoped that it would be sufficient for the N.A.C. to come to a decision." The NAC ruled that a new ballot be held for the position of NE representative on the NAC, and turned down an amendment - inspired by a plea from Smith - that the enquiry be reopened.<sup>301</sup> McNair reported yet again in August, placing all relevant documents before the NAC, and stating "that he had nothing more to add."<sup>302</sup> Frustratingly, these illustrative documents are not present in the archive. However, McNair was able to respond to a vote of thanks by saying "that any success which had attended his efforts was due to the spirit of co-

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<sup>297</sup> *New Leader* 5 February 1944 p6, on the Divisional Conference resolution opposing reaffiliation with the LP and any electoral alliance with Common Wealth; 15 April 1944, p4, Dror Binah of Sunderland branch urging 'Labour to Power', a slogan of the RCP (also LSE Archive 5/1944/5 Final Agenda of Resolutions and Amendments, 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference, Leeds 8-10 April 1944)..

<sup>298</sup> LSE Archive ILP 5/1944/5 Final Agenda of Resolutions and Amendments, 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference, Leeds 8-10 April 1944

<sup>299</sup> LSE Archive ILP 3/31 NAC minutes 6-7 November 1943

<sup>300</sup> LSE Archive ILP 3/32 NAC minutes 10 April 1944

<sup>301</sup> Working Class Movement Library, ILP NAC minutes 10-11 June 1944

<sup>302</sup> LSE Archive ILP 3/32 NAC minutes 12-13 August 1944

operation and the general desire to assist which had been manifested by the N.E. comrades.”<sup>303</sup> This re-run of the 1943 affair does not seem immediately to have harmed Smith’s prospects: he was, in November 1944, appointed a corresponding member of an enlarged Political Committee.<sup>304</sup> At the same NAC meeting, he protested strenuously against a proposal to dissolve the ALLVDC, which had formed a major institutional point of contact between ILP and RCP members. However, further discussions at the same meeting may indicate growing wariness of the activities of Smith and his increasingly assertive Trotskyist colleagues. The council decided that National officials should not be eligible for election to the NAC, nor should divisional officials - such as Smith had been - be eligible for election to Divisional Councils. Full time officials should have full membership rights on DCs - with the exception that they have no vote. Tellingly, the NAC also decided that “future Divisional Ballots for the N.A.C. should be conducted from Head Office and... the votes be scrutinised at Head Office.”<sup>305</sup>

This was to prove too little and too late to preserve peace within the N.E. Division, if such was its intent. Within a very few weeks further disruption had broken out in the division over voting procedures and activities by individual Trotskyist members, principally Sketheway and Auld, provoking a storm of criticism of Trotskyist practices in the pages of *Between Ourselves*. In the course of an increasingly rancorous debate on ‘means and ends’, in the September-October 1944 *Between Ourselves* Sketheway had contributed an article which rashly included the line “Has John McNair ever witnessed a strike?” This proved too much even for the long-suffering McNair, who, while stating that he had given Trotskyist opinions a fair hearing, gave a blunt definition of the I.L.P.’s stance:

1. The I.L.P. is not a Communist Party.
  2. The I.L.P is not an opposition-Communist Party
  3. Therefore the I.L.P is neither a Stalinist nor a Trotskyist Party. All official Communist Parties are Stalinists. All opposition Communist Parties are Trotskyists. We belong to neither, nor shall we belong to either.
- What is the I.L.P? It is a British Revolutionary Socialist party...<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid* NAC minutes 12-13 August 1944

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid* NAC minutes 11-12 November 1944

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid* NAC minutes 11-12 November 1944

<sup>306</sup> LSE Archive ILP 6/13/4 *Between Ourselves* February 1945

One exasperated ILPer, Fred Nixon, in a piece unambiguously entitled ‘The Trotskyists - Clear Them Out!!!’ responded to Skethaway in the same February 1945 *BO*:

At last the I.L.P. has wakened up to the fact that Trotskyists are active in its midst... I would add that a Gateshead comrade, Norman Winters, warned the Party over 2 years ago that the Trotskyists were active on Tyneside, and would split No. 2 Division. Now to the real starred item of Dec. “B.O.” The manuscript of a Genius!!? Skethaway [sic], in which his parrot-like phrases reveal his intelligence! Previously he had asked: ‘Has John McNair ever witnessed a strike? John McNair, a comrade whom everyone knows has more experience in that particular line than any Ken Skethaway’s [sic], Dan Smith’s, or anyone else of that calibre. Dan Smith, I consider to be the most dangerous of the Newcastle ‘ultra-revolutionaries’, for he has kept silent, making the bullets for others to fire, in other words, allowed his stooges to do the attacking... Finally, I would say “THE TROTSKYISTS --- CLEAR THEM OUT, AND MAKE THE I.L.P. A CLEANER PARTY.”<sup>307</sup>

Don Bateman, Divisional Organiser of the Yorkshire ILP, wrote in the same issue that Yorkshire ILPers:

are beginning to feel that a concerted attempt is being made by the R.C.P. to sabotage and then capture our Party... I feel that the whole issue is laid bare by Fairhead, who openly states: “I, myself, would like the R.C.P. to disband itself, its members to join the I.L.P., to link themselves with Trotskyists already in the I.L.P. and at the next Annual Conference to flood the supporters of the present leadership. These last, infuriated and horrified... would resign or be expelled.” We are indeed grateful... for this gratuitous exposure of Trotskyist tactics....It is surely time the Party woke up to the fact that these people are sapping our energy...The “any-means-justified-by-the-ends” tactic of the Trotskyists is a Stalinist yardstick, and it is at complete variance with our (Marxist!) attitude that ends and means are interwoven and each condition the other. Their squawking is interrupting our constructive work and diverting our resources. They shout for a disciplined Party! Very well, let us give them one. Let us exact the discipline of the Revolutionary Communist party where disruptionist tactics would not be tolerated for one moment. These people do not share our cause; they have no right to share the privilege of Party membership.”<sup>308</sup>

And Edgar Parker anathematised the Trotskyists as “the Jesuits of the left. I seem to

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<sup>307</sup> *Ibid Between Ourselves* February 1945

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid Between Ourselves* February 1945. I don’t know who Fairhead was.

feel that they desire power for the sake of power, and terror for the sake of terror... The same fanatical evil runs through their utterance about the revolution and the law, as runs through Fascism..."<sup>309</sup>

In the winter of 1944-45 the conflict reached crisis point. As was by now almost traditional, protests had arisen about polling procedures in the No. 2 Division. The Standing Orders Committee met representatives of No. 2 Divisional Council and the secretaries of four branches within the Division, and decided that the Divisional Conference was unconstitutional and invalid, and that DC resolutions and amendments should be deleted from the 1945 National Conference agenda.<sup>310</sup> The investigation had found irregularity in voting procedures, based on precedent, since there appeared to be no divisional constitution. Voting rights for branches were based upon affiliation fees paid (by "stamps"), and should have been computed according to a financial year from 1 January to 31 December. "This was not done. On the contrary the allocation was based on various periods ranging between 7 to 26 months, thus overlapping into other financial years. This naturally created serious misunderstanding, leading to the withdrawal of four branches from the Divisional Conference. We found further irregularities in the crediting of voting strength on exempt stamps which unduly favoured one branch."<sup>311</sup>

Reading between the lines, this strongly implies that skullduggery had been taking place. However, the passing of more than seventy-five years and of most, if not all, of the participants makes it difficult to reach a conclusion about what was going on. What is presented as fraud, may equally be, in whole or part, due to administrative incompetence, by Smith, whose record will show repeatedly that he was never good at, or interested in, the minutiae of administration, or by individual branches of the ILP. Many branches, even in an area lauded for its energy and expansion like the north east, were tiny, many kept alive by a handful of ageing stalwarts, or by a sudden influx of new and organisationally inexperienced members. That such people

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<sup>309</sup> *Ibid Between Ourselves* February 1945

<sup>310</sup> LSE Archive ILP 5/1945/7 Preliminary Agenda of Resolutions for the 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference, Blackpool, 31 March-2 April 1945. The Standing Orders Committee comprised Fred Barton, Tom Colyer, Arthur Eaton (Chairman), Tom Murray and Emrys Thomas.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid* Preliminary Agenda of Resolutions for the 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference, Blackpool, 31 March-2 April 1945.

submitted membership stamps at seemingly random intervals is, to anyone who has spent time investigating ILP records of this period, far from unlikely. The ILP was not a smoothly-running machine.<sup>312</sup> Certainly, there does not appear to be any real evidence in support of the allegation that Dan, like some Tyneside Chichikov, established 'ghost branches' in the Northumberland coalfield to provide phantom votes to bolster his own faction.<sup>313</sup>

In December 1944 the Executive Committee had instructed John McNair to seek a "full report on the recent incidents in this Division and on the position generally since the N.A.C. enquiry was held in May 1943."<sup>314</sup> The report was presented to the NAC on 24-25 February by Smith, who protested bitterly at the Standing Orders Committee report. John McNair then put the case for the four dissenting branches and for the Standing Orders Committee report, and referring to the enquiries of May 1943 and June 1944, and speeches made by Auld at Gateshead and by Smith at the Divisional Conference.<sup>315</sup> In the ensuing discussion reference was made to articles in *BO*, "and to the activity of Comrade Sketheway at Ashington". Walter Padley then moved, and Don Bateman seconded, the dissolution of the Divisional Council and the suspension of Smith, Auld, Dror Binah, Sketheway and Jack Johnston; and the formation of a committee of enquiry, to report to the NAC before Conference. The motion was passed by 11 votes to 1, the dissentient being Smith, who then withdrew from the meeting. His last act, before his suspension was moved, was to vote against a motion recommending reaffiliation to the Labour Party. It was passed, by 8 votes to 5.

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<sup>312</sup> See, for example, the plaintive response by Mark Simpson to a 1940 circular from Head Office: "Only two branches, Gateshead and Bishop Auckland, contribute to the Power Fund. Of our 15 branches, 11 paid fees on the last report submitted by our treasurer and two have paid since. We have less than 200 members in the whole Division, seven of our fifteen branches have less than 6 members each. Finally, the position is very bad in this area, and I do not see any hopes of a revival at present." LSE Archive ILP/10/1/6, Mark Simpson to John McNair (reply to letter dated 9 July 1940)

<sup>313</sup> For example, Challinor (1994) p17, Thwaites, P J, *The Independent Labour Party 1938-1950* (Unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics 1976) p 139 footnote 96: "some of the branches said to be in existence may be fictional as Smith was supposed to have opened them". Thwaites' source was an interview with Don Bateman, the Yorkshire ILP leader opposed to Smith.

<sup>314</sup> LSE Archive ILP 3/33 NAC minutes 25-25 February 1945

<sup>315</sup> On 19 November 1944, at a public meeting in Gateshead, Auld had said "The line of the ILP during this war is very similar to the line the party took during the last war, the ILP has not taken proper cognisance of the changed circumstances during this war, and it would be wrong to delude the people into believing that the ILP is a revolutionary party. We have not yet got a decent measure of revolutionary thought in the Party." After saying that a proper revolutionary organisation was needed to establish Socialism, he added "but the ILP is not yet the party for the job." Hull University Archives DJH/23/12 Copy of Minutes of the ILP Executive committee. 22 December 1944.

Percy Williams, a fellow NAC member, wrote a gleeful letter afterwards to the senior ILPer Francis Johnson.

In the absence of Jimmy's [Maxton's] too pacific influence we at last took action against the seditionists. We suspended the N.E. Divisional Council and suspended leading members including Dan Smith. I felt pleased when another committee of enquiry was appointed, that Dan Smith objected to me being a member on the ground I wasn't impartial. The joke is that Ballantine was put on the committee and he will treat 'em a damn sight rougher than I would with much less logical reason.<sup>316</sup>

Surviving ILP documents draw a veil over the events at Blackpool, but the party's enemies were not so delicate. A CPGB report on proceedings records

Fenner Brockway and J. McNair... led the attack. The 5 were accused of working in the ILP for the RCP whose sole aim was to wreck the ILP - McNair quoted an RCP internal document to this effect. There was also a subsidiary [sic] charge concerned with NE finance.

The accused were allowed to state their case but could only say "RCP is a party of realists. Under our leadership the ILP in NE England is recognised as the leading working class body" (Dan Smith). "I hold Trotskyist views but the ILP comes first" (Sketheway [sic]). Nowhere in Britain was the ILP more militant or regarded with more respect by the Workers' (Auld).<sup>317</sup>

The votes cast were (for expulsion/against expulsion):

Dan Smith 80 - 19

Ken Sketheway 78 - 19

Alex Auld 60 - 31

Jack Johnston 67 - 26

Dror Binah 57 - 46<sup>318</sup>

The CPGB reporter attributed Binah's narrow vote to the fact that he "eschewed politics and made a strong emotional appeal". Earlier, two North Birmingham ILP Trotskyists, Peter Kinnear and Bruno Schneider, has escaped expulsion by a similar

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<sup>316</sup> LSE Archive ILP 4/1945/1 Letter from Percy [Williams] to Francis Johnson, 1 March 1945

<sup>317</sup> Labour History Archive CP/CENT/ORG/12/1 Progress Report 10 April 1945

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid* These figures are identical to those in a manuscript note on the conference programme at Glasgow City Archives TD 956/18/1.4a (Maxton Papers)

ploy, and John McNair allegedly told Binah that he would be readmitted to the ILP after two months.<sup>319</sup> The relatively narrow margin of the vote to expel Alex Auld may have been in recognition of his long service to the ILP. The CPGB also rejoiced in the damage done to British Trotskyism: "...this Easter Blackpool conference witnessed a severe setback to RCP's hope of using the ILP as a means of getting into the Labour Party. The attacks [by the ILP leadership] are linked up with the move of the ILP itself to affiliate to the Labour party... The extent of the blow to the RCP can be gauged [sic] from the fact that Smith, Sketheway and Binah formed the National Secretariat for work within the ILP."<sup>320</sup>

### **A sop to Laski?**

Expelled from the ILP, Smith and his comrades immediately came out openly as members of the Revolutionary Communist Party. In a front-page statement in the June 1945 edition of the RCP paper *Socialist Appeal*, the five expelled claimed that the expulsion was based on slanders "in order that Laski could give a 'favourable' report to the Labour Party Executive...".

We were won to the Trotskyists-Fourth Internationalist position at various dates inside the I.L.P. We were won to that policy because the test of history confirmed the programme of the Fourth International; confirmed its analysis of national and international events; confirmed in particular its criticisms of the leadership of the I.L.P. and its associated bodies on the plane of international political and organisational collaboration. We were won to that position because the Fourth International is the only international party of the working class which has maintained its principles steadfastly in the course of the present war. We have never hidden our conversion to the Trotskyist position, but have fought to the best of our ability to explain these ideas inside the I.L.P. and win support for them...

The expulsions can only be properly understood if taken in conjunction with the general development of the Party. Since the disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932 the I.L.P. has rocketed from left to right without clear international or national perspectives and policies. In the last few months, disillusioned because of the failure of the I.L.P. to make appreciable headway and grow as they expected it to, the leadership has travelled rapidly to the right. In travelling to the right it is and was prepared to chop off its left wing, no matter how bureaucratically. There were a series of Trotskyist resolutions on the agenda of the Conference from the North East Division, including one which proposed the affiliation of the I.L.P. to the Fourth International. These

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<sup>319</sup> Labour History Archive CP/CENT/ORG/12/1 Progress Report 10 April 1945

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid* Progress Report 10 April 1945



had to be expunged from the agenda as a gesture to the leadership of the Labour Party; it was a demonstration that Brockway and Co. were really going to capitulate as fully as the Labour leaders wanted them to.... Everything was to be subordinated to the success of the I.L.P. quest for affiliation to the Labour Party. Although we were also advocating affiliation of the I.L.P. to the Labour Party and had pursued a consistent policy in this respect, unlike the leadership of the Party, we wanted our critical attitude towards Transport House to be fully elaborated in the discussions on affiliation... Fearful that this would antagonise the leadership of the Labour Party and jeopardise entry into the Labour Party, and incapable of putting up a vigorous opposition to the Labour leaders, Brockway and McNair had to get rid of us.<sup>321</sup>

The question of Trotskyists had arisen in the talks between Brockway - as Political Secretary of the ILP - and Harold Laski, acting Chairman of the Labour Party, in December 1944. Brockway wrote to NAC members reporting on the discussions: "The second ground of criticism was the allegation that the party was "Trotskyist". I told Laski that the "Trotskyists" were only a fraction of the Party and he accepted this and did not consider that the difficulty would be serious."<sup>322</sup> To interpret this passage as giving the green light for a purge of Trotskyists seems perverse; it could somewhat more plausibly be taken as meaning that Laski was unconcerned about the activities of the Trotskyist group. Further evidence that Fenner Brockway had not pre-planned the expulsion may be inferred from a letter from Brockway to Smith apologising for having destroyed material sent by Smith for a proposed 'north eastern edition', presumably of *New Leader*: "I really am very sorry, but after the expulsion business I destroyed the material... I ought to have sent it back to you, but I suppose I was in a ruthless mood that afternoon."<sup>323</sup> Had he engineered the affair, he would scarcely have reacted with anger and surprise to its outcome.

### **Inside the RCP**

The years 1942-45 saw the Workers' International League and its successor, the Revolutionary Communist Party, flourish. It was expanding its influence in industry,

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<sup>321</sup> *Socialist Appeal* vol 7 no 7 June 1945 'Expelled I.L.P.ers Join R.C.P.' Smith had, as noted above, voted against NAC moves to approach the Labour Party with a view to reaffiliation.

<sup>322</sup> Labour History Archive CP/CENT/ORG/12/1 Progress Report 10 April 1945. This is a CPGB document, transcribing an RCP document circulated at the Blackpool Conference, which transcribed Brockway's letter of 29 December 1944 to NAC members. I have not seen the original, and so cannot be sure that it is an accurate version, or whether changes have been made, by accident or design. However, Smith & Co. quoted this passage in their *Socialist Appeal* statement of June 1945, and would hardly have done so had this laid them open to charges of falsification.

<sup>323</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/23/13 Letter, Fenner Brockway to Dan Smith, 29 August 1945

its membership was growing, and, with wealthy supporters, it was able to sustain a fortnightly newspaper and an expensive establishment: by November 1944, 12 full-time staff - including one in Newcastle, Heaton Lee - and one part-timer. By then, the party had also acquired a Newcastle office, at Ridley Place in the city centre.<sup>324</sup> Earlier that year the WIL, under pressure from the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, had agreed to hold a unification conference with its rival groups. Unlike 1938, WIL was now strong and its rivals weak and divided, and the 'Fusion Conference' of March 1944 saw the WIL merge with the RSL to form the Revolutionary Communist Party. Its leadership was dominated by WILers- Jock Haston became General Secretary, Ted Grant remained at the helm of *Socialist Appeal*, and the WIL 'theoretical organ', *Workers' International News*, remained the theoretical organ of the new body. Former WILers had a clear majority on the RCP ruling bodies.<sup>325</sup> In the north east, the RCP was expanding: it had two branches, a weekly speakers class, and a weekly study circle "in conjunction with the I.L.P."<sup>326</sup> Smith may still have been keeping a low profile as far as the RCP was concerned (*vide* Bill Landles' non-recollection of Dan's role in the RCP prior to April 1945 above), but the ex-Communist strike leader Bill Davy had been won over to the Fourth, and was on the stump for the RCP, addressing, for example, an AEU branch in Walker: "a very hostile audience of between 80 and 100 were tremendously impressed", and later the AEU District Committee were given "the trouncing of their lives" by the young agitator.<sup>327</sup> Attempts were being made to infiltrate the YCL, although, commented Lee, "They are all very young and particularly immature"; of the adult party, "to all intents and purposes, the C.P. has gone 'underground'"<sup>328</sup>

By early 1945, just prior to the ILP conference, Jock Haston and his comrades were bullish about future prospects. "The old spirit of apathy and demoralisation among the Workers' is ended for the next period. We are entering the period of new revolutionary waves with an enthusiastic and optimistic party, which for the first time faces our enemies as a united fighting force."<sup>329</sup> Dan Smith and his fellow

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<sup>324</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15B/8 Central Committee Minutes, 10-11 November 1944.

<sup>325</sup> Bornstein & Richardson *op cit* pp97-113

<sup>326</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15B/12 Regional Organisers' Reports, December 1944

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>329</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/5 Letter, Haston to unknown recipient, n.d. (early 1945)

ILPers were entering, or 'coming out' in, a party at its peak. It was united - the years 1944-1947 was the sole period of the history of the British Trotskyist movement when it was united under one banner - and it confidently expected the immediate and culminating crisis of capitalism, to be followed by world revolution. However, both in the national RCP and in its Tyneside branch, fissures would begin to appear at this most hopeful of times.

In the national party, these took the form of increasingly sharp debates about strategy, instigated by Gerry Healy. As capitalism did not enter its final crisis upon the end of the war, Haston and his supporters began to re-examine their outlook, and reached a position that the post-war world might be experiencing a temporary economic boom of a very few years' duration. Healy, backed by the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (ISFI), held on to the catastrophist view that collapse and revolution was imminent. There was, in this view, no time to build an independent working class revolutionary party; the urgent need was for the RCP to adopt a policy of entrism into the Labour Party, the only party capable of attracting the loyalty of the working masses. Another debate, along similar fault lines, addressed the party's policy on mass unemployment. Haston and his 'Majority' believed that, in the event of mass redundancies, the party should press, through the trade unions, for a policy of 'nons first' - that non-union members should be laid off first, in order to maintain a disciplined, unionised core in industry. Healy and his supporters attacked this policy as one of dividing the working class. Eventually, in 1947, the ISFI promoted a deal whereby the RCP would split into two groups. Healy led his 'Minority' into the Labour Party, where it formed 'The Club', a deep-entry group increasingly paranoid in its character. Haston, Grant and the residual RCP carried on for another two years as an open party before they decided to liquidate the party and follow Healy into the Labour Party and into The Club. There, Healy took delight in isolating and expelling his former adversaries.

This divide was mirrored in the Tyneside group (as, indeed, in other 'locals' around the country). The extent to which this was doctrinally-inspired in Newcastle is unclear. The influx of new members to the Tyneside RCP in April 1945 was recalled by Bill Landles as bringing a change to the atmosphere of the group:

I didn't know at the time that these people existed in the ILP because what we had was a group of people who worked in the factories, they were actual working class industrial proletariat. Now, the group that were in the ILP, I'm not denigrating them at all, they were what we would have called normally 'petty bourgeois', they were normally sort of middle class people, and certainly they would be better off... they had better jobs and so on. And when we joined together... it was quite noticeable that there was a difference.<sup>330</sup>

The divide was not, however, between the 'open' RCPers and the ILPers who joined them. It was largely between Dan Smith, who identified as a member of the Healy's 'Minority' faction, and the 'Majority' led by the branch secretary, Dror Binah. The clash between the two men appears to have been more than political.

...there was a great deal of personal animosity between Dan and Dror Binah. What the base of that was I don't know but in one meeting it erupted - because they used to argue in the meetings - and ...Dan Smith, his face was absolutely red with rage and he yelled at Dror Binah, 'You don't even know how to treat your bloody wife'. Now, I'll never forget that because I was absolutely shocked that these comrades, who were supposed to be Marxists and philosophers and what not, descending to that level. And what it was about I have no idea, but it was very personal. I don't think it was political at all...<sup>331</sup>

The immediate tasks were electoral. Smith may have assisted in the RCP campaign at the Neath by-election of May 1945 (where, in one of last by-elections to take place in the electoral truce, Jock Haston stood as an RCP candidate against a Labour candidate).<sup>332</sup> Members would have been active in the 1945 General Election campaign, albeit aware of party policy: "It should never be forgotten that our 'support' for the Labour Party is the same as a rope 'supports a man who has been hanged.'"<sup>333</sup> Alex Auld worked full-time for the Labour Party during the campaign. In the autumn of 1945, the RCP again stood against Labour, with Herbie Bell, who had resigned from the ILP in protest at the purge of Trotskyists, standing as RCP candidate for the Buddle Ward of Wallsend Borough Council in the November 1945 municipal elections; the 20-year-old Bill Landles was his agent. They secured 265

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<sup>330</sup> Interview with Bill Landles 15 December 2008

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>332</sup> TDS Archive disc 4A. Dan mentions Neath as a campaign in which he was involved, although apparently confusing it as an ILP by-election candidature. Many RCP activists spent at least some time in Neath. On the campaign, see Bornstein & Richardson *op cit* pp136-140; McHugh, J & Ripley, B J, 'The Neath By-Election, 1945: Trotskyists in West Wales' in *Llafur* 3 (2) (1981) pp68-78

<sup>333</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15A/21az Electoral Policy - Adopted by Central Committee July 1944

votes, and "...the amount of propaganda work done was terrific"<sup>334</sup>

What temporary unity this activity may have brought about was certainly exhausted by the end of 1946. On 6 December 1946 Arthur Ross, the RCP National Treasurer, wrote to all branches explaining the party's "grave" financial situation attempting to stimulate fund-raising. The letter to the Newcastle branch had a manuscript postscript: "Newcastle. I understand that some of your comrades are in business on their own. While they are earning their living in this way they must make a generous payment by way of income levy. Please try to get your average up! AR"<sup>335</sup> This, and a subsequent branch decision to recommend an income levy on members who ran their own businesses, provoked a furious reaction. Alex Auld chose to interpret it as a personal slight and submitted a resignation 'letter' scrawled on a torn-off calendar sheet: "I herewith resign my membership of the R.C.P., because of the fact that, in my view, the Branch decision of the 'Branch Capitalists,' is not just."<sup>336</sup> Other 'minority' members, Smith, George Brown, and Evelyn Shiel, threatened to follow him. On 27 December - in a doleful echo of Smith's career in the ILP - the branch wrote to the Political Bureau in London requesting that "a leading comrade" be sent as soon as possible to conduct an inquiry.<sup>337</sup>

The 'Branch capitalists' were Smith, Auld and Evelyn Shiels. Smith had begun a painting and decorating company at some point in 1945, in partnership with an old friend named Bill Nicholls. At this early stage it appears to have been very much a 'two-men-and-a-barrow' type of undertaking. Auld may have been working as a self-employed newspaper canvasser, a frequent job choice among left wing radicals, who were often blacklisted by conventional employers.<sup>338</sup> Shiels' undertaking is unknown. Jack Rawling appears to have escaped condemnation on this score, although (with Smith as partner) he had established the Luxor Café in Wallsend, also in 1945.<sup>339</sup> RCPers were supposed, where possible, to work in industry, to 'go where

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<sup>334</sup> *Socialist Appeal* Supplement Mid-November 1945

<sup>335</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/1

<sup>336</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/2

<sup>337</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/3

<sup>338</sup> This was pointed out by Wicks, H, *Keeping My Head: The Memoirs of a British Bolshevik* (London 1992)

<sup>339</sup> I am grateful to Chris Butterworth, Jack Rawling's daughter, for information on her parents' career and for sight of the Deed of Association for the Luxor.

the Workers' go'. "Comrades in business or other petty bourgeois jobs should feel it part of their Communist duty to pay cash into the Party in accordance with their income."<sup>340</sup>

Prior to Tearse's visit to Newcastle in January 1947, the four dissenters wrote to the Political Bureau protesting that they had been subject to "a persistent attack" by Binah, which, "while not conducted on a political basis was motivated by decision [sic] to support the minority resolution on the Labour Party. The atmosphere in the Newcastle branch had degenerated to such an extent that we were compelled to press for a national enquiry... However, at the first branch meeting after this decision, the whole of the business dealt with a continuation of the discussion on the matters to be submitted to the enquiry... As this has been the sole business of the branch for months, we have decided to resign and leave the playing at politics to those desirous of playing..."<sup>341</sup> Gerry Healy later claimed that the four had come over to the minority prior to the RCP's September 1946 Conference. "Naturally they incurred the most severe factional hostility from the majority and some of its supporters in the Newcastle branch, which led to a situation where the comrades resigned because of the intense factional provocation."<sup>342</sup> He quoted a letter from Smith, in which Smith states that Auld's resignation was against the advice of the local minority.

We decided no matter what happened we must maintain a level keel and carry on - the following three meetings however were spent on attacking us as degenerates - and my decision to walk out was taken after a 'document' by Binah, and devoted mainly to a gutter attack on me, was tabled. It is absolutely impossible in our opinion to carry on any kind of work in such an atmosphere - the effect of all this dirt was really breaking up our branch - and knocking hell out of the morale of all the comrades.<sup>343</sup>

Healy was making use of the affair to support his own attacks on the RCP leadership, "a regime which systematically violates the elementary principles of

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<sup>340</sup> Hull University Archives DJH 15F/27/5 Letter, Arthur Ross to Dror Binah, 2 January 1947

<sup>341</sup> Hull University Archives DJH 15B/82 Document issued by the RCP July 1947 'For Information' regarding Healy's statement to the ISFI that minority supporters were being victimised and citing Newcastle and Liverpool as examples. This document reproduces the Newcastle minority group's statement.

<sup>342</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15A/38a Internal Bulletin Special 1947 Conference Number. 'The Crisis in the Revolutionary Communist Party. By the E.C. [Executive Committee] of the Entrist [i.e. Minority] Faction'

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting letter (n.d.) from Dan Smith to Gerry Healy

democracy in the service of a political line which departs more and more from the traditional line of orthodox Trotskyism and contradicts the needs and interests of the party and the class.”<sup>344</sup> In this he was successful, in that ISFI authorised the splitting of the British Section into two at a special conference on 11 October 1947, with Healy leading his entrust faction, about eighty-strong, into Labour.<sup>345</sup>

What the ‘gutter attack’ complained of by Smith consisted of is unknown, but it may have borne some similarity to the complaints made against the minority faction in a letter from Dror Binah to Party HQ on 7 January 1947.<sup>346</sup> This accused the minority of a “failure... to understand the responsibilities involved in being members of a Bolshevik organisation... In the case of the Newcastle branch the minority makes full use of its rights but falls short of fulfilling its obligations.” Among the failings attributed to minority members were:

- \* failure to participate in a mass showing in Jarrow to sell *Socialist Appeal*, after Herbie Bell had been assaulted by Communists while selling the paper there. Of the minority, only Alex Auld turned up.
- \* failure to attend study circle meetings. Not one person from the minority attended.

“The comrades justify their absence by saying that they are engaged in other Party activities yet Comrade Smith, for instance, found time to spend five days in London to conduct discussions with comrade Healy at the expense of normal branch activities which he missed by his absence without being granted leave, and two of the comrades of the minority are known to have attended a public meeting of the Secular Society, and one an informal discussion circle of the Labour Party without any direction from the branch. The only conclusion we can come to is that the comrades are deliberately sabotaging the organised branch effort and their claim to be concerned about serious political discussion and inner Party education is mere hypocrisy [sic].”<sup>347</sup>

- \* poor sales performance for *Socialist Appeal*: “With the exception of one week

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<sup>344</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>345</sup> Bornstein & Richardson *op cit* p195. The figure for the minority faction is from Lotz, C & Feldman, P, *Gerry Healy: A Revolutionary Life* (London 1994) p 211. This hagiographic work does not mention the Newcastle affair at all; its only reference to Dan Smith is to accuse him of being the “most notorious supporter” of the “Haston clique”, active in undermining a grass roots Workers’ movement in the Royal Ordnance Factories in 1942, and describing him as a member of the WIL Central Committee (p205). I have seen no evidence that Smith was on the WIL CC.

<sup>346</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/7 Dror Binah to [Party Centre: addressed ‘Dear Comrade’, 7 January 1947

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid*

during Municipal elections Comrades Smith and Atkinson [Marshall Atkinson] have not sold a single paper for many months.”<sup>348</sup>

\* poor TU work. “Comrade Smith, who is industrial organiser often uses his industrial work as an excuse to justify inactivity in other spheres. However the hollowness of this excuse is demonstrated by the following...” - failure to attend the Trades Council of which he was member, failure to attend a branch meeting at which he had been appointed to lead a discussion on industrial perspectives, and failure to supply industrial members with copies of model resolutions supplied by Party Centre.

Binah continued his indictment by blaming the bad atmosphere on the minority: “It is quite an understandable position that comrades who struggle against terrific odds... to maintain a certain standard of activity in the branch feel a certain amount of resentment towards others who evade their basic responsibilities as Party members and particularly if the latter never miss an opportunity to criticise the Party organisationally and politically... and now these comrades are trying to utilise the unhealthy atmosphere... as an excuse to justify their inactivity” The minority claimed that the branch was run as an autocracy, persecuting members to whom they object. “This kind of slander has been directed in particular against Comrade Binah who in the last branch meeting was subjected to a vile personal attack by Comrade Smith who accused him of being mainly responsible for the ill feeling in the branch.”<sup>349</sup>

A motion had been passed censuring Smith who, although Chairman and industrial organiser, had been absent from two branch meetings and one EC meeting and “haughtily refused” to explain his absence, and resolutions passed urging adherence to party rules, especially regarding payment of dues. This last, on 2 December 1946, infuriated Auld, who threatened to resign should issues of the same kind be brought up. He did so a few days later, after Ross’ circular from Head Office had arrived and

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<sup>348</sup> A list had been drawn up showing SA sales for the period November 1945-November 1946. Herbie Bell came top, with 3,154 sales to his credit, Dror and Grace Binah second, with 2,352. Dan Smith sold just 17, the lowest of all branch members listed, and Marshall Atkinson 22. Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/16

<sup>349</sup> This cannot have been the incident recalled above by Bill Landles, as he was conscripted into the RAF shortly after the Wallsend municipal election in 1945 and was not present at the implosion of the Newcastle RPC.



after a branch debate calling for an income levy on members in business, proposed by Ken Sketheway. When this was passed, reported Binah, Auld walked out and resigned “on the grounds that he opposed the resolution. This was a glaring example of the comrades’ attitude to Bolshevik discipline. The other comrades of the minority instead of demonstrating their loyalty to the Party by repudiating strongly Com. Auld’s action tried to justify it... and opposed his expulsion... Instead they came out with fresh attacks on supporters of the resolution and particularly on Comrade Binah whom they accused of having indirectly, by misinformation influenced the Centre’s decision to levy the business comrades as a preconceived manouvre [sic] directed to drive Comrade Auld and others out of the organisation. This is the height of disloyalty.”<sup>350</sup>

Before Tarse was able to visit Newcastle Smith submitted a letter of resignation from the RCP on behalf of himself, Alex Auld, George Brown and Evelyn Shiels - a letter which Tarse, writing to Smith to make arrangements for the inquiry, described as one of “determined haste”, a cause of surprise and disappointment.<sup>351</sup>

Tarse arrived in Newcastle on 11 January 1947 and met Smith, Auld, Brown and Shiels in a group. They described the Branch statement on the situation sent by Binah as ‘rubbish’, but refused to discuss it further. Tarse recorded in his Report: “At the same time I asked these comrades... to draw up a statement of what they considered the position to be of the branch, local activity etc. over the past period and which I pointed out would be treated as seriously as the statement of any other comrades. This they refused to do, and persisted in their refusal despite an endless number of requests from myself during the whole time I was in Newcastle.”<sup>352</sup> They maintained the line that Binah was behind a persecution of ‘minority’ members, being “not fit to be in any responsible position in the Party”, “incapable of defending his political ideas” and “had not a political idea in his head”. The other members who supported Binah were “dupes”. “This characterisation of “dupes” they gave to

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<sup>350</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/7 Dror Binah to [Party Centre: addressed ‘Dear Comrade’, 7 January 1947

<sup>351</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/11(ii) Letter, Roy Tarse to Dan Smith, 10 January 1947. This was a reply to DJH/15F/27/10 Letter, Dan Smith to Roy Tarse, 9 January 1947, announcing the resignation of the four.

<sup>352</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/15 Report of Investigation into the situation in the Newcastle Branch. 31 January 1947

all other comrades excepting themselves. The attacks they claimed were directed particularly against D.S. [Dan Smith]”<sup>353</sup> The four told Tarse that they would not re-enter the party if Binah remained in the branch - or even if the branch were split in two. They also refused - despite being invited by Tarse - to attend a branch meeting that Tarse had arranged.

The other members repudiated the claims of the four, as did Marshall Atkinson, the sole minority supporter who had not resigned.

They had found that the work of the comrades in business, for the Party, had steadily deteriorated over the past year. In particular this related to D.S. [Dan Smith] They looked upon D.S.’s position with a certain seriousness because when D.S. originally went into business some eighteen months ago he had informed the branch that this would enable him to give half his time during each week to Party work. This in fact had not been the case and he was today giving far less time to the Party than when he worked for an employer. This had not even been compensated by increased financial commitments during this period.<sup>354</sup>

Tarse examined branch records and found the allegations of the minority members to be “completely unfounded”, and that the majority members’ statements on the deterioration of work - and in particular of work done by Smith - were “substantially correct”. Some of the allegations by the majority members didn’t justify an inquiry as they could be levelled at some majority members also; but the minority failure to attend the Jarrow demonstration despite a central office instruction “shows an anti-Party attitude of the worst form”. He found that members who had left the party over the past two years had not done so because of Binah or the conflict, but for personal reasons, and that the four most recent recruits were brought in by majority members. Tarse’s conclusions were damning for his old friend Dan Smith and his supporters:

My general conclusion is that whilst one cannot deny that there has been a clash of personalities in the branch the basic reason for the degeneration that has taken place has been the altered sociological composition of the branch resulting from the fact that certain members have taken up businesses on their own.... Also a study of the record added to the statements of all the comrades, both majority and minority, leads me to a position where I find the allegations of the minority comrades substantially incorrect and the statements of the other

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<sup>353</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid*

comrades substantially correct. Another point worthy of note is that throughout the whole course of the Inquiry the four minority comrades demonstrated an attitude of non-co-operation and in the discussions with me and in their attitude towards attending the Inquiry etc. maintained a factional discipline. The majority comrades met me individually and assisted me to the full in any requests I made upon them to conduct the Inquiry.<sup>355</sup>

The outcome cannot have been in much doubt, especially since the RCP Constitution did not permit members to resign (attempting to resign was an offence punishable by expulsion). Tearse reported to the Central Committee in February that Smith & Co. “had been disrupting the work of the party... and not acting as loyal members” while Binah, an alternate member of the Central Committee, said that the Branch “had now learned that Smith had been in the Labour Party for at least two weeks before leaving the RCP without informing us and was attempting to get our members to leave the Party and join the LP.”<sup>356</sup> The CC voted to endorse Tearse’s report by 12 votes to 2 (Gerry Healy and John Goffe), and Binah moved that “In view of the fact that these comrades had been well known Trotskyists on the Tyne as public propagandists and could do considerable damage to the Party as L.P. members... we endorse the expulsions and make a public statement in the press.” Healy proposed that an attempt be made to win them back, but a suggestion that he be sent to Newcastle to do so was defeated, while expulsion was carried by 12 votes to 2 (Healy and Goffe). Healy then again sought CC approval to go to Newcastle. This was refused. “Comrade

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<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.* DJH15F/27/13 consists of notes presumably taken by Tearse during the Inquiry, in which, inter alia, branch members comment on Dan’s attitude. ‘T.G.’ [Tommy Green] for example commented: “Since early days knew D.S.; left industry and no longer faced with industrial struggles and his inferior political position does not help him to make up his industrial loss since he took up business”. J.K. [John Kennedy]: “D.S. views very tempting but always struck me about D.S.’s debates - puts point of view - but on thinking about it - persons political opinion is very often subject of outlook in life. D.S. point of view changed since became remote from industry.” Kennedy added, re. the Trades Council meeting, “disappointed to find he was not going - gave reason that of one of demoralisation. When he made this statement he may have been mentally upset but thought it strange thing for a comrade with his abilities.”

<sup>356</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15B/76 Report of Central Committee 15-16 February 1947. The allegation that Smith had secretly entered the Labour Party was subsequently withdrawn. However, in a ‘Postscript to Newcastle Inquiry’ dated 16 March 1947, Roy Tearse stated: “...I find that the following is the correct position: before resigning from the Party D.S. [Dan Smith] had invited M.A. [Marshall Atkinson] (who supports the minority political perspectives) to attend a meeting, attended by G.B. A.A. E.S. [Brown, Auld, Shiel] & D.S. at which they intended to discuss and decide upon the question of leaving the R.C.P. and joining the L.P. In extending this invitation D.S. also suggested to M.A. the idea of persuading another member J.K. [John Kennedy] to join the L.P. also. Also for some considerable time D.S. had intimated to M.A. that he was considering leaving the Party. M.A. refused to act upon the suggestions of D.S....” Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/15.

Healy announced nevertheless that he was going to Newcastle.”<sup>357</sup> Following his visit, the four wrote contritely to Haston on 23 February expressing a wish to reapply for membership. “In doing so we recognise fully the seriousness of our mistake in resigning from the Party and pledge ourselves to do everything possible to carry out its perspectives and assist in building it up.”<sup>358</sup> The Central Committee on 31 May/1 June 1947 decided to accept this, on the basis of six months’ probation from the date of renewed activity in the local branch. “Three comrades have been reaccepted. Dan Smith has made no effort to contact the branch or undertake activity for the Party. The local Branch has therefore rejected his reapplication.”<sup>359</sup> Smith’s career as a Trotskyist was over.

## Discussion

To the uninitiated, writing a history of the British Trotskyist movement, or even of a small portion of its activities, is riddled with difficulties, not least the need to be aware of the political stance of other commentators and historians who may not only wish to support their own cause but - consciously or unconsciously - undermine that of their opponents. “Much of the historical work produced *within* the various Trotskyist groups is seriously compromised” is the verdict not just of Alan Johnson, but also of the doyens of this school of internal history, Al Richardson and Sam Bornstein.<sup>360</sup> There is a danger, also, that non-Trotskyists approach the internal machinations of the movement with ridicule or contempt: “much that is produced from outside the movement is either vitiated by incomprehension or else exhibits a kind of contemporaneous equivalent of the ‘condescension’ which, in another context, E.P. Thompson criticised. Even the ‘poor deluded followers’ of Gerry Healy

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<sup>357</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15F/27/15 Report of Investigation into the situation in the Newcastle Branch. 31 January 1947. John Callaghan argues that Healy’s initial aim was to take over the leadership of the RCP, rather than just alter its line (Callaghan, J, *British Trotskyism: Theory and Practice* (Oxford 1984) p35). Under those circumstances, and given the small numbers involved in the RCP and Healy’s faction, the retention of the Newcastle minority and especially the persuasive Dan Smith within the party and the faction could have been important to the success of failure or failure of Healy’s plans. In an interview towards the end of his life, Smith claimed that “Healy... one of the polarised guys, was a man that I couldn’t get on with.” TDS Archive disc 7B

<sup>358</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15B/82 ‘Revolutionary Communist Party - For Information - July 1947’, quoting letter from Dan Smith, A. Auld, G. Brown, Evelyn Shiel, A. Auld to Secretary, RCP, 23 February 1947.

<sup>359</sup> Hull University Archives DJH/15B/82 ‘Revolutionary Communist Party - For Information - July 1947’

<sup>360</sup> Johnson, Alan, “Beyond the Smallness of Self”: Oral History and British Trotskyism’, Oral History, vol 24 no 1 (1996), p39

deserve better.”<sup>361</sup> Thus Richard Croucher, for example, can make a value judgement in writing from an orthodox Communist perspective of the “bizarre politics” of the Trotskyists.<sup>362</sup> ‘Mainstream’ writers and historians can also let value judgements slip into their writing, as in Andy McSmith’s choice of chapter title, ‘The Long Trudge of Ted Grant’, while John Callaghan can write of “nonsense” being “authentic Trotskyist doctrine” and of the “doctrinal gibberish” propagated by ISFI.<sup>363</sup> Those of us without the talents of a Crick or a Callaghan should take care to avoid the temptation to rush to judgement. In many ways it is much easier to be faced with the works of Mickie Shaw, Ted Grant, or Corinna Lotz: at least one knows where one stands. All of this caution applies equally to Dan Smith, with the added complication that his subsequent career and fall have influenced the historical record and historical memories of the man; at least, the presentation of such memories (and not least in the presentation of such memories by Smith himself). It is not just in Trotskyist memoirs and quasi-official biographies that people seek to distance themselves from him<sup>364</sup>. Smith, too, distanced himself in memory from the Trotskyist movement, presenting it almost as a youthful aberration, barely mentioning it in his published autobiography, and glossing over the events of the period in the recorded interviews of the T Dan Smith Archive.

Yet the period treated in this attempt at a chapter is not one of extreme youth for its principal. Smith was 24 years old in 1939; in 1947 he was 32; this was a period of mature action and an important part of his career and not a piece of juvenilia. It cannot be treated separately from his later career; the Dan Smith who worked in the ILP and RCP was the same man who forged his way in the Labour Party and in business.

From the narrative of his actions that it has been possible to piece together, we are left with two major questions. To what extent does Dan’s political activity in the period between 1939 and 1947 reflect or contradict established historical views of left-wing politics at that time; and to what extent does it show continuity with and

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<sup>361</sup> *Ibid* p40

<sup>362</sup> Croucher *op cit* p178

<sup>363</sup> Callaghan (1987) *op cit* pp59, 60

<sup>364</sup> There is the rare exception of a pro-Smith Trotskyist historian in Ray Challinor, exculpating Dan from blame in the 1943 enquiry, in his view a put-up case by ‘Barneyites’. Challinor (1994)

causation for his later career?

In partial answer to the first question, Smith's career is useful in showing the mechanisms of Trotskyist infiltration of the Independent Labour Party, the north-east division of which was 'a shell' almost waiting to be taken over by energetic politicians wanting a ready-made vehicle to promote their views.<sup>365</sup> Albeit slightly complicated by the fact that Smith wasn't a Trotskyist entrust, but seems to have converted very rapidly once he was an ILP member, it is, depending on one's personal viewpoint, an instruction manual or a cautionary tale on how a party as open and democratic as the ILP can come close to being taken over by a particularist group at odds with the party's broader ethos.<sup>366</sup> His expulsion, although presented by the Trotskyist left as a coup to make the ILP more palatable to the Labour Party, seems equally likely to have been a reaction against the aggression, dogmatism and disruptive nature of the Trotskyist faction: the dislike that Smith and his No. 2 Division comrades inspired seems to be due more to their alleged bullying and insulting of others than to any doctrinal differences. Barney Markson, for example, was capable of pursuing a leftist line, yet was pushed out because he was not 'one of us'; and had Smith and his colleagues left their former pacifist allies in peace they may have come closer to their goals. Once in the RCP, it is not hard to imagine Smith becoming bored. He was chairman of the Newcastle branch, but, unlike his nemesis, Binah, he wasn't a member of the Central Committee, and although he had been friendly with Haston and Tearse, they were a long way off and Smith was no longer at the top table, as he had been in the ILP. The building of a business and impending raising of a family would have occupied more of his attention, the more so as the RCP was not about to fulfill the high hopes of growth in numbers and influence mooted in 1945, and nor did the revolution seem imminent. It seems odd that such a realist as he later turned out to be should side with the catastrophist Gerry Healy in the majority-minority debate. Possibly he saw entry to the Labour Party as the best political solution at the time, irrespective of whether or not the revolution was imminent, and one that Healy offered sooner than Haston, while entry as part of

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<sup>365</sup> I am grateful to Dr Gidon Cohen for the 'shell' analogy.

<sup>366</sup> It did not seem to have learned the lesson of the mid-1930s, when the Revolutionary Policy Committee almost achieved that feat on behalf of the CPGB, and, indeed, Harry Wicks suggests that Walter Padley, the London Divisional Organiser, welcomed Trotskyists entering the ILP c.1940 as a counterweight to the Communists: Wicks *op cit* p188

an organised group offered a prospect of greater influence than entry alone. Late in life Smith claimed that the Trotskyists “were so sectarian and so primitive, it seemed to me, and I used to say so.”<sup>367</sup> There is no corroborative evidence that he did voice such disillusionment at the time, other than in his plans to join Labour in 1946, but arguably it would not have been out of character for him to have felt so. He would not have been alone.<sup>368</sup>

What of the relevance of this period for Smith’s own career? One might argue that it was a ‘false start’: eight wasted years in which he could have been doing something more useful for himself and for society than pursuing a career in two dying parties which had no impact in the real world.

Or, like David Byrne, we can see Smith using his Trotskyist experience as a badge of honour in the Labour movement and as a useful training ground for the businessman, a “trajectory [that] was not all that unusual... I do not think that Dan’s opposition to the War, which kept him out of it, was a post [sic] adopted so that he could build up a good business during and immediately afterwards while others were fighting fascism, but that is in effect what he did and how his business interests developed.”<sup>369</sup>

Or one could compare the Dan Smith meeting with his friends at the Socialist Café in 1939, with the Dan Smith emerging from the RCP in 1947. The first was an untested young man, occasionally employed, educating himself through reading and discussion and evening classes, of passionate socialist views but still finding out what exactly socialism involved and how best to achieve it. By 1947 he is confident and experienced. He has become an accomplished orator, someone who can hold a crowd, who can dominate a meeting, who can form and articulate a vision and persuade others of it. He has demonstrated guile, no small amount of ruthlessness, and a capacity for hard work. Within three years of joining, the journeyman painter,

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<sup>367</sup> TDS Archive disc 7B. This doesn’t, however, square with a statement earlier in the same interview that “the ideological conflicts were of a very high level, and Ted Grant was a remarkably talented philosophic socialist.”

<sup>368</sup> cf Haston’s disillusioned retirement from the field in 1950. Callaghan, J, *British Trotskyism: Theory and Practice* (Oxford 1984) p 41

<sup>369</sup> Byrne (1994) *op cit* p 20. It was, however, not Smith’s initial opposition to the war that kept him out of it but his partial deafness. ‘Post’ is probably a typo for ‘pose’.

recipient of just an elementary education, had become a member of the ruling council of a famous political party (albeit one in terminal decline), and was in the process of shaking that party up so much that it had eventually to purge him from its ranks. He has the confidence in his own judgement to turn his back on Trotskyism, and to make his own way in the world - to quote David Byrne again, "he was not one to confuse status within sect with power in the real world. He had to become a reformist if he wanted the latter, and become a reformist he did..."<sup>370</sup>.

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<sup>370</sup> *Ibid* p 20



### **Chapter 3: Preparing for Power 1945-1958**

By the mid 1940s Smith was no longer a young man, turning thirty in May 1945.. It may be appropriate at this point – a point where he moves from fringe politics into mainstream politics - to reflect on his political trajectory. In his early years, insofar as autobiographical writings and testimony can be relied on, he had passed through several different phases. He had imbued the Marxism of his father and the Christian Socialism of his mother, been moved by the struggle in Spain while himself experiencing the struggles of employment and unemployment. In the late 1930s he came to reject war as a solution for international problems, and became a ‘fervent’ pacifist. His pacifism led him into the left wing socialism of the ILP, and from there he was drawn into the revolutionary socialism of the Worker’s International League/Revolutionary Communist Party. It was a long and sometimes disjointed journey for a youth and young man eager to make a mark, but perhaps not an unusual one – some of his political colleagues made similar journeys. He was to make a further change in the 1945-50 period: from the revolutionary socialism of the RCP, which in 1945 was anticipating the imminent collapse of capitalism, to the democratic socialism of the Labour Party in 1950. That process is documented and explained, as far as possible, below, but ultimately it may not be capable of satisfactory explanation given the nature of the information available, very little of which is contemporary. What is clear is that he deliberately turned his back on Trotskyism and moved into mainstream politics (he would not be the only Trotskyist or ILPer to do that, and some moved much further to the right) and that after a period of political inactivity he once again entered the lists. The Labour Party he entered in 1950 was very different to the party of the pre-war years. Nationally, Labour in 1950 had been in government for ten years (exclusively so for five) and had solid achievements to its name, for all that Smith was to decry its want of vision (see below). Locally, if rather less remarkably, it had tasted power in Newcastle. Smith was about to join a movement which offers him a real prospect of making a difference.

He was also joining a party that was about to experience a serious split between left and right, between so-called ‘Bevanite’ left wing of the party, and the centre-right subsequently identified with Hugh Gaitskell. This split, triggered by a dispute about

NHS charges and leading to the resignation from government of Heath Secretary Aneurin Bevan on 20 April 1951, led to the Labour Party appearing divided; a compromise manifesto lacking in vision was agreed for the impending general election in October 1951, which Labour lost, entering thirteen years of opposition.<sup>371</sup> The divide between Bevanites and their opponents, later dubbed ‘Gaitskellites’, was to continue for the next five years, with arguments on defence (including nuclear disarmament), foreign and colonial policy to the fore.<sup>372</sup> Yet although characterised by much personal vituperation, the split did not lead to clear domestic political alternatives. Bevan’s *In Place of Fear* of 1952 was not “a systematic analysis of a socialist position” according to Morgan “Bevan himself, it became clear, was hardly a Bevanite.”<sup>373</sup> Bevan was to enter the shadow cabinet in 1956 as shadow Colonial Secretary and then shadow Foreign Secretary; in October 1957 at the Labour Party Conference he was alienate many of his supporters by attacking the policies of unilateralist disarmers within the party as “an emotional spasm” .<sup>374</sup>

### **“An ordinary human being”**

The end of the war saw Smith, according to his own recollections, tired and disillusioned. The victory of the Labour Party at the 1945 General Election roused no enthusiasm in him: rather, “I was disillusioned at a time when everybody else was euphoric, even Ada was euphoric... because I felt that we’d missed a historic opportunity and historic opportunities didn’t recur.”<sup>375</sup> In his 1970 autobiography Smith explains that the missed opportunity was to help rebuild a new Europe. “Here we had a Europe, razed in many places to the ground, presenting new opportunities, and if ever there was a time for Britain to go into Europe and give a lead, it was in those radical days in 1945.”<sup>376</sup> But he believed that the Labour government, despite major achievements in health and other fields, was frittering away “the tremendous spiritual energy of the British people” on issues like ration levels.<sup>377</sup> Smith believed that he knew the true feelings of the people better than the Labour movement, and its

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<sup>371</sup> Morgan, Kenneth O, *The People’s Peace. British History 1945-1990* (Oxford 1992) pp100-105

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid* pp137-139

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid* p104

<sup>374</sup> Hennessy, Peter, *Having It So Good. Britain in the Fifties* (London 2007) p523

<sup>375</sup> TDS Archive disk 16B. The nature of the historic event was unspecified.

<sup>376</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p23

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid*

leadership, inferring from ILP by-election campaign successes during the war years (when the main parties observed the political truce) that people “were sick to death of living in slums...[they] did not want to go back to the kind of society they had left behind in 1939, and that if the war was to yield anything at all, then it had to be the beginnings of a new society.”<sup>378</sup> Dismayed by the failure of the Labour leadership to see and seize the opportunities that he could see, Smith recalled, he dropped out of political activity. “I spent the next five [sic] years reading and thinking... the three years from 1947 until I went into local politics I spent purely as an ordinary human being studying the political form.”<sup>379</sup> Part of his change in direction appears to be due to Ada Smith, who gave him a form of ultimatum: “It was against such background discussion that I conceded to the wishes of my wife, who determined that, if she were to have children, then it was her desire that they would have me as a father and she would have me as a husband and that I would not seek to ‘emulate’ many of the self-styled revolutionaries she had met, who seemed to see marriage as a joke and a hindrance in the ‘march towards socialism.’”<sup>380</sup> Smith was settling down. He and Ada were now living in rooms in a multi-occupancy house in the Newcastle district of Spital Tongues, and they soon began a family: their first child, Gillian, was born in December 1947.<sup>381</sup> Smith was also starting the first in a long series of business ventures. He initially became a partner with RCP comrades Jack and Daisy Rawling, briefly running the Luxor Café in Wallsend. Subsequently (or possibly simultaneously; the dates of his association with the Rawlings are uncertain) he began working as a self-employed signwriter. In 1947, after a chance meeting with a former trade union colleague and painter Bill Nichol, Smith and Nichol formed a partnership which became Smiths Decorators, the core of his business interests for the next decade.<sup>382</sup> Nichol had recently lost his wife to tuberculosis and had thrown himself into political and educational work with the NCLC, “and so, naturally perhaps, proceeded to woo me back into active politics.”<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>379</sup> Amber Transcript of interview with TDS by Steve Trafford [nd but possibly 1984]. For

<sup>380</sup> Amber TDS unpublished autobiography p41. “I happily agreed to the most important personal decision in my life” (p42)

<sup>381</sup> The house was 13 Belle Grove Terrace, part of a terrace of Victorian town houses overlooking Castle Leazes Moor. By 1945, local electoral registers show that Smith’s parents, Robert and Ada, had also moved there from Wallsend. On the childrens’ birth dates, Foote Wood *op cit* p298. Gillian was followed by Jocelyn (April 1952) and Clifford (December 1956).

<sup>382</sup> Amber TDS unpublished autobiography p48

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid* p48

In reality, Smith's holiday from active politics was probably extremely short. The previous chapter details his involvement with the RCP which ended in the spring of 1947, at which point he was already considering joining the Labour Party, whether as an adherent of Healy's minority faction or independently. In September 1947 he officially applied to join the Labour Party.<sup>384</sup> Subsequently he was adopted onto the party's Municipal Panel for potential council candidates, a move which provoked a protest by the Westgate ward party, whose secretary sent the secretary of the Newcastle City Labour Party a resolution "That the City Party Executive look further into the case of Mr D Smith... as his inclusion on the Municipal Panel does not seem to be in order."<sup>385</sup> At roughly the same time, Smith joined the Newcastle General branch of the Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union (CAWU), almost certainly at the suggestion of Arthur Blenkinsop, Labour MP for Newcastle East. His Newcastle East constituency party, although largely right wing, was "tolerant of dissenters" and Smith, Ken Sketheway and Ted Fletcher were to obtain council seats there.<sup>386</sup> Blenkinsop was a member of the CAWU Newcastle General branch, which acted as a 'holding pen' for members whose workplace would not support its own branch, and also had a number of 'political' members such as Blenkinsop and Emmanuel Shinwell (Clement Attlee was also a CAWU member).<sup>387</sup> Blenkinsop was instrumental in persuading Smith to stand for the council.<sup>388</sup> This time Dan Smith defied his wife (he stood "against my instinct and my express wish", she wrote), and on his thirty-fifth birthday – 11 May 1950 - was elected as councillor for

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<sup>384</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1266 TDS to Newcastle City Labour Party, received 25 September 1947. Smith requests an application form and adds "I am at present very busy but would be pleased to give you any help you need in the November elections. I have quite a wide experience in public speaking and have at different times been on the Newcastle Trades Council E.C. and on the National I.L.P. and at present lecturing for the N.C.L.C."

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid* J A Ridley (Secretary, Westgate Ward LP) to Secretary, Newcastle City LP, no date. The nature of the problem and the action taken (if any) is not recorded. Smith recorded in his published memoir that "...I was not welcomed into the Labour Party with fanfares of trumpets; I went in, looked upon by the older members and some of the younger ones, as a sort of devil incarnate who would not accept party discipline." (Smith, T D, *An Autobiography* (Newcastle 1970) p 30)

<sup>386</sup> Charlton, J, *Don't You Hear the H-Bomb's Thunder? Youth & politics on Tyneside in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties* (Pontypool 2009) p 40

<sup>387</sup> Creaby, J, *Geordie Clerks Unite! A Centenary History of the Newcastle & Gateshead Branch of the Clerks' Union 1908-2008* (Newcastle 2008), pp 38, 33, 49 (note 25). On Smith's membership, Creaby cites the then branch secretary Ian Black. Smith's decision to join the CAWU may have predated (and been intended to smooth the way towards) his joining the Municipal Panel, or may have been intended to overcome the problem raised by the Westgate ward party.

<sup>388</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* pp28-33

Walker ward, a safe Labour seat in Newcastle's East End.<sup>389</sup> Walker may have been a safe seat – an area of shipyards and associated industries along the riverside, with a good deal of slum housing adjacent, and a large interwar council estate further inland – but Newcastle City Council was politically quite volatile. It had been won by Labour for the first time in the municipal elections of November 1945, then lost in 1949 to the Progressive Party, a self-defined 'non-political' group composed largely of Conservatives and Liberals.<sup>390</sup> Smith was to enter a council Labour Group facing a further eight years in opposition.

### **The Progressives**

In his varied recollections, Smith speaks noticeably more favourably of his Progressive opponents than of his Labour Party colleagues. "Many of them had quite a lot of ability and if you took them man for man I would say they far outweighed as individuals the people of the Labour side with one or two exceptions."<sup>391</sup> Among the figures he admired were John Chapman, Cuthbert Carrick, Robert Parker, William McKeag "who play acted Winston Churchill and was highly competent as a debater" and A Charlton Curry, "and so the standard of debate surprised... and impressed me... it let me see that it was necessary to understand their business if you were going to translate attacks on slum houses and property and the city centre... I was perceptive enough to see that they had these abilities and qualities and that if you didn't do your homework they could trip you up. It mightn't have been obvious to your colleagues but it was obvious to you."<sup>392</sup> Of his Labour colleagues, by contrast, "...I sat at the back of a hall listening to them talking and I thought Oh God! What the hell am I getting myself into here? They hadn't a clue... as to what they should be doing in a city like Newcastle which was... a capital city of a declining region. So

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<sup>389</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3913 Ada Smith memoir 'Once more without feeling' p 8. Smith was selected for the Walker seat despite competition from a large number of experienced Labour councillors ousted in the 1949 municipal elections; Blenkinsop's support may have been of help to him.

<sup>390</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 13 May 1949 p1

<sup>391</sup> TDS Archive disk 9A

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.* Chapman ran a prominent Newcastle furniture shop; Carrick was an accountant; Robert Parker one of the founders of the major Newcastle estate and property agency Storey Sons & Parker. William McKeag (d.1972) was National Liberal MP for Durham 1931-35 and went on to achieve ultimate office as chairman of Newcastle United FC. Aaron Charlton Curry (1887-1957) was National Liberal MP for Bishop Auckland 1931-35, first defeating and then losing to Hugh Dalton. On McKeag, Todd *op cit* p 98

twenty years work I thought, maybe, and we can use this as a base in order to radicalise and bring into revolutionary perspective what the labour movement should be doing in Britain.”<sup>393</sup>

Smith’s memories may give an undeservedly positive impression of the Progressives, for all the quality of individual members, for its governance of Newcastle during the 1940s and 1950s was marked by a series of corruption scandals, division and ultimately disintegration.

In 1943 two senior Progressive aldermen and former Lord Mayors were tried for corruptly procuring Admiralty contracts for their dry dock and shipbuilding company (one, Sir Arthur Monro Sutherland, was acquitted; Alderman Robert Dalglish and an Admiralty official were gaoled).<sup>394</sup> The following year, the Home Secretary ordered an inquiry into the running of fire and civil defence services in Newcastle, in which it was revealed, among other matters, that a city fire engine had been sold for £15 to a scrap company run by the chairman of the Watch Committee, Cllr Embleton; that Embleton’s men had also, when meant to be “removing rubbish” at the Fire Brigade HQ, removed and cut up for scrap a fire pump, and that Embleton, along with family members and friends, had stabled their horses at public expense at the police stables. More seriously, Embleton’s company had bought a boat at auction which the Fire Brigade had sought to acquire as a fire boat but subsequently failed to bid for. Embleton had stated that he would make the vessel available to the Fire Brigade when needed, but at the time of the fiercest air raids on Newcastle the boat was some distance downriver, working for Embleton’s company, and never brought into service. Further allegations involved the use of ARP and police personnel, premises and supplies for private purposes. Despite the nature of the inquiry’s findings, the Watch Committee voted by 5 to 4 that no change be made in civil defence arrangements, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that both Embleton and Crawley, the Chief Constable also in charge of the fire brigade, were induced to resign. Neither man, nor anyone else associated with the events, was prosecuted.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Amber: Transcript of interview with TDS by Steve Trafford, Amber Films, Tape 1 Side 2 pp 2-3

<sup>394</sup> *The Times* 25 May 1943 p 2; 26 May 1943 p2; 21 July 1943 p 2; 26 July 1943 p 2.

<sup>395</sup> *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Inquiry* (1944 Cmd 6522); Armstrong, C, *Tyneside in the Second World War* (Chichester 2007) pp 68-73. It is perhaps indicative of the fractious nature of the Progressives and the feebleness of Newcastle Labour that the attack on Embleton was led by his Progressive colleague

Further disquiet was occasioned in 1952, when it emerged that the Housing Committee had irregularly approved an open-ended contract for consulting engineers Brian Colquhoun and Partners to work on the council's Longbenton housing scheme for fees estimated at up to £150,000, even though the City Engineer's Department was well able to have carried out the work at a fraction of the price.<sup>396</sup> The subsequent lengthy debates on the matter saw Progressive representatives speaking out against the Housing Committee chairman, Alderman William Temple, and voting against the Progressive leadership, while the Progressive leader, Charlton Curry, protested that "[e]ver since this job was started there has been some evil genius at work creating an atmosphere which has so vitiated the climate in which we live in this Chamber that it has become quite impossible for many individuals and the majority Party... to do its best work."<sup>397</sup>

A Newcastle Labour Party report states that the Progressive Party was founded in the 1930s, though its genesis can be traced to the influence of the Economic Union (Newcastle and Northumberland) (not to be confused with the Economic League), an organisation founded in 1923 "for the protection of ratepayers", and perhaps even further back to the influence of the London Municipal Society, founded in 1894.<sup>398</sup> The Economic Union (Newcastle and Northumberland) sought to bring Liberals and Conservatives together and to elect persons "who would exclude party politics from local administration" in the face of Labour's post-1918 surge in support.<sup>399</sup> As a result, "Newcastle City Council no longer knows any party distinction in its membership, other than Labour on the one hand and Anti-Socialist on the other."<sup>400</sup> Already in the early 1920s a 'Business Group' of anti-Labour councillors controlled

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William McKeag. This was not the only time that Embleton's misuse of public resources in wartime came to public attention.

<sup>396</sup> *Proceedings of Newcastle Council* 18 June 1952 (pp154-161); 28 July 1952 (pp 258-280); 17 December 1952 (pp 651-688) ; 7 January 1953 (pp 723-747); 4 March 1953 (pp 896-933) ; 6 January 1954 (pp 698-709); 3 February 1954 (pp 780-784); 16 June 1954 (pp74-78); 1 September 1954 (pp 252-264; 274-285)

<sup>397</sup> Eg Cllr Arthur Grey, *Proceedings of Newcastle Council* 7 January 1953 p 742, p 747; 4 March 1953 p 927

<sup>398</sup> *The Times*, 26 October 1927 p 9; Gyford, Leach, *et al op cit* p 11. On the LMS and its wider influence, Young, K, *op cit*.

<sup>399</sup> *The Times*, 26 October 1927 p 9. In Newcastle Labour representation rose from 9 councillors in 1915 to 17 in 1921: Todd *op cit* p 96

<sup>400</sup> Gyford, Leach *et al, op cit* p 12; Gyford (1976) *op cit* pp100-102; *The Times*, 26 October 1927 p 9

the council, although this was to dissolve in mid-decade.<sup>401</sup> The Progressive Party was part of an interwar trend for the formation of local anti-Labour alliances characterised by names such as Progressive, Moderate, Citizens', Municipal Alliance and Ratepayers.<sup>402</sup> In the north east, Gateshead, Wallsend and Blyth all had Rent and Ratepayers' Associations; Middlesbrough the Civic Association; South Shields, Ratepayers.<sup>403</sup>

The Progressive Party existed solely in order to elect members to Newcastle City Council, but individual membership was encouraged, and by the 1950s the party had approximately 800 members. It was run by an executive committee of six councillors, six non-councillors, and four officers from either category, which would select candidates for its panel. Four district sub-committees would then select candidates on the panel for individual wards. According to a local Labour Party report, the Progressives' ability "to maintain its position as a catch-all for Liberals and independents as well as Conservatives is probably largely due to careful, diplomatic handling of panel and candidate selection. The Progressive Party first of all avoids making enemies by very rarely rejecting anyone for the panel. Secondly... the selection committees usually check informally to make sure that the proposed candidates are at least reasonably acceptable to the Conservative constituency associations..." As an election machine, though, it barely existed: "Each candidate is left largely to fend for himself, though records of helpers and supporters are usually made available to them by the Constituency Conservative Association."<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Todd *op cit* p 96

<sup>402</sup> Gyford, Leach, et al *op cit* p 13

<sup>403</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 12 May 1949, 12 May 1950 p 9. The South Shields Ratepayers managed the coup of capturing the county borough from Labour in the 1945 municipal elections. Many ratepayers' associations from all parts of England and Wales applied for institutional membership of the London Municipal Society between 1921 and 1935, including the Durham Municipal and County Federation of Ratepayers Associations, but neither the Progressive Party nor the Economic Union are recorded as having done so. On the nationwide influence of the LMS, Young *op cit* pp127-137, 143-169; and pp 227-231, 'Appendix 2 Institutional membership of the London Municipal Society'

<sup>404</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1267 File 2. 'The Progressive Party', undated document (almost certainly from 1950s). The lack of a 'machine' was not the case in 1935, however, when the regional *Sunday Sun* newspaper reported excitedly on the creation in central Newcastle of "a nerve centre and information bureau from which the activities of the party in every one of the 19 wards are being controlled" as part of their campaign to "prevent the Socialists gaining municipal supremacy." *Sunday Sun* 29 September 1935 p 15



The Progressive alliance began to break down in 1951, when Leigh Criddle, a former Progressive councillor, retained his seat standing as a Conservative.<sup>405</sup> In 1955 two Conservatives stood for Newcastle seats; by 1956 there were three Conservative councillors.<sup>406</sup> In October 1956 the Newcastle Central Conservatives decided to support their own candidates in the six wards in that constituency, its agent, Norman Welch, describing the Progressive Party as “a nebulous body” from whom they were now divorced.<sup>407</sup> Two years later the Northern Counties Area urged “effective and efficient support for all Conservative candidates in view of the tremendous importance of local government elections.”<sup>408</sup> Finally, in November 1958 Newcastle Tories withdrew their support from Progressive candidates and formed a joint committee of the four constituency associations to select and assist ward candidates, a decision supposedly prompted by the Labour Party policy on comprehensive education in the city.<sup>409</sup>

Like the Progressives, the Conservative Party in Newcastle was prone to factionalism and splits, particularly in its Newcastle North association, whose bitter infighting throughout the 1940s and early 1950s was chronicled by the local MP Cuthbert Headlam in his diaries.<sup>410</sup> This, according to Headlam, was due initially to the arrogance of his predecessor as Newcastle North MP, Sir Nicholas Grattan-Doyle, in attempting to install his son as Conservative candidate when he resigned in April 1940. A rebel Conservative Association proposed Headlam as their candidate, and he defeated Howard Grattan-Doyle at the subsequent by-election.<sup>411</sup> The divisions exposed by this incident did not readily heal, and Headlam suspected Alderman William Temple (“...an unpleasant piece of work, and not a person in

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<sup>405</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 11 May 1951

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid* 11 May 1955 p 21; 11 May 1956 p 9

<sup>407</sup> *The Journal & North Mail* 24 October 1956 p 5

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid* 2 June 1958 p 7

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid* 4 November 1958 p 3

<sup>410</sup> Sir Cuthbert Headlam (1876-1964) was Conservative MP for Barnard Castle (1924-1929, 1931-1935) and for Newcastle North (1940-1951). Ball *op cit*, pp15-18, 30-37 et seq. It might be more accurate to refer to the Newcastle North associations as the party there was as liable as the Trotskyists to splitting. Headlam was to write in 1950 of the internal atmosphere: “How ridiculous all this bickering is among our female Conservative leaders in this division - but I gather that similar jealousies and self-seeking are to be found in most Conservative associations - the men are bad enough, but the women are impossible.” (entry for 19 January 1950, Ball pp 631-632)

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid* pp 15-16, 84 et seq (to 205). The by-election was contested only by the official and rebel Conservative candidates.

whom one can put much trust”), who was to be a senior postwar Progressive alderman, of stirring up trouble.<sup>412</sup>

### **The Labour Group and City Labour Party**

Smith was initially unimpressed by his Labour colleagues:

I remember going to the first group meeting. Strangely enough, my new colleagues were not discussing what they were going to do tomorrow; they were discussing what they should have done yesterday. I remember one very dear lady, Alderman Mrs Taylor, saying to me, ‘Well, Councillor Smith, if you take my advice you’ll serve an apprenticeship. You will listen and say little and then when you’ve got experience you’ll be able to take a more active part in council proceedings.’ I was quite flabbergasted... I thought, ‘Well good gracious, has this woman lived as long as this and not known all the things that I’ve been active for in the Labour movement?’<sup>413</sup>

This first meeting saw Edward Short stand for election as Labour Group leader against the long-time leader, the “ageing” and (apparently) “complacent” James Clydesdale.<sup>414</sup> Smith supported Short (a friend from pre-war days) but was surprised to find that

politics played no part in choosing this candidate. There was no discussion on the political attitudes we would be pursuing in the coming year or about the policies we would be advocating in opposition. There was a noticeable attitude of arrogant ‘superiority’ displayed by those councillors who had already served... They believed that if you were in a council minority ‘you could not do much about it.’ Having always been in a very small political minority, I knew for certain just how foolish such a belief was.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Headlam quote of August 1944 in *ibid* p 30. Temple was behind an attempt to deselect Headlam in 1949-50, and may have been involved in a similar attempt in 1945.

