Explaining Changes in Political Party Fortunes in Greater London 1918-1931

By Adrian Mark Steel

Queen Mary, University of London

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Abstract

This thesis is a case study of the party politics of Greater London 1918-1931. First, and to place its conclusions in context, the thesis properly defines the area of Greater London with which it deals. The region, chosen so as to provide an area small enough to deal with in detail but large enough to find many types of locality within it, was becoming more of a distinct entity during the 1920s, and growing rapidly. The changes in Greater London and their political implications are examined.

As a result of the Great War, the 1916-18 political realignment and related upheaval, and the franchise extension in 1918, the parties faced a new political landscape. Dealing with the three main parties in turn, the thesis looks at the tactics and machinery each employed to deal with it. It touches on both local and parliamentary electoral contests, and evaluates the success of the approaches each party took. The local and regional strategies of the parties, and what happened to them, are placed in the context of current historical debates.

Case studies of particular localities within Greater London, and of the role of both the local and national press in London politics, are used to develop further specific points about political party fortunes in the 1920s. The thesis finds that different parties used similar tactics when it suited them, and varied tactics between areas to achieve the best results. Parties were each affected by internal problems and by tendencies to introspection. The thesis also finds evidence that the Labour breakthrough in Greater London in July 1945 was simmering beneath the surface in the 1920s, despite failing, for the most part, to manifest itself electorally.
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Chapter One: Introduction
Setting the Scene

Despite it being recently described as 'under-researched', the fascinations of 1920s politics were, and are, many. ¹ There were great personalities on the political stage, changes and realignments in party positions, and the results of the biggest-ever widening of the franchise had an impact at the ballot box. Historians have fed on the wealth of material bequeathed to them by the characters and organisations of the time, and have produced a multiplicity of works, advancing theories to explain events, trends, and phenomena. This thesis will add to these an explanation of changing political party fortunes in Greater London, 1918-1931, and this chapter will introduce the study. ²

At the last pre-war General Election, in December 1910, there was a close result nationally, but Greater London voted more clearly for the Conservatives, and they won there by 43 seats to 33. ³ At a local level, before 1914 the London County Council (LCC) was one of the few local authorities nationwide, and by far the largest, where regular and widespread party contests took place at election time. As Ken Young has said, 'London was in two great camps' – the Progressives, who were an alliance of Liberal forces and moderate Labour opinion, and the Moderates, who became organised under the umbrella of the London Municipal Society (LMS) as ‘Municipal Reform’ politicians, and who were by and large Conservatives. ⁴ The Progressives controlled the LCC until 1907, when the

¹ Duncan Tanner, 'Elections, Statistics and the Rise of the Labour Party 1906-1931', in Historical Journal No. 34 (1991), 893-908, 893. Throughout this thesis, in footnotes, numbers not otherwise attributable, for example as years of publication, are page numbers.
² 'Greater London' for the purposes of this study will be defined later in this chapter.
³ Generally Conservative forces were known at this time as 'Unionists', and the majority of their formal organisations were so named. See John Ramsden, The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, London (Longman), 1978, 272 on reversion to the name 'Conservative' in 1925. For the purposes of this study 'Conservative' will be used throughout to avoid any confusion about names changing between 1918 and 1931. This convention is the same as followed by Trevor Wilson: see his The Downfall of the Liberal Party, London (Collins), 1966, 10. At the General Election in December 1910, 273 Conservatives and 275 Liberals were returned, but with the addition of Irish and Labour members the more important statistic was that the government was supported in Great Britain by 315 'radical' MPs against the opposition of 252 'conservatives' (see Peter Clarke, Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990, London (Penguin), 1996, 61-2). See table 2A for the London result.
⁴ An account of the formation of the London Municipal Society is given by Ken Young, Local Politics and the Rise of Party, Leicester (Leicester University Press), 1975, 57-83. For the politics
Municipal Reformers took control and retained power until 1934. From 1900 elections were also held in the LCC area for Metropolitan Borough Councils (METBs) outside the City, where conservative forces generally fared better than they did on the LCC before 1907. In Greater London, as elsewhere, the position was transformed by the arrival of the Labour Party, specifically the London Labour Party (LLP). Outside the LCC area, in the rest of Greater London (which will be described as 'Outer London' for the purposes of this study), local government generally took a non-partisan form before 1914, with local worthies taking their turns to sit on councils, be mayors, and perform other civic duties.

Although the 1914 party truce was ended at the conclusion of war in November 1918, normal politics did not resume immediately, in Greater London as elsewhere. The General Election of 1918 was fought on the new franchise introduced earlier that year by the Representation of the People Act, and following the accompanying redistribution of seats. The Times commented on the eve of the poll:

'It has not been an easy task to diagnose this election, largely because it is in essentials entirely different from those that preceded it. A Coalition in place of party divisions, a new electorate, women and young soldiers as well as men, new constituencies for old,
and, above all, a new world with changed political ideas - these are some of the fundamental differences which separate this election from the two elections of 1910, with which the old electioneering era came to an end. 10

Nationally, Coalition (mostly Liberal and Conservative) candidates won 531 out of 707 seats, the second largest grouping being Sinn Fein with 73. 11 Labour won 60 seats, remaining 'wee free' Liberals 29 and others 14. In London The Times predicted that '... the Coalition seems assured of a substantial majority ...', and that was what happened. 12 Michael Kinnear has shown that 'Labour remained weak in Greater London, where it elected only 4 MPs. Three had Coalition support, while the fourth, Jack Jones in West Ham Silvertown, was well known as a right winger', and Pugh has agreed that in their patriotism and jingoism, these four MPs were 'well attuned ... to the views of the London working class'. 13 The position of 1918, where in Greater London, in addition to Labour's 4 seats, 77 were won by Conservatives, 3 by Liberals, 16 by Coalition Liberals and 3 by other candidates, was the product of a unique situation. 14 Since 1832 no government had worked with such a commanding majority in the House of Commons, and the situation has only since recurred in the 1930s, under other exceptional circumstances.

In Greater London the electoral good times did not last long for the government and its supporters. Amidst a pandemic of influenza, which in the capital was to kill 16,500, one Conservative peer asked of Lloyd George, 'how long will the electorate allow him before venting its inevitable disappointment?' 15 At the local

10 The Times, 13 Dec 1918, 9.
12 The Times, 13 Dec 1918, 9.
14 See table 2A.
elections in 1919 - the first since 1913 (for the LCC) or 1912 (for the METBs) Labour made sweeping gains. These came against a worsening economic outlook, and the realisation by many that the government's promises of 'a land fit for heroes to live in' had come to very little.Labour won only 15 seats on the LCC in March, but won 573 council seats on the METBs in November, and took control of 13 councils - one more than were controlled by conservatives. This acted as a wake-up call to the established politicians in the capital. By 1922, when the elections were held again, Labour fared worse. The political climate had changed, with infighting within the Coalition leading to a revival among Conservative activists, and 'economy' had become a more popular battle cry. Labour lost over half of the METBs it controlled and gained only one LCC seat, while the Municipal Reformers gained 14. At the November 1922 General Election Labour did better in Greater London, with representation rising from 4 to 16. Nationally it was a good year for the Conservatives under Bonar Law - the party won the election with an overall majority of 75, taking 75 Greater London seats. Success came to such candidates as Sir Philip Lloyd-Greame, newly appointed as President of the Board of Trade. He spoke at a school in his Hendon constituency praising the war record of Lloyd George, his late boss, but arguing that

... that fact did not give Mr Lloyd George the prescriptive right to remain Prime Minister for the term of his natural life.  

It was not long before the next General Election, called on the issue of tariffs by Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister after Bonar Law's death. Although defence of

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 17 See tables 3 and 4. The LCC elections took place in March, when economic conditions were not as bad as they were in November - the time of the METB elections. See Wrigley, Changes, 9.

 18 See Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 154-183.

 19 See tables 3 and 4.

 20 See table 2A.

 21 See table 2A.

 22 The Times, 27 Oct 1922, 14.
free trade was a Liberal issue, in Greater London it was Labour who came out on top, winning 38 seats to the Liberals 12 (although the Conservatives remained ahead with 53). Labour had managed to take advantage of Conservative disarray, one of the victors being Arthur Henderson's son Will, who captured Enfield after a strong campaign:

The stranger dropped into Enfield, on its greener side, might suppose that the only relation the place could bear to Labour would be agricultural. Grave would be his mistake. ... The supporters of Mr Henderson are working hard and well at the canvass. The Unionists, if they are to counteract these efforts, will need all the quiet help they can get. Though their majority is nearly 2000, it will not be maintained without a struggle.  

In the end there was not enough help, quiet or otherwise, to save the Conservatives of Enfield and the rest of Greater London from the Labour government that took office in January 1924. Once again, though, the government did not last and the capital went to the polls again before the year was out. 

The 1924 General Election campaign was seen as a quiet one in a part of Greater London:

A casual visitor to the two Parliamentary divisions of Croydon yesterday would scarcely have imagined that a General Election was in progress. The calm surface of the life of this big community ... seemed apparently unruffled by even a ripple of

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23 For comment on Baldwin's actions see Chris Cook, The Age of Alignment, London (Macmillan), 1975, 137-138. Cook (3) also says that the 1923 election was 'unwanted' by most Conservatives at the time. See also Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 179, and Taylor, English History, 207 which gives a brief outline of possible explanations for Baldwin's move. On Liberal reunion as a result of Baldwin's actions see Wilson, Downfall, 254.

24 Kinnear, The British Voter, 43. See also table 2A.

25 The Times, 4 Dec 1923, 17.

26 The government finally fell over the 'Campbell case'. Campbell was a communist whose prosecution for inciting the armed forces to mutiny was abandoned by the Attorney General in disputed circumstances. See David Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald, London (Richard Cohen Books), 1997, 365-77 for a full account of the circumstances of this case.
political excitement. Closer examination and inquiry, however, revealed more activity than was outwardly in evidence.  

*The Times* then described civilised political activity, including meetings for adopting candidates and publication of addresses. Not all politics in south London was trouble-free: at Lambeth Baths, the future Lord Haw-Haw, William Joyce, was injured stewarding a Conservative meeting. When the votes were counted, Baldwin's party came up trumps with an overall majority nationwide of over 200. Labour hung on to 26 of their Greater London victories of a year earlier, but the Conservatives now held 71 seats and the Liberals were reduced to just 4, with two 'others': Winston Churchill in Epping; and a Communist in Battersea South.  

The London local election results during the 1924-29 parliament show that the overall balance did not change much. Labour made gains on the LCC in 1925 and consolidated them in 1928, but this was for the most part at the expense of the Progressive / Liberal forces rather that the Municipal Reformers. Labour controlled eight of the 28 METBs in 1925 and retained them all in 1928. Some by-election results during the parliament indicated, however, that the political tide was turning again. When the 1929 General Election came, once again focussing on Greater London, *The Times* issued a warning to the Conservatives:  

Surveyed as a whole, there is little indication of anything like a political sweep in Greater London. The Conservatives are quietly confident that they can hold their own against the combined attacks of Liberal and Labour parties. It is recognised, however, that at this election nothing can be left to chance. New factors, such as the very large additions to the electorate, and the development of new housing estates by the London

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27 *The Times*, 17 Oct 1924, 8. Capitalisation as in the original.  
30 See table 2A.  
31 See table 3.  
32 See table 4. There were 28 METBs, plus the City of London, in the LCC area.  
33 See 'Note: 1924-1931' by John Ramsden and Chris Cook, in Chris Cook and John Ramsden (eds), *By Elections in British Politics*, London (UCL Press), 1997, 59-64. See Table 7 for a complete listing of Greater London by-elections from this period, with results.
County Council and other agencies, have made it unsafe to rely on majorities, however large, which were obtained at the last election.

Conservative apathy and over-confidence is a danger even in constituencies like Wimbledon, Kingston, or North Croydon, which are apparently safe, but it is especially so in places like Harrow, Finchley, Romford, Hornsey, Enfield, South Tottenham, Upton, Ilford, East Willesden, East Walthamstow, and the two divisions of Leyton, where the Conservative candidates need every vote they can secure. 34

The Conservatives fought a lacklustre campaign, and not only lost their majority but left Labour as the largest party in the House of Commons for the first time. Of the 15 seats mentioned by The Times, seven were lost to Labour. 35 Labour won a majority of Greater London seats for the first time, with 54 wins to 47 for the Conservatives and just two for the Liberals, despite that party's well-fought campaign. 36

The 1929-1931 period was one of turmoil in British politics. 37 The General Election in October 1931 saw an all-out attack on Labour in Greater London, as elsewhere. In some seats, unconventional tactics were used, as in Southwark Central:

Central Southwark may well be envied by other constituencies confused by a number of party labels inasmuch [sic] as there are only two candidates before the electors, one representing the official Labour party and the other a 'Nationalist,' unattached to any party, but pledged to full support of the National Government. Both ... the prospective Unionist candidate, and ... the prospective Liberal candidate, withdrew in favour of

34 The Times, 30 May 1929, 8.
35 For the result see Kimnair, The British Voter, 48 - Labour won 287 seats, the Conservatives 260. For the campaign see Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 291-2, and Philip Williamson, Safety First: Baldwin, the Conservative Party and the 1929 General Election in Historical Journal Vol. 25 (1982), 385-409.
36 See table 2A.
Mr I M Horobin and are giving him their cordial support. ... In his election address Mr Horobin says :- '...If I am elected I will see as much as I can of Central Southwark ... But it is not honest to make any big promises to you except this: I pledge myself to approach every problem as it arises - including tariffs - with an honestly unbiased mind, and to do what the situation may seem to require, and thus to preserve the National Government as long as the country is in danger.'

The government in this part of London was being represented by someone yet to get to know the constituency, and one with little in the way of fixed policies beyond opposition to Labour. However, Horobin still won, as did the government nationwide with 471 Conservatives the basis for a huge National Government parliamentary majority. In Greater London Conservatives won 85 seats to Labour's nine and the Liberals' four (with five 'other' National Government supporters). At the same time, in local elections, Labour lost about 200 METB seats (in November 1931), and the conservative forces were strengthened. At the end of the period covered by this study, the electoral fortunes of Labour and the Liberals appeared to be at a low ebb, and those of the Conservatives to be at a peak.

The Greater London area was then a barometer of national political opinion in the 1918-1931 period. The national trends, which maintained Conservative domination for the most part, but which saw an overall increase in Labour performance carrying the party to power in 1924 and 1929, and a decline in Liberal performance, were shared by the capital and its environs. However, in the Greater London area the trends were in general taken further in either political direction: the Conservative victory here in 1924 (with 69% of seats) was stronger than nationally (67% of seats); in 1929 the Labour victory in London (with 45%...
of seats) was also stronger than nationally (42% of seats). Furthermore, these results were recorded in a geographical area that was relatively compact, but which during this time contained almost every type of habitation and land usage - from farming to industrial estate, from heathland to compact slum housing. All of these factors made, and make, Greater London a fascinating and worthwhile area to study. *The Times* commented in 1918, 'if London cannot be accepted as absolutely typical of the United Kingdom as a whole, its main tendencies are interesting and instructive.' Political historians have generally approached the 1918-1931 period in the past either as a small part of a study of a longer period, or from the point of view of the party that they were themselves studying. The advantage of this regional study is that it is possible to take other angles and say more about a relatively short period of time. Stefan Berger has commented that, 'if regional history writing is unable to provide an adequate picture of what was going on in the localities, and if it is equally unable to provide a new national interpretative framework, then what is it worth?' Both the localities and the national picture will be illuminated by the work in this study of a particularly important region, and points made about the national picture confirmed or challenged.

**Method**

The historian of modern British politics is faced with an embarrassment of riches. For the period from the 1832 Reform Act to the present, the private papers of a great many of those who reached cabinet rank have survived and are available for research in fully

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43 *The Times*, 13 Dec 1918, 9.

catalogued collections held in national and regional archives. ... The concentration by historians of nineteenth and twentieth century politics upon these archives was understandable ... . One consequence of this was to cast into shadow the relationship between the parliamentary leaders and the developing mass parties upon which their position increasingly was based. With the exception of the special case of the origins and growth of the Labour party, historians were hesitant and selective in making use of the archives of the parties themselves. This was despite the fact that the latter had become the main institutionalised form of political activity, and that their growth both inside and outside the Palace of Westminster has been the outstanding feature of the last one hundred and fifty years. 46

Stuart Ball's commentary on the state of British political research in 1996 made the pertinent point that there is much to be drawn from a study of surviving records of grass roots political activity. As has been suggested, they often add colour and detail to the stories of those at the top of the political tree at Westminster, and provide a unique way of examining and interpreting the decisions made and actions taken by senior figures, and their implications. Ball goes on to point out how historians had begun to use local political records to enrich national political studies. 47 Something less common, the use of such records to derive local and regional conclusions, will be done in this study.

One particular and valuable thing that local party records can show - and not necessarily as a result of efforts to record such information - is the health of the local party organisation in that particular area, something certain to have an effect upon the fortunes of that party. This can be examined in a number of ways, such as looking at financial or membership figures, examining periods of particular activity or inactivity and triggers for this, and the dates of establishment of

organisations in particular areas. For example, if the finances of a local party improved during a particular year, or as the result of a particular campaign, conclusions could be drawn about the success of that party. Some parties were more active during periods of national success but less so at other times, whereas others swung into action when the party they opposed was in government, fading away at other times. Further to this, the frequency, type and success of social events and fundraisers recorded in local party records can also give good indication of the health or otherwise of groupings at that time. The existence and strength of youth organisations, such as the Junior Imperial League for the Conservatives, could be a similar indicator if no special circumstances prevailed. Party organisational strength and efficiency could not fail to affect the fortunes of that party, and explain the changes in them. Another important thing to watch for when looking at local party records is instances where they offer an explanation of an action taken by the party that has been noted elsewhere. For example, they may explain why a particular piece of propaganda was produced, or why an organisation existed in a certain way. Evidence such as this will be used during the examination of the London Labour Party’s response to the Zinoviev letter in 1924. Finally, as Peter Catterall has pointed out,

Academic research into the history of British party politics is often conducted as if the parties operate in hermetically sealed spheres. But how can a rounded picture of a political party emerge unless you examine how they were seen and countered by their opponents?

Looking at local records of the main parties can also show how they each viewed their opponents, and reacted to them.

48 Commentary on triggers for activity and inactivity, and establishment of organisations, appears in chapter three - for example based on evidence from the Ilford Conservative Association, and the Wood Green Conservative Association and related bodies. On the Labour party, see the example of the Merton and Morden organisation in chapter four. Commentary on the issues of finance appears, for example, in chapter three.
49 See comments about the success of some Conservative organisations in chapter three.
50 For example, see comments on the Junior Imperial League in Woodford which appear in chapter three.
It could be argued that information such as that just outlined could be found merely by looking at the local press. However, as Tom Stannage has argued, there are reasons why this alone is not sufficient - 'the press form too unreliable a basis from which to generalise', on the grounds of proprietorial bias as much as anything else. Colin Seymour-Ure has taken this point about the influence of proprietors further.

There is plenty of scope in the choice and presentation of news for a paper to try, without actually falsifying opinions or facts, to promote its editor's or proprietor's own views. In addition an editor has his leader columns in which he can quite explicitly argue a case and comment upon the contents of his news and feature columns. In both these ways a newspaper is not acting 'neutrally' ... but is aiming to shape opinions and to influence the reaction of readers to what they read. In addition ... newspapers can have a third function. This is to influence not the people for whom journalists write but those largely about whom they write.

An example of how an owner could wield influence through the editorial columns at this time was in Hereford. There the local MP, Samuel Roberts, acquired a controlling interest in the Hereford Times and, through keeping this fact a secret, managed to write anonymous editorials in his own local newspaper in his own constituency. Although outside of Greater London, it does demonstrate that such influence as Seymour-Ure suggests could exist was a real possibility. It is necessary to be wary of drawing general conclusions about issues that the press, and not necessarily the public, saw as important, and of giving them excessive weight. But evidence from the press can provide useful details, if put into proper context. For example, how else could a historian uncover a description of an incident such as this in October 1919, at which a meeting of Erith UDC was invaded by 50 strikers, the council chamber was taken over by a 'Labour element', and the chairman of the council was prevented from leaving by the crowd?

Work by others has also been used to strengthen the study. Kinnear’s mapping work means that data can be deployed, with qualification, on subjects such as areas where there was strong local organisation supporting the Coalition Liberals up to 1922, and the views of Coalition Conservative MPs representing different areas at the Carlton Club in October 1922. Local information is of particular use because, as Chris Cook says - albeit in reference to 1931-35 - the differences between local and national pictures could sometimes be great.

A regional study cannot simply be based on surviving party records. For one thing, such work would inevitably be affected by exactly where records survive and where they do not. This study uses other sources such as local and regional newspapers, records of prominent individuals, and electoral statistics, to draw conclusions about changing political party fortunes. It also draws upon the scholarship of other historians where appropriate, for example where the more detailed work of others can be used to develop a point raised by this study. Examining local case studies made by others, and supplementing these by undertaking specific research for this exercise, adds cumulative value.

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54 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 234.
55 Evening Standard, 28 October 1919, 6. Capitalisation as in the original.
56 See Kinnear, The British Voter. This work is used, for example, in chapters three and five.
58 Three main newspapers covering the whole of London were the Evening Standard, Evening News, and the Star, and these often had an extended reach as they were bought by commuters on their way home from Central London to the outlying areas. Most of the national press was produced in London and was more likely to carry local news relating to this area than any other across the period. Most boroughs also had newspapers available at a local level, some had more than one and some newspapers covered larger sub-regions of Greater London, such as the Kentish Mercury and the South London Press. See chapter six.
The complexities of national and local voting patterns ... bring us back to the fundamental problem of how difficult it is to tease out generalities concerning the intersection of local and national structures in Britain. ... [This] demonstrate[s] not only the importance of using both national, parliamentary and private, local archives and other sources in our search for answers, but also the worth of detailed and sensitive case studies. 60

This thesis provides such a study, based upon a key electoral battleground, and its arguments are illustrated by examples from the London region.

Examining changing political party fortunes in Greater London allows conclusions to be drawn on a few further specific issues. A comparison of how the parties tackled national issues such as a franchise extension can be made. It will be possible to compare and contrast the tactics parties used at elections to attract voters, and to get their voters to turn out. As a unique point in the Greater London area, looking at local elections that were continuously contested means that they can - to an extent - be used like 'opinion polls', and can show how the attitudes of the new mass electorate changed between General Elections. This is in addition to the benefit that can be gained from looking at parliamentary by-elections, often of equal significance. With the sum of this information it will be possible to draw conclusions, such as the extent to which political parties (and in particular the Labour party) depended upon class-based support in Greater London, or the extent to which they reached outside what might be considered as their natural class constituency. The explanation of changing party fortunes follows from such analysis.


60 Quoted in Parliamentary History Vol. 17 (1998), 11 - the introduction to the volume of articles. The quotation is actually referring to a local case study of Norwich.
1923, 1924, 1929 and 1931. However, as throughout the United Kingdom, there was in Greater London little continuity between the parties contesting individual parliamentary constituencies from one end of the period to the other. This was partly the result of the unusual national electoral agreements in 1918 and 1931, and partly the result of the fluctuating fortunes of the Liberal party. But local factors also came into play, with the occasional appearance of independent or fringe party candidates. Unopposed returns still occurred in the 1920s, and these can make a mess of any statistician's calculations. An even more difficult problem can be caused by multiple candidates from one 'party': not only were there occasionally Liberals of different persuasions fighting each other, different types of Conservatives contesting seats - particularly at by-elections - but competing Labour candidates sometimes existed in numbers too. For example the sitting ILP MP fought both an official Labour and a National Labour candidate in Camberwell Peckham in 1931. National Liberal or Coalition Liberal candidates stood in some seats in 1918, 1922 and 1931, and sometimes they were opposed by Conservatives, official or independent, sometimes not. It is difficult to make simple comparisons in seats over time when dramatic changes in candidatures have occurred, and party labels used by such candidates add to the problem.

Particularly when looking at local election results - a crucial part of this study - but also when looking at parliamentary elections, the problem of party labels attached to candidates can hamper the making of true comparisons. The change noted earlier between the 'Unionist' and 'Conservative' name used at election time is easy to deal with, but looking at conservative local organisations - such as the LMS - makes things more difficult at local council level. The LMS only officially

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61 Exact details of unopposed returns in Greater London seats are given in table 9. This shows that the Conservatives were generally the beneficiaries of such circumstances. The numbers of unopposed returns could vary dramatically - there was only one in 1929, but six in 1931 and 1923, and eleven in 1918.

62 On this last example see Thorpe, 1931, 183. At the Westminster Abbey by-election in August 1921 a Conservative fought an Anti Waste League (AWL) candidate - effectively a Conservative in disguise - as well as a Liberal. In the March 1924 by-election in the same seat a Conservative beat off a challenge from Winston Churchill standing as a 'Constitutionalist'. In neighbouring Westminster St George's a by-election in June 1921 saw the AWL candidate beat the official Conservative, and the famous by-election in this seat in March 1931 saw the Conservative take on an 'Independent Conservative'. See chapter six.
operated within the LCC area, through the Municipal Reformers (MRs). A plethora of other 'front' organisations (often affiliated to the LMS) allowed conservatives to stand for local council seats in Outer London. These sometimes included Liberals - mainly in Outer London - and sometimes did not, and certainly not where Progressive candidates were being fought for LCC seats.\footnote{See commentary on Croydon Federation of Ratepayers Associations in chapter five. The Progressive party were not formally related to the London Liberals in the early part of this period, and the records of the London Liberal Federation show that talks on a 'definite and recognised relationship' only took place in 1923. This is also amplified in chapter five. London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), ACC/1446/2, minutes of executive committee of the London Liberal Federation, 7 Jun 1923 and 15 Apr 1924.} An examination of this question appears later.\footnote{See chapter three.} Looking at local election results is particularly important, considering that the prevailing electoral system - 'first past the post' - for parliamentary elections means that electorally diverse constituencies could be generalised about incorrectly in a simple study of results over a larger area. Under the electoral system, for example, results were neither recorded nor reported at anything other than constituency level, so it is impossible to work out how strongly particular parts of one parliamentary constituency supported one candidate or another, but simply who won the constituency as a whole. Generalisation about constituency results might miss electoral trends in particular types of areas buried within larger constituencies; the work in this thesis is some remedy for the problems caused by the system. Understanding local results properly means that the benefit of analysing them regionally is not foregone.

It is important to remember that this study is being undertaken from the point of view of knowing what happened as a result of the political upheavals of the 1920s. Politicians - local and national - and activists had hopes for their future but no knowledge of what it would bring. It is impossible for the historian today to write without the benefit of hindsight. However, it is important not to judge the evidence that survives, particularly that from local newspapers and local party records, assuming that the protagonists knew what the outcome of their actions would be. For example, some Conservative activists were fearful of what would
happen once Labour won power in January 1924. It is now known that things changed little, and the panic that they felt then now seems hard to understand, even - as it may have been intended - as a tactical measure designed to rouse supporters into action. To understand it fully an attempt has to be made to take it at face value; it can then be properly interpreted.

There are two particular exclusions from this study which should be mentioned here. First, it has been decided as a general rule not to examine the results of elections to local Boards of Guardians. This is because it would lead to the thesis being bogged down in excessive detail, with too many statistics, and mean that less space was available for analysis. It is also because the general trends at Boards of Guardians elections reflected fairly closely those for local authority elections, both for where they were fully contested and which parties were in the ascendancy at which times. The primary manifestations of electoral opinion that will be looked at here will thus be the parliamentary and local authority (county and local council) elections and by-elections. Second, it has been decided to exclude analysis of peripheral or informal political organisations such as Primrose League branches or Trades Councils. This is principally for reasons of space, but also because points can be made about the health of political organisations sufficiently with the evidence that is examined. Additionally, points about informal political groups are bought into discussion of other bodies where appropriate.

So this thesis will use a variety of sources, including local party records, newspapers, electoral statistics, the papers of relevant politicians and the work of earlier historians as the basis for its conclusions. It will use an examination of these sources to illuminate via the study of a crucial region the national political situation of the period 1918-1931. It will analyse the changing fortunes of the

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65 LMA, ACC/1338/1, Ealing Conservative and Unionist Association minute book, meeting of 7 Feb 1924. The local MP, Sir Herbert Nield, addressed the meeting: '... he pointed out the great danger under which the country existed and pressed the urgent necessity of all members of the association of helping to strengthen and develop the organisation.'

66 For example see Goss, Local Labour, 18-19, for how this happened in Southwark.
political parties over the period in Greater London, and explain these changes from a regional perspective as well as a national one.

**Defining ‘Greater London’**

The issue of which areas ‘count’ as ‘Greater London’, and which do not, was and remains an emotive subject. An examination of the debate will highlight the issues involved and help outline just what the area was like, and why the particular definition of ‘Greater London’ used here has been chosen.

The County of London, that is to say the LCC area, was defined following the establishment of County Councils by the Local Government Act of 1888. By and large it extended to the boundaries of the built-up area around London at the time - the main exceptions being to the north and east, and by and large it incorporated the areas of the Metropolitan Board of Works - which was abolished - and the School Board for London - later abolished as a result of the 1902 Education Act. Speaking at the turn of the century, philosopher Frederic Harrison described the LCC as ‘trustees of the metropolis of the Empire’. It is clear that by 1918 though, physically and otherwise London meant much more than simply the County of London, hence the concept of ‘Greater London’. This had already been recognised by central government to some extent - the area of responsibility for the Metropolitan Police was far wider than the County of London, and the Royal Commission on London Traffic in 1905 covered a geographical area of approximately twelve miles radius from Charing Cross, again larger than the LCC area. Calls for the reform of London government included calls for a modification of the area covered by the London authority, almost as soon as the original LCC had been created. A Royal Commission on the whole issue of local

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67 See Young, *Local Politics*, 35-38, and other works cited on these pages. Also see Pelling’s explanation: Pelling, *British Elections*, 26-27.
69 Pelling, *British Elections*, 62-3 explains and lists the parliamentary constituencies (of the 1885-1918 distribution) that fell within this definition. The Commission was officially known as the *Royal Commission on the Means of Locomotion and Transport in London*. 
government for the capital sat from 1921-23, but no changes to the area were made as a result of it, there being no consensus on action to be taken. 70 In due course the Green Belt, and the Greater London Plan of 1944 gave further official recognition to the new situation. In fact it was not until the 1960s that political and administrative recognition was given to the changes in the built up area of London, and the conclusion of this thesis includes remarks on this recognition. 71

Other historians have encountered difficulty defining or describing the region they studied. Tregidga, for example, who studied the Liberal party in the south west, decried how

The vagueness of such labels as the 'West of England' and the 'West Country' reflects the failure of both academics and the wider community to establish a consensus in regard to regional boundaries. 72

For Pelling's study he too had to deal with the question of defining London. 73 Although based on the parliamentary redistribution of seats in 1885 rather than that of 1918, it is still worth examining the decisions he made about what was and was not 'London'. For the sake of convenience Pelling uses the LCC area as 'London'. But, he admits,

The LCC, at the time of its creation, comprised most of the regularly built up area of London, but not all. Its boundaries had not been in any sense deliberately drawn in order to ensure that this was so. In fact there were considerable discrepancies: if Woolwich was included - a town still largely separate from the more compact part of London - there seemed no reason to exclude West Ham or Croydon or even Brentford and Chiswick. 74

73 Pelling, British Elections, 26-86.
74 Pelling, British Elections, 26.
He goes on to explain how this area had its extraordinary origins in the need for the Court in London in the sixteenth century to be warned of the onset of plague arriving from surrounding areas. It may at first seem strange to let an accident of history decide the methodology for a complex historical study. Pelling gives his reasons for treating the LCC area separately - 'first, a number of important statistics are available for this area only and not for those beyond it; secondly, the inhabitants of the LCC area had in common an important set of political experiences which resulted from electing, and being governed by, this particular local authority...'. However Pelling does concede elsewhere that

there is no doubt that the influence of London was felt everywhere in the South East ... immediately outside the LCC area ... there was a substantial belt of suburban housing which had grown up by the end of the [nineteenth] century and which, because it was contiguous to the LCC, must seem almost equally metropolitan in character. 77

He also treats what he calls 'Greater London (outside LCC area)' as a separate entity within the South East. If Pelling had been looking at the post 1918 period he might well have defined 'London' differently, and others have considered this. Johnson has noted how there was 'little land left' free within the LCC area by 1919. And Ball and Sunderland, in their definition of London, note how

the suburbs of London had expanded across the county line and, by 1914, into some areas beyond the Greater London boundary ... the formal ways of delineating London, therefore, do not correspond with the true economic and social geography of the city, which, as can be seen, crossed such lines. 80

75 Pelling, British Elections, 27.
76 Pelling, British Elections, 27.
77 Pelling, British Elections, 60.
78 Pelling, British Elections, 62.
The redistributions of parliamentary seats in 1918, 1945 and 1948 show that the expansion had been recognised by legislators, hence the increase in seats on each occasion for the outer London area.

It is thus important for the purposes of this study to define 'Greater London' as more than simply the County of London, for a number of reasons. First, the study accepts that London had outgrown its County even if the official designation in this period did not. Evidence for this can be found on almost any Ordnance Survey map showing the expansion of housing and development on the outskirts. Second, including both the highly urbanised LCC areas and areas on the fringes of London where development was less uniform (and indeed in flux during the period covered by this study) increases the value of the study as a whole. It means that it is possible to draw conclusions about a wider range of areas, and that contrasts can be made between responses to political developments in 'inner' and 'outer' London. Third, examples can be found of London based local political federations affiliating bodies on the outskirts of London, because activists themselves felt that they had more in common with London organisations than those in the counties into which they would otherwise have fallen. There are no examples of London associations 'contracting out' of their areas, but the London Liberal Federation affiliated Liberal organisations from West Ham and Hendon. 81 The LMS signed up Ratepayers' Associations and similar bodies from Waltham Abbey, South West Ham, East Ham, Hornchurch, Chingford, Wembley, Chigwell, Dagenham, Barking, and Croydon in the period 1918-1931 - though it did sign up associations from across England and Wales during this time as well. 82 The London Labour Party (LLP), driven by Morrison's objective to capture the LCC,

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81 LMA, ACC/1446/2, executive committee meetings of 4 Oct 1923 and 15 Apr 1924.
82 Young, *Local Politics*, 227-229. The LMS also took on the title 'National Federation of Ratepayers' Associations' - see Guildhall Library Manuscripts Section (GLMS) Ms 19,528 (LMS Minutes of executive committee meetings) Vol. 2 – the name was added at the meeting of 21 July 1921 and removed at the meeting of 6 May 1927.
did not sign up local Labour parties from Outer London but maintained close ties with them, evidence of which survives in their records. ³³

The geographical scope of the study has thus been fixed at roughly that used as a basis for the formation of the GLC in 1963, which drew on much earlier ideas of Greater London. Tables 1A and 1B give a precise listing of those parliamentary constituencies and local authorities that have been included in Greater London. The need to include whole authorities and whole constituencies, for the sake of consistency and to make statistical data of use, has meant that the boundaries of the two do not exactly match. The area covered by the parliamentary constituencies is slightly larger than that covered by the local authorities, since local authorities which fall in their entirety outside of 'Greater London' but within one of the constituencies in table 1A have been excluded from the study. Tables 1A and 1B should be seen as the definitive list of those entities covered in this study. However, the area considered by the study to be Greater London is that denoted by table 1B. Areas outside it, but within the constituency boundaries of constituencies in table 1A, are only included within the study because of the impossibility of breaking them off when discussing the parliamentary representation of those constituencies, and what went on inside them. Because of the way administrative boundaries worked in the 1918-1931 period, some confusion is hard to avoid. Regular reference to tables 1A and 1B keeps it to a minimum.

This demarcation immediately throws up a few points of interest. Among those parliamentary constituencies included in table 1A are Epsom, Epping and St Albans. This study does not claim that the towns of Epsom and St Albans, and the rural areas around Epping, should be included in 'Greater London' because they are part of the same built up area. It is necessary to include them because the parliamentary constituencies containing these localities also contain significant areas which should count as Greater London - St Albans included parts of Barnet.

³³ See for example the records of the Greenford Labour party (in Middlesex), LMA, ACC/1972/9, where contact with Morrison is recorded.
Epsom included the Urban District of Sutton, and Epping included places like Wanstead, Woodford, and Chingford. The constituency of Surrey Eastern has been deliberately excluded, not only because it was for a large part rural but because the main built up parts in the north of the area - the Urban District of Coulsdon and Purley, had a population that did not feel it belonged in London and campaigned hard (but unsuccessfully) to stay out of it even as late as 1963. Coulsdon and Purley does not appear in table 1B.

The way that other historians have defined London and its surrounding areas as part of their studies differs from that used here. For example, Turner defined regions as part of his study of the 1918 General Election. Two regions he used are of relevance to this study, London and South East. His London included simply those constituencies within LCC boundaries, his South East all constituencies within Surrey, Kent, Hertfordshire, Essex and Sussex (including those county boroughs falling within these counties) - no constituencies from within these counties appeared in any other region. The explanation for Turner's classification lies probably in the fact that he was more concerned with dividing constituencies by their class type, and was less concerned about regional issues. Another example is that of Stannage, who defined regions as part of his study of the 1935 General Election; his definition was also used by Thorpe in his study of the 1931 General Election. Stannage used two regions, London and Outer London, to cover the area that is closest to Greater London. There are differences between his classification of constituencies and the Greater London region in this study. Stannage included in Outer London the Kent constituencies of Gravesend, Rochester Chatham and Rochester Gillingham, which are not included in this study. He also included in other regions three constituencies this study has put into

84 For full details of which local authority areas fell within which parliamentary constituencies see F W S Craig, British Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries, Chichester (Political Reference Publications), 1972.
86 For Turner's classifications see Turner, British Politics, 472-473.
87 Turner, British Politics, Appendix 1 discusses the criteria used for his attributions. See also table 5.
Greater London: St Albans appeared in his South-Central England; and Epping and Ilford appeared in his East Anglia region. The discrepancy between his regions of London and Outer London and the Greater London defined by this thesis is actually quite small, and the explanation lies in the fact that no part of those constituencies which he has put into Outer London but this thesis has not put into Greater London fell in the GLC area in 1963; similarly, those constituencies this study has put into Greater London but Stannage has placed in other regions all fell in part or in whole within Greater London in 1963.