<sup>413</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p 34

<sup>414</sup> Todd *op cit* p99. Alderman Clydesdale was the ‘grand old man’ of the local Labour Group. Blind from the age of eight, he had participated in the National League of the Blind marches of 1920 (which had pioneered the use of long distance marches as a political tactic in Britain) and 1936, although he had opposed the latter march and indeed as the League’s regional organiser had covertly supplied information on the organisation of the march to the Ministry of Health. He was elected to Newcastle council in 1922, becoming an alderman in 1943. He died in 1962. Reiss, M, ‘Forgotten Pioneers of the National Protest March: The National League of the Blind’s Marches to London, 1920 & 1936’, *Labour History Review* 70 (2) (2005) pp133-165; *Proceedings of Newcastle Council* 1962-63, p 485 17 October 1962.

<sup>415</sup> Amber TDS unpublished autobiography p 51. Smith had met Short in the International Friendship League (Amber TDS unpublished autobiography p 35)

Smith's suspicions of many of his new colleagues were, he felt, reciprocated. "The combination of those who wanted to give me help and advice, and those who positively disliked me, made for a difficult situation."<sup>416</sup> The level of dislike felt for him by many in the Labour group – whether as an ex-ILPer, a suspected Trotskyist, or a brash upstart – was felt by the intuitive Ada Smith. Attending a municipal 'do', she "was all too aware of the...nervous animosity that was in the air. As soon as possible I made my escape and, in the safety of our home, I turned to Dan and said "Turn around... I'll pull the knives out of your back. They hate you... I will never go there again."<sup>417</sup>

Nevertheless, it is possible to make too much of Smith's isolation at this period. He clearly had sufficient support within the Labour group to be elected deputy leader by 1954.<sup>418</sup> Short's resignation of the group leadership to run for Parliament (he was elected MP for Newcastle Central in 1951) however had enabled the old guard led by Clydesdale to regain the group leadership by 1952; he was replaced in 1954 by another right-wing Labour councillor, Frank Russell, a former policeman.<sup>419</sup>

After his election in 1950, Smith failed to be appointed to any of the major council committees and was consigned initially to the backwater of the Libraries Committee.<sup>420</sup> Here he was able to see the effects of the council's niggardly spending on culture: the recent Housing and Local Government Act allowed a 6d rate for encouraging cultural activities; in Newcastle a penny rate would produce £10,000; in 1952 Newcastle council allocated £645 to cultural societies.<sup>421</sup> At the same time, Smiths Decorators were bidding for library painting contracts, and his companies' work for the council was to become a source of much whispering and rumour-mongering about Smith over the years. Library Committee minutes indicate that Smith (who was in any case a member of the minority party on the council and in the committee) always left committee meetings when tenders involving his own firms

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<sup>416</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit* p34

<sup>417</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3913 Ada Smith memoir 'Once more without feeling' p 9

<sup>418</sup> Smith is described as deputy leader in *Evening Chronicle*, 6 May 1954 p18; following the municipal elections that year he was replaced as deputy by Bennie Russell (*The Journal* 24 May 1954)

<sup>419</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 13 May 1952 p8 records Clydesdale as group leader; on Russell's appointment, *The Journal*, 25 May 1954.

<sup>420</sup> TWAM MD.NC/133/9 Libraries Committee minutes 1949-1952

<sup>421</sup> Amber: TDS Unpublished Autobiography p60

came up; on one occasion, prior to withdrawing, he told the committee that Smith's Decorators could not guarantee to complete the work in the specified time. The contract was given to another firm.<sup>422</sup> A Conservative councillor was later to say "Dan would always declare his interest whenever he was tendering. People on the Tory side were doing it too. Dan painted a lot of council houses. It was fair. Whoever submitted the best tender got the job."<sup>423</sup>

In line with efforts by many Labour groups to make meetings more accessible to working people, Smith for the first time in 1953 attempted to change Library Committee meeting times from 3pm to 6.30pm; and he was successful in securing the abolition of a sub-committee of Painting and Furnishings, having "expressed his concern at the increasing tendencies of committees... dealing with what he considered to be matters of routine administration."<sup>424</sup>

Work more to Smith's taste and ambition came in 1952 with his appointment to the city's Health Committee.<sup>425</sup> This committee shared responsibility for slum clearance in the city with the Housing and Housing Management committees, and Smith was member of a 'Joint Committee as to Slum Clearance.'<sup>426</sup> He was also appointed to the Insanitary Property, the Smokeless Zones and the Public Abattoir sub-committees.<sup>427</sup> The aim may have been to keep Smith out of the way – he believed so – but the experiences of these committees gave him the material to make a name for himself campaigning on housing and environmental issues. On committee, as in Council, he railed at the Progressives' slum clearance policies and the work of the Housing Committee chairman, William Kirkup, who outside the Town Hall acted as accountant for Dan Smith's growing list of decorating companies. In December 1953 he proposed an amendment to the Medical Officer of Health's report, to read "That this Council... recognizes that the work of the Health Committee has been hindered

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<sup>422</sup> TWAM MD.NC/133/10 Libraries Committee minutes 1953-55, meeting of 18 July 1952. Minutes of other committees likewise record Smith's withdrawal when contracts for which he had tendered were discussed

<sup>423</sup> *Northern Echo*, 9 July 1971, quoting Ian Bransom.

<sup>424</sup> TWAM MD.NC/133/10 Libraries Committee minutes 1953-55, meeting of 19 June 1953; TWAM MD.NC/133/11 Libraries Committee minutes 1955-59, meetings of 21 October 1955, 18 November 1955

<sup>425</sup> TWAM MD.NC/98./30 Health Committee minutes 1952-53, meeting of 28 May 1952

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid* Meeting of Joint Committee as to Slum Clearance, 28 March 1953

<sup>427</sup> TWAM MD.NC/98./31 Health Committee minutes 1953-54, meeting of 8 June 1953

by the past failure of the Housing Committee to build the number and type of houses considered necessary to solve the basic problem of bad housing in the City, creating conditions which are not conducive to good health.”<sup>428</sup> This was defeated, but Smith was able to gain some victories: instigating proceedings against the North Eastern Electricity Board over air pollution caused for west Newcastle by the Dunston power station in Blaydon; having a timetable for the demolition of insanitary property drawn up and consultation instigated with the Housing Management Committee over rehousing the people affected; the veterinary officer to report on present and future slaughtering facilities.<sup>429</sup> By 1955 he was urging that the demolition programme timetable be publicised.<sup>430</sup> In 1958, in a move again prefiguring the policy to be adopted when Labour came to power, he suggested the provision of improvement grants for houses with a guaranteed life of ten to fifteen years or more.<sup>431</sup>

### **The City Labour Party**

An important new ally of Dan Smith was the Newcastle City Labour Party secretary, Joe Eagles, appointed in 1951.<sup>432</sup> Smith had a good impression of Eagles, who was “a rare fellow because he had vision and organisational ability... I always admired him because I felt he was a man of principle.”<sup>433</sup> Eagles was able to encourage Smith when, during long years in opposition, he felt frustrated by events. “If it had not been for him continually cranking me up, I would not have had the guts to battle through the council and through my own group, because it is no secret that I was not only being shot at from the front, but from the back as well.”<sup>434</sup>

The two men were to work closely on developing and executing policies for the Labour Party in the city, particularly after Smith was elected Chairman of the City Party, which, he recalled, took place in 1953.<sup>435</sup> The City Party had previously not

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<sup>428</sup> *Ibid*, meeting of 14 December 1953

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid*, meetings of 11 January 1954, 10 May 1954, 12 July 1954

<sup>430</sup> TWAM MD.NC/98/32 Health Committee minutes 1954-1956, meeting of 12 December 1955

<sup>431</sup> TWAM MD.NC/112 Joint Sub Committee as to Rehousing, meeting of 10 January 1958

<sup>432</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1268. Edward Joseph Eagles had been LP organiser in Workington since 1948. He was appointed secretary of the Newcastle City LP as of 1 January 1951

<sup>433</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p 33

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid* p 35

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid* p 36; he states that he served for three years. Whether his period as chairman actually did last from 1953 to 1956 is uncertain as Smith’s published and unpublished recollections tend not to be fully accurate as to dates. For example, on p 33 of *An Autobiography* Smith claims that his election to the council in 1950 coincided with Labour’s loss of control when that defeat in fact took place in

been seen as particularly important in municipal affairs, as Jack Johnston was to recall: “The city party representing... the four constituencies used to plough on its own track and the group used to go in its own track, and often the group used to take decisions that the city party was not very keen about; but we had managed... to get the City Labour Party to control the group or to try and control the group...”<sup>436</sup> This initial insignificance of the City Party was similar, perhaps, to the situation in Nottingham, where it exercised a “perfunctory authority” and shared a right-wing political stance with the Labour group.<sup>437</sup> In Newcastle, though, control of the City Party was to become a political weapon. Influence over the City Party was important not least because its executive committee controlled the municipal panel, the approved list of Labour candidates for council from which individual ward parties would make their selections. Smith and his allies in the City Party sought to rejuvenate the local Labour group as a preliminary to regaining power, and the process of doing so was as likely to lose as to win him friends: “I... was almost hated because I knocked people from... getting on to the panel, the Collins and people like that couldn’t get on the panel in my time. I was looking for people who showed ... ability...”<sup>438</sup>

The ill-feeling seems to have reached a climax with the resignation of Councillor Mary Shaw from the City Party executive committee in March 1956, telling Eagles that “I no longer find myself willing to serve under the Chairmanship of Coun. Smith. I view with distaste many of his actions and do not feel that I can give of my best to help my party under his Chairmanship.”<sup>439</sup> She had earlier written to Smith:

... I can no longer continue to serve under... a man for whom I have such a feeling of disgust and loathing. No one was more pleased than myself to welcome you into our ranks even though many members warned me of your history (the apprentices strikes etc) and I put everything aside and honoured

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1949. Similarly, in his recollections he refers often to becoming Labour group leader in 1960, rather than the correct date of 1959; and occasionally of resigning the group (and council) leadership in 1964 rather than the correct date of 1965. Unfortunately the City Labour Party records at Tyne & Wear Archives do not record the elections of chairman; and the Newcastle City Council Labour Group does not have minutes earlier than 1968. However, he is described as chairman of Newcastle [City] Labour Party in the *Evening Chronicle* 11 May 1954 p3 and *The Journal* of 25 May 1954.

<sup>436</sup> Amber Transcript of interview with Jack Johnston

<sup>437</sup> Hayes, N, *Consensus and Controversy: City Politics in Nottingham 1945-66* (Liverpool 1996) pp 104-105

<sup>438</sup> TDS Archive disk 28B

<sup>439</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1269

and respected you. But from the first year I have watched you hound, witch hunt and get rid of decent people who helped to make my party great, and under your leadership a man was killed twelve months before he died...I should, I suppose, feeling as I do that you are destroying my party, stay and fight you but I am so filled with disgust and disappointment that I can find no enthusiasm to be ever in your company.<sup>440</sup>

Under threat of deselection, Ward was induced to apologise for her accusations.<sup>441</sup>

Not all took deselection well. Some complained to Transport House; Byker councillor Wesley Oliver, on being informed of his removal from the panel, immediately resigned from the Labour Party and went on to stand against it as an independent.<sup>442</sup> Oliver had supported Russell for Group leader after Edward Short's resignation.<sup>443</sup> Issues of undemocratic practices were also raised. In 1954 Frank Verbeek, a long-standing Labour activist, threatened to resign from the party claiming that Jack Johnston, the former ILPer expelled with Smith in 1945 and now vice-chairman of the City LP, had miscounted a vote on a resolution and repeatedly refused a recount, and had allowed an ineligible delegate to cast a vote.<sup>444</sup>

This is not to suggest that Newcastle Labour Party was exceptionally fractious. Such arguments are a staple of local political life, and arise as much from personalities, ethnicity, religion or parochialism as from points of ideology or principle. However, a theme of Labour Party history in the mid twentieth century is conflict between 'Old Guard' members and councillors, and 'Young Turks'. This is described by Gyford in terms of the situation following the major municipal losses suffered by Labour in 1967-68 and subsequently the local government reorganisation of 1974-75, opening

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<sup>440</sup> *Ibid*, Mary Shaw to TDS, 21 January 1956. The meaning of the reference to 'a man killed twelve months before he died' is not known.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid*. Smith did not take part in the official deliberations on this episode.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid*. A L Williams, Labour Party National Agent to Joe Eagles 30 October 1953 wrote of two complaints about municipal panel nominations and stating that "we saw no reason to interfere" but advising against ballot votes on candidates. Wesley Oliver to Joe Eagles 16 October 1953. In the May 1954 election Oliver – claiming that there was "too much dictatorship" in the Labour Party - stood as an independent in Byker ward against the official Labour candidate, Tom Hurst (*Evening Chronicle* 13 May 1954 p 17). Four years later, Hurst was himself opposing Labour as an independent and Wesley Oliver was standing now as a 'Liberal-Progressive' (*Evening Chronicle* 22 April 1958 p10).

<sup>443</sup> TDS Archive disk 8A

<sup>444</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1266 F A Verbeek to R Scott Batey (Chairman, Newcastle North CLP) 16 November 1954: "Although I still am (or better "because I am") a socialist in heart and soul, I cannot belong to a Party which is corrupt." Verbeek clearly withdrew his resignation as he is recorded as Newcastle North CLP Secretary throughout the mid and later 1950s.

local parties to younger, more radical members concerned with the environment, open government and a “more managerial approach to local decision making”; but it would seem appropriate to see Newcastle’s 1950s experience in the same light, with new party members attempting to reinvigorate and politicise a staid and conservative group.<sup>445</sup>

Smith’s attempts to create a cadre of energetic and forward-thinking councillors and candidates saw a number of his former left-wing comrades join the council. Jack Johnston was elected as a Labour councillor at a by-election in December 1954, Ken Sketheway, of the ILP and RCP, was returned at the May 1957 municipal elections.<sup>446</sup> Another keen supporter was the AEU convenor at Vickers’ armaments factory (the major employer in west Newcastle), Roy Hadwin, elected in May 1954.<sup>447</sup> They formed the core of what has been described as Smith’s ‘Praetorian Guard’.<sup>448</sup> More influential, perhaps, and destined to leave local politics for Westminster, was Ted Fletcher, a former fighter with the ILP contingent in the Spanish Civil War and subsequently organiser for the ILP’s Midlands Division. Smith claimed to have identified a job for Fletcher, who in 1949 was appointed North East Area Organiser for the CAWU as well as becoming a member of the Newcastle General Branch. He was elected to the city council in 1952 and served until 1964, when he was elected MP for Darlington.<sup>449</sup>

This was almost certainly not a consciously entrust tactic. Of the ‘Praetorian Guard’ only Sketheway remained an avowed Trotskyist.<sup>450</sup> Smith had abandoned Trotskyist revolutionary politics; Johnston never joined the RCP after his expulsion from the ILP; Hadwin was never in the RCP. Nor did they work together as a clique: “...we did not work... consciously as a group; it was not necessary. If an issue came up and

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<sup>445</sup> Gyford, J, *The Politics of Local Socialism* (London 1985) pp 25-28

<sup>446</sup> *Proceedings of Newcastle Council* 1954-55 List of the Council, 1961-62 List of the Council

<sup>447</sup> *Proceedings of Newcastle Council* 1954-55 List of the Council

<sup>448</sup> Interview with Sir Jeremy (now Lord) Beecham, 3 January 2008

<sup>449</sup> Creaby *op cit* p36, p48 note 20. Trotskyist influence had been relatively strong in the ILP Midlands Division, particularly Birmingham, though not to the extent that it was in the North East. TDS Archive disk 14B, Smith states his CAWU contacts got Fletcher the job. “Ted was a very good politician, excellent, first class material. He degenerated, by the time he went to Parliament he was not one third of the man he was years before that.”

<sup>450</sup> Sketheway, who stayed in the RCP after Smith’s expulsion, was to remain true to his beliefs and was a member of the ‘Militant’ group late in life.



it was my branch meeting I would see a resolution got through to the City Labour Party and... I could be sure of somebody seconding, not necessarily Dan or somebody like that [but] some other people were sympathetic...”<sup>451</sup> Ken Sketheway recalled the activity in these years as a continuation of their wartime association: it “renewed the collective activities which we had had in the past; in other words we more or less came together again in a different situation... It was only informal in the sense that we were all members of the general management committee of the City Labour Party and in most cases... of the executive committee... there wasn’t any real need for discussion outside of that... We had been associated with each other for such a comparatively lengthy period that virtually we instinctively knew each other and what to do, why to do it and how to do it.”<sup>452</sup>

“Smith was the architect, he had the ideas, he was a natural leader” recalled Roy Hadwin. “He just gave you that feeling that you should do something, that his ideas were right, and he made you conjure up... ideas. It made your brain work, you know, he forced it on you, and I believe in collective leadership, well Dan had the knack of giving you collective leadership but still being the leader...”<sup>453</sup>

But Smith’s support came from more than just a coterie of 1940s comrades. Other councillors and party members became trusted associates, including Nobby Bell, John Huddart, Ann Wynne-Jones, Peggy Murray and Doris Starkey, “a very good politically conscious group of people, many of whom had a good sound traditional socialist approach.”<sup>454</sup> Other important figures on the City Party executive included Rowland Scott-Batey from the left-wing Newcastle North CLP, who chaired the City Party before Smith and afterwards; Gladys Robson, “a veteran of the women’s suffrage movement and pre-war trade union activism” and Peggy Murray, “an old thirties left-winger.”<sup>455</sup>

As propaganda activity, the City Party continued to hold Sunday evening soap box meetings in the Bigg Market; it relaunched the May Day celebrations as a large

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<sup>451</sup> Amber transcript of interview with Jack Johnston

<sup>452</sup> Amber transcript of interview with Ken Sketheway pp33-34

<sup>453</sup> Amber Transcript of interview with Roy Hadwin

<sup>454</sup> TDS Archive tapes 9B, 16B

<sup>455</sup> Charlton *op cit* p41

march and rally, and published its own newspaper, the *Northern Star* between 1951 and 1954. Described by John Charlton as a “Bevanite monthly newspaper”, it “featured discussion round nationalisation, NATO, Test Ban Treaties and German re-armament.”<sup>456</sup>

Policies for the election manifesto required the endorsement of the City Party, and following acceptance, would be discussed at branch meetings when delegates to the City Party reported back to ward parties and other institutions. Falling attendances at branch meetings didn’t worry Smith: “Even though attendances were dropping, an important group of citizens knew what you were aiming to achieve.”<sup>457</sup> Smith claimed that wards were encouraged to make policy suggestions: “such ideas were always welcomed and if they had merit, were adopted.”<sup>458</sup> The City Labour Party executive created policy working groups on “every activity in the political spectrum” including issues such as German re-armament. But Smith insisted on a disciplined approach to discussion: “...as Chairman I insisted on written submissions from groups or individuals on any subject or aspect of a subject. This prevented ‘off the cuff’ time wasting.”<sup>459</sup> Draft policies were widely circulated, recipients including staff at King’s College and local further education institutions, “much to the annoyance of many other Labour Party members”.<sup>460</sup> The working groups addressed numerous issues which were to become council policy after Labour secured control in 1958; for example, in 1956 Jessie Scott-Batey and Gladys Robson visited Coventry to examine its comprehensive schools with a view to reforming secondary education in Newcastle.<sup>461</sup>

Smith’s energy in pushing the housing question in committee and in council led to the City Labour Party publishing a manifesto concentrating entirely on housing in advance of the critical 1955 municipal elections, where Labour needed to win just one council seat to gain control. *Peril in a City!* subtitled *The Appalling Story of Newcastle’s Housing Tragedy – and Labour’s Solution* was a sixteen-page brochure

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<sup>456</sup> *Ibid* p 42

<sup>457</sup> Amber TDS unpublished autobiography p 54

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid* p 54

<sup>459</sup> Amber TDS unpublished autobiography p 55

<sup>460</sup> TDS Archive disk 28B. King’s College was the part of the federal University of Durham located in Newcastle upon Tyne. It was to become the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1963.

<sup>461</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1263 Newcastle City LP 1956 Report; Acc 608 Box 1269 file 12 W L Chinn, Director of Education, Coventry City Council to Joe Eagles 3 July 1956

describing the problems of housing and land shortages in Newcastle and pledging a more energetic programme of replacement, including the construction of high-rise flats and the building of a new satellite town. Copious tables and statistics accompanied the programme. It was, perhaps, too detailed, the message being diluted rather than enhanced by the mass of material; and Labour failed to win the one seat it needed.<sup>462</sup>

Smith's ambitions grew: "I had a deepening conviction, shared with Joe Eagles... who I greatly respected for his ability and vision, that, by concentrating on local and regional policies, we could carry through Newcastle City Council given the political power, the changing of the face of democratic representative Government in Britain and far abroad."<sup>463</sup> By the time of the 1958 election, "... we had a group of highly active and competent councillors and candidates who had already absorbed the kind of spirit which had been injected into our municipal and political work."<sup>464</sup>

However, relations between the City Labour Party and the Labour group on the council remained strained, as the group, according to Smith, "still saw itself as a law unto itself and above the decisions of the City Party whose interference it resented. I saw this attitude of theirs as being undemocratic and believed that the role of the Council Group was to direct the professional council officers towards implementing seriously considered party policies. In this way I could see a live democracy at work."<sup>465</sup> Relations between city party and group in Newcastle were echoing the conflicts in the national Labour Party between National Conference and the NEC on the one hand, and the Parliamentary Labour Party on the other, over who should ultimately determine policy.<sup>466</sup> The role of city parties was one of the aspects of the party's administration considered by the 'Sub Committee on Party Organisation' chaired by Harold Wilson, whose report (which famously described the party as being "at the penny-farthing stage in a jet-propelled era") expressed itself extremely disturbed at the state of city parties, where over-centralisation associated with

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<sup>462</sup> Newcastle upon Tyne City Labour Party, *Peril in a City* (1955)

<sup>463</sup> Amber TDS unpublished autobiography p 55

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid* p59

<sup>465</sup> Amber TDS unpublished autobiography p 59

<sup>466</sup> Haseler, S, *The Gaitskellites. Revisionism in the British Labour Party 1951-64* (1969; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition London 2005) pp 149-154

council activities was “inimical to good constituency organisation.” The extreme case was Leicester, where “for all practical purposes there are virtually no constituency parties in being”, and the committee believed that Preston South would have been held at the 1955 general election and Preston North gained “if we had had an active CLP organisation there instead of a costly and top-heavy Borough Party.” Such overt preference for parliamentary over municipal success may not have seemed particularly relevant in Newcastle, where in 1955 the city council had been finely poised between Labour and the Progressive Party whereas two, possibly three of the four parliamentary seats could be considered safe for Labour (and Newcastle North a safe Tory seat, so long as the party could be relied upon to run only one candidate).<sup>467</sup>

City parties were also blamed for bleeding CLPs of funds, several parties failing to share any affiliation fees with the CLPs under their umbrella (here the Newcastle City Labour Party set a shining example, its apportioning of 50% of its affiliation revenues to the four Newcastle CLPs being the most generous of any city party examined). The report concluded that “In general (Birmingham being the one exception) the stress on the parties has led to a progressive withering-away of the CLPs. In general our efficiency as a machine for fighting parliamentary elections is sacrificed to municipal electoral considerations. Moreover, the concern of City Parties with the day-to-day work of Council Groups can lead to as much harm as good, as in Liverpool.” It recommended that city parties be reorganised on a federal basis, with resources provided by the CLPs, although the report, hailed by Richard Crossman as “a really sensational document” and by Attlee as “Absolutely first rate” was to remain according to Ben Pimlott “a monument to what should have happened, rather than what did.”<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Labour had expressed high hopes of capturing Newcastle City Council at the May 1955 poll, by which time the Labour Party had one councillor more than the Progressives, and needed just one seat gained to dominate the impending aldermanic elections and gain control. However, they lost two seats and power remained with the Progressives. *Evening Chronicle* 11 May 1955 p 21, 13 May 1955 p 8

<sup>468</sup> ‘Interim Report of the Sub Committee on Party Organisation’, Labour Party, *Report of the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, 1955* pp 80-81; Jefferys, K, *Politics and the People. A History of British Democracy since 1918* (London 2007) pp 136-137; Pimlott, B, *Harold Wilson* (London 1993) pp 193-196. Pimlott was himself briefly a candidate on Newcastle’s Municipal Panel in the 1950s. It is not known whether or not the constitution of the Newcastle City Labour Party was revised on the lines suggested. The city party itself was wound up in 1975: TWAM Acc 608, Letter, Doris Starkey to members, Executive Committee 12 December 1975 re meeting to be held on 18 December 1975, “The only item of business is the winding up of the City Party.”

The Liverpool reference could as easily have read 'Newcastle.' In June 1954 the City Party, after considering a motion to recommend withdrawal of the whip, censured the recently-elected Labour Group leader, Cllr Frank Russell, and his predecessor, Alderman Clydesdale "for speaking against and failing to vote for, the policy of the group in the City Council."<sup>469</sup> Russell and Clydesdale had failed to support Labour policy on demands for an inquiry into the Longbenton housing estate allegations described above, and despite the controversy following the council meeting on 5 May, Frank Russell was elected leader later that month and Dan Smith replaced as deputy leader by Bennie Russell.<sup>470</sup>

Ward organisation in the city was weak. A 1954 report found that while "all wards and sections are functioning... ward meetings are still poorly attended, and consist in the main of women members, who seem to prefer a cup of tea and a chat with each other, and consequently emphasis is on the social side. This has the unfortunate result of keeping the men away."<sup>471</sup> Was this the "dilapidated, almost atavistic character" which "permeated branch life on the 1950s left" identified by Lawrence Black, a party whose organisation "erred towards the improvised and decrepit"?<sup>472</sup> Individual membership of the City LP was rising in the early 1950s, from 2,614 in 1951 to 3,592 in 1954, not inconsistent with national trends which saw Labour Party individual membership peak in 1952.<sup>473</sup>

Smith's papers contain barely any evidence for activity in his own council ward Labour Party at Walker. Of course, this is not evidence that he neglected such

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<sup>469</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1269 file 17, letter dated 4 June 1954 to Alderman Clydesdale. The carbon is unsigned but almost certainly was from Joe Eagles, City Party Secretary.

<sup>470</sup> Proceedings of Newcastle Council 5 May 1954 pp 1101-1116; *The Journal* 25 May 1954. Smith's colleague Ken Sketheway, Secretary of the Newcastle East CLP, was also to write to Eagles to convey a resolution condemning the group decision to appoint Russell before disciplinary proceedings had finished and expressing no confidence in him as Group Leader (TWAM Acc 608 Box 1269 File 17 Sketheway to Eagles 2 June 1954). A peculiarity of Newcastle Council in the 1950s was that it boasted four councillors surnamed Russell but only one Smith. Benny and Harry Russell were brothers; Harry was married to Theresa Science Russell; Frank Russell was unrelated to the other three.

<sup>471</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1268 File 5 Newcastle CLP Report for Half Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> June 1954

<sup>472</sup> Black, L, "Still at the Penny-Farthing Stage in a Jet-Propelled Era": Branch Life in 1950s Socialism', *Labour History Review* vol 65 no 2 (2000) pp 202-203

<sup>473</sup> Jefferys, K, *Politics and the People. A History of British Democracy since 1918* (London 2007) p 135; Black *op cit* p202.

activity, and he was chairman of the City Party's organisation committee; but it can fairly be taken as an indication that he looked upon such work without any great enthusiasm. Membership in Walker ward suffered a slump in 1953 from 200 in 1952 to 128, although this can partly be accounted for problems with recruiting collectors for membership dues; and perhaps also by the safety of the seat: Smith was returned unopposed in 1953.<sup>474</sup> Understandably, attention was focussed on wards perceived as marginal, with the Organisation Committee, chaired by Smith, in one report urging strengthening of the ward organisation in the partly middle-class Walkergate and Kenton wards; and in 1953 instructing the party organisers to concentrate their activity on Elswick, Westgate and St Nicholas wards.<sup>475</sup>

### **Bevanite but anti-Bevan?**

For much of the 1950s Dan Smith and the City Labour Party appeared to follow a left-wing policy which could broadly be described as Bevanite. MPs and other invited speakers were largely from the left of the Labour Party: in 1952-53 these included Tom Driberg, Ellis Smith, Ian Mikardo, Michael Foot, Fred Mulley, Dick Crossman, Barbara Castle, Fenner Brockway, Pat Barclay as well as the Guyanese leader Cheddi Jagan and the South African trades unionist Solly Sache.<sup>476</sup>

Consistent with Radhika Desai's view that "the Bevanite lack of concrete proposals for domestic reform was matched by its emphasis on questions of foreign policy", the Newcastle party campaigned actively on overseas issues – protesting against a visit by the Japanese Crown Prince Akihito to Newcastle in 1953, and against German rearmament, including passing a resolution critical of Clement Attlee's 1954 party political broadcast on the issue.<sup>477</sup> On the rearmament issue, the party was not above resorting to apocalyptic scaremongering on its leaflets: "Twelve divisions will soon become sixty or more... Atomic artillery will become part of their equipment... The SS men will drop the pretence of being democratic once they are armed... German rearmament is the road to World War III" and concluding with a chilling

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<sup>474</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1268 Newcastle East Divisional LP Organisers Report 1953

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid* Report on Organisation (n.d. but mid 1950s) (The report was signed by Bob Brown, Ted Fletcher, Bill Lewcock and Dan Smith); Minutes of Organisation Committee 29 December 1953. Elswick was considered a highly marginal ward in the 1950s, reflecting residual working class Toryism.

<sup>476</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1263 Newcastle City LP 1953 Report

<sup>477</sup> Desai, R, *Intellectuals and Socialism. 'Social Democrats' and the Labour Party* (London 1994) p 101; TWAM Acc 608 Box 1266 Joe Eagles to Labour Party 11 June 1954

“They are out for revenge”<sup>478</sup> Following the British government dispatching troops to British Guiana in 1953, the City Party protested at this action, although, under pressure from the Labour Party to deny a shared platform to Cheddi Jagan of the (Guyanese) People’s Progressive Party, it withdrew its joint sponsorship of a public meeting which was subsequently run by the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism alone (in practice, leading to Smith wearing one organisational hat rather than two).<sup>479</sup>

In 1955 Smith addressed the Labour Party Conference in Margate in support of a resolution urging the abolition of national service and pointing out some of the absurdities of the practice: “A boilermaker is called up and serves two years, and if a war breaks out he is not called up. Can anyone imagine anything more insane, more ridiculous than that? The same thing applied to other important industries.”<sup>480</sup>

There is no evidence for any formal Bevanite organisation in Newcastle – if any were needed. Mark Jenkins argues against what he describes as “the popularly held prejudice of Bevanism as a poorly organised, ‘academic’ movement”, suggesting instead that tight organisation “is neither necessarily desirable from the point of view of programmatic clarification, nor is it a guarantee of political success”, and that Bevanism should not be abstracted from the organisations “*of which it was an integral part*”, the Labour Party and trade unions.<sup>481</sup> For Jenkins, “[t]he Bevanites *were* organised – too well organised some thought” although “never a party: it was an organised *current* within a party.”<sup>482</sup> He poses the question “how did the Bevanites achieve so much with such economy [of] organisation?”, finding the answer in the use of existing party machinery by “a mass current rooted in the ready-organised party mass”<sup>483</sup> This mass party basis was able to flourish while the parliamentary Bevanite group disintegrated, in the form of “*increased Brains Trust*

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<sup>478</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1256

<sup>479</sup> TWAM Acc 608 Box 1266 Fenner Brockway MP to Joe Eagles, 6 November 1953; *Tribune* 13 November 1953 p 1.

<sup>480</sup> Labour Party, *Report of the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Winter Gardens Margate October 10<sup>th</sup> - October 14<sup>th</sup> 1955*. The motion had been proposed by J Hepplewhite of the United Society of Boilermakers, who in 1944 had been a member of the strike committee of the Tyne Apprentices’ Guild.

<sup>481</sup> Jenkins, M, *Bevanism: Labour’s High Tide* (Nottingham 1979) p 146. Italics as in original.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid* p 146. Italics as in original.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid* pp138, 172-173

*activity in 1953 followed by a drive into the unions in... 1954.*"<sup>484</sup> The Brains Trusts were organised by *Tribune* on the model of the popular radio show, and involved teams of Bevanite MPs and allied luminaries performing for audiences throughout the country, eventually covering most constituencies. One in Newcastle on 22 February 1953 included John Baird, Harold Davies, Michael Foot, Ian Mikardo and Lord Faringdon; another on 24 January 1958 comprised Ian Mikardo, Harold Davies, Hugh Delargy, Sir Leslie Plummer "with Ted Short".<sup>485</sup> The argument that such events, few and far between (even if the author, or *Tribune*, missed out any), constitute "mass work and propaganda [flourishing] as never before", and indeed Jenkins' overall thesis about the definable organised 'mass current' is open to debate.<sup>486</sup> Campbell takes a more sceptical view, citing the sometimes hyperbolic reactions of Bevan's adversaries and quoting Driberg's view that, far from being a 'party within a party' the Bevanites were 'The Smoking Room within the Smoking Room.' Far from being a sophisticated organisation, argues Campbell, "the Bevanites were in reality still not much more than a group of congenial friends ... all good talkers and heavy drinkers who enjoyed one another's company" without whips or plots.<sup>487</sup> Nevertheless, Jim Griffiths, MP for Llanelli and a self-defined 'reconciler' saw the Bevanite-Revisionist conflict extending beyond the Parliamentary Party: "These divisions were reflected in the constituency parties, and the activists in all the constituencies were disillusioned and disheartened by the endless wranglings; many of them gave up active participation in the work of the party."<sup>488</sup> Little of the recorded activity in Newcastle appears to have been concerned with domestic or economic affairs (even national service was primarily an issue of foreign and defence policy)

Such left-wing organisation as took place in the Newcastle Labour Party occurred later, associated with the Victory for Socialism campaign. A VFS group was formed in June 1958, its convenor Ken Sketheway. Perhaps unsurprisingly, VFS, which had been revived by former Bevanites including Ian Mikardo, was largely taken over by

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<sup>484</sup> *Ibid* pp167-168. Italics as in original.

<sup>485</sup> *Tribune* 13 February 1953, 17 January 1958

<sup>486</sup> Jenkins *op cit* p168

<sup>487</sup> Campbell, J, *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism* (London 1987) pp 273-274

<sup>488</sup> Griffiths, J, *Pages From Memory* (London 1969) p 133



Trotskyists.<sup>489</sup> Sketheway was also associated with a further body formed in 1959, the Tyneside Left Club, “a club on Tyneside where people of the left could meet and discuss the problems of the Socialist movement.”<sup>490</sup> This formed around a nucleus of non-CP shop stewards from Vickers and Parsons, as well as Labour Party Young Socialists, and according to John Charlton “provided a new forum for committed Marxists who did not have to defend Washington or Moscow and were strongly interested in the idea of Workers’ control.” It lasted for around two years.<sup>491</sup> I have seen no evidence that Smith was associated with either.

For all that he would describe himself as a left-winger, Smith’s view of Bevan was a jaundiced one. He had come to know Bevan during the 1940s – Bevan was a supporter of the Anti Labour Law Victims Defence Committee set up to support the four convicted Trotskyists in 1944 – and “became an admirer of his and this continued...into the post war period.”<sup>492</sup> However, Smith’s later assessment of Bevan as a minister and afterwards was not flattering:

Nye Bevan... never had any time for local government and didn’t understand the social problems...Nye Bevan hadn’t any idea of the housing [problems]... only a handful on the left of MPs did and they didn’t understand it organisationally...[W]hen Bevan set up the Health Service and took it out of local authority care, he not only destroyed a fundamental element of local democracy, but he took it away from other aspects of public health.<sup>493</sup>

Smith also found himself in conflict with Bevan over housing policy, recalling an argument at a meeting at St Pancras Town Hall where Smith had claimed that the building professions were inadequate to cope with mass housing construction: “... it was a good speech and it was absolutely relevant although no-one took any notice including Nye Bevan who before that when he separated housing from health, this was the beginning of the degeneration of the health service...”<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Mikardo, I, *Back-Bencher* (London 1988) p 109

<sup>490</sup> *Tribune* 13 June 1958, 27 November 1959

<sup>491</sup> Charlton, *op cit* p 19. By autumn 1961 the club “contained the core of what was to become the International Socialists.”

<sup>492</sup> Author’s collection: transcript of interview with TDS by Sam Bornstein (1985) p 11, with manuscript amendment by TDS

<sup>493</sup> TDS Archive disk 13B. Smith was to recall ‘haranguing’ Bevan at a Newcastle May Day meeting [TDS Archive Disk 14B]

<sup>494</sup> TDS Archive disk 20A

### Science, managerialism and revisionism

An appreciation of developments in science and technology and the influence of CP Snow's concept of the 'Two Cultures' appears to have been a factor in Smith's move away from conventional Marxist ideology. In 1985 he told Trotskyist historian Sam Bornstein that during his membership of the RCP he been interested in the impact of science on the labour movement, and he attributed this interest to the influence of a group of science writers including Maurice Goldsmith of *Reynolds' News*, Ritchie Calder and other with whom he kept in contact. From these discussion he came to believe that what they told him about science, computers, the splitting of the atom "makes obsolete the commanding heights of the economy, completely transforms the world. Here is the labour movement talking about nationalisation of the pits..."<sup>495</sup>

In an autobiographical note Smith states he met the science writers Ritchie Calder and Maurice Goldsmith through his acquaintance with Douglas Machray, editor of the *Daily Herald*.<sup>496</sup> On a different occasion he was to write that "Politically I developed an interest in science & technologies and the 'Two Cultures' which have guided me ever since and motivate me more so today. The potential of the computer & the splitting of the atom have never been assessed outside of their strategic war potential – their application to democracy and the social sciences are my constant challenge."<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Author's collection: transcript of interview with TDS by Sam Bornstein (1985) p 12.

<sup>496</sup> Author's collection: TDS autobiographical note drawn up for Ray Challinor. Machray was editor of the *Daily Herald* 1957-1960, though Smith's acquaintance with him may predate that. The left-wing writer H N Brailsford died in 1958. Peter Ritchie Calder (1906-1982) was a journalist, writer and academic who had founded the Association of British Science Writers in 1949. He became a Life Peer in 1966. See Williams, Trevor I, 'Calder, Peter Ritchie, Baron Ritchie-Calder, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30891> accessed 17 January 2020. Maurice Goldsmith (1913-1997) was a social scientist and science writer and journalist, and founder of the Science of Science Foundation (later the Science Policy Foundation). CP Snow was to describe him as "one of those characters, far too rare in any society, who act as a creative influence. Most people don't know the innumerable things he has started all over the field of science, as a labour of love quite unrecognised by society" (*The Times* 8 March 1997). I began to gain an appreciation of Goldsmith's importance to the development of Dan Smith's thinking from material which came into my possession at a late stage of drafting this thesis. The relationship between the two men, and the effects this had on Smith's thoughts and actions, would merit further study.

<sup>497</sup> Author's collection: TDS autobiographical note drawn up for Diane Jamieson, Bloodaxe Books.

As well as losing faith in the transformative effects of nationalisation of ‘the commanding heights’, Smith began by the mid 1950s to have views on national prosperity not dissimilar to those that were to be advocated by Anthony Crosland.

Around about 1955 I had also become aware again because of my contacts with [Maurice [Goldsmith] on] the science policy that we were by this time creating the wealth on such a scale that we no longer had a problem.<sup>498</sup> Today with 135 billion pounds with 56 million people we don’t have a problem. Similarly we had in fact achieved by the mid-fifties the wherewithal to have a just, fair, socialist system. It became a matter of distribution, not the creation. There is no problem of creating wealth... I then argued and I still argue, that the application of the modern computer, the modern technology to the distribution of resources is an essential arm of Socialism. There can be no libertarian Socialism without the mastery of modern technology.<sup>499</sup>

This belief in the sufficiency of wealth is key to Smith’s view of a future society and offers an explanation for his readiness, indeed willingness, to see a future city and region no longer tied to its traditional staple industries. His growing interest in science and technology fuelled a confidence, that was to reach a peak during his period as chairman of the Peterlee Development Corporation (Chapter 6 below), that a new society based on technological innovation was within reach.

In interviews conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Smith refers on several occasions to the influence that James Burnham and his work *The Managerial Revolution* had on his thinking.

There is no conflict in my mind that socialism is synonymous with the utmost effectiveness in management... [Burnham] argued that by superior management you could achieve objectives irrespective of the philosophy. He didn’t argue that but that was the logic of his argument... the debates within the movement were about this potential for management arising from the computer. Our vision of the computer... it was a scale of operative engineering that passed our comprehension... Those of us that thought we understood it therefore recognized the strength of the argument of Burnham and CA Smith...<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> The original transcript reads ‘...my contacts with Morrison the science policy...’. This makes little sense; whereas Maurice Goldsmith (who was to be founder of the Science of Science Foundation, later the Science Policy Foundation) was a major intellectual influence on Smith. I believe that ‘Morrison’ is a misinterpretation by the transcriber of the words ‘Maurice on’.

<sup>499</sup> Author’s collection: transcript of interview with TDS by Sam Bornstein (1985) pp15-16

<sup>500</sup> TDS Archive disk 16A

And in another discussion:

I would say what you're talking about in the simplest terms is like Burnham's *Managerial Revolution*, can you by introducing management techniques avoid the necessity of getting rid of capitalism, can you proceed by managerial methods to socialism, that's what you're saying really. Without going into it, Burnham's *Managerial Revolution*, although it's out of date, is that technique.<sup>501</sup>

Burnham was an academic philosophy teacher and, from the early 1930s to 1940, a leading American Trotskyist.<sup>502</sup> Having passed through a number of Trotskyist groups over six years, and having very recently formed a new group, the Workers' Party, Burnham was to abruptly abandon both Trotskyism and Marxism in 1940, claiming that of the beliefs held by Marxists "there is virtually none of which I accept in its traditional form. I regard these beliefs as either false or obsolete or meaningless...".<sup>503</sup> In 1941 *The Managerial Revolution* was published, containing both a theoretical attack on the Marxist revolutionary thesis, and arguing that while capitalist society was moribund, there was no inevitability that it would be replaced by socialism.<sup>504</sup> The disappearance of capitalist property rights was not in itself sufficient to bring about socialism; in Russia, where such rights were largely abolished, the trends "has been toward neither capitalism nor socialism, but towards *managerial society*, the type of society now in the process of replacing capitalist society on a world scale."<sup>505</sup> Instead, the world was in a state of transition from capitalist or bourgeois society to "a type of society which we shall call *managerial*" in which power would rest increasingly with a technocratic managerial elite.<sup>506</sup> Burnham's ideas were not uniquely new – among other predecessors, in 1932 Berle

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<sup>501</sup> TDS Archive disk 37B

<sup>502</sup> Le Blanc, P, 'From Revolutionary Intellectual to Conservative Master-Thinker. The Anti-Democratic Odyssey of James Burnham', *Left History* (1995) pp51-53, 58-59. Beginning in the Young Communist League at New York University, Burnham was to break with 'Stalinism' and was a founder in 1934 of the American Workers' Party. This merged with the Communist League of America, led by Max Schachtman and James P Cannon, to create the Workers' Party of the United States. The WPUS, after a brief sojourn within the Socialist Party, was re-established as the Socialist Workers' Party in 1938. Burnham was a member of the SWP's Political Committee. In 1939-40, following the Nazi-Soviet Pact and outbreak of the Russo-Finnish War, Burnham and Schachtman began to argue that the Soviet Union was not a 'degenerated Workers' state' but a new type of society, 'bureaucratic collectivism', and the two split from the SWP to create the Workers' Party.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid* p59

<sup>504</sup> Burnham, J, *The Managerial Revolution* (Harmondsworth 1962) pp 46-47

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid* pp 54-55

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid* pp 73-142

and Means had drawn attention to the separation of functions between ownership and control of private companies; and Tomlinson traces the idea of a divorce between ownership and control to *Das Kapital*.<sup>507</sup> Burnham was to argue against Berle and Means, somewhat casuistically, that “the concept of ‘the separation of ownership and control’ has no sociological or historical meaning. Ownership means control; if there is no control, then there is no ownership.”<sup>508</sup>

It is highly unlikely that Smith would have openly expressed admiration for Burnham – even had he felt it - in the years immediately after the publication of *The Managerial Revolution*. The acceptable line for a Trotskyist would have been that laid down by his WIL and RCP colleague Ted Grant, who wrote of “...the cowards and renegades from the labour movement, ex-‘Marxists’ such as James Burnham in the United States and CA Smith in Britain, and the whole tribe of petit bourgeois intellectuals and sceptics who have regarded the proletariat and the struggle for socialism with irony and scepticism. This short sighted professional rabble regarded the outward varnish of fascism as the development of a new form of society with a new ruling class, neither bourgeois nor proletarian!”<sup>509</sup> The Labour left, too – or that part of it that read *Tribune* – had seen Burnham’s views excoriated by Austen Albu (“...many truths, half-truths and a spate of statements based on selected facts and unsupported by any references”) and later by George Orwell, who claimed that “Where Burnham and his followers are wrong is in trying to spread the idea that totalitarianism is *unavoidable* and that we must therefore do nothing to oppose it.”<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> Tomlinson, J, ‘The Labour Party and the Capitalist Firm, c.1950-1970, *The Historical Journal* vol 47 no 3 (2004) p 690, citing Berle, A, & Means, G, *The modern corporation and private property* (New York 1932). Burnham also acknowledges the influence of Berle and Means in *The Managerial Revolution* pp 87-93. Le Blanc *op cit* p 65 lists Max Nomad and Selig Perlman as having similar ideas before Burnham published *The Managerial Revolution*, quotes a work by Nomad also naming Michael Bakunin, and Wacław Machajski, and quotes Burnham stating that elements in his thesis had been treated by Max Weber, Vilfredo Pareto, Berle & Means, “the romantic anarchist, Makhaisky, and the eccentric ex-Trotskyist Bruno Rizzi...”

<sup>508</sup> Burnham *op cit* p91

<sup>509</sup> Grant, T, ‘The Italian Revolution’ (1943) reproduced in [www.revolutionaryhistory.co.uk](http://www.revolutionaryhistory.co.uk)

<sup>510</sup> Albu’s review in *Tribune* 14 August 1942 [ <http://archive.tribunemagazine.co.uk/article/14th-august-1942/12/the-power-of-the-executive-the-managerial> accessed 11 August 2011]; Orwell’s essay in *Tribune* 14 January 1944 p 11. On 24 March 1944 Burnham responded that he had never said totalitarianism was unavoidable, merely probable. Austen Albu - for all that he was unimpressed by *The Managerial Revolution*, was a keen managerialist, Deputy Director of the British Institute of Management and closely involved (with Ian Mikardo) in the Society of Socialist Managers and Technicians in the late 1940s (Anthony Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan. The politics of productivity and the marketing of management science* (Manchester 1987) p 242). Mikardo worked as

As well as through his own reading of Burnham's work, Smith was influenced by the former ILP chairman CA Smith.<sup>511</sup> CA Smith too espoused Burnhamite managerialism from an early stage, writing in 1944:

[T]he next age will not be one of either simple capitalism or old-fashioned Socialism or even Fascism, but one of economic totalitarianism ruled by a techno-bureaucracy. Developments from Britain to Germany and from USA to Russia confirm this thesis, which will soon be a commonplace to political theoreticians.... The Party seems unaware that in the age-long struggle for 'Bread and Freedom' the emphasis (*despite temporary appearances to the contrary*) is shifting from bread to freedom. This necessitates a new ideology, new slogans, new policies – and, I think, new men.<sup>512</sup>

Burnham's prognostications on the course of the Second World War were to be overtaken by events, but his identification and typologising of a new managerial 'class' was to be extremely influential in the following decades, not least upon the thinking of many in the Labour Party. One American author was to observe in 1950 that "The thesis of Burnham's Managerial Revolution seems to have been taken over by Labour spokesmen and Labour theoreticians, lock, stock and barrel."<sup>513</sup> Richard Crossman in 1950 noted that "We went on talking about economic power, and did

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a management consultant before and after his election to Parliament in 1945: Ian Mikardo, *Back-Bencher* (London 1988) pp 49-57 *et seq.*

<sup>511</sup> Author's collection: TDS autobiographical note drawn up for Ray Challinor: "Converging interests with Dr CA Smith supporting for a while (as I recall) Burnham's 'Managerial Revolution'. Dan Smith had formerly, in his early days in the ILP, been an outspoken critic of C A Smith, as outlined in the previous chapter.

<sup>512</sup> Working Class Movement Library, *Between Ourselves* [ILP Internal Bulletin] May 1944 pp 13-15 'Letter from CA Smith', published on his resignation from the ILP. Smith had resigned the Chairmanship of the ILP at the 1941 Easter Conference, before the publication of *The Managerial Revolution* – to which his 1944 article clearly refers - in Great Britain (1942; though it was published in the United States in 1941). C.A. Smith was to defend Burnham against attack in the columns of *Left* magazine; and Dr Ray Challinor commented that "Dr C A Smith's move to the right, in several respects, resembled James Burnham's... Both began their political journey as a response to the Russo-Finnish war, regarded Russia as a growing menace, and had an overall perspective on how the world was developing - Burnham believing it was growing into a managerial society, Smith believing there was a danger state capitalism might reign supreme. Definitely, Smith was greatly influenced by Burnham..." (Challinor, R, 'Charles Arthur Smith (1896-1985), Thinker and Writer', *North East Labour History* vol 27 (1993) pp 41-47). C.A. Smith joined Common Wealth in 1944 after his resignation from the ILP and succeeded Sir Richard Acland as chairman in 1945. Thereafter, as the Cold War grew in intensity, he adopted an increasingly hard-line anti-Communist and right-wing stance.

<sup>513</sup> Carew, A, *Labour under the Marshall Plan. The politics of productivity and the marketing of management science* (Manchester 1987) pp 242, 274 note 42, quoting Brady, R A, *Crisis in Britain* (Cambridge 195) p 563; Tomlinson, J, 'The Labour Party and the Capitalist Firm, c.1950-1970, *The Historical Journal* vol 47 no 3 (2004) p 691

not notice, until Burnham wrote about it, the growth of managerial society, the separation of ownership from individual power, and, equally, the growth of a state apparatus which has a power of its own.”<sup>514</sup>

The seduction of Labour intellectuals was to gather pace in the early 1950s. James Burnham was one of the early influences on the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an organisation for anti-Communist intellectuals covertly funded by the CIA. While Burnham was to “drift away” from the CCF, disillusioned by its preference for employing ‘non-communist left’ rather than right-wing thinkers to lead its anti-Soviet efforts, the organisation itself was subsequently to draw on the enthusiastic participation of leading Labour Party revisionists, including Hugh Gaitskell, Denis Healey, Roy Jenkins and Anthony Crosland.<sup>515</sup> Crosland was “the Congress’s most active collaborator within this group [of revisionists]... [who] from about 1953 on... performed a number of tasks on behalf of the CCF” , and, suggests Wilford, was influenced in his writing of *The Future of Socialism* by the ideas of Daniel Bell and other American intellectuals present at the ‘Future of Freedom’ conference in Milan in 1955, which he had helped to plan.<sup>516</sup> One key argument which emerged from the CCF deliberations was that of the end of ideology. According to Radhika Desai: “Political issues in western democracies in the post-war, welfarist, Keynesian, affluent era were now largely technical ones which would be resolved by experts and intellectuals in progressive directions without the need for mass participation, or any political polarisation of opinion, around them” and this belief “encouraged a cult of ‘expertise’ which was also not unpalatable to the revisionists.”<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> Tomlinson, J, ‘The Labour Party and the Capitalist Firm, c.1950-1970, *The Historical Journal* vol 47 no 3 (2004) p 691 quoting Crossman, R H S, *Socialist values in a changing civilization*, Fabian tract 286 (London 1950) p 8.

<sup>515</sup> Wilford, H, ‘Unwitting Assets?’: British Intellectuals and the Congress for Cultural Freedom’, *Twentieth Century British History* vol 11 no 1 (2000) pp 45-46, 49-51

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid* pp 50-51. “... Bell also speculated that the managerial revolution might be challenged by the substitution of some real thought about the labour process for the fashionable human relations values of the age – in effect reopening the study of the technology of work and challenging the accepted notion of ‘efficiency’. But, of course, in an age of Marshall Plan productivity campaigning there was never any question of efficiency yielding to wider social values: efficiency was exactly what the proponents of managerialism were preoccupied with. Indeed, the whole thrust of Bell’s writing was to show how an unquestioned acceptance of the ideal of efficiency underlay the technical and social organization of industry.” (Carew, A, *Labour under the Marshall Plan. The politics of productivity and the marketing of management science* (Manchester 1987) p 246)

<sup>517</sup> Desai *op cit* pp 82, 83. *The End of Ideology* was the title chosen by Daniel Bell for his 1960 book.

Crosland denounced the politics of *The Managerial Revolution* in his chapter in *New Fabian Essays* (1952), but did not effectively dispute Burnham's points about ownership and control.<sup>518</sup> According to Crosland, Burnham's arguments could be rebutted by (*inter alia*) examining his failed prophesies and that the 'managers' "are too much divided in their political loyalties to wish to carry out a managerial revolution... Burnham provided a brilliant (though often exaggerated analysis of the transfer of power within industry from the owning to the managing class. But this alone does not add up to the managerial state as he conceived it, and I do not believe in the advent of this state unless... capitalism fails to transform itself, or be transformed, and lurches instead into increasingly violent crises of the sort which Marx expected, but which Burnham's managers might more profitably exploit."<sup>519</sup> Crosland's own formulation, 'statism', an amalgam of predominantly capitalist economy, socialistic welfare provision, and an expanded and expanding role for the state, appeared to him to be a more likely outcome.<sup>520</sup> Nevertheless, his discussion of the "Inevitable Transformation of Capitalism" into "a quite different system" clearly owes much to Burnham, and his assertion that "decision-making and economic control have passed to the new class of (largely) non-owning managers. The propertied class has thus lost its traditional capitalist function – the exploitation with its own capital of the techniques of production – and as the function disappears, so the power slips away" reads like an extract from *The Managerial Revolution*.<sup>521</sup>

While Crosland may have been attempting to distance himself from Burnham (who by the 1950s was reinventing himself as a McCarthyite and conservative thinker), the perspective of socialism that he was to develop in the years following the demise of the Attlee government certainly owed much to Burnham and his predecessors.<sup>522</sup> Like Burnham, Crosland did not come up with original concepts, but, in *New Fabian Essays* and much more so in *The Future of Socialism* (1956), produced brilliant syntheses of what became known as 'revisionist' ideology, influenced by the

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<sup>518</sup> Tomlinson *op cit* p 691

<sup>519</sup> Crosland, A, 'The Transition from Capitalism' in R H S Crossman, R H S, (ed) *New Fabian Essays* (London 1952) pp 48-49

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid* pp 38-45, 49; Jefferys, K, *Anthony Crosland* (London 1999) p 44

<sup>521</sup> Crosland (1952) *op cit* pp 34-38

<sup>522</sup> Le Blanc *op cit* pp75-76



writings of Eduard Bernstein and Evan Durbin among others.<sup>523</sup> In *The Future of Socialism*, Crosland developed his ideas, arguing against the necessity for a Labour programme reliant upon extending nationalisation and stressing instead that the party, “since 1951, furiously searching for its lost soul” should look beyond the “old dreams”, many of which were “dead or realised”, and return to the “basic aspirations, the underlying moral values” of socialism.<sup>524</sup> These he saw as rooted in a striving towards equality, to be brought about by improvements in educational opportunities, enhanced welfare provisions and redistributive taxation.<sup>525</sup>

The attractions of revisionist ideology for Dan Smith might not be immediately apparent. While it would be unfair to say that they betrayed the influence of The Boltons rather more than of Bolton, some of the ideas expressed by Crosland do show a certain metropolitan bias: “... certainty and simplicity are gone; and everything has become complicated and ambiguous. Instead of glaring and conspicuous evils, squalor and injustice and distressed areas, we have to fuss about the balance of payments, and incentives, and higher productivity; and the socialist finds himself pinioned by a new and unforeseen reality.”<sup>526</sup> Discussion of ‘new consumerism’ and the ‘affluent worker’ focussed on the south east, yet there was squalor enough in the slums of the Scotswood Road and Shieldfield, and in the blighted landscapes of the Great North Coalfield.<sup>527</sup> The ‘distressed areas’ were not only in the very recent past but threatened to return to blight the immediate future of the north east as well.<sup>528</sup>

However, for a man who had abandoned the dogmatic Marxist formulations of Trotskyism, the intellectual challenges posed by both Burnham and Crosland must

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<sup>523</sup> Crosland (2006) pp24, 72-73; Nuttall, J, “Psychological Socialist”; ‘Militant Moderate’: Evan Durbin and the Politics of Synthesis’, *Labour History Review* vol 68 no 2 (2003) pp 235-252.

<sup>524</sup> Crosland (2006) *op cit* pp 51, 73, 77

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid*; Jefferys (1999) *op cit* pp 57-59

<sup>526</sup> Crosland (2006) *op cit* p 73. Crosland lived in 19 The Boltons, a very well-heeled address in the Brompton area of London.

<sup>527</sup> Jefferys, K, *Politics and the People. A History of British Democracy since 1918* (London 2007) p 125

<sup>528</sup> Aneurin Bevan was to claim that only the rearmament programme had saved the north east from serious unemployment in the early 1950s. Labour Party, *Report of the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference*, 1952 p 83

have been stimulating to Smith.<sup>529</sup> The postwar period has been described as “the apogee of the role of the traditional intellectual, the manifestation of which in Britain was the influence on the British Labour Party, and through it on British society, of the ‘revisionists’.”<sup>530</sup> Radhika Desai’s account of revisionist intellectuals in this period argues that neither the left wing of the Labour Party nor the ‘New Left’ that emerged after 1956 displayed any intellectual vitality. The ‘Labourism’ of the traditional trade-unionist right of the party was defined not by ideology or philosophy but a “set of impulses” among which “unintellectualism” loomed very large, while Bevanism, portrayed as the opposing current to Revisionism, provided a “particularly stunted” intellectual challenge, with few proposals for domestic reform and a concentration on foreign policy issues.<sup>531</sup> Bevan himself decried the need for reassessment of socialism, and, as the Bevanites lost ground in the Parliamentary Labour Party “there was only a negligible intellectual challenge to the revisionist case.”<sup>532</sup> Martin Francis, however, argues that to describe *The Future of Socialism* as ‘right wing’ is simplistic, and that “many of its assumptions were shared by a range of opinion within the party, including ‘left wing’ figures such as Crossman.”<sup>533</sup> Crossman, indeed, was to describe Crosland’s proposals as “...far more revolutionary in their effects than an electoral promise to nationalise ICI and most of engineering... they are diabolically and cunningly left-wing...”<sup>534</sup>

One can only surmise exactly which parts of the revisionist programme might have appealed to Smith. That it represented a rising intellectual tide and was imbued with a sense of modernity would have enthused him: his impatience with the timid and rearward-looking nature of the Newcastle Labour Group might indicate that, just as in 1940 he had embraced revolutionary socialism as a panacea. He was a reader of the revisionist house journal *Socialist Commentary*.<sup>535</sup> The technocratic impulses of

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<sup>529</sup> I have so far come across no references to *The Future of Socialism* in Smith’s archive papers, published writing or recorded interviews. Nevertheless I believe it inconceivable that he would not have been at the very least acquainted with the substance of Crosland’s arguments.

<sup>530</sup> Desai *op cit*, p27

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid* pp72, 99-102

<sup>532</sup> Jefferys, K, *The Labour Party since 1945* (Basingstoke 1993) p 46. Jefferys describes the “Bevanite left” as “devoid of new thinking” (*ibid.*)

<sup>533</sup> Francis, M, ‘Mr Gaitskell’s Ganymede? Re-assessing Crosland’s *The Future of Socialism*’, *Contemporary British History* vol 11 no 2 (1997) p 61

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid* p 62.

<sup>535</sup> Personal papers of T Dan Smith in the author’s possession include a number of copies of *Socialist Commentary*.

revisionism – as Desai commented, “modernisation rather than traditional socialism became central to their vision,” - were also increasingly compatible with Smith’s own views, as will be touched upon in later chapters.<sup>536</sup> That Crosland’s programme assumed continued economic growth *ad infinitum* would fit comfortably with Smith’s belief, stated above, that “there is no problem of creating wealth.”

Smith’s opinion of Hugh Gaitskell was coloured by a mixture of admiration and fundamental disagreement. “I was fighting with Gaitskell all the time on ninety-nine issues out of a hundred, apart from the inner city problem where we were absolutely line to line with him” he was to recall.<sup>537</sup> Another interview Smith expressed something approaching identification with the Gaitskell camp: “...by the time I moved through the Gaitskell position, Gaitskell was on my side, on the home front... he knew that I knew that inside and therefore he was very concerned that we worked well together with his, Jenkins’ group... I was concerned because unlike Nye Bevan... Gaitskell had a deep urban understanding.”<sup>538</sup>

He was in 1971 to write that:

I believe the days of the 50s and 60s in Newcastle were an important phase in the development of socialism in practice, controlling both the bureaucracy and technocracy involved in urban planning... Ironically Hugh Gaitskell was the only leading member of the Party who saw the full significance of our attempts, even though he counted us among his opponents, alas Harold Wilson never did and still does not understand. This is because, changing society without revolution in an advanced capitalist society [requires] an understanding and control of an extremely complex system, even Karl Marx would boggle at it.<sup>539</sup>

Revisionism was also seen as being pro-European, and in favour of membership of the European Economic Community, its stance being “a central element of [revisionist] outlook” according to Desai, in contrast to the opposition of much of the Labour Party, “the Left because of Britain’s links with the Commonwealth, the right because of the ‘special relationship’ with the United States.”<sup>540</sup> This is a problematic

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<sup>536</sup> Desai *op cit* p77

<sup>537</sup> Amber: transcript of interview with TDS

<sup>538</sup> TDS Archive disk 20A

<sup>539</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3861 TDS to Joe Eagles 30 August 1971

<sup>540</sup> Desai *op cit* pp141-145

assertion given the opposition of Gaitskell to membership, expressed most histrionically in his “the end of a thousand years of history” Brighton Conference speech of 1962.<sup>541</sup> Nevertheless, despite the opposition of Gaitskell and the cooler scepticism of Anthony Crosland, enthusiasm for membership of the EEC was most closely associated with the revisionist, social democratic wing of the Labour Party. It was an enthusiasm shared in full measure by Dan Smith; albeit that Smith was to claim his pro-Europeanism throughout represented his socialist internationalism:

Of course [the Common Market] is a purely capitalist economic concept, and as such we have no control over the inevitable *drift* towards monopoly, which now takes over ‘nationalism’ and correctly argues, for incorrect reasons that ‘nationalism’ is out of date.<sup>542</sup>

The ‘correct’ reason, he now argued, was that the scale of problems and opportunities facing the world were such that nationalism was an inadequate solution:

...capitalism has become so complicated and technology so much more complex than the human brain, that the scale of change exceeds the economic and human resources of any one country to progress society at an adequate pace. This is a qualitative and quantitative change which is a completely new phase in history.<sup>543</sup>

This is a different (but not necessarily contradictory) argument to that Smith advances in his 1970 autobiography, where he claimed that it was the chance to rebuild a shattered Europe after 1945 that was a great (but lost) opportunity.<sup>544</sup>

Smith was active on the North East Committee of the British Council of the European Movement in the mid and late 1960s, serving as joint chairman with the former Newcastle Conservative leader Brigadier Ian Bransom.<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> Haseler *op cit* pp227-236; Williams, P M, *Hugh Gaitskell* (Oxford 1982) pp 406-408

<sup>542</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3861 TDS to Joe Eagles 30 August 1971

<sup>543</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3861 TDS to Joe Eagles 30 August 1971. This brought about an anticolonialist paradox: “as socialists we believed in equal opportunity for all people, for that reason we supported the establishment of independent African states. In fact, not one of the separate African states can develop modern science or technology in any significant way. Therefore our simple objective, solely by the developments of technology, has doomed African nationalism to an economic backwardness which is incompatible with our socialist objectives.” He advocated that the African nations should be encouraged to form a continental federation.

<sup>544</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p23

<sup>545</sup> TWAM DF/TDS boxes 3863, 3877, 3911, 3980

Perhaps most importantly, major aspects of Crosland's programme were not wholly reliant upon actions taken by central government. In the postwar period, educational provision, from infant schooling to further and higher education, became an increasingly important duty of local government. The same applied to social welfare and housing policies, and, if councils were so minded, to arts and culture. The kind of 'revisionism' Crosland advocated offered ample opportunities for change at the local levels and as such would have appealed to Dan Smith and others like him. In a much-quoted passage at the conclusion of *The Future of Socialism*, Crosland calls for a change in social attitudes in Britain:

...much could be done to make Britain a more colourful and civilised country to live in. We need not only higher exports and old-age pensions, but more open-air cafes, brighter and gayer streets at night, later closing-hours for public houses, more local repertory theatres, better and more hospitable hoteliers and restaurateurs, brighter and cleaner eating houses, more riverside cafes, more pleasure gardens on the Battersea model, more murals and pictures in public spaces, better designs for furniture and pottery and womens' clothes, statues in the centre of new housing-estates, better-designed street-lamps and telephone kiosks, and so on ad infinitum.<sup>546</sup>

As the next chapter will attempt to demonstrate, this list, alongside 'harder' issues such as education and welfare, encompasses many of the changes that Smith was to bring about (or seek to bring about) during his leadership of Newcastle City Council.

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<sup>546</sup> Crosland (2006) pp 402-403

## Chapter 4: Dan's Castle: Newcastle 1958-1966

*Kings once ruled their kingdom from a castle. Today that king is a man called Smith, and his castle is a town called Newcastle.*<sup>547</sup>

### Labour and housing

On 8 May 1958 the Labour Party regained control of Newcastle City Council after nine years in opposition, part of a national swing towards the party in that year's municipal elections.<sup>548</sup> At the annual meeting of the Labour Group, Smith was elected deputy leader – to his chagrin, jointly with Alderman Bill Lewcock, formerly Labour Party regional organiser.<sup>549</sup>

Smith was elected chairman of the Housing Committee, and immediately began the programme prepared in opposition. "I saw myself... with a mandate to change the system. I began on day one to propose new policies for slum clearance, anti-eviction, old people, design and layout."<sup>550</sup> On appointment he went to see George Kenyon, the City Architect, ordering him to "tear up" the plans for the "appalling houses" being built at that time by the city.<sup>551</sup> These included the huge estate at Longbenton (outside the city boundaries) as well as housing at North Kenton and slum clearance schemes along Scotswood Road. North Kenton was among the last 'green field' sites within the city that could be exploited, and was developed 1953-59. The estate was "singularly unimpressive to look at... untidy, windswept and drab... the groupings of buildings... convey a feeling of desolation."<sup>552</sup> The 1,910 dwellings were

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<sup>547</sup> Opening words of *Dan's Castle* (BBC Television 1965)

<sup>548</sup> *Newcastle Journal* 9 May 1958 p1. Labour won three seats, giving them a majority of one councillor over the Progressive Party and Conservative Party *councillors*. That enabled Labour to unseat six Progressive aldermen at the triennial aldermanic elections, securing their control of the council.

<sup>549</sup> Amber, TDS unpublished autobiography p61. Smith had also stood for group Leader. "The group wanted a particular person as Deputy Leader and decided, in order to get him, to elect two Deputy Leaders that year." Lewcock was married to another prominent Newcastle politician, the redoubtable former suffragette Connie Lewcock. On Bill Lewcock, obituary in *Report of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Conference of the Labour Party* (1960) pp 52-53; on Connie Lewcock, Jones, E R, 'Connie the Rebel: Connie Lewcock (1894-1980) in *Bulletin of the NE Group for the Study of Labour History* 15 (1981) pp 55-58

<sup>550</sup> Amber, TDS unpublished autobiography p 65

<sup>551</sup> Amber, TDS unpublished autobiography p 61

<sup>552</sup> Blowers, A T, 'Council Housing. The Social Implications of Layout and Design in an Urban Fringe Estate', *Town Planning Review* vol 41 no 1 (1970) pp 80-92

provided in two- and three storey houses and maisonettes and flats, as well as a large number of “incredibly ugly” five-storey point blocks which “dominate and depress the neighbourhoods in which they are found.”<sup>553</sup> To make matters worse, older people were housed in ground floor flats in the multi-storey blocks, very often with young families directly above them and consequent problems of disturbance.<sup>554</sup> Worse still were the developments along Scotswood Road, including the Noble Street flats, which became a byword for poor design and conditions. The cramped, barrack-like blocks (which were opened under Smith’s chairmanship) provided him with a convenient stick to beat the Progressives and their housing record. These, rather than any of the housing schemes for which Dan Smith was responsible, were Newcastle’s Pruitt-Igoe, demolished to near-universal satisfaction after less than two decades of use.<sup>555</sup>

His attempts to secure cross- departmental co-operation were welcomed by many officers, but also met resistance, and Kenyon in particular resented Smith’s forays into what he regarded as his own fiefdom.<sup>556</sup> Nevertheless, Smith was able to secure an initial housing policy within three months, for discussion within the Group and Party, prepared, he recalled, “because I had cut across the [housing] committee’s delegated powers and got support from the many officers who wanted to see good policies vigorously applied”, and through the hard work of Smith himself and, in particular, his fellow councillor Ken Sketheway.<sup>557</sup> Smith believed the housing problem was acute as there had been no long-term assessment of need, relative to those on the housing list, living in rooms, in slums, in sound properties in slum areas, facing eviction, or homeless. Initial steps included rationalising the housing waiting list, to ensure that it was accurate and up to date, and, more controversially, to suspend rehousing of people on the list. A halt was placed on evictions of tenants unable to pay rent, and social measures introduced to deal with ‘problem families’ and vulnerable tenants.<sup>558</sup> While the list had been suspended to allow for an accelerated slum clearance programme, everyone on the list was given a date when

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<sup>553</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>555</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 15 August 1978 p9. Cllr Walter Wilson commented “This is one of the greatest days of my life. These flats were dreadful monstrosities.”

<sup>556</sup> Amber, TDS unpublished autobiography p 65

<sup>557</sup> Amber, TDS unpublished autobiography p 65;

<sup>558</sup> Amber, transcript of interview with TDS

they might expect to be rehoused, albeit that that might be several years in the future.<sup>559</sup> This eased pressure of enquiries on the Housing Department – Smith claimed that enquiries fell from 27,000 per year to 9,000 after the first slum clearance programme was published.<sup>560</sup> In addition, the extreme shortage of building land within the city boundaries led to a change in policy: from low- and medium-rise housing to the construction of tower blocks.<sup>561</sup>

Smith told the Town Planning Institute in May 1960 “We have published our programme, and are working to a plan of which all the slum dwellers are aware, either through their elected representatives or by meetings held in the affected areas.”<sup>562</sup> A meeting to inform clergy of all denominations was held in the Town Hall, and discussions were held with the local British Medical Association to enable doctors to plan for population movements. “Surely one of the most important human problems confronting the modern town or city is that of redeveloping slumland – it is not sufficient simply to re-house people; they must be taken into the confidence of the local authority and prepared for the problems they will face in their new environment.”<sup>563</sup>

This involved massaging the public mood through a stream of publicity: exhibitions, publications, public meetings, encouraging those in under-occupied houses to move, and “generally getting people to accept that next year’s houses are better than this year’s and are worth paying more rent for.”<sup>564</sup>

Housing construction increased rapidly: in 1958, the local Labour Party claimed, only 880 dwellings were under construction by the council; by 1962 the figure was 2,566; the aim was to complete 2,143 in 1962, 1,951 in 1963 and 2,182 in 1964, at which date the city would be rid of slums.<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Amber, transcript of interview with TDS; Amber, transcript of interview with Ken Sketheway

<sup>560</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3835 Paper given by TDS to RIBA Housing Conference, 3 April 1962

<sup>561</sup> The two factors did not necessarily go hand in hand: Birmingham, probably the most successful English city in expanding its boundaries in the twentieth century pre-1974 also had the largest number of tower blocks.

<sup>562</sup> Smith, T D, ‘Development Problems of a Regional Capital’, paper reads at 34<sup>th</sup> Spring Meeting of the Town Planning Institute, 26 May 1960

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>564</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3835 Paper given by TDS to RIBA Housing Conference, 3 April 1962

<sup>565</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3842 Draft Newcastle Labour Party election leaflet (1962)



Smith was to express his satisfaction at the outcome of his policies in verse: to celebrate the Cruddas Park housing development with a long poem entitled Ode to the Road:

*From Cruddas Park to Rye Hill  
We are determined, have the will  
These horrid slums we shall erase  
With surgeon's knife and then replace*<sup>566</sup>

### **Operation Revitalise**

The housing programme was not restricted to a tabula rasa programme of demolition and rebuilding by the council. Other housing providers were encouraged: Smith addressed a meeting of local Quakers encouraging the Society of Friends to consider providing social housing.<sup>567</sup> And an aspect of the programme in which he took great pride was 'Operation Revitalise', an initiative to restore housing in the Rye Hill area, west of the city centre, where houses built in the mid-nineteenth century for the local commercial middle class had degenerated to become houses in multiple occupation, with flats and rooms rented to some of the poorest in the city, increasingly including Commonwealth immigrants, and with multiple environmental, health and social problems, including crime and prostitution.<sup>568</sup> The plan was to encourage owners to maintain their properties, to buy and demolish some properties to provide additional local amenities, and to use powers of compulsion to deal with recalcitrant owners. Smith told a Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) conference in April 1962 that "[t]he twilight area can only be successfully dealt with if the methods used are seen to be fair to all with a limited number of rules. The Local Authority by taking over by compulsory purchase all the badly tenanted occupied houses that can be saved and modernized as part of an overall comprehensive plan for the area."<sup>569</sup> However, bad landlords, owner occupiers or bad tenants "whose presence in the vicinity is in fact like a cancer in the neighbourhood should not be tolerated. I believe that the Authority should have the power to impose upon whichever is the

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<sup>566</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3841 'Ode to the Road' – the road being Scotswood Road. Only the opening four lines are quoted.

<sup>567</sup> I am grateful to Mrs Joan Robson for this information

<sup>568</sup> Davies *op cit*

<sup>569</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3835 Paper given by TDS to RIBA Housing Conference, 3 April 1962.

culprit compulsory purchase powers in the general good.”<sup>570</sup> These words, largely overlooked, bear a similarity to those of Wilfred Burns on slum clearance where Burns described slum-dwellers as “almost a separate race of people” and spoke of the “devastating effect” on communities adding that “...one might argue, this is a good thing when we are dealing with people who have no initiative or civic pride. The task, surely, is to break up such groupings even though the people seem to be satisfied with their miserable environment and seem to enjoy an extrovert social life in their own locality.”<sup>571</sup> Burns’ words were widely taken to indicate an overarching contempt for the working class in Newcastle: they were intoned at the start and the conclusion of the Amber collective’s 1983 film *Byker* even though the Byker Wall housing project was carefully designed and implemented in order to preserve the existing community as much as possible.<sup>572</sup> Burns may have been referring only to the most socially and environmentally-challenged areas such as the Rye Hill-George Street area; nevertheless, his words epitomise a technocratic arrogance in housing redevelopment policies which may not be completely unjustified.

‘Operation Revitalise’, however well-intentioned, proved to be a complete disaster, for reasons unforeseen at the time of its initiation but comprehensively documented by Jon Gower Davies in *The Evangelistic Bureaucrat*. The project was doomed by delays and by a failure to properly involve the local communities. Properties acquired by the council were bricked up in order to preserve the structures for renovation when circumstances allowed, but this policy led to a further decline in the environment (so-called ‘planning blight’). The moment for revitalisation never arrived, and eventually it was decided to raze the district and build from scratch.<sup>573</sup>

## Planning Newcastle

Before considering the developments of the 1960s, it is important to locate these in both the wider historical context of planning and development in Newcastle, and in the context of national urban redevelopment practice since 1945. Since the planned

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<sup>570</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3835 Paper given by TDS to RIBA Housing Conference, 3 April 1962.

<sup>571</sup> Burns, W, *New Towns for Old. The Technique of Urban Renewal* (London 1963) pp 93-94

<sup>572</sup> Drage, Michael, ‘Byker: Surprising the Colleagues for 35 Years, a Social History of Ralph Erskine’s Arkitektkontor AB in Newcastle’ in Harwood, Elaine and Powers, Alan (eds), *Housing the Twentieth Century Nation: Twentieth Century Architecture 9* (London 2008) pp147-162

<sup>573</sup> Davies *op cit*

creation of a new town centre by the developer Richard Grainger in the 1830s, the further development of central Newcastle had taken place in piecemeal fashion, and its shortcomings were becoming manifest by the early twentieth century. Two key issues were the need for improved municipal buildings – the Town Hall, located on the Bigg Market, had long been perceived as inadequate for the city’s needs – and for improved north-south communications in the centre through a road parallel to Northumberland Street, a formerly residential thoroughfare which since the 1890s had become Newcastle’s prime shopping street. As early as 1906 the architect James Cackett had incorporated both wants in a plan presented to the Northern Architectural Association; in 1925 Cackett’s partner R Burns Dick drew up plans for the future development of the city culminating in a *beaux-arts* civic centre to be built on Exhibition Park.<sup>574</sup> Neither scheme, with the exception of Cackett’s extended Market Street, was implemented. However, the new high level bridge envisaged by both men did come about in the form of the New Tyne Bridge. This had been under consideration since 1883 but only in the 1920s, when money from central government was made available for schemes to relieve unemployment, was action taken. Parliamentary powers were obtained in 1924, and the new bridge officially opened on 10 October 1928.<sup>575</sup> Although rapidly becoming an iconic image signifying Newcastle and Tyneside, and although fulfilling a genuine need for a new river crossing, the bridge was a disaster for Newcastle, precipitating traffic and planning problems that were to affect the city’s development to the present day. The site chosen was one of three proposed in 1922 by the North and South Tyneside Joint Town Planning Committee (a joint committee of Tyneside planning authorities), but the only one linking the centres of Gateshead and Newcastle.<sup>576</sup> It served to pour increasing levels of motor traffic into the medieval and nineteenth-century streets of central Newcastle. Pilgrim Street and Northumberland Street, both medieval in

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<sup>574</sup> Cackett, J T, *Inaugural Address to the Northern Architectural Association*, 22 November 1905 (Newcastle upon Tyne 1906), Burns Dick, R, *Suggested Plan for Future Development* (Newcastle upon Tyne c.1925). Cackett’s plan envisaged a new high-level bridge linking Gateshead to Newcastle and two new streets relieving congestion on Northumberland Street; a new town hall would occupy the block formed by Market Street, Pilgrim Street, New Bridge Street and a new street. Burns Dick’s plan is not dissimilar to that of Cackett, but providing for many more new roads, some focusing on a semi-circus opposite the Central Station, and a civic centre on Exhibition Park, approached by a broad avenue from Barras Bridge.

<sup>575</sup> Manders, F, & Potts, R, *Crossing the Tyne* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2001) pp71-75

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid* p72. The other proposed bridge sites were at Scotswood, on the western edge of Newcastle, and between Bill Quay and Walker, east of the city. The report also posited a tunnel between North Shields and South Shields.

origin and the latter crowded with shoppers, formed part of the A1.<sup>577</sup> There were no viable alternative routes north or south through the city, which by the late 1950s was choked by traffic congestion.

As well as participating in the joint planning committee and, in 1936, reaching a decision to build a new civic centre at Barras Bridge, at the northern end of the city centre, the city council also secured the passing of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Corporation Act 1926.<sup>578</sup> According to Cherry & Penny this was “[t]he most ambitious” of the local acts obtained by “[a] few among the more energetic city corporations” enabling them to carry out town planning schemes in existing city centres.<sup>579</sup> Nevertheless “the experiment was not a happy one” and barely anything was achieved in Newcastle between the wars.<sup>580</sup> This may have been just as well, as proposals given serious consideration by the council in the 1930s included the opening of a new road through the late Georgian Eldon Square, and the extension of Market Street westwards, potentially involving the demolition of a large part of the indoor market designed by John Dobson.<sup>581</sup>

The enthusiasm for replanning the city centre gathered pace during the war years. In February 1943 Cllr William Temple, chairman of the town planning sub-committee, promised the construction at Barras Bridge of “an academic and civic centre unrivalled throughout the country”, the “dignified, massive façade of the new Town Hall” facing the buildings of Kings College, with the Hancock Museum to the north overlooking “a grand open space, greater in area than Trafalgar Square in London,

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<sup>577</sup> Designation of road numbers was one of the first actions of the Ministry of Transport, formed in 1919: Hands, S, *Road Signs* (Princes Risborough 2002) pp7-8

<sup>578</sup> Faulkner, T E, ‘Conservation and Renewal in Newcastle upon Tyne’ in Faulkner, T E (ed), *Northumbrian Panorama. Studies in the History and Culture of North East England* (London 1996) p 133

<sup>579</sup> Cherry, G & Penny, L, *Holford: a study in architecture, planning and civic design* (London 1986) p113, p273 notes 45 & 46.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid* p 113. The council introduced measures to progressively widen city streets by imposing new building lines for redeveloped sites. A few fragments can be discerned today: buildings along the east side of Pilgrim Street between Worswick Street and New Bridge Street, and Powdene House at the corner of Bigg Market and Pudding Chare display the new building line.

<sup>581</sup> Eldon Square, by John Dobson and Thomas Oliver 1825-1831; the Grainger Market by John Dobson 1835. Both were developed by Richard Grainger (McCombie, G, *Newcastle and Gateshead* (Pevsner Architectural Guide, London 2009) pp 17, 154, 158-159). The purpose of the road through Eldon Square was to exploit for commercial purposes backlands in the Blakett Street-Northumberland Street-Percy Street triangle, which development scheme was discussed at length by Council, eg *Proceedings of Newcastle Council* 20 January 1937, 16 November 1938, 7 December 1938, 18 January 1939, 1 February 1939, 22 February 1939, 7 June 1939, 19 July 1939.

on to the new buildings of the reconstructed Haymarket triangle to the south.”<sup>582</sup> The local press responded positively to this activity, the *Evening Chronicle* declaring “Nobody can shirk the fact that post-war reconstruction will be badly needed in Newcastle, which in spite of its noted architects, simply does not show signs of careful planning. Quite candidly our city is lop-sided, good and presentable buildings lying side by side with antiquated property... Damage inflicted by enemy action may play its part in determining priorities when rebuilding starts in earnest in this country.”<sup>583</sup> In fact, Newcastle suffered relatively lightly from air raids, and there was very little damage in the city centre.<sup>584</sup> This did not stop Temple and his sub-committee, and the City Engineer Percy Parr, from publishing the first comprehensive plan for Newcastle in 1945.<sup>585</sup> That Parr was a road engineer becomes evident in the plan’s preface:

From the public point of view the convenience of roads and streets is rightly considered of paramount importance, for through them runs the life-blood of the city, and it is essential that development in that direction should not be of a haphazard nature but according to a planned programme. Prosperity after the war will depend to a large extent upon roads and road transport, and every effort should be made to improve these vital communications...”<sup>586</sup>

The plan made provision for a web of widened and new roads across and around the city (including what was to be built in the 1990s as the Western by-pass), much-needed amenities for an authority that in 1945 did not possess a single yard of dual-carriageway road.<sup>587</sup> It also nodded to modern planning doctrine in proposing the categorisation of city districts as 33 separate ‘communities’ – in effect,

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<sup>582</sup> *Newcastle Journal and North Mail* 22 February 1943 p 2. The Hancock Museum (now the Great North Museum) is a neoclassical building of 1878 on raised ground at the junction of Barras Bridge, Claremont Road and the Great North Road. The council had in 1939 appointed HR Collins and AEO Geens of Bournemouth, designers of Romford (now Havering) Town Hall, architects of the new Newcastle Town Hall; the designs were for a long, low stripped-down neoclassical structure topped by a high central tower (*Evening Chronicle* 15 February 1959).

<sup>583</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 25 March 1943 p2

<sup>584</sup> Craig Armstrong disagrees with Angus Calder’s assertion that Newcastle (alongside Leeds and Bradford) “had few scars to show” (Armstrong, C, *Tyneside in the Second World War* (Chichester 2007) pp 103-112; Angus Calder, *The People’s War. Britain 1939-1945* (London 1971) p 254); but the most badly damaged areas on Tyneside lay downriver from Newcastle, and the city centre suffered very little bomb damage. Such damaged areas as existed in the centre and inner districts did not play a major part in reconstruction plans – notably the New Bridge Street goods station, devastated in a raid on 1 September 1941, and not fully redeveloped until the 1980s.

<sup>585</sup> *Plan, Newcastle upon Tyne 1945. Report of the Town Planning Sub-Committee* (Newcastle upon Tyne 1945)

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid* p 9

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid* pp 33-46

neighbourhood units, a concept pioneered by the American planning theorist Clarence Perry in the mid 1920s and subsequently refined by planner Clarence Stein in his proposals for Radburn, New Jersey.<sup>588</sup> There was, however, very little that was progressive about Parr's plans for the city centre. Within the girdle of a ring road surrounding the central area, galloping megalomania seems to have taken hold, envisaging that most of the city centre, including large parts of the 1830s Grainger developments, be demolished, replaced by numerous broad new streets constructed to a vaguely beaux-arts pattern.<sup>589</sup> A conceptual illustration of what the late twentieth century city might have looked like showed a dystopia of roads punctuated by Muscovite-looking wedding-cake towers.<sup>590</sup>

The economics of the post-war period, the introduction of new planning law and, as time was to prove, the capabilities of Parr's department prevented most of the city centre plan from coming to pass, although certain aspects of it, most notably the route of the eastern section of the central ring road and the concept of an 'educational centre' east of College Street, were to influence subsequent plans.<sup>591</sup> But much of it resembles a fantasia, and it is open to argument how much of the city centre elements were meant seriously as a plan, rather than as an overblown

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<sup>588</sup> Hall, P *Cities of Tomorrow. An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition Oxford 2002) pp 130-136. Perry's concept of the 'neighbourhood unit' was of a residential area based upon the catchment of a local school, self-contained for everyday purposes, with church and local shops. Stein, in his plans for Radburn, New Jersey, and other proposed new settlements introduced separation of pedestrian routes from vehicular through-routes. The 'Radburn system' was showcased in early postwar British new towns, and became a staple of post war planning in the United Kingdom, with new estates built within looping distributor roads, houses approached by pedestrian ways, and motor vehicles led by short local roads to 'garage courts'. The garage courts were to prove an unpopular and transient phenomenon, and modern (now almost exclusively privately-developed) estates show a modified form of the Radburn system, with peripheral roads containing intertwined knots of wiggly cul-de-sacs, with each house having its own garage or hard stand.

<sup>589</sup> See maps appended to the 1945 plan. Some historic buildings – the medieval churches, St Thomas' Church, the Hancock Museum, some of Kings College, might have survived; much of the Grainger developments would have been lost, including the indoor market (John Dobson, 1835). Grey's Monument, Newcastle's Piccadilly Circus-cum-Trafalgar Square, would have been transformed into a traffic roundabout at the junction of two dual- and three single-carriageway roads.

<sup>590</sup> *Plan, Newcastle upon Tyne 1945. Report of the Town Planning Sub-Committee* (Newcastle upon Tyne 1945)

<sup>591</sup> Byrne, D, 'The Reconstruction of Newcastle. Planning since 1945' in Colls, R, & Lancaster, B (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History* (Chichester 2001) argues (p345) that "the themes identified in it dominated city planning for the next thirty years and continue to be important today", a statement partly true although Parr's trafficism was very different to the engineering solutions proposed by Wilfred Burns and Derek Bradshaw in the 1960s.

statement of intent.<sup>592</sup> Larkham and Lilley argue that many, perhaps most post-war redevelopment plans should be seen as “subverse place promotion; evidence of implicit civic boosterism, rivalry and competition”. These plans “provided local authorities with a means to publicize to a wide audience (certainly national, and sometimes international) the perceived benefits that their new proposals could have for residents and businesses alike.”<sup>593</sup> This would certainly apply to the Newcastle plan, produced as an illustrated booklet and sold to the public for 2s 6d.<sup>594</sup> It was intended to show not just the benefits for residents and commerce, but also the progressive ethos, ambitions and vision of the city.<sup>595</sup>

The wartime period saw the dawn of what has been called ‘the golden age of planning’, ushered in by what Helen Meller has described as “an almost mystical belief that somehow planning would provide all the answers.”<sup>596</sup> The Attlee government for the first time made land use planning a universal legal requirement, imposed on county and county borough councils by the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. The development plan produced by Percy Parr and Newcastle City Council in 1951 (and approved by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in 1953) was a much less flamboyant document than the 1945 plan, focusing on an improved road network, the construction of 12,000 dwellings over a twenty-year period and some industrial development in the north-west of the city area.<sup>597</sup> The proposals for the city centre were much less radical than the 1945 plan, but included a new ring road (making use of existing streets for most of its southern and western sections), and zoning of the centre into eight discrete areas, including a University

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<sup>592</sup> This was not apparent to all at the time: *The Surveyor and Municipal and County Engineer*, 30 November 1945 commented that “So far as the non-resident can judge, these proposals appear restrained and strictly practical in outlook... The extravagant hopes and wishes which so often seem to go with town planning enthusiasm are noticeably absent...”

<sup>593</sup> Larkham, P J, & Lilley, K D, ‘Plans, planners and city images: place promotion and civic boosterism in British reconstruction planning’, *Urban History* vol 30 no 2 (2003) pp183-205. Larkham and Lilley studied 87 plans published between 1941 and 1952; the peak year for publication was 1945 with 24 plans, including that for Newcastle.

<sup>594</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 18 October 1945 p3

<sup>595</sup> “Some may be incredulous that such proposals are advanced seriously. Yet the plan, as a plan, is far-sighted and courageous. It must not be dismissed as a counsel of perfection, devoid of practical value. In effect, the planners invite the citizens to look ahead, not to next year, or even to the next decade; but, possibly, to the next century. They propose virtually to re-make the city, beautiful and efficient.” – *Newcastle Journal and North Mail*, 18 October 1945 p3

<sup>596</sup> Meller, H, *Towns, plans and society in modern Britain* (Cambridge 1997) p67.

<sup>597</sup> Newcastle City Council, *1951 Development Plan. Written Analysis* (1951); David Byrne (2001) *op cit* p245

Zone to enable Kings College to expand, and an Education Zone “to be used for technical colleges and administrative offices for educational purposes.”<sup>598</sup>

Following the adoption of the development plan, such planning activity as took place in Newcastle in the 1950s focused on two particular areas: the road junction at the northern end of the Tyne Bridge approach, where Pilgrim Street, Mosley Street, City Road and the Bridge approach met to create one of the city’s worst traffic bottlenecks; and the issue of a new street to relieve Northumberland Street.

The Pilgrim Street junction was subject to a plan to build a surface level roundabout which would also give access to the proposed inner ring road. In order to construct the roundabout as proposed, two scheduled historic monuments would need to be demolished: the Holy Jesus Hospital, an almshouse of 1681 incorporating a sixteenth century tower, and the Royal Arcade, a fine classical arcade designed by John Dobson for Richard Grainger and opened in 1832.<sup>599</sup> Charlton Curry, proposing the report, could not bring himself to say the word ‘demolition’, stating obliquely that “I hope [members] realise all the implications”; seconding, James Clydesdale admitted “it is a very regrettable thing to do, but we are up against the inevitable.”<sup>600</sup> The report was approved without debate.

By the end of the decade three proposals had been drawn up, very similar in form, each showing a surface level roundabout overlooked by one or more tall commercial buildings, and with car parking and restaurant/leisure facilities in the central ‘well’

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<sup>598</sup> Newcastle City Council, *1951 Development Plan. Written Analysis* (1951) pp 28-36. The zones were: (1) Residential Zone, proposing an ultimate residential population of 2,000 compared with the 1951 figure of 6,340; (2) Shops Zone, where floor space would be increased by 22%; (3) Office Zone, allowing for a 3% increase over 1939; (4) Wholesale Warehouse Zone; (5) Light Industrial Zone; (6) Education Zone; (7) University Zone; (8) Public Buildings, comprising the new Town Hall to be built at Barras Bridge, an area of “places of public resort, cinemas and hotels” along Westgate Road in the south west of the centre, and three bus stations, two of which to be developed on new sites.

<sup>599</sup> McCombie, G, *Newcastle and Gateshead* (Pevsner Architectural Guide, London 2009) pp 146, 148-149. The Arcade, while a fine addition to the city’s townscape, was badly situated from a commercial point of view. Grainger’s redevelopment of the town centre diminished the importance of Pilgrim Street, besides which the arcade led onto steep slopes and the poverty-stricken alleys and yards of All Saints parish. It rapidly lost any fashionable cachet it might have possessed, and as noted earlier was home in the early and mid twentieth century to the Socialist Café, where Dan Smith gained much of his revolutionary education.

<sup>600</sup> Proceedings of Newcastle Council 1951-1952 p 86, 30 May 1951.



of the roundabout. All three cases involved the demolition of the Royal Arcade and Holy Jesus Hospital.

Smith's role was to tear up these plans and commission Wilfred Burns and Derek Bradshaw, newly appointed as Chief Planning Officer and City Engineer respectively, to come up with a more suitable replacement. This was the Swan House Roundabout: a split-level junction allowing a new urban motorway to pass uninterruptedly north from the Tyne Bridge underneath a roundabout, with a major new office building on top of the roundabout, and the Royal Arcade interior and façade rebuilt (after dismantling) and replaced almost on its original site, and facing down Mosley Street as before.<sup>601</sup>

Although requiring the demolition of no historic buildings, the planning of a new street east of and parallel to Northumberland Street excited more controversy. In 1951 this street was put to the council as "not designed to take a very great volume of traffic" but as "a compromise between the idea of prohibiting public vehicles in shopping streets, which did hold at one time in town planning circles, and diffusing bus traffic in alternative directions... we are not arguing that this will be a serious contribution to the traffic problem [*sic*], but... it will meet the need for an increased shopping centre."<sup>602</sup> The City Development Plan in 1954 stated that "It is proposed to re-develop the area east of Northumberland Street primarily for shopping purposes and to provide a new shopping street between New Bridge Street and St Mary's Place."<sup>603</sup> The proposal was subsequently deleted from the Development Plan by the Minister for Housing and Local Government because, as a shopping street rather than a major traffic artery it ought not form part of the Plan.<sup>604</sup> Concentration on plans for this eastward extension of the central shopping area diverted attention from

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<sup>601</sup> Rebuilding the original was considered too expensive by the post-1967 Conservative administration, and a two-thirds scale imitation of the arcade interior was instead installed within Swan House – it can be seen inside the Fat Buddha restaurant. As for the façade: the popular belief is that reference numbers to allow reconstruction were chalked onto the stones during dismantling, only to be washed off as the stones were stored out of doors. Some can now be seen in Heaton Park.

<sup>602</sup> Proceedings of Newcastle Council 1951-1952 p110, 6 June 1951, quoting Alderman A C Curry.

<sup>603</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3835 City and County of Newcastle Development Plan 1954 p12, with first call on scarce resources.

<sup>604</sup> Proceedings of Newcastle Council 1952-1953 pp972-975, 18 March 1953. The council subsequently proposed a Comprehensive Development Area to encompass the proposed road, construction of which would have destroyed part of the Dobson-designed St Mary's Place (Proceedings 1953-1954 pp421-424, 21 October 1953)

development of the Blackett Street-Percy Street-Northumberland Street ‘triangle’ where, commented one councillor, “behind those nice facades of stone we have nothing but rabbit warrens and broken-down stables that are bringing no money at all”<sup>605</sup>

### **Postwar urban redevelopment**

For much of the immediate postwar period, urban redevelopment concentrated on the reconstruction of blitzed cities. Major plans had been drawn up for cities such as Coventry, Hull, Plymouth and these and other heavily bombed towns, together with the new towns designated from 1946, were the priority.<sup>606</sup> A requirement for building licences for development to take place, coupled with rising land prices, made major development uncongenial for many local authorities, although Birmingham was active in clearing lines in preparation for its ambitious road plans.<sup>607</sup> With the ending of building licence controls in 1954, private developers were freed from onerous constraints, and London experienced an ‘office boom’ that lasted from 1955 to 1965, with particular intensity in the period to 1960, and this effect spread outward to other centres.<sup>608</sup>

A key factor affecting city development plans was traffic. The number of road vehicles in Britain doubled, from just under five millions to nearly ten; how to deal with traffic became a pressing issue. The British Road Federation held an exhibition showing examples of road projects and expressways around the world; of the British examples, only Birmingham was planning roads with grade-separated junctions.<sup>609</sup> Birmingham had large plans, including an inner ring road first suggested in 1917 and approved by the Corporation in 1943, the road plans having been drawn up by the energetic and influential City Engineer Herbert Manzoni, appointed in 1935.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Proceedings of Newcastle Council 1951-1952 p 82, 30 May 1951, quoting Cllr Arthur Grey

<sup>606</sup> Halliday, John, *City Centre Redevelopment* (London 1973) pp8-9

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid* p9; Ravetz, Alison, *Remaking Cities* (London 1980) pp64-66. Urban land prices were rising because ‘betterment’ provisions introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, a 100% tax on rises in land values, which was widely expected to stifle the private market in land, were abolished by the Conservative government in 1952.

<sup>608</sup> Halliday, *op cit* p10

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid* p11

<sup>610</sup> Borg, N, ‘Birmingham’ in Halliday *op cit*, pp 39, 51-57

Construction began in 1956.<sup>611</sup> Birmingham's plans differed substantially in kind from those to be introduced in Newcastle in the 1960s: city centre redevelopment was given low priority by comparison with road building, infrastructure and housing projects.<sup>612</sup> This deliberate avoidance of development planning was intended to make the city more attractive for private sector developers.<sup>613</sup> This attitude was made obvious when the city's Bull Ring Centre was built 1961-64: the corporation's Public Works Department, headed by Manzoni, helped the developers to maximise the floor space available; the city architect was not consulted about the scheme.<sup>614</sup> The Birmingham plan bears superficial similarity to that introduced in Newcastle in 1961, but Manzoni's inner ring road was not a full urban motorway, completely segregated from other users and uses, but a road where frontage development was permitted.<sup>615</sup> Other developments prefigure the Newcastle plans: one might consider the unbuilt hypothetical scheme by Chamberlain, Powell & Bon in 1958 for the redevelopment of Boston Manor in west London, an untidy suburban district, as 'New Boston', an urban centre redeveloped around a transport hub, with high density housing and a triple-deck centre featuring parking, retail, and roof gardens.<sup>616</sup> The plans for a new town at Hook in Hampshire by the London County Council involved a town centre based on the principle of vertical separation of traffic and pedestrians.<sup>617</sup> Vallingsby in Sweden, built from the mid-1950s, was a new town near Stockholm, with a pedestrian town centre built on a deck above a railway station: an influential design, and the town much visited by planners. In inner London a major, if unloved, development of offices, shops and homes took place in the Elephant & Castle district, around a major traffic interchange, which sought to create 'the Piccadilly Circus of south London'; and in the City of London major rebuilding took place: the multi-level, traffic-segregated Barbican development, built around and on a 12 acre pedestrian level and incorporating a school and arts centre.

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<sup>611</sup> Harwood, Elaine 'White Light/White Heat: Rebuilding England's Provincial Towns and Cities in the Sixties', in Harwood, Elaine & Powers, Alan, (eds) *The Sixties: life: style: architecture. Twentieth Century Architecture* 6 (London 2002) p62

<sup>612</sup> Gold, John R, *The Experience of Modernism. Modern architects and the future city 1928-1953* (London 1997) p82

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>614</sup> Harwood (2002) *op cit* p62

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid* pp98-99

<sup>617</sup> London County Council, *The Planning of a New Town* (London 1961) pp53-65; Gold *op cit* pp151-155

South of the Barbican, a new road was built (initially Route XI, now London Wall) lined by office buildings, crossed by pedestrian bridges linking the housing to a proposed network of pedestrian ways.<sup>618</sup>

These schemes and plans, all widely admired in their day, share one common factor: none involved the comprehensive redevelopment of a major, existing urban centre. Hook and Vallingsby were greenfield sites; New Boston a suburban area; Elephant and Castle a densely built-up, but relatively small and peripheral site; the Barbican and surroundings a heavily bomb-damaged area. Birmingham encouraged the speculator, and, apart from roads, paid little attention to municipal planned redevelopment of its centre. The developments in Newcastle were to draw on these and many other precedents, but were to be applied to a very different urban environment.

### **Enter Burns**

It was Smith's undoubted charisma and organisational ability that led to Newcastle adopting a pioneering city redevelopment plan, the first of a 'new wave' of city centre plans in the United Kingdom. In 1960 Smith turned his attention to the city centre. He saw the need to revitalise the city of Newcastle as not just for the city's own benefit; rather, for too long Newcastle had been, in his words, "the dying heart of a decaying region". Instead, the rebuilding of the city should act as a catalyst for regional development, and attract new industries - and the people to run those industries - to the north. In 1960 he told the Town Planning Institute "[w]e must develop an inspirational role... to change the economic climate in the area and to ensure that such a new environment will draw to the city the best planners, engineers and architects...[and] create a city and region which would have a compelling interest to forward looking industrialists to come North."<sup>619</sup> The limited city development plan, drawn up in 1951 by the city engineer, was discarded; the engineer retired, and Smith took the opportunity to create one of the first independent town planning departments in any British town or city. The man chosen

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<sup>618</sup> Gold *op cit* pp84-86; Esher, Lionel, *A Broken Wave. The Rebuilding of England 1940-1980* (Harmondsworth 1983) pp114-119; Bor, Walter, *The Making of Cities* (London 1972) pp97-100, 128-129.

<sup>619</sup> Smith, T D, 'Development Problems of a Regional Capital', *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* July-August 1960 (typescript of article).

to run the new department was Wilfred Burns.<sup>620</sup>

Burns had made his name in Coventry, working first on suburban shopping precincts and then, under Arthur Ling, on the city centre redevelopment.<sup>621</sup> He spent two years as deputy planning officer in Surrey, an area covering the outer suburban fringes of south London, before being appointed by Newcastle.<sup>622</sup> There, he had extensive powers - equal in rank with other chief officers of the council - and he was able to build up a new department from the nine staff dedicated to planning under the old regime to 83 by 1966.<sup>623</sup> He moved very rapidly: taking up his post in November 1960, by April 1961 he and his team had drawn up an outline city centre plan. The full statutory development plan review was submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for approval in 1963.<sup>624</sup>

The plan launched by Wilfred Burns and Dan Smith with such enthusiasm in 1961 differed greatly from the earlier generation of central area plans, most of which had dealt either with reconstruction of bomb-damaged cities - Coventry, Plymouth, Hull and others - or with the development of new towns on more-or-less virgin sites. Newcastle had been spared large-scale aerial bombardment; its problems lay in severe congestion and in a largely outworn stock of buildings. With only limited cultural, recreational and educational facilities, it did not meet what Smith would have regarded as the criteria for a thriving regional capital; rather, as one journalist was to describe it in 1962, "Newcastle looks like a bewildered old dowager stuck on a mad, raucous fairground roundabout, losing her dignity fast, and waiting for a latter day Grainger or Dobson to rescue her."<sup>625</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* pp 57-58

<sup>621</sup> I am grateful to Dr Bill Lancaster for this information, based upon an interview he conducted with Donald Gibson (transcript lost).

<sup>622</sup> Cherry, G E, 'Wilfred Burns, 1923-1984' in *Town Planning Review* 55(4) (1984) pp 506-511; *The Times* 6 January 1984 p12.

<sup>623</sup> Barke, M, 'Newcastle/Tyneside 1890-1980' in Gordon, G, (ed) *Regional Cities in the UK 1890-1980* (London 1986) p141

<sup>624</sup> The Town and Country Planning Act required planning authorities to draw up a development plan, and to submit revisions of the plan at five-year intervals. Newcastle's original statutory development plan, completed in 1951, was approved by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in 1953. However, the City Engineer's Department - responsible for planning up to late 1960 - proved incapable of meeting the deadline for the first five-yearly review. Wilfred Burns' 1963 plan was, therefore, the first development plan review undertaken by the city.

<sup>625</sup> Bean, D, 'Bringing Plans to Newcastle', *Time and Tide* 8 February 1962 p22. The developer Richard Grainger was responsible for the building of Newcastle's neo-classical centre in the 1830s; the architect John Dobson designed many of the buildings erected in consequence.

The plan was intended to change all that. In some respects it resembles the preceding generation of central plans, building upon some of the key elements in the government's Advisory Handbook on the Redevelopment of Central Areas: zoning, tightly drawn inner ring roads, pedestrian precincts.<sup>626</sup> But even where the plan echoed parts of the 1951 plan - in the line of the central ring road, for example - it went far further and envisaged the application of new technological and engineering skills to create a very different city. The 1961 plan provided for the encirclement of the central area by a network of urban motorways, linking the centre to city suburbs and beyond. Initially, there were intended to be three north-south motorways and two east-west motorways, forming a rough triangle. The proposals for the southernmost east-west road were dropped, leaving an A-shaped network, the crossbar of the 'A' being a motorway link that would burrow beneath the commercial core of the city.<sup>627</sup>

Within the motorway box a distributor road would ring the city, giving access to car parks, bus stops, and local distribution routes. Separation of pedestrians from vehicular traffic would be achieved over substantial parts of the city centre not by horizontal segregation, of the kind well known from redevelopment schemes in Rotterdam and Coventry, but by vertical segregation: the creation of a series of pedestrian decks built over distribution and access roads for local businesses, and spanning parts of the proposed motorway system. The plan also provided for the preservation of much of the city's architectural and townscape heritage in the form of 'preservation areas', forerunners of the 'conservation areas' established nationally under a 1967 act of Parliament.<sup>628</sup> The ambition was to build upon Newcastle's historical past and its traditions of 'sociability' in order to recreate - or more accurately, to create, a version of the imagined past: a quasi-medieval, walkable city.<sup>629</sup> The whole was nicknamed 'the Brasilia of the North', a phrase now indelibly linked with Dan Smith but actually coined by Councillor Doris Starkey, at her

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<sup>626</sup> Ministry of Town and Country Planning, *Advisory Handbook on the Redevelopment of Central Areas* (London 1947)

<sup>627</sup> Burns (1967) *op cit* p23

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid* p32; Pendlebury *op cit* pp115-141. This aspect of the plan remains relatively unknown, and Smith is lambasted in popular myth as wanting to destroy everything old in the city, with statements such as "T Dan Smith wanted to demolish Grainger Town because it was out-of-date and backward looking" (*The Journal*, 16 December 2005) hitherto going unchallenged.

<sup>629</sup> On the sociable city and Newcastle tradition, Lancaster, B, 'Sociability and the City' in Colls & Lancaster *op cit*.

inauguration as Lord Mayor of the city in 1960. To the architect Basil Spence, the plan was “the most adventurous ever created in this country.”<sup>630</sup>

The changes to be brought about by the plan, Smith argued:

meant that we could have a multi-level city; we could take the traffic out of the city, and fashion a ring around the inner city. In a sense we were creating a modern city wall. When Newcastle was finished, one would be able to come in under gateways at Pilgrim Street and the Great North Road, Claremont Road and the West Road... Every entrance to Newcastle was to provide the sense of coming into a modern enclosed city. Once it is completed, that is what will happen. It will be possible within this redeveloped centre, for pedestrians to wander from offices to shops, to university, to library, to civic centre, and to have an active, alive community, able to walk and talk and dally without the threat of being run over.<sup>631</sup>

The major influences on the Newcastle plan are far from straightforward. Burns did not acknowledge any influences in either the development plan review itself or his 1967 book describing the project.<sup>632</sup> Smith was to criticise Burns on a similar count: “...I have always thought that Burns could have been more generous to his professional colleagues who worked with him, and without whom we never could have succeeded. He could well have afforded to indicate that the re-building of Newcastle was not a one-man band, or a one-profession band.”<sup>633</sup> It perhaps is not all that surprising to learn that city planners - ‘master planners’ as they were wont to describe themselves - could be rather *prima donna*-ish at times; and Dan Smith was himself not immune from attempting to grab some glory, claiming to have drawn up the initial plans on which the 1961 plan was based<sup>634</sup>

It is clear that large elements of the plan are developments of the original 1951 development plan: the route of the eastern section of the inner ring road (built in the early 1970s as the Central Motorway East), the location of the new Redheugh Bridge

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<sup>630</sup> Gold *op cit* p116

<sup>631</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit* p51. Although much of the plan remains unexecuted, ‘gateway’ structures were erected at the southern (Pilgrim Street), north-western (Claremont Road) and northern (Great North Road) entrances to the city centre.

<sup>632</sup> Burns *op cit*

<sup>633</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p58

<sup>634</sup> Amber Films (Newcastle), transcript of interview with T Dan Smith tape 8 p14: “Newcastle.. The basic approach...was my own. I mean I didn’t pinch it off Burns, I did the first drawings for Newcastle and you can talk to the people... that got them from me...”

west of the city centre (opened in 1980), the development of an education precinct on the north-east side of the city centre (now the University of Northumbria). More difficult to identify are other possible influences on Burns' thinking. He had worked briefly for Leeds corporation - and Leeds was just about the only provincial city to carry out any meaningful central area redevelopment between the wars - and subsequently at Coventry.<sup>635</sup> There, the architect-planner Donald Gibson held a low opinion of Burns' talents, keeping him engaged on suburban shopping centres rather than the central area; but when Gibson was replaced by Arthur Ling, Burn's star rose.<sup>636</sup> Influential as Coventry was, its 'precincts' were well-known enough to have been adopted by Newcastle's city engineer for the 1951 plan's education precinct; while the city's pioneering pedestrian precincts likewise were standard practice by the time Burns came to Newcastle.<sup>637</sup>

However, some teasing references occur in Burns' earlier published work. In *New Towns for Old*, published in 1963 and so written during his early years at Newcastle, he refers to the Smithsons' 1958 competition entry for Berlin as "throwing up some new ideas."

It was based on planning for traffic at the street level with pedestrians at a higher level. The pedestrian ways were not parallel; they narrowed and broadened out, and they had junctions at differing angles and were not related in orientation to the vehicular streets below.<sup>638</sup>

Burns also praises multilevel developments in Rochester (New York) and Philadelphia, the former - Midtown Plaza - designed by the Austrian-American architect and planner Victor Gruen.<sup>639</sup> And, while lauding Coventry as the "outstanding achievement" for its (horizontal) separation of pedestrians and vehicles, he continues: "In America, the outstanding plan is surely that for Forth Worth, by Victor Gruen, which separates pedestrians and vehicles in the vertical rather than the

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<sup>635</sup> Bateman, M, 'Leeds: a study in regional supremacy' in Gordon, G (ed), *Regional Cities in the UK 1890-1980* pp 99-115

<sup>636</sup> I am grateful to Dr Bill Lancaster for this information, based upon an interview he conducted with Donald Gibson (transcript lost).

<sup>637</sup> Newcastle City Council, *1951 Development Plan. Written Analysis* (1951); Ward, Stephen V., *Planning and Urban Change* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed London 2004) p131

<sup>638</sup> Burns, W, *New Towns for Old* (London 1963) p 46

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid* pp 47-48



horizontal plane.” It is clear that Burns had known of Gruen and the Fort Worth plan before he came to Newcastle; in *British Shopping Centres* (1959) he writes that “the published plans for Fort Worth show that this superhuman city of the future is, perhaps, not very far away.”<sup>640</sup>

The Fort Worth plan of Victor Gruen, unexecuted and now largely forgotten, was a significant and previously unacknowledged influence on Wilfred Burns’ Newcastle plan. Gruen is recalled in the main as one of the fathers of the shopping mall.<sup>641</sup> Fleeing Vienna after the 1938 *Anschluss*, he worked on Norman Bel Geddes’ modernistic *Futurama* exhibit at the New York World’s Fair of 1939, a vision of a prosperous 1960 United States tied together by motorways, its cities models of pedestrian-vehicular segregation.<sup>642</sup> He went on to design department stores, and shopping centres of increasing size and complexity, culminating in America’s first ‘regional’ shopping mall, Northland, near Detroit, which opened in 1954.<sup>643</sup>

Although such large malls are now viewed as the keystones of ‘edge cities’, Gruen’s ambition was to recreate a form of urbanity familiar from his upbringing in Vienna, evoking the market squares of European cities.<sup>644</sup> He went on to address America’s declining city centres, seeking to apply the principles behind malls to downtown areas, and in 1956 produced *A Greater Fort Worth Tomorrow*. This plan envisaged Fort Worth’s central business district surrounded by a motorway ring road, exits feeding into large car parks. The area within the ring would be entirely pedestrianised, with no building more than c.180 metres (600 feet) from the nearest car park. Service roads. The plan was greeted with some enthusiasm, not least by

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<sup>640</sup> Burns, W, *British Shopping Centres* (London 1959) p 100. The earliest reference by Burns to Gruen that I have seen is in *The Surveyor and Municipal and County Engineer* 116 (3408) 17 August 1957 p 863, where he cites approvingly Gruen’s views on the necessity of a compact central commercial area.

<sup>641</sup> Two biographical studies have focussed attention on his career and legacy: Hardwick, M J, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia 2004) and Wall, A, *Victor Gruen: From Urban Shop to New City* (Barcelona 2005)

<sup>642</sup> Hardwick *op cit* pp18-19. On Bel Geddes, see for example Innes, C, *Designing Modern America: Broadway to Main Street* (New Haven 2005). Film of the *Futurama* exhibit, a huge display around which viewers would be transported in moving seats, can be seen on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74cO9X4NMb4&feature=related> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WU7dT2Hld-c&NR=1> (both accessed 28 May 2010). Bel Geddes used the term motorway rather than freeway, and indeed wrote a book called *Magic Motorways*.

<sup>643</sup> Hardwick *op cit* pp125-126.

<sup>644</sup> Gillette Jr, H, ‘The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City’, *Journal of the American Planning Association* 51 (4) (1985) p 451

Jane Jacobs who described it as “excellent... One of the beauties of the Fort Worth plan is that it works with existing buildings and this is a positive virtue not just a cost saving expedient.”<sup>645</sup> Two years after the launch of the plan, Grady Clay counted 88 cities “working on, or tentatively considering” versions of it.<sup>646</sup>

Fort Worth was not the only contemporary experimentation with the idea of vertical segregation. In Britain, for example, the Barbican development in central London was, in the words of Lionel Esher, “a scaled down *ville radieuse*” with decks separating pedestrians from traffic; the 1960 Elephant and Castle scheme in south London is accorded a line drawing in *New Towns for Old*, while in 1959 a group of Bristol architects proposed pedestrian decks and piazzas spanning the city’s ring road.<sup>647</sup> In Sweden, the centre of the new town of Vallingby near Stockholm was built, in part, on a pedestrian deck on top of a rapid transit rail station.<sup>648</sup> Burns also mentions the “great scheme” which is an “accomplished fact” of a segregated development in Caracas, with “through traffic flow roads, with shops, restaurants and pedestrian ways above these roads, and thirty-storey office blocks towering over all...”, a clear reference to Cipriano Dominguez’s Centro Simon Bolivar development of 1942-49 which, according to Valerie Fraser, “marked a completely new approach to the city; indeed, it was designed to be a city in itself, and in some ways prefigures Brasilia.”<sup>649</sup> None of these matched the scale of the Fort Worth plan, and while the Barbican and Vallingby schemes had the luxury of clean slate planning - a severely bombed area and a satellite new town respectively, Fort Worth represented an attempt to transform an existing, built up, congested city centre.

The similarities of Fort Worth and Newcastle are more than suggestive. Both plans were attempts to rebuild, re-form, existing central areas. Both saw the existing infrastructure as congested and outmoded. Both saw the solution in the

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<sup>645</sup> Hardwick *op cit* p166; Wall *op cit* pp125-126; Jacobs, J, ‘Downtown is for People’ in The Editors of Fortune (eds) *The Exploding Metropolis* (Garden City NY 1958) p 146

<sup>646</sup> Clay, G, ‘Plenty of Action in the Square’, *Journal of Architectural Education* 13 (2) (1958) p31. The Fort Worth plan remained on paper, its acceptance hampered by conflicts of business interests.

<sup>647</sup> Esher *op cit* pp114-119; Burns, W, *New Towns for Old* pp 189, 31

<sup>648</sup> Gold, J R, *The Practice of Modernism* p99

<sup>649</sup> Burns, W, *New Towns for Old* p199; Fraser, V, *Building the New World: Studies in the Modern Architecture of Latin America* (London 2000) pp 110-113; Lejeune, J-F (ed), *Cruelty & Utopia: cities and landscapes of Latin America* (New York 2003) pp 242-244. Cipriano Dominguez had been a student of Le Corbusier.

counterintuitive use of motorway construction to enable pedestrianisation. Both Gruen and Burns had an appreciation of townscape that was historically aware and very different to the Corbusian tradition, seeking enclosure and sociable space rather than the grand vistas of a *Plan Voisin* or *Ville Radieuse*. The 1961 Newcastle plan - motorway belt, inner distributor ring feeding into strategically-sited car parks, pedestrianised centre with extensive use of pedestrian decks - bears an unmistakeable resemblance in its essentials to Gruen's 1956 plan.

The Fort Worth plan was abandoned while Burns' plan for Newcastle was implemented, in part, and Dan Smith's broader aspirations for the city also partially put into effect, with major implications for the modern city. This brings us to the role of politics and power in urban transformation. The social scientist Andrew Blowers describes how "one of the more prevalent myths is that planning and politics are related but separate activities" and that (environmental) planning is fundamentally a 'weak' discipline: "[it] appears to possess freedom, but in fact has little power. It reacts to initiatives from other agencies but it is not capable of determining outcomes without their co-operation... Environmental planning continues to reflect and maintain the prevailing values and pattern of power."<sup>650</sup> Fort Worth in the late 1950s was a city with a weak municipal planning department and a political 'power vacuum' at the top; vested interests combined to impede and defeat the plan.<sup>651</sup>

In Newcastle, by contrast, Smith was able to identify, capture and wield power with some panache; to Kenneth Galley, successor to Wilfred Burns as City Planning Officer, Smith had "a vision of the sort of city he wanted and a clear understanding of the relationship between political and physical objectives."<sup>652</sup> On achieving power, he sought to create the machinery to put the policies formed in opposition into effect. He created a powerful planning department under a tough and effective leader, Wilfred Burns; he pushed acceptance of the development plan through the council against opposition; he appointed the country's first 'city manager' - chief executive in modern parlance - to streamline the archaic local government structure and make the council more efficient; he instituted a council policy of purchasing

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<sup>650</sup> Blowers, A, *The Limits of Power. The Politics of Local Planning Policy* (Oxford 1980) p2

<sup>651</sup> Wall *op cit* pp133-134

<sup>652</sup> Galley *op cit* p209

land in the city centre as it became available to strengthen its hand in negotiation with the private sector, to lessen the need for controversial compulsory purchase procedures, and to maximise the power held by the city council in determining the future shape of the city. At every stage Dan Smith was also waging a major public relations campaign, seeking to win over the general public, fellow councillors of all parties, local commercial interests, leading figures at the city's university, senior civil servants and government ministers to the cause of urban renewal in Newcastle and regional renewal in the north east. It is clear that Smith possessed intelligence, energy and powers of leadership, to a high degree. It is significant that although he resigned his leadership of Newcastle council in 1965 and the Labour Party lost control to the Conservative Party two years later, his erstwhile political opponents carried through his development proposals with relatively little change.<sup>653</sup> Even though Smith was no longer at the helm, in six years of leadership he had transformed the political and administrative environment of the city. In doing so he was, of course, affected by and able to take advantage of external factors, most notably a renewed government interest, from about 1962 onwards, in regional policy.<sup>654</sup> But if the debate about urban transformation is to consider the balance between structure and agency in bringing about change, the history of the 'New Brasilia' on the River Tyne shows that the impact that individuals can have remains a potent historical force.

While Smith was keen to bring architectural big names to Newcastle, the plan inadvertently served to deprive the city of some local talent. The Northern Gas Board had intended to build its new headquarters in the city, but the delay occasioned by Burns' revision of the development plan led it to decide on a site at the new town of Killingworth, just north-east of the city, where the modernist practice of Ryder and Yates eventually built a series of highly distinguished buildings for the Gas Board and the local authority.<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>653</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>654</sup> Exemplified by Lord Hailsham's appointment as Minister with special responsibility for the North of England in 1963, which in turn gave rise to England's first comprehensive regional economic development plan: *The North East. A programme for regional development and growth* (Cmnd. 2206) (1963)

<sup>655</sup> Carroll, R, *Ryder and Yates* (London 2009) pp 64-65. Killingworth was not an 'official' New Town designated under the 1946 Act, but was developed by Northumberland County Council under the 1952 Town Development Act. Gordon Ryder was a north-easterner who had trained (alongside Peter Smithson) at Kings College, Newcastle, and later taught there (where one of his students was

## Opposition

The city development plan provoked little initial opposition, in the council chamber or in the columns of the local press. The first organised community opposition group was the Citizens' Defence Movement, formed in June 1962 by residents of the Sandyford area of the city concerned at the impact of the education precinct development, on which work was due to start in March 1963.<sup>656</sup> The CDM was led by a language school proprietor, Professor M Martin-Moran, and in October 1962 it published a manifesto entitled *Newcastle-upon-Tyne, The City Under Sentence of Death*, addressed to property owners, local associations "and headmasters and staffs of grammar schools" arguing that the council's schemes were spreading "fear, terror and insecurity" among residents and calling for a referendum on planning policy.<sup>657</sup> Smith attributed the opposition to "a core of ill-advised folk" and challenged Martin-Moran to stand in the May 1963 municipal elections.<sup>658</sup>

Criticism of the redevelopment plans on their impact on the city centre was also expressed by Lyall Wilkes, a historian, barrister and, later, judge, who had served as Labour MP for Central Newcastle between 1945 and 1951, in an article in *North East Arts Review*, published by the North East Association for the Arts (NEEA).<sup>659</sup> Smith wrote an angry defence of the plans: the city centre would not be dead in the evenings but "a thriving, living city with students and other people living in it. Alive,

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Alison Gill (Smithson); Peter Yates studied under Le Corbusier in Paris. Until recently most of their Killingworth buildings were intact, contributing to the atmosphere of what Owen Hatherley describes as "a deeply strange place, where the remnants of a suburban Modernism coexist with the familiar limbo of spec homes and malls." (Hatherley *op cit* pp170-171). Amberley Court, part of the Citadel town centre megastructure (itself a development which led Elaine Harwood to describe Killingworth as "the forgotten English Cumbernauld") has been significantly altered, truncated and re-clad, and both Stephenson House and Norgas house have been demolished (Harwood (2002) *op cit* p69. Ryder and Yates were to build in central Newcastle eventually, most notably MEA House (1974) on the east side of the centre, and the Salvation Army Men's Palace (1974) on City Road.

<sup>656</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 19 October 1962, 6 September 1962

<sup>657</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 19 October 1962 Martin Moran was a former artillery officer in the Spanish Republican army during the Spanish Civil War: *Evening Chronicle* 2 May 1963 p8.

<sup>658</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 22 October 1962. Martin-Moran's CDM did put up a number of candidates in the elections of 1963, to minimal effect.

<sup>659</sup> NEEA was the first regional arts association in Britain, and Smith had been a significant figure in its establishment. See Vall, N, *Cultural Region. North East England 1945-2000* (Manchester 2011) pp 97-118

a centre for the arts, for the theatre, for shops. And we want to live in it after six o'clock”<sup>660</sup>

But organised opposition did not emerge until 1971, when a group called Save Our City from Environmental Mess (SOCEM) was formed to campaign against motorway construction and other aspects of the redevelopment plans.<sup>661</sup> In April 1972 the group campaigned unsuccessfully against the removal of trees in Brandling and Exhibition Parks to facilitate construction of the Central Motorway East.<sup>662</sup> It remained in existence long after the motorway plans had fallen into abeyance, and at least until 1981.<sup>663</sup> But it was largely factors outside the control of pressure groups or indeed Newcastle council that determined the extent to which the ambitious 1961-63 plans were implemented or not, and these factors only came into play long after Smith’s departure from the council.

In the 1960s, however, criticism of the plans was muted and marginal. Comment in the media – the local and national press as well as specialist publications – was generally positive, concentrating on the progressive nature of the proposals, typified by this article in the *Sunday Times* lamenting the slow progress:

The trouble is that a great deal is still on paper, working its slow way through the yawning mills of planning permission and Ministry consent. So there are probably more people in Scandinavia and Tokyo and New York than there are on Tyneside who appreciate that the completion of Newcastle’s £179 million redevelopment scheme promises to make it one of the finest and most imaginative modern cities in Europe.<sup>664</sup>

## **The Regional capital**

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<sup>660</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3835TDS’ reply to Lyall Wilkes’ article, sent by Mrs Boyd to Arthur Blenkinsop, (NEEA secretary) 11 December 1962. Percy Street was to a considerable extent to be replaced by the proposed (but ultimately unbuilt) Central Motorway West.

<sup>661</sup> The earliest newspaper reference to the group that I have found is the *Newcastle Journal* of 9 December 1971, p8, referring to the group campaigning against the demolition of Broadcasting House and the Burgogne’s public house.

<sup>662</sup> Members added whitewash crosses to trees in an attempt to confuse workers as to which were to be removed, but plans for protesters to climb and sit in threatened trees were forestalled by the cutting down of the threatened trees early on 20 April. *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 10 April 1972 p3, 20 April 1972 p11

<sup>663</sup> 1981 is the latest date for SOCEM material in Newcastle City Library.

<sup>664</sup> Wilshaw, P, ‘Home Rule for the Regions’, *The Sunday Times* 27 October 1963 p15. Spence’s library has been demolished and replaced in recent years; lesser talents than those of Jacobsen designed the Eldon Square shopping centre; and Burns came from Coventry via Surrey.

Smith's plans for Newcastle were not intended to benefit the city alone. He believed that the development of a vibrant regional capital was vital for the prosperity and development of the region as a whole. But economic prosperity was not enough: the regional capital should be attractive and influential on a whole range of measures: industrial and economic, but also in terms of culture, education, and what might be called 'liveability': the kind of city hymned by Crosland, friendly, informal, with theatres, riverside cafes, bright lights, attractive shops.<sup>665</sup>

Even before the first version of Burns' plan had been drawn up, Smith was urging the creation of a new type of city to draw employers and prosperity to the North East, telling the Town Planning institute in May 1960 that:

"The industrialist must understand that there are other factors than solely industrial ones which make a region attractive to industry... unless the region can make itself attractive to the key people necessary to the success of new industry, they would hesitate to come north.... We must develop an inspirational role in the region and seek to ensure the co-operation of all important organizations together with 'the man in the street', to change the economic climate in the area and to ensure that such a new environment will draw to the city the best planners, engineers, and architects to supplement those who are already here, and then by their renewed efforts I feel sure they would in turn create a city and region which would have a compelling interest to forward-looking industrialists to come north. The heart of the region is starting to beat more rapidly now and the region can look forward to a fuller life."<sup>666</sup>

In short, to make Newcastle a city which would be attractive to middle-class technocrats, whose arrival would then stimulate further economic development and encourage more immigration from the south. One ultimate effect would be to move the region away from being an area based upon the traditional heavy and extractive industries upon which its prosperity had been traditionally based, and whose disappearance Smith foresaw: "Newcastle... has to play its full part in seeking to create a new long-term pattern of industry within the region which would be based on stimulation wherever possible of existing industry, *but above all on preparing for the inevitable decline of existing industries.*"<sup>667</sup>

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<sup>665</sup> Crosland (2006) *op cit* pp402-403

<sup>666</sup> Smith, T D, 'Development Problems of a Regional Capital', paper read at 34<sup>th</sup> Spring Meeting of the Town Planning Institute, 26 May 1960.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.* My italics.

## **Cultural capital**

Another significant step was the formation of the North East Association for the Arts. Smith saw art and culture as being central to his vision for the Newcastle of the future, writing that “I look forward to the time when everyday experience of life in Newcastle will be enormously stimulating – and will include a full cultural life.”<sup>668</sup>

Interviewed in the 1980s, he recalled that “the city vision was to make Newcastle a regional capital, and the philosophic background to that was the arts, Northern Arts, which became the prototype for the rest, sport, and so on.”<sup>669</sup> His vision was not one of art for art’s sake; rather, he envisioned art as a key element in how society should develop, alongside and in partnership with science and technology; as he wrote to Bloodaxe Books, “Politically I developed an interest in science & technologies and the ‘Two Cultures’ which have guided me ever since and motivate me more so today.”<sup>670</sup>

Art could also support his vision of a vibrant regional capital: writing of the proposed 1961 exhibition promoting the city and its industrial and commercial potential, he wrote that the event would show what the council could do “by helpful patronage to encourage the use of sculpture, murals, painting and landscaping in its various developments”; ‘The Arts’ could show the role they could play in attracting industry to the area and encouraging existing enterprises to remain.<sup>671</sup>

Smith was personally interested in the arts (his hobbies included painting and playing the piano). He was a member of the ‘Novocastrian Group’, a small group (limited to fifteen members) formed in January 1961, its members representing “all forms of art in the North East, and dedicated to a positive policy of stimulating

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<sup>668</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3835 Draft transcript of article entitled ‘Newcastle Remade. An Interview with Dan Smith’ (n.d.)

<sup>669</sup> Amber, transcript of taped interview of Smith by Murray Martin, Tape 1003 (nd).

<sup>670</sup> Author’s collection, TDS autobiographical note drawn up for Diane Jamieson, Bloodaxe Books (nd)

<sup>671</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3837 ‘Report by Chairman of Housing Committee [TDS] regarding the Proposed Exhibition to be held in the Spring of 1961’ (n d)



artistic development in all forms of the Arts and City and Town Centre development...”<sup>672</sup> Smith’s fellow members included the jazz musician Ian Carr (a member of the Emcee Five, and the group’s founder and secretary) as well as Sid Chaplin, Scott Dobson, and Ted Fletcher. The group was not just a talking shop – it committed itself to provide early funding of “up to” £40 for a film to be associated with the Scotswood Road Exhibition of the following year (which became the Blaydon Races Centenary Festival, referred to below). The film was called *Flowering City*, the shooting script written by Sid Chaplin, “a story line about two young people, without dialogue and commentary”.<sup>673</sup>

Smith was active in promoting the arts in the work done by the city council. He wrote of plans to co-ordinate cultural activities, archives and the Laing Art Gallery and to appoint an Art Director: “The first city to make such an appointment with such adequate terms of reference. A city of the people for the people. Built for today and tomorrow’s age of leisure... My colleagues will make the city a living art gallery, the city streets a permanent exhibition of architecture, of landscape, of sculpture... so that the future generations will visit the city if for no other reason than to see our city treasures.”<sup>674</sup>

He wrote of his sadness that the burdens of adulthood stripped from children their joy in painting, music, dance and play, but “in the age of automation these pressures will be... replaced by the appreciation of the things that add up to human happiness, so that the benefits of leisure will be the creation of a new quality in society.”<sup>675</sup>

These views are idealistic, even utopian (and a far cry from the portrait of a hard-nosed city boss), and an examination of some aspects of his efforts to create the ‘living art gallery’ show failures and false starts, but they also show successes that have ramifications to the present.

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<sup>672</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3862 ‘Novocastrian Group’ (n d)

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid* 18 June 1961 Ian Carr to TDS on the £40; *Flowering City* shooting script. The storyline is that a male student catches sight of a female shop worker in Fenwicks and follows her round Newcastle all day, at a distance, before standing outside her modern Cruddas Park flat looking longingly up at her window. It is unclear whether the film was made.

<sup>674</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3853 TDS to Cllr Theresa Russell (n d)

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid*. Never a stranger to hyperbole, he continued: “Just as we talk of the glories of Rome and Venice and Athens, we can in this city, if we apply ourselves with sympathy and diligence, together with the people, be the first modern city to extend the fields of culture to the ordinary man and create a new glory that history will say – ‘The Greatness that is Newcastle’.”

Smith was to attempt to place culture at the heart of the region in his support of the North East Association for the Arts (NEEA). Support for the arts had become a feature of post-war government policy, not least by the creation of the Arts Council of Great Britain, a public sector organisation, in 1946 (it emerged from the wartime Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts), and the 1948 Local Government Act which allowed local authorities to levy a 6d rate for culture; and this support was to be given greater prominence by the creation in 1964 of the post of Minister for the Arts.<sup>676</sup> In the North East the idea of a regional arts body was being mooted in the early 1950s, particularly by Lord Eustace Percy; in 1959 Charles Bosanquet, the rector of King's College, Newcastle, contacted Smith to suggest such a development.<sup>677</sup> Smith recalled travelling the country to canvass ideas on the form such a body should take. He persuaded the 1960 Lord Mayor, Gladys Robson, to support the idea in her year of office, and also won the backing of Ted Fletcher, then chair of Newcastle City Council's Finance Committee.<sup>678</sup> A conference of interested parties was organised, and from this emerged NEEA in 1961, its first acting secretary (until 1964) being Arthur Blenkinsop, a former Newcastle Labour MP and, according to Vall, fitting the "character type of left-leaning cultural improver and politician that emerged during the inter-war years."<sup>679</sup> The Association's membership was diverse, by 1963 including 50 local authorities, 40 trades unions, 30 industrial representatives, 40 other organisations and 700 individuals, a coalition formed in no small part through the efforts of Blenkinsop making use of his political contacts.<sup>680</sup>

In 1964 the Arts Council asked NEEA to extend its reach to cover the counties of Cumberland, Westmoreland and the North Riding of Yorkshire as well as Northumberland and Durham; this took place in 1967 and the organisation's name was changed to Northern Arts Association.<sup>681</sup> Subsequently adopted as the Arts

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<sup>676</sup> Vall (2011) *op cit* pp10, 102; Marwick, A, *British Society since 1945* (4<sup>th</sup> ed London 2003) p38. The first Arts Minister was Jennie Lee.

<sup>677</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p70

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid* pp70-71

<sup>679</sup> Vall (2011) *op cit* pp11, 100-101. Blenkinsop (1911-79) had been MP for Newcastle East 1945-59; became a Newcastle councillor in 1961 and MP for South Shields 1964-79.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid* pp 101-102

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid* p100

Council's regional agency, NEEA/NAA provided a template for the development of other regional arts organisations.<sup>682</sup>

NEEA was seen as a pioneer in regional arts promotion, and Labour Party representatives such as Smith and Blenkinsop were key to its early success, but it should be noted that in Newcastle the council had established a Special Committee for the Encouragement of Cultural Activities in 1950, when the Progressive Party controlled the council; and the Progressives were still in power in 1956 when Michael Hall sought council support in establishing the Sinfonia Orchestra (first performance in 1958) – from 1959 the Northern Sinfonia, from 2013 the Royal Northern Sinfonia.<sup>683</sup>

In the mid 1960s there was a possibility that Newcastle Corporation would municipalise the Sinfonia. It was losing money: in 1964 it was costing around £85,000 a year and its income was £25,000. It received £20,000 from the Arts Council and £30,000 from NEEA leaving a shortfall of £10,000. City Treasurer Frank Ireland laid out three options: for the city to subsidise the orchestra; to wind it up; to take it over. "The crux of the matter... should the Sinfonia be retained as a musical symbol in the North East?" Ireland told Smith. "If the answer is yes then the first alternative is the one to apply."<sup>684</sup> Clearly the answer was yes, though the idea of a takeover continued; in 1965 the Sinfonia's leader, Boris Brott, wrote to Smith that "I was glad to hear from Tom Bergman that the take-over of the orchestra by the city seems to be going ahead smoothly."<sup>685</sup> Nothing appears to have come of this.

Smith saw promotion of the theatre as part of the civic responsibility, and in his autobiography mentions discussions with the actor and director John Neville, who was seeking to leave London, and with Adrian Cairns, at that time at Tyne-Tees Television; with Cairns he was forming tentative plans for a municipal theatre.<sup>686</sup>

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<sup>682</sup> *Ibid* p9

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid* pp99-100; <http://www.sagegateshead.com/news-and-blogs/press-releases/queen-honours-royal-northern-sinfonia> accessed 9 December 2019

<sup>684</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3914 F Ireland to TDS, 12 November 1964

<sup>685</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3914 Boris Brott to TDS, 12 March 1965

<sup>686</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p69; TWAM DF/TDS Box 3878 28 May 1961, Cairns to TDS, 29 August 1961 TDS to Cairns, 19 September 1961 TDS to Cairns, arranging a meeting with Wilfred Burns; 14 February 1963 Arthur Blenkinsop to Burns on plans for civic theatre.

The council did acquire some of the city's fading theatres: Smith records the purchase of the Palace Theatre and the Empire Theatre, for commercial rather than artistic purposes.<sup>687</sup>

A civic arts policy could be “an opportunity and a danger”, Smith was to write in 1970. “Instead of creating a liberal arts movement we could easily have councillors dancing about forbidding this and that because they did not like it, or because they sensed that it was too avant-garde.”<sup>688</sup> This did not imply that he was laissez-faire about facilities, in 1965 stating that “...it would have to be recognised that the siting of theatres and arts centres would have to be limited and concentrated into centres – Tyneside, Wearside, Teesside and Carlisle.”<sup>689</sup> Artistic liberty was still to be subject to scientific planning.

In 1965 Smith became a board member of the Flora Robson Playhouse in Newcastle.<sup>690</sup> This was a somewhat old fashioned repertory theatre; in 1965 journalist Philip Norman contrasted it brutally with the People's Theatre. The People's, wrote Norman, “prove [sic] you can be highbrow and cosy, jolly and instructive, studious and pleased with yourself. The Flora Robson makes you think of Agatha Christie and ‘coaches welcome’ signs.” By 1965 the Flora Robson Playhouse was threatened by a new road scheme (it was demolished in 1972); the scheme, commented Norman, “will be the killing bottle for second class rep steadily losing money. How frayed some of the acting is.”<sup>691</sup> It had nevertheless received support from Newcastle council, it being agreed in 1963 that the council would make a grant of £5,000 (subject to the Arts Council of Great Britain matching that

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<sup>687</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit* p69. The Empire site on Newgate Street was used for part of the Newgate Shopping Centre, itself subsequently demolished and the site redeveloped.

<sup>688</sup> *Ibid* p70

<sup>689</sup> *Northern Echo* 13 April 1965. Speech by TDS at the opening of Eston Civic Hall.

<sup>690</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3838 Julian Herington, Managing Director of Flora Robson Playhouse, to TDS expressing pleasure that he has agreed to join board 29 July 1965

<sup>691</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3877, newspaper article by Philip Norman dated 16 December 1965, paper or origin unknown. He went on, somewhat misogynistically, “...How they do courtesy to Women's Institutes when they pick a play. Ungracious words, most of them, descended directly from sitting with batteries of old ladies, crinkling dry-cleaning bags.”

amount).<sup>692</sup> A subsequent company based at the Flora Robson was to move to the newly-opened University Theatre in 1970.<sup>693</sup>

Art could also be incorporated into more functional developments. “As an antidote to the poverty of ideas in 1958, I tried hard to introduce artists as catalysts in the creation of our urban houses and landscapes” he wrote in 1970.<sup>694</sup> He was to be unable to persuade the city architects to involve artists in the design process (an idea which was to be put into effect in Peterlee), but was able to bring about the installation of sculptures in some of the more major housing developments undertaken by the council.<sup>695</sup>

On the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1962 the centenary of the events celebrated in the Tyneside anthem *The Blaydon Races* with a city festival and a recreation of the song’s coach journey from Balmora’s music hall on the Cloth Market to the site of the races in Blaydon – the coach “Gannin along the Scotswood Road to see the Blaydon Races”.<sup>696</sup> The route passed the new housing development at Cruddas Park, one of the most visible achievements of Smith’s early years as council leader.

The day’s activities involved bringing the guest of honour, Labour Party leader Hugh Gaitskell, to conduct the formal opening of The Willows at Cruddas. The function had three parts, wrote Smith in a briefing note: the sculpture, the landscape, and the opening of the flats. Gaitskell would be introduced to Kenneth Ford, the sculptor who won the competition to design an artwork for the development; would unveil the work, then walk through the newly landscaped site which would be part of “the new Green Belt walk into Newcastle”.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3877 Report to Group on the Policy for the Theatre, circulated by TDS to councillors 10 June 1963. It is unclear whether that group was a council or a Labour Group body.

<sup>693</sup> Renamed Newcastle Playhouse in the 1980s and Northern Stage in 2006.

<https://www.northernstage.co.uk/mission-vision-values> accessed 22 January 2020.

<sup>694</sup> Smith, T D, *T Dan Smith: An Autobiography* (Newcastle 1970) p60

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid* pp60-61

<sup>696</sup> Lancaster, B, ‘Sociability and the City’ in Colls & Lancaster *op cit* pp319-320. Geordie Ridley, ‘The Blaydon Races’ (1862)

<sup>697</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Archive Box3979, ‘Notes for Mr Gaitskell for the Opening of the Scotswood Flats’ (n.d.). The sculpture was removed on safety grounds in 1975 (DF/TDS Box 3987 *Evening Chronicle* 11 April 1975)

Public art figured prominently in Smith's ideas. Sculpture was also a feature of the Shieldfield flats development, and at Swan House, where a sculpture was placed to commemorate Sir Joseph Swan (1828-1914), the North Eastern inventor of the incandescent light bulb. In his autobiography Smith recounts how Sir Kenneth Swan, Sir Joseph's son, wanted a memorial showing a swan in flight, to which Smith responded by urging a more modern, illuminated sculpture.<sup>698</sup>

The Cultural Activities Committee sponsored various events: a report of February 1965 refers to a film festival, continued support to NEAA, the sponsorship of orchestral concerts, and an impending arts festival, in conjunction with the University Arts Society, involving music of various kinds, drama, films, exhibitions and lectures.<sup>699</sup> It did, however, in 1965 refuse support to the Morden Tower poetry venue run by Connie and Tom Pickard.<sup>700</sup>

Smith also favoured the incorporation of public art into the Civic Centre under construction in Newcastle in the early 1960s. This on occasion led to controversy, as in March 1965 when he was attacked in council for reserving £87,000 for works of art. The building, he told councillors, "will be as great in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as are the buildings in such places as Florence, Venice and Rome." Of the £87,000, he commented: "This amount represents two hours of 'Z-Cars'. What we are creating will last 100 years."<sup>701</sup> Art at the Civic Centre included sculptures of the *River God Tyne* and *Swans in Flight*, both by David Wynne, sculpted seahorse heads atop the tower by J R M McCheyne, glass screens by John Hutton, tapestry in the banqueting hall by John Piper, murals in the marriage suite by Elizabeth Wise and in the rates hall by Victor Pasmore.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit* p52. The process was very long-drawn out, a memorial being suggested in 1961 and finally unveiled in 1969. TWAM DF/TDS Box 3837: 8 November 1961 TDS to Mr Craig, AEI; 18 December TDS to Lord Mayor (Henry Russell) stating that he has guarantors for £10,000 and suggesting the creation of a committee and fund for the project; 20 November 1962 Notes of Proposed Swan Memorial meeting, suggesting "an illuminated fountain, possibly with a statue of Sir Joseph Swan as a centre-piece". Usherwood, P, Beach, J, & Morris, C, *Public Sculpture of North-East England* (Liverpool 2000) p134

<sup>699</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3980 'Report on Progress and Municipal Policy' (February 1965): an internal Labour Party report, though whether for the Labour Group or the City Labour Party is unclear.