It is also worth noting roughly what proportion of the British electorate fell within the definition of Greater London used here. Without going into a morass of population statistics, it can be seen that of a House of Commons given 707 seats at the redistribution of 1918, 103 seats make up the area of Greater London. When Republic of Ireland constituencies were excluded from 1922 onwards, this area represents 103 seats out of 615 in the House of Commons - about a sixth. There are many anomalies to consider - plural voting, the University constituencies, the terms of the Act of Union, population changes following 1918 and so on, but roughly speaking the area defined as Greater London for the purposes of this study contained at least a sixth of the British electorate from 1918-1931. In addition, not only was it the capital city, but it was the residence of many of the most important politicians including a good number of MPs, and home to the institutions through which Britain was governed. All this makes a regional study of Greater London of special significance in understanding the politics of the 1920s.

The final point to deal with when defining Greater London is the growth of London, and in particular the growth of the suburbs, from 1918-1931. Although it

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88 For Stannage's classifications see Stannage, Baldwin Thwarts the Opposition, 249-258; see also Thorpe, 1931, 281.
89 The London University seat being excluded - see table 1A.
90 For details of numbers of seats in the House of Commons see Kinnear, The British Voter, 38-40. Other changes were also made between 1918 and 1922 - for example in Northern Ireland in 1922 there were 12 constituencies rather than 29 in 1918. The number of University seats was also reduced as Dublin no longer counted as a University town.
was already occurring, growth on the outskirts of London accelerated during the
1920s and 1930s. It happened in part as ribbon development along commuter
transport corridors, such as along main railway lines from Liverpool Street,
London Bridge and Waterloo stations, but spread more generally to form an outer
circle around the County of London. Much of the development was private, based
on the purchase of land by companies for the purposes of house building and sale
onwards. 91 However, the LCC itself played a part in some key areas such as
Becontree, St Helier, and Tottenham, and other local authorities built too. 92 Some
idea of the effects of development on the outskirts can be gained from looking at
the total sizes of electorates in some affected parliamentary constituencies. These
grew remarkably, and more detail follows in chapter two. Table 10 gives
population figures, which also demonstrate the growth well. The most important
single implication is the fact that the Greater London of 1931 was different to that
of 1918, the main areas of growth being on the outskirts rather than in the centre.
The future of political control lay in the suburbs, and chapter two develops this
theme.

91 See Young, Local Politics, 122-3, other works referred to by Young on these pages, and chapter
two.
92 Such developments as these had clear political implications, which will be examined at the
appropriate junctures. See also Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 44-45, and chapter two.
Chapter Two: A Decade of Change in London
What happened to London, 1918-1931?

A generation ago people who lived in the outer suburbs of London might, without undue fatigue, walk out into the country from their homes. But the rural landscape and ways of life that belong essentially to the country are receding further and further from these same places, beyond which an entirely new suburbia is springing up. ... Our grandchildren, living in what we should call a London suburb now, may perhaps have to travel many miles from home in order to spend a day in the country. The prospect is a sobering one. 93

Though the phenomenon of changes in and expansion of London was nothing new in the 1920s, it was especially significant then for several reasons. Following the end of the war, housing was once again a great political question. Previous changes in London and movements of its population were taken account of in a redistribution of parliamentary seats in 1918, which had direct consequences especially for the Conservative party in the metropolis. It was also the case that local and central government were getting involved in the expansion, and in the provision of housing, to an unprecedented degree. Particularly towards the end of the period, economic and other factors combined to support an expansion of the built-up area on a scale not seen before or since. This chapter examines how London's built-up area and housing changed during the 1918-1931 period, the nature and implications of those changes, and looks briefly at how the political parties were affected by this new environment.

Some of the trends of the 1920s were foreshadowed before 1914. The metropolis continued to sprawl over its surroundings to accommodate the influx of people and industry it received. Some areas recorded huge increases in population between 1901 and 1911: 94

93 The Times, 9 Oct 1928, 11.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>% increase in population 1901-1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isleworth</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ealing</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanwell</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southall</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallington</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carshalton</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expansion was taking place in all directions. In addition to areas like these to the south and the west, the north and the east also saw growth, especially along the railway lines into London, in areas such as Walthamstow and Edmonton, Tottenham and Enfield. The development meant that areas previously seen as settlements in their own right, or as suburbs, became subsumed by London.

By the end of the nineteenth century the great days of Camberwell as a suburb were almost over. There were already whole districts in the north of the parish for which the designation suburb was a piece of flattery, and many others which had not stood on the suburban frontier for nearly half a century.

Some of the consequences of the growth of London were already visible. Before 1914, more prosperous members of the middle classes could already be seen to have left central areas for suburbs, partly as a result of the fact that 'erosion of inner suburban business by the newly-arrived electric tramcar and motor omnibus drove the railway companies to develop longer distance residential railway services.' It was increasingly possible for them to live in more comfortable and cleaner localities, while continuing to travel to work with relative ease in the central areas.

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95 Johnson, 'Suburban Expansion', in Coppock and Prince, Greater London, 142-166, 142.
The way in which the growth of London, and the housing situation within it, could be affected by economic factors was also visible before 1914. As Ball and Sunderland explain,

The years prior to 1914 saw a coming together of a number of depressing influences on a scale not previously seen, leading to a severe crisis in the London housing market. Victorian Britain experienced an unprecedented property boom in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Vallis's land price series for England shows a sixfold real rise in auctioned land prices in the 1890s, only to be followed by an equally sharp fall. This boom, when it collapsed, left the London market flooded with unlet suburban homes. 98

Another trend of the 1920s and later, which can also be detected before the war, is local authority intervention in housing. The 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act, which enabled councils to compulsorily purchase land to provide housing, was taken up by about 20 London local authorities of varying political complexion. 408 dwellings had been provided under this Act in Battersea by 1907, 401 in West Ham and 308 in Hornsey. Councils on the fringe of London were as active as those in the centre, with Barking, Barnes, Brentford, Croydon, Ealing, Finchley, East Ham, Erith, Southgate, Heston-Isleworth, Camberwell, Woolwich, Richmond and Esher all making use of the Act. 99 The largest builder of homes under the Act was, not surprisingly, the LCC. According to its own records, it had provided nearly 10,000 dwellings at a cost of slightly over £3,000,000 by the outbreak of war in August 1914. 100 There had also been some provision by housing charities before 1914. In 1906 the Hampstead Garden Suburb was started, and this enterprise had accommodated approximately 5000 people in more than a thousand houses and flats by 1912. 101 The Peabody Trust, the Guinness Trust, the Sutton Dwellings Trust, and others, were also active. 102

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102 LCC, London Housing, 201-213.
As has been suggested, towards the end of the Great War, the extent to which London had expanded and the way in which population was now distributed was recognised in the redistribution of parliamentary seats, following the 1918 Representation of the People Act. The full implications of these changes, which had political benefits largely accruing to the Conservatives, will be dealt with later in this chapter, and in chapter three. At this stage it should be noted that London had obviously outgrown the last redistribution of seats in 1885, and had similarly outgrown the county council boundaries for London that were drawn up about the same time, in 1888. In 1918 there was no general alteration in the local authority arrangements for London to accompany the parliamentary redistribution.

The general election campaign of November-December 1918 saw the question of housing feature prominently. 'Homes fit for heroes' was the popular cry, one adapted from but not actually uttered by Lloyd George, as he emphasised the social reform aspect to the Coalition government's election manifesto. It stated that

one of the first tasks of the government will be to deal on broad and comprehensive lines with the housing of the people, which during the war has fallen so sadly into arrears, and upon which the well-being of the nation so largely depends.

Even the Daily Mail argued for 'ample provision' of new houses. The campaign later became dominated by the way in which a post-war government would treat the vanquished enemy, to the extent that a Conservative Coalition candidate, Leo Amery, could write of the way things changed in his Birmingham Sparkbrook constituency - it would have been similar in London:

I have gradually cut down my social reform programme to a few generalities, plus a little about dumping and British industries, and tell them [the electors] about the Peace

\[\text{Sources:} \]
\[103\] Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 119-123.
\[104\] Manifesto of Mr Lloyd George and Mr Bonar Law', in F W S Craig, British General Election Manfests 1900-1974, London (Macmillan), 1975, 29.
\[105\] J Lee Thompson, Politicians, the Press and Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe and the Great War 1914-1919, Kent, Ohio (Kent State University Press), 1999, 224.
conference and what it means to the country, and to go wholeheartedly for a strong policy including the Kaiser punishing as well …  

However, attempts were made by the Coalition to tackle the housing issue, at least in its early days, and Christopher Addison, Coalition Minister of Health from June 1919 to April 1921, spearheaded these. He oversaw the enactment of the 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act, which for the first time allowed central government subsidy for approved housing schemes. This encouraged a large expansion in the provision of council housing. 34,440 houses were built under its provisions in Greater London over the next few years, of which 27,441 were built by councils, 32% of them by the LCC. However, this was an 'open-ended arrangement soon to be regretted', and a cut-off date of 14 July 1921 was decided upon as part of all-round expenditure cuts, beyond which no new schemes would be approved. Swenarton explains the change of heart as follows:

Throughout 1919 and the first half of 1920 Treasury cavils [complaining about the cost] were rejected on the grounds that the government could not afford to break its pledges on housing. In the autumn of 1920, however, with the collapse of the post-war boom and with it the power of labour, the balance of political forces was transformed. Cabinet ministers who had opposed the Treasury view suddenly found themselves isolated and agreed the curtailment of the housing commitment as part of the general reduction of public expenditure. The 'insurance against revolution' was no longer needed.

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106 Quoted in Turner, British Politics, 328.
107 LCC, London Housing, 6.
108 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 58. Statistics comparing housing provision in the LCC area with Greater London but non-LCC areas (apart from Middlesex) are not readily available, but an idea of the level of housing growth can be gained from an examination of the table of relative population density showing the LCC area compared with Middlesex (15). Between 1921 and 1931, the population density of Middlesex expanded as more housing was provided there, and during the same period the population density of London actually fell as people moved out.
It was at about this time that John Burns, the now ageing radical politician and former MP for Battersea, described in his diary a visit to the relatively new LCC Old Oak Common housing estate in West London.

To Spring Gardens to meet Mr Riley LCC Architect [,] with him we journeyed by Tube (rather smelly this morning) to Shepherd's Bush. Thence walked to LCC Estate Old Oak Common and walked all round it [,] viewed roads and houses from different points of view and generally it deserved praise as to design, ... appearance and for cost as well. 111

Swenarton has demonstrated that, at the time of the 'homes fit for heroes' campaign and the 1919 legislation on housing, the quality of housing provided by the state was seen as just as important as quantity. This had been foreshadowed by the Tudor Walters report (produced during the war), upon which in part the 1919 Act had been based, and which advocated good quality housing. 112 High quality estates, such as that described by Burns, were what was needed, 'as the slogan "homes fit for heroes" itself suggested.' 113

By building the new houses to a standard previously reserved for the middle classes, the government would demonstrate to the people just how different their lives were going to be in the future. ... The housing programme would persuade the people that their aspirations would be met under the existing order, and thereby wean them from any ideas of revolution. 114

As suggested above, when the perceived threat of revolution receded, so did support for 'homes fit for heroes', assisted on its way by the all round anti-waste atmosphere of the early 1920s. 115 Nevertheless, remarkable achievements were left behind. As well as the numerous houses, there was the fact that, for the first time, the state had accepted some responsibility for centrally supported housing

111 John Burns' diary for 1919, British Library (BL) Add Mss 46341, entry for 10 March 1919.
112 Swenarton, Heroes, 188.
113 Swenarton, Heroes, 2.
114 Swenarton, Heroes, 86.
115 See chapters three and six.
provision. The LCC had, as a result of its works under the Act, developed a novel 'cost-plus-profit' basis for contracts with the builders of housing which was to long outlast the 1919 Act. There were also achievements in the related issue of slum clearance.

Post-Coalition government actions in the field of housing provision also affected London. Housing legislation in 1923 (under a Conservative government), 1924 (under Labour), 1925 (under the Conservatives, largely a consolidating Act), and 1930 (under Labour) all affected the way in which state or state-supported housing could be provided. There was also rent restriction legislation. A second phase of building by the LCC was initiated under the chair of the Housing Committee from 1922-1928, Sir Cecil Levita. As Yelling has argued, though he was initially sceptical as to how far the LCC should go in providing housing, Levita's embracing of the cottage estate as a way forward '... drew him close to the LCC officials who were responsible for the programme, and there is no doubt that he took pride in the outcome of their combined efforts.' Levita justified his record in housing in a campaign pamphlet which he wrote for the 1925 LCC election, entitled LCC Housing: A Record of Three Years Work 1922-5. By 1929, when the time came to write their next General Election manifesto, Labour advocated stronger action on housing, both slum clearance and new builds for rent, which it had promoted by its 1924 legislation:

The Labour Party is the party of the Workers' Home. In 1924, it revived the policy of building Houses to be let and not sold. It will return to that policy until there are enough Houses to let at Working-class Rents. It will deal drastically with the Slum

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117 See later in this chapter.
118 LCC, London Housing, 6.
119 See later in this chapter.
121 Guildhall Library Printed Books Section (GLPB), Records of the London Municipal Society (LMS), LMS 75, 'LCC Election 1925 Pamphlets'.

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disgrace and will provide the necessary money grants for both purposes. In the meantime it will protect tenants by continuing the Rent Restriction Acts. 122

The 1930 Housing Act was the outcome of this pledge, but its most substantial effects in terms of completed new homes came after 1931.

The 1918-1931 growth of London was, of course, not wholly on the back of provision by local authorities or housing charities. Indeed, only about a fifth of all the new housing built in Greater London between the wars was local authority sponsored - 'of the 771,759 flats and houses completed between 1919 and 1938, 76,877 were for the LCC and 76,311 for the other councils.' 123 Housing Acts not only allowed and supported public provision of dwellings, but also subsidised private provision. The 1923 Housing Act, for example, while resuming government subsidy for house building after the 1921 hiatus, gave preference to private builders, and local authorities were only allowed to spend money to fill gaps where private activity was low. Some of the private building firms did not grasp exactly how the subsidy arrangements worked:

It was said that Edward Wates, founder of the well known building firm, could not understand the regular subsidy cheques he received. He had done a good job, made a profit and got these cheques as well; it just didn't make much sense to him. 124

It was the 1930s that saw the largest expansion in private housing provision around London, but the factors that underpinned the 1930s boom were falling into place by the end of the 1920s. 125 Certainly the expansion of population in the outlying areas that had begun before 1914 resumed and accelerated during that decade, and some statistics to illustrate this are given in table 10. The population of Middlesex grew by 30% between 1921 and 1931, about five times the rate of

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122 'Labour's Appeal to the Nation' 1929, Craig, Manifestos, 83. Capitalisation is as in the original.
124 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 60.
increase across the UK as a whole. The part of Surrey in Greater London saw a population increase of 33% in this same period, with some areas seeing even more remarkable growth - Merton and Morden had a 135% increase in population from 1921 to 1931. Dagenham had a phenomenal 879% increase in population, thanks largely to the Becontree LCC estate. All this was set against a relative decline in the population within the LCC area. The table below gives some figures for house building in Greater London in the 1920s and 1930s. While there was certainly expansion in the 1920s, it was the 1930s, aided by a good supply of land at cheap prices, and cheap borrowing, that saw the largest growth within Greater London:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Public Sector homes built</th>
<th>Number of Private Sector homes built</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920-6 (7 years)</td>
<td>39624</td>
<td>75460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>15829</td>
<td>25305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>14730</td>
<td>26642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>8451</td>
<td>32983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>7531</td>
<td>42652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>10707</td>
<td>44805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>8328</td>
<td>36288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>6421</td>
<td>47988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>7856</td>
<td>72756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>7662</td>
<td>68014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>11134</td>
<td>67704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>11290</td>
<td>57805</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

127 Jackson, *Semi-Detached London*, 80. The growth in Merton and Morden was partly as a result of the LCC's large St Helier estate, which was begun in 1928.
128 See Table 10.
129 See table of population density on 35.
In 1934, almost as many homes were built by the private sector as they had managed in the seven years 1920-1926. Private building in the 1920s and 1930s occurred in a relatively random way, partly because local authorities were only just beginning to take on what would now be understood as a regulatory role. 131

Although as minister responsible for housing, Neville Chamberlain had established the Greater London Regional Planning Committee in 1927 - to look at the idea of Green Belt among other things - the modern-day planning of Abercrombie's County of London Plan (1943) and Greater London Plan (1944) was over a decade away. 132 Rather than planning, influential factors in London's expansion included where land was available and at what cost, where transport services to Central London were or were going to be, where factories or main

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131 See Horsey, 'Speculative Housebuilding', 150-151.

roads were, and sometimes fashions for particular areas. It was this largely private suburbia that George Orwell was to describe in his *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) as 'the huge peaceful wilderness of outer London ... sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England'. H V Morton, writing in 1927, described the new 'place where London ends', in a west London suburb:

In a field some way off the high road were scared-looking, pink and white villas, each one possessing a bald garden and a brand new galvanised dustbin at the back door. Wives, as new as the gardens and the houses, busied about their work and took frequent peeps through the front windows to make sure that the baby was still on the safe side of the garden fence. The most significant item on the landscape was an empty omnibus standing in a weary attitude opposite the public house. There were London names on the indicator board, but they seemed as unlikely as the Italian names on the French expresses at Calais. The history of London is the moving on of that red omnibus another mile along the road; more pink and white houses; more shops; more wives; more babies.

Additionally, looking back and presenting the contrast between past and present, John Betjeman wrote in his poem *Middlesex*:

Gaily into Ruislip Gardens
    Runs the red electric train,
With a thousand Ta's and Pardon's
    Daintily alights Elaine;
Hurries down the concrete station
    With a frown of concentration,
Out into the outskirt's edges
    Where a few surviving hedges

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133 Jackson, *Semi-Detached London*, 78.
Innovation was an important part of the expansion of housing provision in the 1920s. One major innovation was embarked upon not long after the end of the war, when in August 1919 a flat conversion programme was launched by central government - London was by far the most affected. The idea of the programme was that, under the supervision of the London Housing Board, houses suitable for conversion into flats would be purchased on the open market, then handed over to the Office of Works or local authorities for conversion and finally local authority administration. Though pioneering, this scheme was small and a relative failure, with only 157 houses being converted into 521 flats. The programme was supposed to take six months, but instead ran on into 1921. It also cost far more than originally envisaged, about £300 more per flat. Needless to say, it was not repeated.

A more successful innovation, and one that did have a crucial impact on the development of London in the 1920s, was the cottage estate. As mentioned before, the LCC got going with this type of development in the mid-1920s, though they were not the pioneers themselves, nor were post-war efforts their first in this respect. What was striking about the 1920s estates was the scale of them, particularly the out-county developments like Becontree, Watling, St Helier and Downham. At the time, Becontree was the largest municipal housing estate in the world, at an area of 2770 acres or more than four square miles. Construction was underway throughout the 1920s, with the completion of the main development in 1934. Over 25,000 homes were provided at Becontree, over 7,000 at Downham in Kent, over 9,000 at St Helier in Surrey, and over 4,000 at

138 Hinchcliffe, 'Conversion', 171.
Watling, at Burnt Oak in Middlesex. 141 Cottage estates had a major effect on the social as well as the physical landscape where they were built. 142 The new estates were far from welcomed by all those amongst whom they had arrived. Charles Masterman wrote in 1922 of the fictitious London middle class suburb of Richford, that

...[it] hates and despises the working classes as all Richfords hate and despise the working classes. Richford hates and despises them partly because it has contempt for them, and partly because it has fear of them. It has established its standards of civilisation, modest in demand, indeed, in face of life's possibilities, but very tenacious in its maintenance of its home and garden ... and agreeable manners and ways. Just on its borders, and always prepared seemingly to engulf it, are those great masses of humanity which accept none of its standards, and maintain life on a totally different plain. 143

This attitude was certainly shown towards some LCC estates. One historian has described the image of the LCC among those whom they placed their estates nearby as 'a wolf on the prowl.' 144 In 1926, a group of lower middle class residents in Bromley built a wall over two metres high, topped with broken glass, to keep out the inhabitants of the nearby Downham development - a precursor of the famous Cutteslowe Wall in Oxford just over a decade later. 145 Dislike of those who had moved out of less well off areas was not confined to council estates, and as late as the 1950s people in Woodford who had moved there to escape east London deprivation were afraid of saying where they had come from, as Willmott and Young discovered.

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141 LCC, London Housing, 258.
142 See chapter four for more on the political effects of this.
145 Jackson, Middle Classes, 35.
If social class has an edge in Woodford, it is partly because so many of its people come from the East End. 'We don't tell people we come from Bethnal Green' said one woman, 'you get the scum of the earth there.'

Those who moved out to the LCC estates did not feel themselves naturally part of a new community. While a tenants' association was formed at Becontree in 1924, an attempt to support it with a monthly magazine failed after only two years in 1929. Yelling has tried to explain the particular problems at Becontree by looking at its size:

Becontree is as large as a post-war New Town, and in that sense it lacks both the physical grouping around a centre and the rather wider social composition of these later creations.

The LCC had deliberately tried to avoid large developments of the same type of housing together, and special efforts were made at Roehampton, Becontree and Bellingham, but inevitably this did not always work out as planned. People went 'home' at regular intervals, returning to areas with which they felt more affinity. As a result of this, the District line railway service through Becontree on Sundays had to be improved to cope with demand. Public transport could be a problem for out-county estates, because while some were well connected with Central London, others were not. The LCC could do little about the situation in Outer London, beyond persuading others of the need for provision of services. In the end, it made a particular effort to market the out-county estates to encourage people to move there, and to overturn the developing image of soullessness that accompanied them. Downham was promoted by portraying a comfortable and well-connected modern environment.

149 Swenarton, *Heroes*, 164.
The estate is generously provided with open spaces, and as many as possible of the existing trees have been preserved and new ones planted. The estate is well served by trams, omnibuses and trains, and the tenants have ample means of transport to the central and southeastern districts of London. Eight elementary schools, a central school and an open-air school have been provided ... sites were provided for churches, shops, doctors' houses and a licensed refreshment house.  

To sell Becontree to potential tenants, rents were reduced.

In May, 1929, the Council [the LCC] reviewed the rents in operation at its cottage estates and came to the conclusion that on the merits of the case and on general and economic grounds, a reduction of rents was needed at Becontree. The main grounds for this decision were (i) the distance of Becontree from London and the consequent higher cost of travelling involved for tenants whose places of employment are in London; (ii) the large proportion of tenants at Becontree who have come from overcrowded conditions in London and have been required to take accommodation suitable to the needs of their families at rents which are necessarily higher than those they were previously paying; (iii) the generally lower rent levels in the surrounding neighbourhoods.  

Problems did also occur with the new private housing built around London, particularly with the quality of construction. In Ashford, Middlesex, what one historian has described as a 'notorious firm of builders' were powerless to prevent one unhappy purchaser of their handiwork naming his house 'Ivebeendun', and his neighbour 'Sohavei', in an attempt to warn other potential buyers of properties nearby of what they might be letting themselves in for.  

There was always the possibility that new development might overwhelm existing local services too. Jackson has described how, in '...Edgware the pressure on the 411 telephone lines at the manual exchange in 1927 was such that some local calls were taking twenty

152 LCC, London Housing, 147.  
153 LCC, London Housing, 221.  
154 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 128.
five minutes to connect...155 The difficulty with local authorities paying for new services in the newly-developed areas was also clear.

A lack of community services was apparent almost everywhere in the suburbs because local authorities struggling with large expenditures on such essentials as schools and drains were reluctant to raise rates to pay for anything more, well aware that their average ratepayer was mortgaged to the limit of his income. 156

A problem that new private and local authority developments on the perimeter of London shared was the need for transportation to the centre to enable the new residents to go to work. Many new areas of housing acted primarily as dormitories, and as well as for work, residents went to the centre for an evening's entertainment, although this was to a lesser degree. 157 Commuting was a significant part of daily life for London's workers, and the LCC noted that, in 1921, just under half of London's 2.17 million workers commuted to a place of employment outside their own metropolitan borough. As well as this, over 600,000 people came into the LCC area for work, including nearly 500,000 from the immediate out-county districts. 158 The City of London employed 430,000 people, and a further 500,000 were employed in the central METBs of Holborn, Westminster and Finsbury. 159 Alongside the distance of a commute, the cost was an important part of the lives of travelling workers, as the LCC had recognised when reducing the rents at Becontree. The table below gives an idea of the kinds of fares that could be paid for a commuter journey: 160

155 Jackson, Middle Classes, 102.
156 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 89. See also section later in this chapter, and section on London Municipal Society in chapter three, for more on political campaigning for low rates.
157 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 73.
158 LCC, London Housing, 243.
160 Figures taken from LCC, London Housing, 249, and are for the mid-1930s.
For comparison, here are some sample average annual earnings figures to show how much of an income might be spent on commuting. 161

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LCC Estate</th>
<th>Station travelling from, towards Central London</th>
<th>Workmen's return fare</th>
<th>Season ticket, 3 months 3rd class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becontree</td>
<td>Dagenham</td>
<td>10½d</td>
<td>£3/5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downham</td>
<td>Grove Park</td>
<td>8d or 9d</td>
<td>£3/10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norbury</td>
<td>Norbury</td>
<td>8d or 9d</td>
<td>£2/15/- to £3/3/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Oak</td>
<td>East Acton</td>
<td>5d to 7d</td>
<td>£2/8/- to £2/15/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Helier</td>
<td>St Helier</td>
<td>8d</td>
<td>£3/3/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watling</td>
<td>Burnt Oak</td>
<td>7d</td>
<td>£3/2/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Earner</th>
<th>1922-1924</th>
<th>1935-1936</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male - clerk</td>
<td>£182</td>
<td>£192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male - skilled manual</td>
<td>£180</td>
<td>£195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male - average</td>
<td>£180</td>
<td>£186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - average</td>
<td>£103</td>
<td>£104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall average income</td>
<td>£157</td>
<td>£162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, not everyone commuted. One resident of Lee, in south east London, recalled that

... the wider district of Lee was, and is still, to a large extent no more than a dormitory area to Central London ... Lee Green had every access by tram and bus to Lewisham and - a long journey - to London. But Lee station was an uphill, half-mile walk away and Lewisham station over one mile [from where we lived]. For this reason perhaps, and because many people were 'old' Lee residents, few of those we knew commuted to London to work but instead, like my father ... worked locally. 162

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161 Taken from Thorpe, 1914-45, 83.
Public transport and housing were, as has been implied, closely connected, if not officially then at least in terms of the consequences that the provision and location of one had for the other. The exact nature of the relationship between the two is difficult to define:

In various parts of London the building of new railways preceded the development of suburbs, the classic examples ... being provided by the extension of the tube lines. But it is also possible to find places where suburban building came earlier than the provision of effective links with the centre, as for example ... at Becontree. 163

It is certainly true that some railway extensions were constructed ahead of the new suburban developments, such as Hendon to Edgware and Arnos Grove to Cockfosters; others were built at the same time as new housing, such as the Morden to Sutton and Motspur Park to Tolworth railway lines; and sometimes the railway was only built after development had occurred, for example with the Golders Green to Hendon and Leytonstone to Newbury Park lines. 164 Almost 70 new stations were opened on existing rail lines, 1919-1939, to cope with new housing. 165 Many of these were subsidised by the developers close to whose land and housing they would be situated - for example Riddlesdown (opened 1927), and Petts Wood (opened 1928). 166 The issue was not just one of railways. The provision of bus links from the new private and local authority developments to the nearest stations was an important advance, and after 1933 this was better co-ordinated in many areas by the London Passenger Transport Board. 167

As London grew, there was some change in the location of places of employment, a trend described as the 'suburbanisation of industry'. 168

163 Johnson, 'Suburban Expansion', 150.
166 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 183.
167 Johnson, 'Suburban Expansion', 151.
London and its fattening satellite towns were home to the fastest growing industries of Britain, a growth at its most dramatic between 1925 and 1935: radios, batteries, vacuum cleaners, electric lamps, radiant fires, extractor fans, meters and photographic equipment, motor cars, buses and vehicle parts; ladies nylons, potato crisps, celluloid dopes, artificial limbs, pickles and eiderdowns - all made in London, now more than ever the capital of finished goods manufacture. Between 1920 and 1938, the number of factories using power in Greater London had risen from 25,177 to 32,779 (or by 23.3%). The beacon drew workers like gnats to a hurricane lamp ...

Weinbren has noted that, in south and west London, there was a 'rapid industrialisation' between the wars. He gives the examples of the Lines Brothers toy factory in Wimbledon, the Deans Rag Books premises nearby, the Mullard Radio Valve Company in Beddington, and Helm Royal Chocolates, close to it, all of which grew up in the 1920s.  

Jackson points out the clear link between the new suburban industry and transportation, including the growing road network. New growth, he says,

... appeared around the sites of the war factories in west and north west London; also along the Great Western Railway's Bristol and Birmingham main lines; at West Hendon and Wembley; along the Lea Valley; at Croydon; and at various points along the 210 miles of new arterial and bypass roads built in the London area in the twenties.

Major new or improved roads in London came as part of the Ministry of Transport London Area Programme, which was approved over the 1920-24 period, and included: Eastern Avenue (Wanstead - Romford - Ilford - Woodford); Sidcup - Wrotham (now the A20); the long Watford bypass (Hampstead to North Watford, now the A41); the Great Cambridge Road (Tottenham to Cheshunt, now the A10); the Barnet bypass (Hatfield to Mill Hill, part of the A1); the Great West Road (Gunnersbury - Hounslow - Hanworth); the Western Avenue (East Acton to

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170 Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 45.
171 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 73.
Greenford, now the A40); a 9½ mile stretch of the North Circular Road; and bypasses for Kingston, Sidcup and Eltham, Bexleyheath, Orpington, Sutton, Croydon, Farnborough, East Ham and Barking. 172 A building that came to symbolise the new location of industry along major roads, the Hoover Building in West London, on the Western Avenue, was completed in 1932 and extended in 1935. 173 There was also the Ilford films plant to the east, and many more. Not only were more roads built, they were more heavily used, especially by industrial traffic. For example, the development of the Lea Valley increased greatly the amount of traffic using the Great Cambridge Road - 2950 tons passed Edmonton using it in 1913, compared to 17,425 tons in 1928. 174 During the 1920s and the 1930s then, like the type and location of housing in London, the location of industry was also changing in the expanding metropolis.

It has already been noted that slum clearance formed an important part of the housing policies pursued at a local and, to an extent, at a national level. Slum clearance had begun in London before 1914 - indeed its origins lay in the enabling public health legislation of Victorian times. The LCC's first slum clearance scheme, Boundary Street in Shoreditch, was opened to great fanfare in 1900. 175 The reasons for wanting to pursue slum clearance were clear. Alfred Salter, local politician (he became MP for Bermondsey West in 1922) and doctor, described the problems of living in Bermondsey in graphic terms in 1920:

Bermondsey is not a nice place to live in. The air is thick and sooty. The smells are - well, they are. The streets are dingy and grey. The houses are small, poky and inconvenient. There are no noble buildings and no fine monuments. The people are herded together and huddled together - overcrowded per room, overcrowded per house, overcrowded per acre. They have no space to move, no room to store their clothes or their food and there is little chance of privacy or quiet. 176

172 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 74-75.
175 Ball and Sunderland, London 1800-1914, 386.
176 Quoted in Goss, Local Labour, 11.

54
Overcrowding was a major factor in the slum problem. Clement Attlee's maiden speech in the House of Commons, in November 1922, dealt with the issue in his own constituency of Limehouse, drawing the link with conditions encouraging immoral behaviour:

[We know] ... the intimate way in which housing is bound up with morality. We know it very well down our way. We know, too, the results of the [1921] census, which showed that in our area alone there are 100,000 persons who are living in one-room tenements. You are not going to get a moral nation under those conditions. 177

The LCC's own statistics show how bad overcrowding was in its own area: 178

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Overcrowding</th>
<th>No. of people in London, 1921</th>
<th>No. of people in London, 1931</th>
<th>Increase or Decrease, 1921-1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 2 people per room</td>
<td>683,498</td>
<td>541,352</td>
<td>- 142,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 people per room</td>
<td>147,591</td>
<td>150,130</td>
<td>+ 2539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4 people per room</td>
<td>30,904</td>
<td>47,305</td>
<td>+ 16,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 people per room</td>
<td>6711</td>
<td>16,251</td>
<td>+ 9540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 people per room</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>6423</td>
<td>+ 4455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 7 people per room</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>2343</td>
<td>+ 1575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 8 people per room</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>+ 288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 9 people per room</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>- 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 people per room</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>- 149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 11 people per room</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>- 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 12 people per room</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>- 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These statistics also demonstrate the potential political importance of overcrowding. While the total number of people suffering from overcrowding - as

defined as more than two people per room in any household - fell from 1921 to 1931, the numbers suffering from some of the more noticeable forms of overcrowding - such as four or more people per room - rose during that same period. Although the number of people affected by the increase was smaller than the total decrease in overcrowding, there was still a problem in need of a solution. As the remedy for this sort of worsening situation, slum clearance was important. The overcrowding problem was more noticeable in some areas of London than others, as is shown by this table of population density and the associated chart derived from this data: \(^{179}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Greater London</th>
<th>Population density per acre, 1921</th>
<th>Population density per acre, 1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner East</td>
<td>116.0</td>
<td>107.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner West</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London aggregate</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{179}\) Taken from Yelling, 'Metropolitan Slum', 193.
In some of the worst affected areas there were 40 to 80 houses per acre, which compared badly with the standard in new developments of 12 houses per acre.  

It was not just overcrowding that meant slums had to be dealt with, for another major concern was the prevalence of insanitary conditions. The New Survey of London noted in the early 1930s that 'bugs' were a substantial problem in Somers Town, and an article in the Architects' Journal as late as 1933 noted that 'rats were frequent in older houses in Stepney, and [that] thousands of people are in the habit in the summer time of pulling their beds into the street in order to escape from the bugs.'

Slums were not only present in the obvious areas, those with high population densities or traditionally bad housing conditions. One example of particularly poor housing outside the East End was in Paddington, in the area near the Grand Junction Canal and the Harrow Road, and this was duly recorded by the New Survey as an area 'where poverty and overcrowding are accompanied by crime

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180 Yelling, 'Metropolitan Slum', 198.
181 Article by Massey, quoted in Yelling, 'Metropolitan Slum', 204.
and degradation.\footnote{Yelling, 'Metropolitan Slum', 209.} Slums could, however, be the centre of a strong community, despite all the problems their inhabitants shared. Goss has noted how

The damp, smoke, overcrowding and squalor of the local area, the closeness of work and home, and the large concentrations of workers in huge factories bound the local community together, more obviously so in Bermondsey and Southwark than in the newer communities of Peckham and Camberwell. Neighbours were also comrades at work, shared the same landlords, met at the union meeting, queued at the same cinema, gossiped on the tenement stairs.\footnote{Goss, Local Labour, 13.}

This sense of community was replicated elsewhere. It sometimes meant that it was politically tricky to instigate slum clearance schemes where a substantial body of the residents affected were opposed to the plans. For example, in Stepney METB, which was controlled by the Municipal Reformers from 1922, a slum clearance scheme for the Limehouse fields area was put forward by the council not long before it was up for re-election in November 1925. Labour fiercely opposed the scheme, and proved to be more in tune with local feeling - it regained control of the METB council at the elections.\footnote{Yelling, Slums, 84.} Politically, slum clearance also faced challenge from the general climate of retrenchment in local and national government spending in many areas for much of the 1920s. As Yelling has argued, 'without lowered rents and property values and reduced compensation [for property owners], slum clearance and redevelopment would not have been politically feasible in the 1920s.'\footnote{Yelling, Slums, 78.} Another problem for slum clearance was that, often, fewer people were re-housed than were displaced as the result of a scheme. The 1900 Stepney scheme mentioned above housed 5,500 but displaced 5,700, not all of whom could wait to move into the replacement accommodation, or even afford it.\footnote{Ball and Sunderland, London 1800-1914, 386.} It was certainly true that larger or better-off families from slum areas were more likely to be re-housed in the replacement developments.\footnote{Yelling, 'Metropolitan Slum', 212-213.} Despite the
problems faced, ambitious schemes were proposed during the 1918-1931 period. Salter's plans for Bermondsey were pioneering, as Fenner Brockway described:

The Salter plan for Bermondsey was breathtaking. It was nothing less than to demolish two-thirds of the borough, and rebuild it as a garden city ... The only healthy and civilised policy in his view was to take half the people to the outskirts, linking them with their places of work by speedy and cheap transport, and to reconstruct for those who remained on the basis of cottages and gardens. 188

It was not just Labour politicians who were thinking about slum clearance. Municipal Reform-controlled Marylebone put forward a particularly extensive scheme for a large part of Lisson Grove. Conservative anti-slum sentiments were reflected in John Galsworthy's fictitious Tory MP Michael Mount, who in 1924 went to visit a slum in Sapper's Row, Camden Town, and whose 1924 election address included a pledge to further 'the abatement of slums and smoke'. 189 Despite becoming the MP for 'mid-Buckinghamshire', Mount was portrayed as (amongst other things) a crusader against slums. Yelling has argued that, 'with the exception of Bermondsey, all the most notable projects in the 1920s were by Municipal Reform councils ... London Labour Party policies required control of the LCC.' 190 The Ossulston Street project, in St Pancras, is an example of an ambitious plan which, at least in part, came off. The central block of this development was named Chamberlain House, after the then Minister of Health, and the southern block was named after Levita of the LCC. Electricity was provided for lighting, heating and cooking, which was an innovation at the time. In the end the scheme provided 514 dwellings. 191 Ossulston Street was 'one of the most distinguished products of the London County Council's Architect's Department', under the guidance of its eminent Superintending Architect, George

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188 Quoted in Yelling, Slums, 33. The proposals were promoted from 1919.
189 John Galsworthy, 'The Silver Spoon', in The Forsyte Saga and A Modern Comedy (one volume), London (Heinemann/Octopus), 1976, 717 and 751. The Silver Spoon was first published in 1926.
190 Yelling, Slums, 41.
191 LCC, London Housing, 80.
Topham Forrest. However, Topham Forrest had to rein back his original proposals for what would have been one of the earliest examples of using municipal high-rise housing to solve the problem of overcrowding. Some, at least, were genuinely trying to come to grips with slum clearance in the twenties. The scale of the problem, and of the combined efforts at improving the housing situation, had a noticeable impact on the size and arrangement of London in the period. Such changes as those described here, and previously in this chapter, could not be without political effect.