<sup>700</sup> Vall, Natasha, *Cities in Decline? A Comparative History of Malmo and Newcastle after 1945* (Malmo 2007) p117

<sup>701</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 4 March 1965 p3. Z-Cars was a popular television drama about the police.

<sup>702</sup> Usherwood *et al op cit* pp93-95

Another scheme, suggested by Smith, was to create ‘artists colonies’ around the city. The first proposal was to convert disused Quayside buildings into studio and living accommodation for half a dozen artists; the public would be able to access the studios and see artists at work, and informal and formal exhibitions of their work could be held. He estimated the expenditure as “petty cash” – three or four thousand pounds, and argued that the scheme would help attract industry to the North East by creating an attractive quality of life: “Why do people go to Paris?”<sup>703</sup> The suggestion sparked criticism, one arts lecturer pointing out that similar schemes had failed in north Wales and New York, and that artists didn’t like being told where to go and hat to do.<sup>704</sup> The proposal appears to have been abandoned.

Smith’s views on the importance of art were shared by Wilfred Burns, who in 1964 wrote “In the City Centre, and perhaps in the city as a whole, the aim should be to get the most varies collection of artistic expressions... Richness and variety are the important features and the sculptures often need to be sited so that they are come upon accidentally, and as a part of the total artistic adventure known as civic design.”<sup>705</sup>

The arts also formed part of his vision for the region as a whole. *Challenge of the Changing North*, the study published by the Northern Economic Planning Council in 1966, stresses the importance of art to “an acceptable standard of living” but also a lack of new and properly equipped buildings; attention was paid to music, theatre, and film theatres, and the possibility of an arts festival similar to the Edinburgh Festival was raised. The study urged more work in planning, research and development of the arts to take place, in co-operation with other arts associations and economic planning councils.<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3982, ‘Council studios urged in ‘Left Bank’ scheme’, *Daily Mail* 27 July 1964.

<sup>704</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3982, ‘Newcastle’s Culture Plan the Wrong Sort of Patronage, say Local Painters’, *Newcastle Journal* 28 July 1964

<sup>705</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3836 Note by Wilfred Burns 14 December 1964

<sup>706</sup> Northern Economic Planning Council, *Challenge of the Changing North* (London 1966) p46

Smith was later to use art and culture as a cornerstone of his efforts to develop a science campus at Peterlee while he was chairman of the Peterlee Development Corporation from 1968-70 (a period covered in detail in chapter 6). A key component of his concept for Peterlee was an Arts and Humanities Centre, to be developed with input from a variety of bodies including the Northern Arts Association; the centre would be, according to the NAA's director Sandy Dunbar "something like a cross between the Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Bauhaus."<sup>707</sup>

### **The city and the region**

Newcastle's influence was not to be solely within its own boundaries. Smith took pains to form cross-boundary coalitions: Newcastle was a prime mover in creating the regional group of authorities to run Newcastle Airport, which opened a new terminal building in 1967: vital for conveying an up-to-date image for the North East and paid for by the consortium of Newcastle, Gateshead, Tynemouth, Sunderland, South Shields county boroughs and the counties of Durham and Northumberland.<sup>708</sup> Similar co-operation between authorities led to the formation of the Tyneside Passenger Transport Authority, which came into being on 1 January 1970.

Another expression of this desire to build coalitions came in 1963, when Smith for a time expressed interest in the formation of a North Regional Zoological Society and the establishment of a zoo in the grounds of Brancepeth Castle in County Durham, under the auspices of local authorities and the University of Durham.<sup>709</sup>

But Smith failed in the logical extension of this attitude, which would have seen the Tyneside local authorities merged into one council for the conurbation, within a broader northern region.

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<sup>707</sup> *The Guardian*, 5 August 1968. John Ardill, 'Total Research the aim of Peterlee Plan'

<sup>708</sup> *Newcastle Journal* 17 February 1967 p11. The quoted words are by Airport director James Denyer.

<sup>709</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3837 Note by TDS entitled 'Proposed North Regional Zoological Society' 17 July 1963 in which he stated that Hugh Casson [1910-99, architect and designer] had promised his co-operation; TDS to Lord Mayor (Ald Henry Simm) 19 August 1963



Responding to a 1963 Boundary Commission proposal for a two-tier county of Tyneside, encompassing four lower-tier borough authorities (for Newcastle, Gateshead, North Shields and South Shields), Smith criticised the Commission's tendency to "think in isolation in old local government terms", and while continuing to press for a unitary Tyneside authority he argued at the same time for more fundamental changes:

"[M]y feeling is that we should forget about area reviews of local government boundaries and concentrate now on the wider issue of a regional local government unit to undertake responsibility for all the major features which the commission recommend their proposed Tyneside County Council should undertake. I think that planning should also be done on a regional basis. If the Government is going to go in for greater decentralization, it means, from a regional point of view that at last we shall be getting things right at the top. A regional local government organization is now needed so that we shall get things right at the other end."<sup>710</sup>

In 1970 in hindsight he commented "I applied all the energy and influence that I had in an attempt to get Tyneside Unification approved. After all, we had Teesside Unification, and I felt that if we could get both Tyne and Tees in the forefront nationally, we could lead the country and really forge ahead in advance of local government reform, and show what the devolution of power could yield."<sup>711</sup>

However, the decision regarding Tyneside was placed on hold pending the deliberations of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England (of which Smith was a member – see chapter 5). Newcastle's representations on Tyneside unification, viewed with some suspicion by the other authorities, continued after Smith's resignation as leader of the Labour group in 1965; and one of the tasks of the new Principal City Officer Frank Harris (see below) was to present the city's case to a 1966 public inquiry, a job he handled badly.<sup>712</sup>

### **Harris: the man from Ford**

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<sup>710</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3843 *Northern Echo* 17 July 1963

<sup>711</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* pp83-84. The County Borough of Teesside was created in 1968 by a merger of local authorities.

<sup>712</sup> Elliott, J, 'The Harris Experiment in Newcastle upon Tyne', *Public Administration* 49 (2) (1971) p 157. Harris responded poorly to cross examination by counsel for the other local authorities, who in his closing speech claimed that Harris' comments on local government in the area was "insulting to us and our intelligence"

A further initiative was to review the role of the Town Clerk. In 1963 Smith<sup>713</sup> wrote “My own view is that the Town Clerk’s Department should be completely re-organised and that responsibility should be divided into the major work of the Department, being purely legal in character, and that the Town Clerk himself should have a legal qualification, but should also have qualifications in administration. Administrative ability being the major factor in the decision of appointment.” Change was necessary in order to carry out the developments proposed for the city: “...without the right appointment in this post, then most of our policies, in my view, will fall short of achievement. It is the lack of strong central co-ordination in the Corporation which is the major factor for the present frustrations that occur in many directions, and we must have an Officer who has the respect by his ability and authority, of his brother officers.”<sup>714</sup>

The changes proposed would divide responsibility between the Town Clerk, who would deal with legal issues, and a new position of Principal City Officer (PCO), later amended to City Manager, who would head the city council’s administrative structure (a role which nowadays would be called chief executive or CEO). The manager was expected to control the running of the council, and it was hoped that the appointment would allow the administrative machinery to be streamlined, with the cumbersome structure of committees and sub committees being reduced as the PCO took on such work, allowing committees to focus on policy matters rather than the minutiae of administration.<sup>715</sup>

The plan was approved of by the Conservative opposition, Alderman Arthur Grey commenting that “We believe this is an experiment which should be tried.”<sup>716</sup> A special council committee chaired by Cllr Doris Starkey (and with Smith as a member) was set up to define the roles and recruit for the posts, and – probably also another innovation in local government circles – appointed an occupational

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<sup>713</sup> Probably. The document cited does not have a named author, but is in Smith’s papers, is annotated in his hand, and the writing style is Smith’s.

<sup>714</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3848 Note on Town Clerk (manuscript addition in Smith’s hand: ‘Original note, 1963’). The year may or may not be correct, but this note would appear to be the catalyst for the ensuing changes.

<sup>715</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3834 Joint Sub-committee of representatives of the Finance and Establishment Committees, Appointment of Town Clerk (nd but circulated 16 October 1964)

<sup>716</sup> *Newcastle Journal* 1 October 1964

psychologist, William Isbister, to oversee the recruitment process.<sup>717</sup> Isbister's first task was to draw up a job description for the post of City Manager, based on the premise that "Local Government is now Big Business." The incumbent should, wrote Isbister,

...act as a 'practical thinker' as well as a 'forward thinker'. Here, as a result of this thinking, we anticipate the P.C.O. being in a position to dictate rather than follow trends; to anticipate, advance or even initiate new legislation; to foresee the new policies which any new legislation may require; to foresee possible 'snags' before they arise, and before most others do. Because of his [sic] unique situation, with time and the position to take the broad, sweeping view, to act as a guide, philosopher and friend, both to his Chief Officer colleagues and those of near status, and to the Elected Members... They must come to regard him as someone to whom they may turn for objective advice...<sup>718</sup>

The Chief Officers were not amused: "We do not accept the starting premise that 'Local Government is big business.' Local Government is primarily a service to the ratepayers and its operation we suggest cannot be compared with... 'big business' which has essentially and primarily a profit motive."<sup>719</sup> And guerrilla warfare was resorted to, leading Isbister to complain that the chief officers were tinkering with the job description. "The phrases and words which I used... were measured deliberately and generally chosen with tremendous care and precision. Any proposal to change them therefore is no light weight matter but one of intellectual integrity as well as some significance."<sup>720</sup>

Advertisement for the post began in February 1965.<sup>721</sup> 71 applications were received, and among those shortlisted was Wilfred Burns – who had earlier considered leaving Newcastle for the post of city planning officer in Liverpool.<sup>722</sup> Burns failed to get the post because, according to Smith, "I knew that Evelyn Sharp wanted him as Chief

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<sup>717</sup> William Leonard Thompson Isbister (?1923-2012)

<sup>718</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3834 Job description by W Isbister, January 1965

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid* Report of Chief Officers on the Job Description, February 1965

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid* Isbister to Doris Starkey, 15 February 1965. He went on: "Much change is painful... and I have no doubt that these changes we propose will be so. This, therefore, is a time for courage and maybe for some greatness."

<sup>721</sup> *The Surveyor and Municipal Engineer* 6 February 1965

<sup>722</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 18 September 1962. The Liverpool job offered a salary of £5,000 compared with £3,500 at Newcastle, but Burns, though shortlisted, withdrew his application "Because I felt I would be happier due to the greater scope at Newcastle."

Planner [at MHLG] and when she said to me ‘Don’t appoint him as City Manager’ he wasn’t appointed. He would have made the City Manager because he had all the qualities that were necessary...”.<sup>723</sup>

The successful applicant was W Frank Harris, product planning manager for the Ford Motor Company. Harris was, according to Isbister, “The one candidate recommended... He has a firmness and decisiveness, coupled with a slight streak of ruthlessness, additional qualities which are considered very desirable in the tremendous job which faces the new Principal Officer. He is certainly very able and emotionally tough... A person who knows he is ‘good’, yet with sufficient social awareness not to let this belief cut across his relationship with others.... There is no evidence of emotional instability.”<sup>724</sup>

The appointment caused a media stir, with *The Times* profiling Harris as ‘Man in the News’,

Mr W Frank Harris... is described by the man who has been the driving force behind this appointment as ‘an efficient democrat’ By this, Councillor Dan Smith... means someone who recognises that there is an art gallery as well as an architect and a medical officer of health as well as an engineer. Mr Harris is said to have the right approach to life, with wide vision and outstanding ability... Unlike city managers in the United States, he will not be put in charge of the budget nor will he be the boss of the local council. The office of the town clerk will remain within that of the city manager, but there will be a separate legal department, in charge of a chief officer, which will take over the legal work normally undertaken by the town clerk.<sup>725</sup>

The ‘efficient democrat’ was hired for £9,500 a year on a seven year contract, terminable after two years by either side.<sup>726</sup> This was, according to *The Surveyor*, “one of the most interesting developments in local government administration in many years”, although Newcastle had been pipped to the post by Basildon UDC, which had redesignated its Town Clerk as Chief Executive Officer on 1 June 1965.<sup>727</sup>

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<sup>723</sup> TDS Archive Disk 18A

<sup>724</sup> TWAM DF/TDS 680/44 Note by the Occupational Psychologist Adviser April 1965

<sup>725</sup> *The Times* 6 July 1965 p7

<sup>726</sup> *The Times* 6 July 1965 p7.

<sup>727</sup> *The Surveyor and Municipal Engineer* 10 July 1965 p17. Not only was Basildon much smaller in size and population than Newcastle it was, as an urban district council, not a planning authority, and

“The creation of a new ‘supremo’ post of this kind goes against all British Local Government tradition.” “Why should a change be necessary?... Do the chief officers need a leader of this kind?” mused *The Surveyor*. Its conclusion was (perhaps unsurprisingly) No: the system might be creaking, and Newcastle’s decision “seems logical against this backcloth”, but the tendency to create new departments outside the fiefdoms of the engineer and surveyor were going in the wrong direction. “Is it reasonable to expect any single person to contain such diverse knowledge?”<sup>728</sup>

Yet by March 1966 Harris had proposed reducing the council’s 37 committees to eight, and after long internal discussions the Parliamentary and General Purposes Committee in July 1967 produced a plan which could reduce the number to eleven, and which aimed at streamlining procedures, in particular urging brevity in agendas, reports and meetings.<sup>729</sup> It was not long before Smith’s man began to display a Smith-like impatience: in January 1968 he was seeking (unsuccessfully) the post of director general of the Greater London Council, and in 1969 he left the council to return to the automotive sector as financial controller for Massey-Ferguson, this being he stated “a normal career step” influenced by Newcastle’s inability to offer a salary commensurate with what he could get in the private sector.<sup>730</sup> Summing up his Newcastle experience, he said that “Newcastle is an example of how a local authority should organise itself; an example of courage in the way it abandoned previous ideas, for instance, the drastic reduction in committees.” But he criticised the continuing slowness of the committee system: “This is why I can foresee local government by executive. At Newcastle, I would personally rather have been at the disposal of the electorate.”<sup>731</sup>

The ‘Harris Experiment’ could be described as having shaken up the administration of Newcastle. “Officers were stimulated to re-think their functions and procedures. A

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most development activity in its boundaries was carried out not by the council but by the new town development corporation.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid pp17-18

<sup>729</sup> *The Surveyor and Municipal Engineer* 1 July 1967 p16. It went on to comment “More power to his elbow”

<sup>730</sup> *The Times* 20 January 1968 p8, 23 April 1969 p25; *The Municipal and Public Services Journal* 25 April 1969 p1031.

<sup>731</sup> *The Municipal and Public Services Journal* 25 April 1969 p1031.

climate of opinion was created whereby it was possible to introduce and experiment with new methods... The corporation became more adventurous; it took more risks in an effort to get things moving.”<sup>732</sup> But, argues Elliott, the experiment was hampered by the role and powers of the post not being made clear; and the new post of Principal City Officer was shoehorned into an unaltered administrative system. In addition, little attention was given to the relationship of the PCO with other chief officers: as Elliott commented, “There was a contradiction in [the council’s] approach in wanting to have a strong executive officer, yet also trying to protect the powers of the individual chief officers.”<sup>733</sup>

Elliott places the blame for confusion on the political leadership of the council, and the failure of councillors to evaluate and monitor the position and the work of the PCO. It is not unreasonable to suppose that this failure drew in part from the weakened central political leadership of the council after Smith’s resignation as Labour Group leader in 1965 (and from the council in 1966). Two one-year Labour group leaders, followed by the loss of control in 1967 to the Conservative Party did not provide a stable platform to evaluate Harris’ work, even had the leadership shared Smith’s enthusiasm for the changes and possessed his authority to adjudicate on any confusion about what the City Officer’s role should be. Smith’s own views were quite clear, telling the *Sunday Times* in 1965:

What we were looking for was a new type of manager in local government. I like to think of him as an ‘implementation planner’, as novel in his ways as the ‘physical planner’ ten years ago. He is the man who understands the priorities and commercial complexities involved in translating plans into realities.... Most important of all is the fact that he will not be a first among equals like other Town Clerks. *He will be the boss.*

The *Sunday Times* journalist seems to have hit the mark with the comment that “Perhaps most important will be the loss of the regular patronage of Mr Smith.”<sup>734</sup>

Harris’ departure spelled the start of decline for the experiment in administration. He was succeeded by a local government insider, Newcastle’s City Treasurer Frank

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<sup>732</sup> Elliott (1971) *op cit* p154

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid* pp 160-161

<sup>734</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3843 *Sunday Times* 4 July 1965. My italics.

Ireland, as head of a trio of leading officers, with City Engineer Derek Bradshaw and Burns' successor as Chief Planning Officer, Kenneth Galley.<sup>735</sup> Ireland retired in 1973 and was replaced by Derek Bradshaw, but Bradshaw retired for health reasons shortly after his appointment and was replaced by the third member of the troika, Galley.<sup>736</sup>

Just as the concept of recruiting widely for the post of City Manager was replaced by a return to something akin to Buggin's turn, so too the concept of a united administration under clear leadership began to crumble. This is recorded in David Green's *Power and Party in an English City* which describes the creation of power centres in the "symbiotic relationship" of committee chairmen and their departmental chief officers; the Labour Party's own advice to local authority members was that the concentration of power in a few hands in local councils "will lead to a narrowing of political vision, unimaginative policy making, and ill-considered decisions."<sup>737</sup> Suspicion of strong, perhaps over-dominant leadership, which had led to a reaction against Smith's style of governance, gave way to weaker political leadership and something of a return to departmental satrapies.

The 'Harris Experiment' melted away.<sup>738</sup> That can perhaps be explained by the lack of a strong advocate for Harris' role. In the absence of Smith, his successors could not, or did not want to stop a slide back into old ways. In attempting to create strong leadership to carry forward his plans, he had created a structure which lacked strong foundations.

The 'New Brasilia' project also ground to a halt. Key elements of the plan had been executed: the new Civic Centre; a new library; the Education Precinct bringing the city's tertiary colleges together (to be consolidated into Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic in 1969 and Northumbria University in 1992) ; Eldon Square shopping

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<sup>735</sup> *The Journal* 30 July 1969 p13

<sup>736</sup> *The Journal* 28 June 1973 p7, 13 March 1974 p8

<sup>737</sup> Green, D G, *Power and Party in an English City. An Account of Single Party Rule* (London 1981) pp 65-74; 98-104

<sup>738</sup> Indeed, appeared to have been largely forgotten over the ensuing quarter century. In 1997, while working as a freelance journalist on local government issues, I interviewed Newcastle City Council's newly-appointed chief executive officer Kevin Lavery: that Lavery had come from Price Waterhouse rather than from within the local government arena was presented as a huge innovation.

centre; the creation of John Dobson Street to enable (eventually) pedestrianisation of Northumberland Street; the building of the Central Motorway East between 1972 and 1975 to take much through traffic out of the city centre; a new library; and other achievements. Kings College had in the same period transformed itself into the University of Newcastle and embarked upon a major building programme, including by 1970 the University Theatre. But much was left undone. Smith's aspirations for St James' Park to be rebuilt and become an arena serving the whole city came to nothing.<sup>739</sup> The vision of a traffic-segregated walkable city, with pedestrian decks linking shops, restaurants, galleries, offices, flats, pubs, even churches, while vehicular traffic moved below and out of sight, hardly began. Fragments of what was planned can be seen spanning John Dobson Street, but having been built in isolation, rather than as part of a large network, they lacked the most vital asset – people – and present a forlorn appearance. Elsewhere in the city, columns with no apparent purpose attached to buildings, a bank where the banking hall is on the first floor, accessible by escalator, and a door-opening leading to a precipitous drop remain as evidence of the split-level city.<sup>740</sup> After the Central Motorway East, no more of the planned urban motorway network was built. Three, or perhaps four, reasons suffice. The 1973 Yom Kippur War and subsequent economic downturn led to the drying up of funding for major projects such as urban motorways. The 1972 Local Government Act led to Newcastle losing its strategic planning powers in 1974 to the new Metropolitan County of Tyne and Wear, which had a very different vision for Newcastle, and one which no longer included motorways. The city began to fall out of love with grand scheme urban planning, with the growth of civic opposition to large scale demolitions. And the city had lost its most vocal and effective champion of grand-style planning in the person of Dan Smith – but even had he remained leader of Newcastle City Council, it is unlikely that he could have surmounted those obstacles.

## Conclusions

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<sup>739</sup> Smith, T Dan *op cit* p73

<sup>740</sup> For columns, see for example the rear of the Primark building off Northumberland Road; the former Barclays Bank on Northumberland Street close to Haymarket Metro was designed for access at first floor level; the doorway to nowhere is visible overlooking the New Bridge Street-John Dobson Street junction, south of the City Library.



Smith's own leadership has been praised and decried. For Elliott, writing of Newcastle, "None of the Labour Group leaders during the 1950s and 1960s gave a strong lead in policy matters. Smith was the exception and took the initiative and gave the political thrust in several areas which was necessary for successful policy making. He utilized the position but did not abuse it and retained the support of the Group and the Executive."<sup>741</sup> In addition to his leadership of the Labour group, Smith occupied a number of important committee chairs at various times. "The way he moved from one chairmanship to another was a sign of his concern to get things done. He saw himself as something of a catalyst exerting the political drive to push through important policies. A leader should not get bogged down in the administrative system; he should be able to concentrate on policy areas where there really was a need for action. This is what Smith did."<sup>742</sup>

A contrasting view of Smith's role in early 1960s Newcastle is that of David Byrne: "There was no political vision of any kind set against the technical vision of the planners." Smith, according to Byrne, was "as much an elite futurist as the planners. He did not have their technical background but his Trotskyist training had given him a belief in an expert elite and he was happy to transfer the identification of that elite ... to architects and planners."<sup>743</sup> This is partly true, in terms of Smith's admiration for and identification with the professional town planners and architects such as Burns (and, indeed, Poulson); but, as is argued in chapter 3, Smith's views had undergone a major political shift since his Trotskyist days and his vision remained very much a political one. And it is misleading to claim, as Byrne did, that Smith was merely "the evangelistic bureaucrats' leading groupie of the '60s". Contemporary views were rather more complimentary, as with this description of Dan Smith as:

now the dominant lay figure in the modern planning world, accepted by the leading experts as an equal. One of the leading figures in that new and now very respectable field... told me recently: 'Not only is he head and shoulders above every lay figure, he is also miles in advance of many of the professionals too'... He is not only on the wavelength of modern thinking

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<sup>741</sup> Elliott, J, 'T Dan Smith in Newcastle-upon-Tyne', *Local Government Studies* 1(2) April 1975 p 35

<sup>742</sup> *Ibid* p37

<sup>743</sup> Byrne, D, 'The Reconstruction of Newcastle. Planning since 1945' in Colls, R, & Lancaster, B (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History* (Chichester 2001) pp 349-50

about planning: he is also one of the powerful modern transmitters and is now internationally known... An astute, and, I think, a ruthless politician, he has, from the beginning, realized that policies do not get carried out because they are good: power is essential.<sup>744</sup>

In the period 1958-1965 Smith was able to wield power to address problems he had identified during the long years in opposition. He introduced measures to streamline the city's administrative structure, and in creating a powerful and independent planning department, and in recruiting Wilfred Burns to head that department, he transformed attitudes towards planning in Newcastle and brought about a complete change in the national perception of the city. Believing that the changes he had made would enable the plans for the city to be carried forward, in 1965 he resigned the leadership of the Labour group (and a year later, left the council) to become Chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Council, seeking to transfer the leadership he had given Newcastle to the North of England. In doing so, he was to exchange power for the chimera of power.

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<sup>744</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3835 *Northern Echo* 27 November 1963 'What Newcastle Thinks Today' by T L Little

## Chapter 5: “A sort of regional prime minister”

*Dan Smith is economic overlord of the north of England... and he's vowed to pull a depressed and old-fashioned region up by its bootstraps and thrust it into the twentieth century.*<sup>745</sup>

### Origins of regionalist thinking

Smith stated he was first drawn to ideas of regional self-government during the closing years of the war, in relation to debate about the future of the health services.<sup>746</sup> His earliest exposure to regionalist ideas is unknown.<sup>747</sup>

Regionalism in England first emerged from the academic discipline of geography rather than from any great political impetus to change; in the early twentieth century the focus was on nationalism, typified by the Irish Question (and, to a lesser extent, Welsh disestablishmentarianism). Insofar as England was concerned, the Fabian Society raised question of regionalism in 1905 in a series of broadsides on ‘The New Heptarchy’, while the question was touched by Lloyd George’s ‘Home Rule all round’ proposals which, as articulated by Winston Churchill in a speech in September 1912, included national parliaments for the four home countries and English regional assemblies.<sup>748</sup> The *fons et origo* of British regional studies was the geographer Patrick Geddes, whose concept of the ‘valley section’, a discrete geographical area encompassing mountain and forest, arable plain and seashore, interdependent villages, towns and cities, paved the way for individual regional studies. Geddes, a major influence on the nascent town and country planning

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<sup>745</sup> “A sort of regional prime minister”: Eversley, D, ‘The Trouble with Regional Planning’, *New Society* 10 August 1967 p188 (his description of the role of Economic Planning Council chairman); Northern Region Film and Television Archive, *The Pacemakers* (Central Office of Information, 1969). This film was one of a series made by the COI for distribution to foreign and Commonwealth broadcasters, profiling creative people in modern Britain.

<sup>746</sup> TDS to Anthony Seldon, 6 December 1988; Author’s collection.

<sup>747</sup> He may or may not, in reading and discussing the work of H G Wells with his father, have come across Wells’ views on local government and regionalism as expressed in Wells, H G, *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* (1901; repr Mineola NY 1999) pp35, 57 and ‘A Paper on Administrative Areas read before the Fabian Society’ in *Mankind in the Making* (1903; repr Fairfield, IA 2006) pp278-289

<sup>748</sup> Lipman, V D, *Local Government Areas 1834-1945* (Oxford 1949) pp 272-273; Burgess, M, ‘The Roots of British Federalism’ in Garside, P L, & Hebbert, M (eds), *British Regionalism 1900-2000* (London 1989) pp 34-35; Tomaney, J, ‘Anglo-Scottish Relations: A Borderland Perspective’ in Miller, W D (ed), *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1900 to Devolution and Beyond. Proceedings of the British Academy vol 128* (Oxford 2005) pp 231-248

movement, believed in the interconnectedness of cities and their hinterland regions, and that they could not be independently understood.<sup>749</sup>

Geddes was vague on the issue of regional boundaries; not so C B Fawcett, whose *Provinces of England*, first published in 1919, identified two reasons for the devolution of parliamentary power to regional assemblies (that the national parliament was overworked, and demand in some parts of Britain for local autonomy). Fawcett believed that self-government, analogous to that of a Canadian province, should be extended to Wales, Scotland, and to England divided into eleven regions. The English regional boundaries did not follow traditional county boundaries, but were determined by geographical and social factors (for example, where possible maintaining economic and social units, and following uplands and watersheds rather than rivers).<sup>750</sup> Fawcett was a north-countryman (from Staindrop in Co Durham), and he believed that his proposed Northern province was “a region distinct from any other part of England, a distinctness which is strongly aided and emphasized by its relative remoteness from the capital”<sup>751</sup> with Newcastle an undisputed regional capital.

Between the wars, “progress in advancing the cause of regional planning was largely limited to extending an awareness of the possibilities”, until the later 1930s when attempts were made to bring about a sub-regional union of the Tyneside conurbation.<sup>752</sup>

In the north, the provincial idea was articulated, perhaps surprisingly, from a traditionalist and conservative viewpoint. In an introduction to a volume of essays edited by the former (and future) Conservative MP Cuthbert Headlam and published in 1939, Lord Eustace Percy, citing Bishop Creighton’s view that “English history is at bottom, a provincial history”, wrote that “To-day, when we are beginning to realize that our existing units of local administration can no longer meet all our local

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<sup>749</sup> Massey, D, ‘Regional Planning 1909-1939: ‘The Experimental Era’ in Garside & Hebbert *op cit* p62; Welter, V, *biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (Cambridge Mass 2002) pp18-19, 64-66, 70-76; Hall (2002) *op cit*, pp143-156

<sup>750</sup> Fawcett, C B, *Provinces of England* (1919; revised ed London 1961)

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid* p75

<sup>752</sup> Hardy, D, ‘Regionalism in Interwar Britain: The Role of the Town and Country Planning Association’ in Garside & Hebbert *op cit* p87

needs, it is good to be reminded once again that there are larger units, marked out by geography and by history, which deserve some share of the local patriotism which we have hitherto devoted to county and municipality...The time may come when this Northern Province will find in a regional council the solution of some of those social problems which have baffled our statesmanship during recent years.”<sup>753</sup>

The outbreak of war in 1939 saw the imposition of emergency regional administrative structures on Britain, designed to preserve the machinery of government in the event of an enemy invasion (a similar system had been briefly brought into play during the 1926 General Strike).<sup>754</sup> Area Boards to assist war production were established in each civil defence region, comprising employer and trade union representatives, and civil servants (often the Regional Controller or equivalent of appropriate ministries and public bodies), and some single-industry committees were also established.<sup>755</sup> However, the wide unpopularity of the Regional Commissioners, derided as *Gauleiters*, the absence of a strong political will to reform the pre-war local government structure, and the lack of a consensus on what form a replacement structure should take, together acted against any progress on the question.<sup>756</sup> Those in favour of retaining a regional structure included a group of Conservatives headed by Cuthbert Headlam MP, who argued that it was “highly desirable that some kind of regional organization should be maintained.”<sup>757</sup> Nevertheless, the centralising impetus of the postwar Attlee government, combined

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<sup>753</sup> Headlam, C (ed), *The Three Northern Counties of England* (Gateshead 1939) pp xi-xii; Tomaney *op cit* pp240-241. Percy had been Minister of Health and President of the Board of Education but sought unsuccessfully to be appointed a minister for the North East by Baldwin (p241)

<sup>754</sup> Lipman *op cit* pp278-279

<sup>755</sup> Smith, B C, *Advising Ministers. A Case-Study of the South West Economic Planning Council* (London 1969) pp 20-21

<sup>756</sup> Owen, J, ‘Regionalism and Local Government Reform 1900-1960’, Garside & Hebbert *op cit* pp49-52. The Northern Commissioner, Sir Arthur Lambert, a former Lord Mayor of Newcastle, was not at all in the *Gauleiter* mould, if Cuthbert Headlam’s opinion of him was at all reliable: “...Sir Arthur Lambert, whose futility strikes me more and more each time I meet him. Pray God that he may never be called upon to act.” (Hall *op cit* p256)

<sup>757</sup> Headlam, C (ed), *Some Proposals for Constitutional Reform. Being the Recommendations of a Group of Conservatives* (London 1946) p 133. The group of eleven authors included 4 MPs (Headlam, Viscountess Davidson, KWM Pickthorn and Charles Taylor), Viscount Castlereagh, G Kitson Clark, Maj Gen G P Dawnay, Miss A Headlam-Morley, Douglas Jerrold, Lord Phillimore, and Viscount Ridley.

with strenuous opposition to change from the established local authorities, meant that there was little effective pressure for change after the end of the war.<sup>758</sup>

Such regional structures as existed were forced into retreat by the Conservative governments of the early and mid 1950s, with regional offices of many ministries (including the Ministry of Housing and Local Government) being closed.<sup>759</sup> The Area Boards continued under the aegis of the Board of Trade in the form of Regional Boards for Industry. Although they were reduced to a purely advisory role in 1953, this role was maintained until taken over by the newly-formed regional Economic Planning Councils in 1965.<sup>760</sup>

### **Hailsham and the North East**

The early 1960s saw a change in attitude towards regional structures. This was attributed by Brian Smith to “a mounting volume of arguments” from bodies such as the National Economic Development Council (NEDC) and the Town and Country Planning Association (the NEDC, a creation of the Macmillan Government in 1962, advocated the redistribution of industry on a regional basis).<sup>761</sup> As likely a reason, however, was the re-emergence of economic problems in those areas that had been worst-affected before the war, and the determination of Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963, to tackle them. A growing tendency towards interventionism in the last years of the 1950s was sealed by the installation of Reginald Maudling at the Board of Trade in 1959; and in January 1963 Lord Hailsham, then Lord President of the Council and Minister for Science, was given special ministerial responsibility for the North East.<sup>762</sup> The North East was an area in which Macmillan, a former MP for Stockton on Tees, held a sentimental interest, and by the early sixties was again suffering unemployment rates twice the national

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<sup>758</sup> Owen *op cit*, pp51-54; Garside, P L, ‘The Failure of Regionalism in 1940s Britain: A Reexamination of Regional Plans, the Regional Idea and the Structure of Government’, Garside & Hebbert *op cit* pp98-114

<sup>759</sup> Smith, B C *op cit* p33

<sup>760</sup> Ringe, A, Rollings, N & Middleton, R, *Economic Policy under the Conservatives, 1951-64* (London 2004) p187; Smith, B C *op cit* pp23-25.

<sup>761</sup> Smith, B C *op cit* p34; Mather, J, ‘Labour and the English Regions: Centralised Devolution?’ *Contemporary British History* 14 (3) (2000) p13

<sup>762</sup> Ringe *et al op cit* pp191-195

average.<sup>763</sup> Sporting a cloth cap, Hailsham first arrived in the region for an extended visit on 4 February 1963. He was to report to the Cabinet that “The tour... was an immense success; I was personally greeted with warmth amounting to enthusiasm.”<sup>764</sup> This did not take account of hostile comments from many Labour Party representatives, including Smith, who was, among other things, to pour scorn on Hailsham’s plans to encourage tourism in the region.<sup>765</sup> Smith’s negative comments contrast with opinions about Hailsham that he was to express seven years later. “He had a remarkable good mind, and there was no Labour Party equivalent of that,” Smith was to recall.<sup>766</sup> In his 1970 autobiography he praised Hailsham fulsomely:

It is interesting that a man like Hailsham came north, and with his perceptive mind which could range right across the board, grasped immediately the main problems. During a series of visits he made an impact which was quite fundamental. His call was for a concentration on investment, in jobs and communications, and for the implementation of a growth area policy... He realized the worthwhileness of recreation... he also appreciated the arts as a regional catalyst. For the first time I was able to see a liberal-minded Conservative, with a knife-keen mind, operating on problems in a region where such problems had defied solution from the thirties up to 1963... It was the beginning of national recognition that man does not live by job alone; certainly this was a pronounced feature of Hailsham’s approach. He appreciated the necessity for changing a backward region such as ours into an advanced region, and sowing within the policy field the seeds of our own growth, rather than having to be continually dependent on outside aid. I think therefore that his contribution is to be measured not in terms of millions of pounds invested in motorways, but rather as a crucial step forward in regional thinking on the broadest possible front.<sup>767</sup>

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<sup>763</sup> Hudson, R, *Wrecking a Region. State Policies, Party Politics and Regional Change in North East England* (London 1989) p 80

<sup>764</sup> TNA CAB/129/112 Visit to the North-East of England, 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> February, 1963. Report by the Lord President of the Council and Minister for Science

<sup>765</sup> *Northern Echo* 21 February 1963: “Who did Lord Hailsham think he was kidding by suggesting the North-East could become a ‘play-land’?” asked Newcastle’s Coun. Dan Smith last night. “The North-East is a good place to work in, the Mediterranean’s the place to have holidays,” the councillor went on. “Does Lord Hailsham think people will come from Los Angeles or Paris to the Lido of Trimdon Grange or something?” Smith’s words here contradicted his own efforts to promote tourism in the north-east, not to mention his own fondness for likening the Newcastle of the future to the great cities of the Italian renaissance.

<sup>766</sup> TDS Archive disc 20A

<sup>767</sup> Smith, T Dan, *op cit* pp78-79

Smith believed, or came to believe also that his views had some influence on Hailsham.<sup>768</sup> It is however doubtful that Hailsham reciprocated Smith's admiration. Reporting to Cabinet after his February 1963 trip Hailsham wrote that "This is a region which is sadly lacking in local leadership of the right quality."<sup>769</sup> The landed aristocracy concerned itself with rural affairs, not industry. The industrialists kept out of local government. The North East Development Council had "practically no industrial backing" and "little insight into the real problems of industry" and "suffers from a tendency towards political exhibitionism."<sup>770</sup> Local government elected representatives were not mentioned at all. Hailsham concluded that "There would be a place for a 'Brecon'-type figure for the North-East and resident there, if the right man could be found. But this must await further decisions on Government organisation."<sup>771</sup>

Hailsham's final comment above gives a tantalising hint of possible regional structural developments had the Conservatives won the 1964 election. He believed that the national government was over-centralised, and was in favour of regional planning, and a measure (at least) of regional devolution in England, in part as a result of his spell as 'Minister for the North'. While he viewed "large nominated boards" as a step back from democratic control, he came to feel that "a pattern of regional governments taking over many of the functions of central government and their regional offices, and many of the duties of functional area boards and joint police authorities" might lead to a local government reorganisation far more decentralised than that of 1974.<sup>772</sup>

Hailsham's efforts in the North culminated in the publication of the White Paper *The North East. A programme for regional development and growth* – 'the Hailsham

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<sup>768</sup> TDS Archive disk 20A: "When Hailsham came... [he] was very responsive to the line that I was putting then, and put even more so today, that science had to have a significant part in the new structure..."

<sup>769</sup> TNA CAB/129/112 Visit to the North-East of England, 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> February, 1963. Report by the Lord President of the Council and Minister for Science.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>771</sup> *Ibid.* Lord Brecon (1905-1976) was David Lewis, a Welsh quarry owner and director of Television Wales and West plucked from "complete obscurity" to become Minister of State for Welsh Affairs in 1957; he was raised to the peerage the same year, and served until 1964. (*The Times* 11 October 1976 p 15)

<sup>772</sup> Hailsham, Lord, *The Dilemma of Democracy* (London 1978) pp 180-181; *On the Constitution* (London 1992) pp86-87



Report' - in November 1963.<sup>773</sup> This announced that efforts to revive the regional economy would concentrate on a 'growth zone' comprising Tyneside, Teesside and county Durham east of the Great North Road (A1). Among other measures, incentives were offered to businesses to relocate or expand in the North East; investment in new roads was increased; the new towns at Peterlee and Aycliffe were to be enlarged and a further new town created at Washington; investment in town centre redevelopment was to be accelerated; and investment in housing, education, tourism and the arts increased. To co-ordinate the government's work in the region regional offices of ministries (existing and newly-ordained) were to be brought together in a single building in Newcastle.<sup>774</sup>

Byrne and Benneworth see the Hailsham Report as one of two "key reports" "whose role in 're-placing' the North East within a national imagination cannot be over-emphasized" (the other was *Challenge of the Changing North*, discussed below).<sup>775</sup> These were both drawn up at a time when regional planning was "coming into vogue and the decline of North Eastern industry had not played through to its climax", but they drove, it is argued, the emergence of a 'branch-plant' economy marked by external control and underinvestment, together with a massive expansion in female employment, replacing the traditional 'carboniferous capitalism' of the region, the nexus of coal, steel, shipbuilding and engineering industries which had developed over the previous 150-200 years.<sup>776</sup>

Robinson sees Hailsham as having had a significant impact on Smith. "The views of T Dan Smith may be considered an extension of Hailsham's ideas, while it is clear that the wide acceptance of Smith's ambitious - even visionary - proposals owes

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<sup>773</sup> *The North East. A programme for regional development and growth*. Cmnd 2206 (London 1963)

<sup>774</sup> *The North East. A programme for regional development and growth*. Cmnd 2206 (London 1963) pp 5-7, 40-41. The 'mini-Whitehall' was established at Wellbar House, a new, speculatively-built office block on Gallowgate, in Newcastle city centre. Wellbar House was demolished in 2007.

<sup>775</sup> Byrne & Benneworth *op cit* pp110-111

<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.* The significance attributed to the two reports is highly debatable, not least because Byrne and Benneworth trace the emergence of the branch-plant economy to the inter-war period; Hailsham came late to the game. While the Hailsham Report had lasting infrastructure effects, most notably in the region's road network and the creation of Washington New Town, *Challenge of the Changing North* may have marked the structural transformation of the NE economy and formalised Dan Smith's aspirations for economic modernisation, but it would be hard to find evidence that it 'drove' anything at all, being published after the July 1966 collapse of the Labour Government's economic and regional policy.

much to the groundwork laid by Hailsham in 1963.”<sup>777</sup> It is certainly true that Conservative politicians carried out much of the preliminary work for regional reforms often seen solely as the legacy of the Wilson government, and created a political climate in which such reforms could be carried out. It is true also that Hailsham’s proposals for infrastructure development shaped the north-east for decades to come (indeed, the motorway and major road proposals advanced by the report still form the basis, largely unaltered, for the region’s road network).<sup>778</sup> However while Smith undoubtedly admired Hailsham, his views on the future direction of the Northern region and the means of achieving regional transformation were already well-formed and articulated long before Hailsham became ‘Minister for the North East’. Smith was widely perceived as a political figure who had revitalized the idea of regional planning, one planning professional telling the *Northern Echo* that “For a decade regional planning had passed out of parlance until he rediscovered it. For the first time the professional felt that here was somebody on their wavelength. He became the catalyst for a lot of constructive thinking.”<sup>779</sup> When the *Architect’s Journal* named Smith as one of its ‘Men of the Year’ of 1960 it was “For being a town councillor who sees the advantages of regional planning, new towns and comprehensive redevelopment and gets them into effect.”<sup>780</sup> A form of regionalist agenda had been publicly aired in Smith’s paper *Development Problems of a Regional Capital* in May 1960, as noted in the previous chapter.

### **The Buchanan Report**

As noted in the previous chapter, Smith had been appointed by the Conservative Minister of Transport, Ernest Marples, despite local opposition, to the steering committee for Colin Buchanan’s working group which produced the study *Traffic in*

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<sup>777</sup> Robinson, J F F, *Peterlee: A Study of New Town Development* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham 1978) p215

<sup>778</sup> *The North East. A programme for regional development and growth*. Cmnd 2206 (London 1963)

<sup>779</sup> *Northern Echo* 9 July 1971

<sup>780</sup> *Architects’ Journal* 19 January 1961 pp 78, 87-88. The architectural historian Gillian Darley believes that this plaudit for Smith was instigated by the architectural critic Ian Nairn, an admirer of the city of Newcastle and a staff writer for *AJ* (Gillian Darley, Thomas Sharp Memorial Lecture, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 18 October 2012). Smith was to return the compliment by selecting *The Italian Townscape* by Ivor de Wolfe (pen-name of Hubert de Cronin Hastings, proprietor and editor of *AJ*) as his ‘Desert Island Discs’ book (his luxury item was a block of stone) (Broadcast 18 March 1968; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/desert-island-discs/castaway/d2e03039#p009y21z> . Accessed 13 January 2013)

*Towns*.<sup>781</sup> Smith was impressed by the quality of minds he encountered on the steering committee, chaired by Geoffrey Crowther, who was to become an important contact and whose company, Trust House, was selected to run the proposed Jacobsen-designed hotel in Eldon Square, Newcastle. Other members included William Holford, whom Smith had first encountered when he was a young painter on the Team Valley Trading Estate in Gateshead, Henry Wells, C H Pollard and the engineer O A Kerensky, son of the Russian bourgeois revolutionary leader.<sup>782</sup>

While Buchanan's working group outlined radical alternative solutions – including massive infrastructure investment – to the problems of increasing traffic loads, the steering committee, whose brief eight-page report prefaced *Traffic in Towns*, came up with an equally radical proposition: the first serious post-war proposal for a regional planning structure. Reflecting on the major issues of urban planning and reconstruction posited by Buchanan's conclusions, the committee highlighted the disjointed and ineffective nature of existing planning arrangements. It urged a policy comprising four stages: a statement of national objectives; the delineation of 'urban regions'; the creation of detailed plans for redevelopment; and the execution of the plans.<sup>783</sup> Such a policy would require a new administrative machinery which "should take the form of a number of Regional Development Agencies, one for each recognisable 'urban region' (and not therefore necessarily covering the whole country). The mandate to the Regional Development Agency should be to oversee the whole programme of urban modernisation in its region, in the sense of seeing that it got done, but not to take over those parts of the whole that are already being effectively done... by the existing authorities." The RDA should have "far reaching legal powers" and be the channel for development grants. "We envisage the Agency

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<sup>781</sup> TDS Archive disk 14B. "That caused hell in the ranks of the Tories. Elliott and them were bloody foaming, they did what they could to stop me going, and I nearly didn't go on it..." 'Elliott': (Robert) William Elliott (Lord Elliott of Morpeth) (1920-2011), Conservative MP for Newcastle North 1957-1983.

<sup>782</sup> Henry Wells (d. 1971) was a chartered surveyor and deputy chairman of the Commission for New Towns (later, as Sir Henry, Chairman of the Commission and of the Land Commission); Sir (Charles) Herbert Pollard was a former City Treasurer of Hull and an expert on municipal finance. Apart from his illustrious parentage, Oleg Kerensky (1905-1984) achieved some renown as one of the two chief designers of the Dome of Discovery at the 1951 Festival of Britain.

<sup>783</sup> *Traffic in Towns. A study of the long term problems of traffic in urban areas* (London 1963), 'Report of the Steering Group' (unpaginated), paragraphs 43-47

being appointed by a Minister... and organising itself on business lines, acting through a General Manager rather than a series of committees.”<sup>784</sup>

Such a model was clearly based on the New Town corporations, and presumably drew on the experience of Henry Wells at the CNT and as a former chairman of the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation, but applied on a much wider scale, and in its advocacy of regionalist solutions the committee may well have been influenced by Smith.<sup>785</sup> Not that the government was eager to adopt such a course. *The Surveyor* records that at the launch of the Buchanan Report, “The politicians, particularly the Minister of Transport, seemed rather apprehensive that they were acting as midwives to a child which could easily get out of hand”. As for the Crowther committee’s suggestion of RDAs, Marples and Sir Keith Joseph, Minister for Housing and Local Government “said that it was not proposed to implement this suggestion at present, and Mr Marples emphasised that he hoped that local government reorganisation would produce organisations capable of applying the Buchanan principles to their towns and cities – ‘if not then the Government will try something else.’”<sup>786</sup> The government was not alone in its reservations about the RDA proposals; there was ‘far from unanimity’ when they were discussed at a conference on ‘People and Cities’ organised by the TPI and the British Road Federation shortly afterwards.<sup>787</sup> Smith, unsurprisingly, defended the committee’s stance, arguing a need for regional agencies to oversee major services such as transport, industry and education as a whole and not as separate issues, adding

I believe we should go further and develop the existing local government machine with its democratic structure and tradition to allow it to operate over a sufficiently large regional area to achieve the necessary efficiency.<sup>788</sup>

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<sup>784</sup> *Ibid* paragraphs 49-50

<sup>785</sup> This is supposition; such minutes relating to the Crowther Committee that I have seen do not identify individual contributions.

<sup>786</sup> *The Surveyor and Municipal Engineer* 30 November 1963 pp1495-1496. The ‘something else’ may have implied the use of consultants, which Marples had said that local authorities without adequate in-house expertise should use.

<sup>787</sup> *Traffic Engineering and Control* 5(9) January 1964 pp551-553. Another critic of the proposal was Wilfred Burns, who in a review of the Buchanan Report expressed reservations about the “creation of regional organizations which are not tied to the ordinary electoral system” (*JTPI* 50(1) (1964) pp 35-36)

<sup>788</sup> Smith, T D, ‘To implement Buchanan Local Government must develop regionally’, *Traffic Engineering and Control* 6(2) June 1964.

At the Town Planning Institute's conference in July 1964 he went further, stressing the extreme urgency of a regional structure and national plan, and a focus on understanding what a national plan was to consist of.:

Without a National Plan there cannot be adequate planning of any kind, for motor cars, education, or any other services... .. I suggest we must have a recognition of what is meant by a national plan. If we do not get this definition right, then events will overtake us so rapidly that not only will our cities choke, but our national economy will choke.<sup>789</sup>

Alluding to a previous speaker's criticisms of the Crowther Report and likening the absence of planning to a recent outbreak of typhoid in Aberdeen, he continued:

We have now to examine the situation of city centres and industrial location and a national plan just as urgently as the medical officer in Aberdeen a couple of weeks ago had to examine the typhoid outbreak. He did not call a committee together to discuss the democratic rights of typhoid bacteria. He took action...

The time has passed for discussion. Whichever government we have, we must have a national plan. The first job it must do is to set a boundary commission, to investigate ... how some form of regional structure, involving all regional services and related to a national plan, can be instituted as quickly as possible.<sup>790</sup>

### **Conservative precedent**

The Conservative government of the early 1960s did hold out the promise of a kind of revolution in regional administration, foreshadowing that which was to occur under the post-1964 Labour government. The catalyst for the proposed changes was Edward Heath, who by 1963 was planning major reforms, as reported in the *Sunday Times*: "Under Heath, if present plans mature, Britain will be administratively split into large coherent sectors, broadly on the lines of the National Health Service or Civil Defence Regions. In each of these a regional capital will be nominated and a regional development committee set up to combine and co-ordinate industry,

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<sup>789</sup> *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* 50 (7) (1964) p 316.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.* The final paragraph of Smith's response to the addresses by Professor Mackenzie and Sir Richard Nugent refers to "not just the boundaries we have known... the services we have known." It may be that the word 'known' is an erroneous transcription of 'now', which would seem a more normal thing to say in the context.

housing, transport, energy and planning for the whole area” and staffed by “senior officials of energy and imagination.”<sup>791</sup>

These new bodies would work “with a new regional body, embracing local authorities, universities, development corporations, and a whole section of industrial, commercial, financial and social organisations.”<sup>792</sup> Heath’s super-department was described by Campbell as being “a precursor of the Department of Economic Affairs.”<sup>793</sup> Regional policy was a core responsibility, and Heath’s belief in interventionism spanned party lines. “An expanding economy requires a more even distribution of economic activity throughout the country. This is the only way to obtain consistent expansion without congestion, without shortages, without inflation and without the waste of unused resources” he told the House of Commons upon the publication of Hailsham’s White Paper on the North.<sup>794</sup> This extended from the economic to the political, Heath telling Richard Crossman “I’ve just spent five years going round England and I can’t tell you how they all hate central government... Regionalism is the great thing. We’ve got to concede this to people if we want to endear ourselves to them.”<sup>795</sup> The regional changes brought about by Labour after the 1964 election took place in “a similar political climate”, and the Conservatives, had they won, had also promised expanded regional policy provision.<sup>796</sup>

### **The Department of Economic Affairs and the Regional Economic Planning Councils**

The Regional Economic Planning Councils (and the Regional Economic Planning Boards, which the Councils shadowed) were the child of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), arguably founded as a vehicle for George Brown in 1964.<sup>797</sup> Along with the Ministry of Technology (Mintech), the DEA was to

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<sup>791</sup> TWAM TDS Archive box 3835. ‘Home Rule for the Regions?’, Peter Wilsher, *Sunday Times* 27 October 1963 p15.

<sup>792</sup> TWAM TDS Archive box 3835. ‘Home Rule for the Regions?’, Peter Wilsher, *Sunday Times* 27 October 1963 p15.

<sup>793</sup> Heath was ‘Secretary of State for Industry, Trade and Regional Development and President of the Board of Trade’. John Campbell, *Edward Heath. A Biography* (London 1994) pp 148-149

<sup>794</sup> Campbell, J, *Edward Heath. A Biography* (London 1994) p 157; a White Paper on Scotland was published at the same time.

<sup>795</sup> Ziegler, P, *Edward Heath. The Authorised Biography* (London 2010) p 204

<sup>796</sup> Mather *op cit* p16

<sup>797</sup> Morgan, K O, *The People’s Peace. British History 1945-1990* (Oxford 1992) pp242-243. Morgan describes the DEA’s foundation as a political rather than economic measure, to satisfy the ambitions

encourage growth: “The DEA was intended to prove that it was Labour, the Party of planning, that really knew how to plan.”<sup>798</sup> Its foundation sought to strengthen economic policy which many in the Labour Party felt “was too much subordinated to the financial considerations of the Treasury.”<sup>799</sup> Nevertheless, the lines of demarcation between the DEA and the Treasury were ill-drawn – a ‘Concordat’ drawn up by the Brown and the DEA to formalise relations was never formally accepted by either James Callaghan, Chancellor of the Exchequer, or Harold Wilson – although Edmund Dell, who served as Under Secretary of State at the DEA 1967-68, summed Wilson’s views on the issue: “The DEA... was the department for promoting ‘socialism’, and the Treasury the department for managing capitalism.”<sup>800</sup> A different view is taken by Janet Mather, who, interpreting Labour history in the light of conflicting centralising and pluralistic strands in the Fabian tradition, saw Wilson’s approach to state polity as centralist and ‘statist’, in opposition to the devolutionist sympathies of Brown and William Rodgers.<sup>801</sup> “The failure of Wilson’s enterprise necessitated the downfall of Brown’s and Rodgers’s ambition. This meant that the dichotomy between the two strands of Labour thought was never exposed in the 1960s.”<sup>802</sup>

The key weapon of the DEA in promoting growth was to be the National Plan; through this, Britain would be able to emulate the French economic miracle. The Economic Planning Boards and Councils were established to provide regional surveys and plans which would inform the national effort (initially, the EPBs were intended to prepare the regional plans, but in March 1966 responsibility was transferred to the EPCs. This was the last time the Councils would be given anything of consequence to do).<sup>803</sup> The naming of the new Councils was sensitive. Brown wanted to call them Planning Councils, but the word ‘Economic’ was added to sooth the fears of local authorities (grouped together in consultative regional planning

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of Brown and Callaghan simultaneously. However, Ben Pimlott stresses Harold Wilson’s commitment to planning and his belief that Brown’s National Plan could have worked, had it not been for external factors: Pimlott (1993) *op cit* pp 360-364

<sup>798</sup> Dell, E, *A Strange Eventful History. Democratic Socialism in Britain* (London 2000) p 336

<sup>799</sup> Brown, G, *In My Way* (Harmondsworth 1972) p87

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid*, p 92; Dell *op cit* p337

<sup>801</sup> Mather *op cit* p11

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid* p12

<sup>803</sup> Pearce, D C, ‘The Yorkshire and Humberside Economic Planning Council 1965-1979’, Garside L, & Hebbert *op cit*, p129

councils), anxious lest the new bodies trespass on their land-use planning responsibilities. The word 'Economic', Brown believed, would "leave enough ambiguity... for our scheme to go ahead without too much fuss. My hope was that, as time went on, the connection between planning for the economic development of an area and planning for its physical development would become so obvious that the two would naturally fuse."<sup>804</sup>

Legend has it that Smith spent the night of the 1964 General Election, and some time afterwards, waiting for the telephone call from Harold Wilson offering him a Cabinet post.<sup>805</sup> That call never came, and it was not until some weeks later that he was sounded out by William Rodgers, who explained the proposed regional system and "said that in my view the key man in each region would be the chairman of the council. I put it to him that for this reason the obvious place for him in a region would be as chairman... I added, however, that an alternative might be if there was a place for him at the centre, ie outside the North-East."<sup>806</sup> This took place before nominations for the post of chairman were formally invited: the names of five other men were put forward, but none as given serious consideration.<sup>807</sup> Membership of the first tranche of regional councils was decided upon in February 1965, Brown refusing to allow local authorities to nominate members so that the new bodies would develop a character of their own, rather than being assemblies of local delegates.<sup>808</sup> Rodgers, who carried out the spadework, reported to George Brown that

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<sup>804</sup> Brown *op cit* pp102-103

<sup>805</sup> I am grateful to John Charlton, who as a young Labour Party activist spent some time with Smith on the election evening, and was able to confirm this.

<sup>806</sup> TNA EW7/134 WT Rodgers to First Secretary [George Brown], 18 November [1964]. In advising Smith that the post of chairman was unpaid, Rodgers also proffered the unfortunate advice that "it might not be in his best long-term interest to give up all his present personal responsibilities. He implied that this was his view also."

<sup>807</sup> TNA EW7/134 Miss B R Williams to Mr Emanuel 23 November 1967. The five other nominees (and nominating bodies) were Sir H Mullens (Federation of British Industries), J H Robson (Lord Chancellor), J H Harper (TUC), Sir N Garow (County Councils Association) and Andrew Cunningham (CCA). Williams noted that Cunningham "is currently a member of the Northern Council but neither Council nor Board Chairman favours his retention in view of his antagonistic attitude."

<sup>808</sup> Brown *op cit* p102. "I refused to have nominations or appointments from the existing local authorities for the new regional planning councils because I'd seen what happened when this sort of thing was done in the past – it would have been the Treasury's list of the good and the great all over again. Also I didn't want the new councils to represent local authorities – I wanted them to have a character of their own." Recommendations were accepted from the local authority associations, "but [I] insisted on retaining the right to decide who should be appointed... We worked out elaborate formulas which varied for each council – so many local government people, so many industrialists, so many trade unionists, and so many totally non-representative people."



“there is every prospect of having excellent councils in the North and North West” (and, rather more tepidly, “I am reasonably satisfied that the Council for the West Midlands will do a useful job.”)<sup>809</sup>

Smith had claimed that he was approached by George Brown for assistance in setting up the DEA shortly after the 1964 election. They met at the Carlton Tower Hotel the week after the election: “George having been too busy and had a drink or two... the discussion was about the DEA, setting up the DEA and what I wanted to do... and at the end of it George said to me, ‘I want you to go into Whitehall on Monday morning and take steps to set the Department up’ and I was troubled... I thought how the hell do I do that and I was genuinely upset.”<sup>810</sup> Brown’s drunken promises did not materialise in a job for Smith.

Brown’s announcement that Smith was to chair the Northern Economic Planning Council brought some criticism, most notably from Edward Heath, who described Smith as “a controversial figure” and quoted him as saying that “The democratic vote is no way to get the sort of changes that we need in the North.”<sup>811</sup> Nor was the structure universally popular – a former mayor of Middlesbrough commenting that “We are witnessing the birth pangs of a new form of government – regional government by little Soviets.”<sup>812</sup> The government was concerned not to alarm local government, with William Rodgers, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the DEA, reassuring them that “Regional government has no place in our vocabulary.” Smith was to advance a different agenda, describing local authorities as “the modern counterpart of feudal barons” and voicing the hope that the Economic

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<sup>809</sup> *Ibid* p 103; TNA EW7/194 WT Rodgers to First Secretary [George Brown] 10 February 1965.

<sup>810</sup> TDS Archive disk 19A. Ada Smith was also recorded in the conversation, commenting that Brown “was a little bit tipsy, I suppose. He was very ebullient.” I have found no evidence that Smith was actively involved in the establishment of the DEA, prior to his appointment as Chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Council.

<sup>811</sup> *The Times* 26 February 1965 p 12. Smith claimed he was misquoted and had said that democracy alone was not enough.

<sup>812</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3836. *Yorkshire Post*, 20 January 1966. Sir William Crosthwaite, five times Mayor of Middlesbrough went on: “Keep a sharp eye on those regional economic planning councils because they could well be developed into some form of regional government.” He had opposed the wartime regional framework: “I opposed it then and often sidestepped it. I made it clear that at the end of hostilities I would bitterly oppose its continuation or extension. It is altogether wrong.”

Planning Councils were the first step towards elected regional governments.<sup>813</sup> His view was shared by George Brown, who was to write that “I wanted these councils to be not only consultative bodies, but also embryos of something that could become a new form of regional government. This was all anticipating the Maud Report on Local Government, but I was quite sure even then that local government would have to be reorganized and take on a new character.”<sup>814</sup>

The new Northern Economic Planning Council covered a large area of northern England, comprising the geographical counties of Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmorland and the North Riding, extending from the North Sea to the Irish Sea, and from Berwick upon Tweed to the northern fringes of York. At its launch in March 1965, Rodgers was also careful to scotch any impression of the new regional structure as a panacea, saying it would be a “great mistake for anyone to believe that in weeks or months they could cure problems which had accumulated in over 100 years of industrial decline”.<sup>815</sup> The creation of the regional Economic Planning Councils was not a question of separatism, or of North versus London, nor even “competitive co-existence between regions, but of choosing regions which are effective from a planning point of view and seeing what contribution they can make to our overall economic plan.”<sup>816</sup> The three main aims of the EPCs, according to George Brown, were to assist in formulating a National Plan; to advise on steps for carrying out the regional plan; and to advise government on the regional effects of national economic policies.<sup>817</sup> However even at this inaugural stage Dan Smith was envisaging a wider role for the Councils: “This job is going to require both economic and physical planning. It will plan for the long term prosperity of the North-East [sic].”<sup>818</sup>

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<sup>813</sup> *The Observer* 6 December 1964. Rodgers was, however, as enthusiastic about the regionalist project as Brown, and was later (1980) to confirm that there was an intention that the new machinery would lead ultimately to elected regional councils (Mather, J, ‘Labour and the English Regions: Centralised Devolution?’ *Contemporary British History* 14 (3) (2000) p 17)

<sup>814</sup> Brown *op cit* p102. From the context it is almost certain that Brown is referring to the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, chaired by Lord Redcliffe-Maud (Sir John Maud) 1966-69, rather than the earlier Committee on the Management of Local Government, chaired by Sir John Maud 1965-67.

<sup>815</sup> *Sunderland Echo* 20 March 1965

<sup>816</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>817</sup> *North Daily Mail* 19 March 1965

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid*

Early in his chairmanship, Smith was to voice considerable support for the new regional structures in a broadcast for BBC radio. One of the most important points about the new Economic Planning Councils, he said, was the links they provided between government thinking at a national level and regional perspectives. These links would give the regions “for the first time” a voice in the formulation and review of the anticipated National Plan; and, he continued, “[a] Britain which can harness the qualities available within its Regions will begin to build, at all levels, interest in the formulation of National Policy.”<sup>819</sup>

By September 1965, Smith stated that the North “was well in front of other regions and... had made more progress in five months that he had thought possible.”<sup>820</sup> His early optimism is reflected in his responses to a DEA study on Cumberland and Westmorland, which recommended long-term improvements in the sub-region such as a barrage across the Solway and the designation of the Carlisle/Solway area as an economic growth point. The report’s anticipation of the developments as taking place in the 1980s or 90s was denounced by Smith as “too far in the future. To speak of 1980 or 1990 is like getting to the moon. We need much more operative dates. We shall certainly attempt to improve on those given and I am certain that long before then the kind of development outlined is going to take place.”<sup>821</sup>

Similarly, his reaction in January 1966 to the announcement of a five-year programme of pit closures by the National Coal Board displayed an optimistic belief in the power of economic planning. Addressing the planned closure of 45 collieries with the anticipated loss of 30,300 jobs in the north east, Smith commented “There are at present 21,000 jobs in the pipeline for the North-East and the average number of new male jobs is running at 11,000 a year... With these new jobs and the NCB’s

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<sup>819</sup> TNA EW7/282, transcript of broadcast ‘Planning for Tomorrow’s People’ by TDS, broadcast Saturday 15 May 1965

<sup>820</sup> *Yorkshire Post* 4 September 1965. His confident claims followed an NEPC meeting in which a working party had been set up to prepare a response to the National Ports Council’s recommendations with regard to the Tyne and the Tees, but also to prepare a long term regional ports policy: “...it means that in the future, instead of the National Ports Council telling us how to run our ports, we will have a policy of our own which is much better than having to react to other people’s policies.

<sup>821</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3836 Daily Telegraph 11 January 1966. No such developments ever took place.

re-deployment methods, I believe the problem in this part of the world can be effectively dealt with. There is no crisis here.”<sup>822</sup>

Early initiatives were also taken in public transport. A study group was set up by the NEPC to examine the feasibility of an integrated public transport system on Tyneside, with the possibility of extension to the entire region. A similar initiative in 1948 had failed as a result of opposition from individual municipal undertakings and the Northern General Transport Company. *The Northern Echo* commented that “[t]he position is entirely different today when the regional tide is flowing very strongly and regional administrative apparatus exists within the framework of a national plan.”<sup>823</sup>

### **1966 July measures**

The General Election of March 1966 provided a safe majority for the Labour government which might have permitted it to press ahead with more vigorous regional policies. Already, though, signs of retrenchment may have been visible. Responsibility for drawing up regional studies (to feed into the National Plan) was transferred from the Economic Planning Boards to the EPCs.<sup>824</sup> The government had committed itself to the former, once approved; but reports by the Councils, according to Mather, “were clearly intended to be less official – and thus not binding upon government. This suggests that less than two years after the launching of the scheme the government was beginning to distance itself from it.”<sup>825</sup> Economic problems, particularly those relating to the stability of the pound, rapidly brought any surviving honeymoon period to an end. Brown referred to “repeated doses of vast deflation” forced on the government by the Treasury, and recalled “I started to feel that the Prime Minister had never really intended to allow the DEA the degree of freedom from Treasury control which was imperative if our ideas were to be carried out.”<sup>826</sup> Brown’s urging of devaluation of the pound was ignored with the institution of the

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<sup>822</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3836, Yorkshire Post 11 January 1966

<sup>823</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3836, Northern Echo 11 February 1966. The initiative ultimately gave rise to the formation of the Tyneside Passenger Transport Executive, prototype for the passenger transport executives for the post-1974 metropolitan county councils including the Tyne and Wear PTE, and the organisation that began the process that resulted in the creation of the Tyne and Wear Metro system.

<sup>824</sup> Mather *op cit* pp 18-19

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>826</sup> Brown *op cit* p104

deflationary ‘July Measures’ (July 1966), and although the First Secretary made one of his many threats to resign over the issue (and was persuaded to stay), his policy of planned growth, with its regional dimensions, was effectively dead.<sup>827</sup> Brown remained at the head of the DEA for another year, before taking up the role of Foreign Secretary, being replaced by Michael Stewart. The main champion in government for an active regional policy, and Smith’s closest friend in government, had abandoned the field. “The DEA... effectively came to an end when I left,” claimed Brown. “Although it lingered on for a bit under other Ministers... it was never again of much significance in Whitehall.”<sup>828</sup>

### *Challenging of the Changing North*

In October 1966 the Northern Economic Planning Council published its magnum opus, *Challenge of the Changing North*, a survey-cum-plan designed to feed information into the defunct National Plan, addressing issues of population, employment, industry, manpower, environment, housing, communications, construction, education, leisure, tourism and health and welfare.<sup>829</sup> This was “prepared hurriedly” (largely by NEPB staff), and much of its content based on outdated information – figures relating to coal mining collated before the NCB closure programme of 1965 was announced, and much of it prepared before the July 1966 deflationary measures.<sup>830</sup> Hudson points out the more ambitious “intentions” of *Challenge* over the Hailsham plan: a concentration on “quality” of growth, the need for R&D and white collar employment, higher productivity, and the importance of moving “from an excessive concentration on heavy industries with a declining need for labour... towards a more diversified, better balanced and more resilient economy” without examining too closely how these desirable outcomes were to be attained.<sup>831</sup> “It was not considered what would happen if the state lacked the required

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<sup>827</sup> *Ibid*, pp 106-108; Morgan *op cit* pp262-266

<sup>828</sup> Brown *op cit* p109. “When the Prime Minister finally killed it [in 1969]... there wasn’t much left to kill.” Although Brown’s own departure for the more prestigious, if largely decorative, role of Foreign Secretary had arguably hastened the decline of the DEA, he was unrepentant: “Everybody in the Department knew how hard I had fought... and realized, I think, that having been defeated I should have let them down more by staying at the DEA than by going.”

<sup>829</sup> Northern Economic Planning Council, *Challenge of the Changing North* (London 1966). The NEPC was the first EPC to publish a regional study.

<sup>830</sup> Hudson *op cit* pp 88-89

<sup>831</sup> *Ibid*, pp 88-89; Northern Economic Planning Council, *Challenge of the Changing North* (London 1966) p 53. Smith had been actively engaged in Newcastle in projects to encourage progress of the kind highlighted as desirable in *Challenge of the Changing North*; and he was to do so again as

powers and resources.”<sup>832</sup> Even had *Challenge* provided the most detailed feasibility studies and implementation plans, however, it would have made little difference to the document’s reception, given the change in national economic and political circumstances.

In November 1966 Smith had written to the First Secretary proposing a meeting between NEPC members and ministers from all departments affected by recommendations in *Challenge of the Changing North*. A meeting was arranged with Stewart for 12 January, Smith being accompanied by NEPC member Sir Sadler Forster who, wrote NEPB Chairman Jim Robertson, “is usually a restraining influence in the Council, who endeavours to keep the Council from overstepping its terms of reference and from involving itself in unprofitable activities.”<sup>833</sup>

Nevertheless, the Newcastle DEA office warned Whitehall that both Smith and his council members were increasingly disillusioned. NEPC was “not content” that its recommendations be discussed in isolation with individual ministers and departments but should be seen as part of comprehensive and interdisciplinary process of regional development. The proposal for a Technological University on Teesside was cited, which NEPC members considered should not just be seen as a means of producing more scientists and technologists, but also take account of “the need of Tees-side for a higher educational centre to enhance the cultural (in the widest sense) environment there and to make it more attractive to the type of person whom the region is seeking to attract from the south.”<sup>834</sup>

The DEA was concerned to preserve its role as the link between the EPCs and central government, but that to reject the Northern request “would cause the Council sharp dissatisfaction and it may be thought best to concentrate on the practical considerations.” Reluctance to allow the NEPC to meet ministers *en masse* was seen

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chairman of the Peterlee Development Corporation. At Newcastle City Council and at Peterlee Development Corporation he had power; at the NEPC he did not.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid* p89

<sup>833</sup> TNA EW7/644 Brief for meeting of 12 January 1967 between the First Secretary [Michael Stewart] and TDS. Forster was chairman of the English Industrial Estates Corporation which oversaw, *inter alia*, and had its headquarters at, the Team Valley Trading Estate in Gateshead.