**London's Political Parties and the New Greater London**

One of the most significant implications of the changes in London's size and shape that took place in the 1918-1931 period was the way in which, as a consequence, people moved between electoral districts. It was the number and type of voters involved in that movement that mattered. As has been suggested already, the redistribution of parliamentary seats that accompanied the 1918 Representation of the People Act took account of the growth in London up to that point. It was of great advantage to the Conservatives, as it allowed extra MPs to be returned from localities where they were either sure of winning, or were able to win with reasonable frequency. Cook has calculated that, if the December 1910 General Election had been fought on the 1918 constituency boundaries, the Conservatives would have gained 25-30 seats. With the result being so close in 1910, it could have made all the difference. London was particularly significant in the redistribution, and Ramsden has shown how the increase in seats in Conservative strongholds in and around London - such as the increase from one to five in the number of seats in Wandsworth - aided them in 1918 and the following years.

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193 See earlier in this chapter.


195 Ramsden, *Balfour and Baldwin*, 123.
As a result of the movement of people and the expansion of London, the numbers in the new electoral areas went on changing as a consequence, so that by 1939 a redistribution that had reflected reality in 1918 no longer did so. In just twenty years the number of voters in some seats had fallen, and in others it had gone up remarkably. The table below gives some examples of the latter. 196

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliamentary Constituency (1918)</th>
<th>Electorate, 1918 *</th>
<th>Electorate, 1935 *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epsom</td>
<td>32,590</td>
<td>105,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendon</td>
<td>33,117</td>
<td>164,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornsey †</td>
<td>45,510</td>
<td>72,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitcham ‡</td>
<td>28,952</td>
<td>91,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romford</td>
<td>37,055</td>
<td>167,939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - NB the widening of the franchise in 1928 to allow women to have a vote on the same basis as men, and to allow 21-29 year old women to vote, also affected the changes in these totals. 1935 was the last General Election before the Second World War. Figures given are for the parliamentary electorate. Population figures for selected areas can be found in table 10.

† - the two figures given for Hornsey are for 1921 and 1941 respectively.

‡ - the electorate in Mitcham, even allowing for the effect of the 1928 widening of the franchise, grew astonishingly between 1924 (34,435) and 1929 (60,311).

This chart based on the above data shows the trends clearly:

196 Taken from Craig, *Results*, 148, 355, 426, 475, 478.
David Butler has noted that Hendon and Romford were the constituencies most affected by the rapid growth. But he also points out that 'there were half a dozen constituencies in the East End which had barely a third of the quota' of electors in them that they should have had, as so many had moved on.\textsuperscript{197} Such population changes were taken into account in the 1920s by local authorities. In 1928, Croydon CB council created a new ward for the growing district of Addington, distinct from the ward within which the area had previously fallen.\textsuperscript{198} In Hendon, in 1930-31, both Burnt Oak and Edgware became council wards in their own right, also reflecting local suburban growth, not least from the LCC's estate.\textsuperscript{199} There might have been more changes in ward boundaries were it not for the fact that such changes were then at the discretion of local councils, which may not have seen sufficient political advantage in making them.\textsuperscript{200} Table 1B shows how

\textsuperscript{198} Croydon Local Studies and Archives (CDN), \textit{Croydon Borough Council 1889-1951 Aldermen and Councillors Election Results}, (Croydon County Borough Council), 1951.
\textsuperscript{199} Barnet Archives and Local Studies Centre (BNT), records of Hendon Constituency Labour Party, file 1, typescript 'Notes on the Labour Party in Hendon: Part 1: 1918-1945', 3.
some lower tier local authorities, such as Acton, Barking and Ilford, changed during the 1920s in designation (from an Urban District to a Municipal Borough), changes that were a direct or indirect consequence of population change. It was, however, not just the changes in location or size of the populations that had political consequences, but also the type of people who were involved in these population movements.

Johnson has written about people moving into the inner London area, that 'families moving into London [from outside] often took temporary accommodation in the inner residential areas before buying new homes', usually further out. He has also suggested that 'immigrants into inner London were more often than not young unmarried adults'.\(^{201}\) It is reasonable to argue that both these types of people were less likely to settle in one home for a prolonged period, and thus less likely to become established and politically active in their chosen location. Both groups were among those who took the housing in inner areas and former suburbs of the Victorian and Edwardian period, which had now been vacated by those moving further out to the new suburbs.\(^{202}\) The majority of those moving right out were the better off, middle class inhabitants who wanted to take advantage of the improvements in lifestyle that the marketing men of the new suburbs promised, in many advertisements placed in the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*. Yelling has pointed out that 'the middle classes were not only moving outwards, but consolidating their territory around the West End' - distinct middle class areas were becoming more common, and mixed areas less so in the centre of the metropolis at least.\(^{203}\) Tanner has argued that the decline of mixed areas, and the removal of 'rural or middle class elements from ... largely working-class [parliamentary] seats' in areas like London made such seats more winnable for Labour.\(^{204}\) It was true that migration to the suburbs was not entirely a middle class phenomenon, either before 1914 or afterwards.\(^{205}\) But the exodus of the

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\(^{201}\) Johnson, 'Suburban Expansion', 154.
\(^{203}\) Yelling, 'Metropolitan Slum', 192.
\(^{204}\) Tanner, 'Class Voting', 115.
\(^{205}\) Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, 29.
middle classes had the greatest, and longest-lasting, political consequences. As Young has put it, 'those who remained were to form an eventual political majority in the LCC area for the Labour party in both municipal and parliamentary elections'. Once they had won control of the LCC in 1934, Labour was not to lose it again for as long as the authority existed. 206 As the movement of the middle classes outwards strengthened the Conservative hold on parliamentary and local political representation in the areas to which they went, so it also loosened their control of representation in the areas they left, including the county of London as a whole.

The growth of the suburbs meant that parties had to form new political institutions at a local level, to galvanise the new residents into action. Examples can be found throughout the period of local ward, borough or constituency parties forming or meeting for the first time on a regular basis because the population in their catchment areas had shot up. Greenford Labour Party formed in 1927, Merton and Morden Labour Party in 1926, and in Harrow both the women's section and a local ILP started in 1923. 207 There were also particular political impacts caused by LCC out-county estates, which hit the areas in which the estates had been constructed. All types of people lived in the estates, but the vast majority of tenants were skilled working class families. In Becontree, 81% of earners at this time were skilled working class, only 9% middle class, 9% unskilled working class and 1% poor. 208 The result of this was a boost for the natural Labour strength in the locality. During the 1928 Ilford by-election campaign, the Daily Herald wrote of how the Becontree development had recently added 5,000 'Labour' voters to the area of the Ilford parliamentary constituency. 209 The St Helier LCC development fell into the areas of Carshalton UD, Sutton and Cheam

206 Young, Local Politics, 123.
207 LMA, records of the Greenford Labour Party, ACC/1972/9, minutes 1927-1930; British Library of Political and Economic Science [LSE], records of the Merton and Morden Labour Party, Merton and Morden 3/1, minutes 1926-1930; Harrow Reference Library [HRW], Harrow and Wealdstone and Harrow Weald Labour Party Women's Section minutes 1923-1927, and Harrow and Wealdstone ILP minutes 1923-1926.
UD, and for the most part in Merton and Morden UD, which helps to explain why
the local Labour party formed in 1926. All three councils were affected to
some extent. There were specific fears about the impact of the Watling estate,
built in the Hendon constituency.

Surrounded by middle class suburbia, the estate, known to some as 'Little Moscow',
generated not a little antagonism in the early years. A major concern of the local press
in the twenties was the effect of the influx on the majority of Hendon's Tory MP. They
were soon reassured ... [although] at the local level, Watling returned Labour
councillors.

This included the newly created wards, mentioned above. The local Tory MP was
Sir Philip Lloyd-Greame (known as Cunliffe-Lister from 1924), a Yorkshire
squire not known by his colleagues as one who liked his constituency - Neville
Chamberlain noted his 'distaste' for it in 1929. But Hendon looked after him,
and the lowest majority he had in the inter-war period was just under 6,000 in
December 1923. There were also specific fears about the impact of the
Downham estate. As early as the mid 1920s, Labour activists could see the threat
that Downham could pose to local Conservative representation. 'Downham is
going to down 'em' was their hope.

A subtler characteristic of London's was the 'ideal home' factor, so called after the
exhibition of that name established by the Daily Mail in 1908. What this meant
was that, particularly for the middle classes in the new suburbia, the values

209 Daily Herald, 15 Feb 1928, cutting taken from Redbridge Local Studies and Archives
(RBDGE), records of the Ilford Conservative Association, cuttings book on 1928 Ilford by-
election.
210 LCC, London Housing, 166.
211 Jackson, Semi-Detached London, 246.
213 Craig, Results, 426.
214 Quoted by Jeffery, 'Suburban Nation', in Feldman and Stedman Jones, Metropolis London, 189-
218, 195. The Downham estate fell partly into the Lewisham East parliamentary constituency.
215 Kevin Morgan, 'The Conservative Party and Mass Housing, 1918-1939', in Stuart Ball and Ian
Holliday (eds), Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public Since the 1880s, London
associated with their homes were important. They should have their own, and in increasing numbers should own it in one way or another. They should take pride in it, and its contents should reflect the fact that they were up to date, clean and respectable. They should have such labour-saving gadgets as were available, and maintain their property in good condition. As the numbers in new suburban homes increased and their distribution became more widespread, so the values of the 'ideal home' spread too. As Morgan has said, the 'ideal home' factor was particularly important because

...it represented the housing and related industries in all their ingenuity, subliminally attesting the Conservative values of private provision, and holding out a vision of the affluent society of the future. 'Yours!', the [Ideal Home] exhibition promised, and the politician had only to add: 'But not under Socialism!' 216

The residents of new suburban areas demanded not only the best in their homes but also in their streets.

There was a demand in the newly-built street for trees which would give a country air to the place while preserving the tidy appearance proper to a respectable suburb. The Borough Engineer [for Woodford] sought to avoid root trouble under pavements and foundations and obstruction to light or traffic from overhead branches; at the same time to achieve quick growth, hardiness, ease of maintenance. And he chose the flowering cherries (pink rather than white), the crab apples, the almonds, the mountain ashes, purple plums and laburnums which now line hundreds of local streets. 217

While historians tend to associate the 'ideal home' factor with the Conservative party's position in the inter-war period, it can also be detected, to some extent, in the municipal housing of the LCC. Some estates were given interesting names, aimed to engender civic pride among the inhabitants. Among them was the Comber estate in Camberwell, so called after Thomas Comber,

217 Willmott and Young, London Suburb, 12.
one of the pioneers of the Congo, who was frequently interviewed by Stanley, [and who] was born in Clarendon Street, now Councillor Street, Camberwell, which is within a stone's throw of Comber Grove on the estate. The buildings on the estate have been named after famous African travellers. 218

The LCC also made much of preserving original local features in areas it developed, particularly the beauty of open spaces. This was both for health reasons, and to sell the developments as being good ones, encouraging pride of occupancy in their tenants. At Roehampton the LCC tried hard to preserve the 'natural beauty of the land'.

...special regard was paid to the retention of trees and the effect of this is seen in the preservation of the wooded character of Putney Park Lane and in a group of tall elms at the side of Dover House Road. 219

As a landlord, the LCC encouraged tenants to cultivate their gardens, and wrote this as an obligation into tenancy agreements. The council provided prizes for best-kept front gardens in cottage estates and best-kept window boxes in blocks of flats, and the costs of judging the competitions were subsidised. 220 Doubtless not all of the tenants took their obligations as seriously as to enter a competition, but there were people even on LCC estates who were encouraged to take pride in their environment and did so - and they were not far off feeling and acting as those middle class people in the new suburbia, driven by the 'ideal home' factor, did in this respect. Those concerned with the 'ideal home', a group created and strengthened by the growth of the metropolis, wherever in the new Greater London they were located, were ripe for capture by the politicians, and particularly suitable for Conservative cultivation. How those politicians went about the cultivation of these and their other voters in the new Greater London will now be examined.

218 LCC, London Housing, 61.
219 LCC, London Housing, 139.
Much evidence can be found to show that London's political parties knew that the electoral climate in the metropolis was changing after 1918. The parties knew that there was a new type, or types, of voter to be captured, and they adapted their campaigning accordingly. Goss has described how vital it was for politicians to adapt to the changing life experiences of their constituencies of voters, to ensure that they themselves prospered. 221 Sidney Webb, writing in 1922, recognised that Labour had to capture the new middle classes to aid it on its way to power.

Unless London Labour can solve the problem of securing the political attachment of the social strata known as the Middle Classes severe limitation will be set upon the progress of the movement in London. In view of the character of our population it is a matter of vital importance that the problem should be faced boldly. 222

Labour did not really succeed in this aim until 1945, when its victory was symbolised by Herbert Morrison's capture of the previously impenetrable middle class Conservative stronghold of Lewisham East. 223 But it did try hard in the inter-war period, with limited results in 1929. 224 Three areas stand out when looking at the way London's political parties responded to the situation brought about by the changes in London: the enlarged and altered middle class, increasingly the territory where elections would be won and lost; the needs of the working classes; and other implications, such as changes in work and transport.

As shown, though itself of working class origins, even Labour realised the value of gaining the votes of the middle classes. In some respects, the voters it was after were a curious kind, as is illustrated in this story about a daily commuter train from Brighton to London Bridge.

220 LCC, London Housing, 228. Although this evidence is from the 1930s, similar trends were at work in the 1920s.
221 Goss, Local Labour, 188.
224 See chapter four.
Eight daily users sitting in the same compartment each day, followed an accepted procedure: after an initial 'Good Morning' no conversation was allowed for the first part of the journey so that newspapers and stock market reports could be adequately absorbed. At Earlswood, approximately half way, where the windows of the compartment could be opened if the weather permitted, social contact was re-established. 225

The 1920s middle class was also a social group with grievances. Jackson has demonstrated how the upper and middle sections of the middle classes were suffering in the 1919-1932 period in general, especially in comparison with those below them on the social scale, in terms of how well off they were, and felt they were. 226 This was due to a combination of factors, including improvements in conditions for those below them, and was exaggerated by their harking back to a low-taxation belle époque within living memory, the pre-1914 zenith of their position. Middle class salaries were, in relative terms, rising more slowly than those of their working class contemporaries. 227 There was consequent problems with housing, especially for those who had suffered immediate loss during the war and no longer had a breadwinner, or so many breadwinners, to support their existing housing situation. Those from the middle and the upper classes who were landlords, either on a small or large scale, often transferred their hardships to their tenants, who could be middle as well as working class, forcing them to move on or buy their home outright, which they could not always afford. James Rowlands, MP for Dartford, brought this particular problem to the attention of the House of Commons in February 1919, and in a constituency such as his with a growing middle class it must have been particularly acute. 228 In the same parliamentary debate, John Newman, then MP for Finchley, complained about the shortage of housing for the middle classes. A wartime innovation, the Rent Restriction Acts, were retained in order to stop the effects of post-war inflation putting rents beyond the means of tenants in small to medium size homes. However, many of the middle classes occupied housing just outside the scope of the Acts, and had to pay

225 Jackson, Middle Classes, 241.
226 Jackson, Middle Classes, 27.
227 Hinchcliffe, 'Conversion', 168.
increased rents. 229 If these same people had a little money invested in, say, a working class home where they were not allowed to extract increased rents, they were squeezed from both sides. Still bearing high wartime taxation, the middle classes were, as Ewen Green has argued, far more likely to join up with parties of protest like the Anti-Waste League (AWL) and the Middle Classes Union (MCU), as a result of their predicament and consequent hostility to the Coalition government they saw as being responsible. 230

At the start of the 1920s, then, this was the body of voters, detached from a political party, that had to be captured, and this group was particularly prevalent in the London area. David Jarvis has pointed out how Conservatives feared groups such as the AWL and MCU although they should perhaps have been seen as natural supporters. They threatened the party's subscription income, and contradicted their implicit claims to be the electoral voice of the middle class. 231 The result was that, in London, Conservatives went on the attack to secure the support of this section of the electorate. They used methods of fundraising and social occasions that appealed to up and coming homemakers to generate electoral support. In Greenwich, for example, they left a legacy that continued into the 1950s of

... diluting politics with pleasures. Balls, dinners, whist drives, garden parties, outings... characteristic occasions, where the chief motive is not direct political indoctrination but goodwill and funds. 232

228 See Hincliffe, 'Conversion', 169.
229 The Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest Act was originally passed in 1915, and its temporary provisions extended by the Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest (Restrictions) Act (better known as the Rent Restrictions Act) 1919. In 1919, the rateable value of controlled properties was increased, but increases in rent limited to 10% and in mortgage interest payments to 0.5% with an overall cap of 5%. See Thorpe, 1914-45, 59.
231 David Jarvis, 'The Shaping of Conservative Electoral Hegemony 1918-1939', in Lawrence and Taylor (eds), Party, State and Society, 131-152, 145.
Chapter three gives more examples of fundraising and other methods that were used to garner middle class votes in Greater London - methods also adopted by Labour in some areas, as chapter four indicates, all part of its wooing of the middle classes. Conservatives also attempted to address the direct concern of their target group of middle class voters - the pressure that was being put on their finances. Through their London Municipal Society and Municipal Reform party, they strove to secure electoral support for the reduction of local authority rates, something in which they were successful in the Greater London area, also dealt with more deeply in chapter three. Their efforts can, however, be summed up in a 1929 leaflet produced by the LMS, 'Capitalism and the Common Good', which contains much of what Conservatives used to appeal to voters in the 1920s.

The aim of capitalism as a whole is to make every man his own capitalist; so that each may live in his own house, may cultivate his own garden, and by steady work and careful saving may gain a position in the country, and may lay by for his children's future. 233

This was a dig at the socialism that might threaten the ideal expressed, but more than that it was an appeal to the 'ideal home' factor, mentioned earlier in this chapter as being so important in and around London. It even sought the votes of those who may have been foremost among the keen gardeners encouraged by the LCC on their estates. Noel Coward, the playwright born in Teddington who grew up in south London suburbia, wrote in his play This Happy Breed (written in 1939, published in 1942) of a character named Frank who, in the Clapham of the mid-1920s, used gardening as a clear political analogy connected to conservatism.

ETHEL [Frank's wife]: It is wrong, isn't it? All that Bolshie business?
FRANK [head of the household]: Oh, there's something to be said for it, there's always something to be said for everything. Where they go wrong is trying to get things done too quickly. We don't like doing things quickly in this country. It's like gardening, someone once said we was a nation of gardeners, and they weren't far out. We're used

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233 H J Marshall and Agnes Giberne, Capitalism and the Common Good, 5. The pamphlet is in GLPB, LMS 130, 'LMS Leaflets and Pamphlets 1929'.
to planting things and watching them grow and looking out for changes in the weather...

ETHEL: You and your gardening.

FRANK: Well, it's true - think what a mess there'd be if all the flowers and vegetables and crops came popping up all in a minute - that's what all these social reformers are trying to do, trying to alter the ways of things all at once. We've got our own ways of settling things, it may be slow and it may be a bit dull, but it suits us all right and it always will. 234

From attitudes such as this the Conservatives benefited. One historian has described the defining characteristics of the middle classes in the 1920s and 1930s as follows:

... a rigid adherence to the concept of 'respectability' and a lifelong quest for stability and security. With these went a very real sense of belonging and contributing to what was perceived as the steady progress and beneficial development of society and the nation. Allied to all this and underlying it, was a strong belief in the importance of family and home as the only true source of personal contentment and fulfilment as well as a necessary element for the success and stability of society as a whole. 235

Paul Scott, writer, grew up in Palmers Green in North London, and his biographer has written of his childhood home:

The inhabitants of Fox Lane and the suburban streets round about were a rootless people whose insecurity made them hostile to anyone but their own kind. None of them had been there for long. The whole area had been farmland until the first decade of the century. For the raw new society that replaced the old framework the most urgent need was cohesion, and the prime virtue conformity. 236

Scott himself wrote in later life:


235 Jackson, Middle Classes, 315.
Here come the clerks, the respectable middle class and the respectable artisans of England ... encouraged to come here by the building of railways and houses by speculators. ... Outer London, north and south, is a vast complex of action and reaction, cause and effect. 237

The values identified above were exactly those with which the Conservatives, especially in London, associated themselves, both in local and national political contests. They were rewarded by an influx of middle class members during the 1920s. 238 Jarvis has pointed out how political parties in general, and especially the Conservatives in this context, 'play[ed] an active role in the creation of political identity' rather than simply reflected a situation that already existed. 239 As he, and others, have shown, they did this on a wider stage than Greater London, and their achieving it did not come about without incident. For example, in the typical middle class seat of Mitcham, they lost the by-election designed to return Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen to parliament in 1923. 240 Griffith-Boscawen had to fight the contest to retain his seat in cabinet, having lost his Taunton constituency at the 1922 General Election. 241 While it is not clear how the incumbent MP in Mitcham, Thomas Worsfold, was prevailed upon to resign to allow the contest to take place, he went on to receive a Baronetcy in 1924. 242 The issue of rent decontrol and the continuance and extension of the Rent Restriction Acts, explained above, were key in the campaign. Griffith-Boscawen, without consulting the cabinet, and under pressure from Austen Chamberlain and the press, committed the government not to decontrol in 1924. 243 However, hindered by his record as a government minister during and after the Coalition (and as a former chair of the LCC housing committee), and facing Independent Conservative opposition backed by Lord Beaverbrook, Griffith-Boscawen lost the election anyway. Labour won the seat by over 800 votes, the Independent

237 Spurling, Scott, 23.
238 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 250.
239 Jarvis, 'British Conservatism', 69.
240 Craig, Results, 478, and see also Chris Cook, 'By-elections of the first Labour Government', in Cook and Ramsden (eds), By-elections, 37-58, 38.
241 Craig, Results, 456.
Conservative, who won nearly 3,000 votes, proving fatal to Griffith-Boscawen's chances. He was forced to resign from the government, his appointment as Minister of Agriculture notwithstanding. The Labour candidate in Mitcham, James Chuter Ede, had been active for the Liberals in Surrey before 1914, and though he lost Mitcham at the 1923 general election, he was Labour MP for South Shields from 1929-31 and from 1935 until his death in 1965, serving as Home Secretary in the Attlee governments. 244 His fortuitous win in Mitcham undoubtedly helped him advance his career in national politics.

Sometimes the Conservatives did fear that they were not solidly linked to the middle classes in suburbia, and felt them somewhat 'unreliable'. 245 They were grateful that they had the support of the business vote as well as the middle classes in some areas. 246 However, overall, the Conservatives were certainly successful at connecting with and directing the destiny of middle class political support in Greater London in the 1920s and into the 1930s.

When it came to the working classes, the Conservatives felt that, even if they were not in tune with the working classes themselves, they were aligned with the views that other classes had about them. McKibbin has gone as far as to argue that

What united the merchant banker, the Treasury official, the manufacturer, and suburban Toryism was a belief that the working classes behaved in certain ways which, on the whole, the middle classes did not: class wisdom became conventional wisdom and common sense was validated by class pride. 247

245 Jarvis, 'Conservative Electoral Hegemony', 147.
246 Butler, Electoral System, 147. Butler notes that the City of London had a high percentage of business voters (70-80%), and also that the Holborn constituency had a substantial number of such electors.
247 McKibbin, Ideologies, 275.
As Jarvis has shown above, McKibbin is not the only historian to establish the fact that Conservatives shaped attitudes as well as benefited from them. However, coupled with the harnessing of the middle class view of the working class, was an abandonment of Conservative hopes of winning some working class seats. The East End, like mining areas in the north of England and South Wales, was abandoned as a barren area first by Davidson and then Chamberlain when Conservative Party Chairmen, culminating in the way constituencies were grouped together to minimise expenditure on local organisations where this would do no good. Such areas were simply abandoned to the Labour party, and to whoever else might want to take it on, in complete contrast to the position in the run up to the 1929 General Election when large subsidies were poured into such areas by the Conservatives in an attempt to win them. If they had understood exactly how the poorest classes in one Islington street thought politically, the Conservatives would probably have had their views reinforced.

The four pillars [of political outlook] ... were egalitarianism, or a feeling of equality with others and the rejection of the value attached to a 'higher' status or class; individualism, or a belief that the needs or ambitions of the individual should take priority over those of others; libertarianism, or toleration of behaviour and attitudes which were outside society's normally approved moral codes; and chauvinism, or an aggressive dislike of people (and things) who were not English.

One resident of this street was asked about his father's attitude to politics between the wars.

Q: Did your father ever talk politics?
A: Only to the extent of saying to me he didn't agree [with] ... he was jealous, probably, jealous of the fact that the Royal Family was up there ... He was manifestly against the toffs, that was one of his favourite expressions of them, the 'toffs', was

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248 Jarvis, 'Conservative Electoral Hegemony', 135.
249 Thorpe, 1931, 42.
250 See the list of subsidies in House of Lords Record Office (HLRO), Papers of J C C Davidson, DAV/187, Income and Expenditure Accounts of the General Election May - December 1929. The London aspect of this is dealt with in chapter three.
people [who were] parasites. I suppose in his way he was as much of a parasite, but none the less he was there by force of circumstances. He disapproved strongly of privilege ... \(^{252}\)

One other ex-resident said

He always voted Labour, the old man. Well, you couldn't do nothing else, could you? ... Well, you couldn't vote Tory if you never had nothing, could you, really? \(^{253}\)

But there was some support for Conservatives in the street, due in part to that party's association with the Empire, and also for other reasons, as reported of another ex-resident:

He always reckoned Conservatives - he's right as well - they're the ones who've got the money, they're the ones who can employ you. That's what he used to say to me. He said, 'if you haven't got the Conservative', he said, 'you got no work'. Yet there was about two million unemployed his days. [sic] \(^{254}\)

As suggested earlier with reference to the LCC, it was Labour that captured politically the areas the middle classes left behind when they moved out to the suburbs of London. \(^{255}\) It is without doubt that Labour also drew strength from some circumstances of London's changing shape and life during the 1920s. For much of the time, the rise of unemployment was seen as a political boost for it, even though compared to other places in Britain the rate of unemployment was not high, and ultimately it was to prove Labour's undoing in 1931. \(^{256}\) In contrast to the view that Municipal Reform councils were most active in the field of housing provision in the 1920s, it has been argued too that Labour benefited from

\(^{251}\) White, *Worst Street*, 102.
\(^{252}\) White, *Worst Street*, 102.
\(^{253}\) White, *Worst Street*, 106.
\(^{256}\) Some unemployment statistics at the peak of the problem in London are given in White, *Worst Street*, 37.
being associated with positive action on housing in working class areas. The London Labour party certainly campaigned heavily on the issue of housing, using posters measuring 80" by 120" on the subject in the 1925 LCC election campaign. That year it faced 'housing candidates' challenging them in more than one part of the capital. By 1928,

The London Labour Party [had] ... adopted the principle of the satellite town for the regional planning of London and the Home Counties.

This showed that Labour was considering all aspects of the housing question before the other parties had necessarily done so, and that it forced the pace with its opponents. In 1924, the London Municipal Society was forced to rapidly develop a slum clearance policy under pressure from Labour. In 1929, Conservatives in Kennington blamed the loss of the parliamentary seat at that year's General Election partly on the 'housing difficulty'.

The changes in London helped Labour to secure its hold on working class and previously mixed areas, although its success in luring middle class support was not so great - both these trends are covered later.

The final category of political responses to changes in London will be dealt with in more detail in the chapters relating to the three main parties. An idea of the kinds of responses in question can, though, be given here. At the Ilford by-election in 1928 an important issue was that of public transport, and more importantly the obtaining of a link from Ilford to the London Underground network. Ilford wants

258 LMA, ACC/2417/A/10, LLP Presented Papers, Circular of 5 Feb 1925.
259 F D Lapthorn and Miss E Neville stood as 'Progressive and Housing candidates' in North Lambeth that year, and Harper and Mills as 'Housing and Anti-Socialist' candidates in Islington West. GLPB, LMS 181, 'LCC Election Addresses 1925'. The Islington West candidates were a coalition, Mills (who topped the poll) being Progressive and Harper (who came second) a Municipal Reformer. The North Lambeth candidates were both Progressives, and came bottom of the poll - the Labour candidates won. See The Times, 7 Mar 1925, 14.
260 LMA, ACC/2417/A/13, LLP Presented Papers, programme for visit to Welwyn Garden City, 28/29 Jan 1928.
261 GLMS, Ms 19,528 Vol. 2, London Municipal Society executive committee minutes, emergency meeting of 23 Dec 1924.
a Tube more than it wants anything else, and the man elected is expected to see
about it' was the comment of the *Evening Standard.* 263 As more and more people
moved out, their need for good, efficient, cheap transport became more important,
and so the issue took on greater political importance. The lack of co-ordination
between planning and transport, especially in Outer London, exacerbated this. 264
One other response to the increase in travelling to work from the outside to the
centre can also be found, interestingly, in Ilford. The Ilford Conservative
Association sold its candidate Frank D Smith as being

... one of the few councillors who are in Ilford all day, and every day in the week, and
[he] is, therefore, better able to look after the interests of the ratepayers than the man
whose waking hours are all spent in the City. 265

Weinbren has also noted that some new 'Londoners' were more localist than
metropolitan in their outlook, and Ilford's point was designed to appeal to electors
such as these. 266

The political parties had to institute new organisations in the areas of growth, and
also had to run more events, and more frequently. Even the Liberals were
affected: the Home Counties Liberal Federation reported a large increase in the
number of meetings it held in the run up to 1931, although the injection of Lloyd
Georgian money was no doubt as responsible for this as the increase of population
in their catchment area. 267 They also began to affiliate to the London Liberal
Federation Liberal Associations from Outer London, with the proviso that the

262 British Library of Political and Economic Science, LSE (LSE), COLL/MISC/463/1,
Kennington Conservative Association, meeting of Executive Council, 14 Jun 1929.
263 *Evening Standard*, 15 Feb 1928. Cutting in RDBGE, Records of Ilford Conservative
Association, cuttings book on Ilford By-election 23 Feb 1928.
265 RDBGE, Frank D Smith Collection of Pamphlets and Leaflets, cutting from the Ilford
Guardian, 7 Mar 1924.
266 Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 43.
267 University of Bristol Special Collections (BRIS), DM 668, Annual Reports for the Home
Counties Liberal Federation, 1927 [15, about 1000 meetings], 1928 [16, nearly 2000 meetings,
including those arranged in conjunction with the Land and Nation League, and the Liberal
Campaign Committee], 1929 [14, 1500 meetings including those with the Liberal Campaign
Department], 1930 [nearly 1200 meetings], 1931 [just 300 meetings].
London Liberal Federation was not solely concerned with LCC business. They clearly felt that such associations, having electorates whose lives were closely tied into the sprawling metropolis, had more in common with London associations than those in their distant county towns. Labour party organisations tried to help in areas of new development by sending in activists from those areas where they were better established, for example from Walthamstow to Chingford to help with the local council elections in 1926. They also tried to make the most of new housing development and link it to existing strongholds for their political benefit. For example, they combined their existing strength in Woolwich from the Arsenal with the wartime development of state housing for workers there, to make the local area one of their safest seats in London.

Political parties naturally tried to make the best of the new situations they found themselves in, and at least at a local level were responsive to changing circumstances. They had much to deal with in the new Greater London of the 1920s, and were to have more to face in the 1930s. All the physical growth in the metropolis, the changes in the types of housing comprising it, the increase in state housing in one form or another, and the way in which the workforce went to work, all had political implications, as did the expectations of the new suburban electors, and those electors they left behind. These trends have been outlined in this chapter, and subsequent parts of this study will look at each political party in turn to see how they developed in the Greater London of the 1920s.

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268 LMA, ACC/1446/2, meeting of executive committee of London Liberal Federation, 15 Apr 1924.
269 Waltham Forest Archives and Local Studies (WFOR), Records of Walthamstow Borough Labour Party, W32.7 B1 P 1, executive committee meeting of 21 Mar 1926.
270 For explanation of Labour’s strength in Woolwich see Donoughue and Jones, Morrison, 84-85. On the state housing at Well Hall, Woolwich, see Swenarton, Heroes, 53.
Chapter Three: The Consolidation of Metropolitan Conservatism
The Historical Context

A political party has two main problems: how to obtain power, and what to do with it once obtained. In the inter-war years the Conservatives solved the first problem more successfully than the second. They won five out of seven general elections and were in office either on their own or as dominant partners in a coalition for eighteen out of twenty-one years. This success, like most political successes, was compounded of good luck, the defects of their opponents, and their own merits. The revival of the party was greatly helped by the First World War whose effects were in almost every respect favourable to the Conservatives and adverse to the Liberals. 271

Robert Blake's observations confirm that the 1920s were a tremendously successful decade for the Conservative party. In Greater London they won 408 out of 618 parliamentary seats up for grabs at General Elections from 1918-1931. 272 Blake also hits upon a number of the reasons for their success, 'their own merits' being one. Other historians agree that the (generally) efficient and effective Conservative political organisation underpinned their success in the 1918-1931 period. For example, John Ramsden has used detailed arguments to explain the relative success enjoyed by the Conservatives, despite their fears over the advent of mass democracy. He uses examples, such as that of the organisational revival in 1924 when the party was out of office.

Much attention was given to the party organisation during 1924, for now there was a chance to renew the modernisation interrupted in 1914... Chris Cook has shown how the Liberals wasted the time available to them in 1924, but no such charge can be made against the Unionists. 273

Blake agrees that this was crucial.

272 See table 2A: this figure includes unopposed returns.
It would … be wrong to underestimate what was achieved in 1924 in terms of restructuring antiquated and creaking party institutions. 274

In Greater London, party organisations were galvanised in 1924 as elsewhere: in Richmond, a feud between rival factions was brought to an end; in Southgate the party revived after a period in the doldrums. 275

Blake also identifies 'good luck' as a factor in Conservative success. One of the 'lucky' things in their favour was the changes made to electoral districts in the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which went a long way to benefit the Conservative cause. Ramsden agrees on this point too, and gives examples from London to substantiate his argument.

The already safe seat of Wandsworth was divided in 1918 into five safe seats; Lewisham, Hammersmith and Fulham were each divided into two seats; the number of seats in the outer London suburbs of Kent, Surrey, Essex and Middlesex went up from 15 to 40, of which 35 were held by Unionists at every election before 1945. 276

A former Conservative leader, William Hague, has written that

Unlike the parties of the left, the Conservative party has always been suspicious of strict ideology and abstract doctrine. Consequently, throughout its history, the party has favoured a more pragmatic approach and has continually adapted its core values to fit the prevailing political conditions of the time. 277

Adapting in the early years of mass democracy so as to make the best of it also helps explain Conservative success. An expansion of social activities and events for the new female voters was part of this. In Clapham the agent

274 Blake, Conservative Party, 225.
275 The Richmond example is covered in chapter six. For Southgate: LMA, ACC/1158/1, Southgate Conservative and Unionist Association minute book - there is a gap in meetings between October 1921 and February 1924.
276 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 123.
...organised a popular group that debated the Empire, tariff reform, trade unions, profiteering, socialism, Bolshevism, Ireland, and the political role of young people.  

Conservatives were thus attracting new voters to come to their events and debate their issues. Similarly, labour committees could be established in an attempt to woo the working classes: again Clapham, at the instigation of the agent J H Bottomley, was a pioneer. Social events could be use as fundraisers, and, as Ramsden has argued

Increased income [to Conservative Associations] was mainly derived from two sources, from far more small subscriptions and from a greater use of social events for fund raising purposes.

Conservatives thus adapted to new conditions in a way that secured their financial future. Chapter two gave examples of how events geared towards the new middle class, such as whist drives, were put on to raise funds and interest, particular in Outer London. Women's organisations flourished in the party during the 1920s, and despite some fears to the contrary in the party

Women voters proved on balance to be an advantage rather than a disadvantage to Conservative candidates: opinion polling evidence has demonstrated this clearly and consistently over the past forty years, and there is no reason whatsoever to think that this was not already as true of 1918-39 as it has been since 1945.

Certainly many of the Greater London Conservative organisations covered in this study established women's groups, and in Hampstead Conservatives stated that 'all

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277 William Hague, 'Foreword', to Ball and Holliday (eds), Mass Conservatism, ix.
278 McCrillis, Popular Conservatism, 160.
279 McCrillis, Popular Conservatism, 117.
280 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 245.
indications point to the woman's vote being preponderatingly (sic) Conservative.'