<sup>834</sup> TNA EW7/644 Brief for meeting of 12 January 1967 between the First Secretary [Michael Stewart] and TDS

by Smith, if not by some other NEPC members, as showing a lack of enthusiasm for regionalism “as he sees it” and he was disappointed by the lack of attention some ministers were giving to considerations of regional development policy and in particular at the lack of consultation from the Ministry of Fuel and Power about North Sea Gas. “He also feels, and the feeling is strongly shared by his Council as a whole, that Regional Councils are not sufficiently consulted in the formative stages of policy.”<sup>835</sup>

Smith was, the DEA briefing continued, showing “a marked degree of disillusionment and disappointment” about the way regional planning policy was developing, and the role of the Planning Councils, and was hinting at resignation (“although one should not take this too seriously”) if a change did not take place within a year or eighteen months.<sup>836</sup>

Robertson and the Newcastle DEA were clearly concerned that the EPCs might be exceeding their remits. Robertson wrote that the NEPC was “all at sea” following the completion of *Challenge of the Changing North* even though Smith had given its various working groups “ambitious, though sometimes ill-defined” tasks.<sup>837</sup> He urged the Department to speed up the production of guidelines for the councils “and to give them clear directions about what is and (equally important) what is not expected from Councils. It would be desirable for this to be given a considerable degree of precision...”<sup>838</sup>

Smith was able to persuade Michael Stewart in January 1967 that the NEPC should meet ministers collectively rather than individually to discuss *Challenge of the*

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<sup>835</sup> TNA EW7/644 Brief for meeting of 12 January 1967 between the First Secretary [Michael Stewart] and TDS

<sup>836</sup> *Ibid.* The attitude of some Ministers also caused resentment. Smith was “nettled... considerably” by the words used by Arthur Greenwood in rejecting the idea of joint ministerial/council meetings, and Anthony Crosland, pressed by Smith on the Teesside university issue, “more or less said that it was nothing to do with the Planning Council.” (TNA EW7/644 JG Robertson to AW Peterson, 15 December 1966)

<sup>837</sup> TNA EW7/644 JG Robertson to AW Peterson, 15 December 1966. One such task was the setting up of a working group to examine the impact of Britain joining the EEC on the region (TNA EW4/65 NEPC press release, 5 December 1966)

<sup>838</sup> TNA EW7/644 Brief for meeting of 12 January 1967 between the First Secretary [Michael Stewart] and TDS

*Changing North*. This new procedure “could lead to real results in comprehensive regional planning.”<sup>839</sup>

Nevertheless, the Government response to *Challenge* was to be a disappointment, with First Secretary Michael Stewart writing that “I am sure your Council will agree that a great deal of further collection of data is needed in order that your Council can assess... the economic future of the region as a whole”, preparatory to the production of a “general planning strategy”. Stewart went on to stress the region’s economic strengths, including the highest per capita for manufacturing industry, and the highest percentage of scientists and technologists in the workforce of any region outside the south east. The need to give priority to balance of payments placed limits on public investment, and proposals for a Teesside university – which Stewart had told the House of Commons on 24 February 1965 might be an exception to the moratorium on creating new universities – were now “in cold storage”.<sup>840</sup>

Broader regional planning interests shared Smith’s gloom. If anything, the North Regional Planning Committee, an advisory body comprising local authority members and officers which had always looked upon the NEPC with some suspicion suspecting it (quite rightly) of wishing to trespass on its physical planning remit, expressed the greater outrage at a joint meeting in September 1967. The Planning Committee voiced “deep disappointment at the attitude displayed by the Government in both the reply to the Regional Study and the meeting with Mr P Shore. It concerned them that the Government were not prepared to devolve any power to the regions and were also so far unable to give any indication of the future levels of population, industry and investment to be expected in the region.” They believed that

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<sup>839</sup> TNA EW4/65: Briefing note for First Secretary’s visit to Newcastle 2 June 1967; NEPC press release, 6 February 1967

<sup>840</sup> TNA EW4/65 draft letter from Michael Stewart to TDS attached to TL Beagley to J G Robertson 23 February 1967. The strength of manufacturing output was attributed to the concentration of capital-intensive industries such as steel and chemicals in the region. The 1961 census found that the North had 13 qualified scientists and technologists per 1,000 employees, equalling the figure for the south east. Greater detail was given in TNA EW7/673 E Martindale (Mintech) to RJ Monk (DEA) 8 February 1967. Martindale stated that the North had 13.2 qualified scientists and technologists per 100 employees, compared with a Great Britain average of 10.8, and higher than all but two standard regions (neither of which was London and the SE). The North had faster than average growth in the leading four of the six ‘manufacturing orders’, including engineering, electrical goods and metal goods. “It is suggested” commented Martindale “that the NEPC might be invited to undertake a more detailed study in support of their belief that the Region’s industry is seriously deficient in the newer technologies.”



“long-term regional planning could not take place in this situation” and that dialogue between the region and the centre was “now destroyed.” The government’s commitments to new towns in the SE and Midlands, and the mooted growth areas on Severnside, Humberside and Tayside led the Committee to feel that the North “seemed to be completely ignored or regarded as no more than a reservoir of manpower available to feed more prosperous regions.”<sup>841</sup>

Smith attempted to soothe this anger, refusing to accept that dialogue with central government had finished and stating that “it must continue if the region was to have any future at all”. The NEPC shared the concern of the Planning Committee about investment in growth areas and “determined to press for major growth points such as Teesside and Solway in Northern Region.”

### **Disillusionment**

At meetings with Stewart in January and April 1967, Smith expressed concern about the future of the Council and a growing sense of frustration, which he said was shared by his colleagues, at a perceived lack of consultation by Government, and by the tendency of some departments to pay little attention to regional considerations. Particular issues of concern included Teesside university deferral and the London/Teesside air licence being allocated to Luton rather than Heathrow; while uncertainty about the objectives “and general usefulness” of the council made it difficult for the NEPC to get whole-hearted co-operation from local planning authorities in drawing up a regional strategy.<sup>842</sup>

Smith was anxious to press ahead with a comprehensive regional plan (but not “his more responsible members”, it was noted), but following the meeting with ministers, on 18 April 1967, agreement was reached on a work programme for the NEPC on a development strategy dealing with industrial and population growth, communications and environmental improvement. The main aim was to plan to offset the decline of the older industries in the North East and to ensure that

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<sup>841</sup> TNA EW7/673 Minutes of Link Meeting between NEPC and North Regional Planning Council 19 September 1967. Peter Shore had taken ministerial responsibility for the DEA in August 1967.

<sup>842</sup> TNA EW4/65: Briefing note for First Secretary’s visit to Newcastle 2 June 1967

Teesside, which had a survey and plan already in progress, did not get out of balance with the rest of the region.”<sup>843</sup>

The April meeting had been seen by DEA officials very much as an exercise in both placating and restraining Smith: Stewart was warned that the answers agreed upon by the various departments to the NEPC complaints “may not be regarded as particularly satisfactory” and he was advised to begin – after flattering words of appreciation and reiteration of government commitment to regional planning – by starting with the most favourable responses.<sup>844</sup> This was to be followed by a series of obfuscations and refusals, culminating in the conclusion, to be put “gently”, that the government had other issues to consider as well as the North and that “the Region has to do all that is humanly possible to help itself, and that it has to look to means of making its own contribution to national prosperity (as well as asking for its share of the cake).”<sup>845</sup>

However hopefully Smith might have taken on the role of NEPC chairman in 1965, by mid-1967 he was demoralised by the task and rethinking his ideas. In May he told a conference of the Town Planning Institute that the regional economic planning councils had made little impact on investment policies and that faults in the decision-making process were worsening regional imbalances. EPCs should exert pressure to change this process and to bring about the linkage of regional economic, physical and financial planning.<sup>846</sup>

A few weeks later, he gave a remarkable interview to the Newcastle-based newspaper *The Journal* in which he virtually admitted the impossibility of the task he had taken on. “The scale of the job is beyond the scope of regional thinking...

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<sup>843</sup> Ibid

<sup>844</sup> TNA EW7/664 Draft briefing note for meeting of First Secretary and other ministers with Chairman of the Northern Council and other representatives of the Northern Council, 18 April 1967. Attached to minute by PBM James (main recipients unnamed), 14 April 1967. The three favourable responses to be given were: a £50,000 capital grant for Carlisle Airport, the establishment of a rural development board in the North, and the acceptance by government as a reasonable basis for planning of an aim of 29,000 new dwellings a year by 1970 in the region.

<sup>845</sup> TNA EW7/664 Draft briefing note for meeting of First Secretary and other ministers with Chairman of the Northern Council and other representatives of the Northern Council, 18 April 1967. Attached to minute by PBM James (main recipients unnamed), 14 April 1967.

<sup>846</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3842. ‘Policies for regional planning’: paper given by TDS to TPI Conference, 23 May 1967

The centre of power is Whitehall. That is where all the major decisions are taken. I firmly believe the job of regional planning could be done better in London.”<sup>847</sup>

It may be that on accepting appointment as chairman of the Peterlee and Aycliffe Development Corporations he might have been prepared to stand down as chairman of the NEPC.<sup>848</sup> This was not, however, required of him – a curious decision, perhaps, given that Smith was now the chief spokesman both for the region as a whole and for one of its new town corporations.

In September 1967, stung by the decision of the National Coal Board to close a colliery in West Cumberland without consulting the NEPC, Smith threatened to resign his position, and in doing so won a short reprieve for the pit. He also voiced his wider complaints publicly and at length in an article in the *Sunday Times*, claiming that the conflicting decisions of government departments, nationalised industries and private companies were preventing “meaningful planning” in the regions by the EPCs and EPBs, and stating that “If the Government... does not rapidly take steps to enable the planning councils to start planning, I for one will not be prepared to continue as chairman of one.”<sup>849</sup>

Government, he wrote, would give the regions “raw materials” – notably financial incentives to encourage industry to move to areas of high unemployment; it would then be up to the regions, after studying economic and social trends, to plan the best use of those raw materials for the benefit of the regional and national economy. While some ministries – notably Transport, the Home Office and the Board of Trade – were supportive of regional views and regional policy, others were not. The record of the Ministry of Fuel and Power “was dismal”, while the Ministry of Housing and Local Government was frustrating the efforts of the Board of Trade to encourage the movement of industry away from London and the South East.<sup>850</sup>

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<sup>847</sup> *The Journal* 21 July 1967

<sup>848</sup> TNA EW7/134 AW Peterson to Mr Winkett, 17 July 1967, refers to TDS’s request for a meeting with the First Secretary (Peter Shore) to discuss whether the Peterlee chairmanship was compatible with chairing the NEPC. This was *after* Smith had accepted the Peterlee post.

<sup>849</sup> Smith, T D, ‘The unforgiveable waste’, *Sunday Times* 17 September 1967.

<sup>850</sup> *Ibid*

“I think that with Harold Wilson directly in charge regional planning has a good chance of becoming a vital part of the Government’s economic machinery.” He recommended that Wilson should do three things at once:

- require EPCs and EPBs to produce within a year reports stating short-term industrial problems, in particular caused by contraction of traditional industries
- the Government should consult with industry and EPCs to question whether the contraction is justifiable, and, if not, to list alternative action
- if contraction is found to be justifiable, the government, in consultation with EPCs, should increase investment in the worst-hit areas.<sup>851</sup>

“If the job of a chairman of a regional economic planning council is to watch development in the South-East and Midlands proceeding without thought for the poorer areas, particularly the North... then it is not the job I understood it to be when I took it on – and I would certainly not want to keep it.”<sup>852</sup>

Smith appreciated the inevitability of running down much of the coal industry in the north but at a meeting with ministers in September 1967 had called for “better publicity and public relations to put the fuel policy over to the miners”; constantly changing estimates, and the planning of nuclear in place of coal-fired power stations “had all led to confusion and loss of confidence in the industry.”<sup>853</sup>

He was also frustrated by continued industrial development being permitted in the South East and East Anglia, and as well as his *Sunday Times* article spoke on the issue in two talks on the BBC Third Programme. According to a note by MHLG officials, “Two themes clearly lie behind all his ideas on this subject. The first is that the Government only has one significant policy, the regional policy of giving priority to development areas and that this must be pursued to the exclusion of any other policy. The second is that the Government can, and ought to be able to, direct the distribution of industry. Both these beliefs are fallacious.”<sup>854</sup> The note pointed out

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<sup>851</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>852</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>853</sup> TNA EW7/664 Note of Meeting held by Secretary of State for Economic Affairs [Peter Shore] with Chairmen of the Economic Planning Councils and Boards 8 November 1967

<sup>854</sup> TNA EW7/1188 Brief for Minister’s Meeting with Mr Dan Smith. Note by MHLG (n.d.) The brief went on to list the benefits available to development areas and defended in detail the policy towards industry in the London satellite towns, while arguing, perhaps disingenuously, that “even though the

the necessity for overspill towns to relieve overcrowding in London, adding, tellingly, that “In blunt terms there might well be more votes lost over a failure of the Government’s housing policy than over a failure of the regional development policies.”<sup>855</sup>

His discontent also led him to attempt to rewrite the role of the planning councils. On 19 October 1967 he wrote to all the EPC chairmen that while the work of the EPCs would continue while the Government considered the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, and during the time taken to implement any recommendations, and that “we may even continue in existence after local government has been reformed”, nevertheless “the time may have come to look at the proposals for certain modifications. I would be pleased to have your views on this or other associated matters.”<sup>856</sup> If he had expected to lead a group of chairmen clamouring for reform and greater power with one voice, he was to be disappointed.

Most compatible with Smith’s own aspirations were his fellow north of England chairmen, Charles Carter of the North West EPC and Roger Stevens of the Yorkshire and Humberside EPC, with whom he had worked on airport policy. Carter sought the presentation to EPCs of a consolidated budget for all Government-assisted projects, with councils having the power to propose major switches within and between programmes, reporting to the Cabinet secretariat, “and the joint proposals of Councils would then become a basis for the reconsideration of the balance of national powers in the cabinet... the presentation of programmes in this way would ensure that the Council was regarded as having teeth. I see little future in the present arrangements for tinkering with programmes after their main details have been settled elsewhere.” He also wanted spending departments to have regular meetings with EPC chairmen, which would prevent departments from failing to notify them of

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movement of a firm from London to a new town is clearly in pursuance of a government policy that firm will not be granted an i.d.c. to establish itself in the new town unless the Board of Trade is satisfied that it cannot divert the firm to a development area. Even in this context the Government does in fact pursue its policy of giving priority to development areas.”

<sup>855</sup> TNA EW7/1188 Brief for Minister’s Meeting with Mr Dan Smith. Note by MHLG (n.d.)

<sup>856</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 TDS to Economic Planning Council Chairmen 19 October 1967, copied to Peter Shore, First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, whose response, if any, to this usurping of his role is not recorded in this file.

matters of regional importance.<sup>857</sup> Stevens complained that councils were under pressure to engage in short term activities which diverted them from their main tasks of medium- and long-term planning, and that as the role of councils in relation to the National Plan, and even regional plans, “had been overtaken by events... we are much more concerned with priorities of expenditure and strategy than was expected when we were set up. Perhaps this calls for some review of our Charters...”<sup>858</sup>

Other chairmen were more resigned or more Panglossian, although the South East chairman, Maurice Hackett, responded that he was unaware of any proposals or modifications “that are of great significance at present, and suggest that you might let us have a paper so that we can see what you have in mind”, following this up with a barely-veiled dig at Smith, who had been vocal in his protests at expansionist policies for the south-east by the Greater London Council and SEEPC: “The one thing I think we should avoid as much as possible is looking over our shoulder at every other region’s proposal. I am sure we have quite enough to settle the varying but important difficulties that are by no means common to each region.”<sup>859</sup>

### **“A triumph for Dan Smith”**

Meeting members of the NEPC and NEPB on 13 October 1967, the Prime Minister said that a re-examination of regional policies was taking place in DEA and that the government’s aim was “reflation on a selective, regional basis” with favourable consideration being given to public investment in construction in development areas, and special consideration to road schemes in such areas. He also announced that Fred Lee, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, would assume special responsibility within DEA for the Northern Region, working through existing machinery. He would visit more often and for longer periods than London-based ministers and be able to meet deputations from regional organisations on the spot.<sup>860</sup> Lee was a long-term Wilson loyalist (he had stood for Deputy Leader of the Labour Party when Wilson challenged Gaitskell for the leadership), although scarcely a leading figure in

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<sup>857</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 Charles Carter to TDS 16 October 1967 (this date may have been mistakenly typed on Carter’s letter, which is clearly a response to Smith’s letter of 19 October).

<sup>858</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 Roger Stevens to TDS 2 November 1967

<sup>859</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3839 Maurice Hackett to TDS, 25 October 1967

<sup>860</sup> TNA EW7/673 Note of meeting between Prime Minister and Members of NEPB, 13 October 1967 (TDS was also present)

the cabinet on the model of Lord Hailsham four years previously. In addition, the PM announced that arrangements for consultation with planning council chairmen on closure of steel plant would be made, similar to those relating to pit closures.

An experimental project on industrialised building was to be set up in the Northern Region, to produce building components for the construction of factories, hospitals, etc. The PM had asked Smith to investigate the best system in consultation with the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works and the National Building Agency.<sup>861</sup> The PM also suggested that the NEPC draw up a land reclamation programme, with assistance from MHLG, to be submitted to the government with a request for whatever assistance might be required.<sup>862</sup>

Wilson's visit to the North "was a triumph for Dan Smith" commented *The Guardian*. "It was he who pegged away so steadily for a building component industry for the north... His threat to resign over Harrington Colliery was on a principle that economic planning councils should be consulted beforehand. He got that today, and more.... Mr Smith has been calling for more roadbuilding in the North to open the region and provide more work. He got that, too."<sup>863</sup> Not all papers were as impressed, the *Sunday Times* referring to a region "unthrilled by Mr Wilson's Rabbit" and that his visit held out no promise of action to help the region's miners or 55,000 unemployed. Of the Prime Minister's offerings, "All this was enough to convince Dan Smith that regional planning had been 'relaunched'. Others were more sceptical."<sup>864</sup>

By the third anniversary of the NEPC's establishment, Smith, persuaded to take stock for the *Financial Times*, argued that while it was idle to pretend that all was success, there had been considerable progress. "The concept of regionalism is now accepted both within the region and in Whitehall" he claimed. "The argument is no

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<sup>861</sup> Smith had long been pressing for such a development to be undertaken.

<sup>862</sup> TNA EW7/673 Note of meeting between Prime Minister and Members of NEPB, 13 October 1967 (TDS was also present)

<sup>863</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3836 *The Guardian* 14 October 1967

<sup>864</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3836 *Sunday Times* 15 October 1967. The 'rabbit' that Wilson pulled from his hat – shown in a cartoon by Gerald Scarfe – was "the rotund and jolly shape of Mr Fred Lee", while the sceptics included Andrew Cunningham, who "summed up the plain man's view of the situation... 'What we want is work'."

longer whether regional organisation should exist... this is accepted and the debate now revolves around such questions as the type of regional institution needed... The Northern Economic Planning Council can claim that its pioneering efforts, for it was first in the field, represent a major contribution in this direction.”<sup>865</sup>

His list of achievements included aiding the establishment of tourist organisations for the individual Northern counties, assisting in the formation of Northern Arts, and the making of successful recommendations on agriculture, forestry and fishing.

“These achievements may seem small and insignificant... but they are not, they are the first manifestations of the growing awareness in the region of the need for regional unity. The old parochialism of the North is rapidly dying and the Council has been partly instrumental in hastening this demise by repeatedly providing a regional focus which has risen above understandable sectional interests.” Regional interests should not be paramount, but it was important that they should be taken into account in setting policy, Smith argued. The Council accepted the run-down of older industries “and we do not argue that these industries should be maintained simply to provide employment. What disturbs the Council is the lack of determination shown in providing alternative employment, the vacillation demonstrated when positive rather than negative ... decisions are required.” Expansion in the prosperous South East and West Midlands was desirable, but not at the expense of those in the less prosperous regions.<sup>866</sup>

His early optimism about the employment situation had evaporated completely by mid 1968, and at a meeting with the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Peter Shore) in June he stated that more employment was needed to offset the decline of the old staple industries and that EPCs needed clearer guidance on how far broader economic policies fell within their remit, so that they could work in consultation with the TUC and CBI. Public expenditure at regional level was beyond the scope of central planning, he argued: the EPCs should be involved in this.<sup>867</sup>

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<sup>865</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3843, TDS: ‘The Region as Part of a Larger Planning Unit’, *Financial Times* 6 May 1968 p13

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>867</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3838, Note of Meeting held by Secretary of State for Economic Affairs with Chairmen of EPCs, 12 June 1968



Among the later undertakings of the NEPC under Smith's chairmanship was the 1969 report *Northern Region. An Outline of Strategy of Development to 1981*. Peter Shore thanked Smith fulsomely – "One often hears the argument that reports like this get one absolutely nowhere. People say, 'The Government will just shelve it – another load of paper for the Whitehall pigeon-holes. As far as I am concerned this is nonsense'" and reiterating that the DEA needed "not only the basic raw material – the facts – but also the interpretation of them and the 'regional feel' that only an Economic Planning Council can give."<sup>868</sup> The document was criticised by the North Regional Planning Committee, representing local authorities, as being "an examination of trends only and not a strategy. The strategy does not adopt a questioning, probing attitude and this, in the Committee's opinion, is what Regional Councils were supposed to be for."<sup>869</sup> The strategy, like *Challenge of the Changing North*, made few concessions to changing circumstances, but repeated advocacy of a growth point strategy and further public expenditure as stimulants for growth – although the timescale for this to be achieved was steadily pushed back. According to Hudson, "As the desired goals retreated in parallel with the present, the policy response was more of the same; that the conception of policy might be inappropriate was never placed on the agenda."<sup>870</sup>

Edward Heath, then Leader of the Opposition, visited Wellbar House on 17 January 1969 for meetings with the NEPB and with Smith. It would appear that Heath's enthusiasm for regionalism had not diminished, as Smith told Jim Robertson afterwards that "he had expressed to Mr Heath his preference for a Council with some control over finances... It was of course recognised in our [NEPB] discussion with Mr Heath that inability to determine expenditure was an inevitable feature of a non-elected body. One further point raised in this part of the discussion was the suggestion (from Mr Heath) that a mixed body, part elected (local authority) and part nominated (industrialists and independents), might secure the advantages of both systems." Smith had expressed to Heath a preference for a body nominated by local authorities which might itself nominate industrialists and others.<sup>871</sup>

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<sup>868</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3838 Peter Shore to TDS, 1 April 1969

<sup>869</sup> TWAM TDS Archive Box 3838. Press Statement on NEPC Document 'Outline Strategy' by North Regional Planning Committee, 2 April 1969

<sup>870</sup> Hudson *op cit* pp89-90

<sup>871</sup> TNA EW7/1232 JG Robertson to Mr Heaton, 17 January 1969, Visit of Mr Edward Heath, MP

### Conclusions on EPCs

George Brown's (possibly partial) assessment of the EPCs was that "It would be said now [1971] that most of the Economic Planning Councils have done extremely good work, and are unlikely to be dropped. Part of the problem in setting them up was to make sure that the work they put in and the advice they gave was in fact used in Whitehall. This was a struggle, because not all departments were as pleased with the idea as we ourselves were... but somehow things worked out."<sup>872</sup> The regional machinery had been "cumbersome and ill-defined", but waiting for the ideal arrangement would have meant action never took place. "We accepted all the disabilities in order to get our ideas off the ground."<sup>873</sup>

Was Dan Smith's sometimes confrontational and high-profile role counterproductive? Diana Pearce describes the Yorkshire & Humberside EPC as "less critical of the national government of the day than some of the other Councils and its more pragmatic line perhaps enabled it to claim Ministers' ears more effectively, on some occasions."<sup>874</sup> Smith's more publicity-conscious role enabled him to win some tactical victories, but in the end neither victory nor defeat made much difference. Even when the regional experiment was at its peak, commented Hardie, "The Government took a good deal less notice than the Councils would like – partly at least because the sum of the demands of all the Councils in the country far exceeded the capacity of the Government to meet them."<sup>875</sup>

Overall the DEA experiment of the National Plan and its regional outriders was a failure. Woodward argues that while the July Measures were overtly responsible for the failure, there were deeper reasons, in that there was only a limited commitment to planning and hence only a limited potential for planning: "It is difficult... to establish the credibility of a plan, while in mixed economies only a small proportion

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<sup>872</sup> Brown *op cit* p103

<sup>873</sup> *Ibid* p 103

<sup>874</sup> Pearce, D C *op cit*

<sup>875</sup> Hardie, J, 'Regional Policy' in Beckerman, W (ed), *The Labour Government's Economic Record 1964-1970* (London 1972) p 239

of decision-makers are directly influenced by official plans. The possibility of successful domestic planning is also limited in a world in which countries are highly interdependent.”<sup>876</sup> For Dell, consistent with his thesis arguing the inevitability of the failure of Labour’s socialist experiment, the National Plan itself was “an exercise in make-believe, which fostered fantasies about the potential performance of the British economy”, while the DEA had no idea of how to foster growth and “the sheer irrationality of George Brown’s approach to policy undermined the hopes for the DEA.”<sup>877</sup> In the end, according to Dell, “it was not proximity to the Treasury that doomed the DEA, simply the lack of any definable purpose other than as a vehicle for Brown’s enthusiasms. The DEA was bound to fail because of the nature of its mission. The management of capitalism was bound to win precedence over the promotion of socialism.”<sup>878</sup>

The corollary to the failure of the DEA, the failure of Labour’s regional policy, was also predictable, according to Mather. Excessively conventional in form, the policy “ran on contemporary tramlines of economic and political thought, concentrating particularly upon regional economic regeneration within a national framework. It gave little thought to popularising its regional policy. Had it done so, the government might have paid some attention to establishing elected assemblies.”<sup>879</sup> It is tempting, on reading this analysis, to see Smith as a potential saviour for the regional experiment. Certainly, he did his best to raise awareness of the new regional bodies and their potential, and the flexibility of vision to countenance reforms that broke through political and administrative traditions. He had argued for an expansion of the planning council role, to make the councils more relevant and more accountable to the people they served, but was caught in a situation where his powers were limited to his persuasive abilities.

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<sup>876</sup> Woodward, N ‘Labour’s Economic Performance, 1964-70’ in Cooper, R, Fielding, S, & Tiratsoo, N (eds), *The Wilson Governments 1964-1970* (London 1993) pp 86-87. He continues, “The conclusion would seem to be... that economic planning did possibly have a role to play in the 1960s, and that it is a pity that it was not given a greater opportunity to prove its value. But it must be doubted, even if it had received the necessary support from the Wilson Government, whether it would have transformed Britain’s growth prospects.”

<sup>877</sup> Dell *op cit*, pp322, 341

<sup>878</sup> *Ibid.*, p 343

<sup>879</sup> Mather *op cit* p22

He was to conclude, some years later: “We got [regional planning], it was no insignificant achievement. It failed totally, but that doesn’t matter, it was a battle worth fighting and it was bound to fail because the people in it, I mean the ministers, didn’t know what the hell it was, Harold Wilson didn’t know what it was either. I used to despair privately, but of course publicly didn’t despair. I went on cheering for a couple of years, anyway.”<sup>880</sup>

### **Labour Party Regional Policy**

Smith made some further contribution to the regional debate in leading the Labour Party’s review of regional policy in the later 1960s. He was invited to join the Labour Party’s Advisory Committee on Local and Regional Government in late 1966, and the following year appointed chairman of the Party’s Study Group on Regional Planning Policy, established on 20 June 1967.<sup>881</sup> This drew up a sizeable report which, published in 1970, surveyed progress on regional issues to date and made recommendations on economic and fiscal as well as structural mechanisms.<sup>882</sup> As well as development area status, policies on industrial location, regional employment premiums and other controls and incentives to regional development, the report examined policy on new towns and on the interrelationship between central, regional and local planning. It drew attention to the lion’s share of new jobs created in new towns being secured by the ring of towns around London, and recommended that less prosperous regions should be given priority in the new towns programme.<sup>883</sup> The report stressed the critical importance of the region as being “the level of interaction... at which coherent patterns become discernible and the co-ordination of different policies rewarding.”<sup>884</sup>

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<sup>880</sup> TDS Archive disk 20A

<sup>881</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3862 Terry Pitt, Research Secretary, Labour Party to TDS 24 November 1966 and Smith’s reply 1 December 1966 (in which Smith also sought, unsuccessfully, appointment to the LP committee dealing with prices, incomes and productivity “as I have some ideas which I think can be of help”).

<sup>882</sup> Labour Party, *Regional Planning Policy. Report of a Study Group* (London 1970). This was not a policy document formally endorsed by the NEC but was published “as a basis for further discussion of the most effective methods of carrying forward the Labour Government’s policies for regional development... the NEC believes that it will be a valuable stimulus to constructive thought in this important field.” (p 3: Introduction by Harry Nicholas, General Secretary)

<sup>883</sup> *Ibid* pp 83-94

<sup>884</sup> *Ibid* pp95-98

The Report was published in summer 1970, after the general election of 18 June which made its contents irrelevant for the then foreseeable future, and after Smith's arrest in January 1970 on corruption charges (addressed in chapter 7). The study group secretary, Peter Downey, had the "disagreeable task" of telling Smith that his name had been omitted from the list of those responsible for the report: "I think that the report, and much of its content, still reflects the lines on which you set us thinking... and I hope that you are happy with it... I hope that you will be able to forgive the Party for its traditional over cautiousness!"<sup>885</sup> Smith, understandably, was neither happy nor conciliatory: "I certainly will not forgive the Party for an action which smacks more of totalitarianism than Socialism; re-writing history is something I always have and always will oppose."<sup>886</sup>

### **The Royal Commission on Local Government in England**

Smith promoted regional thinking in other areas of activity. In 1966 he was appointed to the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, chaired by Sir John Maud (in 1967 created Lord Redcliffe-Maud). Again his appointment was not without controversy. Among those opposing was the council of his native Wallsend: "We believe that Mr Smith is the wrong person to sit on what will be a sort of judicial body. He believes in regional government...He is entitled to hold his views but it does not mean to say that regional government is best just because Dan Smith says so..."<sup>887</sup> The Commission had been established at the instigation of Richard Crossman. According to Lord Kennet, then a junior minister at the MHLG, Crossman had "one great overriding reason... to settle the running warfare between the counties and county boroughs" and was interested in planning to the exclusion of other local issues such as education and health.<sup>888</sup> This had been a matter of concern to Smith, who recalled that on joining the Commission he found that "the future of the health service was not on the Commission's agenda whereas I saw it as the essential core of a devolved provincial/local authority structure."<sup>889</sup>

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<sup>885</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3858 Peter Downey to TDS 27 July 1970

<sup>886</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3858 TDS to Peter Downey 30 July 1970

<sup>887</sup> TWAM TDS Archive box 3836, *The Journal* 7 July 1966 quoting Cllr Paul Chute, chairman of General Purposes Committee, Wallsend Borough Council.

<sup>888</sup> 'Symposium: Redcliffe-Maud Royal Commission: Twenty Years On', *Contemporary Record* 2 (6) Summer 1989 p 32

<sup>889</sup> 'Symposium: Redcliffe-Maud Royal Commission: Twenty Years On', *Contemporary Record* 3 (1) Autumn 1989 p 36

Disappointed by the submission of the DEA to the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, which he felt ignored the role of regional administrative bodies, Smith made his own submission in December 1966. In some respects the Regional Councils he envisaged were modelled on the Economic Planning Councils, being appointed by the responsible minister and members drawn from local government, private and public enterprises, trades unions, academia and elsewhere; yet while “I do not believe that such a Council could be elected in the immediate future... I am sure it would prove in a real sense to be responsible to its region even though not directly elected. It is from the regional level that so much of central government must continue to operate, and... it must be possible for central government to meet local government and industry at the intermediate regional level, where conflicting demands on resources can be examined more thoroughly.”<sup>890</sup>

The regional councils – to be mirrored by regional boards of civil servants – would be beefed-up versions of the existing EPCs, giving advice on regional implications of economic policy and expenditure, a “function... already nascent in some regions”. More specifically, the proposed regional machinery should be capable of reviewing variables in population development proposals; should produce strategic regional plans “which would go far beyond the present inadequate method of determining strategic objectives”; give attention to land use, agriculture, forestry and natural resources; review manpower supply and demand forecasts; and survey environmental conditions including housing, retail, leisure, health, education and culture. “Fundamental” to the planning process would be transportation, investment in which would require more critical appraisal at all levels.<sup>891</sup>

Smith was not alone in his views, shared by, among others, *The Economist* and the Liberal Party; while the Labour MP John Mackintosh argued for powerful, directly elected regional governments, headed by the equivalent of US state governors, with wide powers and responsibilities.<sup>892</sup>

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<sup>890</sup> TNA EW7/664 ‘Regions – The Job to be Done’, paper by TDS dated 29 December 1966, submitted to the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, RCP (66) 64

<sup>891</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>892</sup> Mackintosh, J P, *The Devolution of Power. Local Democracy, Regionalism and Nationalism* (Harmondsworth 1968)

The Commission's Report, published in June 1969, proposed completely redrawing the local government map of England (excluding Greater London, which had been subject to its own reform in 1965). The patchwork of county boroughs, county councils, municipal boroughs, urban districts and rural districts was to be replaced by a system of 58 unitary authorities covering most of the country, with a two-tier system proposed for the West Midlands, Merseyside and Greater Manchester.<sup>893</sup> Overlying the 61 new authorities, as well as Greater London, would be eight provincial councils. These would devise regional development strategies, and, while "rooted in local government... should work in closest touch with central government." They would replace the regional EPCs.<sup>894</sup>

The proposed provinces broadly mirrored the pattern of the Economic Planning Councils, although in northern England Yorkshire province lost much of the Parts of Lindsey to the East Midlands, and gained most of the North Riding, and the North West province gained Westmorland and Cumberland. The Northern EPC area was to lose much of its territory to its neighbours and be reconstituted around its 'Three Rivers' nucleus as the North East province, consisting of Northumberland, Durham and an area of North Yorkshire extending as far as Whitby.<sup>895</sup>

The Commission intended that the provincial councils be elected from the membership of the new local authorities, "thus establishing an organic link between the strategic and operational levels of local government."<sup>896</sup> The councils' principal role would be to create and maintain a strategic plan which would address issues including population change and movement, location of growth points, land use, major industrial developments, transport, regional cultural and sporting facilities, and higher education priorities and location. Unlike the EPCs, which were purely advisory, the provincial councils would have certain powers – the plans, once

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<sup>893</sup> Royal Commission on Local Government in England, *Report* (Cmnd 4040) (London 1969). In the three two-tier 'metropolitan' areas, the West Midlands area would have seven second tier authorities, Merseyside four, and 'SELNEC' (Greater Manchester area) nine.

The Report also provided for elected local councils to represent cities, towns and villages within the unitary areas, with a right to be consulted and some limited powers

<sup>894</sup> Royal Commission on Local Government in England, *Report* (Cmnd 4040) (London 1969) p74

<sup>895</sup> As per map on Royal Commission on Local Government in England, *Report* (Cmnd 4040) (London 1969) p 176; detailed maps were included in a supplement to the Report.

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid* p115

approved, would be binding on local authorities and they would have some powers of funding – and they would have their own staff.<sup>897</sup>

Much of this mirrors the proposals put by Smith to the Commission, and while records of the discussions of Commission members do not appear to have been retained, one may suppose that Smith had no small influence on the content of the relevant parts of the Report. At the time of his 1974 trial, Redcliffe-Maud wrote to the court describing Smith as “an excellent colleague... on the Royal Commission he gave good public service without reward.”<sup>898</sup>

All of this work - the Commission sat for three years, produced the longest Royal Commission report yet written at that time, and cost an unprecedented £378,851 - came to nothing.<sup>899</sup> Its implementation was delayed while Harold Wilson set in train the Royal Commission on the Constitution (the Crowther, later Kilbrandon Commission), a step announced even before the Redcliffe-Maud Commission had reported. Despite Wilson’s move being a reaction to resurgent Scottish and Welsh nationalism, this gave rise to much suspicion of his motives: did he not like Redcliffe-Maud’s conclusions; did he fear reactions to the proposals; did he fear the reactions of Whitehall?<sup>900</sup> Smith himself believed that the two commissions in tandem were proof of Wilson’s “determination to initiate major devolved reforms.”<sup>901</sup> In the event, Redcliffe-Maud was shunted into the sidings; Labour lost the 1970 election, and the Kilbrandon Commission reported in 1973 in favour, as far as England was concerned, of a system of powerless advisory councils (a minority report advising elected regional councils on the lines of Redcliffe-Maud), to governmental apathy.<sup>902</sup> The incoming Conservative government in the meantime had authorised a reorganisation of local government which paid little heed to

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<sup>897</sup> *Ibid* pp109-117

<sup>898</sup> Tomkinson, M & Gillard, M, *Nothing to Declare. The Political Corruptions of John Poulson* (London 1980) note 21

<sup>899</sup> ‘Symposium: Redcliffe-Maud Royal Commission: Twenty Years On’, *Contemporary Record* 2 (6) Summer 1989 p31

<sup>900</sup> Much of the speculation summarised in *New Society*, 7 November 1968, p663. *New Society* posited a decision in favour of large city-regions provoking a Dan Smith minority report, and consequent embarrassment for the government: “If they are faced with this prospect, it is understandable that they are setting up another commission.”

<sup>901</sup> TDS to Anthony Seldon, no date but almost certainly February 1989. Author’s collection.

<sup>902</sup> Brian Hogwood, B, & Keating, M, *Regional Government in England* (Oxford 1982) pp 243-244



Redcliffe-Maud. The idea of two-tier conurbation authorities (now ‘metropolitan county councils’ was extended to cover Tyne and Wear, West and South Yorkshire, but in the rest of the country the idea of unitary authorities was dropped and the two-tier county/district system retained, with some remodelling. In 1986, the metropolitan county councils were themselves abolished and England left with a system the diametric opposite of that proposed by the Redcliffe-Maud Commission. With George Jones, perhaps, “we can label [the Redcliffe-Maud Report] a disastrous failure”<sup>903</sup> Smith took a different, and somewhat self-congratulatory, retrospective view: “I do believe that the 1970 election, had Wilson carried on... I think that legislation would have been passed and it would have led to democratically elected provincial authorities... What is certain... is that provincialism’s march forward ended when I was arrested.”<sup>904</sup>

## Conclusions

The period between 1965 and 1970 in Smith’s career should have been dominated by his tenure of the chair of the Northern Economic Planning Council. Yet this was an episode which he passed over with relatively little comment in his published and unpublished memoirs, and one which left him increasingly frustrated and bored. For all that he would appear bullish in interviews, it is hard to escape the belief that his true feelings were those expressed to *The Journal* in July 1967, that “The scale of the job is beyond the scope of regional thinking... I firmly believe the job of regional planning could be done better in London.”<sup>905</sup> In a candid letter to his friend and political associate Joe Eagles, written in 1971, he remarked that “I spent six years in Wellbar House [headquarters of the NEPC] and the most important objective in those years, for me, was to master technological methods, that could be applied to urban problems. I succeeded sufficiently to enable me to see how inadequate and outmoded are our present attempts ... The role of the city, and region, is, I am certain, the scale of socialist planning for the next 20/40 years and the region is not necessarily a national concept, indeed, I would go further and state *cannot* be a national concept.”<sup>906</sup> As he became increasingly disenchanted with his work at the

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<sup>903</sup> ‘Symposium: Redcliffe-Maud Royal Commission: Twenty Years On’, *Contemporary Record* 2 (6) Summer 1989 p31

<sup>904</sup> TDS Archive disk 9A

<sup>905</sup> *The Journal* 21 July 1967

<sup>906</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3861 TDS to Joe Eagles 30 August 1971

Planning Council, his attentions turned elsewhere: to his growing business interests, to the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, to his work on regional policy for the Labour Party, and, perhaps, most significantly, to a new post obtained in 1968, Chairman of the Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporation. It was in these latter fields, rather than in the machinery of 1964-65 soon abandoned by its creators, that Smith sought to advance his regionalist ideas; and especially at Peterlee, where he sought to combine his views on regionalism, education, science and the arts into a workable model for regional regeneration.

Smith's own significance as a regional leader is open to debate. John Tomaney argues that Smith's views and actions as a flag-bearer marked a transition from 'bourgeois regionalism' to Labourist regionalism', reflecting the decline of the landed and coal-owning elite of former times and the dominance by mid-century of the Labour Party.<sup>907</sup>

However, regionalism was still a minority interest in the Labour Party, and was strongly identified with Dan Smith. His gaoling in 1974, argues Tomaney, together with the suspicions of regionalism held by the emerging New Left, were damaging blows.<sup>908</sup>

This is a sharply contrasted picture which draws to a considerable extent on Smith's remarkable capacity for self-promotion and promotion of ideas (which undoubtedly led to his being regarded as a, if not the, key regionalist apologist of the period). However, Tomaney's positioning of Smith as modern and Labourist against the declining, landed and Tory old regionalism of Percy and Headlam ignores the emergence of a rival modern regionalism in the Conservative Party: that personified in Hailsham, and, potentially more importantly, in Heath. Newcastle was far from being a Labour hegemonic base for Smith; but his regionalist ideals were shared to a significant extent by his main Conservative rival, Alderman Arthur Grey. Indeed, it was a Conservative cabinet minister, Ernest Marples, who in appointing Smith to the Crowther Committee gave him his first opportunity to make the first call for

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<sup>907</sup> Tomaney *op cit* p244

<sup>908</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 244-245

regional, popularly accountable administrative councils in a government-sanctioned report.

This ‘political continuity’ was expressed, in a somewhat different form and with overtly ideological underpinning, by the Rowntree Research Unit, whose authors argued that successive regional bodies in the North drew on a socially coherent and only slowly changing core or people, exemplified in the figure of Viscount Ridley.<sup>909</sup> Smith was seen similarly as a member of a group “which represents a unified elite within the North East”; regional policy itself had as its aim “repression of a spatial or social lack of homogeneity in the North-East”, persuading the population to act on ‘regional’ rather than on “area, industry, party, or interest basis”, while regional problems are interpreted as being “no more than a geographical constellation of social-structural problems” requiring social-structural solutions rather than a geographically-based regime of grants and incentives.<sup>910</sup> Smith’s relationship with capitalism will be treated in other chapters, but his advocacy of regional democratic structures as a means to bring about profound social and economic reform would make him a strange bedfellow for the One Nationism of Lord Ridley.

Smith also emerged in a climate favourable to regionalism. Mather draws attention to “a culmination of events” giving rise to “Labour’s experiment” in regionalism: the 1950s survival of regional ministry structures, Conservative initiatives in the late 50s and early 60s, calls for regionalism in the media and by political groups such as the Fabian Society, and the formation of ad hoc organisations such as regional industrial development associations (Smith played his part in this, as leader of Newcastle Council and as a prominent Labour propagandist).<sup>911</sup> But to argue that an individual might only flourish given certain historical circumstances should not mean that the individual’s contribution need be discounted.

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<sup>909</sup> Cousins, J M, Davis, R L, Paddon, M J & Waton, A (Rowntree Research Unit), ‘Aspects of Contradiction in Regional Policy: The Case of North-East England’, *Regional Studies* 8 (1974) p142. The Fourth Viscount Ridley (1925-2012) was a major Northumberland landowner and *inter alia* chairman of Northumberland County Council (1967-79), Chancellor of Newcastle University, chairman of the Northern Rock Building Society, and Lord Steward of the [Royal] Household.

<sup>910</sup> *Ibid.*, pp142-143

<sup>911</sup> Mather *op cit* pp13-15

What is clear is that in abandoning his leadership of Newcastle City Council for the chairmanship of the NEPC Smith had backed the wrong horse. He had given up a position of power – which had in turn brought him great influence and a multiplicity of contacts – for a simulacrum of power, a position with no power and only declining influence. From the start the Councils were in a weak position, its members appointed, not elected, “indebted to central government and distrusted by local government. Resting uneasily somewhere between the two, they were unable to obtain the active support of either.”<sup>912</sup> Such influence as the councils had relied on the condescension or otherwise of ministers. They were to lose their relevance with the emasculation of regional policy and the effective death of the National Plan in July 1966, and eked out a shadowy existence, half forgotten, until dissolved in one of the first moves of the Thatcher government in 1979. Smith was able to make some headlines and gain some victories: the brief respite for Harrington colliery; the securing of Fred Lee as Minister for the North. But these were victories in appearance only, and Smith knew it. His frustration and boredom with the NEPC became manifest, and he turned his creative energies to other fields, still believing in Harold Wilson’s ability to deliver constitutional reform, and, at Peterlee, finding a new arena to synthesize his visions and create a new type of new town as a new route to regional regeneration.

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<sup>912</sup> *Ibid*, p 20

## Chapter 6: This other Eden: Peterlee 1962-1970

### Farewell to Squalor

Peterlee lies close to the North Sea coast of County Durham, roughly midway between the ports of Sunderland and Hartlepool. The new town, located in the 'concealed coalfield' of east Durham, was quite unlike the other settlements founded following the passing of the New Towns Act of 1946. Unusually, it had been lobbied for by its 'host' local authority, Easington Rural District Council, whose architect and surveyor C W Clarke first proposed a new town for the area in 1938, and equally unusually, it was to be a 'centripetal' rather than 'centrifugal' town, an example of concentration rather than dispersal of settlement.<sup>913</sup> The intention was to improve conditions for local mining communities.

The new town of Peterlee was designated under the New Towns Act in January 1948. It was intended to provide accommodation for 30,000 people, mainly drawn from the villages of Easington RD, to provide recreation and shopping facilities for the district, and employment opportunities for local women. Its early years had seen a number of difficulties: the failure of the first planner, the modernist architect Berthold Lubetkin, to get his plan past Coal Board opposition; the bankruptcy of a major housebuilding contractor; criticism of the dull environment being created.<sup>914</sup>

Much of this criticism came from the General Manager of the Development Corporation, Arthur Vivian Williams (1909-1993).<sup>915</sup> Williams had worked for Holborn and Finchley boroughs, before becoming town clerk of Bilston (Staffs) in

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<sup>913</sup> Boyes, D, *An Exercise in Gracious Living: The North East New Towns 1947-1988* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham 2007) p18; Allan, J, 'Lubetkin and Peterlee' in Deckker, T (ed), *The Modern City Revisited* (London 2000) p105. Peterlee is sometimes written of as the only new town to be actively canvassed for by its local authority, but Deanna Walker states that Billericay RDC and the county boroughs of West Ham and East Ham lobbied the government for the creation of what became Basildon new town: Walker, D, *Basildon Plotlands. The Londoners' Rural Retreat* (Chichester 2001) p22

<sup>914</sup> Boyes, *op cit* p35. On Lubetkin, see Allan, J, 'Lubetkin, Berthold Romanovitch (1901-1990)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2007 [<http://www.oxford.com/view/article/40675>, accessed 31 Aug 2010]

<sup>915</sup> Obituary of Williams in *The Times*, 23 November 1993, a fine example of *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

1941 and of the County Borough of Dudley in 1946. Williams was a man of substantial energy and intelligence, an active Labour Party member, and an admirer of the American urban theorist Lewis Mumford. According to the socialist architect and planner Sir Charles Reilly, “I think he is unique. I have never before met a man with such fine sociological ideals, such administrative capacity and such quick decision.”<sup>916</sup> He was, though, “extremely aggressive and difficult to work with” (Elain Harwood), and according to Smith, “a man of considerable intellect, undoubted ability and entirely abrasive. He was unable to communicate at any level with local administrators, and even less with local councillors, who were important to his work as well as being numerous amongst his Board members”<sup>917</sup> Complaints about Williams to Whitehall, including one from an Aycliffe housing manager about his “tyranny”, came to nothing.<sup>918</sup> This may be because, as his former assistant Tom Toward believes, he was a university friend of Richard Crossman; what is clear is that he was shielded by the MHLG’s formidable Permanent Secretary Dame Evelyn Sharp.<sup>919</sup>

Unusually active in the planning field for a Town Clerk, Williams brought a touch of the *avant garde* to his authorities.<sup>920</sup> While it was important that building should

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<sup>916</sup> From a letter to Clough Williams-Ellis, 23 August 1946, cited in Larkham, P J, ‘People, planning and place. The roles of client and consultant in reconstructing post-war Bilston and Dudley’, *Town Planning Review* 77 (5) (2006) p561

<sup>917</sup> Harwood, E, ‘Neurath, Riley and Bilston, Pasmore and Peterlee’ in Harwood, E, and Powers, A (eds), *Housing the Twentieth Century Nation: Twentieth Century Architecture* 9 (London 2008) p85; Amber TDS Unpublished Autobiography p 161

<sup>918</sup> TNA HLG 115/995 R N Winter (DoE) to Mr Fairclough, 20 September 1972, refers to the ‘tyranny’ accusation.

<sup>919</sup> Interview with Tom Toward, 14 September 2010; TNA HLG 115/995 R N Winter (DoE) to Mr Gilbert, 7 September 1972, repeats a litany of complaints and responses: “Robinson (Aycliffe chairman) told Joseph that Williams needs a firm financial controlling hand... Sharp - Williams is good GM [General Manager]... Robinson - unrevealed objections to Williams... Sharp - Robinson’s objections to Williams not important... Shinwell objects to Williams... Sharp - Williams is temperamental but devoted... Sharp - Williams has done well.”

<sup>920</sup> He encouraging the Oxford-based Viennese designer and economist Otto Neurath (1882-1945) to contribute to the replanning of Bilston; and after Neurath’s sudden death in December 1945 he instead engaged Sir Charles Reilly to create an outline plan. Reilly devised and planned in outline a number of what became known as ‘Reilly Greens’, small-scale housing developments around green spaces, and incorporating communal facilities (including clubhouses at which residents could eat communally, as well as district heating and refuse disposal schemes), at both Bilston and Dudley. Harwood, E, ‘Neurath, Riley and Bilston, Pasmore and Peterlee’ in Harwood, E, and Powers, A (eds), *Housing the Twentieth Century Nation: Twentieth Century Architecture* 9 (London 2008) pp86-87. Neurath was “a fascinating man... political economist, sceptical Marxist, intimate of the Vienna Circle, co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge* and inventor of the Isotype system of universal signs.” On the last day of his life he complained to his wife that no-one would want to write his biography. “Never mind, you have Bilston, isn’t that better?” was her consoling response. (Boyd Whyte, I, ‘Otto Neurath and the sociology of happiness’ in Boyd White, I (ed), *Man Made Future*.

proceed rapidly at Peterlee, what was produced was not to Williams' liking. He had become an increasingly dominant figure, and the PDC Board became less important as the fifties wore on.<sup>921</sup> In 1955 Williams approached the artist Victor Pasmore, then Professor of Fine Art at King's College, Newcastle, to work as a consultant on the design of housing in the town.

**“...like a disease over the whole countryside...”**

Pasmore's first visit to the town was not encouraging. Having been offered the job by Williams, he recalled in 1961, “I went the next day and looked at this housing and I was horrified. It seemed to spread like a disease over the whole countryside, these masses of red brick houses with little holes for windows and a beastly little garden lining all these wriggle roads...”, echoing Williams' own dismay at the “sprawling red-bricked streets of the five year old town”.<sup>922</sup> Pasmore - following Williams' supposed instruction “do what you like, but don't do what we have done before” - was to devise a new look for the town's housing based upon a form of cubism, and promising the PDC “a series of clearly defined housing communities related to each other in form and scale so as to make a total environment, which is both rationally practical and emotionally stimulating.”<sup>923</sup>

Working mainly in the town's south-west area, after 1958 - when the MHLG finally bestowed its approval - he produced a series of estates characterised by clusters of flat-roofed cubic or cuboid dwellings interspersed with three- or four-storey point blocks of flats. The projects were widely praised by the architectural press.<sup>924</sup>

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*Planning, education and design in mid-twentieth-century Britain* (Abingdon 2007) p16. Larkham, P J, ‘People, planning and place. The roles of client and consultant in reconstructing post-war Bilston and Dudley’, *Town Planning Review* 77 (5) (2006) 557-582. Although ‘greens’ were constructed in both towns, the loss of direction after Williams' departure, financial constraints, and the change of political control in both Bilston and Dudley led to the abandonment of the more communalistic aspects of the plans.

<sup>921</sup> Robinson, J F F, *Peterlee: A Study of New Town Development* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham 1978) p310. Beveridge was succeeded as Chairman by the Middlesbrough Alderman F C Pette in 1952, who was in turn succeeded by Col H H Peile - the pre-nationalisation Managing Director of Priestman Collieries, and Chairman of the Weardale Lead Company - in 1957. Pette and Peile both kept a low profile in Peterlee, leaving most of the speeches and public appearances to Williams.

<sup>922</sup> Grieve, A (ed), *Victor Pasmore: Writings and Interviews* (London 2010) p94; *The Observer*, 1 May 1968, cited by Boyes, *op cit* p98

<sup>923</sup> ‘Do what you like’: *Northern Echo* 22 January 1963 cited by Robinson, *op cit* p111; June 1955 Report by Pasmore, DCRO NT/AP/1/5/35 cited by Boyes, *op cit* p101

<sup>924</sup> *Sunderland Echo* 23 May 1958, cited by Boyes, *op cit* p101

Unfortunately the earliest ‘Pasmore’ contracts for 800 houses and a school were awarded in 1958 to a company named Milton Hindle, which went into liquidation two years later with just 350 houses built, many of which were “wretched and shabby in their details and practical execution.”<sup>925</sup>

However, as well as finding the means to give Peterlee a futuristic appearance, Williams also had more fundamental, structural problems to deal with in the town, feeling it essential for Peterlee’s future success that the more light industry should be attracted to the town, a belief justified when the coal industry began a sudden and severe contraction in 1956. Between 1958 and 1963 40,000 mining jobs were lost in the north-east; and the anticipated demand for male employment rose sharply. In 1950, it had been believed that just 4,950 male (non-mining) jobs would be needed by 1971. By 1958 this figure had been revised to 7,680, with an anticipated requirement of 12,890 jobs by 1980.<sup>926</sup> The MHLG responded by giving the Corporation permission to build factories to let but progress was pitifully slow. By late 1962 there were only four factories in the town, with 1,093 Workers’, of whom just 290 were male, and in 1963 there were fewer than 1,500 non-mining employees overall in the town.<sup>927</sup>

### **The Hailsham Report**

Lord Hailsham’s 1963 report - which is discussed more fully in chapter 5 - signalled a change in policy towards new towns in the region: attempting to build socially and economically balanced communities was replaced by a goal of asserting the towns as major industrial and employment locations.<sup>928</sup> Recognition of the North East as a region in transformation made it necessary to promote economic growth; grants and other incentives would be provided for industrial diversification.<sup>929</sup> Public investment was to be concentrated in a ‘growth zone’ approximately comprising South East Northumberland, Tyneside, East Durham and Teesside. Peterlee was more or less in the centre of this area, although not part of any of the main centres of

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<sup>925</sup> David Boyes, *op cit* pp 101-102. Hindle was subsequently gaoled for fraud.

<sup>926</sup> Boyes, *op cit* pp68-70

<sup>927</sup> Boyes, *op cit* pp 73, 76-77. The best known enterprise attracted to the town in this period was the Tudor Crisps factory, which opened in 1960 and which rapidly became Peterlee’s largest single employer (Robinson, *op cit*, p210)

<sup>928</sup> Boyes, *op cit* p8

<sup>929</sup> *The North East: A programme for regional development and growth* (Cmd 2206) (1963) p5



expansion: Tyneside, Teesside and Darlington/Aycliffe.<sup>930</sup> Peterlee itself would benefit from an enlarged industrial area (an extra 90 acres were promised), and from the improvement of the A19, one of a number of road schemes promised in the Report.<sup>931</sup> The A19 proposals were of major importance to the town, hampered by inadequate road connections in all directions. Hailsham's report, argues Boyes, transformed the economic fortunes of Peterlee and was "crucial to its continuing industrial welfare."<sup>932</sup> The PDC began to promote the town with increased vigour, and during the 1960s 15 firms, mostly in the textiles and clothing centre, opened in Peterlee, mostly offering female employment, but in its 1966 report the Corporation claimed that for the first time more jobs had been created for men than for women. This was critically important in a town where male mining employment was falling rapidly (15.8% by 1973). The A19 improvements, beginning in 1964, and the provision of small advance factories also contributed to this economic advance.<sup>933</sup>

Also in 1963, the Peterlee and Aycliffe boards were merged; although the corporations remained separate entities (until 1985) they were to share senior officers.<sup>934</sup> The chairman of the joint board was the "inflexible and austere" Colonel H H Peile, who had chaired Peterlee since 1957, and who, "to some... lacked the creative drive which was badly needed after 1963".<sup>935</sup>

While Newton Aycliffe prospered, the former ordnance factory site providing ample space for industrial expansion, Peterlee, writes Boyes, "was always destined to be the poor relation to Aycliffe... [it] had very little to offer in comparison."<sup>936</sup> Development was hampered by the underlying coal measures (Aycliffe was not in the coalfield); and while Aycliffe was adjacent to the A1, Peterlee's road connections, as noted, were poor. The improvements took time - the extended industrial area was designated in 1966 and only then could be provided with

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<sup>930</sup> *The North East: A programme for regional development and growth* (Cmd 2206) (1963) p16

<sup>931</sup> *The North East: A programme for regional development and growth* (Cmd 2206) (1963) pp 6, 22, 26

<sup>932</sup> Boyes, *op cit* pp189-191. Peterlee expressed its gratitude by naming part of the town centre development 'Hailsham Place' (Robinson, *op cit* p212)

<sup>933</sup> Boyes *op cit* pp 189-191

<sup>934</sup> Gary Philipson, *Aycliffe and Peterlee New Towns 1946-1988: Swords into Ploughshares and Farewell Squalor* (Cambridge 1988) pp158-159

<sup>935</sup> Boyes, *op cit* p195

<sup>936</sup> Boyes, *op cit* p76; In 1964 alone, employment at Aycliffe rose by 40% (*ibid* p 205)

drainage and services, and the A19 improvements were not completed until the 1970s.<sup>937</sup> Furthermore, the Hailsham Report was to introduce a further rival for industrial investment, proposing the designation of a third new town for the region at Washington.<sup>938</sup> This was located between the Tyneside and Wearside conurbations, with good transport links; and, from May 1967 part of its area was designated a Special Development Area, enabling much higher grants, tax concessions and other benefits to potential employers than were available at either Peterlee or Aycliffe.<sup>939</sup> Many other areas in the county also gained SDA status.<sup>940</sup> This marked, wrote Boyes, an “abandonment of the growth point principles embodied in the Hailsham Report, and a return to the old ‘blackspots’ approach exemplified in earlier legislation”, and it came about at the time when employment in Peterlee was dealt a heavy blow by the closure of three major collieries near the town in 1967-68.<sup>941</sup> The town only gained SDA status, following further local pit closures, in 1971.<sup>942</sup>

### **Enter Dan Smith**

This was the situation shortly to be faced by Smith when, on 1 February 1962, his new public relations company, T Dan Smith Associates (TDSA), was appointed press and public relations consultants to the PDC.<sup>943</sup> Negotiations had begun the previous year. It is uncertain who approached who, but Smith was clearly impressed by Williams, writing “It is a rare experience for me to leave a business interview with the sense of exhilaration that I experienced on my recent visit to Peterlee... I am excited by the possibilities that undoubtedly exist in this field.”<sup>944</sup> The Corporation was to pay TDSA £5,000 per annum (inclusive of the costs of preparing and printing brochures and publicity material, and travelling expenses), and TDSA were also to act, for a further £5,000, as industrial consultants. “Smith Associates

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<sup>937</sup> Robinson, *op cit*, p213

<sup>938</sup> *The North East: A programme for regional development and growth* (Cmd 2206) (1963) pp26-27. Washington was designated a New Town on 24 July 1964 (Stephen Holley, *Washington: Quicker by Quango* (Stevenage 1983) p6)

<sup>939</sup> Boyes, *op cit* p195

<sup>940</sup> These were Consett, Crook, Spennymoor, Stanley, Bishop Auckland, Durham, Houghton-le-Spring and Chester-le-Street Employment Exchange Areas. Robinson, *op cit* p215 note 2.

<sup>941</sup> Boyes *op cit* p197. Deaf Hill colliery closed in 1967; Trimdon and Wheatley Hill in 1968.

<sup>942</sup> TNA EW 7/1372 Durham New Towns: Management Structure 16 April 1971

<sup>943</sup> DCRO NT/AP/7/1/34, Minutes of PDC 1 February 1962

<sup>944</sup> TWA DF/TDS Box 3874 TDS to AVW 19 December 1961. Williams claimed Smith approached him: TWA DF/TDS D2063 Witness statement, Arthur Vivian Williams [cover page with date missing; probably late 1973]

had established offices in Frankfurt and Paris and they hoped, in the near future, to open an office in New York”, Williams assured the Peterlee board.<sup>945</sup>

Smith recalled: “It was a tough public relations assignment, as I quickly discovered. The surrounding local authorities, including the officers of the Durham County Council and the regional officers of the various Ministries, were hostile to the General Manager... and were reluctant to meet him simply as they said, to be insulted.”<sup>946</sup> There had been hostile press coverage of housing standards and employment in the town, and “an understandable suspicion in the minds of most of the journalists to whom I spoke... that all was not well in the town.”<sup>947</sup> The firm rapidly began to drum up press coverage - recorded in lists of column inches of coverage submitted to Williams - and to organise press visits, exhibitions, etc: in late September 1962 Smith and Peter Ward were in Norway with an exhibition stand for Peterlee at the ‘Gateway to Britain’ exhibition in Bergen and Stavanger.<sup>948</sup> This all formed part of what Robinson describes as “an attempt to re-interpret Peterlee’s functions in the terms of the regional policy prescriptions of the 1960s...regarded as part of the process of modernisation and regional revival”: who better, therefore, to be a spokesman for the town than Dan Smith, ‘Mr Newcastle’ and the region’s arch-moderniser?<sup>949</sup>

At the same time, Smith was introducing his other clients to Peterlee. An undated report to the General Manager, dating probably from 1962, includes the recommendation ‘Approach Poulson, Bovis and Crudens re industrial development’; by December 1962, he had advanced plans to bring the Scottish construction company Crudens (with which his name had been linked in Newcastle), to Peterlee. On 10 December 1962, he wrote to Williams that two companies, Rima and Crudens, had expressed interest in establishing a housing components factory in Peterlee, and that Crudens wanted to proceed to firm contracts. “We are proposing,

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<sup>945</sup> DCRO NT/AP/7/1/34, Minutes of PDC 1 February 1962. The payments were subsequently reduced to £4,500 for the PR account and £1,500 for the industrial consultancy, which lapsed in 1964 or 1965: TWA DF/TDS Box 3914 AVW to TDS notifying him of contract renewals, 1 April 1963, 24 March 1965, 6 May 1966, 19 July 1967. The overseas offices did not exist, although it is possible that Smith had established contacts in those locations.

<sup>946</sup> Amber TDS Unpublished Autobiography p 161

<sup>947</sup> Amber TDS Unpublished Autobiography p 161

<sup>948</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3874

<sup>949</sup> Quote from Robinson, *op cit* p356

subject to the approval of the board, in association with Crudens and Skarne, to commence an immediate investigation into the practicabilities of opening associated factories in Peterlee and are convinced there exists every possibility of this developing into an important employment centre.”<sup>950</sup> Crudens also secured contracts to build three advance factories - handed over to the Corporation by February 1964 - and 100 houses at Acre Rigg, on the west side of the town, on which work started that month.<sup>951</sup> Crudens’ own factory was opened in June 1965, immediately starting production for a 212-house contract for the Acre Rigg.<sup>952</sup> Crudens were to go on to build several housing developments at Peterlee, particularly in the Howletch and South West districts, using the Skarne system-building technique, for which Dan Smith was the British representative and Crudens its British licensee.<sup>953</sup> At first, the Skarne system seemed to offer significant advantages over traditional building methods (and the supposed advantages of industrialised building were very widely recognised: by 1967 42% of all new housing in new towns was being built by industrialised methods).<sup>954</sup> While traditional building was vulnerable to disruption by the weather, units - whole sections of houses - could be constructed year-round under cover. Transported to site by road, they would be erected using cranes, making unnecessary the time-consuming erection and dismantling of scaffolding. A four storey block of twenty flats could be erected in twenty days, and completed within two months.<sup>955</sup> “Instead of a skyline dominated by tiles or slates, there are flat roofs which help to make the houses seem like cosy boxes for living in rather than utilitarian defences against downpours” wrote Ray Thomas in 1969.<sup>956</sup> He was right: far from being ‘utilitarian defences’, the flat roofs leaked badly. The system-built dwellings were poorly finished and their high maintenance and repair costs accounted for perhaps half of PDC’s rental income by 1976.<sup>957</sup>

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<sup>950</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3874 Undated report to General Manager; draft letter, TDS to AVW, 10 December 1962. Skarne was the Swedish industrialised building system for which Crudens, of Musselburgh, was the UK agent.

<sup>951</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/1/1/6 PDC Minutes 6 February 1964, 5 March 1964. It was envisaged the first 100 houses at Acre Rigg would be built by traditional methods; the remainder by industrialised methods.

<sup>952</sup> *Northern Echo* 31 July 1965 pp1-2

<sup>953</sup> Boyes, *op cit* pp231-133

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid* p232

<sup>955</sup> *Ibid* p231

<sup>956</sup> Thomas, R, *Aycliffe to Cumbernauld: a study of seven new towns in their regions. PEP vol 35 Broadsheet 516* (London 1969) p905

<sup>957</sup> Boyes, *op cit* pp233-234

A further complication in Dan Smith's relations at Peterlee came also in 1962 when, with the permission of Williams and the Board, he began to employ Kenneth Allan on a part-time basis. Allan was a senior officer of the Aycliffe and Peterlee corporations, in charge of public relations. Unlike Smith's colleagues in his growing PR empire, Allan was a qualified member of the Institute of Public Relations and was prepared to work simultaneously for the corporations, and, in the evenings, for Dan Smith. His role was to act as a go-between or chief of staff at T Dan Smith Associates. Peter Ward and other PR executives would report to Allan, who would report to Dan Smith.<sup>958</sup> "It was cosy" commented Fitzwater and Taylor in *Web of Corruption*. "Dan worked for Ken Allan's corporation and Ken Allan worked for him."<sup>959</sup>

John Poulson also carried out several contracts for the Aycliffe Development Corporation - run under a joint senior management system with Peterlee - in the 1960s, and while no documentary evidence has been found, it seems entirely possible that Smith introduced Poulson to Williams, who was also General Manager for Aycliffe.<sup>960</sup> There are also allegations that Williams received benefits from Poulson's organisation. Tom Toward recalled "I know that Ken Allan went down to the Quayside in Newcastle, every three months, I think it was, could be six months, regularly, over many years... after the Poulson business blew up... he came to see me and said Tom, as you know I've been going down to the Quayside to Dan Smith Associates PR Ltd or whatever they called it, every so often to get money for Vivian - and I think it was £1500 a visit but again that's just memory, it was cash, anyway - and he said, do you know, with this Poulson business going up, I'm going to be the

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<sup>958</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3911. Memo, TDS to Peter Ward, Robert Nichol, William Nichol, A R Hadwin 2 October 1962. "Mr Allan will be responsible to me for co-ordinating the activities of the various members of the Organisation, and in this respect he will require a system of reporting to him direct... Until we have established an efficient routine, the administrative function will not be an easy one, and I therefore stress the necessity of giving Mr Allan your full support..."

<sup>959</sup> Fitzwater, R & Taylor, D, *Web of Corruption. The Story of J.G.L. Poulson and T. Dan Smith* (London 1981) p40.

<sup>960</sup> At Peterlee, Poulson was responsible for a small shop development in 1965, and the making of a model for the Arts and Humanities Centre in 1970. At Aycliffe, he gained three commissions to design a total of 602 dwellings in 1965 and 1966, and in 1968 gained two contracts to build four small shop units. Only the last of these - for one shop - was dated after Dan Smith became Chairman. TNA HLG 115/995 K L Allan (PDC) to R N Winter, DoE 21 July 1972. Poulson also designed the Norseman Hotel in Peterlee and possibly a public house; but these were by private contract with Scottish & Newcastle Breweries rather than the Development Corporation.

fall guy here, because I've been signing it K L Allan, the receipt..."<sup>961</sup> The benefits included more than envelopes of cash; on 29 April 1965 Poulson wrote to Smith to "...wish you and Mr Williams a very happy Cup Final. Please be sure that you cheer for the right side!" The trip included a chauffeur driven limousine and accommodation at the Dorchester Hotel.<sup>962</sup> In a statement given in 1973 to the Metropolitan Police, Williams claimed that "I thought Dan was the source of the tickets. I did not know it was Poulson", and stated that he had met Poulson only three or four times, the first time being to do with the Norseman Hotel (which, if true, would almost certainly have placed it in 1968 or 1969), although in a later statement he changed this to a first meeting in 1963. He had received drink from Poulson at Christmas - six bottles of brandy and six champagne - for three or four years, "just something that was widely practiced", and Poulson had covenanted several hundreds of pounds to the school where Williams' son was a pupil.<sup>963</sup>

Open System Building Ltd, a Poulson-controlled company, also had aspirations in Peterlee and Aycliffe, and Poulson companies had done a significant amount of work in Aycliffe, though by 1967 this was drying up. A representative of Poulson, J G Watson reported a meeting with the Chief Architect, Theo Marsden, in November 1967, suggesting that "as it seems that at present we cannot be certain of further housing commissions it may be useful for us - preferably yourself - to have a chat with Mr A V Williams, the General Manager, and possibly Mr Marsden."<sup>964</sup> According to a progress report dated 28 December 1967, "Following unofficial visit of Mr K Allan to Pontefract, approaches in official capacity from OSB to be made when OK is received from TDS."<sup>965</sup> In February 1968 an OSB progress report recorded "We are following up our previous approaches to this Authority on the

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<sup>961</sup> Interview with Tom Toward, 14 September 2010. However, as Allan was working part time for Smith over the same period the need for special visits would scarcely arise: see Allan's police witness statement of 14 November 1973 (TNA J291/159/2)

<sup>962</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3852 JGLP to TDS 29 April 1965. Poulson went on: "Williams told me that he is very much a Liverpool man, but just keep him quiet. You know what Yorkshire men are like when they are roused, but I know he is a Welshman and well able to look after himself, and I should know having a bit of Welsh blood in my own veins!" Williams would have been well satisfied as Liverpool beat Leeds 2-1 in extra time.

<sup>963</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box D2063 Witness statement Arthur Vivian Williams, 1 August 1973; TWA DF/TDS D2063 Witness statement, Arthur Vivian Williams [cover page with date missing; probably late 1973]

<sup>964</sup> TNA J 291/84 J G Watson to JGLP, 23 November 1967. There is no suggestion that either Watson or Marsden were implicated in illegal activity.

<sup>965</sup> TNA J 291/74 OSB Progress Report 28 December 1968

strong advice of Mr Dan Smith”.<sup>966</sup> The next month Poulson was complaining to Smith about Allan “backing out” of an appointment arranged during a telephone conversation between Poulson and Allan. “I know, like me, you fully appreciate the urgency of getting a positive discussion going with Peterlee as quickly as possible and should you encounter Mr Allan during the next few days, I would be grateful if you would perhaps stress this aspect of our negotiations.”<sup>967</sup> Dan Smith’s association with OSB continued after he took the chair of the joint corporations, and he was to meet Poulson in June 1969 to discuss OSB matters in relation to Aycliffe and Peterlee.<sup>968</sup> Poulson was clearly confident of his prospects there and elsewhere in the north east, writing in April 1969 to OSB chairman Sir Bernard Kenyon “Peterlee and Aycliffe, West Bouldon [sic], Seaton Valley, Blythe [sic] and Bedlington are all mine personally and will be starting in the next three months...”<sup>969</sup>

It appears that Smith was in line for the Aycliffe and Peterlee chairmanships from early 1967, the matter being discussed by Smith, Anthony Greenwood and Bob Mellish at a number of meetings that year, before being cleared by the Treasury and the Prime Minister. On 20<sup>th</sup> June, Greenwood had mentioned Aycliffe/Peterlee to Smith, who, it was recorded, “has from time to time been exhibiting interest in the chairmanship of a New Town”, and who “said he would be delighted to consider this in about three months’ time... and wanted to accept it provided this did not put the First Secretary in an embarrassing position” [because of Smith’s role as Chairman of the NEPC]. The delay in appointment was later said to be to allow his PR contract to run its course.<sup>970</sup> Smith was formally appointed Chairman of the Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations with effect from 1 July 1968, at an annual salary of £2,000.<sup>971</sup> He had relinquished his public relations contract on 31 March.<sup>972</sup>

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<sup>966</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3849 OSB Progress Report 16 February 1968

<sup>967</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3849 JGLP to TDS 22 March 1968

<sup>968</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3849 J F Rook (OSB) to W Sales (Chairman, OSB)

<sup>969</sup> TNA J 291/73 JGLP to Sir Bernard Kenyon 11 April 1969

<sup>970</sup> TNA HLG 119/995 R N Winter to Mr Fairclough 21 July 1972 mentions the meetings with Greenwood and Mellish and the cause of the delayed appointment. TNA EW 7/134 Sir Matthew Stephenson (MHLG) to Sir Douglas Allen (DEA) 30 June 1967 relates the meeting of 20 June 1967.

<sup>971</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3857 Anthony Greenwood to TDS 29 December 1967 & TDS’s reply 2 January 1968; DF/TDS Box 3876. Instrument of appointment dated 21 March 1968, with G R Coles, MHLG, to TDS 22 March 1968

<sup>972</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3849 Sir Matthew Stephenson, MHLG to Col H H Peile, Chairman, PDC 8 March 1968; TDS to AVW 28 March 1968

Despite some initial murmurings about his many commitments, including his recent appointment to the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, affecting his ability to do the job properly, no conflict of interest was seen in Smith taking up this new role while remaining NEPC chairman, let alone being a former PR contractor to the Corporation.<sup>973</sup> Jim Robertson, Chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Board, told the DEA that he had no objection; indeed there were precedents in that Smith's leadership of Newcastle City Council was not held to be any impediment, and that a current NEPC member - Sir James Steel - had been appointed Chairman of the Washington Development Corporation. Robertson did, though, wonder at Smith's motives:

“I would have thought that he would be aiming much higher than this; he is always very critical of other public figures who accept what he regards as unimportant appointments. It may be that he wants to be in a position where he can apply some of his planning ideas in practice. I think he has sometimes regretted terminating his association with Newcastle City Council because it deprived him of that opportunity. Or it may be that he feels the appointment would in some way get him ‘inside’ the New Towns machine. He is taking great interest these days in the administration of New Towns policy, largely because of the conflict he sees between the interests of the New Towns outside the Development Areas and the Development Areas themselves.”<sup>974</sup>

Robertson's analysis of Smith's views is credible; it may also be that Smith sought the Peterlee position in order to demonstrate the value of science and technology in urban and regional regeneration. The recently-published NEPC report *Challenge of the Changing North* had stressed the relative backwardness of the region in terms of its technological development, stating that “[i]t is obvious upon first inspection that research and development effort here is seriously out of balance”, the gap between the North and the rest of Great Britain showing a shortage of graduate employment in the region. There was no government civil research station in the North, and just

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<sup>973</sup> TNA EW 7/134 T L Beagley (DEA) to Mr Peterson 13 July 1967. Beagley saw the appointment of a planning council chairman to a post with special responsibility for one area in a region as being “undesirable in principle” and given that Smith “already has so many interests... I doubt if he has the time to do the job properly... However I think it would be difficult for us to make a convincing case against the proposal.” He also noted that “there have been some signs recently that he would not mind stepping down [from the NEPC chairmanship]”. A few days later A W Peterson wrote that “We do not see any reason why Mr Smith should not continue as Council [NEPC] Chairman after his appointment as Chairman of the Development Corporations has been announced.” (TNA EW 7/134 A W Peterson to Mr Burge 17 July 1967).

<sup>974</sup> TNA EW 7/134 J G Robertson to T L Beagley (DEA) 5 July 1967. Peterlee - unlike Washington - lay outside the Special Development Area boundaries until 1971.



one of the ‘research associations’, while, claimed the report, the government invested heavily in industries such as electronics elsewhere, and regional business management was unwilling to invest in R&D.<sup>975</sup>

The solution, the report argued, was in the long term to increase the amount of R&D carried out by industry and by industry-sponsored activity in university and other laboratories; urgent short term action, in the form of encouraging regional industry to use such facilities as existed, coupled with an intensive programme of “educating industry”, together with financial aid for smaller companies, to prevent the situation worsening. Government assistance would be required. “This is not just an interesting experiment in diversification but a touchstone for the future of the North.”<sup>976</sup>

### **“...the marriage of an idea with a physical possibility”: the Peterlee science campus**

The idea of seeking rather more than conventional *ad hoc* industrial development for Peterlee appears to have emerged in early 1967. Lord Wynne-Jones, the Professor of Chemistry at Newcastle University raised the idea of a science campus for the north-east following a visit to the ‘Research Triangle’ in North Carolina, an early science park established in the mid-1950s with the co-operation of the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), Duke University and North Carolina State University.<sup>977</sup> By February 1967 Williams had written to Smith about the suggestion and expressing interest on behalf of Peterlee, and Smith followed this up by setting up a dinner with Wynne-Jones to discuss the matter.<sup>978</sup>

The idea of a science campus (or science park, or research base) matured as the months passed, and gained a new urgency when Peterlee was excluded from the

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<sup>975</sup> Northern Economic Planning Council, *Challenge of the Changing North* (London 1966) p14. The shortfall was estimated to be in the order of 600 graduate scientists and engineers.

<sup>976</sup> *Ibid* p57

<sup>977</sup> Smith, T Dan op cit p130. Kenrick Wynne-Jones, created Baron Wynne-Jones in 1964, was Professor of Chemistry at Newcastle University. His wife Ann was a long-serving Labour member of Newcastle City Council. On the establishment of the Research Triangle, see W B Hamilton, ‘The Research Triangle in North Carolina: A Study in Leadership for the Common Weal’, *South Atlantic Quarterly* (Spring 1966) pp 254-278

<sup>978</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3858 AVW to TDS 17 February 1967; TWAM DF/TDS Box 3858 TDS to Lord Wynne-Jones 22 February 1967

Special Development Areas schedule in May 1967, giving Washington New Town a clear advantage over its regional rivals. In June 1967 Williams produced a paper examining the potential for research and development (R&D) activities in Peterlee.<sup>979</sup> Pointing out that British R&D was “less concerned than it should be with business motives” and not readily available to smaller companies, “[t]he situation, therefore, draws attention to the need to consider ways and means of encouraging the establishment of Research and Development Organisations within the region who would establish a connection between the technical needs of industry and the universities within the region. If this problem can be solved then the region can venture forth upon the competitiveness necessary to exploit its unrivalled position vis a vis the Common Market.” Peterlee, close to Durham and Newcastle Universities and with attractive natural surroundings, could be an outstanding site for an R&D base, wrote Williams, adding “...the town is an expression of the vitality demanded in the north east to establish its claim as a region endowed by nature and potential to rank high in the European hierarchy of zones of attraction. There is no location in the North East more capable of originating and sustaining a base of R&D designed to serve the technology of modern industry.”

The 200 acres of the Oakerside district were admirably suited:

“Here a base for R&D establishments could be developed including housing and amenities for the technologists and employees involved. The Corporation... is able to build for the enterprise and let at rack rent, can dispose of freehold land for building... or provide mortgages. There is considerable flexibility in the approach whether to the development of laboratories, factories, or houses. This is the key to the success of Peterlee as a total environment... A strong scientific and technological base in Peterlee would serve to improve the economic image of the North East and increase the productivity of its fragmented structure. Might it not also magnetise the interest of the science graduates, many of whom are engineers and technologists at heart, towards the field of industry? To succeed in this endeavour could revolutionise the economy of the North East.”<sup>980</sup>

Smith came up with the idea of a trust to run the project, and on 23 October 1967

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<sup>979</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3840. A V Williams, ‘Research and Development and Economic Growth. A Case for R&D in Peterlee New Town’, June 1967.

<sup>980</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3840. A V Williams, ‘Research and Development and Economic Growth. A Case for R&D in Peterlee New Town’, June 1967.

wrote to his old friend and former council colleague Ted Short, then Postmaster General, asking him to suggest a Post Office nominee for the putative trust. The other people and bodies represented, he told Short, might include Sir Isaac Wolfson, the Universities of Newcastle and Durham, the Ministry of Technology, ICI, Teesside Polytechnic, and the US and Swiss embassies.<sup>981</sup> The same day he wrote to Williams that he thought GPO's decision to locate its research project in East Anglia "could be re-examined in the light of our Peterlee project" - and suggesting his business associate Eric Levine as a possible Trustee.<sup>982</sup>

By November, Williams told Colonel H H Peile, the PDC chairman, "Dan Smith...tells me that he has gone a long way now in pursuit of the matter and has made a contact with the American Embassy who, I understand, have exhibited great interest since the U.S. Government is about to embark upon an extensive investment programme in Western Europe with particularly in view the development of scientific enterprise in the United Kingdom... Dan Smith certainly seems to be getting things moving but I think he is a little worried lest the approaches he has made and the interest he has elicited should reach the ear of competing places in our region. He seems pretty confident that with your backing and approval we could take this business a very long way."<sup>983</sup>

Quite how far this long way might extend was made clear by Williams in a letter of 23 November 1967 to Smith: "If it comes off it would have not only a regional impact of the highest importance but also nation wide ramifications. I have not stressed this; it might be as well to confine ourselves for the moment more modestly to the regional impact. I have placed great emphasis upon the North Carolina example, it points the moral and by specific reference to its structure and working provides concrete illustration instead of hypothetical and abstract argument. Above all this method saves words."<sup>984</sup>

However, it appears that other regional projects were being considered, and, from the

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<sup>981</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 TDS to Edward Short, Postmaster General, 23 October 1967

<sup>982</sup> TWAM DF/TDS to AVW 23 October 1967

<sup>983</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 AVW to Col H Peile, Chairman of PDC, 7 November 1967

<sup>984</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 AVW to TDS 23 November 1967

Peterlee side, it was essential to move fast. Williams wrote to Smith on 30 November “...we should not be losing out in the race and I agree with you that time is of the essence, although no-one in the north east has got what we have to offer in terms of this kind of development... we are now preparing a cartoon layout for the development of Oakerside as a Research Base. It will only be a rough idea at this stage but will certainly give great prominence to the siting of the Research Institute on the lines of R.T.I. [Research Triangle Institute] Carolina. This is, I am sure, the key to the whole situation and where I think the Trust comes in...”<sup>985</sup> This was echoed by Smith: “You will see from the attached that our basic idea is being accepted. Speed is essential - the first project off the ground makes History.”<sup>986</sup> Williams and Smith were also suspicious of the extent to which the interests of the north-east were considered in Whitehall, and especially by Mintech, and had commissioned a report by a Dr Stanley Harrison which advocated a regional R&D Institute to do for the North East what Mintech did for the UK.<sup>987</sup>

Early in 1968 Smith attended the formal inauguration of a new IBM computer at Newcastle University and there met for the first time and spoke about the Peterlee project to IBM UK’s Director of Public Affairs, John Hargreaves.<sup>988</sup> IBM UK was, “an outspoken, maverick member of the World Trade family” according to Nancy Foy, and led the corporation in its external affairs activities, “partly due to the commitment and energy of a dedicated IBMer called John Hargreaves, supported staunchly by Parry Rogers and UK general manager Eddie Nixon.”<sup>989</sup> Hargreaves, whose role involved establishing relationships with political figures of all hues, had had discussions with Jeremy Bray at which the idea of a science campus in NE England or Scotland had been discussed; shortly afterwards, “he had been very impressed with Dan Smith’s ideas for Peterlee as an intellectual magnet for those

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<sup>985</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 AVW to TDS 30 November 1967. The Outline plans were even to suggest a heliport at the western end of the Oakerside site: TNA EW 9/62 Peterlee Development Corporation, *Research and Development Project Report, Appendices and Maps October 1968*

<sup>986</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 TDS to Eric Levine 5 December 1967. Attached was a report of *The Times* 30 November 1967 entitled ‘Research for Industry’, describing a £1 million Mintech project to create a network of R&D units connected to the University of Leeds, University College Swansea, Strathclyde University, University College Bangor, Cranfield and the UKAEA laboratory, Risley.

<sup>987</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3869 AVW to TDS 23 January 1968 (and expanded views in letters of 16 and 18 January 1968 to TDS)

<sup>988</sup> Amber TDS Unpublished Autobiography p164

<sup>989</sup> Foy, N, *The IBM World* (London 1974) p188. World Trade was one of the two main divisions of IBM.

interested in studying total environment.”<sup>990</sup> Hargreaves was an idealist: deeply affected by being among the first British troops to enter Belsen at the end of the Second World War, he “decided to devote the rest of his life to rectifying the imbalance of man’s inhumanity to man”; concluding that while governments were part of the problem, multinational companies could become a force for good through world trade.<sup>991</sup>

His reaction to the proposed Peterlee project was extremely positive, as he wrote to Smith on 29 April 1968: “Since seeing you I have visited the Research Triangle in North Carolina and am wildly enthusiastic. I believe that your scheme can go even further since you have the nucleus of Peterlee already. It can be a show piece for the world.”<sup>992</sup> A day later Hargreaves sent a second letter, even more fulsome in its enthusiasm: “More than ever, I am excited at the Peterlee possibilities, and I am communicating this to a growing number of people in IBM. We want very seriously to examine how we can work with you. I believe that your concept is far in advance of Raleigh [the home of North Carolina State University, a Research Triangle partner] and can be a showpiece in the western hemisphere...” John Fairclough, “an astonishingly brilliant engineer [who] is heading our task force that is studying the Peterlee possibilities... knows Raleigh well. I can only say that he is as excited as I am.”<sup>993</sup>

Both the Development Corporation and IBM were interested in broadening the intellectual basis of the Science Campus project. In May 1968 Parry Rogers of IBM was suggesting a study of the creation of a new community.<sup>994</sup> Williams warmly welcomed this: the aim of the Corporation was not just to secure IBM but “the nucleus of a broad research base on the lines of the RTI set up in North Carolina... One imagines that the setting up of a science base would involve, as it does in North Carolina, not merely technical aspects of industry and commerce but investigations

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<sup>990</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 Note of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster’s meeting with B J A Hargreaves, IBM, 17 October 1968. Jeremy Bray (1930-2002) was Labour MP for Middlesbrough West (1962-70) and Joint Parliamentary Secretary at Mintech (1967-69).

<sup>991</sup> Interview with Colin Bell, former Director of IBM’s Peterlee unit, 5 October 2010.

<sup>992</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3857 BJA Hargreaves, Director of Public Affairs, IBM UK Ltd to TDS 29 April 1968

<sup>993</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3857 BJA Hargreaves to TDS 30 April 1968.

<sup>994</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3857 T G P Rogers, Director of Personnel, IBM UK Ltd to AVW 22 May 1968

into the field of social science using the technology of the computer. Your ideas are entirely consistent with our basic aim. I would, therefore, say that the social study is essential in Peterlee since IBM naturally want to know into what kind of world they were moving.”<sup>995</sup>

However, only in April 1968, it seems, did Smith’s plans come to the attention of Whitehall. Jim Robertson (who the previous month thought that Smith’s plans “seem to have died out”) had informed James Vernon at the DEA on 30 April about the science campus plan, adding “I am surprised at IBM being interested as I understand from Ministry of Technology papers... that they had opted for Scotland... But according to Dan they have no intention of going further north than this region, and are interested in the Peterlee project.”<sup>996</sup> In June, Robertson was reporting that “Although he has been very uncommunicative about these discussions” [with “certain industrialists” and others] TDS is assured of private funds for project. “This being so, it would seem desirable to ensure that whatever decision is taken as a result of the meeting of Ministers on 26<sup>th</sup> June, it should not prejudice the consideration on its merits of Mr Smith’s proposal, which may well prove to be a very attractive one.”<sup>997</sup>

Robertson was in a position to report more fully, after attending a meeting on 10 July attended by representatives of the PDC, IBM (John Fairclough, John Hargreaves and Parry Rogers), the Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University, the Director of the Science of Science Foundation (Maurice Goldsmith) and the Director of Northern Arts.

Robertson wrote:

“It quickly became clear that IBM are not, as we have been assured from MINTECH, interested in a science campus in Scotland; on the contrary, they said they would be strongly opposed to any such suggestion. They said they had considered many sites throughout the country but the one which, in their view, stands out as the best was Peterlee. They were strongly attracted by Mr Smith’s idea of developing there not just a science campus but ‘a total community project’ of which a science campus would be an important part, but

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<sup>995</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3857 AVW to T G P Rogers 13 June 1968

<sup>996</sup> TNA EW 9/62 J G Robertson to A W Peterson (DEA) 16 March 1968; TNA EW/7/1048 J G Robertson to J W Vernon DEA 6 May 1968

<sup>997</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 J G Robertson, Chairman, NEPB to J W Vernon, DEA 24 June 1968

to which would be added important cultural elements and high quality residential facilities. This, they believed, could provide an ‘intellectual magnet’ which would attract technologists from elsewhere, and evolve in time into a unique development of international importance.”<sup>998</sup>

Smith, reported Robertson, was under no illusion that IBM alone could ensure the success of the project, but would form a major part of its appeal. Bosanquet said that the two universities could “feed in” several enterprises, including Newcastle University’s proposed Institute of Research Technology which he would be “very willing” to locate at Peterlee. “When the Vice-Chancellor made his statement about University participation, the IBM representatives said that this ‘swept away their main worry’ about the project.”<sup>999</sup>

Robertson advised that if they wanted to interest the government they should make plans “with some precision without losing too much time so that it could be considered with other similar schemes that were being suggested from other quarters”; it was agreed that this be done by the end of 1968, and that Dan Smith should let ministers know officially that this was being done.

He continued:

“IBM made it clear that although the extent of their participation must in the end depend on commercial considerations, their interest was more than purely commercial; they wanted to be involved in what they saw as ‘an important social experiment in how man could have a fuller life.’ I was surprised by the almost emotional terms in which the IBM directors - presumably hard-headed businessmen - described the proposed experiment as they saw it, but there is no doubt that they are seriously interested, and it would clearly be in the interests of the Northern Region to encourage their interest.”<sup>1000</sup>

Robertson had also spoken with the IBM representatives seeking information about ICL’s plans, and was told that ICL was no longer interested in a science campus on Teesside, feeling that they were being ‘railroaded’ on that issue “and they have no intention of being railroaded anywhere by anybody”. He felt that IBM were similarly resistant to outside pressure, but should be encouraged if they were attracted to

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<sup>998</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 J G Robertson, Chairman, NEPB to J W Vernon, DEA 12 July 1968

<sup>999</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>1000</sup> *Ibid*

Peterlee.<sup>1001</sup>

Smith wrote to the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Peter Shore) on 25 July 1968 formally notifying him of progress with the Peterlee project, prompting a non-committal reply while an interim report from a working group examining the question of science parks was awaited.<sup>1002</sup> This working group had been set up in July, after prompting by Jeremy Bray, and comprised representatives from DEA, the Treasury, Board of Trade, DES, the Scottish and Welsh Offices, the Northern Ireland Department of Commerce, and the Cabinet Office. Its interim report, produced in the autumn of 1968, produced neither conclusions nor recommendations (unless one counts a “recommendation that it is premature to decide yet whether the Government should designate any Science Campuses”), leaving the issue undecided and advising Fred Lee, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the lead minister on science campus policy, not to make any statement which “could be interpreted as a statement of intent... in favour of science campuses...”<sup>1003</sup> By October, DEA officials in Whitehall still believed that IBM was “uncertain” about Peterlee and to UK science campuses in general.<sup>1004</sup> “After expressing unbridled enthusiasm initially IBM have been very much more cautious in later comments on the project” commented one DEA official, while according to MHLG Peterlee Development Corporation was showing “some trepidity” because of the involvement of IBM: “This, it is considered may be an anathema to the Government, hence their constant vague reference to support in principle.”<sup>1005</sup>

However, in July 1968 Williams had assured Smith that the Oakerside site, the

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<sup>1001</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 J G Robertson, Chairman, NEPB to J W Vernon, DEA 12 July 1968. Newcastle University later backed away from a commitment to physically build a institute at Peterlee, while maintaining its commitment to active participation in the project: TWA DF/TDS Box 3857 Henry Miller to AV Williams 8 October 1968

<sup>1002</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 TDS to Peter Shore, 25 July 1968; M S Bremner to Messrs Casey, Vernon, Addison & Thorp 8 August 1968

<sup>1003</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 Brief for Meeting between the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and IBM, 17 October 1968. Earlier in the year Fred Lee had expressed a preference for the first science campus to be on Teesside: TNA EW 9/62 I R Spence to Mr Hoan 8 February 1968

<sup>1004</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 Brief for Meeting between the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and IBM, 17 October 1968. IBM had apparently told Mintech in August 1968 that they were “in no way committed” (TNA EW/7/1048 M S Bremner to Mr Casey, 24 October 1968)

<sup>1005</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 Pauline Chew to Bremner 22 October 1968. Chew had been asked to report on what support PDC was hoping for from Government. It was, she said, “impossible to provide even a rough approximation”



envisaged location of the Science Campus, should be free of subsidence by the end of 1969 and that IBM were seeking a start date of January 1969, with the possibility of developing a research/management training centre at Castle Eden in addition to the proposed computer base.<sup>1006</sup> Williams underlined the need to press forward with the Arts & Humanities Centre “In this connection the Baths issue as a starter is of great importance...” For a rapid start at Oakerside some coal sterilisation might be necessary “otherwise the start may be delayed and I am sure that you would not be less horrified than I by such a prospect.”<sup>1007</sup>

The Development Corporation publicly unveiled the project in August 1968, when it “broke without warning” at a press conference. John Ardill’s report in *The Guardian* mentions “a computer firm” whose proposed establishment would be “The nucleus of a complex devoted to high level research into nothing less than the total environment in an environment which would be little less than total.”<sup>1008</sup> The most exciting part of the project, he wrote, was the arts-science integration. “This seems to have sprung from the realisation that to attract the PhDs, Peterlee would have to have a cultural environment equal to any.” The Sports Council, Northern Arts and the Arts Council had been involved, with Sandy Dunbar, Director of the NAA, envisaging “something like a cross between the Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Bauhaus”<sup>1009</sup>

By early September 1968 IBM were agreeing in principle to enter into discussions about a regional data centre and science centre “working closely on defined lines with Newcastle University” and at a later date on development-oriented activity associated with the company’s Hursley laboratories. Its prerequisites were the involvement of other industries for a balanced community; the development of some

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<sup>1006</sup> Oakerside is a peninsular ridge of land on the southern edge of Peterlee, bounded to the south by the wooded Castle Eden Dene and to the east and north-east by Blunts Dene, and it offered scenic views over both valleys. It had been reserved in the Lubetkin plan for a sports and recreation centre, and remained undeveloped after Lubetkin’s departure. The site is now occupied by Durham Way and associated *culs-de-sac*, where private ‘executive’ housing was built in the 1980s and 90s. Castle Eden, a eighteenth-century gothick mansion, formerly home to the Burdon family of local land- and coal owners, had latterly been used by the NCB as area offices but was by the late 1960s surplus to their requirements.

<sup>1007</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3857 AVW to TDS 12 July 1968

<sup>1008</sup> *The Guardian*, 5 August 1968: John Ardill, ‘Total Research the aim of Peterlee plan’ in TNA EW 9/62

<sup>1009</sup> *Ibid*

higher education facilities at Peterlee; and plans for international facilities at Newcastle Airport.<sup>1010</sup> The company's view of its role at Peterlee was articulated in a letter from Hargreaves to Fred Lee in October 1968: "a limited one physically, but is also a 'think tank' one. We regard Peterlee as something separate from our main plans in the country, of which we have spoken to Mintec[h] in detail. We see it as an exciting social experiment to which we would like to contribute our experience and which lies outside the marketing role of this company."<sup>1011</sup>

IBM's domestic rival ICL was unhappy with the proposed development. Warning that IBM could get a "virtual world monopoly", one senior company official tried to stall Peterlee: "I would be grateful if you would consider the national and international, as well as regional, implications of the reported scheme and sound out our reactions as a company before finalising any arrangements with IBM."<sup>1012</sup> ICL had been formed by the Mintech-sponsored merger of the two largest British computer companies in 1968 in an attempt to create a British company capable of competing with IBM and Honeywell.

Lee visited Peterlee in September 1968 and was favourable impressed with the project. "I think we can count on his support for it" Robertson told Smith, adding that a science campus project at Cambridge was being strongly opposed by the local county planning committee. "If you know anybody on that body you might be able to encourage that attitude and turn it to this Region's advantage!"<sup>1013</sup> The men at the ministry were less enthusiastic. Describing the Peterlee proposals, M S Bremner of the DEA wrote that "it is not clear what, if any, efforts have been made to gauge the readiness of such industry (apart from IBM) to come to such a campus; nor what Government support the Corporation envisages (such 'support' is deemed essential, and a prior condition of their 'opening negotiations' with IBM on the acquisition of the site). Prime facie, the study seems very vague as to precisely where one goes

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<sup>1010</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3860 E F Nixon, Managing Director, IBM UK Ltd to TDS 9 September 1968

<sup>1011</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 B J A Hargreaves to Fred Lee, 21 October 1968

<sup>1012</sup> TWA DF/TDS Box 3857 B M Murphy, Controller, Strategic Location, ICL to TDS 23 September 1968

<sup>1013</sup> TWA DF/TDS Box 3876 J G Robertson, Chairman, Northern Economic Planning Board to TDS 12 September 1968. I have seen no evidence that Smith acted on Robertson's uncharacteristically snaky advice.

from here...”<sup>1014</sup> The Governmental response was equally vague; but, as Robertson summed it up, if it was decided that a science centre be located in Peterlee “so much the better, but meantime it is being assumed - I think reasonably - that if the Corporation... can attract firms with research and other scientific interests, Government will do nothing to frustrate it... It seems to me that for [Dan Smith] to go ahead as far as he can by his own efforts - as any Local Authority is entitled to do - is the best way of proceeding. This should not cut across the work of your group [the Science Campus Working Group], and one hopes that if he can show some initial success the Government might be readier to recognise the merits of Peterlee as a location for an officially sponsored campus.”<sup>1015</sup>

At a meeting on 7 November 1968, new opportunities and broader implications of the project were discussed. “The decision of the Corporation to associate with the Science of Science Foundation had now resulted in the interest of Dr Bruce Archer who had agreed to pursue the possibility of the transfer of the Industrial Design Research Unit of the London College of Art [sic] to Peterlee...” Archer said that his staff were willing to relocate. Williams outlined negotiations with IBM “who had agreed that, subject to certain conditions being fulfilled, they would be prepared to enter into discussions with the Corporation with a view to establishing in Peterlee a regional data centre, a centre for scientific research and management training and, at a later date, a centre for development associated with their Hursley Laboratories.” “At a later stage” a Centre for the Arts and Humanities and Sporting Recreation was envisaged.<sup>1016</sup>

Smith and Williams travelled to the United States in November-December 1968, visiting *inter alia* the North Carolina Research Triangle and organisations of interest

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<sup>1014</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 M S Bremner to Heaton, 9 October 1968. Jim Robertson was able to reassure the DEA about the possible financial implications of Peterlee Development Corporation’s proposals by the simple expedient of asking A V Williams. TNA EW/7/1048 J G Robertson to M S Bremner, 11 November 1968.

<sup>1015</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 J G Robertson to J W Vernon, 27 December 1968

<sup>1016</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3857, note of meeting at Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle, 7 November 1968. Present were TDS, R D Appleton (Vice Chairman of the PDC), ‘AC’ (unknown), A V Williams, D G Christopherson (V-C, University of Durham), Henry Miller (V-C, University of Newcastle),

K Rowntree (Professor of Fine Art, University of Newcastle), Maurice Goldsmith (Director, Science of Science Foundation), L Bruce Archer (Royal College of Arts).

to the project.<sup>1017</sup> Williams reported back to the PDC board on the lessons learned, in particular the importance of keeping the universities totally involved in the project and the importance the of IBM nucleus. He also reported (at length) on an interview with a Dr House, Director of the Washington Centre for Metropolitan Studies, for whom

“the IBM centre for environmental studies would probably be idiosyncratic and would, in terms of the kind of people it employed, produce a psycho-drama. The language was picturesque, in fact, this sort of activity can develop a society in which, in the first instance, you are talking to yourself... Meanwhile it was interesting to hear Dr House confirm that environmental studies hitched to the computer in a mathematical game was in the technological and industrial field a hot gimmick and once started could treble in size in a short time, ‘it works like the hula hoop.’ It was a seminal idea that produced a psycho-drama of magnetic attraction.”<sup>1018</sup>

The reaction of board members is not recorded.

But DEA remained cautious. In December 1968 JW Vernon told Robertson that: MHLG would tell the PDC that nothing it was proposing required consideration by the Ministry under the New Towns Act. This would not preclude negotiations with IBM for a “precise proposal”, but that “[w]e ourselves, of course expect that before the Corporation has reached that stage Ministers will have taken a decision on the science campus idea.”<sup>1019</sup>

Smith was also developing the idea of a parallel organisation at Peterlee to run the science centre project. Robertson in February 1969 wrote that “Dan does not consider that the members of the New Town Corporation have the qualifications needed to deal with the development of a project of this kind, and he has it in mind to establish for the purpose a Trust which would include a number of members from industry, others from the Universities and Polytechnics in the Region, and a few from other (eg cultural) organisations.”<sup>1020</sup> Smith also wanted Robertson as a member of the trust, which caused consternation in Whitehall. In a revealing memo,

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<sup>1017</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3858 Manuscript notes on visit to USA November-December 1968

<sup>1018</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3870. General Manager’s Report to PDC, 2 January 1969

<sup>1019</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 J W Vernon, DEA to J G Robertson, Chairman, NEPB 20 December 1968

<sup>1020</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 J G Robertson to Donald Kirkness, DEA, 20 February 1969

Donald Kirkness wrote: “Ideally, I would rather Mr Robertson were not mixed up in this at all, given Mr Dan Smith’s personality. On the other hand, given that personality, it may well be difficult to go as far as that...”, and he supported Robertson’s proposal that he act as an assessor rather than a full trust member (a compromise approved with “substantial misgivings”).<sup>1021</sup>

In April 1969 Nixon confirmed IBM’s decision to establish a science centre and an application programming development centre at Peterlee, and to take a purchase option on 20 acres at Oakerside, envisaging 22 employees at a prefabricated building on a rented site by 1970. Increased activity would depend on the project’s progress in three areas: the success of the initial IBM venture; the plan for the institute of higher education - “I believe this to be very important and the commitment to build such a facility will be key” wrote Nixon to Smith; and the commitment of at least one other technology-based organisation to establish itself in Peterlee.<sup>1022</sup> As the project was launched to the press later that month Dan Smith added to the hyperbole. It was, he said “the most exciting possibility for the North-east since the launching of the Turbinia... It is not just an industrial project, it is a part of the creation of a new society of unimaginable possibilities.”<sup>1023</sup> Despite this, IBM thought the press response disappointing, with Nixon telling Smith that “Assuming their rather sceptical attitude reflects the feelings of some of the local ‘men in the street’, I believe Peterlee Development Corporation and IBM must take a very close look at the subject of community relations. Indeed, I am told that a situation could exist whereby the local working class community in particular might fear, at worst, a ‘Brave New World’ type of environment being created in the area.”<sup>1024</sup>

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<sup>1021</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 Donald Kirkness DEA to J W Vernon DEA, 7 March 1969. Also M B Casey to Donald Kirkness, 12 March 1969; “substantial misgivings”: Donald Kirkness to J G Robertson 14 March 1969.

<sup>1022</sup> TWA DF/TDS Box 3860 E R Nixon, Managing Director, IBM UK to TDS 11 April 1969. Sir Edwin (‘Eddie’) Nixon (1925-2008) became Managing Director of IBM UK in 1965, bringing radical business methods to the company and subsequently instrumental in the establishment of ‘Silicon Glen’ in Scotland. Obituary, *The Times* 22 August 2008: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article4581796.ece> accessed 24 September 2010 According to Robertson, regarding the third point “Dan is in touch with several American and other foreign firms, one or two of whom he hopes to land before very long” (TNA EW 7/1049 J G Robertson to J W Vernon 22 April 1969)

<sup>1023</sup> Evening Chronicle, 29 April 1969, cutting in TNA EW 7/1049

<sup>1024</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3860 E R Nixon, Managing Director, IBM UK to TDS 1 May 1969. A few months earlier, a visiting civil servant, J E MacColl, had told his MHLG colleagues of his worries that the PDC might be seen as trying “to establish a community of long-haired, master-race scientists” in

The locals may not have been wrong to think that way, as it is clear that a form of social engineering, albeit a starry-eyed one, was once again on the agenda. In August 1968 Maurice Goldsmith of the Science of Science Foundation, who had been commissioned to report on development proposals, wrote that “We plan to create at Peterlee a multi-class community: it is to be founded deliberately on new science and technology, which in special relationship with the arts (including entertainment and sport) will provide an original environment, of a kind unknown hitherto in the UK, designed to ensure economic and social growth. This breadth of vision makes this approach fundamentally different from other proposals based simply on a mechanical R&D/university linkup... Peterlee will not live and flourish by science and technology alone.”<sup>1025</sup> This view was also put forward, slightly more soberly, in the PDC’s 1969 Annual Report, stating that the Research Centre “will go down in the history of the North East as the beginning of the new period when we moved into the scientific and technological era... Peterlee represents the marriage of an idea with a physical possibility.”<sup>1026</sup>

An address by TGP (Parry) Rogers to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Newcastle Computer Sciences Seminar, 11 September 1969, bears quoting at some length, as a comprehensive exposition of IBM’s vision for Peterlee, with uncritical appreciation of Dan Smith and Maurice Goldsmith:

“The dream of a science city demands the full involvement of science and technology on the one hand, of the arts, including entertainment and sport, and with a complete interaction and integration of activities in the field of industry, education and the public services. The present barriers between these organised fields of human activity are surely intolerable. The realisation of this dream is

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the town. Boyes, *op cit* p204 citing TNA HLG/115/1065 Visit of J E MacColl and R Marshal to Peterlee, 9 October 1968

<sup>1025</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/1/4/15 *Peterlee 1980: Proposals for the development of a New Community* (Draft First Report). Goldsmith’s report is a splendid example of all kinds of Sixties arcana, from a belief in “normative commitment ...that is, we can invent the future and go on to construct it” to referencing Cedric Price’s sublimely batty *Potteries Thinkbelt* plan (which “merits study to see how it might be adapted to Peterlee and region”); suggested features for the town included a Paperback Books Cultural Centre, a Tower of Information (containing “an information centre available... to anyone, anywhere” and a “quality restaurant”), conferences, seminars, an awards scheme, a Centre for Mass Communication, and ‘Originals Unlimited’, providing facilities for “the ‘off-beat’, original researcher, working on a new frontier, from whom one might expect spin-off”, the basis of which was to be a bio-engineering centre to be headed by Professor Heinz Wolff.

<sup>1026</sup> PDC Annual Report (1969) cited in Boyes, *op cit* p203

surely a question of leadership and it is one of the most exciting parts of this project that the quality of leadership seems to be there in the form of Dan Smith as Chairman of the Regional Development Council and the Peterlee Development Corporation, in the form of the two Vice-Chancellors on either side of me... in the form of IBM because I believe we can lay claim to the industrial leadership of this project and indeed in the form of Maurice Goldsmith of the Science of Science Foundation who is providing some visionary ideas for us to work on... The enthusiasm which is to be found in the project appears incredibly, too, to be communicated to the Government because we have the most encouraging support from Cabinet level in the Government in our plans and indeed in the involvement of a Government research establishment in Peterlee at a later stage... This project is extremely important for the next generation at Peterlee because without it it will degenerate into a latter day mining village... The Peterlee project, therefore, is for Peterlee to grow from its present situation to a science city in 1980 in four stages..."

These were (1) from 68-70 the universities locate one or more departments in Peterlee; IBM establishes advanced technology activities. A start on executive housing ...first building to be ready on 16 October... "A number of other industries in the chemicals, plastics [and] pharmaceuticals fields have already made a move to come to Peterlee and Dan Smith and IBM's Chairman, Lord Cromer, are working on a plan to select the companies we would like to see in Peterlee and make direct approach to sell them on this whole project." An Arts Trust had been established. "A Government research centre will come to Peterlee, though one is not yet able to say who it will be, and there is a probability of Harrods locating a store in the town." Stage 2 (1970-72) would see development of government and industrial activity and joint projects with the universities. In Stage 3 (1972-75) attention would be given to environmental research such as traffic control, oceanography, desalination, water resources, air pollution. A management training centre and "an institute of some appropriate future field" was part of the vision, and "some international project... perhaps a UNESCO research centre", as well as an arts festival and the provision of exhibition and conference facilities. In Stage 4 (1975-80):

"we believe the dream of the science city will come to reality... a European research centre will be one of the primary activities of the town. It will have international renown as a centre for environmental research. It will have done work in the field of experimentation in the world of leisure. It will be a place of architectural excitement... I believe there is high probability that the name of Peterlee will become internationally renowned as a very important step in our

design for living in the 1980s.”<sup>1027</sup>

IBM also contributed ideas for further development: J V Dauman, an assistant to Hargreaves, wrote to Smith in September and October 1969 with lists of companies and organisations that might be interested in the project as an exercise in “crystal ball gazing”.<sup>1028</sup>

The end of 1969 saw the Peterlee project apparently ‘set fair’ for the future. IBM was established in the town; and, wrote John Fairclough, although it was premature to make additional specific commitments, “I can say from an overall point of view the project is taking on an increasing significance to us and if the present progress is sustained we will not only be maintaining our present plans but increasing them.”

<sup>1029</sup>

### **Embarrassing Jeremy Bray: Peterlee and science campus policy.**

The decision to pursue a science campus policy at Peterlee was not universally welcomed. Rival moves were under way in the newly formed County Borough of Teesside, a ‘sub-region’ which had been designated a growth point in Hailsham’s 1963 white paper, to create a science campus involving the newly-formed Teesside County Borough Council, the Post Office and ICL, the intended British rival to IBM, formed in 1968 by the officially encouraged merger of a number of smaller companies and which was being actively encouraged by the Ministry of Technology (Mintech).<sup>1030</sup>

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<sup>1027</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3870 Address by T G P Rogers, IBM UK Ltd, to 2<sup>nd</sup> Newcastle Computer Sciences Seminar, 11 September 1969. The third Earl of Cromer (1918-1991) was a former chairman of the Bank of England. John Orbell, ‘Baring, (George) Rowland Stanley, third earl of Cromer (1918–1991)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49616>, accessed 24 Sept 2010]. In the event, Harrods passed up the chance to open a Peterlee branch.

<sup>1028</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3874 J V Dauman, IBM UK, to TDS 3 September 1969 and 7 October 1969; quotation from latter letter.

<sup>1029</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3860 J W Fairclough, IBM to TDS 22 December 1969. A pioneering computer technologist, Sir John Whitaker Fairclough (1930-2003) was Chief Scientific Advisor to the Government 1986-1990. At the time of the Peterlee events he was Director of Data Processing for IBM UK. Geoffrey Tweedale, ‘Fairclough, Sir John Whitaker (1930–2003)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Jan 2007; online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/90039>, accessed 24 Sept 2010]

<sup>1030</sup> Bray, J, *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants. Science, politics and trust: A parliamentary life* (Cambridge 2004) p73



Mintech had a history of conflict with the DEA. Anthony Wedgwood Benn, who had succeeded the hapless Frank Cousins as Minister of Technology in July 1966, records that his public relations advisor told him “that the DEA had been spreading some pretty poisonous stuff about Mintech in the past and he thought it was essential that they should take a higher view of our importance”; while it was unlikely that Benn’s view of Mintech as “the spearhead of an industrial Britain in opposition to the old concept of imperial Britain” would find much favour with a department that saw *itself* as the ‘Ministry of Growth’.<sup>1031</sup> Relations between Mintech - which favoured ICL - and IBM were also difficult, with Benn recording a hostile meeting with Eddie Nixon after IBM had been referred to the Prices and Incomes Board in March 1968: “He came near to threatening me, saying that if we did this it would affect investment policy by IBM in the future... I said I quite understood this but that, of course, such pressure would only encourage me even more to take action against them.”<sup>1032</sup>

Williams had been suspicious of growing ambitions on the Tees, which he felt might threaten Peterlee’s interests. Writing to Smith in 1967 about regionalism, he commented: “As matters now rest, ‘Big T’ [the new county borough] is in action and is anyone seriously going to suggest that it won’t hog the bulk of the resources available to the north east without reference to the other growth points within the region equally important and, in some respects, more vital to the overall health and balance of the region?”<sup>1033</sup>

The most serious political opposition to Dan Smith’s plans for Peterlee was to come from Dr Jeremy Bray (1930-2002), Labour MP for Middlesbrough West and a junior minister at the Ministry of Technology (Mintech), and an unlikely but tenacious foe. Bray was a high-minded Methodist with a PhD in pure mathematics who had worked for several years for ICI on Teesside before being elected to Parliament; in his own words, “a one track, mathematical minded technocrat” (the acidic Marcia Williams

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<sup>1031</sup> Benn, T, *Out of the Wilderness. Diaries 1963-67* (London 1987) pp451-452 (12 July 1966) and p 464 (4 August 1966).

<sup>1032</sup> Benn, T, *Office Without Power. Diaries 1968-72* (London 1988) p51 (27 March 1968). In 1969 Benn proposed favouring ICL for a major Home Office contract, despite IBM being the cheapest bidder and ICL “a poor third” “But the Department is not keen.” *Ibid* p225.

<sup>1033</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3876 AVW to TDS 13 April 1967. ‘Big T’ was the County Borough of Teesside.

described him as being like “every mad professor of comic fiction”).<sup>1034</sup>

It was a letter from Bray to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Fred Lee) in June 1968 that had prompted the Government to set up a science campuses working group, and Bray had urged the development of pilot schemes (including one on Teesside) at a subsequent meeting of ministers and officials.<sup>1035</sup> Lee had already expressed a preference for Teesside as the location of Britain’s first science campus.<sup>1036</sup>

Relations between Bray and Smith had been fairly cordial. Smith was supportive of Bray’s aspirations for the creation of a technical university on Teesside, becoming a member of the Tees-side University Promotion Committee in 1965.<sup>1037</sup> Their relationship was such that in 1967 Bray was urging Smith to stand for Parliament, suggesting that a by-election might soon be pending at Middlesbrough East.<sup>1038</sup> The two men had had “many dealings” on ways to stimulate R&D and advanced technology in the region. Smith had apparently shown interest in the former US National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy’s 1967 proposals, formulated at the request of US President Lyndon Johnson, to form an international centre to study management problems in ‘advanced societies’, bridging the gap between west and east<sup>1039</sup> “It was an attempt to build a bridge and ease tensions during the Cold War: a confidence building measure... we wanted to carve out some activity that belonged to the ... union of such disciplines as operations research... management science,

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<sup>1034</sup> Bray (2004) *op cit* p48; Dalyell, Tam, ‘Bray, Jeremy William (1930-2002), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Jan 2006 [<http://www.oxford.com/view/article/76970>, accessed 29 September 2010]

<sup>1035</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 Brief for Meeting between the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and IBM 17 October 1968. TNA EW 7/1050 M S Bremner to Mr Charles and J W Vernon 5 November 1969 (attached briefing note on Peterlee) refers to a ‘detailed paper’ by Bray in 1968 recommending the establishment of government-sponsored science campuses in Scotland, the North, and “possibly Wales”.

<sup>1036</sup> TNA EW 9/62 I R Spence to Mr Hoan, 8 February 1968. Spence wrote: “The Chancellor of the Duchy has commented: “I hope that Mr Dell [Edmund Dell] will press for the first campus to be developed at Tees-side. There is ample evidence that Tees-side’s need is greater than that of any other area’s.[sic]”

<sup>1037</sup> TWA DF/TDS Box 3910 Jeremy Bray to TDS 7 March 1965; *The Times* 6 March 1965 p10

<sup>1038</sup> TWA DF/TDS Box 3858 Jeremy Bray to TDS 5 September 1967

<sup>1039</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Collection, Transcript, McGeorge Bundy Oral History Interview II, 17 February 1969, by Paige E Mulhollan, Internet Copy, LBJ Library p26 <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/McGeorgeB/Bundy%20%20web.pdf> accessed 12 February 2011

policy analysis, cybernetics, systems dynamics, and systems analysis”<sup>1040</sup> This was exactly the kind of rhetoric to attract Dan Smith’s attention. Bray, however, took a cooler view, writing to Fred Lee that: “I told Dan that McGeorge Bundy’s proposal was not highly regarded in scientific circles in Whitehall, and it would be a great pity if a viable proposal for the North East got associated with a half-baked idea from elsewhere.” Bray also pointed out that Solly Zuckerman, who had chaired a conference at the University of Sussex on Bundy’s proposals, was not in support.<sup>1041</sup>

Bray also believed that Teesside should become a hub for advanced scientific and technological developments and this led him into conflict with Smith’s aspirations.<sup>1042</sup> In his November 1967 letter to Fred Lee about Dan Smith’s plans he argued that “it would be better to put research effort into Newcastle, Durham, or the new Technological University of Teesside rather than develop it in isolation in Peterlee, as a compromise between parochial jealousies in the North East, but I have yet to hear the arguments.”<sup>1043</sup> Further complicating factors included an atmosphere of distrust between the Department of Economic Affairs (Dan’s overlords at the Northern Economic Planning Council, and with an interest in regional economic activity) and Bray’s Ministry of Technology, and Mintech’s preference for the British computer company ICL over IBM. In Bray’s words, Mintech “was engaged on generally interventionist policies in the conventional wisdom of the time. It promoted the rationalisation... of computers around ICL...”<sup>1044</sup>

Mintech was not alone in this view. An MHLG official, J E MacColl, also questioned whether IBM should be allowed to “entrench itself in Britain” in this way.<sup>1045</sup>

Smith’s activities had clearly upset Bray and led to some acrimony. In April 1968,

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<sup>1040</sup> Raiffa, H, ‘Contributions of Applied Systems Analysis to International Negotiation’, pp 5-6, [http://media.wiley.com/product\\_data/exerpt/67/07879588/07879588.pdf](http://media.wiley.com/product_data/exerpt/67/07879588/07879588.pdf) accessed 10 February 2011

<sup>1041</sup> TNA EW 9/62 Jeremy Bray to Fred Lee 29 November 1967

<sup>1042</sup> TNA EW 9/62 Jeremy Bray to Shirley Williams (DES) 13 May 1968 outlines his aspirations for Teesside which included co-operation with Newcastle and Durham Universities and an ICL ‘software house’ linked to a science campus location.

<sup>1043</sup> TNA EW 9/62 Jeremy Bray to Fred Lee 29 November 1967.

<sup>1044</sup> Bray (2004) *op cit* p73

<sup>1045</sup> Boyes, *op cit* p204 citing report of J E MacColl to MHLG, 15 October 1968 (TNA HLG/115/1065)

after what was described by Jim Robertson somewhat mildly as “a talk with Dr Jeremy Bray last week about his plans and the incompatibility of this kind on Teesside with what he has in mind for Peterlee”, Smith drafted (but did not send) a letter protesting at Bray’s attitude. If he and Bray could not agree on one project, they might proceed on separate lines and let others decide, he wrote, adding:

I willingly concede, and understand, your desire to secure this development for Teesside, but I do not, however, like to be told, as you stated on the telephone recently, that “I am the only one being difficult” because my views do not happen to coincide with your own. I only became interested in this form of development when I knew that the Universities were interested, and have acted largely under guidance.

Your assertion that IBM were no longer interested in developing in the North was in direct contradiction with my own information, one such source being the Planning Board minutes which are available to you. Your conclusion that I.C.T. [sic] were now free to develop, if they wished, on Teesside that being the only possible and practical site for them, is no longer valid (if it ever was), as IBM are still interested in exploring the possibility of coming into the Northern Region.<sup>1046</sup>

And while Smith in May 1968 wrote to Robertson that “I am aware of the activity of Jeremy Bray and he is of mine - I am happy that our two conceptions are allowed to develop until the end of 1968 and then to let others take the final decision”, Bray was lobbying against Smith.<sup>1047</sup> In July 1968 he wrote to Shirley Williams, then a junior education minister, that the Peterlee science campus plan:

is a private venture project on the part of Dan Smith... with the support of some interests in Newcastle University including the retiring Vice Chancellor. The computer company referred to is IBM where the proposal is for a ‘data centre’ which would be a bureau service in the first place. The IBM person who is pushing this is Mr Hargreaves who is a relatively junior member of IBM, and not either Mr Nixon, or Mr Fairclough the Technical Director... Dan Smith has been keeping these discussions personal to himself until a meeting at which Mr Robertson of DEA... was present... I think any development at Peterlee is likely to be on a small scale, and I am sure it could not provide the kind of environment that ICL are looking for. It is a somewhat opportunist line pursued by Dan Smith and Bosanquet, with the support of IBM who want to maintain their foothold in the academic world ... We should certainly encourage Newcastle University interests in a science campus, but I don’t

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<sup>1046</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 J G Robertson to J W Vernon, DEA, 25 April 1968; TWA DF/TDS Box 3858 TDS to Jeremy Bray 27 April 1968 (unsent)

<sup>1047</sup> TNA EW 9/62 TDS to J G Robertson 4 May 1968

think this is the way to do it.<sup>1048</sup>

He followed this up the next month with a letter to Peter Shore, then Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, saying that there were “real difficulties” about Peterlee and that Smith “has already caused us some embarrassment” by approaching companies without keeping government, or even the local Planning Board informed, and that this had caused “crossed wires” in Mintech’s efforts to get IBM to open a unit in Scotland.<sup>1049</sup>

Robertson had originally considered that the decision would go in favour of Teesside.<sup>1050</sup> By July 1968 he was advising PDC to advance their plans as fast as possible to receive equal consideration with other, central government sponsored proposals.<sup>1051</sup> By early 1969 he was warning Dan Smith of Mintech’s machinations. “You are due to meet Hertzig [sic], of MINTECH, with Vernon Brooks, on 29<sup>th</sup> January. I should perhaps tip you off that Hertzig has, on two or three occasions, spoken to me about the Peterlee project when I have met him at meetings of various committees in London, and he has always tended to be a bit discouraging about it, and indeed about the IBM people who have been involved. He is too condescending. I distrust him.”<sup>1052</sup>

Smith remained no more trusting of Bray. After a meeting at the House of Commons, he wrote that Bray (who had suggested a regional committee on science campuses to be chaired by Smith) “is taking steps to prejudice the decision by his action on Teesside (ie Woodham). I agreed on the necessity for a wider body than that of the New Town Corporation and indicated that we would have an ad hoc body established before Government could act (action to discuss with AV).”<sup>1053</sup> Smith, who was, according to Robertson “clearly most seriously concerned lest the

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<sup>1048</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 Jeremy Bray to Shirley Williams 31 July 1968. Charles Bosanquet was the outgoing Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University.

<sup>1049</sup> TNA EW/7/1048 Jeremy Bray to Peter Shore, 16 August 1968

<sup>1050</sup> TNA EW 9/62 J G Robertson to J W Vernon 21 May 1968, albeit advising that Whitehall should not commit too early to Bray’s, and Teesside CB’s proposals while there was the possibility of a bid from Tyneside, and while Dan Smith would be urging Peterlee’s case “with his usual force.”

<sup>1051</sup> TNA EW 9/62 PDC Research and Development Project. Minutes of meeting of 10 July 1968

<sup>1052</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3855. J G Robertson, Chairman, NEPB to TDS 16 January 1969.

Christopher Herzig was Assistant Secretary at Mintech 1966-70.

<sup>1053</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3855 Notes of meeting at House of Commons with Jeremy Bray, 8 March 1969. J B Woodham was the Treasurer of Teesside County Borough Council.

establishment of a regional body... might prejudice the development of his Peterlee scheme”<sup>1054</sup>, responded to Bray’s suggestion stating that “spontaneous regional activity” (ie regarding Peterlee) superseded the need for a regional committee on science campuses in the north, and expressing the hope that when Woodham met PDC representatives (as he was due to do on 31 March) he would be enthused by what was envisaged for Peterlee.<sup>1055</sup>

Teesside had set out its ambitions in a letter from the Town Clerk of the new county borough to the Education Secretary on 19 March, urging again the establishment of a technological university on Teesside with a science campus attached, and pointing out that Peterlee was not suitable for a university.<sup>1056</sup> “Mintech Headquarters are clearly going to be a nuisance on this topic” wrote Jim Robertson, though adding, perhaps optimistically, that the Mintech regional office in Newcastle favoured the Peterlee proposals.<sup>1057</sup>

Bray had indeed not yet given up being a nuisance on the issue. On 18 March 1969 he had met M P Hughes, Mintech’s Senior Regional Officer for the Northern Region, and suggested the formation of a committee to examine the possible locations for a science campus in the region. Although the suggested committee would be under the aegis of the NEPC, Smith’s name was not suggested; Hughes suggested instead the appointment of Dr William Reid, also a member of the NEPC, not least because “Mr Smith might find it embarrassing to refuse agreement to Dr Reid and demand the job himself.”<sup>1058</sup> On 3 April Bray sent a report to Hughes, in preparation for a meeting of ministers (including Fred Lee, Shirley Williams of DES and Dickson Mabon of the Scottish Office) with ICL representatives. This set out

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<sup>1054</sup> TNA EW 9/63 J G Robertson to Mr Thorp 11 March 1969, commenting upon TDS’ letter of 10 March to Jeremy Bray, cited below. Robertson had actively supported Dan Smith’s fight against Bray’s suggested new body, writing to James Vernon “I must say that I, too, fear the possibilities of duplication in all this, and it was in my mind to suggest to you that the machinery the Council Chairman [TDS] was in process of building up here should be regarded as ‘suitable alternative machinery’...I would see no difficulty in an appropriate link being forged with the Planning Council.” TNA EW 9/63 J G Robertson to J W Vernon 6 March 1969

<sup>1055</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3855 TDS to Jeremy Bray, Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Mintech, 10 March 1969. J B Woodham was the Treasurer of Teesside County Borough, having previously held that office for Middlesbrough CB.

<sup>1056</sup> TNA EW 7/1049 M S Bremner to J W Vernon, DEA, 3 April 1969

<sup>1057</sup> TNA EW 7/1049 J G Robertson to J W Vernon, 3 April 1969

<sup>1058</sup> TNA EW 7/1049 M P Hughes, Notes of a Conversation with Dr Jeremy Bray at Millbank Tower on Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1969

once again the case for Teesside and the drawbacks of Peterlee, and criticised the capability of the northern universities to participate in such a project. Durham had “no base in technology and little base in pure science” while Newcastle’s bid to become a base for a Mintech Industrial Unit had been “so disappointing” that the unit had been placed at Salford instead. Newcastle’s existing industrial contacts included “acrimonious” relations with the Tyneside power engineering company Reyrolle-Parsons, while its orientation towards IBM “has not contributed to building up a UK capability in the way that Cambridge, Manchester, Edinburgh and London universities have done...”<sup>1059</sup> Peterlee’s achievement in securing IBM’s interest was, Bray wrote, due to Mintech and Board of Trade pressure on IBM to expand in Development Areas, but the proposal was small scale and “it is unlikely that Peterlee will be able to make a major contribution to development in the North East very quickly.... Teesside would need at least an undertaking to establish a university there before a start could be made on a new science campus there, but this does seem on reasonably objective grounds to offer the best medium term prospects in the North East.”<sup>1060</sup>

However, within weeks Smith was to achieve victory. The Ministerial Committee on Environmental Planning, formed to advise the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Fred Lee), on 24 March recommended that one campus each should be established in Scotland, Wales and the North of England.<sup>1061</sup>

Subsequently the [Northern] Regional Economic Planning Board was asked to advise Lee, and in May 1969 submitted its report. Had Peterlee not made the progress it had, “detailed examination of various possible locations would have been appropriate” and the choice would not necessarily have fallen on Peterlee; indeed, the Board of Trade favoured Tyneside as a science campus location. However, the enthusiastic support of the universities of Newcastle and Durham for Peterlee and the participation of IBM was noted, as was the “abundance” of enthusiasm in the Development Corporation. “There was no feature about the Peterlee project that

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<sup>1059</sup> TNA EW 7/1049 Jeremy Bray to M P Hughes, MinTech (Newcastle) 2 April 1969 with covering letter of 3 April 1969

<sup>1060</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>1061</sup> TNA EW 7/1049 Draft Paper for Northern Economic Planning Board, attached to memo from M S Bremner to J W Vernon, 14 April 1969

made it undesirable to encourage”, the report stated. The Mintech representatives, supported to an extent by the Board of Trade, made a last-ditch effort to sow doubts about Peterlee’s capacity to attract science-based industry and R&D, and about the greater likelihood of government research establishments moving to the region if ICL, rather than IBM, were associated with any science campus. But it was pointed out that IBM had committed itself to Peterlee, while ICL’s intentions were questioned. The Committee therefore agreed (with the exception of the Mintech representatives) “that the only sensible and practical course for Government to take was to support the Peterlee R. & D. project...”<sup>1062</sup> On 25 June 1969 Fred Lee wrote to Smith that, taking into account the Peterlee plans, with their links to academic and industrial research in the region and the steps already taken towards putting the plans into practice, “I can assure you that the Government endorse Peterlee as the site for a development of this kind in the Northern Region. As he told you, the Prime Minister concurs in this decision.”<sup>1063</sup>

Smith and the Peterlee Development Corporation had achieved a notable victory, and one which should stand as one of the high points of his career. An unfavoured new town with no track record of hi-tech industry - indeed with little experience of non-extractive industry at all - remote, and with poor communications, had put together in two years an astonishingly visionary scheme, had built a coalition of supportive institutions, and had managed to attract IBM - Big Blue itself - to the declining East Durham coalfield.

Recognition as the location for the region’s science campus gave the Peterlee authorities greater influence in dealing with recalcitrant government departments. Following complaints by Smith about the lack of co-operation from government departments, and in particular from Mintech, Fred Lee wrote to him on 30 July 1969 underlining recognition of Peterlee as the science campus for the Northern Region and promising that the Ministry of Housing, Board of Trade and Mintech would

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<sup>1062</sup> TNA EW 7/1049 Report of the Planning Board, attached to R N Stewart to Mr Braun, 5 May 1969. The Report refers to the ‘Planning Board’; that this was the Northern Economic Planning Board, of which Jim Robertson was chairman, is in the draft report on Peterlee circulated to the Working Group of the Official Committee on Environmental Planning by M S Bremner, October 1969, in TNA EW 7/1050

<sup>1063</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3855 Fred Lee to TDS 25 June 1969



appoint assessors to the committee being set up by Smith for the campus project if Smith so wished.<sup>1064</sup>

Ironically, perhaps, Smith may have been having second thoughts about the entire science campus concept. “He now takes the view that what we should all be doing is considering the development of industry/University research in a regional context, and that the idea of concentrating as many activities as possible in one site (as suggested by Dr Bray) is outdated... He sees no reason for having, e.g., the Civil Service Staff College cheek by jowl with IBM or ICL software centres.”<sup>1065</sup> wrote Robertson in early April 1969. Later that month Robertson reported that Smith was speaking of the science campus concept as “out-dated” and that, in a small region such as the North, it was sufficient for the various institutions to be linked without necessarily being physically close to each other. His desire to announce the Peterlee project was, believed Robertson, to forestall any government announcement of a campus elsewhere, and any moves to advocate a science campus on Teesside.<sup>1066</sup>

Smith later reported to the Peterlee Science Centre Advisory Committee on his return from a visit to the United States about a visit to the ‘Route 128’ area of high-technology industry and R&D in the Greater Boston area. Although the area was “not sufficiently far enough developed in its relevance to industry... [h]e felt however that Route 128 could not be ignored when considering the Peterlee concept and that in many ways it was an arrangement which was more appropriate than even the North Carolina triangle.”<sup>1067</sup>

Such views were later amplified in a paper he presented to the British Association when it met in Durham in September 1970. While urging an expansion of the role of the Regional Science Committee established by the PDC “to work out a policy for the advancement of the Peterlee regional base for science and technology”, he also said that “there should be land allocation in the Tyne, Wear and Tees areas which

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<sup>1064</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3870 Fred Lee to TDS 30 July 1969

<sup>1065</sup> TNA EW 7/1049 J G Robertson to J W Vernon, 9 April 1969.

<sup>1066</sup> TNA EW 7/1049 J G Robertson to J W Vernon, 21 April 1969

<sup>1067</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 Minutes of Working Party of Peterlee Science Centre Advisory Committee, 10 November 1969. It was agreed that the Vice Chancellors of Newcastle and Durham Universities be asked to visit the Route 128 area “for the purpose of studying its relevance to the Peterlee project.”

would only be allowed for industrial growth linked to high technology”, while the new Teesside Polytechnic “could do for Teesside and the North East what MIT has done for Boston and its Industrial Route 128...”<sup>1068</sup> The NEPC, he urged, should devise a strategy with the Yorkshire and NW EPCs and regional universities and polytechnics to develop an industrial strategy emphasising science and technology and based on strategic locations along the A1-M62-M6 route linking the different areas of the three regions.

Smith was also trying to establish science parks elsewhere. On 15 July 1969 he hosted a dinner at the Angel Hotel in Cardiff, hoping to establish contacts and acquire land options for a similar scheme in south Wales linked to University College Swansea.<sup>1069</sup>

Bray meanwhile had not given up hope of reversing the decision. After Fred Lee’s confirmation of Peterlee as the North’s science campus, Bray circulated a paper to relevant Ministers on the question of science policy in the north-east, and proposing a new high-powered committee to discuss and make recommendations on technological policy in the region. Despite doubts about this suggestion, Bray was asked to expand his report.<sup>1070</sup> He was also present at a meeting between Dan Smith and Ministers (headed by Fred Lee) on 22 September 1969, at which he raised again his belief that the arguments in favour of Peterlee (and the level of commitment of IBM) were not strong enough, only to be in effect rebuffed by Lee’s conclusion that “the Government would do everything in its power to assist in encouraging new developments at [Peterlee].”<sup>1071</sup> The meeting had been requested by Smith because of his concern at “the negative attitude of Mintech”.<sup>1072</sup> Three days later, Bray

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<sup>1068</sup> T Dan Smith, ‘Education, Science & Technology: Are They Our Allies or Enemies in the Evolution of New Regional Policies?’: paper given to the British Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting in Durham, 4 September 1970 (Author’s collection)

<sup>1069</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3864. Note on dinner at Angel Hotel, Cardiff, 15 July 1969. Guests included the senior civil servant Idwal Pugh, Mervyn Jones (the chairman of British Gas Wales), Bill Sales (a Poulson associate and chairman of OSB), and the property developer John Foulerton (an associate and later business partner of Dan Smith) and colleagues from Foulerton’s Mount St Bernard Group and the North British Housing Association.

<sup>1070</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 M S Bremner to J W Vernon 27 October 1969. It is unclear whether Bray did expand his report before his resignation from the Government.

<sup>1071</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 Peterlee ‘Science Campus’. Meeting with Mr T Dan Smith and Ministers on Monday 22 September 1969

<sup>1072</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 M S Bremner to J W Vernon 27 October 1969.

committed political *hara-kiri* over an unconnected issue.

While the Peterlee controversy had been rumbling on, he had been giving most of his intellectual attention to the question of economic forecasting, and writing a book examining the Government's record and capability in dealing with the problems of modern society. *Decision in Government* expressed concerns about how the government was able to deal with the problems of contemporary technological society. As a minister, Bray sought the Prime Minister's approval for publication, only to be brusquely turned down. Wilson forbade Bray to publish, warning him "If you do publish you will never again hold office." Bray resigned from the Government on 25 September; *Decision in Government* subsequently appeared, to widespread critical apathy.<sup>1073</sup> Two months later the Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette*, under the headline 'Fight for a Computer Centre is Lost', reported on the collapse of Bray's (and Teesside CB's) aspirations, with ICL deciding on an establishment at Edinburgh rather than the Tees, and a further hoped-for project going to Leeds.<sup>1074</sup> "Although Jeremy has got many talents he has not much idea of what is politically advisable" was Tony Benn's opinion of the affair.<sup>1075</sup>

Meanwhile, Smith pressed ahead with plans for the Science Centre. The Peterlee Science Centre Advisory Committee met for the first time on 18 September, and Smith was working on plans for the arts and humanities centre - which he now saw as incorporating a TV workshop; "This... could be made to fit in with Dan's aim of developing at Peterlee the role of TV as an educational medium in management and in the community at large" reported Robertson.<sup>1076</sup> Smith was also trying to persuade Sir Patrick Dean, the former UK ambassador to the United States, to play a senior role at Peterlee, possibly directing the Science Centre "as [Dan] judges this job is beyond the capacity of the Peterlee Administrative staff. (This information he did not

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<sup>1073</sup> Bray (2004) *op cit* pp76-80; *The Times*, 26 September 1969 p1. "[*Decision in Government*] attracted very little comment in Parliament or the press. It was too technical to find readers among MPs and in the media" lamented Bray. However, Dan Smith did give it an approving mention in his 1970 address to the British Association. Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette*, 22 November 1969. Cutting in TNA EW7/1050. Tony Benn, *Office Without Power. Diaries 1968-72*.

<sup>1074</sup> Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette*, 22 November 1969. Cutting in TNA EW7/1050.

<sup>1075</sup> Benn (1988) *op cit* pp232-233 (3 February 1970)

<sup>1076</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 J G Robertson to J W Vernon 23 September 1969

give to the Committee).”<sup>1077</sup> Early indications of the centre’s success were very positive. Smith told a press conference of four more possible international firms ready to invest in Peterlee who he hoped to name in January 1970, and spoke airily of turning away unsuitable companies.<sup>1078</sup> IBM appeared to be flourishing in their temporary quarters on Neville Road, Peterlee. By December 1969 they had decided to double their establishment from twenty to forty staff, and were receiving requests for transfer to Peterlee from the south. “Dan Smith... spent some time yesterday visiting the homes of a number of those who have moved up, and the wives, as well as the scientists themselves, expressed themselves as being delighted with the living conditions at Peterlee. If this is the case in December, we can be hopeful about those who may come in June!” reported Jim Robertson.<sup>1079</sup> By the time the Science Centre Advisory Committee met on 15 January 1970 the Government had approved proposals for preparatory road and drainage works on the Oakerside site and for the extension of Peterlee’s north-west industrial area by 313 acres, to be used for high technology manufacturing industry “complementary to the development of the Science Base.”<sup>1080</sup>

A further shortfall in the provision of up-to-date amenities in the town was made good by the opening of the Norseman Hotel in December 1969 by Dan Smith. Designed by Poulson’s practice for Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, it presented a bland façade towards the town centre; but in the opposite direction, a space-age circular cocktail bar projected out from the main building into space overlooking the deep, tree-lined valley of Sunny Blunts. Here, at the heart of Lubetkin’s imagined miners’ city, the scientists who would pilot the Peterlee of the future should sip Cinzano and eat chicken-in-a-basket alongside the executives, technologists and

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<sup>1077</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 J G Robertson to J W Vernon 23 September 1969. Sir Patrick Dean (1909-1994) was Ambassador to the USA 1965-1969. Obituary, *The Times* 8 November 1994. Dean had been suggested to Dan Smith by Lord Cromer, former Chairman of the Bank of England and Chairman of IBM UK 1966-70 and 1974-79. Sir Patrick met members of the Peterlee Science Centre Advisory Committee at a dinner hosted by the Vice Chancellor of Newcastle University on 22 October, and professed himself “tremendously interested in the project and... promising to do his best to help in every way, exploiting to the full his contacts in the United States particularly...” (TNA EW 7/1050, note by J Earl 6 November 1969).

<sup>1078</sup> TNA EW7/1050 L W Mandy, COI to J G Robertson, 24 November 1969. The press conference followed a visit by Anthony Crosland, Secretary of State for Local Government and Regional Planning, to Peterlee on 21 November 1969

<sup>1079</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 J G Robertson to J W Vernon 11 December 1969

<sup>1080</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 Peterlee Science Centre Advisory Committee. Progress Report. 15 January 1970

academics flocking to do business in the new town.<sup>1081</sup>

### **The Arts and Humanities Centre and the 1974 trial**

From Peterlee's beginnings as a new town it had been intended that it should act as a focal point for the surrounding district, with an entertainment centre providing facilities - such as a cinema, bowling alley or swimming pool - which otherwise would require travelling to Sunderland or Durham. A plan to provide an entertainments centre was announced in 1964, only to fall victim to a government economy drive the following year.<sup>1082</sup> Work on the planning of a swimming pool began in 1967; but almost from the inception of the Science Campus project, it was envisioned that a significant input in arts development for Peterlee should be included.<sup>1083</sup> In March 1968, before his assumption of the chairmanship, he told Robertson that "to think of the project [of a science campus in the north east generally] in terms only of a scientific campus would be totally inadequate; it would be necessary also to include cultural elements, and the ideal would be to have a major qualitative investment of this nature which would also be a political counter to the run-down of the mining industry."<sup>1084</sup>

It was envisaged that the Centre would be modelled on the Midlands Arts Centre at Cannon Hill, Birmingham.<sup>1085</sup>

The Corporation selected a site at North Blunts - a 'peninsula' immediately south of the town centre overlooking Blunts Dene - for the centre which, it was envisaged, would include provision for the arts, recreation and sport; however, it had already allocated a site on Howletch Lane, west of the town centre, to Easington RDC for the construction of the proposed swimming pool and some design work had been carried out by Easington's chosen architects, Cackett Burns Dick & McKellar. By April

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<sup>1081</sup> *The Norseman* is now called the *Peterlee Lodge Hotel* and on summery days one can sit in a beer garden on the roof of the projecting bar and enjoy the surrounding scenery. At the trial of Poulson and George Pottinger, counsel cited a letter from JGLP to TDS of 17 May 1968 in which Poulson said he would get Pottinger - a senior Scottish Office civil servant - to use his influence with Sir William Younger, chairman of S&N, with respect to the *Norseman* project. (TNA J 291/63, Transcript of Reg. vs. Poulson & Pottinger Day 28, pp53-54)

<sup>1082</sup> Boyes, *op cit* pp154-155

<sup>1083</sup> TNA EW 9/62 Minutes of PDC meeting on R&D Project, 10 July 1968

<sup>1084</sup> TNA EW 9/62 Note by J G Robertson 19 March 1968

<sup>1085</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/1/1/6 PDC Board minutes, 4 September 1969

1968 - prior to Dan Smith's appointment as Chairman - the PDC had begun discussions with Easington RDC, asking them to stop work on the baths scheme. Easington was at first reluctant, but agreed to defer work at Howlatch in July 1968.<sup>1086</sup> Peterlee agreed to pay the architects' fees for the abortive Howlatch scheme.<sup>1087</sup> According to Eric Simpson, a senior official at the PDC, "The Corporation considered that the North Blunts concept had to be designed as an integrated scheme rather than as a series of unrelated buildings designed by a number of architects. At that stage it was not possible to determine the agencies that might be ultimately involved... and therefore, unified architectural control could only be secured by the corporation naming an overall planning consultant in the hope that such a consultant would be nominated as project architect for each element as it proceeded... The Corporation felt that JGL Poulson who had carried out work satisfactorily for the Corporation, was a firm of national and international reputation who could provide the full range of consultancy services that would be required."<sup>1088</sup> However, when this was put to Easington TDC at a Liaison Committee meeting in July 1968, the PDC deputy chairman, Ralph Appleton recalled being "disturbed and surprised at the dictatorial manner which [Smith] adopted to the Local Authority representatives..."<sup>1089</sup> A similar episode had occurred when Williams and Smith met representatives of Darlington RDC to discuss the proposed pool at Aycliffe. Donald Vickers, an Aycliffe board member, told police that a feasibility study for swimming baths at Aycliffe had been completed by the time Smith became chairman, and Darlington RDC had decided to commission R Brown and Partners. "...when the Chairman, Mr Smith and the General Manager, Mr A V Williams, made very strong efforts to get us to change our architects. Among the phrases used was 'we want an architect of international repute.' These efforts were strongly resisted, particularly by me and Darlington RDC. I think the Chairman finally realised that neither I nor Darlington RDC would change our minds... Agreement was finally reached and we

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<sup>1086</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Witness statement, Eric Simpson (Senior Administrative Assistant, Peterlee and Aycliffe Development Corporations), 9 October 1973

<sup>1087</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Witness statement, Eric Simpson (Senior Administrative Assistant, Peterlee and Aycliffe Development Corporations), 9 October 1973; TWAM DF/TDS Box 3849, Cackett Burns Dick McKellar to Easington RDC 23 October 1970. The firm at first invoiced for £3,432.14.0d based on estimated £300,000 cost of the Howlatch baths. Eventually a (post decimalisation) sum of £2,670.80 was agreed and paid.