They were clearly enthusiastic about tapping the reservoir of female support.

Peter Catterall has argued that

Insofar as the twentieth was indeed a 'Conservative century', it was because the Conservative party for most of that time was better able at manipulating the fit between its own identity, the issues of the day … and the attitudes and values of the public. In Britain electoral success is usually determined by building a successful electoral coalition, and the Conservatives have been not only relatively good at creating such coalitions, but have also generally been more successful than their opponents at keeping such coalitions, once established, in being. 283

A coalition of new, traditional, female and working class voters helped to sustain the Conservative success, as suggested here, and as will be examined further in this chapter. An addition to the coalition of Conservative support in the 1920s was, a lot of the time, a body of Liberals. As Ramsden has argued,

The 1920s had confirmed the Conservatives' status as one of the two major parties, with all the advantages that that implied under Britain's voting system, and suggested that, for the time being at least, they were the stronger of the two. But the elections of 1923 and 1929 had also shown that there was enough residual loyalty to Liberalism to allow Lloyd George to accumulate a respectable vote - in 1923 it had still been almost 30 per cent of all votes cast - and so damage the Conservatives' prospects. By 1929 Liberal support, even in a good year, was down to less than a quarter of the national vote … but that still meant that there were more than 5 million Liberal votes to be bid for, as and when their party's decline was resumed. 284

In Greater London, by using a combination of propaganda and political alliances or front organisations where it suited them, the Conservative success was

282 Hampstead Conservative Association, Annual Report for 1918. Here and elsewhere, if no record office is given with a reference, local Conservative Association material was found in the constituency association research notes of John Ramsden.
283 Peter Catterall, 'Series Editor's Preface', to Ball and Holliday (eds), Mass Conservatism, xiii.
solidified with ex-Liberal votes. For example, in the 1924 General Election, in 'two of the most keenly fought and interesting contests in the outer London area', in Hornsey (where a Liberal was standing) and in Enfield (where there was no Liberal), the party garnered Liberal votes:

[in Hornsey] There are signs that many Hornsey Liberals will support Captain Wallace [the Conservative] as the best means of preventing a reversion to the system of minority government which proved so unfortunate in the last parliament.

[in Enfield] The Liberals have been officially advised to abstain from voting at this election, but it is doubtful whether they will obey the behest. 285

In both this chapter and chapter five the success of Conservative efforts to win over Liberals will be expanded upon.

Other historians have, like Ramsden and McCrillis, used local Conservative records and examples based upon them to support their views on the period. Among these is Stuart Ball: a particularly strong advocate of making better use of local party records. 286 Both he and Philip Williamson have looked at the period from the point of view of Conservative politics and politicians, in particular the party leader from 1923-1937, Stanley Baldwin. 287 Between 1929 and 1931 a number of important London by-elections had consequences for Baldwin's leadership, and outcomes were influenced by where he had taken his party. One was in East Islington, and such was its importance that

All the parties have arranged for as many meetings as possible on the eve of the poll. Lord Hailsham and Lord Lloyd are to support Miss Cazalet [Conservative] at her two final demonstrations, and Mr Herbert Morrison, the Minister of Transport, speaking for

284 Ramsden, Appetite for Power, 271.
285 The Times, 28 Oct 1924, 7.
286 Ball, 'National Politics', 27-59.
287 Ball, Baldwin, and Williamson, Baldwin.
Mrs Manning [Labour]. If the weather is favourable open-air meetings are likely to go on until midnight. ²⁸⁸

Chapter six deals with all these contests and the conflicts behind them.

David Jarvis has also considered the 1920s, and argued that a better balance needs to be struck between attributing Conservative success to favourable factors such as women voters and boundary changes, and attributing it to efforts made by Conservatives to develop a community of support. He notes the unease with which Conservatives faced the new mass democracy after 1918, and the fact that they did not have a 'big idea' with which to win over this electorate. ²⁸⁹ He advocates greater research into the 'popular culture' of those Conservative organisations that supported their successes. ²⁹⁰ He continues,

...Historians need to pay more attention to the substance of the Conservative message, in particular by examining the party's propaganda material more critically. It is also essential to define how Conservatives perceived the political process: to analyse their readings of democracy, party affiliation and political socialisation. ²⁹¹

Propaganda material is examined in this chapter. It ranged from that seeking to capitalised on the fruits of victory in 1918:

The German Fleet, as you all know,
Is safely moored at Scapa Flow;
The crafty Huns will have to pay
And your friend BULL will show the way.

Vote for BULL should be your cry
As you'll discover bye and bye,
He'll do his best to get the fruits

²⁸⁸ The Times, 18 Feb 1931, 9.
²⁸⁹ Jarvis, 'Conservative Electoral Hegemony', in Lawrence and Taylor (eds), Party, State and Society, 131-152, 131-132.
²⁹⁰ Jarvis, 'Conservative Electoral Hegemony', 134.
Of Victory over German Brutes. 292

To that which urged support in the 'national emergency' of 1931, with the candidate for Romford reported as having

...succeeded the other evening in interesting a mixed audience in the intricacies of French finance and their bearing on our own crisis. This is but one example, not only of the candidate's talents of appeal, but of the desire the electors are showing for instruction on economic subjects. 293

Henry Pelling's commentary on the results of elections in London and the South East before 1914 show just how entrenched the Conservative party was here, and how relatively successful they were compared to other regions, even in their poorest performance in 1906. 294 Looking back to the period before 1914 helps provide a full understanding of the situation in the 1920s. Others have also examined long term trends, but in the context of particular examples. Andrew Thorpe has re-examined the 1931 General Election and concluded that the very favourable result for the Conservatives was a logical outcome given the electoral indicators of preceding years. 295 The trends helped them to build upon their existing strength, such as in the Outer London Surrey areas where in 1931

... the Unionists are in a position to ignore the attitude of all other parties providing their own supporters rally to the standard on the day of the election. 296

In his study of the London Municipal Society (LMS), Ken Young shows how through this organisation Conservatives were able to first challenge and then assail the Progressive party in London. 297 Importantly, he also looks at the social

293 The Times, 26 Oct 1931, 7.
294 Pelling, British Elections, 56, detail in rest of chapter.
295 Thorpe, 1931, 7.
296 The Times, 13 Oct 1931, 7.
297 Young, Local Politics.
changes within the LCC area that eventually saw the LMS supplanted by Labour as the natural controllers of the council. These were mentioned in the previous chapter, the use of the LMS is dealt with in more detail in this chapter, and the collapse of the Progressives in chapter five.

Maurice Cowling has highlighted the differences between the Conservative and Liberal responses to the rise of Labour:

What Labour did between 1919 and 1924 was to create an atmosphere which no politician could ignore. What the Conservative leaders did was to respond, not resentfully like the Liberal party towards a prodigal son, but with a coolness which implied reasonable disagreement about the best way to achieve objectives which were held in common.

This chapter includes some evidence of activists behaving other than coolly, especially in the aftermath of defeat in 1929. The generally loyal activists in Westminster St George's, for example, raged against the fact that

...the slack attendance of the Conservative members in the House of Commons [in later 1929] is a great danger to the future of the Conservative party and it considers that this slackness is causing widespread dissatisfaction in the ranks of the party.

However, the Conservatives were in general successful in gaining and retaining power, and successfully responded to the political situation of the period. This chapter will show how the Conservative position in the metropolis was consolidated.

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298 Young, _Local Politics_, 122-23, and elsewhere in the book. See note in chapter one on the use of 'Conservative' and 'conservative'.

299 Cowling, _The Impact of Labour_, 421. Conversely, the Conservatives also denounced Labour as extremists when it suited them electorally - in other words, at every election time, local and national - and examples are included in this study.

300 Westminster City Archives (WMIN), ACC/487/9, Minutes of the St George's Hanover Square Conservative Association, executive committee resolution, 19 Dec 1929.
A Pattern of Success 1918-1931

By mid-1918 the Conservative party had not won a General Election in 18 years, while there had been a Liberal Prime Minister for nearly 13 years. Although they were now part of David Lloyd George’s Coalition government, Conservatives were not used to recent success and many were far from optimistic about their chances in the future. It was not certain that the war would be won. And even when it was, what chance would the Conservatives have in the age of the new mass electorate, now to include women for the first time? Yet by 1931 the party had been in government nationally for all but roughly three of the intervening thirteen years. The 1931 General Election returned an overwhelming mass of Conservative MPs to parliament, and in Greater London 85 out of 103 MPs were Tories. 301 The stranglehold of conservative forces on local government bodies had for the most part survived the 1920s as well, though not undisturbed.

To get a full picture of the extent of the success of conservative forces in Greater London politics after the end of war in 1918, it is necessary to look back to pre-war political conditions, superseded by the party truce instigated at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. Following a period of domination by the Progressive party, the conservative Municipal Reformers (MRs) had won control of the London County Council (LCC) in 1907 and retained that control in 1910 and 1913. 302 The majority of Metropolitan Borough Councils (METBs) were of a similar political persuasion. 303 In Outer London politics were of a conservative tone though not necessarily an overtly partisan one – at this stage it was still thought of as beneficial by some to 'keep party divisions out of local government'. Indeed, in some areas this persisted after the war: in Wanstead local Conservatives joined forces with the local Liberal Association and the Ratepayers' Association to, together, 'fight against the introduction of party politics into local government

301 See tables 1A and 2A.
302 Young, Local Politics, 223. Elections to the LCC had been held triennially since the council started life in 1889.
303 Young, Local Politics, 224-5.
elections with all the resources at their disposal. In Stoke Newington, the dominance of the ratepayers' association on the METB council, in what was then a distinct political entity on the edges but still within the LCC, masked the fact that the ratepayers' body here was genuinely non-party, rather than simply a Conservative or anti-Labour front organisation. As will be seen the parliamentary seat was contested, and won by both Conservatives and a Liberal. But on the METB things were different. The Stoke Newington Ratepayers' Association headed notepaper said 'Non-Political' at the top. While opposed to increases in the rates, the organisation was opposed to the intervention of any political party, Labour or otherwise, into local government elections, and passed a resolution in May 1924 saying,

That in view of the fact that it has been the boast of Stoke Newington that the business of the borough council and the election of its members have been conducted on lines strictly non-political, this Association has noticed with deep regret signs of a tendency to break away from a custom which has had such gratifying results in the past, and desires to place on record its considered opinion that it is against the best interests of ratepayers that candidates should submit themselves for election as members of a particular political party; and it expresses a hope that the local political organisations will agree not to take part officially in any election of members of our borough council.

The Association often saw a clean sweep of its candidates elected at METB elections, for example in 1925 and 1928. It 'vetted' candidates' opinions by means of a questionnaire on local issues, circulated at election times. While the London Municipal Society certainly considered the Stoke Newington METB council, supported by the Association, to be friendly, it did not count it as

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304 Essex Record Office (ERO), Records of the Wanstead and Woodford Conservative Association and predecessors, ACC A6853 Box 9, Letter from Sir James Hawkey, president of the local [Epping] Conservative Association, to the Junior Imperial League branch in Woodford, Mar 1926.
305 Craig, Results, 54.
306 Hackney Archives Department (HKY), Records of the Stoke Newington Ratepayers Association, D/S/29/3, Minute Book 1918-1924, paper appears in this volume.
307 HKY, D/S/29/3, resolution of 2 May 1924.
Municipal Reform, but 'Independent' or 'Ratepayers' Association', in its centrally held list of METB election results. The Stoke Newington Ratepayers' Association was non-party in a way that other associations were not. But despite this example, and despite some difference in two nearby County Boroughs (CBs) – East Ham and West Ham – the big picture shows Greater London to be a generally conservative area from the point of view of local government before 1918.

The same sort of picture existed in terms of parliamentary representation. Pelling has shown that, while some areas had a greater propensity to elect Conservatives than others, London generally was fertile Tory ground. He shows that the most middle-class constituencies (his 'category A') had an average Conservative poll of 54% or more from 1885-1910, and some had an average as high as 77%. Given that the figures include the Liberal landslide of 1906, this was indeed an achievement. Even in the 'category B' mixed-class constituencies the Conservatives managed an average of over 50% with only two exceptions, and in only one of the 'category C' working-class constituencies did their average vote fall below 40%.

This was the background from which London Conservatism emerged when the War and the party political truce came to an end in November 1918. However, the situation did not return to normal at once – the Conservative party joined forces with the Liberal supporters of Lloyd George to fight and win the 1918 General Election as a coalition. Of the 93 Coalition supporters returned to parliament in Greater London, 77 were Conservatives – an apparent success for the party in spite of its fears of the future, especially when taken with the fact that only 10 Conservatives in the field were defeated. The coupon - the badge of Coalition endorsement - was not awarded in five seats out of the 103 covered by this study.

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309 GLPB, LMS 19 (The Ratepayer) No. 38 (1925), and LMS 121 (Borough Council Elections 1931 - Leaflets and pamphlets), Leaflet No. 10 (contains 1928 results).
310 Pelling, British Elections, 30. This is looking at his 'London' area only.
311 Pelling, British Elections, 37 and 43. The one constituency with an average Conservative vote of less than 40% was the Poplar division of Tower Hamlets.
312 See table 2A, also Craig, Results.
Although a total of six candidates were beaten in Greater London despite being in receipt of the coupon, it was in general all-powerful. In Bethnal Green, the coupon allowed a Coalition Liberal to win the North East seat, by over 2000 votes, though the seat was to be won by an independent Liberal or a Labour candidate at every subsequent election until 1945. In the South West seat, it allowed a Coalition Conservative to win, though the seat was won at every subsequent pre-1945 election by the Liberal Percy Harris. There is, however, one example of the coupon not bringing Conservative success: Frank Briant, an independent and uncouponed Liberal, beat his couponed Conservative opponent, who had been the local MP since 1910, in Lambeth North, and he went on to hold the seat at each subsequent election bar 1929 until his death in 1934.

At subsequent General Elections until 1931 the Conservatives only failed to win a majority of the Greater London seats once. It was only in the 1929 parliament that more Labour members sat for the area, and this was a situation more than rectified two years later. The conservative domination of the London County Council continued, with the balance of seats barely shifting until 1931. Most of the time the MRs had about double the number of elected councillors of the second party, even without taking into account aldermanic seats. The main event was the Labour party becoming the main opposition on the council in 1925, in place of the...
Progressives. The landmark Labour LCC victory in 1934 seemed far off in 1931, when MRs still held two thirds of the council seats. So the picture of political representation of Greater London, in terms of parliamentary and county council seats, was a positive one for the Conservatives throughout this time.

When looking at second tier authorities, however, things cannot be said to have gone quite so much the Tory way, at least in the county of London. Here, the METBs were not dominated in the same way as the LCC. In their high tide of November 1919, Labour very nearly overtook the MRs in terms of numbers of councillors elected to these bodies, and did overtake them in terms of number of authorities controlled. At the same time there were swings against the Coalition in by-elections. While this local success only lasted for one three-year term, the effect it had was great in that it brought home to conservatives the fact that control of councils could not be taken for granted. It led to the development of many of the campaigning tactics that will be examined later. In Outer London the Municipal Boroughs (MBs), Urban Districts (UDs) and Rural Districts (RDs) did not come under such threats.

What is remarkable by present day standards about the Conservatives success in London local government is that most of it was achieved through other organisations with links to the Conservatives, and not by the Conservative party itself. The MRs' domination of the LCC has already been shown. These were representatives of the 'political wing' of the London Municipal Society, a body formed with Conservative support in the late 1890s to counter the Progressive party's organised assault on the LCC. There were very few councillors in London elected under the label of 'Conservative', and these were mainly in

320 See table 3.
321 See table 4. The Labour controlled authorities 1919-1922 were: Battersea, Bethnal Green, Camberwell, Deptford, Fulham, Greenwich, Hackney, Islington, Poplar, Shoreditch, Southwark, Stepney, Woolwich (from GLPB, LMS 135 (1920-22), pamphlet 13). For the by-election results see table 7.
322 The County Borough Councils of Croydon, and East and West Ham, were single tier authorities.
323 An account of the formation of the London Municipal Society is given by Young, Local Politics, 57-83.
Holborn and sat as MRs anyway. 324 Here it may well have been the case that local Tories thought the use of that label would be to their party advantage – as will be shown, Conservatives were well versed in choosing labels to suit party advantage, both for themselves and for their opponents. Conservatives can be shown to have used the LMS and the LCC elections to blood candidates, and also to have used the LCC as a 'nursery for parliament'. 325 For example, Francis Fremantle, Conservative MP for St Albans from December 1919 to 1943 and former Hertfordshire Medical Officer of Health, was a member of the LCC from March 1919 to 1922. 326

For a time during the 1920s the London Municipal Society appended to its name 'National Federation of Ratepayers Associations'. 327 This gives an idea of what really drove the Society – a desire to represent those who were paying for local government as opposed to those who wanted money spending on them. That this was their stated objective is reinforced by the high proportion of its election publicity attacking the high-rate wastage of Labour-controlled authorities. It was also the defence of ratepayers' interests that drove many among the conservative forces in Outer London to stand for election to their local councils – 'Ratepayers' or 'Residents' Associations' being the commonest forms that organisations took. 328 These were often very successful, and were increasingly encouraged by the LMS which took on more and more affiliated members from outside the county of London after 1920. 329 The records of the Ealing Conservative Association show which other organisations supported these efforts to secure local council places -

324 GLPB, LMS 140 (1925), contains an election leaflet from Holborn typical of those produced in the 1920s, with clear labelling of 'Conservative' candidates.
326 Self (ed), The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, 200 (biographical note).
327 GLMS, Ms 19,528 (LMS minutes of executive committee meetings) Vol. 2 – the name was added at the meeting of 21 July 1921 and removed at the meeting of 6 May 1927.
328 For example the Croydon Federation of Ratepayers Associations controlled the County Borough Council throughout the period, and the Ilford Ratepayers Association controlled the local UD/MB council (see RBDGE, Frank D Smith collection).
329 GLMS, Ms 19,528 Vol. 2 - at the meeting of 15 July 1920, as a result of an application from the West Ham Municipal Alliance and others, the LMS agreed to help any suitable association provided that association paid its expenses. See also Ramsden, Baldwin and Baldwin, pp. 258-9.
among them Chambers of Commerce and Trade. \textsuperscript{330} In this area a 'Municipal Amalgamation Elections Subcommittee' was set up '…with a view to avoiding a great [sic] number of Constitutional candidates than seats on the new council.' \textsuperscript{331} Among the bodies represented were the National Citizens Union (Ealing Branch), and the Hanwell Ratepayers Association, typical of the type of organisation to be found represented on and collectively controlling local councils in Outer London. Perhaps surprisingly, these negotiated arrangements were not kept private but reported in the local press: the \textit{Middlesex County Times} reporting the meeting of the Hanwell Chamber of Trade:

The secretary … read a letter from Cllr H J Baker, suggesting that efforts should be made for all organisations interested in the elections to meet together with a view to arriving at a common agreement to support constitutional candidates who would be likely to serve the best interests of the district … \textsuperscript{332}

Gipsy Hill Conservatives tried obtaining 'the names of local members of the middle classes union' to try to get them to join their own organisation. \textsuperscript{333} Interestingly enough, not all the local establishment was always on board - for example a discussion in Epsom in 1923 on the problem of local Church of England clergy speaking on Labour platforms took place, and was probably not a unique occurrence. \textsuperscript{334} Sometimes local Conservatives wanted to keep links with others secret - for example at Ealing in 1920 a local representative of the Middle Classes Union attended to agree the line-up of local MB council election candidates. The meeting '… resolved that no joint letters or action should appear before the public.' \textsuperscript{335} Many diverse conservative organisations thus lay behind the successes of their movement at elections in Greater London.

\textsuperscript{330} LMA, ACC/1338/1 (Minutes of the Ealing Conservative and Unionist Association) meetings on 3 and 17 June 1926.
\textsuperscript{331} LMA ACC/1338/1, meeting of 3 June 1926.
\textsuperscript{332} Middlesex \textit{County Times}, 12 Jun 1926, 6.
\textsuperscript{333} Lambeth Archives (LBH), Class IV 166/1/7, Minutes of Gipsy Hill Conservative Association, meeting of 24 February 1921.
\textsuperscript{334} Epsom Conservative Association, executive committee meeting 14 May 1923.
\textsuperscript{335} LMA ACC/1338/1, meeting on 21 Sep 1920. They were not the only constituency association supporting the Middle Classes Union - in Lewisham West on 3 April 1919 a resolution supporting
It can be argued that the Conservative successes in London were made possible by the prevailing electoral arrangements, particularly the distribution of parliamentary seats after 1918. Kinnear has suggested that the poor Tory result in the December 1923 General Election would have been far worse if fought under the 1885 arrangements. This shows part of the benefit that the Representation of the People Act had bought the Conservatives, and how wise of them it was to watch the distribution of seats carefully. It has also been argued that the Conservatives were assisted at least once - in the same General Election - by the fact that their voters could not find a suitable place to register a protest when they were unhappy. A fall in turnout in Conservative seats at this time indicates that such people stayed at home instead. The party also had luck on its side on more than one occasion. When, in 1922, voters fed up with the Coalition wanted to punish it, they were spurred on by propaganda such as this from the Conservative candidate in Ealing:

The nation is in the position of a sick man who must be carefully nursed back to health before experiments whether surgical or medical can be made upon him ... Confidence can only return when there is security against violent socialistic propaganda, and the disruptive forces which, inspired by the present rulers of Russia, are threatening stability and order throughout the world.

Voters did not see the Conservatives as the party to punish, despite the fact that they were the largest component in the government. This was in contrast to the way they sometimes suffered during the 1918-1922 parliament at by-elections. Defence of seats often came at the cost of the inflated majorities of 1918. In

the aims and objectives of the Union was carried. (Lewisham West Conservative Association, Council minutes 3 April 1919).

Kinnear, The British Voter, 43.

LSE, CCA/3 (Metropolitan Conservative Agents Association minutes) meeting 15 Feb 1918, at which those present were advised to watch the redistribution carefully in the Conservative interest. Cook, Alignment, 176. For example, turnout fell in Richmond Upon Thames by 9.5% on 1922, and it fell by 9.7% in Hendon.

Ealing Local History Centre (EAL), General Election Leaflets/Manifestos 1922-1923, Manifesto of Sir Herbert Nield, Conservative candidate in Ealing, for General Election on 15 Nov 1922, 2.
Croydon South their majority fell by over 8,000, in St Albans they hung on by 713 votes (compared to an unopposed return in 1918), in Bromley in December 1919 the Conservative vote slumped as the seat was won by just over 1,000 with a 27% swing against them compared to 1918. 340 A government majority of 9,370 over Labour in Dartford was lost in March 1920, with Labour winning by 9,048 in what was admittedly a confused field, a swing against the government of nearly 39%. 341 The three seats that Conservatives defended in the second half of 1921 - Westminster Abbey, Lewisham West and Hornsey, were all won, but unopposed returns in 1918 had in each case been replaced with remarkably low majorities given the seats concerned, of between 850 and 2,000 votes. 342 Leaving aside a remarkable performance in Woolwich East, the only reasonable job was done by Frederick Wise in Ilford, who retained his seat for the Conservatives at the September 1920 by-election, with a majority cut by just 2,000 to 9,000, a swing against him of just 4.5%. Terrible divisions threatened to be unleashed within the Conservative party over the coalition: the case of the Anti-Waste League is dealt with in more detail in chapter six. There was also, for example, serious argument at Ealing (resolved in time for Sir Herbert Nield to produce the piece above) and within the Metropolitan Conservative Agents Association, not to mention at the Carlton Club. 343 However, the party came off the better of the two coalition partners in Greater London. When the General Election came in 1922, as suggested, the Conservatives did well and their former allies less so.

Conservative success during the 1918-1931 period was not simply down to luck, or to the system, or to the predisposition of their voters, and nor was it continuous and problem-free. This is borne out by an examination of the results of the LCC

340 See table 7. For the purposes of this study, swing is calculated in the same way as outlined by David Butler in Ramsden (ed.), *British Politics*, 630.
341 See table 7. The seat was defended for the Coalition by a Conservative rather than a Liberal, which encouraged both an independent Conservative and an independent Liberal to enter the fray. This was something Chris Wrigley has blamed for the loss - see Chris Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: The Post-War Coalition 1918-1922*, Hemel Hempstead (Wheatsheaf), 1990, 246.
342 *The Times*, 14 Sep 1921, 5.
343 LMA, ACC/1338/1, meeting on 21 Sep 1921. See also LSE, CCA/4 (Metropolitan Conservative Agents Association minutes) meeting 3 August 1922. For the votes of London MPs at the Carlton Club meeting see table 8.
elections in certain seats. The other county councils were not comparable for, despite reports such as that in *The Times* in 1927 describing a 'thorough attack' on conservative councils '…in places like Acton, Leyton and even Croydon', contests occurred far less regularly.  

For example, in Essex in 1928 'there were contests in [only] 14 divisions, but outside the Metropolitan area the elections were not fought on party lines', and in March 1931 60 out of 70 councillors were returned unopposed in Surrey, and 60 out of 73 in Kent. On the LCC, the number of unopposed returns fell remarkably, from 56 out of the 124 councillors in 1919 to a low of eight in 1925 and only 12 in 1931. The strength of the capital's Conservative forces is indicated through the fact that in 1925 and 1931 the uncontested seats were all held by Municipal Reformers. In 1919 - with the Coalition government recently returned in the General Election - this was far from the case. While most unopposed returns were MRs, there were two Progressives returned unopposed in each of Camberwell Peckham, Southwark Central and Whitechapel. In true coalition spirit there was one Progressive and one MR returned unopposed for Hackney Central. In most seats MRs did not fight Progressives: this only happened in ten of the 61 council divisions, but they fought together with a mixed slate of candidates only in Hackney. In Camberwell North and Lambeth Kennington, the MRs took on a 'ticket' of one Progressive and one Labour candidate for the two seats on the council. So one unofficial coalition occasionally fought another, nicely reflecting the confused national political situation.

The change in candidatures in some council divisions can be said to reflect national political trends as well. Typical was St Pancras South East, contested by two MRs fighting two Progressives in 1919, two MRs fighting two Labour candidates in 1925, while there were two candidates from each of the three parties in the remaining three contests. This factor can certainly be said to have influenced results in some cases. Both seats on the council from the Battersea

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344 *The Times*, 18 Oct 1927, 8.
346 Factual information relating to results in this section is all taken from *The Times*. Editions date from 6-8 March 1919, 2-4 March 1922, 6-7 March 1925, 1-10 March 1928, 5-7 March 1931.
North division were won by Labour in 1919 (by 499), 1922 (by 1,888), and 1925 (by 1,791). But the Labour vote was split in 1928 by the intervention of two Independent Labour candidates, enabling the MRs to win the seat by 779. They won again in 1931 by 540 votes, this time with two Communist candidates splitting the Labour vote. Interventions such as these make it difficult to generalise about majorities in particular seats or the numbers of seats held on councils. But if the area being looked at and the candidates standing are taken into account, then overall trends can be seen and they usually reflect the national trends at the time.

Broadly speaking the Conservatives were strongest in the affluent Central London bases of the City and West End, where there was a greater concentration of the middle and upper classes both before and after the War. Tables 5 and 6 give greater detail on which parliamentary seats actually fitted into these categories, according to the differing classifications used by John Turner and Michael Kinnear. A good example of their strength in such seats was in Chelsea, where Samuel Hoare won comfortably even in the confused times of 1923. With the class categories Turner uses in table 5, the Conservatives held all the Urban/Rural and Rural seats without interruption during this period. They dominated the Middle Class seats, with only a very few defeats - for example losing Wandsworth Central to Labour in 1929. They also did very well in Mixed Class areas, with only a few exceptions - for example Labour won Deptford every year except 1931. The area where they did least well was in the Working Class seats, but even here there were success stories - Stoke Newington was won every year except 1923 when the Liberals took it, and Walthamstow East was won every year except 1929 when it was captured by Labour. Moving on to table 6, the extent of the Conservative domination of the middle class seats by Kinnear’s classification is

347. The majorities here are calculated by giving the figure for the lead the last successful candidate had over the highest placed unsuccessful candidate at the poll. As almost all of the LCC divisions returned two members, the majority would be the difference between the second and third placed candidates.


even clearer. There are a few areas of failure among these - for example some of the Camberwell seats, Lambeth Kennington on occasion and some of the Hackney seats. But in general the Conservatives dominated the parliamentary representation of all these constituencies: they are exactly those identified as being ideal territory in the previous chapter, and give a good idea of their strongholds. These areas are remarkably similar to those where Pelling saw strength before 1914, and indicate the extent to which class voting was already a continuous factor in London’s politics.

One Conservative success story was the Metropolitan Borough of Lewisham in South-east London. Lewisham had two parliamentary seats, East and West, and these had continuous Conservative representation. The local Municipal Reform party controlled the borough council for most of the time. Typical of Lewisham was Brockley, described a few years later as

quite pleasant, always providing you shut your eyes to the cemetery and the new council flats on the other side of the railway cutting … The life of the district consists of getting out of it for most things. The men folk go out of it for their jobs and the women go away to Catford and Lewisham for their shopping. In fact they all just, and only just, live there. Nothing ever happens except for a dance each week at the church hall and an occasional accident on the main road … Briefly Brockley is a dead and alive hole through which most people go to get somewhere else, but it is not a bad place to live just the same. 351

Lewisham was ideal Conservative territory; the description of Brockley echoes those of the suburbia of the previous chapter. The locals were proud of the Conservative ‘tradition’ they were establishing - even though they came close to losing the Lewisham East parliamentary seat in 1929. 352 This close shave was indicative of the fact that the continuity of the Conservative representation masked the existence of many other political organisations in the borough, not least strong

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350 All results information in this section from Craig, Results.
Labour and Liberal parties. The forty or so members of the East Lewisham Young Liberal Association debated with West Lewisham Young Liberals, the West Lewisham Labour Party organised flag days in support of striking miners and petitions supporting the abolition of the death penalty. This pattern was repeated in Croydon, where again unbroken returns of Conservatives to parliament and uninterrupted Ratepayer control of the council masked the existence of healthy opposition groups. So while the Conservatives did do very well in suburbia in the 1920s, they did so because they campaigned and won against other groups and not, as was the case in the Central London strongholds, because they were often handed unopposed returns or faced very weak competition.

In their Central London strongholds, when Conservatives faced serious opposition at parliamentary elections it was more often than not from their 'own side' - from campaigning organisations usually backed by some elements of the Tory press. Such people as the Empire Crusaders and the Anti Waste Leaguers did not challenge for control of local councils, but did challenge at parliamentary by-elections and General Elections. Established Conservatives could be extremely critical of such movements, with the Council of the West Lewisham Conservative Association calling the Anti Waste League '... a personal vendetta by a group which controlled a very powerful section of the press against the Prime Minister.' But division could also occur within official associations over the policies put forward by the campaigning organisations – and in Outer London. The St Albans Conservative Associations adopted resolutions both in favour of Empire Free Trade and in support of Baldwin continuing as party leader, in July 1930.

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353 Lewisham Local Studies and Archives (LHAM), A82/5 (East Lewisham Young Liberal Association records), 1929-30, and A89/100/2 (West Lewisham Labour Party executive committee minutes) meeting 10 Dec 1928 and A89/100/1 meeting 14 Jun 1926.
354 West Lewisham Conservative Association, minutes of Council meeting, 18 Aug 1921.
355 St Albans Conservative Association, minutes of executive committee, 25 July 1930. More on this period follows in chapter six.
On the Middlesex County Council (MCC), control remained in the hands of local Ratepayers' representatives. An idea of the strongest points of conservatism in the Middlesex area can be given by looking at where contests occurred in the county council elections, and where they did not. Typical of the contests is that of March 1928. Unopposed returns of ratepayers' candidates took place in all five Ealing seats, in Hounslow, Southgate North, both Wood Green seats, and Uxbridge, all areas that were Conservative strongholds. The closest contests took place in the eight wards in Tottenham, where Labour made two gains. 356 Labour controlled the MB council in Tottenham from 1923 to 1928 (with a brief gap) and the Conservatives were weaker here - though there was never any question of their forces losing the MCC. 357 There was also no question of Labour capturing the Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey or Kent County Councils. For example the 1928 election of county councillors in Kent 'saw only six contests. The Labour party is comparatively indifferent...' 358 And in Surrey in 1931 coverage of the election makes clear that 'there are no party divisions on the council itself' although 'the new candidates include two Labour nominees.' 359 As suggested earlier, contests themselves were rarities. There were areas where Conservatives were weaker, and as with Middlesex these tended to be where there was a higher working-class population and where Labour had a history of success in other local elections. These areas were not always those closest to London, sometimes Labour had strength in more provincial towns such as Ashford in Kent. There were also areas in Outer London, for example in Leyton, where party politics itself in local elections was opposed:

It ought not to matter what political opinions a man holds provided he is a straightforward, sensible, level-headed person. Unfortunately in Leyton it does, the Labour-Socialists working on party lines are doing their best to secure control of our council. Are such things considered in business life? A public representative on a local

356 LMA, MCC/CL/COUN/2/1 (Middlesex County Council, records of the Clerk's Department).
357 GLPB, LMS 64, County Borough and Municipal Borough Elections: A Handbook for Candidates 1928 by the London Municipal Society (1928), 92. Labour also controlled Edmonton at this time.
358 The Times, 2 March 1928, 9.
359 The Times, 5 March 1931, 16.
council should be chosen for his suitability for the job alone, not because he carries a political label. 360

The wishes of the Stoke Newington ratepayers, cited earlier, were of similar tone.

So far the pattern of Conservative success has been outlined. This success was not uniform and not without problems. The next section examines the problems and circumstances the Conservatives faced in more detail, and looks at how some of the problems were transformed into opportunities.

**Problems and Opportunities Faced by the Conservatives**

London Conservatives faced a number of problems in this period, some serious and fundamental. Some were, though, frivolous, such as facing this opposition tactic in Ealing:

...the employment of a donkey bearing a card suggesting that the animal was one of the same species who voted Conservative. 361

More often than not the problems could be surmounted, and examining the way in which they were tackled helps explain the changing fortunes of the Conservatives in Greater London.

First of all, women aged 30 and over had been allowed to vote at parliamentary elections for the first time in 1918, and this together with other changes made in the Representation of the People Act of that year more than doubled the size of the parliamentary electorate. David Jarvis is among those who have argued that, in general, the enfranchisement of women was of benefit to the Conservatives. This was despite the fact that many Tory men 'tended to view the enfranchisement of

women ... with a combination of trepidation and optimism...'. 362 What they felt would be to their advantage was that the forces of organised male Labour, which could be ranged against the Conservatives, would be diluted. This would, of course, apply equally in London as it would anywhere else, but London did contain seats where single unions had potentially great political power - almost on a par with that held by mining unions in North East England or in South Wales. These included seats in the East End, such as Stratford where the Great Eastern Railway works was located, and in Enfield where there was the Royal Small Arms factory. 363 Theoretically that could mean all the votes of these workers could be delivered for any political party - Labour being the natural beneficiary. The fact that women could now be persuaded - again theoretically - to support the Conservatives may have been of particular encouragement to the party here. Some local associations went further than others in recording their confidence, as the example of Hampstead in the introduction to this chapter showed.

However, there were occasions when Conservatives saw the lack of support from women voters as a factor in their defeat. The main example of this at a General Election was in 1923, the same year of which Austen Chamberlain wrote, 'everybody says we must lose in London.' 364 Conservatives had already lost two by-elections in London on 3 March 1923. At Willesden East, in a straight fight the Liberal candidate, backed by a campaign run by his mother (who had successfully campaigned for her brother, the candidate's uncle, in US gubernatorial contests), overturned a Conservative majority on a swing of 13.4%. 365 This gain was kept by just 114 votes in the general election later that year, but on every other occasion until 1945 a Conservative won the seat. 366 The defeat at Mitcham has already been discussed. 367 In December 1923, and speaking of a General Election campaign centred around the issue of Free Trade versus Conservative-backed

363 Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 42.
365 The Times, 19 Feb 1923, 9.
366 Craig, Results, 277.
tariffs, the Clapham Conservative Association felt that '... the old cry of "your food will cost you more" created alarm in the minds of a large body of female electors, to whom this question of the high cost of living is one of vital importance.' 368 Again this is not strictly a local issue but it was clearly one that mattered to Conservatives in Clapham. By 1925 the LMS made an effort to woo women voters on the issue of the cost of living, and the method of trading:

To the Woman in the Home - The Labour Socialist Party are recommending that the London County Council should be given control of the supply of meat, milk and other foods. Do you want to return to war conditions and have to buy your food with tickets and stand for hours in queues? And deal only at one shop? Or do you prefer to use your money to buy the food you want, where you like? If so, vote on March 5th for Municipal Reform. 369

By 1927 Hampstead Conservatives had reversed their earlier optimism, at least when it came to the extension of the franchise to women aged 21 to 30, which they proceeded to oppose. 370 This extension was something Lord Birkenhead, a cabinet minister in the government that introduced it, thought women should show 'gratitude' for at the next election. 371 Generally speaking historians accept the fact that conservative candidates were successful in their appeal to women voters - we have already seen that it is likely the trend detected in post-war opinion polls had its roots in the post-1918 era. 372 Certainly conservative social events and women's organisations were relatively successful - for example the Wood Green Women's Constitutional Association ran many activities during the 1920s and was chaired for a time by the wife of the local MP, Mrs Locker-Lampson. 373 The occasional

367 See chapter two.
368 LSE, CCA/11 (Clapham Conservative Association minutes), Annual Report for 1923-24, presented 7 Apr 1924.
369 GLPB, LMS 76 (LCC Election 1925 - Municipal Reform leaflets), Leaflet No. 12.
371 Quoted by Butler, Electoral System, 38.
372 Ramsden, Appetite for Power, 234. See also John Turner, 'Sex, Age and the Labour Vote in the 1920s', in Peter Denley, Stefan Fogelvik and Charles Harvey (eds), History and Computing II, Manchester (Manchester University Press), 1989, 243-254, and McCrillis, Popular Conservatism, 46-82.
fear of women voters was similar to the fear of younger voters also occasionally exhibited by Conservatives. 374 Both fears were also 'tempered by hope'. 375 Tactics such as the formation of organisations like the Junior Imperial League for the young were used as a remedy for Conservative fears. 376 For example, in Clapham the Junior Imperial League organiser was the local agent, and he

...ensured that a JIL branch offering a range of social activities and political support was in operation by 1921. 377

Bruce Coleman - among others - has pointed out that 'the [Conservative] party's broad base of support was arguably a factor in its stability...', and also, of course, in its ability to flourish. 378 The wide range of non-political organisations supporting local conservative politics has already been shown. The records of the Wood Green party show that a healthy level of income could be generated each year for the party. Although the local MP, Godfrey Locker-Lampson, was by far the largest single contributor to party funds, giving £80 quarterly, others contributed large and small amounts. 379 In Ilford the local MP from 1928, Sir George Hamilton, donated his entire parliamentary salary - £105 per quarter - to the local Conservative Association, and this was clearly a major contribution to the costs of the organisation. 380 Yet in the year to November 1929 the local party had an income of £841/13/-, and expenses of £800/16/-, so even allowing for Hamilton's contributions there must have been a healthy flow of income and plenty of activities to spend on, especially in a General Election year. 381 Accounting records from the Westminster St George's Conservative Association

375 Jarvis, 'Conservative Electoral Hegemony', 139.
376 See The Times, 3 Feb 1925, 9, report on the AGM of the Westminster St George's Conservative Association, at which the Junior Imperial League is noted as specifically a device to secure the younger vote and to encourage 'right political opinions' among young voters.
377 McCrillis, Popular Conservatism, 92.
379 LMA, ACC/I 158/4 (Wood Green Constitutional Association Account Book 1918-1934). Locker-Lampson's contribution is the same from 1919-1930, but by 1933 it had fallen to £50 quarterly.
380 RBDGE, Ilford Conservative Association, Finance Committee meeting minutes 24 Sep 1931.
show a range of contributions, large and small - although a greater total value as might be expected for such an area. Here there does seem to have been more of a problem extracting contributions from the local MP at times, but still income was healthy. 382 In Finchley and Friern Barnet a system of 'rating' was used to determine the amount local ward branches were expected to contribute towards central constituency funds: £6 per 1,000 electors in 1930, for example. 383 Where records survive it appears that the targets were met. This organisation could obviously demonstrate to bankers that it had a good income stream: in 1929 in the aftermath of the General Election it was £334 overdrawn, principally due to the cost of its offices; this was reduced to £253 by that October, and was wiped out before Christmas. 384 Its own efforts here were supplemented by the party receiving an income from Major Cadogan, the local MP, who contributed £100 quarterly in 1930, for example. 385 With such solid financial support, Conservatives could feel comfortable, more than matching the spending power of trade unions which aided local Labour parties.

In some areas of London records show the effect that lack of funds could have on local Conservatives. But attempts were made to tackle such problems, and these did help Conservatives consolidate their position. 386 It was not always true that safe seats had financially secure associations: there were problems in Epsom in 1921. 387 But generally problems were, as might be expected, in areas where Conservatism was weaker. The Kennington Conservative Association insisted that any candidate wishing to contest one of that division's LCC seats in March 1925 must have a '… willingness to spend up to £200 on the election …': the 471 members of the local party at the time could not support the campaign on their

381 RBDGE, Ilford Conservative Association, Finance Committee meeting minutes 22 Nov 1929.
382 WMIN, ACC/487/9 (St George's Hanover Square Conservative Association minute book), 3 Oct 1929 on Worthington-Evans’ contribution - which was never properly settled - and ACC/487/10 (also a minute book) 29 May 1931 on Duff Cooper's contribution which was also disputed. See also Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 247-248.
383 BNT, Ms 18037/2 (Minutes of the Finchley and Friern Barnet Conservative Association 1929-34), Council meeting of 31 Jan 1930.
384 BNT, Ms 18037/2, finance committee meetings of 19 Jun 1929, 1 Oct 1929 and 9 Dec 1929.
385 BNT, Ms 18037/2, finance committee meeting of 14 Apr 1930, and later notes in volume.
386 See also Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 219 onwards, and Ramsden, Appetite for Power, 259.
387 Epsom Conservative Association, minutes of executive committee meeting, 27 Jan 1921.
own. 388 One solution to the problem of lack of funds the party came up with was leaving opponents unchallenged, or weakly challenged, in some areas of London, as mentioned in the second half of chapter two. Additionally, as party leader Baldwin appealed to richer associations like that in Westminster St George's in early 1926 for help to be given to poorer London organisations. The annual report for 1926 shows that £1,150 was raised during the year to help the poorer associations. 389 This amount of money would undoubtedly have had an impact at election time. In 1929, for example, Shoreditch received £800, as did Islington South, while St Pancras North received £850 and Finsbury £900 for the campaign, all from the centrally-accumulated fund. 390 Support was also given in kind as well - for example in the 1931 General Election, party workers from Kensington South helped out in other seats, something that occurred quite often. 391

In some areas, though, rather than work to solve financial problems, the Conservatives created difficulties for themselves. Those who looked after Conservative Association monies did so in their own names, a potential source of difficulty if arguments arose. For example, in Ilford a dispute broke out within the Becontree Ward branch:

Mr Hobbs reported that although the Becontree Branch had decided by resolution to remove their Hon Secretary ... that member had refused to hand over the books, papers and monies belonging to the association. Repeated application had been made for the return of the property but so far without success. It was resolved that a summons be issued in the County Court for the recovery of the property involved. 392

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388 LSE, COLL/MISC/463/1 (Kennington Conservative Association minutes), General Purposes Committee meeting 8 April 1924. Executive committee meeting 30 May 1924 reports the membership figure.
389 WMIN, ACC/487/9 Annual Reports for 1925 and 1926, and executive committee meeting of 5 Feb 1926.
390 J C C Davidson's (the party chairman's) papers do not appear to show a record of contributions being received centrally specifically for redistribution, but the accounts for the 1929 General Election distribution of funds to constituencies, which do survive among his papers, show that a number of less well off London constituency parties were among the largest receivers of Central Office grants. HLRO, DAV/187 - Income and Expenditure Accounts of the 1929 General Election, May-Dec 1929.
391 Kensington South Conservative Association, minutes of Annual General Meeting, 8 April 1932.
392 RBDGE, Ilford Conservative Association, Finance Committee meeting minutes 4 July 1930.
Also, at least in Ilford, the principal financial problem turned out to be that money was held right down the chain of command - in ward associations - but did not reach the local Conservative Association in the centre where it was needed for campaigning. At the end of 1930 the central body resolved that

50% of the net balance [in the ward associations] shall, at the end of the financial year, be paid to the Honorary Treasurer of the Association, for the purposes of the Association. 393

In general, however, such problems with money were not widespread in Greater London, and by such schemes as helping poorer associations with money from richer ones, leaving a few hard-up areas uncontested, and raising as much money as possible from small and large subscribers, Conservatives turned finance into one of their strengths in the region.

The apathy of the electorate, or at least the fear of it, was a problem that Conservatives faced. This was mainly a problem for them in local elections. Turnout in pre-war LCC elections hovered around 50% - it was 56% in 1907, 51% in 1910, and 52% in 1913. In 1919, with an electorate still smaller than the newly enlarged parliamentary electorate, turnout collapsed to 18%, the sort of level where it remained throughout the 1920s. 394 This worried the Conservatives greatly, probably because they feared the mass ranks of trade union members who would be led into the polling stations to support Labour under orders from their local commissars. Far more election material was produced by the London Municipal Society simply encouraging voters to turn out than by the London Labour Party. The Clapham Conservative Association blamed apathy for losses on the Wandsworth METB in 1919 - Labour winning the seats in the Clapham North ward was 'a result we must all deplore, but which was brought about entirely by the terrible apathy which prevailed amongst our own supporters in that ward.' 395

393 RBDGE, Ilford Conservative Association, Finance Committee meeting minutes 1 Dec 1930.
394 GLPB, LMS 172 (London Municipal Notes Vol XXII No 127 - March 1919), 44.
In Epsom the loss of the 1923 General Election - though not this parliamentary seat - was blamed by the local association on 'over confidence' and 'the number of abstentions.' Finchley and Friern Barnet Conservatives saw apathy as the 'enemy within', blaming 'lack of support by members of the Council' for a £10/3/4 loss on the annual dinner in 1929. In 1927, election literature in Leyton warned,

If you do nothing to help, and as a result of apathy Labour Socialists secure a majority, you must be prepared to have a communist mayor and a red flag on the Town Hall.

After the 1928 contests, the same organ commented,

It seems as if nothing short of a miracle or statutory compulsion will bring people to realise their responsibilities.

Activists, generally speaking, are prone to blame factors outside their control for setbacks more than anything they may themselves have done. A glance at some results of General Elections in some Greater London constituencies suggests, however, that London Conservatives' fear of voter apathy had some justification. In five sample constituencies which Labour won at General Elections in 1923 and 1929, but not at any other time, turnout fell in 1923, rose in 1924 - when the Conservatives did better - and fell again in 1929. In one of these constituencies, Lambeth Kennington, the fall in turnout from 1924 to 1929 was a substantial 10%. It has already been shown that turnout did tend to fall when Conservatives were on the defensive in parliamentary elections in their own seats, and nationally it did rise when in 1924 they took on a Labour government, and in 1931 when they took on the remnant of an outgoing Labour government. With justification, the

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396 Epsom Conservative Association, minutes of Annual General Meeting, 27 March 1924.
397 BNT, Ms 18037/2, Council meeting 10 Dec 1929.
398 WFOR, L32.5, Leyton Electors Gazette October 1927, 5.
399 WFOR, L32.5, Leyton Electors Gazette November 1928, 7.
400 The sample constituencies used were: Dartford, Greenwich, Leyton East, Lambeth Kennington and St Pancras North. Dartford was also won by Labour at a by-election in 1920, as described earlier. For results see Craig, Results.
Conservatives in London did fear apathy among the electorate in general, and among their natural supporters in particular.

The Conservatives did worse at some local elections than others. At General Elections the Conservatives were 'defeated' in 1923 - though they remained the largest party nationally - and really did lose in 1929. After the 1929 defeat Conservatives in London were among those asked by Conservative Central Office to express their opinions on why they had lost. The Ealing Conservative Association responded:

1. The adoption of the slogan 'Safety First'
2. A hostile press
3. De-rating and revaluation being misunderstood by the electors
4. Sufficient prominence was not given to the policy of safeguarding

In Kennington, a seat that the Conservatives lost in 1929, local party members sent off a detailed response to J C C Davidson's request for views. They gave some local and some 'national' reasons:

1. The fact that the election date was anticipated in the press made it hard to arouse enthusiasm
2. 'Unemployment and misrepresentation by our opponents on the housing conditions were extremely harmful.'
3. The widening of the franchise to women aged 21-30 in 1928:
   'While we do not attribute the loss of the seat to the increased vote, we do feel its unpopularity did much to damp the enthusiasm for the cause. In our opinion the Prime Minister was badly advised in this matter.'
4. Local Government (mainly de-rating)

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401 See table 2A for London results.
402 LMA, ACC/1338/1 executive committee meeting on 13 Sep 1929. The slogan 'Safety First' was meant as an appeal to the electorate not to chance a vote for Labour, but came to characterise a lacklustre campaign: see Ramsden (ed.), British Politics, 575.
(5) Trams (a scare story about selling off the trams from a neighbouring constituency)

(6) Poster campaign (they did not like the 'safety first' slogan)

(7) 'In view of all the circumstances ... we feel that the press were responsible for the loss of the seat in Kennington.'

(8) More advertising was needed in the popular press.

(9) The Liberals in Kennington did not back the Conservatives - there was no Liberal standing in the constituency - because the Conservatives were standing against a Liberal in North Lambeth, a neighbouring seat.

(10) '...The leaders of the party were not sufficiently in touch with the rank and file.' This can be taken as code for 'poor leadership' being shown by top people.403

During the 1924-29 parliament the Conservatives lost a number of parliamentary by-elections to Labour and the Liberals, including in the Greater London area. These comprised three losses for the government and five seats held with often greatly reduced majorities. 404 Williamson argues that nationally 'no leading Conservative thought that these by-elections indicated a decisive movement against the government, indeed for most of this period almost all of them were confident of retaining an overall majority.' 405 But the losses and reduced majorities were undoubtedly setbacks, and in London it was more often than not Labour that gained rather than the Liberals. When taking into account the results at local elections, in particular in 1928, this trend is emphasised. Labour scored its best LCC result to date in 1928. 406 Marginal seats on the LCC such as that at Kennington came too close for comfort that year, especially compared to 1925 - here the Conservative Association managed to secure the return of only one of its

403 LSE, COLL/MISC/463/1, Executive Council meeting of 27 Sep 1929. The Liberal mentioned in point (9) was the incumbent MP, Frank Briant, who had won a three-cornered contest in 1924 by 29 votes. See Craig, Results, 35.
404 See table 7 for results.
406 See table 3.
two nominees, by four votes. And though, at the METB elections in 1928 Labour did not gain control of more authorities, it did secure the return of many more councillors. Although Williamson went on to say that 'as the government equipped itself with policies during 1928, it contributed to a marked increase in Conservative confidence,' the signs of Conservative defeat in 1929 were there in Greater London in the years before.

The National Society of Conservative Agents blamed the 1923 defeat on 'the want of a really Conservative press', and the fact that they were not consulted about the election date, while in 1929 they attacked the fact that Trade Unions could legally pay for posters to be produced supporting Labour without them having to go into returns of election expenses. De-rating was - as suggested above - another thing Conservatives blamed for their defeat in 1929, though they had often viewed the move as positive beforehand. Such issues as these had the same effect in London as they did in the rest of the country. The most spectacular divisions with Conservative forces occurred over issues such as Empire Free Trade and Anti Waste, which had particular effect in London; they will be discussed later. While they were most marked at parliamentary by-elections, actions like the purchase of 10,000 copies of Bonar Law's pamphlet on government anti-waste measures by Clapham Conservatives in 1920 showed that officials could be worried, by-election or no by-election.

Conservatives were, however, not immune from divisions in other ways. In Kennington in 1925 two Conservative candidates for the Lambeth Board of

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407 LSE, COLL/MISC/463/1, meeting of 13 April 1928: the result in the two-member ward was MR 5,155, Labour 5,151, MR 5,139, Labour 5,128. The MRs won by about 900 votes in 1925.
408 See table 4.
409 Williamson, 'Safety First', 397.
410 WMIN, ACC/485/4 (National Society of Conservative Agents Council minutes), meeting on 14 Jan 1924, and ACC/485/5 meeting on 1 Jul 1929.
411 William Bridgeman wrote, in December 1928, that the 'de-rating proposals, which though not likely to be understood thoroughly, are most statesmanlike, and I think by far the best thing we have done. Their effect on the election is doubtful, but I think they will keep the farmers on our side, and not be really unpopular anywhere.' (Philip Williamson (ed), The Modernisation of Conservative Politics: The Diaries and Letters of William Bridgeman 1904-1935, London (The Historians' Press), 1988, 217.) The LMS expressed similar views.
412 LSE, CCA/11, meeting on 20 December 1920.
Guardians withdrew from the election because they did not agree with the actions of other Lambeth Conservatives sitting on the Board. 'After some time and considerable pressure' they withdrew their resignations 'for the sake of unity and for the good of the party.' They reacted as might have been expected of an organisation whose constitution (in another London constituency) has been described as

…the constitution of a party which takes its policies and programmes as found, and which anticipates struggles for precedence rather than differences of opinion.

In Holborn in 1922 the Conservative Mayor of the METB and LCC candidate (and later MP for Lambeth Kennington 1924-29 and 1931-39) George Harvey was attacked by Independent candidate Harry Jenner:

He refused, on November 11th, … to assist in organising Earl Haig's appeal to collect funds for unemployed ex-service men, which lost the British Legion Unity Relief Fund hundreds of pounds.

Harvey still won without difficulty, but this shows that a Conservative in even the safest seat could be accused of behaving in an unconservative way. Sometimes the Conservative party in London could, by the behaviour of its adherents, make problems for itself.

As well as internal problems that Conservatives faced, they had to cope with changes in the electoral landscape. The expanded franchise has been mentioned, but there were other points to consider. One of the most significant was the change in population density and location due to economic changes and the growth of the suburbs. Dunbabin argues that in Greater London in general, and in some county of London constituencies in particular, 'electoral continuity conceals

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413 LSE, COLL/MISC/463/1, General Purposes Committee meeting 13 Mar 1925.  
414 This refers to Greenwich, from Benney, Gray and Pear, How People Vote, 43.  
415 GLPB, LMS 180 (Election Addresses for Borough Elections 1922).
an enormous change in the economic circumstances of the area.\textsuperscript{416} The extent of these changes was covered in chapter two, and could be disadvantageous, for example relating to LCC elections. But the Conservatives consolidated their suburban strongholds in the main: they won 71 Greater London seats in 1924 (the election fought most clearly on a party basis in this period, where they performed best); though a number fell to Labour in 1945 and again in 1997, some suburban areas remain strongholds to this day.\textsuperscript{417}

Conservatives also had to face a different franchise system for local elections. The 1918 Representation of the People Act had established a standard nationwide franchise for elections to local councils and Boards of Guardians, but it was different from the parliamentary vote. Men required six months' occupation of land or premises in the local government area, women the same or alternatively to be married to a man so qualified whom she resided with, if aged 30 or over.\textsuperscript{418} In addition, the disqualification from voting by paupers was removed, and owners (as opposed to occupiers) of land in a local government area were given the right to be elected to the local authority, although not the vote. The franchises for local and parliamentary elections were not equalised until the 1945 Representation of the People Act.\textsuperscript{419} In Stepney in the 1920s, 30% of the population could vote for an MP, but only 25% could vote for a councillor.\textsuperscript{420} From 1900 the LCC

\textsuperscript{416} Dunbabin, 'British Elections', 248.
\textsuperscript{417} See table 2A.
\textsuperscript{418} The complicated system is explained in B Keith Lucas, \textit{The English Local Government Franchise}, Oxford (Basil Blackwell), 1952, 234-235.
\textsuperscript{419} Lucas, \textit{Franchise}, 235.
\textsuperscript{420} Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 42. It is hard to say for certain why both these figures are so low. Clues can be found in census and other data about the constituency which show that the population was poor and had to crowd into slum housing. In 1911 Stepney had the third highest average number of occupants per room in all types of housing in the whole LCC area, behind only Deptford and Shoreditch. It had the highest average number of people living in one room tenements. It is also likely that life expectancy in the area would have been lower than elsewhere, and therefore there would have been more people aged under 21 in the area as a proportion of the population. There may also have been a noticeable proportion of 'aliens' in the locality. All this would imply that registering much of the population to vote would be difficult. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the mobile population and the poor level of education in the borough did not help either. Nor did the fact that it might not always have been in the political or financial interest of a landlord, providing electoral roll details for his property, to declare the names of all his tenants. See Pelling, \textit{British Elections}, 45-6, \textit{Census of England and Wales, 1911, Summary Tables} (1915) and \textit{Census of England and Wales 1911 - Area, Families or Separate Occupiers and Population Volume 1} (1912), the last two both published by HMSO.
franchise was the same as the then parliamentary franchise with the addition of between 80,000 and 100,000 women voters. In 1918 it did not keep up with the changes in the parliamentary franchise - this came later. At first glance it would appear that this lack of change would be of advantage to the Conservatives, and it probably was. But this did not stop them complaining about it. The Metropolitan Conservative Agents Association (MCAA) became upset after the 1922 LCC elections and resolved at a meeting in April


... that the attention of the London Municipal Society be called to the deliberate practice of the Labour party at municipal elections in certain divisions of the metropolitan area of sending poll cards to electors who possess the parliamentary vote only.  

Presumably those who did not have the vote at local elections could not have affected the result because they could not have voted anyway. However, the discrepancy - if drawn attention to in this way - may have created confusion, resentment, and a pressure for change that the MCAA did not want to see develop. It is not even clear that Labour was doing this deliberately, but still the MCAA were unhappy.

Finally it is important to point out that, as the party in office on the LCC throughout this period, the MRs were bound to fall prey to any 'events' that made them as incumbents look bad. The largest of these occurred in early 1928, when there was serious flooding of the River Thames upstream of Westminster, and lives were lost as a result. The MRs had the misfortune to have to face re-election in March of that year, and produced copious propaganda to defend themselves:

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422 LSE, CCA/4, meeting 20 Apr 1922.
423 It was not unheard of for a Conservative body to be accused of malpractice itself: in November 1920 the Norwood Conservative Association complained about the canvassing for and bargaining of votes that occurs each year at the Annual General Meeting of the Metropolitan Division of the NUA. [National Unionist Association] This council considers this practice derogatory (sic) to the dignity of the party...'. LBH, Class IV 166/1/13, Minutes of the Norwood Central Conservative Association Executive Council, meeting of 29 Nov 1920.
Early this year an unprecedented disaster befell the low-lying portions of London alongside the river. All the available evidence points to the fact that it was caused by a combination of exceptional circumstances, chief amongst which was a phenomenal tide or tidal wave. … The river defences had been regularly inspected and all the existing banks had been adequate as regards strength and height to cope with all the tides since 1864. The disaster was due to abnormal and unprecedented conditions which could not be foreseen. \(^{424}\)

The London Labour Party, which said that neglect was responsible for the scale of the problems, was accused of making 'political capital' out of the disaster. \(^{425}\) But as they had such a chance so seldom, it was not surprising that they tried. In the event the 1928 election did not lead to dramatic change in terms of representation on the Council: the only change in party representation in a West London division was in Hammersmith North, where there was one Labour gain from the MRs - and this was not by the river; there was another Labour gain from the MRs in Lambeth Kennington, but by just 12 votes after a recount. \(^{426}\) The MRs' record of sound and efficient administration, something they prided themselves on but opponents always doubted they had, took a knock as a result of this disaster, but not necessarily a knock of long term significance.

In this section it has been shown that conservative forces in Greater London did face problems in what looks at first glance like a successful period from 1918-1931. They encountered oddities too, such as the astonishing series of post-Bottomley results in Hackney South. The Conservatives, who won the seat twice in 1922, with a substantial majority at the General Election, came bottom of the poll in 1923 when Herbert Morrison won, and were scared enough to allow a Liberal a free run against Labour in 1924. They were to recapture the seat only for the 1931-35 parliament. \(^{427}\) As well as this they faced other changes in society and in the political landscape at a local level, all of which they had to deal with. What

\(^{424}\) GLPB, LMS 77, LCC Election Leaflet 22 (1928) (Manifesto of the Municipal Reform party), 8-9.
\(^{425}\) GLPB, LMS 78, LCC Election 1928 - pamphlets, London Questions No. 2.
\(^{427}\) Craig, Results, 22.
they did to face their problems has, in this section, been shown to have been for the most part successful.

**Tactics and Electoral Machinery**

Between 1920 and 1924 the Conservative party made three long term decisions. The first was to remove Lloyd George from office. The second was to take up the role of ‘defender of the social order’. The third was to make Labour the chief party of opposition. These decisions were attempts to contain the upheaval caused by the Labour party’s arrival as a major force and to gain whatever advantage could be gained from it. 428

Cowling’s famous summary of Tory tactics in the early 1920s has passed into historical folklore in terms of British high politics. However, while it may seem that what he is summarising are national and not local political issues, his comment is well worth bearing in mind when examining the tactics of the Conservatives in London from 1918-1931. Though local politicians were looking over their shoulders at Labour more and the Liberals less, the latter could still have a significant effect on electoral outcomes, in particular in the 1929 General Election.

The LMS produced much in the way of publications, in particular election material, and propaganda journals, most of which still survive. A study of these can give a good idea of the successful tactics used by Conservatives in local government in the London area. As has been shown, apathy was a major worry for local conservatives at this time. The LMS aimed some of its election material at getting the voter to turn out, arguing

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If the men and women of London deny the first obligation of their citizenship by neglecting to take their part in the choice of those who are to rule over them, they are directly contributing to the downfall of popular government. 429

However, were individual voters of London to be on Poor Relief at the time then the attitude of the LMS was very different: they wanted those in receipt of relief to be disqualified from voting. They accused Labour controlled Boards of Guardians and local councils of using these people as an army of supporters, voting to keep them in power and save their own relief at election time:

For the unfortunate man and woman, down on their luck, who are reluctantly driven to seek Poor Relief, we can have nothing but the sincerest pity. But for the deliberate policy of maintaining an army of voters on Poor Relief in Poplar, Bermondsey, Stepney, Woolwich, Deptford, West Ham, Bedwellty, Shoreditch etc. we can have nothing but contempt. It is the worst form of degradation to which human beings can be subjected. 430

The Executive Committee of the LMS was dissatisfied with Neville Chamberlain’s plans to tackle ‘... the evil of bribery at Poor Law elections’ in 1926 and proceeded with a gentle campaign for disfranchisement. 431 The tactic, however, did not work. What did work, though, was the way in which the MRs, once in power on the LCC, changed the system of voting to their advantage. In 1913 they moved polling day from Saturday to Thursday and brought the close of the poll forward to 5pm. Clearly this would impact against those out at work – those more inclined to support the Progressives or Labour candidates. For this among other reasons, the MRs increased their majority on the LCC at that year's elections. 432 In 1919, The Times included a report of how Herbert Morrison protested strongly at the post-war retention of these practices, and how he

431 GLMS, Ms 19,528 Vol 2 (London Municipal Society executive committee minutes), meeting 2 December 1926. The phrase is that of the LMS, not Chamberlain.
432 Young, Local Politics, 100-102.
commented, 'fixing the election for a Thursday will, in effect, disfranchise thousands of work-people'. 433

At this point it is valuable to look at how the LMS and the Conservative party nationally got on, as this will assist in understanding how the electoral machinery worked. 434 First of all, from its inception it is clear that the two bodies were linked, with the implication that the LMS was subordinate to the Conservatives. It was hoped that in theory a different name would appeal to a broader range of voters, including more moderate Liberals. On the ground locally many of the key personnel were the same - it was the local Conservative Associations who selected LMS candidates and the records have survived together in several instances, for example in Westminster, Ealing and Kennington. These archives show that the same people were likely to be officials on the two bodies, underlining the close association between them. Records from Clapham and Lambeth show how committees of the local Conservatives chose the MR candidates for LCC or METB elections. 435 Of those records examined in the preparation of this study, only those for Finchley and Friern Barnet make no mention of local elections and, unlike most Conservative local associations, here there were few local councillors among members - only four out of 80 Association Council members in 1931, and no Aldermen that year at all. 436 This was the exception, not the rule.

The LMS took and used official Conservative party publicity material as well as producing a lot of its own. The best examples of this were during General Election campaigns - in 1929 and 1931 the LMS used the London Election Notes produced by Conservative Central Office. The campaigning points included in the pamphlet were tailored to London issues, or national issues which were important in

433 The Times, 21 Jan 1919, 10.
434 Young, Local Politics, explains the relationship in detail.
435 LSE, CCA/11, minutes of executive committee of Clapham Conservative Association, 15 Sep 1919, and LBH Class IV 166/1/7 - flyer dated 3 Oct 1922 in volume of Minutes of Gipsy Hill Conservative Association.
436 BNT, Ms 18037/2, Finchley and Friern Barnet Conservative Association 1931 Annual Report, presented 15 Apr 1931.
London - for example electricity improvement work in 1929. Attacking the Liberal 'Yellow Book' plans, they said,

[currently] work is being carried out with the utmost possible rapidity, and Mr Lloyd George cannot expedite matters unless he is given the powers of a dictator. Even then, having no knowledge of a highly technical undertaking, he would make a sad mess of the whole scheme! In London, since the passage of the Conservative Electricity Act of 1925, there has been a steady fall in the cost of electricity. 437

Relations were also close during campaigns for LCC elections. The general level of interest in these contests is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that The Times gave full coverage to them and printed complete results. It went into far more detail with these elections than those for other County Councils. Also the then Conservative party chairman Neville Chamberlain took a personal interest in the 1931 campaign for the LCC, expressing a particular pleasure at the success of the film vans used by his side:

It is very remarkable how they [the film vans] can get publicity when meetings fail. During the LCC election on two nights when large halls had been booked and good speakers brought down only about 50 people turned up. On the same two nights speakers going round with the van reckoned that they addressed audiences amounting in the aggregate to over 3000 each night. 438

The film vans were a great asset to the Conservatives in general about this time: they were used in the 1931 General Election campaign to great effect; Andrew Taylor has shown that

A [Conservative] cinema van tour in April-November 1926 lasted 31 weeks and cost £40 per week, which made it very cost effective compared to conventional propaganda techniques. In a village of 600 adults, 400 would attend with a special 4pm showing

for children facilitated by teachers allowing their charges to leave early. Little
advertising was needed because the van itself proved a great crowd-puller … 439

The March 1931 example above also shows the degree of importance attached to
the LCC elections by the central Conservative organisation, and shows too what
the Conservative-backed forces could do with the substantial resources at their
disposal. However, despite the two bodies being inextricably linked, the LMS and
the Conservative party did not always get on. The Daily Telegraph reported the
comments of Sir Herbert Nield, Conservative MP for Ealing, during a House of
Commons debate on an LCC Tramways and Improvements measure, made about
the LMS-run LCC:

The London County Council always seemed to forget that there were other governing
bodies besides itself. It had lived on evil terms with its neighbours, and no good words
were to be found for it in Middlesex, Hertford, Essex, Kent or Surrey. 440

Unlike any other county council, the LCC had to apply to parliament for
permission to borrow by means of an annual 'money bill', and there could often be
fierce criticism from MPs who thought that amounts being spent were too great.
441 For example, the Executive Committee of the LMS had to try and head off
'agitation which was being raised by Conservative members in the House of
Commons in connection with the employment of temporary officials by the
London County Council'. 442 Obviously it would be embarrassing to them if a fuss
was made in parliament about their administration of the LCC, so the LMS tried
to dissuade the MPs involved from speaking out further. The greatest fight
between parliament and the LCC occurred over the issue of paying for the new
Waterloo Bridge, between 1932 and 1936, resolved when the incoming Labour

439 Andrew Taylor, 'Speaking to Democracy: The Conservative Party and Mass Opinion from the
1920s to the 1950s', in Ball and Holliday (eds), Mass Conservatism, 78-99, 84. On the 1931
General Election campaign van use see Thorpe, 1931, 188.
440 Daily Telegraph, 23 April 1920, reported in GLPB, London Municipal Notes No 131 (May
1920), 10.
(Macmillan), 1939, 585.
442 GLMS, Ms 19,528 Vol 2, meeting of 24 Jan 1924.
administration in 1934 began paying for the work with current rates income rather than capital expenditure. 443

As has been shown the overriding raison d'être of the LMS was to keep rates low in the authorities it controlled. This theme appears constantly in its election propaganda. Illustrations often depicted the rate in particular authorities as a weight, with Labour controlled authorities figures as large red weights and their own as smaller blue ones. In 1929 the figures given for Labour authorities were rates of 17/8 in the £ in Poplar, 16/- in Bermondsey, and 12/6 in Battersea. The selected Municipal Reform controlled boroughs' figures were Wandsworth 10/6, Fulham 10/5, and St Pancras 9/11. 444 'You Pay - Vote for Municipal Reform Candidates and Low Rates.' When election time was approaching strenuous efforts were made in MR-controlled authorities to keep rates down. At the Executive Committee of the LMS a few months before the 1925 METB elections, 'a letter was read from Mr Charles Pascall, a prominent Municipal Reformer in Hammersmith, urging the Society to warn local authorities that strict economy was desirable in view of the approaching Borough Council elections. It was resolved that a letter should be written to the leaders and whips of the Municipal Reform party in each borough calling attention to the point.' 445 Local associations joined in the cry; Norwood Conservative Association lambasted the 'alarming rise in the local rates since the last election' in 1920, despite the fact that their friends ran Lambeth METB council. 446

It was not just the level of rates which excited the LMS, but also the spending of Labour controlled METBs in the county of London. Following the loss of a number of authorities to Labour in November 1919, the decision was made to watch these thirteen London METBs carefully for signs of extravagance. 447 As well as examples of 'excessive' spending, the LMS attacked Camberwell and

443 Gibbon and Bell, History of the LCC, 583.
444 GLPB, LMS 130, LMS Leaflets and Pamphlets 1929, Municipal Election Leaflet No 7.
445 GLMS, Ms 19,528 Vol 2, meeting of 30 April 1925.
446 LBH, Class IV 166/1/13, meeting of 1 Oct 1920.
Deftord for giving council workers May Day as a holiday, and they expressed
disgust at the fact that in Camberwell 'on Empire Day the Union Jack was missing
from the flagstaff on the Town Hall'. In fact the flag issue came up elsewhere:
in Battersea the banning of the Union Jack being flown from the Town Hall on the
ground that it was a political symbol resulted in fighting and court appearances;
and 'ructions' followed the flying of the red flag on May Day from the town hall in
Edmonton. These were just a few examples of the conservative LMS
positioning themselves against upheaval in the traditional order of things, the
traditional flying of flags - just the position Cowling indicated that Conservatives
did take.

LMS propaganda also made a point of using what they thought was a derogatory
label for their 'Labour-Socialist' opponents. They also wanted to make sure that
official Labour candidates were distinguished from other candidates who may
have adopted the word 'labour' as part of their label - including some tried
abortively by the Conservatives themselves. For example in Lewisham West a
'Labour Committee' was set up in 1921, and in St Albans a proposal for
'Conservative Labour candidates' was considered in 1923. The aim as always
was conservative advantage. In the early 1920s they produced a leaflet Is Your
Labour Candidate a Socialist?

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448 GLPB, LMS 135, LMS Leaflets and Pamphlets 1920-22, Municipal Reform Pamphlet No 13:
449 The Times, 4 Nov 1925, 8, and letter from Graham Dalling, Local History Officer, London
Borough of Enfield, to the author, 29 August 2002.
450 GLMS, Ms 19,526, Minutes of Council Meetings of the LMS, meeting on 11 Apr 1921. The
LMS decided '...that the term 'Labour-Socialist' should be used wherever possible.' This is far from
being the only example.
451 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldivin, 117, describes attempts by some Conservatives during wartime
to create a labour organisation of their own supporters. The NDP, as it became, went on to some
success in certain constituencies, including in London, at the 1918 General Election. See Wrigley,
Lloyd George, 7 on this development. Lewisham West Conservative Association, minutes of
Council meeting, 10 Jan 1921, and St Albans Conservative Association. minutes of Annual
General Meeting, 11 May 1923.
Of course your 'Labour' candidate has a right to be a Socialist if he believes in Socialism. But if he is a Socialist he should call himself a Socialist so that everyone may know what they are voting for.  

This is just one of many examples of propaganda produced by conservatives which, as Jarvis has also noted, allowed for the 'lack of sophistication' of the electorate by putting issues in very simplistic terms.

To make the advantage of being 'anti-socialist' hit home the LMS incorporated into their election literature fierce attacks on what might happen if Labour won control of the LCC. They threatened the public with 'the establishment of socialism and communism through the machinery of local government'. Comparisons with what had happened to the administration of Moscow since 1917 were frequent. But the LMS were not always on the offensive when it came to propaganda. Speaking of the Conservative party in the country as a whole at this time, Ewen Green has argued

...the Conservatives not only far outmatched the left in terms of the quantity of publicity material they produced, but also in the quality and nature of the media they deployed. Yet, in spite of the Conservatives' undoubted success as a 'propaganda machine', many Conservatives did not see their party dominating this field. Indeed, particularly in the realm of political literature, the left was often described by Conservatives as enjoying almost complete ascendancy.

Perhaps this was in part a misunderstanding of just how much the left was producing, and in part a reflection of Conservative fears at the content of the propaganda of their opponents. It has already been shown that they fell victim to an assault on their handling of Thames flood defences in early 1928 which,

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452 GLPB, LMS 135, LMS Leaflet No 2 (1920-22), Is Your Labour Candidate a Socialist? This was part of the national approach that the Conservatives were taking, which was put into practice in London as elsewhere.
453 Jarvis, 'Conservative Electoral Hegemony', 140.
454 GLPB, LMS 135, LMS Leaflet No 20 (1920-22), Municipal Reform v Progressive Socialism.
455 GLPB, LMS 130, Pamphlet Moscow's Municipal Socialism by Dr E Luboff.
456 Green, Ideologies, 137.
although unsuccessful, rattled them. They were also taken by surprise in late 1924 when they learned that the Progressive party was preparing an assault on their housing policy at the LCC elections due the following March. This may well sound surprising given that housing policy was one of the recent Labour government's perceived achievements - in the form of the Wheatley Act - so the issue should have been in the minds of political activists at this time. The LMS had, in effect, to make up a housing policy on the hoof to ensure they had something to counter with.