<sup>1088</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Witness statement, Eric Simpson (Senior Administrative Assistant, Peterlee and Aycliffe Development Corporations), 9 October 1973

<sup>1089</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Witness statement, Ralph Appleton 2 October 1973

proceeded with the architect of our choice.”<sup>1090</sup>

Poulson was ‘tentatively approached’ in May 1969. Williams - acting, he claimed, on Smith’s instructions - wrote to Poulson inviting him to a meeting about the Centre. “It was about this time that [Smith] first told me that he wanted Poulson to have the commission for the project. Knowing nothing against Poulson, I did not demur... It was obvious from what he said at the meeting that he was determined to commission Poulson’s for the project”<sup>1091</sup> On 18 August Williams wrote to Easington RDC saying that the Corporation “wished to appoint” Poulson and on 4 September 1969 told the Board that “I have informed Easington RDC in accordance with discussions at the Liaison Committee, that JGL Poulson will be consultant architect for the whole of the arts and humanities centre, who will be working in conjunction with Victor Pasmore as the Corporation’s Planning Consultant”, this latter wording, he told police later, amounting to ‘suggesting’ his appointment to the Board.<sup>1092</sup> On 12 November Williams wrote to John Poulson informing him that the PDC wished to commission his practice as overall planning consultants for the Arts and Humanities Centre (Easington RDC commissioned Poulson to design the swimming pool component of the plan).<sup>1093</sup> This was confirmed at the Peterlee Board meeting of 4 December 1969.<sup>1094</sup>

Ralph Appleton later told the police: “Immediately after the meeting [of 4 September 1969] I informed the General Manager [Williams] that I was extremely unhappy about the decision and about the procedure in that the Board had not been consulted. He stated that he shared my view but that this was a fait accompli for it had been agreed at the Liaison Meeting, which I had been unable to attend... After the meeting the Chairman told me that he knew I was unhappy about the appointment but there was extreme urgency and he understood that Messrs. J G L Poulson was a very good firm for such a project also he had ‘met’ Poulson... This meeting was the

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<sup>1090</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Witness statement Donald Vickers, 8 November 1973

<sup>1091</sup> TWAM DF/TDS D2063 Witness statement, Arthur Vivian Williams [cover page with date missing; probably late 1973]

<sup>1092</sup> TWAM DF/TDS D2063 Witness statement, Arthur Vivian Williams [cover page with date missing; probably late 1973]; DCRO NT/Pe/ 1/4/14 PDC Board Minutes 4 September 1969

<sup>1093</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3849, AVW to JGLP 12 November 1969

<sup>1094</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3849 Minutes of PDC 4 December 1969. Easington RDC had also commissioned Poulson “in accordance with agreement reached through the liaison committee that it was desirable for only one architect to be involved in the centre as a whole.”

first occasion upon which I had heard the name Poulson mentioned in connection with this project.”<sup>1095</sup> He did not report his suspicions to the MHLG, however, because “it could have been argued that the appointment was primarily a matter for the RDC, also that the cutting of ‘red tape’ in order to make an appointment without delay was expedient.”<sup>1096</sup> Williams told police that Appleton’s comments “came as a surprise to me. It was from this time that I began to have doubts about Poulson and T Dan Smith... but only a worm of doubt, certainly not sufficient to warrant taking it back to the Board.”<sup>1097</sup> There is no evidence that Appleton voiced any further objection during or after the Board meeting on 4 December 1969; indeed, the Board, under Appleton’s temporary chairmanship, on 7 May 1970 commissioned Poulson to provide a model of the scheme.<sup>1098</sup> Planning continued, and permission was given for site preparation for the first phase in mid-1971.<sup>1099</sup> Smith was later to comment on Appleton’s statement, that “[t]he appointment to which Mr Appleton was referring was not that of the Science Park but of a leisure complex associated with it, a matter for the Rural District Council. I also had nothing to declare.”<sup>1100</sup>

Smith had kept Poulson informed on Peterlee progress, writing from the United States in November 1968 that “...I am sure the IBM project is on...[on returning home] I will then suggest a new arrangement between us to prevent any financial interest which may clash and hold the possibility of future trouble.” His concern at possible trouble may have been due to his interview with Gordon Mees on Wandsworth that month.<sup>1101</sup> In November 1969 he made a declaration of interest to Williams, citing six directorships (of his painting and PR companies) and adding that

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<sup>1095</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Witness statement, Ralph Appleton 2 October 1973

<sup>1096</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Witness statement, Ralph Appleton 2 October 1973

<sup>1097</sup> TWAM DF/TDS D2063 Witness statement, Arthur Vivian Williams [cover page with date missing; probably late 1973]

<sup>1098</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/1/1/6 PDC Board Minutes 7 May 1970. The appointment of Poulson in late 1969 did not involve any payment; this first commission under the scheme involved a fee of £1,000.

<sup>1099</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/1/1/6 PDC Board Minutes 3 June 1971. This was for the swimming pool, the only part of the proposed centre to be built. The architects, Booth Hancock & Johnson, were Poulsons operating under a new flag.

<sup>1100</sup> Smith, T D, *Designing History From Hysteria: A Participant’s View of the Poulson Affair*. Conference on Fraud and Corruption, University of Liverpool, 12-14 July, 1987 (Author’s collection)

<sup>1101</sup> TNA J 291/69 TDS to JGLP 24 November 1968. The “new arrangement” may have been the establishment of Progressive Public Relations Ltd in early 1969, of which solicitor John Marron, a Mr Andrews were directors, and Mrs Grace Cheeseman (Dan Smith’s personal secretary) Company Secretary, under her maiden name of Robinson. Mrs Cheeseman’s understanding was that PPR was set up solely to deal with PR for OSB (TNA J291/159/2 Witness statement, Grace Cheeseman, 6 September 1973)



he acted “in a consultancy role” for four organisations - including Ropergate Services Ltd, the company which acted as a business service company for the Poulson organisation.<sup>1102</sup>

## **Resignation**

The dream was never to be realised. Smith’s involvement with the London Borough of Wandsworth, and corruption scandals involving the council’s leader, Sidney Sporle, had already led to his being interviewed by the police in November 1968. In January 1970 Smith was arrested at his home by officers from the Metropolitan Police Fraud Squad, and later that month charged with corruption offences relating to Wandsworth. He rapidly stepped down - temporarily, he hoped - from his public offices, including that of Chairman of Aycliffe and Peterlee Corporations. This latter decision came after some heavy hints from Anthony Crosland, who wrote that civil service procedure was to suspend “without imputation of any kind... I have no power to force you to do this in regard to your chairmanship of the New Town [sic] Nevertheless ...”<sup>1103</sup> He also received strong advice to follow this course from his doctor, who told him that “...if you were to disregard this medical advice I feel you would be taking a calculated risk with your health.”<sup>1104</sup>

John Hargreaves wrote to Smith shortly after he stepped down that “Peterlee loses much of its inspiration without you” and his words were mirrored by events.<sup>1105</sup> An almost immediate sense of unease creeps into the documentary evidence. At a dinner hosted by IBM on 16 February 1970 the need to attract a public sector R&D establishment was stressed. “Without this, IBM’s buildings ‘were portable’”<sup>1106</sup>. A week later, Howard Marshall, an Assistant Secretary at MHLG, wrote that “one cannot but feel a little disturbed that there are as yet no signs of other development

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<sup>1102</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3849, TDS to AVW 24 November 1969. Mrs Cynthia Poulson was the majority shareholder of Ropergate; Poulson held no shares and was not a director.

<sup>1103</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3914 Anthony Crosland to TDS 21 January 1970

<sup>1104</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3914 Dr Lionel Kopelowitz to TDS 21 January 1970

<sup>1105</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3860 BJA Hargreaves to TDS 3 February 1970. A year later, Hargreaves wrote about “the gap that had been left in dynamic leadership due to the absence of Dan Smith” (TNA EW 9/69 B J A Hargreaves to J G Robertson, 7 January 1971). Hargreaves was then sounding out Lord Robens as a possible successor to Dan Smith.

<sup>1106</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 J G Robertson to J W Vernon, 17 February 1970. In a manuscript note on this letter, Vernon asks whether the CES [Centre for Environmental Studies] might be asked to set up a small project at Peterlee.

there.<sup>1107</sup> While efforts continued to attract new companies - Air Products Ltd and the Belgian medical diet specialists Dietronics Ltd being the front-runners in early 1970 - and there were hopes that the proposed Urban Transport and Environment Centre (UTEC) be located in Peterlee, there were also fears at MHLG that Peterlee would lose the advantage of its head start over science campuses in Wales and Scotland, and pessimism “about getting Mintech to do anything in terms of its research establishments.”<sup>1108</sup> Smith’s departure from the chairmanship was seen as a major reason for the slowdown in progress. “Dan Smith, who has been a driving force behind the whole idea and who has spent much time wooing suitable individuals and firms in this country, Europe and the USA has withdrawn temporarily from public life... There must now be considerable doubt whether he will return... In his absence there has been no one of comparable calibre and influence on the Peterlee Dev. Corporation capable of playing a similar role.” wrote S W Craig in June 1970, listing among other detrimental reasons Peterlee’s lack of Special Development Area status and the old problem of the personality of A V Williams, “not an easy man to deal with and we know of cases where he has been less than diplomatic in his negotiations with possible developers.” Williams had also fallen out with the Mintech Regional Director, Mr R Wood, “which does not make the task of getting science based industry into the New Town any easier.”<sup>1109</sup> A further problem was the rival new town of Washington, located closer to Newcastle and with the advantage of Special Development Area status; Mintech staff believed that Washington was promoting itself more effectively than was Peterlee as a location for industry.<sup>1110</sup>

Smith’s absence was also seen as critical by Henry Miller, Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University, who wrote to the new Conservative minister Peter Walker expressing his worries - and recommending Newcastle’s Tory council leader, Arthur Grey, as a replacement for Smith. “...the Peterlee Corporation officers seem to feel that all is going reasonably well. From the sidelines, however, things are not so

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<sup>1107</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 H W Marshall to J W Vernon, 24 February 1970

<sup>1108</sup> TNA EW 7/1050 M S Bremner to Mrs O’Brien

<sup>1109</sup> TNA EW 7/1051 S W Craig to K F J Ennals, MHLG 24 June 1970. That Mintech were still proving unhelpful is indicated by TNA EW 7/1051 K F J Ennals (MHLG) to G Blackburn (Mintech) 15 July 1970; Ennals expressing surprise at a recent statement by Blackburn that “it appears to us questionable whether Peterlee has anything special to offer”.

<sup>1110</sup> TNA EW 7/1051 G Blackburn to K F J Ennals 14 September 1970

happy. The remarkable impetus that Dan Smith gave to publicising the Science Campus project and trying to persuade other concerns to establish their laboratories side by side with the IBM venture seems to have run out of steam. I think it is too much to expect great progress to be made by permanent officials on further projects that clearly need political inspiration.”<sup>1111</sup>

The failure to attract interest began to gain unwelcome publicity. “North ‘science city’ may be doomed by lack of support” ran one headline in the Newcastle *Evening Chronicle*, citing complaints by IBM.<sup>1112</sup> And although the latter part of 1970 saw “a genuine attempt by a wide range of people interested in the Science Campus concept to try and replace the drive that was lost with the temporary retirement of Mr Smith”, including securing the UTEC project for Peterlee, little concrete was achieved.<sup>1113</sup> By the end of 1970 John Hargreaves and Sir Patrick Dean together approached Lord Hailsham for help with the project. “They represented to me that Mr Dan Smith has gone who has been to some extent an inspiring influence, and that they felt that the project on which they placed great hopes had “begun to flounder”; and they sought a Government research project (In particular, the transport project).<sup>1114</sup>

Smith’s term of office as Chairman of the Aycliffe and Peterlee Corporations expired on 30 June 1971 and, unsurprisingly, was not renewed by the Conservative Environment Secretary, Peter Walker.<sup>1115</sup> His replacement was the 26-year old Dennis Stevenson, “a younger and more vigorous Chairman” according to one chronicler of the town, though it would be hard to imagine a more active and vigorous Chairman than Smith.<sup>1116</sup> Stevenson was no supporter of the Science Campus project, although it still remained Development Corporation policy at the time that Williams was succeeded by Gary Philipson as General Manager in 1974.<sup>1117</sup> The attention of the PDC was diverted towards attracting employers of any

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<sup>1111</sup> TNA EW 7/1051 Henry Miller to Peter Walker, 10 September 1970

<sup>1112</sup> Newcastle *Evening Chronicle*, 23 September 1970

<sup>1113</sup> TNA EW 7/1051 R F B Grimble to K F J Ennals, 5 January 1971. The UTEC project was eventually awarded to Bristol.

<sup>1114</sup> TNA EW 9/69 Note by Lord Hailsham, 22 December 1970

<sup>1115</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3914 TDS resigned 5 March 1971 as from 30 June 1971

<sup>1116</sup> Robinson *op cit* p224

<sup>1117</sup> Philipson *op cit* p239. Stevenson’s career culminated in his elevation to the House of Lords and his appointment as Chairman of the Halifax plc, later HBOS; he resigned this post after the near-collapse of the bank in 2008.

kind to the town. Peterlee's PR officer described the Science Campus scheme as "never a realistic proposition but a public relations gimmick... The Development Corporation's current policy for prompting Peterlee is now based on honesty and realism."<sup>1118</sup> The Science Campus plan was finally put to sleep in February 1978, when the DoE granted permission to the PDC to develop a first tranche of private housing on the Oakerside site.<sup>1119</sup> A few months later Eddie Nixon wrote to Dan Smith "It is unfortunate that your leadership was missing at a crucial stage of the development, but I have concluded that I must face reality."<sup>1120</sup> With the Science Campus plan dead, and Bell's successor as director of the Peterlee operation lobbying Nixon for its closure, IBM withdrew from Peterlee in 1979.<sup>1121</sup>

By 1981 Peterlee had the unenviable record of being the urban area with the lowest relative amount of high technology employment in Britain.<sup>1122</sup>

### **The Peterlee Indictment**

Following John Poulson's bankruptcy in 1972 and the subsequent police investigations, Smith faced four charges of corruption offences, the most serious of which was related to the Peterlee Arts and Humanities Centre. Smith pleaded guilty to all four charges, but in later life argued repeatedly that he had not been guilty. An examination of the Peterlee charge certainly offers alternative possible explanations to the belief that Smith, in receipt of bribes from Poulson, single-handedly took the decision to present him with the Arts and Humanities Centre contract.

First, the prosecution's arguments in formulating the charge against Smith were poorly assembled and may have been vulnerable to an informed and energetic defence. Prosecution notes on the Peterlee indictment record that "At no stage throughout his connection with the Peterlee Development Corporation did TDS disclose an interest in JGLP or his practices: very belatedly on 24.11.69 he declared an interest in a number of companies including Ropergate Services Ltd, but he did

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<sup>1118</sup> *Sunderland Echo*, 17 May 1977

<sup>1119</sup> Philipson *op cit* p241

<sup>1120</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3913 E R Nixon, Managing Director IBM UK to TDS 3 November 1978

<sup>1121</sup> Email from Colin Bell to author, 28 September 2010

<sup>1122</sup> Begg, Iain G & Cameron, Gordon C 'High Technology Location and the Urban Areas of Great Britain', *Urban Studies* vol 25 (1988) p369

not even at this stage mention his contractual relationship with JGLP.”<sup>1123</sup> But Dan Smith’s sole contractual relationship with Poulson was through Ropergate Services Ltd; he had no direct contract or agreement with Poulson’s practice or Poulson himself. This was the view taken by an anonymous author tasked by the PDC in 1972 to assess whether Smith was in breach of Corporation standing orders, who went further in questioning whether Smith needed to make a declaration of interest at all: “On the basis of the facts presently known Smith was not (nor his nominee) a member of, or employed by, J G L Poulson Architects per se, with whom the Corporation was in contract for defined architectural services. Smith states that he was a consultant employed by a company (Ropergate Services?) who provided certain services for the Poulson organisation. Nor was Smith a partner in the Poulson organisation and so far as we are aware his wife did not have interests either pecuniary or by virtue of employment. This may seem to be legal hairsplitting but subject to better view I think it would be unwise to consider that Smith had an obligation in accordance with Standing Orders to declare an interest in the Poulson commissions when these were being considered by the Corporation.”<sup>1124</sup>

The indictment continued: “There was no officer on the staff of the Peterlee Development Corporation who, of his own professional knowledge, thought JGLP deserving of a contract from the Corporation, *if indeed any of the officers was actually aware of JGLP at all.*”<sup>1125</sup> The suggestion that none of the officials at the PDC might have known of Poulson’s work for the Aycliffe Corporation and in Peterlee itself strains credibility and would appear to indicate that the charges against Smith were put together almost without any great care. Documents on the DPP files (TNA J291 series) cited above show that Poulson had carried out no fewer than eight contracts, including substantial housing developments in Aycliffe, by 1970. The fact of Allan’s work for Smith’s public relations companies was known, as was Williams’ receipt of Poulson’s ‘hospitality’. In his statement to the police, Allan mentioned Poulson’s earlier contracts at Aycliffe and Peterlee.<sup>1126</sup> To suggest that no

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<sup>1123</sup> TNA J291/159/4 The Queen against Thomas Daniel Smith. Second Indictment - Peterlee Development Corporation

<sup>1124</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/1/4/15 Supplementary Document No 1 T D Smith [pencil note: Mtg 21/7/72]

<sup>1125</sup> TNA J291/159/4 The Queen against Thomas Daniel Smith. Second Indictment - Peterlee Development Corporation (my italics).

<sup>1126</sup> TNA J291/159/2 Witness statement, Kenneth Allan 14 November 1973

senior PDC officials might have heard of Poulson is difficult to accept.

Second, one must also examine the possibility that the suggestion to use Poulson for the Arts and Humanities Centre originated other than with Dan Smith. In this connection a note from Allan to Smith about the proposed swimming pool at Aycliffe is of great interest. Allan wrote: "The commission would be in the region of £1,000,000 at least and apart from our previous discussions, I would have thought it desirable to appoint an architect who will really give us a building of distinction - Richard Brown certainly won't! In any case, we will be making a substantial contribution to this scheme and I would not think it unreasonable to nominate the architect. Pearson, the Clerk to Darlington Rural [District Council], is a very reasonable man, and if the suggestion comes from you I'm sure it would be acceptable. Perhaps we could have a word about it. Ken."<sup>1127</sup> Far from Smith deciding that Poulson should design the pool at Aycliffe, he is here being nudged towards that position by Allan. If that were the case in Aycliffe, why not in Peterlee? Moreover, Allan was more than disingenuous in his statement to the police: "From the moment that Mr Smith advocated the commissioning of a single architect he left no doubt in my mind that he wanted Poulson for the job. I formed this opinion from what Mr Smith said at Board meetings when he named Poulson. I was aware that Mr Smith had known Mr Poulson for a number of years, but I was unaware of any financial arrangements, consequently when Mr Smith failed to disclose any financial interest to the Board I thought obviously that none existed. ... I must add that at the Board meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> September 1969 Mr Smith in no way indicated to the Board that he knew Mr Poulson, he merely referred to his repute nationally and internationally as an architect."<sup>1128</sup> Allan was Smith's PR chief of staff for years and Poulson was one of Smith's main clients; it would have been very strange had he not known of the financial connections between them.

Third, Poulson's relationship with Allan may have been of longer standing and more influential that Allan was prepared to admit to the police. Allan told the police that "as far as I can remember" the only time he met Poulson was in February 1970, at

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<sup>1127</sup> TNA J291/159/7 Manuscript note, KLA to TDS 15 October 1968

<sup>1128</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Witness statement Kenneth Allan 6 November 1973

Allan's request, to ascertain that Poulson was not going bankrupt.<sup>1129</sup> Allan had certainly met Poulson on at least one previous occasion, and possibly more. In late December 1969 or early January 1970 he had met Poulson at Aycliffe.<sup>1130</sup> And on 20 January 1970, Poulson wrote to his solicitor, Nigel Grimwood:

“Miss McLeod asked him [Scott] if I could buy ½ dozen bottles of whisky to give to the Deputy General Manager of Peterlee and Aycliffe Development Corporation where we have 400 houses for OSB and an Arts and Humanity [sic] Centre, for which we have been officially appointed by letter, together with a £300,000 swimming pool, for which we have been officially appointed by letter. Scott prattled on about this, and said in the end that I could not have them... He sickened me so much that I have taken the whisky out of my own stock... I am dictating this to you in the car going up to County Durham ...I am seeing the Deputy General Manager at Peterlee, to try and get some additional work (hence the whisky I mentioned). There is no-one in my office who could even get near him, let alone get work from him, including Wilson.”<sup>1131</sup>

Poulson was in dire financial straits at that point. In June 1969 he had been told that he was insolvent, and new arrangements made to control his companies on the advice of his wife's brother-in-law, John King (later Lord King of Wartnaby, chairman of British Airways), with Poulson himself marginalised.<sup>1132</sup> At a meeting convened on 31 December 1969, Poulson states that he “had agreed to sign away my entire organisation”.<sup>1133</sup> One can almost sense the clammy, barely suppressed panic of that journey: the once-powerful, confident businessman now dictating letters on the hoof, no longer able even to draw on the company stock of whisky, driving to Peterlee in the middle of winter in order to beg favours. He was desperate to get work to keep his empire intact, and the man he turned to was not Smith, with whom relations had broken down, nor even Williams, but Ken Allan. The relationship clearly had personal aspects to it: he was confident enough to take Allan bottles of whisky; he was able to “get near him” where others could not. Allan, indeed was not a stranger to gifts of this nature: he “used to get at Christmas lots of gifts, as some

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<sup>1129</sup> TNA J291/159/2 Witness statement, Kenneth Allan 14 November 1973

<sup>1130</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/4/2/10 JGLP to AVW 5 January 1970. Poulson refers to “my visit to Aycliffe when I met your Chief Administrative Officer Mr K L Allan...”

<sup>1131</sup> TNA J 291/159/8 JGLP to N Grimwood 20 January 1970. George Wilson was a former civil servant at the Department of Health who Poulson had recruited in 1968 (Poulson, J, *The Price* (London 1981) p129)

<sup>1132</sup> Poulson, J *The Price* (London 1981) pp149-155

<sup>1133</sup> *Ibid* pp156-158

senior people do”, including one year a dozen bottles of Krug.<sup>1134</sup>

Fourthly, by the time that Poulson’s appointment as overall planning consultant for the Arts and Humanities Centre was confirmed, the relationship between Smith and Poulson had collapsed.<sup>1135</sup> The last payment by Ropergate Services Ltd to Confersbrook PR (the company of Smith’s that was by then handling Poulson money) came at the end of September 1969, and no notice of the cessation of payment was given before or after. Grace Cheeseman, Dan Smith’s secretary, recorded a series of meetings in October and November 1969, and a phone call on 3 December. “Although obviously upset, JGLP still maintained he was getting his affairs under control and wished TDS to come to another agreement in regard to public relations work. TDS thoroughly annoyed, said he had offers elsewhere and JGLP had put him in an extremely embarrassing position. After Christmas there was an agreement to meet in January 1970, but upon the announcement of the Wandsworth case TDS received a telephone call to say JGLP would not be available.”<sup>1136</sup> This situation raises a number of questions. One reading is that Smith was by December 1969 perhaps no longer interested in doing business with Poulson. Did Smith, despite his annoyance, preside over the PDC Board meeting the following day, 4 December, hoping that the appointment of Poulson would help his former friend back on his feet, whether or not this would lead to a resumption of their former business relationship? Did he feel that the appointment of Poulson as consulting architect was necessary to keep the Science Campus project on track? Did he feel that Poulson was indeed the best practice for the job? Whatever the case, it is clear that whatever reason he had for approving of Poulson’s appointment, he was

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<sup>1134</sup> Interview with Tom Toward, 14 September 2010. On the Krug, Toward continued: “he had them in his office in cases and he went out to a meeting and when he came back they weren’t there... he made enquiries, couldn’t find out... On Christmas day he went to Vivian Williams’ for a meal and ... Vivian Williams had in his entrance hall this huge long sideboard, and on it were twelve bottles of Krug. Ken Allan said to him, ‘They looked like mine’, and Vivian Williams grinned and said ‘You can have one back’. On Poulson’s whisky, Toward commented: “Ken Allan was the contact for Vivian Williams... The whisky would be intended for Vivian Williams. Ken Allan didn’t have the power to take decisions.” Toward believes Allan innocent of wrongdoing: “I cleared Ken Allan of any wrongdoing because he... hadn’t done anything wrong, he was an honest lad caught up by circumstances, it’s just his association with others because of his link with Vivian Williams sort of made people think different”

<sup>1135</sup> eg TWAM DF/TDS Box 3842 TDS to Professor George Jones, 22 July 1976, stating “My association with Poulson ended in Sept 1968 and was finalised in Sept 1969”. The second date is more reliable than the first.

<sup>1136</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3879. Note (undated) by Grace Cheeseman, signed ‘GC’.



not at that point in receipt of money from Poulson, and that there was no certainty of the payments resuming in the future.<sup>1137</sup>

### Investigations

Once the Poulson bankruptcy began to make headlines, Smith's chairmanship was examined for indiscretions, although the paperwork was sometimes missing. "We don't not know what tie-ups Dan Smith *may* have had with various firms" wrote one irritated civil servant. "If our ministers appoint a man as chairman it is hardly to be expected that we maintain a detective to check on his private and business affairs."<sup>1138</sup> The same officer also had to investigate the unlikely suggestion that Smith was a director of Pressdram, publishers of *Private Eye*.<sup>1139</sup> Another more tangible link became apparent when the Ministry realised that a company called Project Location Ltd had been given an industrial consultancy by PDC in November 1968, supposedly on Smith's recommendation; Ron Dilleigh, Smith's Northampton-based friend and business associate, was a director of the firm. Ralph Appleton, the Deputy Chairman at Peterlee, had raised his disquiet about these associations with the Ministry in September 1969.<sup>1140</sup>

At Peterlee, meanwhile, steps were taken to maintain an illusion of calm. A Board Meeting on 17 August 1972, held to consider Allan's actions, found that the board "are satisfied that Mr Allan was not in a position to influence the placing of Poulson contracts nor did so. We can find no evidence of any kind to suggest that Mr Allan ever had a special association with Mr Poulson." The Department of the Environment, too, seemingly did not wish to rock the boat, one officer advising a junior minister that Andrew Cunningham's acceptance of a free holiday from Poulson "does not even begin to look like sufficient reasons for requiring him to resign from the Authority."<sup>1141</sup> Allan resigned at the end of June 1974 "on grounds of ill health" and this was greeted "with the deepest regret... the corporation

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<sup>1137</sup> Poulson, in his memoirs, wrote: "The truth is that I terminated his employment, not the other way about, and solely because I had heard that he was to face a further investigation in Wandsworth, and we were deeply concerned that no mud should stick to us in the wake of his turbulent career." (Poulson *op cit* p71)

<sup>1138</sup> TNA HLG 115/995 R N Winter to Mr Fairclough 21 July 1972

<sup>1139</sup> TNA HLG 115/995 R N Winter to Mr Gilbert 24 January 1973

<sup>1140</sup> TNA HLG 115/995 R N Winter to Mr Stirling 20 March 1973

<sup>1141</sup> TNA HLG 115/995 C N Tebay to PS/PUSS(TI) (Private Secretary to Parliamentary Under Secretary of State) 30 August 1972. There were, of course, more than one holiday.

record deep appreciation of the very long and valuable service rendered by Mr Allan.”<sup>1142</sup> Williams had retired on 16 January 1974, his departure by contrast having been marked by complete silence in the records other than functional mentions of date of leaving, although the Director of Finance, who served as stand-in until Gary Philipson took over the position in March 1974, received a vote of thanks for his three months service.<sup>1143</sup>

Philipson was to write in his 1988 history of the Aycliffe and Peterlee Corporations that “[n]one of the offences to which Smith, Poulson and Cunningham pleaded guilty were in any way related to the Development Corporations’ business...”.<sup>1144</sup>

## Discussion

Forty years after the departure of IBM from Peterlee, how can we assess Smith’s tenure of the new town corporation chairmanship and his advocacy of the science campus project? Was the latter, as Robinson believed, just “a dismal, somewhat embarrassing, failure”, or could it have worked?<sup>1145</sup> Peterlee gets no mention in the history of science parks, “almost certainly... because it failed to develop into a fully fledged park”; but it was, as Smith had hoped and striven for, the first in the field in the UK.<sup>1146</sup> If the arrival of IBM on the ground can be taken as a starting date, Peterlee was active by late 1969; the science parks of Heriot-Watt and Trinity College Cambridge did not start until 1971. Since that period, and especially since the 1980s, the number of science parks has expanded in the UK and elsewhere. By the early 1990s there were 38 science parks established in the UK, and 18 more under development.<sup>1147</sup> Naturally, there would be failures. Castells and Hall describe a headlong rush of regions eager to become new Silicon Valleys:

“A hasty, hurried study by an opportunistic consultant was at hand to provide the magic formula: a small dose of venture capital, a university (invariably termed a ‘Technology Institute’), fiscal and institutional incentives to attract

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<sup>1142</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/1/1/7

<sup>1143</sup> DCRO NT/Pe/1/1/7 PDC Board minutes 6 September 1973, 6 December 1973, 3 January 1974, 7 February 1974, 4 April 1974

<sup>1144</sup> Philipson *op cit*, p169

<sup>1145</sup> Robinson *op cit* p220

<sup>1146</sup> Gareth Potts, *Towards the Embedded University?* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne 1997) pp170-171

<sup>1147</sup> Nikos Komninos, *Intelligent Cities. Innovation, Knowledge Systems and Digital Spaces* (London 2002) p56

high-technology firms, and a degree of support for small businesses. All this, wrapped within the covers of a glossy brochure, and illustrated by a sylvan landscape with a futuristic name, would create the right conditions... to become the locus of the new major global industrial center. The world is now littered with the ruins of all too many such dreams that have failed... Indeed it would almost seem, as some scholars have argued, that the whole world has become gripped by 'high technology fantasies,' which signify virtually nothing."<sup>1148</sup>

But Peterlee was hardly an instance of slapping 'high-tech' signage on a common-or-garden industrial estate. It offered most of what is now identified as the key requirements of a 'technopole' (to use the term favoured by Castells and Hall). For example, of the four types of technology intermediation suggested by Komninos - university/business collaboration, business networking, finance and other support for spin-offs creating new technology-intense industries, and the attraction of innovative organisations and the dissemination of research - Peterlee offered all but the third; and Smith might reasonably have hoped that Government designation of Peterlee as 'the' science campus for the region might ultimately bring financial support to overcome the disadvantage of non-SDA status.<sup>1149</sup> And while Heriot-Watt's proximity to Edinburgh may have offered some advantages, Peterlee's connection with both Newcastle and Durham Universities outshone Heriot's standing, which, says Bowyer, was not very high, the university having just 1,000 students in 1970 and being short of money throughout the 1970s; yet "[t]his has not inhibited its steady development and the healthy growth of the research park..."<sup>1150</sup>

Also, although Peterlee was neither "emerging from deep agricultural torpor" nor indeed is County Durham one of "the idyllic corners of the world" which saw so many technopole developments, there were precedents for the impact of new technology on a depressed traditional-industrial background.<sup>1151</sup> The Route 128 corridor around Boston, USA had developed largely accidentally as businesses were established near strategic junctions on that city's orbital freeway. Garreau described the consequence: "From the dawn of the computer age, the Edge Cities along Route

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<sup>1148</sup> Castells, Manuel, & Hall, Peter, *Technopoles of the World. The making of twenty-first-century industrial complexes* (London 1994) p8

<sup>1149</sup> Komninos *op cit* p25

<sup>1150</sup> Bower, D Jane, *Company and campus partnership. Supporting technology transfer* (London 1992) p97

<sup>1151</sup> Quotes from Castells & Hall *op cit* p7.

128 became synonymous with the romance of high technology. Companies that made history clustered around the verdant interstates - Digital, Lotus, Wang. The Edge-City-driven Massachusetts Miracle of the 1980s in one decade lifted New England from the poorest region in America to its richest.”<sup>1152</sup> Massachusetts had lost its staple textile industries in the inter-war years, but Route 128 brought about a remarkable resurgence in computing, electronics and avionics.<sup>1153</sup> The process had begun when Wang Industries, founded by a Harvard graduate, relocated in the 1960s to Lowell, an archetypal mill town which had lost half of its jobs between 1924 and 1932. Wang was just the vanguard of a great number of technology firms.<sup>1154</sup> The parallels could not have been lost on Smith.

The question of leadership in the creation of technopoles appears to receive little attention. Castells and Hall comment that the Sophia-Antipolis science park near Nice was “[m]ost remarkably, and unusually among the schemes considered [in their book], it was the notion of an individual, which was fully accepted as a public initiative only after a decade of indecision.”<sup>1155</sup> If anything, Castells and Hall looked upon individual leadership with something approaching suspicion, writing of ‘Science Cities’ (in their terminology, centres for ‘pure’ scientific research such as Akademgorodok in Siberia) that such projects “also tend to be linked to the all-powerful will of a Prince (in modern terms, an autocrat or technocrat) with the power to create ex-nihilo a new site for science...”<sup>1156</sup> Given the respect in which he was held by many of the key figures in the project, and the effects upon it of his departure from Peterlee, this is perhaps not a completely bad analogy in Smith’s case.

Individual leadership also played a significant role in the development of the North Carolina Research Triangle - a major influence on the Peterlee scheme - in the person of North Carolina state Governor Luther H Hodges. While a number of people associated with the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), Duke University and North Carolina State University came up with the idea of a research park, it was Hodges who drove it to reality, “with the vigor and drive, the capacity

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<sup>1152</sup> Garreau, Joel, *Edge City. Life on the New Frontier* (New York 1991) p74

<sup>1153</sup> Castells & Hall *op cit* p29

<sup>1154</sup> *Ibid* p31

<sup>1155</sup> *Ibid* p85.

<sup>1156</sup> *Ibid* pp39-40

for hard and sustained work, and the flair for salesmanship that have always characterised him. His administration as governor was dedicated to broadening the industrial base of a relatively poor state, and the Triangle proposal fitted right in.”<sup>1157</sup> The parallels are obvious; the differences equally so. Governor Hodges was a man of great power within his state, albeit powers with strict limitations; Smith technically had no individual executive power at all, although a great deal of influence. But both men were adept in publicising and persuading for their cause, and in building coalitions of interests in favour of it. Smith’s efforts on behalf of Peterlee even took up a significant part of a 1969 government propaganda film in which he was profiled as a representative of booming 1960s Britain: *The Pacemakers*.<sup>1158</sup>

Could it have worked? Counterfactuals make bad history, but certain points can reasonably be made or argued. Had Smith remained Chairman of the Corporation, and had the Labour government been re-elected in 1970, it is entirely possible that he could have encouraged further advanced technology enterprises to come to Peterlee and to have secured from central government both the ability to offer greater financial incentives to relocating companies, and - a very important factor - a government research facility for the town. Certainly, the behaviour of his successors in office (Appleton and Stevenson) did little to encourage the project, which, at Smith’s departure, appeared ripe for ‘breakthrough’.

Gary Philipson argues that “although Dan Smith claimed from the outset the support of Ministers and of IBM... in both cases the support given was in principle only.”<sup>1159</sup> This is misleading. As outlined above, IBM *had* committed themselves to Peterlee and their initial establishment was in place by the time Smith stepped down; only their continued expansion was conditional. The question of government support is

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<sup>1157</sup> Hamilton, W B, ‘The Research Triangle in North Carolina: A Study in Leadership for the Common Weal’, *South Atlantic Quarterly* (Spring 1966) pp254-278. Luther H Hodges (1898-1974) was Governor of North Carolina 1954-1961 and US Secretary of Commerce 1961-1965.

<sup>1158</sup> Central Office of Information, *The Pacemakers*, also released as *No Two the Same*, (1969). These were part of a series of short films profiling innovative figures in the arts, culture, town planning etc, released for broadcast overseas. The film on Dan Smith, as hagiographic a portrayal as anyone might wish for, shows among other things one of his “legendary” dinner parties at which he is discussing the Arts and Humanities Centre with guests including the actor John Neville, Arthur Clifford of Tyne Tees TV, Leslie Holloway of the Midlands Arts Centre, Leonie Cohn, a BBC producer, and Wilfred Burns.

<sup>1159</sup> Philipson *op cit* pp171-172

more open to argument. While support from certain departments, especially Mintech and to a lesser extent the Board of Trade, was lukewarm at best, Fred Lee's statement that Peterlee was to be the officially sanctioned science campus for the north was unequivocal.<sup>1160</sup> One can but conjecture.

The facts, though, are that Smith arrived at an ailing mining town in 1962. When he left it in 1970, it had, largely through his efforts, attracted investment by IBM and was, however briefly, a town which serious and senior people even believed might soon have its own branch of Harrods. The Peterlee project serves also as a microcosm of Smith's career. It was a location where his political will and his belief in the possibility of a better future and a new society in the north of England, achievable through a marriage of science and technology and the arts, tangled and collided catastrophically with his business interests. His guilt or innocence of corruption is in one sense irrelevant to the nature of his achievement in Peterlee. I have sought to suggest that the situation at Peterlee was of such a nature that while his innocence cannot be demonstrated, it would be equally unsafe and unjust to assume his guilt. But whether or not he was guilty of corruption in Peterlee, the entanglement of interests was his own responsibility and set the conditions for his fall, and for the ultimate failure of his aspirations for the town and the region.

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<sup>1160</sup> Boyes, *op cit* pp204-205 citing TNA HLG/115/1065 DEA Official Committee on Environmental Planning, 22 November 1968

## Chapter 7: A Piece of the Action

*I came to the conclusion that I was missing out, that I could combine my real desire to give public service with what they call a piece of the action.*<sup>1161</sup>

### The end of a career

Smith's public life came to an abrupt end on 17 January 1970 on being told by a journalist that he was about to be charged with corruption relating to a public relations account with Wandsworth borough council.<sup>1162</sup> He was formally summonsed on 19 January on charges under the Public Bodies Corrupt Practices Act 1889 and within days had 'temporarily' stepped down as chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Council and the Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations and was never again to occupy public office.<sup>1163</sup> Instead, he entered upon a seven-year period in which the collision of his public and private interests saw him stand trial on three occasions for corruption, serve almost three years of a six year prison sentence, be called as a key witness in two further corruption trials and as a witness to two official inquiries. In the course of this his business interests collapsed and his reputation was all but destroyed.

Smith's career as a businessman had begun after the end of the war, when, after an interlude running a Wallsend café with former ILP colleagues, he began a painting and decorating business with another political associate, Bill Nichol. The partnership flourished, specialising in the painting of cinemas and in council contracts. The role of Smith's accountant, William Kirkup, as Progressive Party councillor and chairman of Newcastle's housing committee in the mid-1950s, gave rise to gossip, but Smith was apparently scrupulous in declaring an interest when his company was being considered for a council contract. Ian Bransom, former leader of Newcastle's Conservatives, recalled in 1971 that "Dan would always declare his interest whenever he was tendering. People on the Tory side were doing it too. Dan painted a

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<sup>1161</sup> T Dan Smith, quoted by Chibnall, S & Saunders, P, 'Worlds apart: notes on the social reality of corruption', *British Journal of Sociology* 28 (2) (1977) p 143

<sup>1162</sup> TWAM DF.TDS Box 3913, unpublished memoir by Ada Smith p 50

<sup>1163</sup> *Newcastle Journal* 20 January 1970, 26 January 1970

lot of council houses. It was fair. You would lose a lot of good men in councils if you said that no one was allowed to carry out work for the local authority.”<sup>1164</sup>

Eventually he gave up tendering for council contracts, because, according to Alderman Arthur Grey (Bransom’s successor as Tory leader): “Dan felt resentment at having to leave the council while a tender was being discussed. He felt it was undignified because he seemed to be singled out for personal discussion and he knew it. He decided to go for no more tenders because of what some people on the council were doing to him.”<sup>1165</sup>

### **The Crudens Affair**

By the late 1950s he was losing interest in painting and decorating. Having maybe been influenced by Vance Packard’s work on the American advertising industry *The Hidden Persuaders*, Smith turned his attention to the new field of public relations.<sup>1166</sup> He had encouraged Newcastle City council to appoint PR consultants to handle a corporate account, and this contract was awarded to JKT Public Relations, formed by three specialist correspondents from the *Evening Chronicle*, Jack Ramsey, Ken Dodd and Tom Bergman.<sup>1167</sup> While the contract was being debated in Council, Conservative members “accused an unnamed Labour councillor of having a financial interest in JKT”, while Smith invited his critics to take the matter up with the Town Clerk if they had any evidence. “Dan’s coolness under fire, and the support of his Labour colleagues, won the day.”<sup>1168</sup> Soon afterwards, probably in early 1961, Smith came into contact with a Scottish building company, Crudens, whose north east England agent was a local councillor in Chester-le-Street named Bob Urwin, an old acquaintance of Smith. Crudens had obtained the UK licence for the Swedish Skarne industrialised building system. Urwin and his colleague Sid McCullough sought Smith’s help in promoting it to local authorities; meanwhile, JKT had begun to act as PR agents for Crudens. According to Fitzwalter and Taylor, Smith proposed setting

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<sup>1164</sup> *Northern Echo* 9 July 1971

<sup>1165</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>1166</sup> *Ibid* 1971 mentions Smith being influenced by *The Hidden Persuaders*. I have come across no references to it in Smith’s writings or recorded interviews.

<sup>1167</sup> Fitzwalter, R & Taylor, D, *Web of Corruption. The Story of JGL Poulson and T Dan Smith* (St Albans 1981) pp 37-38. Jack Ramsey was local government correspondent, Ken Dodd (who soon dropped out of the company to take up a journalistic post in Manchester) the industrial correspondent and Tom Bergman wrote on culture and the arts. The firm drew its name from their initials

<sup>1168</sup> *Ibid* p 38. Jack Ramsey denied that Smith ever had a financial interest in JKT (Interview with Jack Ramsey 3 March 2010)



up a new PR company to pursue local authority contracts which an outraged Bergman denounced as “a bribe collection agency”.<sup>1169</sup> Jack Ramsey recollects Smith trying to detach him from Bergman for a similar (if not the same) venture, with Ramsey warning Smith that he would probably end up in Durham Gaol.<sup>1170</sup> Both versions end with Smith storming out.<sup>1171</sup>

Smith’s interest in Crudens caused local controversy in January 1962 when a report presented by the housing committee to the council recommended inviting Crudens, which previously had not worked in Newcastle, to tender for three proposed new high-rise blocks of flats in Newcastle. Conservative leader Ian Bransom moved that the contract be given instead to Wimpeys, adding “I had hoped that Councillor Smith would be back, as I wanted to ask him why this great preference was being shown for... Crudens, who, as far as I know, have never done any work in this city for this Corporation... If the reference back is not acceptable to the Socialists, I suggest that the matter be referred to the Minister of Housing and Local Government to see what he thinks about this sort of thing. I think it is a bit sinister, a bit strange and a bit unsavoury.”<sup>1172</sup> Rumours were spreading about Smith’s supposed interest in Crudens, and causing upset in the Labour Group as well as outrage in the Conservative opposition. In June 1962 the Labour chairman of the Housing Committee, Cllr Tom Collins, resigned, allegedly over Smith’s ‘behind the scenes’ behaviour regarding housing contracts, and his deputy, vice chairman Jonathan Burton resigned in early July after Dan Smith was re-elected housing chairman, a post he had held from 1958 until May 1961.<sup>1173</sup> A bitter dispute broke out between Smith and his former ILP colleague Jack Johnston.

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<sup>1169</sup> *Ibid* p 39.

<sup>1170</sup> Interview with Jack Ramsey 3 March 2010

<sup>1171</sup> Fitzwalter & Taylor’s assertion that “If there was to be a PR war in Newcastle, Smith was determined to win it” seems rather melodramatic, and their assertion that he “[took] with him JKT’s latest journalistic recruit, Peter Ward, and the Burton and Crudens accounts” does not accord with Ramsey’s recollection that he and Bergman had suggested Ward move to Smith’s employment when Smith had asked their advice when the row had simmered down, and that JKT continued to work for both Burtons (and the Newcastle-based Jackson the Tailor, which was to take Burton over) and Crudens (Interview with Jack Ramsey 3 March 2010) .

<sup>1172</sup> Newcastle City Council, Proceedings 1961-62, 17 January 1962 pp 750-751

<sup>1173</sup> *Newcastle Journal* 4 July 1962 p 5; 6 July 1962; 7 July 1962; Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit*, pp47-48. Collins resigned ostensibly because of ‘pressure of work’, later claiming it to have been in protest at Smith’s actions in brining pressure to bear for the council to approve a contract for the builder Leslie’s, a subsidiary of Bovis, at a time when Smith was establishing a triangular business relationship with Bovis and Poulson.

Smith was subsequently to deny repeatedly that he had been working as a PR consultant for Crudens. He had, he said, been negotiating with them as he wanted to secure the UK licence for Skarne, believing it to be the best building system in Europe. Skarne suggested Smith set up a PR company to handle them and so Nicholas PR was established with Bill Nichol.<sup>1174</sup>

Smith was still considering the matter at a meeting of T Dan Smith Associates on 9 October 1962, when it was noted he would meet Crudens representatives on 16 October to discuss the *possibility* of PR work for them.<sup>1175</sup> But Poulson did not believe the Skarne system was financially viable; and he was now the more important business partner for Smith who was later to write that “My interest in Skarne and Crudens never came to fruition.”<sup>1176</sup>

His practice of not attending meetings of the Housing Committee and Council at which Crudens was discussed (and thus not having to declare an interest) was, Smith later explained, because he had been warned in 1961 by a former police officer that a meeting of building company representatives and councillors on both sides were planning to campaign against him on the allegations that he had had Crudens placed on the city’s list of contractors. He was advised not to attend any meetings at which Crudens was discussed, and, he said, followed this advice until the committee decided to approve the scheme. He then declared an interest, because Smiths Decorators had priced Bills of Quantities for the project.<sup>1177</sup>

Jack Johnston claimed, however, that Smith was actively lobbying for Crudens within the Labour group. In an interview for Amber Films in the mid-1980s, he

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<sup>1174</sup> Author’s Collection, Draft paper for Conference on Fraud and Corruption, University of Liverpool, 12-14 July 1987 pp13-14

<sup>1175</sup> TNA J291/66 Report of Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1962

<sup>1176</sup> Draft paper for Conference on Fraud and Corruption, University of Liverpool, 12-14 July 1987 pp13-14; Author’s Collection

<sup>1177</sup> Draft paper for Conference on Fraud and Corruption, University of Liverpool, 12-14 July 1987 pp 13-14; Author’s Collection. The story may sound far-fetched but was repeated by Smith in interviews. Corroboration, however, may be provided by Ada Smith’s memoir (I do not believe that she would take wifely loyalty to the point of writing outright untruths); she also named the officer as Dale, although this was subsequently struck out in the draft. TWAM DF.TDS Box 3913, unpublished memoir by Ada Smith, unpaginated fragment.

recalled that, as a member of the housing committee, he had pressed for imaginative design of blocks of flats. At a meeting of Labour members prior to a housing committee meeting to assess the various proposals for the three sites, he recalled,

Mrs Scott [Cllr Mrs Kate Scott] was there, she had just come back on to the committee and she said ‘now before we look at these we have to agree to Crudens.’ I said, ‘You fancy one block, fair enough, I might fancy another block and we will go on what the committee thinks is the nicest looking block’. ‘No, no, none of that’ she says, ‘I have been talking to Dan about this... and what Dan says is what we want is new blood in the city. Crudens is... a reputable firm and they have got a good block there and we all plump for that.’<sup>1178</sup>

Johnston declined to vote on the proposal at this or subsequent meetings.<sup>1179</sup> He was later deselected as a Labour candidate.<sup>1180</sup>

In late 1962 the Conservatives announced their intention to ask Sir Keith Joseph, Minister of Housing and Local Government to hold an inquiry into the decision, and asked Newcastle North MP William Elliott to speak to the Minister. Joseph did not call an inquiry, but refused loan sanction for the three blocks, effectively killing the deal.<sup>1181</sup> The council housing committee in July 1963 voted in favour of an inquiry into the debacle, but once again Smith called the bluff of his opponents, telling the press “If any council member or citizen feels that I have personally in any way contravened the law, then surely the facts should have been placed before the proper authorities...”, and persuaded the Labour group to support him. A motion authorising the proposed inquiry was heavily defeated.<sup>1182</sup>

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<sup>1178</sup> Amber, Transcript of interview with Jack Johnston pp 64-65.

<sup>1179</sup> *Ibid.* Johnston, by the time of the interview, was expressing considerable animus against Dan Smith, of whom he said, “Dan... came into the Labour Party and then on to the Council in the first place because he was in business... and the better contracts he got the more successful he would be... Probably he had forgotten all about his socialist background and socialist roots... after [joining the Labour Party] he was for Dan 100%... He pushed the city forward in order to make himself more prosperous” (Transcript pp 57, 69). Smith claimed that Johnston’s animosity was the result of a workplace argument: he had employed Johnston as a painter for a while, and the two fell out when Smith refused to take Johnston into partnership.

<sup>1180</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3853. Message from Roy Hadwin to TDS 8 February 1963: “Tell Mr Smith that Jack Johnston was beaten as the prospective candidate for the Armstrong Ward last night. Mr Stabler was elected.”

<sup>1181</sup> *Newcastle Journal* 20 December 1962 p3; Fitzwalter & Taylor, *op cit* pp 103-104

<sup>1182</sup> *Ibid* pp 104-105. A few weeks later, on 12 October 1963, the re-advertised contract for the three blocks was awarded to Brims, a local subsidiary of the Swan Hunter shipbuilding company, at a higher price and for fewer flats than Crudens’ tender. One of the blocks, Mill House in Spital

## **John Poulson**

Smith first came into contact with the Poulson organisation in November 1961, when Poulson's Teesside representative, Alec Mallory, arranged a meeting. This took place on 1 December, and by 6 February Smith had been appointed as a consultant to Poulson, Smith specifying in his acceptance that he would not act in any matter connected with Newcastle.<sup>1183</sup> Smith was attracted by what he saw as the advanced nature of Poulson's firm, which, unlike the great majority of architectural practices at the time, offered a 'total' multidisciplinary service, employing architects, surveyors, civil engineers, acoustic engineers, heating and ventilation engineers and other professionals. He saw Poulson's struggles against the hostility of the architectural establishment as analogous to his own desires to modernise local government, writing two decades later that "The fragmented nature of local govt... [was] designed to maintain and encourage the division of the professions: engineers, surveyors, architects and planners were all in departmental cocoons and looked to 'THEIR' committee for support against other committees... That drove Poulson to buy his friends."<sup>1184</sup>

The initial intent was a triangular relationship with Poulson and the builders Bovis. Bovis chairman Harry Vincent had a meeting with Smith in mid-1962 at which he was concerned that Smith should clarify his position with Newcastle's Town Clerk, and seemingly rattled Smith with his warnings. Hearing of this, Poulson wrote to Vincent "Very rightly you were not only protecting Bovis Holdings' interests but [Smith's] as well, and the dangers and difficulties had been so strongly emphasised regarding this position that it had assumed in his mind quite a predominant factor. Naturally a man in such a high position as he would be a fool to have endangered his position, and I respectfully suggest that Councillor Smith is no fool."<sup>1185</sup> The deal

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Tongues, was to be the home of Dan and Ada Smith after they were forced to sell their house on nearby Belle Grove Terrace in 1983.

<sup>1183</sup> TNA J291/66 Alex Mallory to TDS 24 November 1961; Report by Mallory to JGLP on 1 December meeting, 5 December 1961; JGLP to TDS 6 February 1962; TDS to JGLP 8 February 1962.

<sup>1184</sup> Amber, drawer 2, untitled document on corruption written circa 1988 (Opening words 'It was 20 years ago, in 1968...')

<sup>1185</sup> TNA J291/66 JGLP to Harry Vincent 12 June 1962.

was agreed that Smith's PR operation should identify and introduce Bovis to town centre development schemes, and that Bovis would employ Poulson as architect.<sup>1186</sup>

Smith was using his influence to get Poulson more widely known, and a key field was County Durham. In December 1962 Poulson thanked Smith for an introduction to the county council and doubled his pay.<sup>1187</sup> Not long afterwards, Smith arranged for Poulson to meet Andrew Cunningham, then chairman-elect of the County Council.<sup>1188</sup> A letter from Poulson to Smith in early 1964 gives a good indication of the range of locations and projects on which the pair were actually or potentially interested. The list included Washington New Town, Darlington, Gateshead, Warrington, Leeds, Keighley, Bradford, Bolton, Liverpool, Tynemouth, Chester-le-Street, Putney, Clydebank, East Ham, Hexham, Killingworth, Blaydon, Whitehaven, Peterlee & Aycliffe, Anderton Cross, Glasgow, Livingstone, Felling, and 'Hospitals'.<sup>1189</sup>

## OSB

Enthused by the possibilities of industrialised housing production, Smith had registered a company called Open System Building Ltd in July 1964. In March 1966 he sold it to "persons associated with JGL Poulson" – the majority of the shares were held by Cynthia Poulson, and John Poulson's sole official interest in the company was as an architect licensing it to use his plans in marketing and constructing system-built housing.<sup>1190</sup>

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<sup>1186</sup> TNA J291/66 Harry Vincent to JGLP 18 June 1962: on the satisfactory introduction of a scheme, Smith to receive 1% of estimated building costs; on planning approval granted, another 1.5%.

<sup>1187</sup> TNA J291/74 JGLP to TDS 14 December 1962, thanking Smith for the introduction to the County Architect's Department *via* Alderman Sid Docking. Smith's reply thanking Poulson for the pay increase was fulsome, to say the least: "You are the most outstanding man it has been my privilege to meet and I wish you and yours health and prosperity for the future." (TNA J291/74 TDS to JGLP 24 December 1962)

<sup>1188</sup> At a dinner at the Three Tuns Hotel in Durham. TNA J291/66 TDS to JGLP 28 December 1962. Apart from Smith, Poulson and Cunningham, others invited to the dinner on 17 January were Alderman Docking, County Architect G W Gelson, Deputy County Architect Les Parnaby, and Poulson's Teesside representative Alec Mallory.

<sup>1189</sup> TNA J291/66 JGLP to TDS 21 January 1964. Hospitals were one speciality of the Poulson practice.

<sup>1190</sup> TNA J291/159/4 Document compiled by Company Fraud Department, Metropolitan Police 6 April 1974 giving biographical details of TDS.

At a board meeting on 4 August 1966, an agreement for Dansmith PR to act as PR consultants was discussed: terms would be embodied in a letter rather than a formal agreement.<sup>1191</sup>

OSB managers were optimistic at first. Smith told the board in July 1967 that he estimated construction of 3,200, 5,000, 7,500 and 8,000 houses for the years 1968/69 to 1971/72. He advised “that we must convince the professional men who are advising the local authorities. Normal advertising methods were quite useless. We must increase our staff if we are proposing to try to [compete] with the larger companies. If we choose our sites, however, we can build up to 10,000 houses a year with little more than our existing organisation.” Despite this, there were worrying intimations: the General Manager, S J Bell, reported that contact had been made with over fifty authorities “with varying degrees of success”; but work on 44 houses had begun (in OSB’s home town, Pontefract). In discussing estimated accounts for 1967-1968, figures of 6,000 sales delivering a profit of £200,000 were posited. Smith demurred, giving his opinion that 1,500 was more realistic, offering a profit of £25,000. Poulson argued that this figure was too low and followed up after the meeting by sending Smith an angry letter accusing him of lack of commitment.<sup>1192</sup> At the October 1967 meeting the board approved the allocation of areas allocated to the *proposed* contractors according to a map drawn up by Poulson, and the new General Manager, G R Shearing (Bell had been sacked) announced 1,377 confirmed houses and 650 “safely anticipated”.<sup>1193</sup>

Still hopeful, Shearing reported in January 1968 that OSB was “negotiating, tendering or positively discussing” over 10,000 houses, and that by mid-1968 should

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<sup>1191</sup> WYAS CC3/1/2, ‘Extracts from OSB Minute Book’, Meeting of Directors 4 August 1966; Author’s Collection, Transcript of public examination of Thomas Daniel Smith 24 July 1972 paras 322-325. Poulson was not present at the 4 August meeting.

<sup>1192</sup> WYAS CC3/1/2, ‘Extracts from OSB Minute Book’, Meeting of Directors 11 July 1967. Reginald Maudling was appointed to the OSB board at the AGM on the same day, telling directors that he “may be able to help the company in Birmingham”; his son, Martin Maudling, had been a director since 30 January 1967.

<sup>1193</sup> *Ibid*, Meeting of Directors 11 October 1967. Shearing had been appointed on 24 July 1967, and reported not to OSB’s chairman, Sir Bernard Kenyon, but to Poulson, despite the latter ostensibly being a contractor to the company. The ‘confirmed’ houses were in Pontefract (94), Whitburn (20), Mexborough (36), Sunderland (265), Castleford (200), Doncaster (350), Southlands (12) and Hebburn (400). Those ‘safely anticipated’ were at Saltburn with Marske (125), Normanton (50), Adwick le Street (350), Dearne (5), and Bentley with Askey (126).

have started 2,000, with an even higher rate in the second half of the year. He was also preparing a new film, and OSB was to have a stand at the National Housing and Town Planning exhibition at Brighton, at a cost in excess of £2,000. At the AGM the same day, Poulson noted that by 31 October 1968 they expected work to have started and fees of over £250,000 received on more than 4,000 houses. “The Board expressed pleasure at the excellent prospects which the future so obviously holds for the Company.”<sup>1194</sup>

By June, however, disappointment was setting in. Shearing reported just 54 completions, 172 houses under construction, and 994 “contracts agreed”; in contrast to the optimism of 1967, the minutes record dolefully that “the last figure was open to some doubt. It was noted that the activities of the General Manager during his period with the Company had not produced a single contract.” The only bright spot was that the NBA had certified the OSB system on 1 April.”<sup>1195</sup>

By July 1969, a year after the period for which Poulson had confidently predicted profits of £200,000, OSB was still making a loss: £36,836; the regional contractors for the system had still not all been appointed. A new chairman, Bill Sales, estimated a break-even point as 2,000 houses a year.<sup>1196</sup> In October 1969 – by which time Smith’s connections with Poulson’s empire had been effectively terminated by the cessation of payments - the board approved contracts for 24 houses with Southborough UDC. Sensing the way things were going, the Maudlings resigned their directorships.<sup>1197</sup>

## **Wandsworth**

Smith’s business career, as well as his political life, ground to a halt after he was charged with corruption in 1970. His remaining PR contracts dried up, and he was asked to step down from his post with Euroways, a property development company

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<sup>1194</sup> *Ibid*, Meeting of Directors 12 January 1968, AGM 12 January 1968.

<sup>1195</sup> *Ibid* Meeting of Directors 19 June 1968. This was “a most significant event and a sure indication that quality of its product had been proved.”

<sup>1196</sup> *Ibid*, Meeting of Directors 21 July 1967. Kenyon had resigned and Sales was appointed chairman on 11 July. Sales had worked his way up from ‘pit boy’ to chairman of the Yorkshire division of the NCB, and was a recipient of gifts from Poulson. He was to receive a suspended prison sentence and a fine of £5,000 for Poulson-related corruption offences in 1974.

<sup>1197</sup> *Ibid*, Meeting of Directors 14 October 1969.

he had been running since the late 1960s with John Foulerton of the Mount St Bernard group.<sup>1198</sup> The trial of Smith, Sidney Sporle, whom Smith was alleged to have bribed in order to secure a PR contract from the London Borough of Wandsworth, and other defendants also accused of bribing Sporle began on 8 February 1971 but Smith's barrister, Jeremy Hutchinson QC, persuaded the judge that his client should have a separate trial.<sup>1199</sup> Sporle was convicted on 23 March of seven charges, including accepting a bribe from Smith, and was sentenced to six years imprisonment.<sup>1200</sup> Smith's trial began on 29 June 1971, and on 9 July he was found not guilty.<sup>1201</sup> That Sporle was found guilty of being bribed by Smith and Smith not guilty of bribing Sporle may not be such an inconsistency as it might appear. Smith was already employing Sporle, who at the time was deputy leader of Wandsworth council, as a consultant for OSB, advising on housing opportunities in SE England (except with Wandsworth and the South London Housing Consortium) when Fleet Press Services, a company acquired at Kirkup's suggestion, applied for the Wandsworth PR contract.<sup>1202</sup> Sporle had failed to declare his interest at the council meeting which awarded the contract to Fleet Press Services (run on a day-to-day basis by Kirkup), but there is no evidence that Smith was paying him with the intent of gaining the PR contract or that he knew that Sporle had not declared an interest.

## Wakefield: the scandal breaks

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<sup>1198</sup> Eg Author's Collection, Lionel Jacobson to TDS 18 June 1970 informing Smith of Burton's appointment of in-house PR and terminating the agreement with him; Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* p 195. Euroways sought to develop trading estates at strategic sites on Britain's expanding motorway network. Smith was also working with Foulerton on interests related to North Sea oil development and seeking to develop Edinburgh as the main port for North Sea exploitation.

<sup>1199</sup> *Newcastle Journal* 9 February 1971 p 7

<sup>1200</sup> *The Times* 24 March 1971 p 4, 25 March 1971 p 5

<sup>1201</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 8 July 1971 p 1

<sup>1202</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3861, TDS to Sidney Sporle 2 November 1966: "I confirm that I will pay your Company an amount of £12.10s.0d per unit on all sales effected through your introductions. As discussed, this arrangement would exclude the London Borough of Wandsworth and the South London Housing Consortium where, I appreciate, you have a direct interest and are not free to work with me." TWAM DF/TDS 3869 contains a carbon copy of a police witness statement of Colin Maitland Shaw, dated 17 June 1971, in which Shaw described recommending Sporle to Smith as a potential southern England agent for OSB, and was present at a meeting of Smith and Sporle in Newcastle in November 1965. "During the interview I can recall that Mr Smith had made the point to Mr Sporle that if there were to be any negotiations in Battersea with the Battersea Council, either Mr Sporle would have to declare his interest or would have to withdraw from the job and give it to someone else. This is a familiar problem with Companies and Executives who have political affiliations or positions. Mr Smith, Mr Sporle and myself, understood this well and apart from being mentioned there was little or no discussion on it."



Poulson's finances had been getting steadily worse since the late 1960s. Warned that he was insolvent in June 1969, he turned to his brother-in-law, John King, to help him out of his difficulties.<sup>1203</sup> On New Year's Eve 1969 he effectively signed away his rights in his businesses, but his personal financial situation worsened and on 4 January 1972 he filed for bankruptcy.<sup>1204</sup> The public examination into Poulson's bankruptcy began at Wakefield County Court on 13 June 1972, with Smith's role being raised on the first day.<sup>1205</sup> On 3 July Muir Hunter QC, counsel for the Trustee, pressed Poulson on the reason for payments to Dan Smith, and gave a total figure for payments between 1 March 1962 and 28 February 1970 as £155,000. "Phew" was Poulson's response, "...It is fantastic. I had no idea it was this big." What did Smith give you in return? asked Hunter. "Well, I can't answer that question I'm afraid. I can't see anything positive as a result of it."<sup>1206</sup> This set the tone for Poulson's replies to the questioning of Muir Hunter, and it created a damning impression of Smith. The transcripts convey a powerful image of Muir Hunter – sarcastic, goading, playing to the gallery – and an increasingly enfeebled Poulson, bleating variations on "I don't know, because he never produced anything", "I can't remember as far back as that, sir..." and "I can't remember any of the details. sir".<sup>1207</sup>

Nor was Muir Hunter any softer on Smith, harrying him on details of his financial relationship with Poulson, the absence of invoices and contracts accounting for Poulson's payments, and the role played by the consultants employed by Smith on Poulson's behalf. Smith was to recall Hunter as "like Vyshinsky in the Moscow trials... ruthless, unprincipled and... excessively using the power that he undoubtedly had... unjust and unfair."<sup>1208</sup> Hunter alleged that the absence of invoices was because Smith's dealings with Poulson were not *bona fide* and that Smith "had been looting Mr Poulson's funds for your own private concern".<sup>1209</sup>

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<sup>1203</sup> Poulson *op cit* pp149-155; Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* pp182-185. John King (1917-2005) – later Lord King of Wartnaby, chairman of British Airways – had married the sister of Cynthia Poulson.

<sup>1204</sup> Poulson *op cit* pp156-163; Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* pp 202-203

<sup>1205</sup> WYAS CC3/1/3 Transcript of public examination of John Poulson 13 June 1972 paras 369-387

<sup>1206</sup> WYAS CC3/1/3 Transcript of public examination of John Poulson 3 July 1972 paras 1038-1041

<sup>1207</sup> *Ibid* paras 1420, 1422 and 1437.

<sup>1208</sup> TDS Archive disk 41A. Andrey Vyshinsky (1883-1934), chief prosecutor at the Moscow show trial of Kamenev and Zinoviev, 1936.

<sup>1209</sup> Author's Collection, Transcript of public examination of Thomas Daniel Smith, 25 July 1972 paras 672, 783.

He poured scorn on Smith's consultants, claiming that they were not genuine.<sup>1210</sup> The idea that councillors could be of any real use in this field was derided. Of Colin Dews, a Castleford alderman, Hunter remarked that Dews was "a colliery bricklayer who does not attend work regularly at the colliery; he is a local magistrate, an Alderman of Castleford Council, and resides in a terrace type house in a working class area. Do you still wish to say that Mr Dews was a consultant on town planning?"<sup>1211</sup>

Muir Hunter was far from infallible, although obituaries highlight his "devastating skill" and "fearless and tenacious cross-examination".<sup>1212</sup> His tactics against Poulson were emphasised by Poulson's defence counsel at his subsequent trial: Douglas Herrod QC claimed that on forty occasions Hunter had "interrupted Poulson... to thrust documents he had not seen for years into his hand and demand an immediate answer. These answers, he said, were given widespread publicity from which many assumed Poulson's guilt 18 months before he stood trial."<sup>1213</sup> At one point Hunter read from a letter from Poulson to Smith touching on vacant positions at the newly-established Washington New Town Development Corporation. "...[C]an you give me a name for chairman and also for General Manager" wrote Poulson, which Hunter interpreted as evidence of a conspiracy, rather than a simple request for 'insider' information on who was to be appointed: "Who at the Ministry gave you... the right to appoint the Chairman and General Manager?" Poulson: "Nobody." ... Hunter: "What was he going to do? His friend at the Ministry would nominate Mr Poulson's choice?" Poulson's reply of "Nonsense" was brief and to-the-point, although by that stage it is doubtful whether anybody noticed.<sup>1214</sup>

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<sup>1210</sup> *Ibid* para 673

<sup>1211</sup> Author's Collection, Transcript of public examination of Thomas Daniel Smith, 24 July 1972 paras 443-455. Smith replied: "I do. I think nothing that you have read out there is in any way derogatory of [sic] Mr Dews."

<sup>1212</sup> Obituaries of Muir Hunter (1913-2008) in *The Guardian* 26 November 2008 p38 and *The Times* 27 October 2008.

<sup>1213</sup> Obituary of Muir Hunter, *Daily Telegraph* 23 October 2008 p 29

<sup>1214</sup> WYAS CC3/1/3 Transcript of public examination of John Poulson 29 January 1973 paras 5871-5875. Perhaps because of his assertive demeanour, Muir Hunter was able to get away with such behaviour unchallenged, so it is pleasant to record Poulson turning the tables at the January session: Hunter described him as being in "an increasingly impossible corner because you do not wish to let down your friends." "I do not have any friends now, thanks to you" was the architect's response (Obituary of Muir Hunter, *Daily Telegraph* 23 October 2008 p 29).

Smith gave a rather more definite description than Poulson of the work done on his behalf, telling the hearing that he had introduced Poulson to two hundred authorities in Great Britain, though neither man made anything like a solid defence of their activities.<sup>1215</sup>

Hunter summed up the process of making contacts with local authorities as “Mr Poulson’s lieutenants – paying people to be nice to Mr Poulson’s staff. It is quite simple, is it not?” Smith: “Paying people to hear what Mr Poulson’s organization had to offer, which was something quite substantial.”<sup>1216</sup> Examining a list of names, Hunter commented “Now, when we discover who these people are... then we will find, will we not, that they are all either government officials, municipal officials, new town officials or trade union officials; is that right? Every single one.” Smith: “A large number of them; not all of them.” Hunter: “Right; and so you were, on Mr Poulson’s instructions and with his money, paying money to persons in public service to procure favours for Mr Poulson?” Smith: “I would say not... I negotiated a fee with Mr Poulson and I was free to deploy that fee the way I wanted to, and I deployed it with what I believed to be honourable people, who, if they had interests, would declare them.”<sup>1217</sup>

The significance of the Wakefield hearings is not only that they finally brought the Poulson affair to widespread public attention, but that Hunter’s cross-examinations, whether pertinent or wayward, set the tone for the subsequent trials and contributed very largely to the creation of the popular perception of Smith as an archetypal corrupt and corrupting councillor.<sup>1218</sup> After a slow start – just one reporter present at the second session on 3 July – media interest was piqued by mention of Reginald Maudling and his subsequent resignation as Home Secretary on 18 July. The third session, on 1 August, was “a sell-out... standing room only...”<sup>1219</sup> The subsequent proceedings were given immense press coverage, and *The Sunday Times Magazine*

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<sup>1215</sup> Author’s Collection, Transcript of public examination of Thomas Daniel Smith, 25 July 1972 paras 985-1004

<sup>1216</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>1217</sup> *Ibid* paras 1032-1036

<sup>1218</sup> Concerns about Poulson had first been aired in 1970 by Ray Fitzwalter in the *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*, and were subsequently taken up by *Private Eye*. Raymond Fitzwalter and David Taylor, *Web of Corruption. The Story of JGL Poulson and T Dan Smith* (St Albans 1981) pp 1-2

<sup>1219</sup> Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* p 212

devoted a large part of one issue to reprinting extracts from the transcripts.<sup>1220</sup>

Poulson's solicitor attempted to have the hearings stopped because of the danger of prejudicing any trial of Poulson, to no avail.<sup>1221</sup> The danger was very real, and even Fitzwalter and Taylor concede that "as Poulson had incriminated himself in the bankruptcy court and compromised others by his evidence, the architect and his accomplices could not be given a trial strictly free from prejudice..."<sup>1222</sup>

There can be little doubt but that Smith came across poorly at Wakefield, and that he felt intimidated by Hunter. He failed, as Poulson had failed, to make a robust justification of the operation and value of his public relations activities.

Nevertheless, the proceedings at Wakefield were a one-sided affair; they were not a criminal trial, and Smith's legal representative, his solicitor, Tom Ogle, did not act in the role of 'defence counsel', challenging a prosecution case. For reasons that will be examined below, Smith pleaded guilty at his subsequent trial in April 1974, so again nothing but the prosecution case was heard, and this was not subject to close examination and challenge.

### **Cunningham**

On 29 April 1965 Poulson wrote to Smith raising, among other matters, the issue of Durham and Cunningham: "Dan, we ought to see this gentleman. There is an awful lot he can do, and there is an awful lot not being done."<sup>1223</sup> Within a few months Freda Cunningham, Andrew Cunningham's wife, had been given a position with one of the Smith PR companies. For 21 months between November 1965 and July 1967 she was paid between £65.14.5d and £66.6.0d a month by Cladan PR Ltd, a Smith company.<sup>1224</sup> She was subsequently 'employed' by Vinleigh PR. Leslie Pullen, the managing director of Vinleigh, a company set up by Smith, Pullen and Eric Levine after Smith's split with Kirkup, told police he had received a handwritten note by Smith instructing him to pay Mrs Cunningham. Faced with a statement recording a payment as 'Staff notes AC - £1,000' he responded "I take this, as I would have in

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<sup>1220</sup> *The Sunday Times Magazine* 24 September 1972 pp 20-41, with an artist's impression of Muir Hunter gazing balefully at a crestfallen Poulson on the front cover.

<sup>1221</sup> Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* p 212

<sup>1222</sup> *Ibid* p 263

<sup>1223</sup> TNA J291/67 JGLP to TDS 29 April 1965

<sup>1224</sup> TNA J291/159/3 Witness statement by Cyril Speight, Manager's Assistant, Barclays Bank Ltd, Market St Newcastle, 22 November 1973

1968, to refer to Andrew Cunningham, an alderman in the North Country. I always regarded Mr and Mrs Cunningham as synonymous. I had no idea why Mr or Mrs Cunningham were receiving wages from my company, but I had no reason to suspect it was for any unlawful purpose. I did later, in discussion with Smith question the payment of persons in Local Government and he said it was in order, so long as that person did not influence matters in which they had an interest, which they had not declared.”<sup>1225</sup>

Smith was to claim that Freda Cunningham was legitimately employed arising out of the need to promote the Skarne housing system, Andrew Cunningham suggesting to Smith that “wor lass will [do] that”.

Well, yes, of course she could, if that’s OK by her, because Mrs Cunningham was a thousand times more acceptable in Durham than her husband ever was... I knew if she said come along for cocktails and see the exhibition that this would be far more successful than if Andy said it because the people hated Andy, whereas nobody hated Mrs Cunningham. <sup>1226</sup>

Smith wrote to his solicitor, John Marron and to Pullen that Mrs Cunningham’s employment ended at the end of December 1968 (she was subsequently given ‘employment’ as an administrative assistant by OSB in October 1969, as Poulson became increasingly desperate for orders to shore up his collapsing concerns, and after his break with Dan Smith).<sup>1227</sup>

Pullen had also sent a message to Grace Cheeseman, Smith’s confidential secretary, about the cessation of Mrs Cunningham’s employment by Vinleigh, writing “No further payments to A Cunningham (we actually pay Mrs Cunningham) and

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<sup>1225</sup> TNA J291/159/3 Witness statement by Leslie Pullen, 19 October 1973

<sup>1226</sup> Author’s Collection, Transcript of Interview with David Taylor 12-13 January 1974 p32. Smith went on to state (pp 35-36) that he believed that Mrs Cunningham did not know that she was on Smith’s payroll at that time.

<sup>1227</sup> TNA J291/69 TDS to John Marron 18 January 1969 stating that Mrs Cunningham was employed by Vinleigh up to 31.12.68; TDS to Leslie Pullen 30 January 1969 “The business connection between Mrs F Cunningham and myself ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1968”. TNA J291/69 Vivian Baker (Poulson’s accountant) to ‘May F Anderson’ (Freda Cunningham) 21 October 1969 offering post as administrative assistant for OSB; TNA J291/94 M F Cunningham (Freda Cunningham) to R C Moorehouse & Co (Solicitors) 18 May 1972, stating she was employed by Ropergate Services (Poulson’s service company) as administrative assistant and adviser on interior decoration between 21 October 1969 and 31 January 1970.

therefore no payment has been made for January”<sup>1228</sup> His recognition that payments to Mrs Cunningham were, in reality, payments to Andrew Cunningham render Smith’s defence that Freda Cunningham was legitimately employed scarcely credible, however accurate his assessment of the Cunninghams’ respective personal charms may have been. And while his payments to Sidney Sporle and other local government figures might well be justified as payment to consultants for advice, information and acting as ‘agents of influence’ outside their own authorities, the disguising of payments by the employment of Mrs Cunningham in a sinecure designed to channel money to Cunningham raises legitimate suspicions.

### **Were they bribing?**

From mid-1967 Poulson appears to have become increasingly unhappy with Smith’s work. In July he wrote to complain at Smith’s attitude at an OSB board meeting:

“Are you going to sit back and let us do all the work and pay all the money?”<sup>1229</sup>

Two months later was chiding him again, for failing to send information to Reginald Maudling and suggesting a lack of belief in OSB.”<sup>1230</sup> He was still dissatisfied in February 1968, commenting angrily on the absence of progress in the North East and in Hammersmith.”<sup>1231</sup> Smith employee Peter Ward was the subject of a philippic in September 1968: “[He] is a waste of time... He has sent in some invoice for £209 expenses. Out of that he has got nothing... he is just not earning his keep.... He is just idling his time away and we are paying for it.”<sup>1232</sup>

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<sup>1228</sup> TNA J291/69 Leslie Pullen to Grace Cheeseman 3 February 1969

<sup>1229</sup> TNA J291/68 JGLP to TDS 13 July 1967

<sup>1230</sup> TNA J291/68 JGLP to TDS 9 September 1967. Smith sent a hurt response protesting “of course I believe in OSB – no one in BRITAIN is more identified with this system than I am – in the MOH [Ministry of Housing] – the NBA [National Building Agency] and in Local Government; indeed apart from working on OSB and architectural work for you – I do *no* other work at all. Whoever makes suggestions to you about me – they are the disloyal ones. I am 100% loyal. You have done more for me than any other person in Britain, and even if for some reason not clear to me you wish to end our association – I for one would retain the kindest thoughts for you and your family.” (TNA J291/68 TDS to JGLP 17 September 1967)

<sup>1231</sup> TNA J291/68 JGLP to TDS 2 February 1968, criticising Peter War whose failings included an inability to make appointments: “He may say things will be happening there in another month and then it will be another month and so on and then other people will get in before us.” Conversely Bradford “looks like coming to life” because Maudling intervened with the vice-chairman of housing “whom he knows”.

<sup>1232</sup> TNA J291/68 JGLP to TDS 13 September 1968. Ward ceased to be employed on OSB work from the end of September 1968 (WYAS CC3/1/3 Transcript of public examination of John Poulson 7 August 1972 para1975)

This does not convey the impression of a well-oiled corruption machine. It is possible, of course, that Ward and his employer Smith were corrupt but inefficient, or that they were ‘outbid’ by rival contractors; but it is also possible Smith’s PR operations on Poulson’s behalf were largely or completely legitimate.<sup>1233</sup>

An OSB progress report of 28 December 1967, written by Peter Ward, lists 55 authorities with which Smith’s organisation or OSB had been in contact. Notes include comments such as “Darfield: Slow progress despite fair pressure from PW and OSB. They do not appear to be able to make up their minds” and records of visits, exhibitions and ‘film shows’. For Chester-le-Street RDC, the report read “Surveyor and engineer says officially – ‘We are still shopping around,’ but RH [Roy Hadwin] says we have nothing to worry about – OSB ‘will be all right’.”<sup>1234</sup> Chester Rural was the political base of Bob Urwin, a long-standing Smith associate, but one who, like Smith, knew when not to attend a meeting.<sup>1235</sup> The report also outlined progress at Castleford: “PW [Peter Ward] informed by Ald. Drews [sic; Colin Dews] that ‘D Day’ is Monday next. Council has received OK from NCB to go ahead ‘and this is far more houses than we thought’ he told me. As regards Monday’s meeting, Colin says that OSB should pull it off: ‘I am not unduly worried,’ he said, ‘because OSB will get it.’ At the foot of the report, under the heading ‘Notes to TDS’ Ward wrote “Re Colin Drews (sic), and his letter to you: My view is that if OSB do pull it off on Monday, we should give him a retainer similar to Roebuck. If they don’t, then I suggest we meet him again for some straight talking with him as to what he reckons he can do for us in other authorities.”<sup>1236</sup> This final phrase, *in other authorities*, is important as it indicates that the suggested retainer could reasonably be interpreted as payment for Dews assisting OSB in getting work elsewhere, rather than as a reward (or bribe) for using his influence to get OSB the contract in Castleford

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<sup>1233</sup> Or at the very least, no more illegitimate than the activities of their rivals.

<sup>1234</sup> J291/74 OSB Progress Report, 28 December 1967

<sup>1235</sup> Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* p 179 “Whenever Sid McCullogh tendered for work with Chester-le-Street RDC, Urwin left the meeting and had a drink in the chairman’s room while the matter was being discussed.” Urwin and McCullogh were later convicted of corruption offences.

<sup>1236</sup> TNA J291/74 OSB Progress Report 28 December 1967.

Writing to Sir Bernard Kenyon on OSB matters in 1969, Poulson stated “You can see how entertaining you are doing to get any particular job and whether it is worthwhile... An authority giving us 750 houses obviously has to have more spent on it for entertaining than does an authority only giving us 25...”<sup>1237</sup>

This document, too, was in the DPP files, presumably as it was held to provide evidence of corrupt activities; but again, it sits in that indeterminate area where lobbying overlaps with the provision of inducements. Entertainment of clients covers a broad spectrum – Smith’s PR company would take councillors from potential client authorities to Pontefract, to see OSB houses *in situ*; that they were provided with hospitality and (if necessary) accommodation seems scarcely unreasonable; the same would apply, in a more muted way, to the trips for councillors to Paris, where at least some of the time would be spent in viewing building systems in operation.

### **Leeds Trial**

Smith was arrested on 5 October 1973 by DCS Peter Westley and DCS Kenneth Etheridge at 13 Belle Grove Terrace.<sup>1238</sup> The house was searched – Smith pointing out the location of documents – and he was taken to Newcastle’s Market Street police station.<sup>1239</sup> “Unlike many of the Poulson conspirators he was helpful and courteous to the police” commented Fitzwalter and Taylor, who surmised that “in private Smith recognized the inevitable... He was bound for prison and the best he

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<sup>1237</sup> J291/73 JGLP to Sir Bernard Kenyon, OSB 11 April 1969. Kenyon was chairman of OSB.

<sup>1238</sup> There is a certain piquancy in Etheridge’s leading role in the Poulson investigation, given that he was extremely fortunate himself not to have faced criminal charges for corruption. As an officer at the Metropolitan Police’s West End Central police station, covering Soho, Etheridge was exposed by the *Sunday People* in 1972 as having accepted a holiday in Cyprus from a West End night club owner. Instead of a Crown Court trial, Etheridge faced a Metropolitan Police internal investigation, which, perhaps unsurprisingly given the endemic nature of corruption in the Met at that time, cleared him of wrongdoing. *The Guardian* 3 June 2011 p 36 (obituary of Etheridge), *The Times* 9 March 1972 p 2, 7 June 1972 p 2.

<sup>1239</sup> TNA J291/159/2 Witness Statement by Peter Westley, 18 October 1973. On being told that the police wished to search the house, Smith told them “‘You’re welcome to look anywhere. I took some papers to Wakefield, but there are some upstairs. They are in no particular order, I had debated whether to keep them or destroy them.’ Mr Smith then conducted us over the four floors of the house. He indicated a number of papers in the sideboard in a third floor bedroom, and a number of cartons and cases in a third floor rear room.” On leaving, the police took with them four suitcases, 3 cardboard boxes, a travelling case and a briefcase, all containing documents.



could do was to plead guilty to the minimum number of charges.”<sup>1240</sup> This does not accord with Smith’s recollections or those of other witnesses.

By 1974 Smith was in a very poor state of health, his doctor, Lionel Kopelowitz, writing to his solicitor that he was suffering from coronary artery disease and myocardial ischemia requiring medication, rest and medical care. Dr Kopelowitz was concerned at the effect of the stress of the case on his patient. In addition, Smith was suffering from a urinary condition which had required at least two operations, one in early March, which would need a period of convalescence. He wrote: “In my opinion I consider that it would be detrimental to his condition if this trial was held at the Leeds Crown Court. I am firmly of the view that this trial should take place at the Newcastle Crown Court so that those responsible for Mr Smith’s medical care can be readily available should the need arise.”<sup>1241</sup>

Smith’s medical condition is relevant not just because his doctor’s concerns were ignored by the prosecuting authorities but because it materially affected Smith’s approach to his forthcoming trial. Physically ill, utterly demoralised and “sustaining himself on Carlsberg and heart tablets”, he was in neither the physical nor mental condition to face a potentially long trial in a city eighty miles from home.<sup>1242</sup> It may be that he did not wish to think about the forthcoming ordeal – he told David Taylor in January 1974 that he hadn’t looked closely at the charges of corrupting Cunningham – and so the subsequent legal advice came as a shock.<sup>1243</sup>

On reading the charges against him, Smith claimed astonishment at the weakness of the Crown case.<sup>1244</sup> But meeting his legal team, he encountered “a noticeable

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<sup>1240</sup> Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* p 226

<sup>1241</sup> TNA J291/71 Dr Lionel Kopelowitz to Tom Ogle, 13 March 1974

<sup>1242</sup> Interview with Clifford Smith, 9 October 2008. Both Dan and Ada Smith feared that a prolonged, highly stressful trial could prove fatal to him (TWAM DF/TDS Box 3913 Unpublished memoir by Ada Smith, additional page 4)

<sup>1243</sup> Author’s Collection, Transcript of TDS interview with David Taylor, 12-13 January 1974 p 30: “I think the charge is conspiring with Mrs Cunningham to corrupt her husband... I haven’t really looked at the charge, you know, and what it means because I don’t believe in doing today what you can put off till tomorrow in these things. I think that the experience of the last five years has taught me that the only way you can retain any sense of sanity at all is that you literally live for the day. So far as that part of the question is concerned I haven’t yet got down to what my defence will be...”

<sup>1244</sup> Author’s Collection, Draft paper for Conference on Fraud and Corruption, University of Liverpool, 12-14 July 1987 p 42. Of the charges he wrote “...although there were many more strands in it than confronted me in Wandsworth, none of them amounted to anything like the well publicized

absence of enthusiasm, as at no point was any reference made to the transparent weaknesses in the prosecution case.” He was told that there was little chance of a ‘not guilty’ verdict, and, after considering the matter over lunch, “with a sense of utter doom I told my son, ‘I no longer have the strength of body or the agility of mind to carry this fight forward’” and returned to tell his barrister, David Savile, that he would plead guilty – “surrendering abjectly in a manner totally alien to my normal character.”<sup>1245</sup>

Smith’s trial began at Leeds Crown Court on 24 April 1974, alongside Andrew Cunningham and Poulson. Freda Cunningham had also been charged, but it was decided at the last moment not to proceed against her. All three men pleaded guilty – Smith to one charge of conspiracy (relating to Peterlee) and four charges of corruption. Counsel Peter Taylor laid out the prosecution case:

Ostensibly he was said to be acting as a public relations consultant. Never was a phrase so grossly abused. He operated from a series of companies he formed, used them for a while and then allowed them to decay, shifting personnel and money from one company to another in a manner not only bewildering and confusing but, we submit, was deliberately so, a maze through which he hoped no one could follow his tricks. Despite the complex of companies, the truth was that Smith acted simply as a limb of the Poulson organisation. He was paid not fees, but a salary, which increased ‘by leaps and bounds’ so that in all Poulson paid nearly £156,00 in the years 1962-9. The money was not paid on invoices or against any fee note, or for the most part to any of his companies, but to Smith personally. He then distributed it to himself and between his companies...

[Smith’s activity] was not a public relations exercise to bring Poulson’s merit to the attention of councils. The method was by the back door – by using a fifth column within the local councils not openly, but stealthily and secretly and for reward... For that purpose Smith employed number of men who were in local government and councils and whom he termed consultants, but who, in fact, had no experience in relation to which they could be consulted. Smith delegated to them the task of influencing their own councils to give work to

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master corruptor [sic] image which was by then tagged on to me...” The Peterlee charge (discussed in the previous chapter) “was so incompetently laid as to almost lead one to conclude that it had been drafted for the purposes of losing the case, and... was being presented as the only charge where I was alleged to have used my direct influence on Poulson’s behalf, whereas in all the other indictments I was held to have used [others] to undertake the allegedly corrupt acts.”

<sup>1245</sup> Author’s Collection, Draft paper for Conference on Fraud and Corruption, University of Liverpool, 12-14 July 1987 pp 42-43; Interview with Clifford Smith, 9 October 2008.

Poulson and to lobbying and influencing important men in other councils, using political affinity as the contact.<sup>1246</sup>

On 26 April he was sentenced by Mr Justice Waller to a total of six years imprisonment: six years on the conspiracy charge, and twelve months on each of the corruption charges (these four to run consecutively, but concurrently with the conspiracy sentence). Three other offences were also taken into consideration.<sup>1247</sup>

The prosecution case as related in the press mirrors the narrative created by Muir Hunter at Wakefield. It contains significant areas where reasonable doubt may be expressed. Although Smith's business affairs were complex, and a large number of public relations companies were associated with him at one point or another, Poulson money (as established at Wakefield) was paid to only three of the public relations companies established by or associated with Smith: Dansmith PR, Vinleigh PR and Progressive PR, and with little or no overlap. The "maze through which he hoped no one could follow his tricks" really did not exist. Taylor's assertions that councillors could be of no use to Poulson's business interests except as the recipients of bribes echoes Hunter's lofty dismissal of Dews. There is an underlying assumption that no legitimate lobbying or public relations work was carried out for Poulson, yet following an extensive police investigation into Smith's activities only four local councillors were charged, of those who had received payment as consultants from or via Smith, and one of those was Cunningham, whom Taylor described as "not a mere lieutenant to Smith but an equal member of the triumvirate" and in receipt of inducements directly from Poulson.<sup>1248</sup> If the intention behind the payments to Dews and Roebuck had been to 'purchase' housing contracts that they could award, then Smith had gone for very small fry: Mexborough and Castleford were not large

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<sup>1246</sup> *Daily Express* 25 April 1974 p 6

<sup>1247</sup> TNA J291/159/1; J291/159/4 – Smith signed admissions of conspiring with Sidney Charlton Docking of Durham CC between 1 January 1962 and 31 May 1967; of conspiracy with Colin Dews of Castleford BC between 1 August 1967 and 21 August 1969; and conspiring with Tom Roebuck of Mexborough UDC between 1 November 1966 and 31 August 1969. Taylor was subsequently to lead the prosecution in the trial of Judith Ward in 1974 and of Stefan Kiszko in 1976; Waller was judge at the Ward trial. Both defendants were victims of major miscarriages of justice, their convictions being separately overturned in 1992.

<sup>1248</sup> *Daily Express* 25 April 1974 p 6. The others were Dews, Roebuck and Eddie Newby of Bradford, the sole 'big fish' to be accused of complicity with Smith. In addition, Smith's employees Peter Ward and Roy Hadwin were charged.

authorities.<sup>1249</sup> He would need to have hired very many such consultants to provide OSB with enough business, if OSB's business were done in the manner suggested by the prosecution; but he did not. If the intention was for Dews and Roebuck to lobby or otherwise seek to persuade other local authorities in the interests of Poulson, which may be more likely, then nothing illegal was necessarily being proposed.

Castleford had granted a contract to OSB before Colin Dews had even met Smith. Only in November 1967 did Dews approach Peter Ward seeking a meeting with Smith to offer his services as a PR man; Ward told Smith that Dews was "the strong man of Castleford CB [in fact a municipal borough] who has done an enormous amount of work on behalf of OSB with the Castleford contract of 200 houses... He is extremely well known in Yorkshire and a power on the West Riding County Council. I feel it would be a useful meeting from our own interests, and would suggest... that we could arrange to meet him..."<sup>1250</sup>

Dews' eagerness to enter the world of PR was to cause some concern in early 1969 when he wrote to Leslie Pullen at Vinleigh: "Further to our little talk on phone, please don't forget to thank Dan for letter, everything satisfactory to me, and let me assure you know [sic] one knows of my connection in any shape or form."<sup>1251</sup> Pullen wrote to Smith "I am not too happy about [Dews'] 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph. Surely it is not a question of who knows his connections but of his declaring any actual interest. As you wrote the original letter to him perhaps you should write again emphasizing [sic] this point."<sup>1252</sup> Smith's reply has not been found, but the exchange presents various possibilities. These include: that Dews was, as implied by Hunter and Taylor, bribed to act covertly for Smith and Poulson, and that a warning to declare interests, if given, had been given with 'a nod and a wink'. Alternatively, it was genuinely expected that Dews would declare interests where appropriate. Pullen's concerned reaction indicates he believed this to be the case; and as an experienced advertising

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<sup>1249</sup> *Whitaker's Almanac*, 1964, gives an estimated 1962 population of 40,420 for Castleford, Mexborough was too small to be listed individually, as its population was less than 20,000.

<sup>1250</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3848, Peter Ward to TDS 29 November 1967. Dews was concerned that his employers, the NCB, might become difficult about time off for his local government activities and asked Smith "maybe you could use a part time public relations officer for OSB in this area, or maybe someone else you know of." (TWAM DF/TDS Box 3848 Colin Dews to TDS 6 December 1967)

<sup>1251</sup> TWAM DF/TDFS Box 3848 Colin Dews to Leslie Pullen 19 January 1969.

<sup>1252</sup> TWAM DF/TDFS Box 3848 Leslie Pullen to TDS 23 January 1969

man prior to joining Smith one might not expect him to be naïve about the uses to which PR contracts could be put. What may be inferred is that Dews was possibly acting illegally for Smith's interests since he was recruited in late 1967/early 1968.<sup>1253</sup>

### **William Kirkup**

A plea of ignorance may sound disingenuous, but there is little doubt that Smith was often not involved closely with the day-to-day running of his companies. As with his painting and decorating companies, he would set enterprises up but leave managers in charge and switch his attention to other projects (one could argue that he followed a similar pattern in his leadership of Newcastle City Council, moving from committee chairmanship to committee chairmanship according to the particular needs of the moment). As well as employing Peter Ward and Roy Hadwin to run many of the PR companies, Smith was also heavily reliant on his accountant, William Kirkup, who acted in many cases as Smith's 'managing director'. Smith had first met Kirkup when setting up his first companies in the late 1940s, and Kirkup remained his accountant for around two decades, even when, in the 1950s, Kirkup was a Progressive Party councillor and chairman of the Housing Committee for a while, in which capacity he would have dealt with tenders for painting municipal housing submitted by Smith's Decorators. Ada Smith, who had no high opinion of her husband's judgement of character, distrusted Kirkup; but when in October 1963 Smith had a heart attack, she wrote, Kirkup took over the running of many of Smith's businesses; at one point Poulson rang her, urging her to get rid of Kirkup.<sup>1254</sup>

Kirkup certainly became much more closely involved in Smith's companies.<sup>1255</sup> This involved not just administrative work; Kirkup was taking an active PR role on Poulson's behalf, for example introducing Max Tetlow of Poulson's practice to the

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<sup>1253</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box 3848, Peter Ward to TDS 29 November 1967.

<sup>1254</sup> TWAM DF.TDS Box 3913, unpublished memoir by Ada Smith, unpaginated fragment.

<sup>1255</sup> Fitzwalter & Taylo, *op cit* p106; Amber (drawer 2, white padded envelope) letters from JGLP to William Kirkup 18 November 1963 relating to a project in Durham City; 3 & 5 December 1963 relating to projects in Newburn (an Urban District just west of Newcastle); and Kirkup to JGLP 2 December 1963 re Newburn and Warrington indicate that Kirkup had rapidly taken the helm in the absence of Smith.

chairman of the Central Development Committee in Bolton and lobbying for Poulson to become consultant architect to the Bolton scheme.<sup>1256</sup>

Kirkup remained a key figure up to the point where Smith and he severed their business relationship in or around June 1967.<sup>1257</sup> He had possession of the Dansmith PR account and cash book from the time of Smith's 1963 heart attack until the split. In 1966 Kirkup had moved from Newcastle to London, and in March 1972 he moved to Spain.<sup>1258</sup>

Muir Hunter paid little attention to mention of Kirkup by Poulson or by Smith, and I have seen no evidence that any effort was made to get him to attend as a witness either the Wakefield hearings or the Leeds trial. Given his closeness to the heart of the Smith business for a major part of the 1960s, this seems a strange oversight. Kirkup did give a statement to the police in March 1974, a brief and bland affair: "Although during the period that Mr Smith was ill I did my best to keep the companies 'ticking over', I received verbal instructions from Mr Smith and complied with them. I never considered myself as operational in the public relations field..." Although he and his partner were signatories for the Cladan PR account (which had paid Freda Cunningham), "Virtually all of the expenditure by that company was made at the direct direction of Mr Smith...". Shown a document headed 'Newcastle. JGLP. Salaries' with the initials AC, SD and RU, he commented "I cannot recall anyone ever being employed who had the initials AC and of course as this is a projection the initials may have stood for a proposed employee."<sup>1259</sup>

Smith's recollections were rather different. Before he had fully recovered from his heart attack, he stated, Kirkup had decided to move to London and Smith agreed to

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<sup>1256</sup> Amber, drawer 2 file 9, William Kirkup to JGLP 10 January 1964. Max Tetlow was a highly regarded planner who had been chief planner at MHLG before joining Poulson. Kirkup wrote to Poulson that "In subsequent discussions I asked that you be suggested to the Committee as Consultant Architect for the new scheme. I was informed, at that stage, that we were a little late but I have now heard that you have been included in a short list for the Consultant appointment."

<sup>1257</sup> TNA J291/159/3 Witness statement by Eric Levine, 7 November 1973.

<sup>1258</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box D2063 Witness statement by William Kirkup, 12 March 1974

<sup>1259</sup> TWAM DF/TDS Box D2063 Witness statement by William Kirkup, 12 March 1974

transfer most of his business interests to Kirkup, and to agree to Kirkup signing official correspondence on his behalf.<sup>1260</sup>

He also agreed to set up T Dan Smith Associates (London) Ltd as a new company to be “the operative London company handling, among others, the Poulson Ropergate account. I only learned in January 1969, after my break with Mr Kirkup, that the Poulson fees had, since Mr Kirkup took over the administration in 1963, been channeled through what had always been the company through which I handled my *own* clients:- [Dansmith] PR Ltd. Almost £100,000 of Poulson fees were handled by Kirkup in that way.”<sup>1261</sup>

Smith clearly believed – or presented himself as believing – that Kirkup had been running the businesses for his own benefit and that he (Smith) had little say in the matter. Where the truth lies is now hard to identify, not least since so little effort was made to identify Kirkup’s role and activities.

### **A strategic blind eye?**

Smith claimed some years later that it was his discovery of a corrupt relationship between Poulson and Cunningham that led him to break the relationship with Poulson.<sup>1262</sup> Poulson, in his autobiography, claimed it was he who had terminated the relationship because he believed that Smith was under investigation.<sup>1263</sup>

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<sup>1260</sup> “I was left to agree the transfer of all but my decorating business interests, or recommence to build another business administration in Newcastle. I chose the easiest option and was left in Newcastle with one full-time and one part time employee to assist myself and the PR journalist staff working on our northern assignments. All accounts were administered by Kirkup and the London office, as were the finances of all the companies. Foolishly I began to condone the use by William Kirkup of my signature on official correspondence above the line:- ‘dictated by Mr Smith but signed in his absence’, a practice which worked admirably for me when I dictated the letters and was a regular visitor to the Newcastle office but which had catastrophic consequences when I was a very irregular visitor to the London office and did less and less of the actual dictating.” Author’s Collection, Draft paper for Conference on Fraud and Corruption, University of Liverpool, 12-14 July 1987 p 19

<sup>1261</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>1262</sup> TDS Archive disk 41A: Smith had told Poulson that he was not prepared to carry on, adding “‘I don’t like your relationship with Cunningham’... I had spoken to Cunningham and said ‘look, Andy, so far as I’m concerned I want nothing more to do with Poulson and you’... I think I’d heard about some holidays that he’d organized or something like that and so Cunningham said to me ‘OK, I would prefer to handle my own affairs in any case’”.

<sup>1263</sup> Poulson *op cit* p71

Yet it is clear that Smith's business relationship with Poulson ended effectively in September 1969 when the regular payments from Ropergate Services ceased.<sup>1264</sup>

Also, there is evidence that Smith had known of Cunningham's holidays at Poulson's expense as early as 1964. In January of that year Poulson had written to Smith that "I shall be sending you all the information re Andy Cunningham's holiday and you can deal with him, not me."<sup>1265</sup> Three years later, Poulson was writing again: "Your very dear friend, Councillor Cunningham, rang this morning... He then went on to say 'what about holidays this year'... Miss McLeod will make these arrangements and send details to him and to you."<sup>1266</sup> Quite why Poulson's office needed to involve Smith with the arrangements is unclear.<sup>1267</sup>

However, assertions that Smith's association with Poulson formed a secretive conspiracy ignore the fact that the association appears to have been quite well known. A 1971 profile of Smith in the *Northern Echo* (published after his Wandsworth acquittal but many months *before* Poulson's bankruptcy and before his dealings with Smith were supposedly revealed at the Wakefield hearings) is significant as it includes an accurate description of his links with Poulson and method of working, without any hint of shock or revelation:

The public relations companies' major business, however, was with town centre developers like the Pontefract-based JGL Poulson architects' empire, as well as with system building firms, and here Dan Smith's widespread contacts in local government proved invaluable. A former employee of the Smith PR business said: 'The operations would conform to a pattern. Dan knew a lot of prominent councillors in the Labour Party. Where he thought a council would be interested in a redevelopment scheme, he would give one of his contacts a ring. This would be a committee chairman or someone else placed suitably to have a big say in where contacts would be placed. He would say he was working for a PR firm as a consultant, and would make an appointment for

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<sup>1264</sup>eg TWAM DF/TDS Box 3842 TDS to Professor George Jones, 22 July 1976, stating "My association with Poulson ended in Sept 1968 and was finalised in Sept 1969". The second date is more reliable than the first; TWAM DF/TDS Box 3879. Note (undated) by Grace Cheeseman, signed 'GC'

<sup>1265</sup> TNA J 291/66 JGLP to TDS 21 Jan 1964, though as Smith was then recuperating from a heart attack it may be that he did not see that letter.

<sup>1266</sup> TNA J291/67 JGLP to TDS 7 Jan 1967. Poulson's reference to 'Your very dear friend' is presumably sarcastic.

<sup>1267</sup> Poulson, writing of Cunningham's eleven holidays at his expenses, claimed he arranged the first but knew little of the following ten because Cunningham took most of them for granted. "He telephoned my secretary and asked her to arrange things, often when I was away. I still do not know how some of the holidays were sanctioned... But I do know that Dan Smith had a hand in them; those first tickets, for the holiday in Portugal, went through his office. I personally had them directed to him, so that he could make a present of them to his old friend and 'contact'". (John Poulson, *The Price* (London 1981) p 74)



someone from the PR firm. Councillors were appointed as consultants to the PR firm.<sup>1268</sup>

Asked at a Commons Select Committee enquiry whether clients would have known about the Poulson-OSB link, Smith commented “Everybody knew about it because we were holding exhibitions all over the country. We were not working in our stockinged feet as most people think we were.”<sup>1269</sup>

An examination of Smith’s way of working in Newcastle and elsewhere shows that he believed that he was careful in acting within the law. In both the Crudens controversy and at Peterlee there is evidence that he was actively negotiating with interested parties but that he was careful to declare an interest before participating in official meetings of the city council and the development corporation respectively. Notes on the Peterlee indictment record that “At no stage throughout his connection with the Peterlee Development Corporation did TDS disclose an interest in JGLP or his practices: very belatedly on 24.11.69 he declared an interest in a number of companies including Ropergate Services Ltd, but he did not even at this stage mention his contractual relationship with JGLP.”<sup>1270</sup> This is contradictory: Smith’s agreement was formally with Ropergate, Poulson’s service company, rather than with Poulson personally; and the accusation of belatedness is irrelevant since his declaration was made before the first board meeting Smith presided over at which Poulson was discussed.

He may have been let down by a laxer approach taken by his business associates in local government. Had Sporle declared an interest when the Wandsworth PR contract was being discussed, Smith would never have found himself in the dock at the Old Bailey. The same would be true of Dews, Roebuck and Newby. Smith repeatedly claimed that he believed that his clients would declare their interests where appropriate, but it is impossible now to tell whether he was sincere in this or

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<sup>1268</sup> *Northern Echo* 8 July 1971. However, openness was not invariably the case. In 1963 Smith wrote to Poulson about Peter Meldrum, Lord Provost of Glasgow: “I got his agreement to accept a retainer (on condition it was on the LP [Labour Party] contract as far as the world outside is concerned) this I agreed and put the figure as we agreed at £1250.” This duplicity, it would seem, was on the insistence of Meldrum rather than Smith or Poulson. (TNA J291/66 police typed copy of TDS to JGLP 12 April 1963)

<sup>1269</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Conduct of Members* (London 1977) p 58

<sup>1270</sup> TNA J291/159/4 The Queen against Thomas Daniel Smith. Second Indictment - Peterlee Development Corporation

turning a strategic blind eye on occasion.<sup>1271</sup> It does seem clear that he believed that as responsibility for declaration of interest belonged to his clients, it was no longer his responsibility. Where the direct ‘line management’ of consultants was not undertaken by Smith, any responsibility for oversight did not rest with him: at Peter Ward’s trial, Smith said “It was Mr Ward’s responsibility to me, and not mine to Mr Ward, to ascertain that these people were behaving honestly.”<sup>1272</sup>

But in his relations with Andrew Cunningham the system fails altogether. He might have been able – barely - to claim Cunningham as a consultant, but the payments routed via Freda Cunningham stretch credulity. One may wonder why a careful man acted in such a way, or why he became involved in passing on information about Cunningham’s holidays, and in employing Freda Cunningham. Perhaps having Mrs Cunningham as a notional employee was more palatable to Smith than having to deal on a regular basis with Cunningham himself. Perhaps it was at Poulson’s behest, to tie Smith more closely to the Poulson-Cunningham arm of the ‘triumvirate’, and Smith was unwilling or unable to refuse his main paymaster.

This certainly appears to have been the case with Roebuck. As a witness at the 1975 trial of Peter Ward, Roy Hadwin and Thomas Roebuck, Smith told the court that Roebuck (who had been paid a total of £1,462 by Smith) had been forced upon him by Poulson. Asked by the Judge, “You felt that Poulson had become your dictator?” Smith replied “Of course. I went away from that meeting doing what I was told – and I was supposed to be a very powerful man.”<sup>1273</sup> A further instance of Smith’s deference to Poulson was revealed at Wakefield when he said that Poulson had “permitted” him “time off” to serve on the Redcliffe-Maud Commission: “I couldn’t have undertaken the job, shall I say, if he had objected to it.”<sup>1274</sup>

## **Prison and after**

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<sup>1271</sup> *The Times* 31 January 1975 p 4: Smith told the trial of Ward, Hadwin and Roebuck “I do not want to try to excuse myself, but at the outset I am sure that the councillors employed by us would declare their interests always. That was my intention and the company’s intention.”

<sup>1272</sup> *The Times* 4 February 1975 p 4

<sup>1273</sup> *Evening Chronicle* 3 February 1975

<sup>1274</sup> Author’s Collection, Transcript of public examination of Thomas Daniel Smith, 25 July 1972 paras 1157-1158

Smith served just under three years imprisonment, initially at Walton gaol in Liverpool, and then largely at the open prison at Leyhill in Gloucestershire. The period at Leyhill was subject to frequent interruptions, however. Smith was called as a witness at the 1975 trials of Peter Ward, Hadwin, and Roebuck and of Newby; he gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Standards in Public Life (the ‘Salmon Commission’) and to the House of Commons Select Committee on Conduct of Members. Most seriously, he stood trial again, in 1975 at Birmingham, on charges of fraudulent trading relating to his brief period (1971-1973) as a director of Ron Dilleigh’s company, Dilson Electricals. By this time Smith had recovered his health, and something of his former self-confidence. With his defence counsel (David Savile again) he mounted a vigorous defence; the presiding judge ordered that he be found not guilty.

On leaving prison, aged 61, he took up work with the Howard League for Penal Reform at its offices in North Shields, and subsequently set up an organisation to help potential young offenders through the provision of arts and sporting facilities. His subsequent retirement was anything but quiet. Unlike Cunningham, who spent the final decades of his life in seclusion, or Poulson, who wrote his autobiography only to see it recalled and pulped on legal advice, Smith maintained an active public presence.<sup>1275</sup> He was frequently invited to give talks at institutions around the country; he was an inveterate writer of letters to the press; although his glory days as a frequent guest on national programmes such as *A Word in Edgeways* and a castaway on *Desert Island Discs* was past, he continued to appear on local radio and television. He rediscovered his past as a grass roots activist: working for the local pensioners’ movement, and, after he and Ada moved from Belle Grove Terrace to the nearby Mill House flats in 1984, an active member of the tenants’ association. He founded a patients’ group for his local medical practice, and was a founder member of a friends group for his local park.<sup>1276</sup> He was eventually re-admitted to the Labour Party (he had not been expelled, but his membership had lapsed while he was in prison). He travelled widely, both to give talks and to visit his family in Britain and abroad. He continued to paint and write poetry, and worked on several books,

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<sup>1275</sup> Cunningham died, aged 100, in 2010 (Obituary, *Daily Telegraph* 29 October 2010); Poulson died in 1993.

<sup>1276</sup> The Friends of Leazes Park, an active group still in existence.

including a second autobiography; but none was published. He was, however, the subject of, and featured in, a full length film by the Newcastle-based Amber film collective, *T Dan Smith – A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To Utopia*. He may have retired, but could never be said to be retiring.

Dan Smith died on 27 July 1993 after suffering a heart attack.

### **Approaches to scandal**

Fitzwalter and Taylor's history of the Poulson affair is used to question the British response to scandal, and the failure to carry out a comprehensive investigation: the machinery existed "but the will to use it was never there" with the consequence that "a mountain of publicity produced not even a molehill of effective reform."<sup>1277</sup> They claim, justifiably enough, that "truth was a scarce commodity in the Poulson scandal. One character after another in the drama disclaimed all knowledge of corrupt intent... Had there been a public inquiry into Poulson all of these truths, half-truths and downright lies could have been weighed in the balance."<sup>1278</sup> Their account, however, appears reliant upon the partial narratives of Muir Hunter and Peter Taylor, assuming that the 'downright lies' and 'half truths' prevailed, and that little in the way of 'truth' could be found in the statements of the major participants. This has militated against a more nuanced understanding of Smith's career.

Alan Doig argues that the Poulson affair highlighted the problem of investigating widespread corruption and of comprehending its nature. Citing the claim of an Attorney General that new anti-corruption laws were unnecessary because "the concept of corruption, when properly explained by a judge, is one which is readily understood by juries", Doig adds "...it is even more important that those who may be faced with corruption in their jobs should understand it before the judge explains it to them in court."<sup>1279</sup> The issue is simple: "Corruption is bribery and bribery is corruption... a transactional offence that concerns the use or proposed use of inducements or rewards to influence actions or decisions by politicians and public

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<sup>1277</sup> Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* p 262, p 1.

<sup>1278</sup> *Ibid* p 268

<sup>1279</sup> Doig, A, *Corruption and Misconduct in Contemporary British Politics* (Harmondsworth 1984) p25

servants to ensure an outcome specifically favourable to the donor. The Victorian legislators, faced with the problem of distinguishing transactions they wished to outlaw from the multitude of innocent dealings, chose not to legislate against specific transactions. Instead criminality was determined by the legislative presence of ‘corruptly’, a word with a long historical pedigree...”<sup>1280</sup> It is a view at variance with the “negotiated classification of behaviour” described by Chibnall and Saunders, in which “the same act may be open to a variety of interpretations according to which set of criteria is considered appropriate in a given situation.”<sup>1281</sup>

Doig argues that standards of conduct in public life are most effective when public and private morality share a high degree of compatibility, but that the 1960s began to see divergence, exemplified for example by the greater involvement of local authorities with private businesses (with their laxer standards), and warned against by the MP Francis Noel-Baker’s strictures on the new field of public relations.<sup>1282</sup>

Yet Doig does not – cannot? - define a line between lobbying and corrupting, hospitality and inducement. He gives the example of Roy Hadwin defending the practice of wining and dining councillors: “I don’t think there is a business in this country where a businessman doesn’t take a client out to lunch, it just happens we were dealing with councils, they are the ones that are buying the houses. I don’t think there is anything morally wrong with that.”<sup>1283</sup> But adds that “the sting in the search for council contracts was not, however, in the techniques, but the motives that promoted them.” To illustrate this he quotes Hadwin’s boss, Dan Smith, “laying down the strategy to Poulson.”

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<sup>1280</sup> *Ibid* pp25-26

<sup>1281</sup> Chibnall & Saunders *op cit* p139

<sup>1282</sup> Doig *op cit* pp 348-356. Noel-Baker warned in 1961 that “Offers from business interests can be very tempting particularly if they involve fees, retainers or expenses without an obligation to keep ‘office hours and demand no special qualifications. Even more attractive to some [MPs] is a private appointment (as ‘advisor’ or ‘consultant’) that need not become generally known. At the same time, the growth of so-called ‘public relations’ in all its aspects... means that Members of Parliament have themselves become more attractive allies for business interests than they have been in the past. The door, in fact, is open for a new form of political corruption and there is an uneasy feeling in Parliament and outside, that its extent could be much greater than the known or published facts reveal... in the new ‘grey’ zone that is growing up, the interests are often not known and not declared.”

<sup>1283</sup> Doig *op cit* pp 354-355 quoting ‘The Rise and Fall of John Poulson’, *World in Action* (ITV April 1973)

The basis for success... is top contact and someone on the ground to drink pints and make friends with the rank and file I know the people we need. The prizes are great, but we will miss some of them needlessly unless we take steps forward now.<sup>1284</sup>

Neither the ‘strategy’ of lobbying in the boardroom *and* the public bar, or the ‘technique’ of lunching councillors, necessarily imply or involve corruption. Corruption was possible but not essential to ‘the motives that promoted’ the search for contracts; the motive was to sell houses, not necessarily to sell them corruptly. Doig quotes Cunningham: “Where does public relations end and corruption begin? You haven’t got to be a monk and sit in some cell all your life. You’ve got to talk to people.”<sup>1285</sup> The view was echoed by Poulson: “Somebody is going to have to sit down and work out just what is entertaining and what is corruption so that everybody will know where they stand.”<sup>1286</sup> The grey area remains grey.

A quite different approach is the anthropological, exemplified by Gerald Mars, whose work applies the ‘grid’ and ‘group’ methodology devised by Mary Douglas.<sup>1287</sup> Douglas defined ‘grid’ as the strength of social categories imposed by a culture (thus the caste system of India would be a strong grid; liberal western society weak), ‘group’ emphasised collectiveness as opposed to individualism. Mars applied this concept to the workplace, classifying four occupational types according to weak or strong grid, and weak or strong group, with ‘grid’ assessed in terms of autonomy, insulation (isolation), reciprocity (how much one can give to others) and competition. “Weak grid jobs... are those with an overall absence of constraints and... the freedom ... to transact with a wide range of others.” Those typified by weak grid and weak group he called ‘hawks’, a group defined by individual entrepreneurialism.<sup>1288</sup> Mars sees Smith as a ‘hawk’, and notes society’s ambivalence to hawks and to their freebooting activities.

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<sup>1284</sup> Doig *op cit* p 355 quoting Tomkinson, M & Gillard, M, *Nothing to Declare. The Political Corruptions of John Poulson* (London 1980) p 66 (TDS to JGLP 1 March 1964)

<sup>1285</sup> Doig *op cit* p359

<sup>1286</sup> Chibnall & Saunders *op cit* p 130

<sup>1287</sup> Mars, G *Cheats at Work. An Anthropology of Workplace Crime* (Aldershot 1994)

<sup>1288</sup> Mars *op cit* pp 24-26. The other groups were ‘donkeys’ (strong grid, weak group – ‘isolated subordination’ typified by supermarket check-out staff), ‘wolves’ (strong grid, strong group – ‘tight work groups’, typified by dockers and miners), and ‘vultures’ (weak grid, strong group – ‘loose work groups’, typified by delivery roundsmen). Other ‘hawks’ named by Mars include arms dealer Adnan Kashoggi and the middleman ‘fixer’ Sidney Stanley of the postwar Lynskey Tribunal notoriety.

We tend to despise our most successful men precisely because of their success. Admiration for the frontier pattern of success – log cabin to White House – is tempered by a cynicism or contempt for the way it is achieved. And in the UK the price paid for men of flair like T Dan Smith, who made the north east of England hold up its head, is the sort of corruption that the Poulson investigation revealed. One problem that all hawks have to face, therefore, is the resentment, envy and occasional outrage that society shows when fiddles become visible. This is because there is only a blurred line between entrepreneurialism and flair on the one hand and sharp practice and fraud on the other. Society needs to admire and reward the first but suspects, and often rightly so, the presence of the second.<sup>1289</sup>

Their activities are determined by where they stand in social, class and occupational structures: “The Poulsons and the T Dan Smiths are able to fiddle on a grand scale because their whole style of operating belongs with individualistic hawks. The supermarket cashier has to confine her fiddles to ringing short on the till because her physically and socially restricted style of work belongs with the insulated and subordinate donkeys.”<sup>1290</sup>

Mars’ analysis, useful for typologising Dan Smith vis-à-vis his associates and his employees, in terms of explaining his behaviour strays towards stating the obvious. A different analysis, examining structural processes in the building industry, does however offer an explanation of how Smith’s role in the Poulson affair developed.

Patrick Dunleavy’s history of postwar British housing policy describes how government policy – both actively, through manipulation of subsidy, and negatively, through its failure to reform the structure and boundaries of local authorities, encouraged the employment of industrialised building techniques to provide an *in situ* solution for urban housing shortages; “By building high-rise/high density schemes, it was claimed, a direct attack could be mounted on inner city housing conditions without altering the planning system, the local government structure, or the existing balance of social pressures.”<sup>1291</sup> This led to an “enormous expansion of construction activity” in the early 1960s which altered the relationship between contractors and councils. “Whereas in the past contractors had stood rather apart

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<sup>1289</sup> Mars *op cit* pp 48-49

<sup>1290</sup> *Ibid* p 164

<sup>1291</sup> Patrick Dunleavy, *The Politics of Mass Housing in Britain 1945-1975* (Oxford 1981) pp 99-103

from housing authorities, the new contracting and tendering procedures associated with industrialized building placed a premium on the development of close or closed relations between local authorities and particular firms.” At the same time, the government was actively encouraging industrialised ‘system’ building (Housing Minister Sir Keith Joseph told the 1963 Conservative Party Conference that industrialisation would increase housing output to 400,000 dwellings a year), and the number of ‘systems’ proliferated: 240 in production or development by late 1964.<sup>1292</sup> As the number of systems grew, so did the pressure on firms to gain contracts. “The *sine qua non* of success for firms was access, and the means of obtaining access diversified.”<sup>1293</sup> Construction companies, a contemporary journal noted, “employ armies of men to find housing programmes large enough to warrant a reasonable product of their reinforced concrete monoliths. These men are high pressure sales staff.”<sup>1294</sup> Such firms offered “ever more lavish enticements” – sophisticated presentations, entertainment, foreign trips. “An increasing number of public relations firms and consultancies were employed to gain local authority contracts, a trend pioneered by T Dan Smith’s multiple PR outlets. The final element in this development was the growth of corruption which the Poulson and other scandals have demonstrated was clearly linked with the industrialized building campaign.”<sup>1295</sup>

Whether Smith did pioneer the use of PR firms for acquiring building contracts is uncertain; but it is clear that the ‘hard sell’ and the pressure on firms to get business did lead to significant levels of corruption. Fitzwalter and Taylor note that after Poulson there were “dozens of police investigations into local government corruption... all of them had a great deal to do with the way building contracts were awarded in the sixties.”<sup>1296</sup> Doig chronicles numerous instances of construction-related (and other) municipal corruption, including those of Maurice Byrne, a former Mayor of Pontefract who acted as PR for Carlton Contractors, a subsidiary of Trafalgar House; Sid McCullough, a County Durham builder with numerous district- and county council associates; and the widespread corruption in south Wales, an area

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<sup>1292</sup> *Ibid* pp 115-123

<sup>1293</sup> *Ibid* pp 120-121

<sup>1294</sup> *Official Architecture and Planning* cited by Dunleavy *op cit* p 121

<sup>1295</sup> Dunleavy *op cit* p 121. It is unclear whether Smith did in fact ‘pioneer’ the use of PR companies in this field.

<sup>1296</sup> Fitzwalter & Taylor *op cit* p 270



which “managed to combine redevelopment schemes similar to those of Birmingham with an entrenched one-party domination not dissimilar to that of the north-east, together with added ingredients of an enfeebled local press, geographical isolation, and a quiescent public.”<sup>1297</sup> Most flamboyant of all was Alan Maudsley, Birmingham’s City Architect, who accepted bribes from a small architectural practice, Sharp & Ebery, which, from doing virtually no council work in 1966, gained fees of £730,000 from the city between then and 1973, and from executives of a major city construction firm, Bryants.<sup>1298</sup>

Most relevant to the Smith case is that of Peter Day, accused alongside Smith and others in 1971 of bribing Sidney Sporle. While Smith won the right to a separate trial, Day was convicted and gaoled alongside Sporle. Day had been an agent for John Laing Construction Ltd, and claimed that the £500 he had paid Sporle was payment for consultancy work. No suggestion of impropriety by Laing was made in court, despite Laing’s MD having met Sporle for the two men to sign Sporle’s contract of employment. Laing, whose corporate tone was established by the austere John Laing, a member of the Christian Brethren, had a reputation for extreme probity, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that if even they were complicit in providing inducements to potential clients, then the practice was endemic in the construction industry and not confined to a few exceptional ‘bad apples’.<sup>1299</sup>

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<sup>1297</sup> Doig *op cit* pp 180-198

<sup>1298</sup> A Poulson employee, J G Watson, reported on having visited Maudsley in 1967 but was not able to explain OSB at length (TNA J291/84 J G Watson to JGLP 28 November 1967).<sup>1298</sup> In contrast to the often dowdy corruption of the Poulson affair, with its curious running theme of carpets and other items of interior décor, Maudsley enjoyed the high life, spending much of his ill-gotten gains on gambling, night clubs, and women. A gaming club employee named Doris Day told the Bryants trial that ‘Mr Maudsley called her ‘Dorry’ and was nearly always drunk when she saw him’ ... “At one stage Jim Sharp [one of the convicted architects] asked me to live in a flat on the firm. I’d imagine that he and Bryants had a flat where girls stayed to entertain them. I told them I was not interested.” At the conclusion of the Bryants trial, Mr Justice Melford Stephenson commented that the accused and Maudsley had turned Birmingham into “a municipal Gomorrah”. Even after conviction (when he received a fairly lenient two-and-a-half years), he showed a commendable chutzpah, successfully appealing to get his pension restored by Birmingham City Council. (*The Times* 4 September 1976 p1, 12 April 1978 p2, 21 April 1978 p 4. Doig *op cit* pp 182-185)

<sup>1299</sup> Obituary of Sir Maurice Laing, *The Guardian* 25 February 2008 p33; Alan Thorpe, ‘Laing, Sir John William (1879-1978)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2012 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48743>, accessed 9 Nov 2012]. Ada Smith, writing of the flat in Hill Street, Mayfair, London that Smith rented between 1967 and 1969 with his Northampton-based friend and business associate Ron Dilleigh, recorded that: “One thing that I did notice in the flat was that letters for people unknown to us kept on being delivered and Mr Dilleigh would always take these away and say that he would deal with them. There was one name that cropped up more than a few times on letters which Mr Dilleigh took away to deal with, a name which had no meaning to us at all, at the time... Mr Peter Day... [Dan] mentioned this to me

Smith's role in the Poulson affair can be seen in a somewhat different light if measured against the analysis of corruption scandals put forward by John Garrard. For Garrard, scandals are not straightforward affairs of good and evil but are "slippery phenomena" which "rest... heavily on human perceptions...". Scandals are "essentially *public* phenomena, wherein hitherto private behaviour, sometimes... resting on private systems of mores and values, often persistent and tolerated over a long period of time, is publicly revealed and then widely deemed *morally outrageous, thereby scandalising large numbers of people.*"<sup>1300</sup> They involve people in public life – though standards vary, so businessmen can get away with more financial malpractice than politicians. "Indeed, the mismatch between expectations in the public and business worlds may well be a potent generator of conduct that turns out to be scandalous, particularly for businessmen-turned-politicians, or where politics, as it increasingly does due to the ever-expanding role of government, involves contact and negotiation with business." Garrard cites the Poulson affair as an example of this.

A similar view was adopted by Chibnall and Saunders, using Poulson's relationship with George Pottinger as a model, which case they saw as "the authoritative imposition of the legal category of 'corruption' on behaviour which had previously been regarded as largely unproblematic within a particular situational morality."<sup>1301</sup> This was the argument that "common behaviour within a group cannot reasonably be considered deviant – ie everybody does it, it cannot be wrong."<sup>1302</sup>

Garrard also describes scandals as being largely concerned with behaviour that is "or is taken to be, symptomatic of much wider patterns, involving far greater numbers of people of the same kind..."; and they tend to arise in groups. "This may be less because such behaviour has suddenly become more common than because behaviour which in the past was widely practised and tolerated comes up against a public

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with some concern... it bothered him and he could never get a straight answer to this from Mr Dilleigh." (TWAM DF.TDS Box 3913, unpublished memoir by Ada Smith p 41)

<sup>1300</sup> Garrard, J, 'Scandals: a tentative overview' in Moore, J & Smith, J (eds), *Corruption in Urban Politics and Society, Britain 1780-1950* (Aldershot 2007) p 27. Italics as in original.

<sup>1301</sup> Chibnall & Saunders, *op cit* p 142

<sup>1302</sup> *Ibid* p 143

tolerance that is changing (partly as a result of initial revelations) and/or media competitively eager to reveal.”<sup>1303</sup> He draws parallels with scandals involving public officials in northern towns sparked by the ‘Salford Gas Scandal’ of 1887-88, and the ‘Cash for Questions’ controversy of the mid-1990s, but the point could equally apply to the rash of local government corruption scandals, of which the Poulson affair was only the most famous, in the mid 1970s. Further, while the behaviour being condemned may be

clearly heinous and criminal, dramatically at variance with public value systems... More often, the behaviour is located in a grey zone, on the hazy borderlines between what is publicly permissible and impermissible. This is an area of activity that Anthony Barker has called ‘not unlawful’ rather than either illegal or legal. ... the individuals and/or groups involved may even see their behaviour as morally defensible, or neutral, or at least capable of being rendered respectable.<sup>1304</sup>

Scandals often arise when... public standards and values are shifting. People engaged in hitherto tolerated or condoned private behaviour suddenly find themselves on the wrong side of a shifting public moral borderline...<sup>1305</sup>

Smith’s involvement with Poulson was clearly located in this liminal area, the ill-defined borderlands where lobbying shades almost imperceptibly into corruption, and it may be that he was simply unlucky to have been active at a time of radical change to the “moral borderline”. His ‘legalistic’ attitude towards his activities and the declaration of interests have been touched on above, and he appears to have believed that this was within the law. His views of his own actions admit only very equivocally to any wrong-doing at all, and display inconsistencies. As noted above, Smith in 1987 told a conference that he had decided to plead guilty because he felt he was not strong enough to fight on, and was not being encouraged by his legal team to defend the case.<sup>1306</sup> At the trial of Ward, Hadwin and Roebuck he told the court “I was corrupt because I condoned things on many occasions. I think I would accept that I was the corrupter, although on the other hand I was as much corrupted

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<sup>1303</sup> Garrard *op cit* p 31

<sup>1304</sup> *Ibid* p31. Garrard cites Barker, A, *The Upturned Stone: Political Scandals in Twenty Democracies and their Investigation Processes* (Essex Papers in Politics and Government, University of Essex 1992) p 20.

<sup>1305</sup> Garrard *op cit* p 36

<sup>1306</sup> Author’s collection, Draft paper for Conference on Fraud and Corruption, University of Liverpool, 12-14 July 1978 pp 42-43; Smith’s recollection confirmed in interview with Clifford Smith.

as I corrupted others.”<sup>1307</sup> And to a parliamentary committee he maintained “I believed that the people that we employed... had declared interests. Therefore, there was nothing improper in their associations with the local authorities...If I believed a Councillor was declaring his interests and he reported to me that the Council had decided to go ahead with the scheme, I would write on it, ‘Great’. But when I found that the Councillor had not declared his interests and I had written on ‘Great’ then I accepted the responsibility, for no other reason. On six occasions I saw documents where men who had behaved improperly in my view and on the occasion of those charges I had to plead guilty; the only occasion – I have only pleaded guilty once and I pleaded guilty for that reason.”<sup>1308</sup>

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<sup>1307</sup> Evening Chronicle 3 March 1975

<sup>1308</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Conduct of Members* (London 1977) p 60

## Chapter 8: Conclusions

Hill Street in Mayfair, London W1, in the late 1960s was home to The Beatles' management company NEMS, and also to the flat shared by Dan Smith and his friend and collaborator Ron Dilleigh. It is a pleasing coincidence – might Smith and the Fab Four have passed each other in the street? – that highlights an important question about Smith's career: was he essentially a figure of the Sixties?

Much has been written about that decade, examining changes in popular music and popular culture, in the introduction of liberal social policies (such as the suspension of capital punishment for murder in 1965 and its abolition in 1969, the Sexual Offences Act 1967 and the Abortion Act 1967), and in the changes in sexual mores. Historical debate continues about the extent to which the 1960s was a revolutionary decade, exemplified by the works of Arthur Marwick and Gerard DeGroot.<sup>1309</sup>

From a chronological point of view, Smith was pre-eminently a man of the Sixties. The period in which he was a man of some power and influence extended from 1958, when the Labour Party gained control on Newcastle City Council, to early 1970, when he stepped down from public office following his arrest in the Sporle case. It could be argued that his origins in the North East helped him attract attention, just as musicians, poets and writers were able to benefit from a media increasingly turning its attention away from the capital. And the Sixties can be seen as an era of optimism, typified by Harold Wilson's 1963 speech on "the white heat of the technological revolution", whereby it was held that science, technology, education and planning could transform British life and society.

Could Smith have flourished in any other decade? This question raises the issue of 'structure *versus* agency' – was what happened in Newcastle and the North of England in the 1960s the product of economic and social forces, or could an individual exercise sufficient influence to have a significant effect on the course of events? In the case of Smith, it is tempting to give the answer "both of the above."

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<sup>1309</sup> Marwick, A, *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974* (Oxford 1998); DeGroot, G, *The Sixties Unplugged. A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* (London 2008)

Undoubtedly his personal qualities, intelligence and drive would have helped him in other periods, but the Sixties was a fertile period for innovation in planning and local government.

The lifting of building restrictions and increased availability of loan finance enabled local authorities that were not war-damaged towns and cities or new towns to begin to implement major redevelopment plans; and Newcastle's was the first of this new wave, in 1961. Smith's plans for Newcastle chimed with developments in education: Newcastle introduced the comprehensive system to its secondary schools, and Smith's administration commenced the building of the (previously planned) 'education precinct' in Newcastle city centre.

Newcastle took a leading role in the modernisation of local government administration, replacing traditional modes of administration with a council cabinet system, with the introduction of a chief executive (or 'city manager') to run the council. And Smith was able to solidly link developments in the city of Newcastle with a wider regional agenda as regionalism increasingly became part of the post-1945 *zeitgeist*.

But – Newcastle was a pioneer in many of these fields, and it was a pioneer very largely because of the work of Smith. It was under his guidance that the city council reformed its creaking planning structure, creating an independent planning department, one of the first for any major British urban centre, led by a chief planning officer who could no longer be outranked by other council chief officers, and tasked with creating a plan for a new Newcastle. Similarly, it was Smith's initiative that led the city to appoint a 'City Manager' – chief executive in modern parlance – to take over the administrative functions of the town clerk and act as a leader in an administrative structure which formerly lacked such a role (the town clerk being traditionally just 'first among equals'), and thereby – it was hoped – provide dynamic leadership in place of interdepartmental squabbling. That the City Manager could be, and was, appointed from outside the local government profession was another innovation.<sup>1310</sup>

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<sup>1310</sup> Eliot (1971) *op cit* pp149-162

Smith's views of the role of the regional capital as an engine for regional economic regeneration, and his views of the need for regional administrative and political structures were, as I have commented, consistent with the *zeitgeist*, but he was far from being just a beneficiary of changing times; he was an active figure in seeking change. Through writing, through media appearances, in his role as Chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Council and through his work for Crowther Report and the Redcliffe Maud Commission he was an energetic and consistent advocate for regional government in the United Kingdom.

An appreciation of Smith's personal qualities – positive and negative – is of huge importance in assessing his career. He had a strong will, and energy, displayed in his ability to progress so high within the (admittedly enfeebled) Independent Labour Party, although his work as a covert Trotskyist agent attempting to hollow out the ILP also shows an unscrupulous streak, particularly in the treatment of those members seen as opposing Trotskyist interests. He showed skill in organising a group to reenergise the Labour group on Newcastle City Council and, in power, to put forward a coherent programme of development and reform. He was an intelligent man, albeit without the benefit of extensive formal education, but did not have a chip on his shoulder about this, and retained an admiration for academics and experts, sometimes uncritically so. He had in many respects an absence of ego. This, more than in any other feature of his character of career, gives the lie to the frequent accusation that Smith was the British equivalent of “an American city boss” – a Robert Moses or Richard J Daley figure.<sup>1311</sup> Smith did not occupy roles for long periods: he was leader of the Labour group at Newcastle city council for six years before voluntarily resigning; and his enthusiasm for his subsequent post as chairman of the NEPC was also waning by the later 1960s. And far from monopolising power in his own hands, a feature of his governance of Newcastle council was his efforts to set up other powerful positions – the Chief Planning Officer masterminding the transformation of the city, and the City Manager ensuring that the council's work was carried out swiftly and efficiently – which under other circumstances could have

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<sup>1311</sup> On Moses, Caro, R, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (1974); on Daley, Spinney, R G, *City of Big Shoulders. A History of Chicago* (2000) pp213-240

been seen as rivals to the council leader. His leadership of the Labour group, too, was not based on institutional networks of control. The group of Smith 'loyalists', mostly ex-ILP and/or RCP, described as his Praetorian Guard – Ken Sketheway, Ted Fletcher, Jack Johnson, Roy Hadwin – was too small (and in some cases unpopular) to control the group; nor was Smith able to dispense safe seats through his control of a major trade union locally (as Andrew Cunningham was able to control Durham County Council Labour group through his domination of the GMB in the region).

Smith's control was based on intangibles. A word frequently (almost invariably, I found, in the course of interviewing for this thesis) used about him is 'charisma' and it would seem that Smith possessed this to a high degree. He was undoubtedly a very capable public speaker. This must have helped his advance in the ILP and the pre-1959 Labour Party; it would have enabled him to win over world-weary officials in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, and seasoned business executives in IBM. It made him a regular figure on the broadcast media: not just local news programmes, but on national radio (he had a good relationship with the prominent BBC producer of talks, Leonie Cohn) and television – where a documentary, *Dan's Castle*, examined his ideas and 'the state of the north'.<sup>1312</sup>

But charisma by itself is not enough to explain Smith's success. He was able to develop, express and execute many of the ideas which formed his vision for Newcastle and the region, exemplified by his piloting of the Newcastle development plan through the council and ministry approval, by his reconstruction of Newcastle city council's administration, and, perhaps most remarkably, by his achievement in having Peterlee – one of the more obscure postwar new towns – declared the location of Britain's first science campus.

In achieving these, and other, things, he showed an undogmatic ability to step beyond ideological and organisational barriers. He was able to work closely with members of rival political parties – for example, as a campaigner for Britain to join the European Common Market, he worked closely with the leader of the

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<sup>1312</sup> *Dan's Castle* (BBC Television 1965)



Conservative group on Newcastle council, Ian Bransom.<sup>1313</sup> In developing council policy, he looked beyond his councillor colleagues and fellow Labour Party members to seek advice from academic staff at the local university college. Leading architects – Basil Spence, Arne Jacobsen and Robert Matthew – were persuaded to form a design panel to advise on the city redevelopment policy. Perhaps the best example of this flexibility is the close working relationship that Smith, a senior figure in the Labour Party in NE England, was able to form with John Poulson, the Deputy Chairman of the National Liberal Party, an organisation that was shortly to be absorbed into its long-term partner, the Conservative Party.

This quality is tied in with Smith's skill at networking. Perhaps not a clubbable man in the formal sense (though he was a member of the Reform), he seems to have been very good at forming relationships with work contacts, and of developing these relationships. Thus his contacts with the businessman Geoffrey Crowther, initially when Smith served on Crowther's steering committee for the Buchanan report, which developed when Trust House hotels, chaired by Crowther, became the intended operator of a large new hotel (to be designed by Arne Jacobsen) in the centre of Newcastle. One might also note the willingness of several of Smith's business contacts to travel to Gloucestershire to address the business club that Smith has established while incarcerated in HMP Leyhill.

It was this ability to network that made Smith such a tempting target for John Poulson. Poulson was anxious to expand his business with labour-controlled local authorities, and saw Smith as the ideal man to provide information and introductions. Smith, a man whose ability to judge character was as poor as Poulson's was refined, was very impressed by the architect.<sup>1314</sup> In particular he was struck by the way that

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<sup>1313</sup> The two were joint chairmen of the NE Regional Committee of the United Europe Association: *Evening Chronicle*, 11 December 1962 p7.

<sup>1314</sup> Ada Smith held this opinion of her husband. "I had learned that Dan had one fatal weakness and that was that he was a pathetically bad judge of character. He was always willing to believe the best about people despite some lessons bitterly learned. Not so me. I had an ability to read between the lines, to interpret looks and nuances in the voice and I frequently made my doubts known to Dan about this or that person. He was inclined not to believe me and say that I was too sensitive but he was forced to admit on a few occasions that what I had suspected earlier had in [end of page]" Unpaginated autobiographical fragment in TWAM DF/TDS Box 3919

Poulson had broken through the restrictive rules and traditional practices that were prevalent in architecture and construction, to create an integrated company that could provide design, engineering and project management services. In Smith's eyes Poulson was a man who could 'get things done', in much the same way that Smith sought to 'get things done'. In this thesis I argue that Smith was not necessarily guilty of all the charges for which he was gaoled in 1974. Rather, he was drawn into Poulson's network, probably became increasingly aware that Poulson was engaging in dubious practices, while at the same time believing that his own actions remained on the right side of a rather vague line, or zone, dividing the licit from the illicit. That Poulson became bankrupt and brought down many others in his fall, deserving or undeserving, was for Smith a matter of bad luck as well as of his own bad judgement and habit of sailing close to the wind. That he was, by 1973-74, thoroughly demoralised and suffering from major health problems, and feeling that his legal team was not enthusiastic to fight what in retrospect seems a flimsy prosecution case, was worse luck.

But if we challenge the myth of 'Smith the corrupt councillor', we must also challenge the heroic myth. His career ended in failure, and that failure had several aspects. Firstly, it came about as a result of his own misjudgements and possibly misdeeds. It was entirely because of his own actions that he had to stand down from public office in January 1970.

Secondly, many of the achievements of his period of power and influence were relatively short-lived. Initiatives undertaken in Newcastle spluttered to a halt: the development plans, the creation of dynamic new roles within the administration all fell by the wayside. Economic difficulties, the 1973 oil crisis, a national mood turning against urban motorways, and (ironically) local government restructuring put paid to the larger concrete ambitions of the Smith-Burns plan; a failure of 'agency' caused the post of City manager to wither into irrelevance.

Possibly it was his experience as a member of a self-defined revolutionary 'vanguard' in the 1940s that led him to believe that creating 'leadership' posts would enable his urban reforms to continue. His vision in Newcastle was to falter after 1965: as discussed in chapter 4, the creation of a city manager post did not in itself

guarantee that the impetus behind the redevelopment plans would continue. The removal of an inspirational leader led to stagnation. This was the case also, and very visibly, in Peterlee: Smith's resignation as Chairman led to his science campus project, which had seemed on the verge of success, coming to a complete halt.

Thirdly, he misjudged the prospects of the NEPC developing into a form of regional administration. Joining the NEPC seemed a natural progression; in his period as leader of Newcastle council he had moved from committee chairmanship to committee chairmanship according to the priorities of the moment, setting projects in motion and them moving on; moving from the council to the NEPC was a similar step, with the exception that chairmanship of the NEPC gave no power, just the possibility of influence. In less than a year-and-a-half, economic pressures would derail the regionalist agenda of George Brown, and render the influence of the NEPCs and their chance of gaining greater responsibilities minimal. A harsh but not unfair assessment of Smith's (almost) five years chairing the NEPC would be that he had wasted his time.

It would be historically misleading to remember Smith solely for the circumstances of his fall; an assessment of his complete career, its successes and failures in the short and the long term, is required.

He was a resourceful and innovative local government leader, and a leading advocate for local government reorganisation and for regional government. A study of his career casts some further light on the ideology and activities of British Trotskyism in the 1940s, and how the revisionist doctrines of James Burnham and Anthony Crosland could be put into practical effect, not at a national level, but in a middle-sized English city.

Many of the initiatives introduced in Newcastle during his period of control led the way in Britain: independent planning departments; chief executive officers. The 'conservation districts' embodied in the 1963 plan led the way to the creation of statutory conservation areas in 1967. Smith's vision for Newcastle and North East England looked beyond the traditional industries of coal, steel, shipbuilding and engineering, for which he had no sentimental regard. He sought a new industrial

framework based around advanced technology, around education, and around leisure. His encouragement of the arts as a potent economic driver – and the presence of higher education institutions in city centres filling a similar role – occurred long before ‘culture-led regeneration’ became popular.<sup>1315</sup> And the shape and appearance of modern Newcastle – both in what was built, and what was saved from inappropriate redevelopment - still owes a great deal to the 1961 plan. And his efforts to encourage a regional layer of government and administration might still inform the present day experiments with ‘combined authorities.’<sup>1316</sup>

In the early period of writing this thesis, I received an email from a noted writer on politics who said, jokingly, “I hope you don’t disprove too many of the legends that have grown up around Dan.” I hope I have.

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<sup>1315</sup> Sometimes dated to the ‘Glasgow’s Miles Better’ campaign of the early 1980s as in this article: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3649100/Birthplace-of-a-cultural-revolution.html> . The author, while focusing on NewcastleGateshead, makes no mention of the 1960s initiatives.

<sup>1316</sup> I doubt he would be impressed by the North East being divided into three combined authority areas, still less so by two of them being divided by the River Tyne.

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The thesis draws upon a wide range of sources. Treated cautiously are his published autobiography, unpublished autobiography, recorded interviews (including an archive of interviews with Smith carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s by Peter McTigue and Chris Ford in the possession of Northumbria University) and other autobiographical fragments: these may be useful on his feelings and opinions, but can be factually inaccurate and are unreliable about episodes such as Smith's wartime political activity. Similar caveats apply to recorded interviews with Smith's contemporaries. By the time research began in 2007, few were still alive, and of the survivors, many had failing memories of events taking place fifty or more years previously. Some were unwilling to be interviewed because of the controversy which Smith's career was still felt to stimulate.

The main archive source used were the papers of Dan Smith held at Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums. The great bulk of this large collection contains Smith's papers from the mid 1950s onwards, with little earlier material. It is complemented by material currently in my possession, donated by the Smith family and by Peter McTigue.

On Smith's wartime and immediate postwar career, other main sources used were the Jock Haston papers at the University of Hull Library, the ILP archives at the London School of Economics Library, the Glasgow Caledonian Archive of the Trotskyist Tradition (GCATT) at Glasgow Caledonian University, the Working Class Movement Library, Salford, the papers of the Communist Party of Great Britain at the Labour History Archives in Manchester, and the papers of Jimmy Deane at the Modern Records Centre, Warwick University.

For his career in the Labour Party, as council leader, NEPC chairman and Peterlee chairman, key resources include the Labour Party archives at the Labour History Archives, and archives of a number of Government departments held at The National Archives: principally the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the Department of Economic Affairs.

On corruption allegations, extensive use has been made of the transcripts of the Poulson bankruptcy hearings held at West Yorkshire Archives, Wakefield, and the case files of Leeds Crown Court held The National Archives.

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