The matter was of urgent importance ... [the Progressive proposals] would have a serious effect upon our chances of success at the forthcoming LCC election. It was therefore necessary that we should be first in the field with our housing policy. 457

Fortunately the LMS had a favourable and supportive press to help them most of the time - a fact they often recognised. For example, after the METB council elections of November 1925 at the Executive Committee meeting '... it was resolved that a vote of thanks be accorded to the press for their work during the recent borough council elections.' 458

Occasionally the way Greater London voted was determined by non-London factors. The advocacy of tariffs on imported goods led to the cry of 'dear food' defeating the Conservatives on more than one occasion. But David Close has argued that it was in London that it first became clear to the Conservatives, in May 1930, that tariff reform need no longer be a barrier to electoral victory. In Fulham West that month they won the by-election caused by the resignation of Labour's Dr G E Spero, overturning Labour's 2,211 majority in 1929 on a swing of 3.5% (the Liberals having withdrawn). 459 Close argues that this was just the beginning, with perhaps the exception of the East Islington result in 1931, of the

457 GLMS, Ms 19,528 Vol 2, meeting on 23 December 1924.
458 GLMS, Ms 19,528 Vol 2, meeting of 5 Nov 1925.
459 Craig, Results, 18. See also chapter six for more on the by-elections of this period.
turning of the electoral tide on tariffs, and was a pointer towards the result of the next General Election, whenever that might come. 460

The LMS did produce some publicity relating to political issues that were strictly speaking not London-related. Among these in 1919 were pamphlets on coal mining, the effect of war on taxed incomes, and nationalisation in Australia. 461 This confirms that the political awareness of the LMS was a wide one. They also took up positions on the national issue of Trade Unions in 1927. 462 The MCAA even took a view on the Northern Ireland elections in 1921. 463 Taken with the fact that several nationally senior Conservative politicians served on the Executive of the LMS and the on-off use of the 'National Federation of Ratepayers Associations' title, this reinforces the view that the LMS was partly a national organisation. 464 The same could almost be said for the Westminster Abbey Conservative Association, where five Conservative MPs - T W H Inskip, J T Moore-Brabazon, W F Perkins, S Samuel and Sir P Pilditch - were on the General Committee, or the St George's body, where the 1925 AGM was chaired by Lord Hambledon and attended by at least two Conservative MPs. 465

However local Conservatives were also adept at watching out for their own local interests. The MCAA took great care to monitor moves towards the introduction of any form of electoral reform in 1918 and tried to ensure it was avoided, and carefully watched the proposed boundary changes to parliamentary constituencies. 466 Conservatives nationally did the same things. The same local agents were also assiduous in keeping the noses of Conservative Central Office out of their journal,

460 Close, 'Realignment', 394.
461 GLPB, LMS 53, Facts Against Socialism Vol VIII (September 1919), 17.
462 GLMS, Ms 19,527 Vol. 2, Council Meeting 9 May 1927.
463 LSE, CCA/3 (Metropolitan Conservative Agents Association minutes 1918-1921), meeting of 14 July 1921. The primary topic of conversation was the delays in counting due to Sinn Fein activity.
464 GLMS, Ms 19,528 Vol. 2 – the name was added at the meeting of 21 July 1921 and removed at the meeting of 6 May 1927. See also note 38.
465 WMIN, ACC/1267/14/9, Westminster Abbey Division LCC Elections file 1925, and The Times, 3 Feb 1925, 9.
466 LSE, CCA/3, meetings 15 Feb 1918 and 15 March 1918.
of which they wanted to keep editorial control themselves. 467 Conservatives in Gipsy Hill held a meeting to determine if local opinion was for or against an extension of the tramway into the area. When it appeared that it was against, so subsequently were the local Conservatives. 468 This was typical of the efficient and effective political machinery that Conservatives had created. Examples can be found from throughout the 1918-1931 period of the party taking a healthy interest in local and national issues that would affect them. It is what would be expected of an active political grouping, and contributed to their success. The Times comment on some Middlesex constituency parties in 1929, that 'the Conservative organisation is good and is leaving nothing to chance', could be applied to most Conservative constituency parties at most times during the period covered in this study. 469 It is no wonder that at times their opponents feared the 'army' that was being organised against them, and a 'determined effort' made to thwart their ambitions. 470

Occasionally particular tactics were initiated by constituency parties themselves, and while not necessarily the only examples in Greater London of these particular tactics, they are likely to have been used in the areas concerned because the local parties thought they would work. They did, of course, depend on how much money was available to finance them. Fighting for the first time under a Labour government, the Kennington Conservatives in April 1924 decided to canvass the constituency on a 'paid' basis 'with a view to increasing the membership'. 471 This worked in as much as the membership rose from 306 to 471, and happened at a time when organisational revitalisation was underway party-wide. 472 The seat was also retaken by the Conservative candidate George Harvey at the 1924 General Election. 473 Canvassing was approved of by the Metropolitan Conservative

\[\text{References:}\]

467 LSE, CCA/3, document of April 1919.
468 LBH, Class IV 166/1/7, meeting of 7 Feb 1922.
469 The Times, 22 May 1929, 7.
471 LSE, COLL/MISC/463/1, General Purposes Committee meeting 23 Apr 1924.
472 LSE, COLL/MISC/463/1, executive committee meeting 30 May 1924. See also Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 195, and Blake, Conservative Party, 225, as cited earlier.
473 Craig, Results, 34. This is almost certainly the same Harvey referred to above (note 415).
Agents Association, as 'still the most important feature of election work, and cannot possibly be dispensed [sic] with.'\textsuperscript{474} The Clapham Conservatives discussed changing their colours in 1922 - and in the event did change from purple and orange to a patriotic red, white and blue.\textsuperscript{475} They clearly felt this would aid them in early post-Coalition days, and they safely retained the seat in the November General Election.\textsuperscript{476} St Albans Conservative Association ran speakers' classes for activists in Barnet and St Albans in 1920.\textsuperscript{477} The Westminster St George's Conservatives advertised in the local press on a regular basis as they felt that would be beneficial to them, so did the Woodford branch of the Junior Imperial League, while the Croydon Federation of Ratepayers Associations - who controlled the local council - used a similar tactic.\textsuperscript{478} This was in addition to any centrally organised advertising done at national election times. Important associations like St George's could get free coverage for their meetings and propaganda in the national press.\textsuperscript{479} Norwood was not the only Conservative Association to 'adopt a system of devolution [in its own affairs] by establish[ing] and resuscitat[ing] ward and branch associations'.\textsuperscript{480} This would strengthen them, they felt, and although the surviving records from the area do not detail the results, it is likely that better fundraising would have been the aim, and the Conservatives certainly retained the local parliamentary seat safely throughout the 1920s, and did not lose the LCC seat.\textsuperscript{481} Tactics could also be developed locally to overcome particular local problems. The 1928 Ilford parliamentary by-election was held on a foggy day. The \textit{Daily Express} reported that, 'in anticipation of further fog, fleets

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{474} LSE, CCA/3, undated loose sheet entitled 'Canvass' inserted in volume.\textsuperscript{475} LSE, CCA/6, Clapham South Branch meeting of 7 November 1922, and CCA/11, council meeting of 4 Dec 1922.\textsuperscript{476} Craig, \textit{Results}, 57.\textsuperscript{477} St Albans Conservative Association, minutes of executive committee meeting 26 Feb 1926.\textsuperscript{478} WMIN, ACC/487/9, Westminster St George's Conservative Association Finance Committee meeting of 22 Jan 1929 and 18 April 1929 (the latter advertisement was for the General Election period only); ERO, ACC A6853 Box 9 (part), Wanstead and Woodford Conservative Association: Junior Imperial League (Woodford Branch) meeting minutes, meeting of 17 Dec 1925; and \textit{Croydon Advertiser}, 29 October 1921 8, and other editions.\textsuperscript{479} For example the 1925 AGM was reported by \textit{The Times}, 3 Feb 1925, 9.\textsuperscript{480} LBH, Class IV 166/1/13, meeting of 15 Dec 1919.\textsuperscript{481} Craig, \textit{Results}, 36, and \textit{The Times}: 8 Mar 1919, 14; 4 Mar 1922, 10; 7 Mar 1925, 14; 10 Mar 1928, 17; 7 Mar 1931, 8.}
of cars will be at local railway stations in the constituency to rush electors to the polling stations on their belated arrivals from the city. 482

Some associations seem to have been more aware than others of the need to spread Conservatism through social events in between elections. As has been shown in the previous chapter, it was possible for events to be geared to the new suburbia and its Conservative-leaning middle class inhabitants. Ilford Conservative Club decided to 'get them while they're young' with a children's new year party in 1926 - aimed just as much at the parents involved. 'The children received some wonderful toys from Father Christmas before singing at the close of a happy time "auld lang syne" and the national anthem.' 483 The Women's Section of the Wood Green Constitutional Association organised a garden party in May 1919, with a particular effort to '... keep the price of admission as low as possible to attract the Noel Park ward and the labouring classes.' 484 The Westminster Abbey and City of London parties also have records of many social events, but it is likely that most associations would have had at least a few events of their own, designed to meet local needs as they saw them. The view of one speaker at a meeting of the Southgate Constitutional and Unionist Association on 15 Apr 1921 was '... if properly taught the principals (sic) of constitutionalism the large majority of women would vote for constitutional government', and women were the targets of some of their events. 485 In Westminster St George's this would have been all to the good as far as the Conservatives were concerned, as the electoral roll here contained far more women than men - probably because of the elderly population in the constituency. 486

482 *Daily Express* 23 Feb 1928, cutting in RBDGE, Ilford Conservative Association scrapbook on by-election.
484 LMA, ACC/1158/5 (Wood Green Women's Constitutional Association 1919-30), meeting of 14 May 1919.
485 LMA, ACC/1158/1. See also McCrillis, *British Conservative Party*, 46-109, on Conservative wooing of women supporters.
486 WMIN, ACC/487/9, Annual Report for 1929: the electoral roll contained the names of 20,996 men and 32,918 women.
In contrast to some of the strong areas like Westminster, other places only got their organisations going, or resurrected them, in times of adversity for the Conservatives - in 1921 or 1922 in the last days of the Coalition, or in 1924 or 1929. In strong areas problems were relative and Westminster Conservatives got into a panic when for a change they had to face Labour/Progressive candidates in one ward - Victoria - on the METB council. And it was the loss of the 1923 General Election which prompted the warring local associations to reunite. The Aldersbrook branch of the West Essex Conservative Association - in the Epping parliamentary constituency - was formed in April 1924 - spurred on by the existence of the first Labour government. In a similar vein, their main association only started getting seriously involved in local elections when Labour candidates were nominated for two wards in 1926, and in defensive conjunction with the Liberals.

The main publicity produced locally at election times - triennially for the county councils and London METBs, and more frequently where there were annual council elections in places like Croydon - was the candidate's principal election address. While MPs often had a great deal of say on what went into their own personal addresses, particularly in the Conservative party, the situation was different for local elections, certainly in the county of London. Here it was the LMS which handed down the policy for the addresses. Before the 1922 LCC elections the LMS policy was accompanied by a note about how it should be used to form addresses: 'it is desirable that some slight alteration of language should be made, and the use of simple wording and short paragraphs is suggested ... in no case ought an address to be too long.' An examination of the election material produced by MR candidates and preserved in the LMS collection at the Guildhall

487 The Southgate association appears only to have met at times such as these, as suggested earlier: see LMA, ACC/1158/1.
488 WMIN, ACC/1267/14/9, Local Election Leaflets for 1919.
489 See WMIN, ACC/487/8, last few meetings 1923-4.
490 ERO, ACC A6853 Box 11 (part), Wanstead and Woodford Conservative Association Aldersbrook Branch minutes, first meeting on 7 April 1924.
491 ERO, ACC A6853 Box 9 (part), Junior Imperial League (Woodford Branch), meeting of 16 Mar 1926.
492 GLPB, LMS 74 (LCC Election 1922), leaflets on London Questions.
Library shows what election addresses across London had in common, and where parts of them were obviously written locally. One key thing that could be changed to suit local circumstances was the label of the candidate. The use of the word 'Conservative' in Holborn has already been noted. In this area the leaflets were also printed in blue ink rather than the black standard to the rest, though the common core of content is the same.\(^{493}\) This was in similar vein to the way that, in 1922, it was reported that some Essex candidates were loudly proclaiming themselves 'Tory' rather than 'Conservative' or anything else.\(^{494}\) In some areas candidates adopted the label 'Progressive Reform' as a result of a *de facto* coalition with local Liberals against Labour. For example in Hackney South candidates R M Dix and G J Holmes wrote in 1925:

> We make our appeal to you on the broad programme of Progressive Reform. That policy has been eminently successful in Hackney in the last two and a half years, since you swept away the Labour-Socialist majority on the borough council. With Progressives and Municipal Reformers working together at the town hall both efficiency and economy have been secured. We shall endeavour to pursue the same policy on the LCC.\(^{495}\)

Smyth has described the labels 'moderate' and 'progressive' as 'basically interchangeable' in relation to Glasgow politics at this time, and there is a similar link behind the election address above. Here in Hackney is another clear example of local Municipal Reformers and Liberals working together under a label of convenience, which, as has been shown, was also possible in Outer London areas like Woodford. It is particularly interesting given the opening remarks of Cowling on what Conservatives were doing nationally in the 1920s. Here, as always, it was the Conservative interest that governed their actions.

The Conservatives clearly consolidated their position in Greater London from 1918-1931. They kept a firm grip of their strongholds and prospered in the new

\(^{493}\) GLPB, LMS 140, Election Addresses for Borough Elections 1925, Holborn Conservative Association leaflet.

\(^{494}\) *The Times*, 27 Oct 1922, 14.
middle and mixed class suburbs growing up around London; adapting, as historians such as Catterall and others such as Hague suggested earlier, to their new surroundings to ensure their survival. They developed tactics for large and small-scale problems and local solutions where this best suited them, and changed tactics too when it suited them. While there were difficulties, and some periods were more successful than others were, most Conservatives could look back from 1931 and say that their party position had been enhanced. They had taken advantage of difficulties, just as Ramsden and Blake saw nationally with the party revamp during 1924. They were able to prosper in a climate made favourable to them by their financial strength, the 1918 redistribution of seats, the support of women voters and the problems of opponents, all confirmation of what Ramsden was earlier cited as saying. They built up the community of support identified by Jarvis, the coalition identified by Catterall, including ex-Liberal voters, as shown and as will be shown in chapter five. Indeed, a lot of what this chapter shows mirrors the national picture, as described by other historians of the time. However, there are parts of the Greater London story which are unique, or at least nearly so, such as the Anti-Waste League successes, described in more detail in chapter six. The Conservatives initiated a lot of the same political activities that Labour did, which are covered in the next chapter. They canvassed, campaigned, produced propaganda, considered and reconsidered their position, raised funds in as many ways as they could, and so on. However, they did these things well and with a track record of success, as the chapter has shown, and though to a degree distracted by internal matters, they were afflicted by internal politics to a lesser degree than Labour. It was not just the Conservative candidate in Enfield who benefited from '...the advantage of a very efficient local organisation...'. The fortunes of the party in Greater London were a result of a combination of the many contributory factors, local and national. This story of growth and consolidation would have made happy reading for both important politicians and

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495 GLPB, LMS 181, LCC Election Addresses 1925, Election Address of R M Dix and G J Holmes.
496 Hague, 'Foreword', and Catterall, 'Series Editor's preface', as cited earlier.
497 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, and Blake, Conservative Party, as cited earlier.
498 Jarvis, 'Conservative Electoral Hegemony', and Catterall, 'Series Editor's preface', as cited earlier.
499 The Times, 23 Oct 1924, 8.
grass roots activists looking back from 1931, and would have delighted the Conservatives of 1918.
Chapter Four: The Development of Labour Strongholds: Labour in Greater London 1918-1931
The Historiography of the Rise of Labour in London

The question of how one national opposition party to the Conservatives was supplanted by another in just two decades has long interested historians. Studies of electoral statistics, of the records of politicians and parties, and of behaviour have been made in attempts to explain what happened. Several historians have put forward theories as to why Labour rose to prominence in general terms. One widely propagated theory is that of the 'franchise factor' being of key importance.

In an article written in 1976, Matthew, McKibbin and Kay

...suggest that the Liberals were wedded to the form of the 1867-1914 political community as their opponents were not, that the ideologies of both the Labour and Conservative parties made them better able to exploit a fully democratic franchise. 500

It follows that Labour was suddenly able to record its full working class poll after universal male, and near universal female, suffrage for parliamentary elections arrived in 1918, and that it thus rapidly replaced the Liberals as the opposition to the Conservatives. However, as Jon Lawrence reports, this theory has been called into question.

...more recent work on the franchise has challenged these assumptions, arguing that age and marital status, rather than social class, were the principal determinants of [pre-1918] enfranchisement. At the same time, it is also becoming clear that for a number of years after the Great War Labour actually performed rather poorly among the 'new' voters of 1918 (both male and female). 501

Martin Pugh, agreeing with Lawrence, stated that

...analysis of the pre-1914 electorate casts doubt on claims that the working class was significantly under-represented, and suggests that the young and unmarried in all classes were disenfranchised. 502

Specific examples have been used by historians on both sides of this argument. Chris Wrigley made a detailed study of Battersea and concluded that, from 1919, 'politics in Battersea were very clearly class politics. This was recognised by both sides.' 503 He goes on to quote one W Davis, who during a 1919 campaign pointed out...

...the reality of the post-war world - 'the country was divided into two parties, the Labour party and the Capitalist party, for whatever Labour's opponents chose to call themselves, Liberal, Tory, Radical, Conservative or Municipal Reformers, they were one.' 504

To sum up, he says,

The Labour Party did well in Battersea after the War because it was able to channel the working-class desire for independent working-class representatives. The Labour party was based on the trade unionism of the area. It had an ideology sufficiently elastic to gain from the class politics of the period yet not too extreme to scare away people switching from the Liberals or Conservatives. These things were crucial. But equally important, in understanding the strength of Labour's advent at the end of the War, were the Liberal divisions and the switch by Coalition Liberals from the pre-war Progressive Alliance to a Reactionary Alliance. 505

Kenneth Wald has used statistical analysis and sociological methodology to support his case that it was the rise of non-denominational education from 1870, and the passing of those educated in this way into the electorate from the early

502 Pugh, 'Rise of Labour', 514.
503 Wrigley, Changes, 9.
504 Wrigley, Changes, 9.
In the twentieth century, that saw the decline of religion as the primary factor in voting preference, and its replacement by class as the deciding factor. Michael Childs has argued that

The coming of age of workers born in the late Victorian and Edwardian period explains in part the coming of age of Labour. Peter Clarke concluded that Labour naturally came into an 'inheritance' of electoral support from 1918. However, Clarke suggested that it was not simply this that led to the decline of the Liberals, especially as they had radicalised during the early 1900s - their collapse was due to the effects of the Great War. Ross McKibbin, who accepted the role of class as key in the rise of Labour, disputed this second point - arguing that the disappearance of the Liberals would have been inevitable, Great War or no Great War. Other historians agreed with McKibbin. And another view, advocated by Keith Laybourn, calls for a balance to be struck.

A more balanced approach is necessary which accepts that the First World War was responsible for significant political and social change but admits that the Liberal party was finding great difficulty in containing Labour's pre-war challenge.

While noting what other historians have said on the subject, Duncan Tanner has explained why he, and other historians, have challenged the view that class based

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508 See P F Clarke, 'Electoral Sociology in Modern Britain', in History No. 17 (1972), 31-55.
509 See Clarke, 'Electoral Sociology', and also P F Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism, Cambridge (CUP), 1971. See also Wilson, Downfall.
510 McKibbin, Evolution.
voting heralded the rise of Labour. 513 His work 'refocused attention on political ideas, rather than social experiences, as a powerful influence on the process of electoral change.' 514 Andrew Thorpe separately recognises the importance of one significant idea Labour had - Clause IV - in enabling it to establish an identity both radical and distinct from the Liberals. 515 Dan Weinbren argues that 'although it is hard to pinpoint the reasons why people voted for Labour Party candidates, probably electoral success between the wars did not derive from the arousal of an innate [class] consciousness among voters', nor simply from the extension of the franchise, nor simply from a shift in the balance of class forces. 516 Instead, he says, 'the Labour party's victories can best be attributed to the ability of its members to link everyday life with the conventions of party politics.' 517 In other words, what was crucial was the ability of the Labour propagandists to link their ideas in with 'real life'. Weinbren also emphasises the fact that Labour was aided by the sheer variety of appeals it could make in this way - '...local Labour parties developed because their distinctive flavours allowed the party to make numerous appeals across class, ethnic and sometimes gender lines.' 518

This leads to another: was it a rise directed from the centre by high ranking politicians, or did it evolve at a very local level? This is a debate which is particularly relevant when it comes to London, where the powerful London Labour Party (LLP) rose to prominence after the end of the War. McKibbin is among those who emphasise the role of this central organisation in fostering the growth of Labour strength in the capital. He emphasises too the key role played by the LLP's strongman, Herbert Morrison, arguing that '...under Herbert Morrison's vigorous direction London was one of the most effectively organised parts of the

516 Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 41.
517 Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 41.
518 Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 53.
country. Morrison's biographers, Bernard Donoughue and George Jones, also point towards his role in the LLP being of crucial importance.

Although it had been created a few months before he became its Secretary, he forged it into a unique political machine. He was devoted to this organisation above all others, since it was where he made his reputation.

A number of other historians do not feel that the LLP was so significant, and that growth would have occurred without the driving force of Morrison. James Gillespie has attacked what he sees as the simplistic approach of those who have looked at the rise of Labour in London from the point of view of Morrison, and Labour's growth from the centre, or solely by concentrating on dramatic confrontations between Labour METBs and central government. He feels that both approaches have paid '...little attention to the relationship of local social and labour market structures and class formation ...', and that more emphasis should be placed on a study of patterns of unemployment and the treatment of the unemployed. Gillespie goes on to do this, and while an examination of economic issues in such detail is beyond the scope of this study, he is right in saying that to pay too much attention to Morrison and the centre would be to oversimplify. He also argues

The use of borough councils and boards of guardians to advance the interests of Labour's constituency provided the basis of political unity, not any sense of class unity engendered by the workplace.

Gillespie suggests that it is wrong to emphasise to excess the role of trade unions in the rise of Labour in London in the 1920s. For example, he says,

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520 Donoughue and Jones, *Morrison*, 63.
522 Gillespie, 'Poplarism and Proletarianism', 164.
In new industrial areas such as Acton and Willesden the core of Labour support was drawn from pockets of railwaymen and bus workers, not from semi-skilled factory workers. Similarly, trade unions found the new factories difficult to organise. 523

There are many examples of trade unionists taking major roles in local Labour organisations - for example they took a good number of the positions in the Harrow Labour Party, and were particularly powerful in Greenwich and Southwark, as shown by the selection of parliamentary candidates, as well as elsewhere. 524 However, the fact that powerful trade unionists such as Jack Jones could be elected without official Labour support (in 1918), and that trade unionists could vote Liberal or Conservative as well as Labour, show how much local or non-class factors could in fact matter. 525 Another example of how out-of-the-ordinary local candidate choices could be came in the unwinnable seat of Epsom at the 1924 General Election:

The Epsom Division particularly has a formidable Labour candidate in Mr P Butler, a graduate in Economics of Glasgow University, who was secretary and treasurer of the Glasgow Society of Painters and Sculptors. He is one of the Fabian candidates. 526

Sue Goss has also emphasised the local, based primarily on a case study of Southwark. For example, she concludes, 'the evolution of Labour at a local level has been a very different process from that suggested by simply studying the national party.' 527 Trade unions could be important at a local level but,

523 Gillespie, 'Poplarism and Proletarianism', 166. See also paper by Peter Scott (University of Reading), 'Local Externalities and New Manufacturing Plant Formation in Inter-War Britain', given at Association of Business Historians Annual Conference, Cambridge, 31 May 2003. This paper included a detailed statistical breakdown of 'new' types of industry that appeared in areas such as Acton and Willesden. For example, Acton and Willesden jointly had the highest number of new electrical engineering concerns established during the inter-war period.
524 Harrow Reference Library (HRW), Records of the 'Harrow Local Labour Party', Minute Book 1920-1927. Representatives of nine different trade unions attended a 'special delegate meeting' on 24 Nov 1920.
525 Pugh, 'Rise of Labour', 518-520. On 518 Jones is described as 'an authentic representative of Tory-socialism.' On 520 Pugh states that good union leaders were often well aware that their unions contained more than just Labour supporters.
526 The Times, 23 Oct 1924, 8.
527 Goss, Local Labour, 184.
While political parties can be seen to influence the context within which allegiances are developed by changing the values people hold, or the perceptions they have of the realities around them, they cannot do simply 'as they please' without any analysis of the realities of people's changing life experiences.  

It was, in other words, people's experiences at a local level that affected their political allegiance in areas like Southwark where Labour was able to grow. This is similar to the view expressed by Weinbren above. Tanner has contributed to the debate, arguing that 'local social structures and interests, in conjunction with local political actions, created powerful political languages and cultures', and Berger agrees that 'what strikes the reader while ploughing through Tanner's book is a distinct sense of the differences of the political scene in almost every locality.' The local evidence deployed in support of Tanner's contentions has added to his conclusions.

There are other strands of the argument about the rise of Labour. Goss has also suggested that the evolution of local Labour parties was fundamentally different from that occurring in the Labour party at a national level. A variation on this has also been argued from the point of view of a national study - Melinda Haunton has shown that the lukewarm performance of the Parliamentary Labour Party from 1918-1922 did not impact negatively on local organisations, many of which reached a peak of success in 1919-20. The Marxist historians see the development, progression and appearance of their own political theories in the rise of Labour. Tanner has argued that more seats became winnable for Labour during the 1920s, and Michael Kinnear has demonstrated that the breakthrough in

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528 Goss, Local Labour, 188.
530 Goss, Local Labour, 184.
532 Eric Hobsbawm, Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991, London (Michael Joseph), 1994, 55 for example argues that in 1918 'it seemed obvious that the old world was doomed ... humanity was waiting for an alternative ... it looked as though only a signal was needed for the peoples to rise, to replace capitalism by socialism, and thus to transform the meaningless sufferings of world war into something more positive ...'.
this way came in 1924 with the end of the serious Liberal challenge in urban areas. 533 Tom Jeffery has commented on the fact that the best-run local Labour parties in Greater London by the end of the 1930s seemed to be in Conservative held seats. 534 This is a point worth comparing with work done by Maureen Callcott, who has shown that even in the Labour heartland of Durham the rise of the party was not uniform. 535

Debate is still ongoing on many of these issues. One issue that is still especially contested is the extent to which links between trade unions and party activists were strong or weak at a local level. 536 The 1920 Dartford by-election was won by Labour's candidate, J Mills, a member of the ASE (an engineering union), and, said The Times,

…[he] works at Woolwich Arsenal, where he has acted as chairman of the Shop Stewards Committee. He is regarded as an advanced Socialist and as anything but an industrial pacifist in trade union matters. 537

This study will use the records of local Labour party organisations to show that links were inevitably close in most areas - more will be said, for example, on the 'clearing house' committee in Walthamstow which was established to facilitate cooperation between local Labour groups, including trade unions. 538 Tanner has also opened the issue of the franchise difference between local and national elections, and has suggested that studying different results at local and parliamentary elections in the same areas can indicate what type of voters became Labour supporters. 539 This dissertation will look at election results across Greater London in local and parliamentary elections, and show that it was the timing of

534 Jeffery, 'Suburban Nation', in Feldman and Stedman Jones (eds), Metropolis London, 189-216, 190.
536 Marriott, Culture of Labourism, 70 and 100-101, shows how both views can be put.
537 The Times, 12 Apr 1920, 15.
538 WFOR, party meeting of Walthamstow Borough Labour party (WLP 32.7 BLP/1), held 22 June 1926.
539 Tanner, 'Elections', 906.
elections as much as the franchise that affected outcomes. So far there have been very few local studies of politics during this period in Greater London localities. As a part of the overall work, this chapter will use those that do exist to add to, and enhance, the body of primary evidence available. It will also attempt, to some degree, to close the gap caused by the lack of such local studies, and endeavour to show how the rise of Labour was assisted by the development of different tactical approaches at local level. In so doing, the thesis will explain why Labour strongholds developed as they did, where they did and when they did.

Labour Strongholds

Nationally, by the time the dust had settled on the 1931 General Election, Labour was left with fewer MPs than in December 1918 - 52 as opposed to 60. However this was in large part due to the fact that in 1931 Labour's opponents were united against it. As Kinnear says, 'the party won a greater percentage of the total vote than in any previous [general] election except those of 1924 and 1929. In 1923 it had won 0.2% less than in 1931 but it had formed the government.' From 1918 to 1931 the Labour party had undoubtedly grown in strength nationally, despite the result in October 1931; growth mirrored in Greater London. In 1929, Labour overtook the Conservatives in terms of number of London seats held for the first time, though it fell back again in 1931. Crucially the retreat was not below the level of representation achieved in 1918. This was partly because Labour had fared very badly in London in 1918. It was also due in part to the fact that Labour now had strongholds in parts of Greater London in which it remains dominant to this day. It was also able to win in many other parts of London in a good year. This section will show just how these developments occurred, and in following sections the machinery, tactics and other factors behind them will be examined.

Those that do exist include Goss, Local Labour, Marriott, Culture of Labourism and Wrigley, Changes, as already cited, and also Bush, Behind the Lines.

Kinnear, The British Voter, 38 and 50.
Kinnear, The British Voter, 50.
See Table 2A.
Labour put in a lacklustre performance in 1918. Facing the coupon, and an assault on wartime pacifist divisions, it suffered some remarkable defeats. In the Bow and Bromley division of Poplar, Reginald Blair, the couponed Coalition Conservative, beat George Lansbury by 861 votes; Lansbury was to hold the seat at every election thereafter until his death in 1940.\(^{545}\) Having lost to the same candidate who had beaten him by 4,042 votes to 3,291 (a similar margin) at the celebrated 1912 by-election in the seat, an optimistic Lansbury's comment on 1918 was

Our faith in democracy is not at all shaken ... a great number of voters went to the poll with nothing clear in their heads except some nonsense about hanging the Kaiser and making the Germans pay ... it is equally true that a great number went to the poll with a perfectly clear idea in their heads of social reconstruction ... the future is inevitably ours.\(^{546}\)

There were some bright spots. In Deptford no coupon was issued, and incumbent Labour MP Charles Bowerman fought off a challenge from a Conservative and an independent candidate; he was to hold the seat at each subsequent election until 1931.\(^{547}\) Labour did not take advantage of the lack of a coupon in Tottenham South - its candidate here, Sir Leo Money, former Liberal MP for Paddington North and also Northamptonshire East, was beaten by his Conservative opponent, included in error in the final list of coupon-receiving candidates despite not actually getting a coupon.\(^{548}\) Labour was to benefit from one oddity thrown up by the 1918 contests, Cecil Malone, MP for Leyton East from 1918-1922. Elected as

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\(^{545}\) Craig, *Results*, 41. Blair had won the seat for the Conservatives at a by-election in 1912.


\(^{547}\) Craig, *Results*, 15. The National Unionist Association described Bowerman as a 'Labour candidate whom the official Coalition have decided not to oppose', and he was described by *The Times* as '...an expert Labour man, who has proved his patriotism and regard for the best interests of the Empire'. *The Times*, 12 Dec 1918, 9.

\(^{548}\) Craig, *Results*, 258. Money was a convert to Socialism, though he has served for a time in the Coalition government during the war - see Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party 1914-1931*, New York (Syracuse University Press), 1963, 166.
a Coalition Liberal with a coupon, he attended the 1920 Labour party conference as a delegate of the British Socialist Party, joined the Communist party after that, and spent six months in prison under the Defence of the Realm Act, before becoming Labour MP for Northampton in 1928. 549

Recovering from its 1918 reverses, Labour soon went on to achieve what was before 1929 its electoral high water mark in Greater London, at the local elections in 1919. As with national politics, local political conflict, suspended for the duration of the Great War, resumed in Spring 1919 with the elections to county councils due in 1916. Labour saw only fifteen of its candidates elected to the LCC, as against 40 Progressives and 68 Municipal Reformers, but this far bettered two in 1913. 550 However, in the elections to the Metropolitan Boroughs (METBs) in November 1919, Labour exceeded all expectations by securing the return of 573 councillors, compared with 130 Progressives and 621 Municipal Reformers, and compared with no Labour councillors at all in 1912. 551 Among the councils controlled was Poplar, where Lansbury became mayor 'without robes, mace or cocked hat'. 552 In total Labour took control of thirteen METB councils, compared with twelve for the Municipal Reformers, and again compared with no councils in 1912. 553 In Outer London, Labour made significant inroads, notably in West Ham, but also in areas such as Harrow and Wimbledon. 554 In some places a slate of Labour candidates stood in some wards or divisions for the first time in 1919. One of the most convincing explanations for the sudden improvement in Labour's electoral fortunes during 1919 is put forward by Wrigley. He cites the early failure of promises of a land 'fit for heroes' and the fact that the government pursued a deflationary economic policy from August 1919. In Battersea, 'Labour candidates pointed out [that] prices were higher than during the German submarine

549 Craig, Results, 170.
550 See Table 3.
551 See Table 4.
552 Description quoted in Shepherd, Lansbury, 191.
553 See Table 4, and Wrigley, Lloyd George, 245. Wrigley gives 12 council wins to Labour, plus two others on which they were the largest party and occupied the Mayor's office.
554 Marriott, Culture of Labourism, 36, results given in HRW, records of 'Harrow Local Labour Party', minute book Aug 1920 - Dec 1927, and Hawtin, Early Radical Wimbledon, 73. In
campaigns and were 130% above pre-war prices.

The deterioration in the economic situation could be used by Labour as a powerful electoral weapon, and in places such as Battersea it was. However this was not the only explanation for Labour's successes. As Donoughue and Jones say,

The swing to Labour [in 1919] was a national phenomenon, but in London one explanation for the victories was put about, which [Herbert] Morrison did little to dispute, namely that his efficiency as secretary of the London Labour Party was responsible.

Following its 1919 gains, Labour scored another success in the parliamentary seat of Dartford in 1920, winning a by-election on 27 March. A Coalition Liberal had won the seat in 1918 in a straight fight with Labour, with a majority of 9,370. Labour's majority in 1920 was 9,048 over a Liberal, with the Coalition candidate, now a Conservative, coming third. However, a setback occurred in 1921 when Labour lost Woolwich East at a by-election; its candidate was Ramsay MacDonald, whose record of pacifism in the Great War did not please electors in whose constituency the Arsenal was based. Labour sent many of its big hitters to speak during the campaign, men such as Henderson, Thomas, Clynes and Snowden, but the local organiser blamed the lack of 'hard doorstep work' for the loss. He had also had to contend with Conservative propaganda aimed at the Labour candidate's weak points. Robert Gee VC, the Conservative candidate, argued that,

like Mr [Will] Crooks, [the late Labour MP] I was a workhouse boy, I have spent a long and laborious life, starting work at nine years of age, always earning my own

Wimbledon Labour contested five wards out of eight, winning in four - their best performance on that council to that date.

Wrigley, Changes, 8-9.

Donoughue and Jones, Morrison, 44.

See Table 7. This followed on from the astonishing performance of Labour at the by-election for the Bromley parliamentary seat on 17 Dec 1919. Though they did not win the seat, Labour polled so well that their reduction of the Conservative majority to just over 1000 must rank among their best performances ever in this part of London.

See Table 7.

McKibbin, Evolution, 129.
livelihood ... I desire first to pay tribute to him [Crooks] as a patriotic Briton who, in the time of his country's need, did much to serve the state.\footnote{560}

This highlighted the deficiencies MacDonald had, compared to his predecessor as Labour candidate. As Paul Ward has said, Gee's use of his war rank (of Captain) contrasted with MacDonald's record and helped him win.\footnote{561} The Conservatives, who won on this occasion, lost Woolwich East again in 1922 and Labour represented it in parliament until the 1980s.\footnote{562}

The unpopularity of the Coalition government aided Labour in winning two by-elections in central South London following its Woolwich debacle. Thomas Naylor, General Secretary of the London Society of Compositors and Chair of the London Labour Party took the Southwark South East seat in December 1921 from a Coalition Liberal, and Charles Ammon won Camberwell North in February 1922 from a Coalition Conservative, coming from third place in 1918.\footnote{563} Naylor's local supporters kept their feet firmly on the ground after their victory, in a contest described by \textit{The Times} as 'on the whole ... a dull one', the secretary arguing that 'though Labour had achieved such a success by defeating Liberals and Tories combined, we must realise that it is necessary to build up our organisation, if the seat was not to be lost as readily as it had been won ...'.\footnote{564} However, following a long discussion, this particular 'meeting closed at 10.10, little or no progress having been made'.\footnote{565} Perhaps there is a clue in these last statements to why \textit{The Times} reported during the by-election campaign, 'it [Southwark] is the part of London which, so local politicians will tell you, has the reputation for breaking the heart of Labour.'\footnote{566}

\footnote{560}Greenwich Local History Library (GCH), records of the Woolwich Labour Party, WLP 31, East Woolwich by-election leaflet of R Gee, 1921.
\footnote{562}Craig, \textit{Results}, 62.
\footnote{563}See Table 7.
\footnote{564}\textit{The Times}, 14 Dec 1921, 5, and Southwark Local Studies and Archives (SWK), records of the Southwark South East Labour Party, 1983/121/1 - minutes 1919-1922, meeting of 20 Dec 1921.
\footnote{565}SWK, 1983/121/1, meeting of 20 Dec 1921.
\footnote{566}\textit{The Times}, 23 Nov 1921, 4.
Summary Table of Labour's General Election Performance in Greater London 1918-29 (taken from Table 2A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1922</th>
<th>1923</th>
<th>1924</th>
<th>1929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result (seats won)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the 1922 and 1923 General Elections came what can be described as Labour's 'great leap forward' in Greater London. Cook observes that

The net outcome of 1922 for the Labour party was its growth from a relatively ineffective and insecurely based force to the position of a vigorous and determined opposition, securely based in several major industrial regions. ... Much the best advance for Labour in 1923 was the Greater London area. The number of members returned leaped from 16 to 37. ⁵⁶⁷

Proportionally, this more than doubling of Labour's London representation was better than the increase from 142 to 191 seen nationally in 1923. ⁵⁶⁸ In 1922 Labour became the official Opposition party in the House of Commons, and following the 1923 General Election formed the first Labour government in January 1924. More constituencies returned Labour MPs in Greater London than ever before - aided in the circumstances of the 1923 campaign by the fact that ex-Coalition Liberal, Lloyd George-supporting, MPs who sat for inner London constituencies no longer had Conservative support. ⁵⁶⁹ At the 1922 LCC elections Labour held on to gains made in 1919, winning sixteen seats, and though it lost control of seven councils at the London METB elections in November 1922, the continued accumulation of parliamentary seats in 1922 and 1923 in London

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⁵⁶⁷ Cook, Alignment, 24 and 160. See also Table 2A for results. Cook does not include Mosley, MP for Harrow, in his count for Labour in 1923, whereas Mosley is included in the Labour total in Table 2A.

⁵⁶⁸ Thorpe, 1914-45, 16. About a fifth of Labour MPs now represented London constituencies. This was also an increase compared to 1922, where the figure was just over a tenth.

⁵⁶⁹ Kinnear, The British Voter, 44.
painted a more encouraging picture. \textsuperscript{570} During the 1924 government, Labour supporters had greater combined representation in local and national government than ever. This was despite the fact that, as Kinnear has identified, 22 constituencies covered by this study still had no Divisional Labour Party (DLP) in 1922 - something which would have been a sign of advanced organisational and political intent. While some absences were in what might have been considered barren ground, others were in more fertile territory; but 11 still did not have one by 1924. \textsuperscript{571} The many reasons for this include the presence of other Labour structures to take responsibility in the locality, but the picture was still confused, and there was still slack to be taken up.

At the 1924 General Election Labour was defeated nationally, but lost only twelve seats in Greater London and retained more MPs than were elected in 1922. \textsuperscript{572} Among its 1924 results was a gain in Battersea for Shapurji Saklatvala standing as an overtly Communist candidate (without official Labour opposition), a reverse of the result in 1923 when, in another close contest, the Liberals beat him when he stood on the official Labour ticket. \textsuperscript{573} And further consolation for the 1924 losses came in March 1925 when, with 35 councillors elected, Labour easily replaced the Progressives as the LCC Opposition. It also made a breakthrough on Middlesex County Council, winning a few seats 'mainly through the advocacy of the Sunday opening of cinemas', a good example of its work on local issues. \textsuperscript{574}

Local elections in the mid-1920s were the main way that local Labour activists could flex their muscles against a strong Conservative government - the General Strike aside. It has been claimed that 10,000 turned out for a meeting in support of

\textsuperscript{570} See Table 2A and Table 3.
\textsuperscript{571} Kinnear, \textit{The British Voter}, 108. The 22 without a DLP in 1922 were: Battersea North; Battersea South; Bermondsey West; Bethnal Green North East; Bethnal Green South West; City of London; Hammersmith North; Hammersmith South; Lewisham West; Paddington North; Paddington South; Westminster Abbey; Westminster St George's; Woolwich East; Woolwich West; Tottenham North; West Ham Plaistow; West Ham Silvertown; West Ham Stratford; West Ham Upton; Romford; and Chislehurst.
\textsuperscript{572} See Table 2A.
\textsuperscript{573} Craig, \textit{Results}, 3.
\textsuperscript{574} \textit{The Times}, 6 March 1925, 16.
the General Strike in Croydon in 1926. 575 Indeed, studying the local election results for Croydon in details throws up the fact that Labour were far stronger in the borough than their parliamentary electoral performance would suggest. Labour supporters regularly turned out to vote in municipal elections and, though they faced a coalition against them, the party put in some respectable performances. Their best performances were in the 1923 and 1929 elections, when they won five seats to the CFRA’s nine. While this may not seem to have been a threat to the CFRA, and indeed Labour certainly were not in other election years when they won only one or two seats, an examination of the full results for the council elections shows that, in terms of votes, Labour were very close to achieving a breakthrough. 576 For example, in 1927, Labour won two seats and the CFRA twelve in the annual election. 577 However, they were within a couple of hundred votes of winning two more seats, and were within striking distance of obtaining a further two. In fact, with typically only 2,000-3,000 votes polled in each ward at election time, margins of victory were frequently less than 500, meaning that if just 250 people had changed their minds the outcome would have been different. In a good year for Labour, 1929, they were within 400 votes (in each case) of winning three more seats than the five they got, and would actually have beaten the CFRA that year if they had done so. They would also have surely come closer than the 9,465 they were beaten by in Croydon South, and the 12,484 they were beaten by in Croydon North, to winning one of the two Croydon parliamentary seats at the 1929 general election, if they had managed to replicate the aggregated performance they put in that year’s CB elections, as shown below. 578

575 LSE, COLL/MISC/0783, Strike News (published by the Preston General Strike Committee), 11 May 1926.
576 All results from CDN, Croydon Borough Council 1889-1951: Aldermen and Councillors Election Results, County Borough of Croydon, 1951.
577 One third of councillors in Croydon were elected every November. Most wards had three councillors, so elections for one vacancy took place each year. This sort rhythm of local elections applied in most local councils outside the LCC area, although some local alterations were made, and although County Councils were elected triennially in their entirety. In the County of London, entire METBs were elected every three years.
In 1927 one Croydon CB seat, in the newly created Addington ward, went to an independent.
578 Craig, Results, 119-120.
TOTAL VOTES IN CROYDON CB ELECTIONS FOR 1927 AND 1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CFRA</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>15164</td>
<td>8836</td>
<td>1553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>9999</td>
<td>8326</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(In 1927 three CFRA candidates were returned unopposed. In 1929 four CFRA candidates and one Labour candidate were returned unopposed.)

Similar things could be said of two other areas, Lewisham and Ealing. In Lewisham, Jeffery has identified the masking of radicalism in the borough by a perceived 'Conservative' tradition, rather as in Croydon. Though they never unseated a Conservative MP or MR council, the Labour parties in Lewisham were strong campaigning bodies. There was Labour representation on the METB council: seven councillors were elected in 1919, and five were elected in 1928. Labour activists took a full part in municipal life. They donated chairs and books to the Library, arranged meetings with guest speakers, arranged collections such as for the miners in 1926, and attempted canvassing and campaigning with vans at election times. Famously, Labour's efforts came to fruition in Lewisham in 1945, when Herbert Morrison turned down the safe Labour seat of Deptford to come to Lewisham East and win it for Labour by a handsome margin. The explanation for this lies not just in the Labour landslide of 1945, but in the fact that Labour had been stronger in Lewisham than a cursory glance would suggest throughout the period. In 1929 they came second in the Lewisham West seat by nearly 10,000 votes - though their votes combined with those of the Liberal candidate would have beaten the Conservatives. However, in the Lewisham East

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579 Jeffery, 'Suburban Nation', 189-216. On 195 he says, 'just as Lewisham's indigenous working class population was subsumed with the middle class ethos, so a long standing strain of radical political dissent was hidden by a much vaunted "Conservative tradition".'
580 There was a Borough Labour Party and two Divisional Labour Parties in Lewisham, one for each parliamentary constituency.
581 The Times, 3 Nov 1919, and GLPB, LMS 121 (Borough Council Elections 1931 - Leaflets and pamphlets), Leaflet No. 10 (contains 1928 results).
582 For examples of all these see chapter three, and LHAM, Records of the West Lewisham Labour Party, A89/100/1-2.
Like Croydon, Ealing saw a Conservative MP elected throughout the 1918-1931 period, and the party was never at risk of losing the seat - the lowest majority they scored was nearly 6,000 in 1923. The Municipal Borough (MB) council was dominated by Conservatives and their friends. The Middlesex County Council (MCC) seats were only contested on one occasion, in 1919, when challengers to the Conservatives were successfully beaten off. The Liberal candidate for Ealing in the 1923 general election tried to seem positive when confronted by such dominance, stating 'I will not believe that the town is so Tory and reactionary as it has appeared to be.' Indeed, again Ealing is an example of where there was more to the political scene than was obvious. The MP, Sir Herbert Nield, attended a meeting of his Association in May 1919, and spent his address 'pointing out how exceedingly active the Labour party had become' locally, and pointed to Labour's electoral strength in Hanwell and Acton. By the end of the 1920s the local Constituency Labour Party was very active, and there is evidence of it running a cricket club, a newspaper with a circulation of 10,000 jointly with the local Co-op, and of plenty of social events being organised too. By 1931 they had grown so strong locally that they were able to take their crushing general election defeat on the chin, 'the candidate [Maycock] spoke briefly on the disappointing results but pointed out that Ealing did not fare so badly when compared with other constituencies.' This ability to accentuate the positive was one mark of a

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583 Jeffery, 'Suburban Nation', 205, and Craig, Results, 37.
584 Craig, Results, 37-38.
585 Craig, Results, 128.
586 LMA, Records of the Middlesex County Council, MCC/CL/COUN/2/1, Election Results for County Councillors. In 1919 Ealing North saw the challenger beaten by 2,130 to 388, and in Ealing South by 2,035 to 1,792. While no party labels are given, it is likely that both were Labour candidates. In 1922, the North and South divisions saw unopposed returns. By 1925 there were four council wards for Ealing, all saw unopposed returns again. In 1928 and 1931 this had grown to five Ealing wards, and at both elections a full slate of unopposed returns took place.
588 LMA, Records of the Ealing Conservative and Unionist Association, ACC/1338/1, meeting of 28 May 1919.
590 LMA, ACC/1972/1, meeting of 28 October 1931.
mature political party. As well as growing in Ealing, Acton and Hanwell, there is evidence that Labour was getting stronger in nearby Greenford, which actually fell within the Harrow parliamentary constituency at this time. The Labour party there could not afford to contest the MCC election as late as 1931, but they took a full part in their local life, advertised in the local parish church magazine, contributed to civic appeals, published their own local freesheet, ran a speakers class and started a women's section. So in Ealing a picture of outward Conservative dominance also masked a lot of other activity. In 1945, the parliamentary seat having been divided into two because of its size, Labour won the new Ealing West constituency by over 16,000 votes, though the Conservatives hung on in Ealing East by a respectable 4,000 or so. In addition to the Labour party, there was the presence of fascism in Ealing: the local fascist grouping was particularly strong between 1926 and 1929, provided 'many ... members' as bus drivers during the 1926 General Strike, and ran social events such as whist drives and dances.

In Hendon, the parliamentary seat, which by 1945 had ballooned into one of the largest in terms of electorate in the whole of the UK, was held by Lloyd-Greame/Cunliffe-Lister for the Conservatives throughout this period. Like Ealing, the closest it came to falling was in 1923 when a majority of nearly 6,000 was scored over the second placed Liberal candidate. Unlike Ealing, however, there was not total dominance over local government representation. For example, in 1928, the 'Anti-Socialist' candidate for the MCC Hendon West seat, W Taylor, succeeded in defeating the Labour candidate. Labour had captured the seat at a by-election in 1926, although facing a divided opposition. Labour won its first representation on the Hendon Urban District Council (UDC) in 1919, one councillor in Hendon West and one in Hampstead Garden Suburb. They won a

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591 LMA, Records of Greenford Labour party, ACC/1972/9, especially 1927-1930.
592 Craig, Results, 129-130.
593 Jonathan Oates, Fascism in West London, 40, article available at EAL, no date. The Ealing Branch of the British Fascists is noted as having been established in 1926, and one in neighbouring Acton was founded in 1925.
594 Craig, Results, 426.
595 The Times, 8 Mar 1928, 11.
596 BNT, Records of the Hendon Constituency Labour Party, Ms11642 File 3, meeting of 22 Apr 1926. The figures were: Richardson (Lab) 1,226, Selby ('Brotherhood') 832, Naar (Con) 612.
second seat in the Garden Suburb a year later at a by-election. By 1926 the Hendon West ward on the UDC had become safe Labour territory: they retained it by 1,038 to 447, and won a second ward, Childs Hill, by 615 to 515. While their candidates were well beaten in Mill Hill and Central Hendon, they came within 50 votes of winning a seat in the Kingsbury ward. The Labour party also organised the usual slate of social events such as fetes, bazaars, and had a newspaper, and so on. In 1945, with Hendon also divided into two parliamentary constituencies, the new Hendon North went to Labour by over 4,500 votes, though Hendon South remained Conservative by just over 2,000 votes. As has been made clear, is possible to find examples of situations where Labour was lurking beneath a veneer of Conservatism from all over Greater London. In Wimbledon, Labour was weak but still won four seats on the local council in 1919, and the radical movement was active despite other electoral setbacks. Of the area Hawtin has commented,

It was perhaps inevitable that left-wing ideas would not make much headway in Wimbledon. Wealth, the nature of the education received by north Wimbledonians, inertia, were against it. Not that it should be supposed Labour drew support only from the south; this had a big working class Conservative vote, and left wing intelligentsia were dotted about the north (where their vote, however, could not signify). Perhaps most people are not politically minded, at least until the shoe pinches! There are many better things to occupy oneself with - sport, nature, art, entertainment, the family - the list is long. Socialism, rather as G.K. Chesterton asserted of Christianity, has not so much been tried and found wanting, but hardly tried at all.

Labour did in fact win the parliamentary seat of Wimbledon in 1945, by nearly 1,400 votes.

598 All 1926 results from BNT, Ms11642 File 3, meeting of 31 Mar 1926.
600 Craig, Results, 145-146.
601 Hawtin, Early Radical Wimbledon, 73 and throughout.
602 Hawtin, Early Radical Wimbledon, 123.
603 Craig, Results, 279.
In the Conservative stronghold of Paddington South, scene of the 1930 by-election already mentioned, there was also more Labour activity than manifested at election times. The first Labour candidate for parliament in this seat got nearly 8,000 votes at the 1930 by-election, and over 25% of the vote, which was not bad for a first attempt, particularly given that the Conservative versus Empire Crusade battle was being fought out alongside them - something which masked their achievement at the time. 604 Records surviving from the Paddington South Labour party also paint a picture of an active group, which organised events, ran a hall, and assisted with the political work of the Paddington North party, where the Conservatives were run far closer at general elections. 605 In Wandsworth Balham and Tooting, Labour activity was more widespread that would be imagined looking at election results as well. MacDonald wrote in the publication of the local party, the Balham and Tooting Herald, in early 1931,

In Balham and Tooting you have difficult ground to plough; but you are only in the same position we were all in, in all parts of the country, when the party began its work many years ago. You will prevail in due time, and in Balham and Tooting, as elsewhere, the harvest you deserve will be reaped. 606

Labour did not win the seat until 1945, but work towards victory had clearly been done well before then.

Mid-1920s opportunities for Labour to strike blows against the Conservatives came at parliamentary by-elections as well as locally. Labour won three Greater

604 Craig, Results, 40, for Paddington South. Unfortunately there is little comment on this event in the minute book of the Labour party for the division, which has been deposited at the LSE. The body had come close to contesting the seat in 1929, but it was thought that the endorsement of a candidate then would make the job of returning a Labour candidate in Paddington North more difficult. Although the Conservatives got an unopposed return in 1929 in Paddington South, Brendan Bracken won Paddington North for them by only 528 votes, and retained that seat until he was beaten in 1945. See Craig, Results, 39 for Paddington North, and LSE, COLL/MISC/471, Minute Book of the Executive Committee and General Committee of the Paddington South Divisional Labour Party 1929-1931, meetings of 29 Mar 1929, 16 Apr 1930, and 15 Oct 1930.
605 LSE, COLL/MISC/471, Minute book for the Executive Committee and General Committee of the Paddington South Labour Party 1929-1931.
606 GLPB, LMS 57, LCC Election 1931: Liberal and Labour Local Literature, Balham and Tooting Herald Feb 1931, 1.
London seats from the Conservatives during the 1924-29 parliament - compared with one loss in Southwark North to the Liberals. 607 This last contest, in March 1927, is of interest because it was caused by the resignation of the incumbent MP, Leslie Haden-Guest. He was the Labour MP for the seat, but left the party in protest at its foreign policy, and in particular 'the Labour party's vote for the recall of the armed forces sent to Shanghai for the protection of British people.' 608 He fought the seat as a 'Constitutional' Candidate, with the support of local Conservatives who did not stand against him. The press thought that the election was too close, and too confused, to call, The Times commenting that

If one judged the election on the showing of window cards one would probably arrive at the conclusion that the Liberal held the advantage. On the basis of meetings, the Socialist would be reckoned the favourite. 609

The campaign was fierce, Lloyd George speaking in the constituency to support local Liberals in a fight against what they saw as two Labour candidates, one of whom had been 'adopted' and supported by the Conservatives. Lloyd George said in one speech,

Dr Guest has declared himself a Socialist who is in favour of taking away all the property of individuals and handing it over to the community. This is a queer kind of candidate for a Conservative Association to adopt. 610

The Liberal candidate, Edward Strauss, had been MP for the seat from 1918-1923, MP for the old Southwark West seat from 1910-1918, and this time he won the seat by 1,167 from Labour, with Haden-Guest coming last. After the contest, Haden-Guest remarked

I was returned to parliament in the general election [of 1924]. To the best of my ability I worked in parliament as the representative of those who had returned me. When I

607 See Table 7.
608 The Times, 21 Mar 1927, 9.
609 The Times, 26 March 1927, 9.
found that the party to which I belonged was quite prepared to gamble with the lives and safety of British men, women and children, I severed my connection with it and came back to my people in North Southwark confident that they were inspired by the spirit of sportsmanship and fair play, which we are proud to boast is the heritage of the British people. The Conservative candidate, Admiral H H Smith, realising the vital national issue at stake, stood aside - the act of an English patriotic gentleman. But I regret to say that the Liberal candidate should have seized the opportunity to intrude on what I hoped was going to be the direct vote of my own people on the unpatriotic attitude of the Labour party. 611

Haden-Guest was to rejoin Labour, and won Islington North for the party from the Conservatives at a by-election in October 1937. 612

In the local polls things did not always go Labour's way. Though running Hackney METB council in 1919-22, Labour had no representative elected to it in 1925. 613 Labour also lost control of Bethnal Green METB in 1928, when a completely Liberal council was returned. 614 But in the 1929 General Election Labour put in its best performance of the inter-war period in Greater London, winning 54 seats compared to 47 for the Conservatives and two for the Liberals. 615 As Tanner points out, 1929 really was a breakthrough in London for Labour.

This was not simply a shift in the geography of support. Whilst some of the newly captured London seats contained groups with strong Labour leanings (like railwaymen), constituencies containing large numbers of lower middle-class voters and new council and private housing developments were more numerous. 616

At this point in the chronicle of Labour's fortunes, it is worth noting the different rates of growth, and varying strength, in the political Co-operative movement in

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610 Quoted in The Times, 28 March 1927, 9.
611 Quoted in The Times, 29 March 1927, 14.
612 Craig, Results, 28.
613 Donoughue and Jones, Morrison, 61.
614 Cook, Alignment, 74-5.
615 See Table 2A.
616 Tanner, 'Class Voting', 120.
Greater London, as manifested in parliamentary candidatures. The candidates who stood for election as MPs in Greater London during the 1918-1931 period on a Labour/Co-op ticket rather than simply a Labour one, were: P Holman (Twickenham, 1931); J Reeves (Woolwich West, 1931); Robert Morrison (Tottenham North, 1922-1931); Daniel Chater (Hammersmith South, 1929-1931); T E Williams (Finsbury, 1931); Francis Broad (Edmonton, 1931); Alfred Barnes (East Ham South, 1922-1931). There were two candidates in 1922, but seven by 1931. As is noted later in this chapter, a Co-op candidate did stand for election to Ilford council in 1920.

Of these, only Barnes in East Ham South, Chater in Hammersmith South, and Morrison in Tottenham North were elected to parliament during this period. Both Tottenham South and East Ham North are defined elsewhere in this chapter as among Labour's safest areas in Greater London, so the presence of the Co-operative movement at election time here was perhaps in one way not surprising.

The higher number of Co-operative candidatures in 1931 was probably due to an agreement, made in 1927 with the Labour party, which allowed the affiliation of Co-operative political parties to Divisional Labour Parties. Under the agreement, the local parties, once affiliated, could run joint candidates for parliamentary and local elections, usually labelled 'Co-operative and Labour'. Those standing for parliament had to commit themselves in advance to joining the Parliamentary Labour Party, with all that entailed.

It may seem surprising that Co-operative candidatures did not appear in other 'safe' London Labour constituencies before 1931. The relative strength of Trade Unionism in some of them as a driving force for Labour could be given as explanation - Unions taking such a leading role that Co-operative support was not

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617 See elsewhere in this chapter.
619 R T McKenzie, British Political Parties, London (William Heinemann Ltd), 1955, 530 explains the link in detail.
needed.\textsuperscript{620} It is also important to remember that only 12 candidates stood nationwide with the Co-operative label in 1929, and there were still only 20 in 1935.\textsuperscript{621} More satisfactory, however, is to take forward the conclusions drawn by other historians about Labour in Greater London. Labour developed in different ways in different localities, and local factors influenced the strength, or lack of strength, of the Co-operative movement as it did the whole Labour party. In times of higher unemployment, when Trade Union power was weakened, the Co-operative movement could increase its relative strength within Labour.\textsuperscript{622} Given higher unemployment in 1931 this could be another factor explaining the higher number of Co-operative-related candidates for parliament. However, this was one factor among others, which might include local tradition or the organisational strength of the Co-op in a certain area. It could also be that 1931 was the earliest general election at which the affiliation agreement bore fruit in terms of candidates, thus explaining the lack of them beforehand. In 1935, at the General Election nine Co-operative candidates were elected, including six in London - in addition to the three named above, candidates won in Edmonton, Bethnal Green North East and Finsbury.\textsuperscript{623}

Nationally the 1929-31 government began well for Labour, with the opposition parties slipping into infighting, and with a swing to Labour in parliamentary by-elections in August to December 1929.\textsuperscript{624} This included a remarkable performance at Twickenham, where on 8 August the Labour candidate came within 503 votes of defeating the Conservative, whose predecessor, the outgoing Home Secretary Sir William Joynson-Hicks, had obtained a majority of 5,966 in

\textsuperscript{620} Chris Wrigley has written that, '... on the whole the Labour party was strong where Trade Unionism was strong, and weak where Trade Unionism was weak.' Quoted in Marriott, \textit{Culture of Labourism}, 70. This is a different emphasis to that given by other historians (above).
\textsuperscript{621} Carbery, \textit{Consumers in Politics}, 34.
\textsuperscript{622} As happened, for example, in West Ham in the early 1920s - see Marriott, \textit{Culture of Labourism}, 109.
\textsuperscript{623} Carbery, \textit{Consumers in Politics}, 39.
\textsuperscript{624} Skidelsky, \textit{Slump}, 137
Local activists in the Heston Labour party, visited by defeated candidate T J Mason, were delighted at this.

The chairman ... said that he [Mason] had been largely instrumental in destroying the illusion that Twickenham was a safe Tory seat. Mr Mason ... said that the political complexion of Twickenham had been changed very considerably during the past few years. We were propagating an ideal, and it was the work between elections that counted. We must go on steadily converting the people ...

So things looked rosy for London Labour MPs such as Dr Alfred Salter, who sat for Bermondsey West, as 1930 began.

I think I am not over-optimistic when I say that there is every prospect that there will be more work, better trade and brighter prospects generally for everybody during 1930 than in the 3 or 4 years that have just passed. If this prophecy comes true, as I believe it will, I have no hesitation in saying that the improvement will be directly and immediately attributable to the efforts of the Labour government.

Even as late as November 1930 Labour was achieving some local electoral successes, for example winning the Goodmayes ward in Ilford for the first time. No doubt aided by the effect of the Becontree LCC estate, it was Labour's only victory in Ilford that year.

When the result of the contest was announced to a crowd of two or three hundred outside the Town Hall, mostly Labour people, a yell of delight was heard. An hour later, when Mr Meade [the winning candidate] left the Hall, enthusiasts of his party greeted him with cheers and hoisted him up on their shoulders.

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625 See Table 7 for the result. See Ball, Baldwin, 42 for an account of Conservative difficulties in the campaign. There is more on this subject in chapter six.
626 Hounslow Local Studies Library (HOUN), records of 'Heston CLP' (actually a local Labour party), Vol. 8 - minute book 1929-1931, meeting of 31 Oct 1929.
627 SWK, Bermondsey Labour Magazine No. 69 (Jan 1930), 3.
628 RBDGE, records of Ilford Conservative Association, newspaper cuttings book, cutting 7 Nov 1930 from Ilford Guardian. Labour polled 1692 votes in the ward, against 1,238 for the Ratepayers Association candidate and 964 for an 'official Conservative'.
629 RBDGE, Ilford Conservative Association, cuttings book, cutting of 7 Nov 1930. No newspaper title given, but it appears to be from the Ilford Guardian.
However, as 1930 and 1931 went on things generally got worse for Labour. In London the rot started with the contest for Fulham West in 1930. The seat saw the only Conservative gain from anyone at a by-election in Greater London in this parliament, and indeed in the whole 1918-1931 period. Sir Cyril Cobb, MP there from 1918-1929, overturned a Labour majority of 2,200 on a swing of 3.5% (there being no Liberal candidate this time). Only good fortune for Labour in avoiding by-elections in marginal seats, and Conservative divisions where they did occur, avoided further such losses. The two remaining by-elections of the parliament were in safe Labour seats, and Labour hung on in both. In the Whitechapel and St George's division of Stepney, a by-election was caused by the death of the Labour MP, former Transport and General Workers Union leader, government minister in 1924, and leader of the Labour group on the LCC, Harry Gosling. The contest saw Labour's majority fall from over 9,000 to just over 1,000 in December 1930, though this dramatic drop was partly the result of the intervention of a Communist candidate who won over 2000 votes. In a straight fight with the Conservatives at a by-election in Woolwich East in April 1931, the shock of ten years earlier was not repeated, and the Labour candidate was returned, though with a majority reduced from over 8,500 to below 4,000, and a swing of 6.5% to the Conservatives.

The results in Fulham West, Whitechapel and St George's, Islington East (some described more fully elsewhere) and Woolwich East, only one of which resulted in a seat changing hands, are those most indicative of the trends at work in by-elections of the period. They show that voters in London were less likely to turn out to support Labour. Local election results from 1930 and 1931 also show that Greater London was swinging against Labour. For example, there were no gains at the March 1931 county council elections. Ben Pimlott argues that 'long before

630 Craig, Results, 18. The significance of this result in terms of the attitude of the London voter to free trade is mentioned in chapter three.
631 Craig, Results, 53.
632 Craig, Results, 62. This by-election was caused by the ennoblement of Henry Snell, MP there since 1922.
633 See Table 3 for LCC results.
the collapse of August 1931, a demoralisation and sense of purposelessness had permeated all levels of the party.' 634 In Clapham, as early as May 1930, activists had sent a resolution to a national Labour conference calling for 'immediate steps to cure the problem [of unemployment] within the proposals given in 'Labour and the Nation' [the 1929 manifesto].' 635 The national economic crises compounded to cause the party problems wherever it turned, and by August 1931 one Labour prospective parliamentary candidate in Greater London lamented that,

Even to the most cool and fair minded there has come a winter of discontent, with its inevitable corollary, a slackening of effort in the cause. 636

Following the political crisis of August - September 1931, Labour suffered the consequences at the October 1931 General Election. The signs were there in the campaign: for example, Henry Muggeridge, defending Romford for Labour, 'at the first of his … meetings at Mauney Road School, was subjected to considerable heckling by ladies…'. 637 In Greater London, Labour collapsed to just nine MPs elected. 638 At the METB elections in November, it lost control of all but three councils, leaving it with the lowest count of councils since before the War. 639 However this really was the nadir of Labour's fortunes. The 1920s had shown that it was possible for Labour to win in a variety of areas, with electoral factors such as timing, the economic climate and the state of its opponents favourable to it. The party had also developed strongholds which were not lost even in this, the worst of years. These strongholds will now be examined.

A good idea of where these strongholds were comes from an analysis of General Election results through the period.

634 Ben Pimlott, Labour and the Left in the 1930s, Cambridge (CUP), 1977, 9.
635 LMA, LMA/4284/01/001, records of Clapham Labour Party, minutes 1930-1933, meeting of 21 May 1930.
637 Frost, 'Romford Election', 23.
638 See Table 2A.
639 See Table 4. They were left with Poplar, Bermondsey and Deptford - see The Times, 4 Nov 1931, 12.
Seats won by Labour in Greater London at General Elections, 1918-1931  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Wins (out of six)</th>
<th>Six Wins</th>
<th>Five Wins</th>
<th>Four Wins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>West Ham</td>
<td>Deptford, Poplar, Bow and Bromley,</td>
<td>Bermondsey West, Camberwell North,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plaistow, West</td>
<td>Poplar South, Stepney</td>
<td>East Ham South, Edmonton, Stepney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ham Silvertown,</td>
<td>Limehouse, West Ham Stratford</td>
<td>Whitechapel &amp; St George's,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woolwich East *</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tottenham North, Walthamstow West</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - lost by Labour at by-election in 1921.

If Labour won a seat at least four times out of the six, it means it have must have won it in at least one of its bad years: 1918, 1924 and 1931. Thus a total of fifteen seats in Greater London were won at least four times in the period 1918-1931, and where they were shows where Labour had built its strongholds: in the East End of London and the neighbouring County Boroughs of East and West Ham; inner South London; and North London boroughs where union organisation was strong and poverty a problem.

[In London], ... the prevailing wind being westerly, and the great bulk of industrial smoke and smell being on the riverside in East London, it was natural that the best residential districts should be on the west side. ... The poorest workers lived as close to their jobs as they could, so as to avoid the cost and loss of time involved in travel; they were to be found overwhelmingly in East London and just south of the centre, across the river.  

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640 Table derived from Craig, *Results*.  

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Pelling's description of where the poorer areas of London were before 1914 held true after 1918. It was natural that Labour should be strong in these areas, particularly since it was the lower end of the sharply divided London working class - the unskilled Labourers - who dwelt here. By way of explanation for the pockets of Labour strength in North London, Johnson points out that,

... working class houses spread into Tottenham and Enfield between 1871 and 1900. The form of this growth was largely a result of the building of the Great Eastern Railway [GER] into Liverpool Street, since this company was compelled to provide cheap workmen's services as a compensation for dwellings demolished during the construction of the line into London.

This suggests that many ex-East-Enders would have lived in these areas. Edmonton, Tottenham North and Walthamstow West, areas on the GER route into London, are among those cited as Labour strongholds above. They were thus obviously important areas to Labour. People in all these areas would naturally have most to gain from Labour policies, should they actually be able to vote for them, something more likely after 1918. The analysis emphasises just how important these main localities were to Labour. Key issues Pelling identifies for the East End include 'the alien immigrant question' which was less important after 1906, social reform, and compensation for watermen and lightermen, who had been disadvantaged by the construction of the Rotherhithe Tunnel. So even before the War it was local issues - assuming that, given the nature of the area, social reform would be in the interest of locals - which really counted in this area. This does suggest that after the War it was Labour's ability to make its policies relevant locally, and to develop local organisations using local tactics, that built up its strongholds.

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641 Pelling, British Elections, 28.
642 Pelling, British Elections, 27.
A couple of other characteristics of Labour strongholds are worth emphasising here. Weinbren is among those who have shown that local authority housing estates, which grew both in number and size during the 1920s (as has been shown), brought with them increased electoral strength for Labour. While these were not as a rule built in existing Labour strongholds, they housed many who were moved out of such areas, and hence pockets of Labour strength grew in outlying areas. For example, Labour won control of Dagenham Urban District Council (UDC) in 1925 following the construction of the Becontree LCC estate. A similar effect occurred when the St Helier estate led to a growth in Labour's strength on the Merton and Morden UDC in Surrey. 645

Another point, made by Pelling, is that 'it is a reasonable assumption that the influence of both churches and chapels upon voting behaviour was a very minor factor in London politics.' 646 Some historians have argued that there was a strong link between nonconformity, or strong religious minority groups such as Jews or Roman Catholics, and radical voting generally. This has been shown to have been particularly true of the Victorian period, and, to a lesser degree, of the Edwardian period. 647 However, Pelling contends that this does not appear to have been true in London before the War. After the War an exception to this can be found. What has been described as an 'Irish Catholic Labour machine' was strong in Stepney in the 1920s. 648 Goss has shown that Catholicism also had an influence in Bermondsey. 649 This fits with Weinbren's theory that Labour made conscious efforts from 1919 to cultivate the support of minority groups such as Jews and Roman Catholics. 650 Geoffrey Alderman has shown that 'Jews and Jewish trade unionists played a crucial role in the establishment of the Stepney Central Labour party in June 1918.' 651 Generally speaking, religious worship was declining from

645 Weinbren, 'Building Communities', 44-45.
646 Pelling, British Elections, 56.
647 Wald, Crosses on the Ballot, 17 - with particular reference to the link between nonconformity and radical voting, though also dealing with other religious groups elsewhere in his work.
648 Gillespie, 'Poplarism and Proletarianism', 183.
649 Goss, Local Labour, 22.
the late nineteenth century onwards, although Catholicism, even in London, was 'still thriving'. During the 1920s and 1930s, Thorpe says that

Roman Catholicism expanded; and while providing Labour with many votes, Catholics were always more prone than other denominations to reactionary intercessions from above, as for example with Pope Pius XI's anti-socialist encyclical of May 1931, or the widespread advice given by priests to oppose Labour at that year's General Election in reprisal for the Labour government's education policy. 653

As Catholicism was strong in parts of London, decisions made by Catholics could affect Labour's fortunes, and may well have contributed to its setback in London in 1931 - for example, Thorpe noted this particularly in Dartford. 654 Occasional cases can also be found of Christian Socialism. For example, in Walthamstow, an area where Labour was successful as shown above, Rev R W Sorensen wrote on 'Why I am a Labour candidate':

(1) Because of my Christian faith.
(2) Because the kingdom of God on earth requires the expression of organised Labour in local affairs.
(3) Because I have been nominated and elected to such candidature by the workers themselves. 655

Another example was Alfred Salter in Bermondsey, described as a '... devout nonconformist...' by Goss. 656 While there were some exceptions caused by the middle classes moving outwards and taking with them a greater propensity to attend Anglican church services, in inner London there was a general decline in religious worship in the 1920s. 657 Arthur Black made three surveys of London

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654 Thorpe, 1931, 249.
655 WFOR, Walthamstow Municipal Gazette (published by Walthamstow Borough Labour Party) Vol. 1 No. 3 (2 Apr 1921 - election day), 11.
656 Goss, Local Labour, 15. Though a Quaker, Salter had been brought up a Methodist.
657 Gill's statistics on religious worship in 'Inner Greater London' are reproduced in part in table 11.
church attendance in 1927 for *The British Weekly*. The decline in churchgoing that he noticed could, he found, be explained in five ways:

'The big chapel without exception is a burdensome problem'; all denominations [of Christianity] in poor areas lacked sufficient funds; 'Anglicans are seriously hindered by the shortage of clergy, and they do not use lay help very freely'; churches 'with their small bodies of worshippers, seemed very little fitted to withstand' the attractions of the cinema and other forms of Sunday leisure; and finally, 'these lessened attendances ... have an intimate bearing upon such problems as the presentation of the Christian message. 658

So while religious worship in London was on the decline in the 1920s, as before, and while there may not be a general link between areas of Labour strength and religion of any sort, in particular religious minorities, such as Roman Catholicism, it is a factor worthy of note in some locations. There was also a link between Labour and the Jewish population in some areas.

John Marriott has painted a vivid picture of the political life of a Labour stronghold, West Ham. One key observation he makes is that turnout was often lower at elections in areas of Labour strength. Turnout in West Ham was, on average, always lower and sometimes up to 6% lower than an average turnout in four London seats of similar social composition where Labour success was more sporadic. 659 He also shows how election times became part of the lives of children in such areas. One who was a child in the 1920s described it:

'We used to fight each other at election times, it was almost traditional ... the same as an Oxford and Cambridge boat race, you'd either be a dark blue or a light blue. You had to have some opposition, so some used to gang up and say "we're the Tories", and they'd go round knocking on doors, telling people to vote Tory, and we'd go round after them telling people to vote Labour.' Occasionally these rivalries were more

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658 Gill, *Empty Church*, 195. The quotations are from Black's work in *The British Weekly*. Gill explains (194) that, although he does not say so, Black must have used the Putney and Roehampton areas as the basis for his work.

659 Marriott, *Culture of Labourism*, 164.
openly hostile. Vacant stretches of wasteland became battlegrounds for election gangs. 'Either one of the gangs would go up there and fix up pieces of corrugated iron down one end of it and then down the other end the same, and the gangs would take up their positions at each end and throw bricks at each other all night. Gangs used to form up as Tories just to give us something to do. It had nothing to do with the tradition of voting Labour. It was just a matter of having some rivalry.'

The growth of the organisation of which Herbert Morrison was secretary, the London Labour Party, was key in the growth of Labour's power in London. Membership numbers - including the memberships of affiliated organisations, rose from 279,381 in July 1919, to 372,175 in November 1924, and other evidence such as the formation of more party groups suggests that membership continued to rise after this date. Morrison tried to shape his 'machine' into an efficient one, and also one of rectitude. These, he believed, would be the two main points of strategy that would consolidate Labour's power in London. He wrote in the *London Labour Chronicle,*

A machine without high principle is a machine of no real value. And high principles without an efficient machine constitute but a voice crying in the wilderness. We have to make an efficient machine for a high moral purpose.

Morrison exhorted those many Labour party men and women, newly elected in 1919, to behave responsibly.

If we make good - London Labour goes forward from victory to victory. If our administration is a failure - we go down with a sickening thud.

660 Marriott, *Culture of Labourism,* 180. The narrator of the story is named as Frank Robinson.
661 LMA, records of the London Labour Party (LLP), ACC/2417/A/01 and ACC/2417/A/10 (Executive Committee minutes, 1919-1930 and Presented Papers, 1923-1924). Membership certainly continued to grow in other Labour parties - for example in Woolwich membership rose from 2,194 in 1920 (including 192 new women members described as 'the gentler sex') to 4,424 in 1929, and in Hounslow 160 new members joined in just one quarter in 1926. See GCH, WLP 40.2 Woolwich Labour Party Annual Report for 1920, and WLP 40.3 Woolwich Labour Party Annual Report for 1929, and HOUN, Hounslow and District Labour Party minutes Apr 1926-Aug 1927 (Vol. 12), Quarterly General Meeting of 29 Sep 1926.
Morrison did make a difference to Labour's position in Greater London, as most of its strongholds did grow in the LLP area - though interestingly not two of the three seats that Labour won at all six General Elections. Labour's strongholds formed a solid base on which it could build during the 1920s, and this it did, despite setbacks. In this it benefited from its own tactics, its machinery, and - to some extent - the collapse of the Liberals.

**Tactics, Machinery, and Introspection**

Labour's programme is comprehensive and constructive. It is designed to build a new world, and to build it by constitutional means. It is a programme of national and international justice, founded on permanent democratic principles. Even in an election as sinister as this, in which a large part of the nation's youth is arbitrarily disfranchised by the Government, Labour confidently appeals to the country to support its programme of social justice and economic freedom. 664

Thus ended the Labour manifesto, *Labour's Call to the People*, in December 1918. It included such proposals as the construction of one million homes financed by the state, 'freedom' for Ireland and India, a capital levy and sweeping nationalisation. However, split by the War and facing a dominant Coalition government, Labour 'found itself arrayed in somewhat ragged opposition to Lloyd George.' 665 One of its leading figures, and a future candidate there, Ramsay MacDonald, came under blistering attacks from his opponents in Woolwich. The Woolwich Workers Society produced a leaflet:

> We say 'no'. Ramsay MacDonald, the pacifist pro-German maggot, is booked to speak at Co-operative Woods, Federation Road, Abbey Wood ... you must join the demonstration against this king of the pacifists! 666

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663 LMA, LLP ACC/2417/A/6, cutting from *London Labour Chronicle* Dec 1919.
665 Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 234.
MacDonald's record did not sit well with the strong patriotism in the Woolwich constituencies, or across the river in West Ham, where otherwise Labour would have been expected to be the natural choice of electors. In 1918 Labour clearly did not employ the right tactics for the areas in which it was campaigning. This record improved dramatically over the 1920s, and the evidence suggests that it was by developing local strategies for local areas that success came.

Labour in Greater London tried to place emphasis on policies that would get it elected in particular local council wards, and in particular parliamentary constituencies. In this it was like most political parties, and like most political parties it had to strike an overall balance between satisfying its activists and core supporters, and at the same time attracting voters we would now call 'floating' voters, as well as encouraging people to switch regular support from other parties. At times, too, Labour would advocate policies that were in its own political interest. And at their meetings, Labour activists would often discuss issues that were not necessarily key policy areas but clearly of concern to them. A discussion relating to the death penalty held in West Lewisham falls into this last category. In December 1928 the 'National Council for the Abolition of the Death Penalty' asked for their support for a petition to parliament, and they agreed to help distribute petition sheets. Similarly, in Heston, Hounslow and Isleworth activists agreed that '...compelling the use of a humane killer in slaughterhouses' should become their policy. And in Harrow a great interest was taken in Russia, '...the only country in the world where woman is the equal of man as a citizen.' Here also

666 GCH, WLP 36, Leaflet dated 1918 found in file of Woolwich Labour Party records.
667 At this time part of Woolwich METB, and parliamentary constituencies, were on the north side of the River Thames. For commentary on the patriotism of East End Labour-inclined voters see Marriott, *Culture of Labourism*, chapter two (27-68, especially 27-39).
668 LHAM, records of the West Lewisham Labour Party, A89/100/2 - minutes 1927-1929, General Council meeting of 10 Dec 1928.
669 HOUN, ACC 7062 Vol. 14, minutes of the Heston, Hounslow and Isleworth CLP Co-ordinating committee, meeting of 21 July 1930.
670 HRW, records of Harrow, Wealdstone and Harrow Weald Labour Party Women's Section, minutes Jul 1923 - May 1927, meeting of 17 Nov 1926.
A resolution was proposed by Mrs Marshment and seconded by Mrs Smith that the secretary forward the following protest to the Home Secretary: 'That the Women's Section of the Wealdstone Local Labour Party [sic] views with regret the heavy sentence of two months hard labour on a sixteen year old Cardiff boy, and requests the Home Secretary to order a revision of the sentence and the application of a form of punishment more humane and fitting to a juvenile of the age and mentality of the boy'.

So clearly there was scope for Labour activists to vent their energies on what may be seen as non-core issues tactically, but issues close to their own hearts. This was almost certainly vital in keeping up their morale.

Among policies advocated by Labour that were clearly in the party interest was the abolition of the Boards of Guardians. This was put forward by the London Labour Party from December 1924, as it was becoming clear how these bodies could be used against Labour locally - for example problems in West Ham with what the government saw as excessively generous provision of relief, culminating in the supercession of the Guardians, were among those on the horizon. 672 In a draft of the LLP manifesto for the March 1925 LCC elections, it was said that the party stands for the break up of the Poor Law, the abolition of the Boards of Guardians and the transfer of public assistance functions to the appropriate central and local authorities. 673

Later in the 1920s the Boards of Guardians were abolished by the Conservatives, and the situation in terms of Labour's policy altered when the party found that its representatives were kept off the new Public Assistance Committees of local authorities in many areas (mostly at county council or county borough council level) by their Conservative-dominated councils. For example in Croydon 'bitter

671 HRW, Women's Section minutes, meeting of 3 Dec 1924.
672 For a description of the problems in West Ham see Marriott, Culture of Labourism, chapter four (122-162). The slightly different franchise in Board of Guardians elections, one that favoured 'ratepayers' and disenfranchised some poorer, non-property owning residents perhaps more likely to favour Labour, may also be behind the policy of opposition to the Guardians.
attacks were made on the Croydon Borough Council at a Labour demonstration ... and complaint was made that no Labour member had been elected to the newly formed Public Assistance Committee. 674 This particular policy did not turn out quite as Labour had intended. Another example of a policy being proposed that seemed to be in Labour's political interest was the advocacy of a 'Home Counties Parliament' by the LLP in 1920. 675 Labour wanted this to be created so that it could take on the powers of a London transport authority, or a public body regulating markets - it wanted these to be in the hands of elected representatives rather than unelected commissioners. Underlying this was the belief that it would never win control over an unelected commission, but it did think in 1920 that it could win control of a 'Home Counties Parliament'. Such a body would also have to cover a wider area than that of the LCC. This was something strongly resisted by Labour once it actually controlled the LCC after 1934, when the fear was that such control would be lost by the addition of Conservative-dominated suburbs.

The majority of policies adopted by Labour during the 1920s were, reasonably, put forward with the aim of winning more votes. It entered the decade equipped with a slate of ideas, including those mentioned in the 1918 manifesto, and added to them over time. Labour also changed the emphasis on some policies as time went on and their appeal lessened, dropped those clearly no longer relevant - mainly related to recovery from War - and hid others out of public view for tactical reasons. Examples of new policies taken on because of their perceived voter appeal included supporting the establishment of a Municipal Bank for London. This, it was argued,

... would promote a convenient form of thrift; it would give the poor as well as all other sections of the community much needed facilities for keeping their money in safely [sic]... 676

673 LMA, LLP ACC/2417/A/10 - presented papers, document dated 23 Dec 1924.
674 Croydon Advertiser, 19 October 1929, 11.
675 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/01, executive committee minutes, meeting of 8 April 1920.
676 GCH, WLP 19, Woolwich Labour Party LCC Elections - leaflet for 'LCC Election March 8 1928 - LLP Point No. 6'. This was copying the idea of Conservative-run Birmingham City Council.
In Twickenham activists sought to garner votes, and steal the thunder of the Liberals in the process, with a meeting on the subject of 'land values'. 677 Tackling the problem of unemployment - an issue rarely considered in wartime - soon became a policy priority after the War, and the LLP held a meeting on the subject in December 1920 for London Labour MPs and Mayors. 678 Following this an 'action plan' was submitted. The party was keen to be acting on the unemployment issue when it became of obvious concern to people. 679 Finally, in Wandsworth local activists seized on the sentiment, widespread after the armistice, that there should be 'No More War', and therefore they organised participation in a 'No More War' demonstration and the Battersea 'No More War' committee. 680

Labour's major effort, though, came in the tactics used to get its message across, and to build support. The tactics took many forms, and looking at these is vital in understanding how and why the Labour party managed to achieve a stronger presence in Greater London during the 1920s.

One of the main tactics Labour employed in London after 1918 was the targeting of newly enfranchised female voters, and this effort was renewed following the extension of the franchise in 1928. Bush has argued that women from poorer, Labour supporting areas were more likely to work. 681 It follows that their political needs would be different from housewives - they would be breadwinners as well as consumers or administrators of the housekeeping money. Labour knew it would have to work to avoid such voters slipping through their fingers. Chapter three has shown how Conservatives in London blamed their 1929 General Election defeat -

678 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/07.
679 Unemployment stood at an average 3.9% during 1920, having been a negligible amount in 1919. It rose rapidly to an average 16.9% in 1921 and fell only to an average 14.3% in 1922. For a complete set of figures see Thorpe, 1914-45, 88.
680 Wandsworth Local History Service Library (WWTH), records of the Wandsworth Central Labour Party, Women's Section, Vol. 1 - minutes Mar 1922 - June 1924, meeting of 8 Aug 1922. This issue was distinct from the issue of patriotism that caused problems for Labour in 1918 - that related more to how individuals, and the party as a whole, participated in the national effort during the War itself.
681 Bush, Behind the Lines, 4-5.
in part - on newly enfranchised women voters backing their opponents. Many
instances can be found of Labour deliberately going out to get the votes of such
people. In Wealdstone, for example, Miss Woodley from the League of Youth, a
nationally organised Labour body, came to visit the local party.

She said the Tory party were getting the credit for the young women's vote, that
should be corrected. The advantage of the new young woman voter should be apparent
- the majority were working class and we should be able to capture this vote. 682

In 1925 Labour can be seen to be targeting the housewife vote in London with
their municipalisation policies.

Special Word to Women -
Every housewife should vote for the Labour candidates who stand for the Municipal
Ownership of all food markets and slaughter houses, of the milk and coal supplies and
electricity… 683

The implication here is that municipalisation would lead to lower prices. The
Woolwich Labour party tried to appeal to both the housewife vote and the vote of
the working woman.

To women this election is of vital importance. It is the mother in the house who bears
the largest share of the burden of high prices, overcrowded houses and unemployment.
The Labour party has brought a new message of hope to the working women of our
land, for its policy deals directly with the home life of the nation. I confidently look
for a great rally of the women of East Woolwich to Labour … 684

682 HRW, Wealdstone Labour Party, minutes Aug 1926 - Aug 1929, meeting of 27 Feb 1929.
683 GLPB, LMS 181 - LCC Election Addresses 1925, election address of Mrs C M Merrifield and
Mr Edwin Wigan (Labour candidates in North Hackney).
684 GCH, WLP 15, Election leaflet of Harry Snell (Labour candidate for Woolwich East), 15 Nov
1922.
In 1928 the LLP asked their special 'women's advisory committee' to guide them towards maximising their strength in the 'flapper' vote - women aged 21-30 - at the next General Election. This committee also took up the motion that

The women's advisory committee is asked to consider ways and means of obtaining a panel of working class women candidates for parliament and of promoting funds in support of their candidature. 685

The motion was 'carried by a very large majority', and can be seen as an early attempt at positive discrimination to encourage women candidates, the aim being to ensure that women voters were appealed to. Harrow Labour party women's section held a meeting on 'what the Labour party stands for', another attempt to attract more women who were perhaps unaware of some of Labour's policies. 686

There are many examples of Labour trying to get women's votes and it was clearly a major part of Labour's tactical armoury. 687

Propaganda was another key weapon that Labour, like any other political party, used as part of their campaign strategy. The LLP used vans (with loudspeakers and raised platforms - a sort of mobile meeting venue) to help spread their propaganda from 1924. 688 The LLP minutes show that there were some problems getting sufficient audiences to visit vans on their tours, but the vans did keep going (at least for a few months) so they must have been viewed as successful to some degree. They were used in the LCC election campaign of 1928, where evidence from the West Lewisham Labour party shows that efforts were made to make the best use of them here. 689 Labour also considered using film propaganda

685 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/H/1 - minutes of the women's advisory committee, report of meeting on 13 Oct 1928.
686 HRW, Harrow Labour Party women's section, minute book Apr 1924 - Sep 1927, meeting of 24 Sep 1924. The evidence suggests that the meeting was not planned, and did not take place, as part of the 1924 General Election campaign.
687 Another example of a direct move towards attracting the women voter came, again in Woolwich, in 1928, when local agents advised working through the new electoral register to identify new - mainly women - voters and persuading these people in particular to support Labour. See GCH, WLP 41.2, report of 13 Nov 1928.
688 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/01, meeting of 3 July 1924.
689 LHAM, West Lewisham Labour party, A89/100/2 - minutes 1927-1929, meeting of 23 Jan 1929.
in 1919, although the prohibitive cost - something that could be overcome by their Conservative opponents - stopped them from developing this area seriously until 1928. Extra impetus was given to Labour's attempts at film propaganda when they realised just how much cinema had become a 'central cultural institution of the working class.'

Labour propaganda was also carried in press advertising. This could range from advertising in a church magazine, which happened in Greenford, to the common practice of producing their own local journals. Many other local parties produced their own journals. Perhaps the most widely known was the Pioneer in Woolwich, but there was also the Citizen in Harrow and others. Gramophone records of pro-Labour speeches by key speakers were available for sale and could be used by party activists and others. To give extra sharpness to their written propaganda, both in their own publications and in the local press - paid for or otherwise - many Labour organisations employed professionals or clued-up sympathisers to be responsible for securing them the best results. The LLP employed a professional journalist as early as 1922, and had a full time press agent from 1925, to help produce items which were then often circulated down to affiliated bodies for use. Of course Labour did also use old fashioned public oratory and public meetings to get their message across as well. To help them the London Labour Chronicle, the magazine of the LLP, carried an advertisement for a folding portable speaking platform.

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690 Stephen G Jones, *The British Labour Movement and Film 1918-1939*, London (Routledge), 1987, 139-141. The Labour Committee on Film Propaganda, set up in 1919, was chaired by Sidney Webb, and George Bernard Shaw was a member.
691 Jones, *Film*, 141.
692 LMA, ACC/1972/9, Greenford Labour party, minutes 1927-1930, meeting of 4 Dec 1930, and meeting of 4 Feb 1929 on the publication of the Greenford Citizen. See GCH, Woolwich Labour party: Pioneer May 1922 - Apr 1940 (WLP 40.7, 40.8 and 40.9), and also HRW, Harrow Divisional Labour party, minutes Jun 1929 - Oct 1933, annual report for year ending 3 Feb 1930. This last example demonstrates that such publications were not always financial successes - the paper closed within a year.
693 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/14, presented papers - General Election Circular No. 6, 8 May 1929, 2.
694 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/01, meeting of 5 Oct 1922, and meeting of 7 May 1925. Philip Millwood was engaged as the first Press Agent in 1925.
695 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/P/01, *London Labour Chronicle*, Aug 1923 (No.94), 1 shows an example of this. An advertisement from George S Hirst of EC4 asks, 'Are You an Open Air
It was not just the methods of propaganda but their contents which were important. The main purpose of propaganda was to portray key Labour policies in a good light, but it also intended to portray Labour's opponents in a bad light. In particular at local elections, one of Labour's main messages were that it was opposed by some sort of unholy coalition of their opponents, which ought not to be allowed to succeed. This began as early as March 1919, with Herbert Morrison complaining of 'dishonourable and despicable tactics' by a 'coalition' of Municipal Reform and Progressive opponents in the North Southwark division. By 1922 Morrison was saying

A determined effort is being made, in nearly every county, to exclude from the county council every one of the Labour members; and to win every seat for reaction, under such names as Ratepayers' candidates, Conservative or Unionist candidates, Municipal Reform candidates, Liberal candidates or Progressive candidates. At this election, these names all mean the same thing. They are all 'against Labour.'

In 1925 in Hackney, Labour election material said to voters, '...we appeal to you with all confidence to dismiss an unprincipled coalition from office...' In 1927 in Hendon, Labour propaganda was directed against '...the anti-Labour majority on the Hendon UDC'.

Labour was quite capable of dishing out strong propaganda when it wanted to. In 1922 in Ealing, Labour assailed the incumbent Conservative MP, Sir Herbert Nield:

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Speaker? If so you will welcome the 'Messenger' folding platform ... lasts for years ... price £2/10/-, carriage paid'.

696 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/06, presented papers - 'Labour Repudiates Charges of Bolshevism', 'Press Release' dated 4 March 1919.
697 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/08, presented papers - Leaflet No. 1, Feb 1922.
698 HKY, M/4312/8 Election Material, 1925 Labour manifesto for Hackney METB elections, 1.
Labour impeaches not only the coalition government but the individual members who supported it. Place-seekers all, they change their parties and opinion almost as often as they change their linen. Labour, therefore, impeaches Sir Herbert Nield. 700

A scaremongering leaflet for the 1922 METB election campaign produced by the LLP, entitled 'If You Do Not Want Illness at Home - Read This', railed against bad landlords who wanted to kill children and families. The leaflet ends 'Think of the Children! Vote Labour! Keep Well and Save Money!'. 701 Some of the propaganda produced in the 1931 campaign was also vicious, reflecting the hurt Labour felt at its ejection from office. A typical example is the defiant, jingoistic but at the same time defeatist series of leaflets used in Woolwich during this campaign, culminating in a leaflet from East Woolwich Labour MP George Hicks - 'Woolwich Yet Shall Stand for - Britain for the British, and Against the Financiers.' 702

Perhaps the outstanding thing about Labour's propaganda, though, was that it could be shaped at a local level for local needs. This was true both of events and the contents of propaganda. A good example of how events could be tailored to local conditions came at Dulwich, where local Labour members tried to run a garden fete, and put on dances at the local baths and a children's party, because it was felt that these would have a greater effectiveness among their local target (middle class) voters. 703 Similar practices occurred in many other local areas, and similar tailoring of events was done by the Conservatives. 704 When it came to the contents of propaganda, one of the clearest examples of localisation was in Greenwich where voters were asked to reward Labour for arranging the lighting of the St Alfege church clock at night. 705 In Mile End, Labour made a particular

700 EAL, General Election Leaflets / Manifestos 1922-1923, manifesto of A H Chilton, Labour candidate, for 1922 General Election, 2.
701 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/08, presented papers - Borough Council Election Leaflet No. 1, Sept / Oct 1922.
702 GCH, WLP 15, leaflets dated October and November 1931.
704 See chapters two and three.
pitch for the shopkeeper vote which was perceived as being naturally inclined towards their opponents.

A Word to Shopkeepers - do you realise that you depend for your livelihood upon the thousands of working-class people who live around you? Cannot you see [sic] that unless these people are earning a living wage, and living in clean, healthy streets and houses, your livelihood is in danger too? Do you not therefore understand that even for your own sake, your duty is to vote Labour. 706

In Deptford the message was a defensive one - here Labour had run the METB for six years by 1925, and wanted to keep running things for another three.

Three years ago the electors of Deptford re-affirmed their confidence in Labour's ability to control its local administration in a sane, efficient and constitutional manner. Despite the usual wild statements and customary attacks on Labour representation, we feel that we can not only claim but prove that local affairs have been conducted throughout our term of office with marked ability and real economy. 707

Labour in Croydon attacked the rising 'Empire Party' which it obviously saw as a threat in these two constituencies. 708 In Merton and Morden the decision was taken to provide a prize for the local Flower Show, the aim being to generate awareness of the party locally - it had only been formed in 1926 - and to make the party seem a natural part of the community. 709 In Lewisham West a similar decision was taken to present gifts to the local Library. 710 In Bermondsey it was the local MP in the Bermondsey West constituency who - being popular in the area - was to the fore in propaganda efforts. Dr Alfred Salter even became the subject of a poem published in the Bermondsey Labour Magazine in 1929.

706 GLPB, LMS 139, Stepney METB Council (Mile End South East ward) Labour party manifesto, November 1925.
707 GLPB, LMS 139, Deptford (Hatcham ward) Labour party election address for METB elections, November 1925.
709 LSE, records of the Merton and Morden Labour party, ref. 3/1 - minutes 1926-1930, 15 (1926).
Labour's programme - Bricks and Mortar
Bermondsey's Builder - Dr Salter
Every Union and Labour Supporter
Has a Duty to Vote for Salter
Tories oppress, and Liberals Falter;
Labour's steady - vote for Salter
Father, Mother, Son and Daughter,
All Together and Vote for Salter
The Government's Head is in the Halter
Tighten the Noose Mate! Vote for Salter
The Woman Voter - What has History Taught Her?
That Labour means Business - Vote for Salter
Capitalism Ends in War and Slaughter
Labour Means Peace - so Vote for Salter! 711

There was another verse or song (to be sung to the tune of 'Ma, he's making eyes at me') for the Labour candidate in Bethnal Green South West in 1922, J J Vaughan:

Vaughan's going to be our MP.
Labour's going to have a victory.
Matthew Wilson [Con] is breaking his heart.
Percy Harris [Lib] will soon do a bunk to Pans.
Vaughan's a fighter we have seen,
So he's for Bethnal Green;
He's a communist they tell us,
All the better - he won't sell us.
Vaughan's our MP. 712

710 LHAM, A89/100/1, executive committee meeting of 2 Dec 1925. The gifts included three books and a chair.
711 SWK, Bermondsey Labour Magazine, No. 62 (May 1929), 8. Salter’s popularity seems to have been partly because of his local political service on the Board of Guardians and the Bermondsey METB council, and also because of his eminence as a physician, pathologist and bacteriologist at Guy’s Hospital. See Who’s Who 1931.
712 Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives (THAM), TH/8214, Labour leaflet in Bethnal Green South West, 1922. Vaughan did stand as a Communist (with no Labour opponent) in the seat in 1922 and 1924.
Labour could also send confused and mixed messages to those it was trying to target. In common with other political parties at the time, there was no single national party colour. However, Labour in London seems to have had so many colours, and even different colours in the same constituency or ward, that it rendered efforts to use ribbons or rosettes or flags to bolster support for candidates ineffective. Examples of this are not difficult to find. As late as 1929, in Greenwich, one member urged the adoption of one colour. It was disconcerting to see so many colours displayed during elections. The party should inform its members that its colour was the one definite character [sic] for the whole of the party. 713

Greenwich then resolved to adopt red as its colour. Southwark South East wanted to change its colours to red, and red and yellow, in September 1924 but this proposal was 'lost after full discussion' at a meeting. 714 In Wealdstone it appears that colours changed with each election, and it was decided for example that at the 1926 local elections their colours 'would be yellow and black.' 715 In Islington North in 1931, but only after a discussion, red and yellow were agreed upon as the colours to be used. 716 In Willesden West 'blue and orange' were chosen. 717 It was not just colours that led to confusion in Labour's tactics. In Lewisham West the party's slogan, or lack of it, caused difficulty - 'what is it?' one meeting asked, and apparently did not provide an answer. 718 In Ealing the problem was the flag - in

713 GCH, records of the Greenwich Labour party, GLP 1.1, minutes of General Council meetings 1927-1933, meeting of 18 July 1929.
714 SWK, records of the Southwark South East Labour party, ref. 1983/121/3 - minutes 1924, meeting of 19 Sep 1924.
715 HRW, records of the Wealdstone Labour party, branch meeting minutes Apr 1924 - July 1926, meeting of 27 Jan 1926.
716 Islington Local History Collection (ISL), records of the Islington North Labour Party, minutes of special management committee meeting of 9 Oct 1931.
717 Brent Archive (BRE), 19842/WWWS/2/2, West Willesden Labour Party, Women's Section, minutes May 1928-Mar 1930, half-yearly meeting on 25 Mar 1929.
718 LHAM, A89/100/1, executive committee meeting of 7 Oct 1925. The slogan was wanted for the 1925 METB election campaign in Lewisham.
the end the local Labour party decided not to use the Union flag in campaigns, in case it should cause confusion with the Conservative campaign. 719

Labour's ability to adapt its tactics to cope with changes in electoral situations, and to alter its messages to suit the position it faced, can also be shown with a number of examples. However, these changes were not always successful. For example the London Labour Party managed to develop a rapid and strong response to the appearance of the Zinoviev controversy in 1924. Herbert Morrison wrote on 25 October,

…it is already clear that our opponents may attempt to use this with a view to discrediting the Labour government and the Anglo-Russian treaty in particular. ... There is no need, however, why [sic] the incident should not be used for Labour rather than against it. 720

Morrison then provides a sample 'rebuttal'.

Beware of Last Minute Untruths

Ramsay MacDonald's firm note to the Soviet government PROVES that Labour can be relied upon sternly to uphold British interests and the constitutional position of the army and navy. Remember the LIBERAL government's weak handling of Carson, Galloper Smith and the TORY officer conspirators within the British Army in 1913/14 and vote for Brown, the Labour candidate, AND NO WOBBLING. 721

Here Morrison was not only helping London campaigners but he also provided a lead to Labour activists elsewhere, who were looking in vain to MacDonald for guidance on this issue for a long period. 722 On another occasion the LLP proved it was able to ditch entire parts of its manifesto where they did not suit the prevailing conditions. This would have been seen by many as novel, as the party

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719 LMA, ACC/1972/1, records of the Ealing Constituency Labour party, meeting of 8 May 1929.
720 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/10, circular of 25 October 1924.
721 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/10, circular of 25 October 1924. As polling day was 29 October, it is likely that this rebuttal would have only had a limited impact in the time available.
was supposed to have set its principles in stone in 1918. But when it came to the 1928 LCC elections, Morrison rewrote the LLP manifesto, removing some key planks from the 1925 version. Three of the policies removed were promoting 'social dignity of the teaching profession', 'public ownership of lighting, power and water supplies', and putting a 'penalty clause in contracts [from the LCC] for breach of trade union conditions'. \textsuperscript{723} The explanation Morrison gave was simple. He had removed the policies

\textit{...on the ground either that they are matters that a Labour council would be free to take up but that there is not sufficient electoral value in them to warrant the additional space required in the programme, or that their achievement or effective commencement is not likely during the next three years.} \textsuperscript{724}

It is clear that Labour's tactics were adaptable to suit the situation that the party was faced with not only in a particular area - as was shown earlier - but at a particular time as well.

At least one constituency Labour party also showed the signs of forming an electoral strategy that, while relatively new in the age of mass democracy that had just begun, is now a fixed part of the political landscape. Dulwich Labour party developed a clear 'marginal ward' strategy, targeting seats that it thought it could capture from its opponents on the local METB council (Camberwell) and not fighting so hard elsewhere. \textsuperscript{725} The significance of this can be shown when it is understood that parties were only just developing another strategy nationally that is now commonplace - that of keeping opposing parties busy by running candidates against them in unwinnable constituencies.

\textsuperscript{722} Marquand says of the early days of this affair that 'MacDonald's silence made things even worse.' See Marquand, \textit{Ramsay MacDonald}, 384.
\textsuperscript{723} LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/13, circular of 5 Jan 1928.
\textsuperscript{724} LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/13, circular of 5 Jan 1928.
\textsuperscript{725} SWK, records of the Dulwich Labour party, A390, 1924-29 volume, meeting of 25 Sep 1928. The party decided to target the St John and Alleyn wards in Dulwich on this occasion. The strategy does not seem to have met with success initially - Labour gained only one extra seat out of 60 contested in Camberwell in 1928, increasing their number to 22. See GLPB, LMS 121, for results.
In looking at other tactics used by Labour, similarities with those used by the Conservatives can easily be seen. For example, Labour was not afraid to adapt party labels to suit its own needs. In the North Southwark LCC by-election in 1920, Herbert Morrison stood as an 'anti-profiteer' candidate, emphasising much less his position as the Labour candidate. At this time those who had made 'excess' profits during the war were under particular attack, and Morrison clearly hoped the label would help him, but in the event he was unsuccessful. On at least one other occasion, a Labour candidate - faced by the usual slate of 'ratepayer' candidates put up by his opponents in a local council election - called himself 'the real ratepayers' candidate'. Other electoral tactics included encouraging their supporters to turn out early rather than leaving voting until the last minute, and having a properly organised canvass. The *St Pancras Citizen* said 'vote early on March 5 - avoid that fatal last minute rush to the poll' in 1931, and the Wandsworth Central Labour party women's section, in 1923, decided that canvassing and delivery of leaflets should be done - 'serious work must be undertaken for the good of the party' - though this contrasted with their decision at a previous meeting before the 1922 METB and General Elections that 'the sense of the meeting was that a great deal of door-to-door canvassing was fruitless, and that Labour had to overcome the ignorance of the public by holding more mass meetings of an educational character, explaining its policy very simply.' There is also evidence that support for Labour parties in areas where they were electorally weak was encouraged by stronger organisations in other places - as the Conservatives had done. Walthamstow Labour party received a letter from Sevenoaks Labour party asking for support. It was forwarded to the national party with the suggestion that a fund be started to support parties in 'rural areas.' Support could be other than financial - for example the Bermondsey Labour party

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726 LSE, MORRISON/7/17-24, Morrison's statement of May 1920.
727 RBDGE, Frank D Smith collection, 1920 leaflet for Herbert Dunnico, who was actually Labour/Co-Op candidate in the Loxford ward on Ilford Urban District Council. He instead used this other label, and also the label 'consumers' candidate'.
728 GLPB, LMS 57 (LCC Election 1931: Labour and Liberal local literature), *St Pancras Citizen* March 1931, 1; WWTH, Wandsworth Central Labour party - women's section, meeting of 17 Feb 1923, and meeting of 5 Sep 1922.
729 WFOR, Walthamstow Borough Labour party, (W32.7 BLP/1), executive committee meeting of 15 Aug 1926.
'adopted' the constituency of Chislehurst in Kent and sent activists to it. Dr Alfred Salter (MP) commented, '...from personal and first hand experience I am able to report that we are making great headway there.' Whole areas that were suffering in the 1926 miners strike were 'adopted' by Labour parties in Greater London: for example Bermondsey adopted Blaina in Monmouthshire, and Wealdstone adopted Allerton-by-Water. At this time, financial support was provided through special fundraising events, such as 'miners lamp day'.

It is important not to see Labour's tactics as politically uniform. What some Labour parties wanted to do others did not. This could be both because it was thought such tactics would work in one locality but not another, and also because some activists might not actually agree with the tactics being advocated. An example of the latter came in Hounslow, where the local Labour party heard a letter

...from the Bow and Bromley Labour party asking for general support in its action in withdrawing its representatives from Public Assistance Committees.

It was 'agreed that no action be taken' - the activists here were not so radical as to wish to enter into a policy of non-co-operation with their conservative controlled local authority. While in some areas Labour was at daggers drawn with its local opponents, in Woolwich Labour thought it would look good by giving an extra highly prized aldermanic seat on the local METB to the opposition.

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730 SWK, Bermondsey Labour Magazine No. 26, Feb 1926, 5.
731 SWK, Bermondsey Labour Magazine No. 31, July 1926, and HRW, Wealdstone Labour party meeting of 29 Sep 1926.
732 WFOR, Walthamstow Borough Labour party was among those who ran the Miners Lamp Day (meeting of 20 June 1926).
733 HOUN, Heston Hounslow and Isleworth Labour parties co-ordinating committee, meeting of 23 June 1930.
734 GCH, WLP 41.2, Woolwich borough council Labour party meeting of 4 Nov 1928. Activists were quite sure about one thing on this occasion however: 'the opposition was informed that any agreement or decision was subject to the understanding that under no conditions would the party accept Mr A G Rolstone as an Alderman.' Woolwich Labour party had just won the METB council election on 1 Nov 1928.
All the tactics that Labour used were accompanied by party machinery that was, in a number of ways, more formal and more hierarchical than that used by their conservative opponents. There was of course the national Labour party, and the London Labour party, which co-ordinated strategy in the LLP area and dealt with political matters related to the LCC, including the campaigns. There were also parliamentary constituency Labour parties, local Labour parties and borough Labour parties, which sometimes were and sometimes were not involved in local council elections. Any of the smaller organisations could be affiliated to the LLP or other federative parties, as could other organisations such as Trades Councils or even ILP groups. These other federative parties included a Middlesex Federation of Labour parties. Although no records of the organisation seem to survive there is evidence of contact between it and a number of local Labour parties in Middlesex. It could have been simply an *ad hoc* body that met when pertinent issues arose. 735

All this machinery was capable of operating at a local level to support the tactical choices the party made. For example, the LLP ran a class for training local election workers in 1922, and in Wealdstone a 'canvass class' was also run. 736

However, the machinery was regimented and this rubbed off on local parties in terms of the shape their own organisations took. In Woolwich a network of 'street captains' was formed to ensure that the area was fully covered by Labour. Their duties included:

- Report anything being said detrimental to the party.
- Get politics of all residents in the street whether on the register or not.
- Be the personal link with electors and members.

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735 For example HRW, Harrow Divisional Labour party, executive committee meeting of 6 Jan 1930 notes a meeting of the Middlesex Federation of Labour Parties discussing adding more Labour JPs to the Middlesex lists, and HOUN, 'Hounslow and District Labour party' executive committee meeting of 19 Feb 1930 has a note suggesting they received the minutes of the Federation's executive committee. At a meeting on 6 Apr 1921 the Harrow 'local' Labour party noted that it had been decided not to form such a federated party at this stage. (HRW, Harrow 'local' Labour party, meeting of 6 Apr 1921)

736 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/7, copy letter dated 16 Jan 1922., and HRW, Wealdstone Labour party, executive committee minutes May 1924 - May 1927, meeting of 3 Nov 1924.
In short, know their street from beginning to end.  

There are clear echoes here of the caucus system pioneered in the Birmingham of Chamberlain in the later nineteenth century. The records of Labour organisations are littered with evidence of committees set up to deal with every aspect of political development. It could have been the case that committees set up to cover, say, a small part of a constituency could have developed into a full blown local Labour party. And in Merton and Morden the local Labour party was formed in 1926, probably like this, or from the remains of a General Strike committee. The problem of too many committees and organisations in Walthamstow was dealt with by creating another committee - the 'clearing house' committee, where issues between the various organisations, including local trade unions, could be thrashed out. This could also happen with local conservative organisations, when other bodies got together with them, as has been shown. The whole structure in the LLP region came under review periodically, but changes proposed were not always popular. In 1930 a proposal was put forward by the LLP to abolish Borough Labour parties so that all local work was done by constituency parties, getting together where necessary. Activists in Southwark South East - a constituency party - resolved that 'we reply as follows'  

(a) that the London Labour party as at present constituted is not able to deal effectively with the problems of the divided borough.  
(b) that the only solution of the problem is the formation of one Labour party in each borough.  
(c) that in the circumstance we entirely disagree with the proposals circulated.

The clearest thing about the machinery of Labour in Greater London that comes through from an examination of surviving records is the extent to which it was

737 GCH, WLP 41.2, minutes of meeting of Ward Officers in the Woolwich Labour party, 18 Mar 1924.  
738 LSE, Merton and Morden Labour party 3/1 (1926 - first meeting in May).  
739 WFOR, party meeting of Walthamstow Borough Labour party (WLP 32.7 BLP/1), held 22 June 1926.  
740 SWK, 1983/121/2, Southwark South East Labour party executive committee meeting of 21 Mar 1930.
permeated by Trade Union organisations, and the extent to which different unions held power proportionately to their numerical and financial strength in a particular area. For example, in Harrow the list of attendees at a 'special delegate meeting' shows just how many unions were involved there:

- National Federation of Building Trade Operatives
- Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners
- National Union of Railway Clerks
- National Union of Painters
- National Building Labourers Union
- Plumbers Union
- Union of Electricians
- The Dairymens Union
- National Union of Co-Operative Workers

This meeting was called simply to discuss what to do about forthcoming local elections. In Southwark South East the constituency party was closely linked with the compositors' trade union, which provided the local MP for much of the period. With the link came financial support. This also occurred in Greenwich, where E T Palmer was MP (1923-24 and 1929-31) and secretary of the Prudential Staff Union. Here Palmer contributed substantially to the finances of the local party, paying £200-300 towards the cost of fighting the 1929 General Election, probably out of his union's funds. However he left his party in the lurch in 1931, for, having promised to pay £250, he contributed only £90 towards the fighting fund. It is clear that the financial support of unions was important to Labour at a local level, as elections were expensive. When some Greenwich members complained at the amount of money that was needed, the NationalOrganiser attending the meeting said it 'was mere Charlie Chaplin talk' to say it could be

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741 HRW, Harrow 'local' Labour party, meeting of 24 Nov 1920.
742 The president of the union was Thomas Naylor. As well as being the local MP he also sat on the London Labour party executive, and a number of his associates sat on the local party executive committee. See SWK, 1983/121/1, meeting of 18 Nov 1921.
743 GCH, GLP 2.2, Greenwich Labour party finance committee minutes 1927-1939, meeting of 20 Dec 1928.
744 GCH, GLP 2.2, meetings of 8 Oct 1931 and 7 Dec 1931.
done any cheaper. The financial support of local candidates was also important. J King, Labour prospective candidate in Ilford, gave regularly to party funds in 1920, giving £60 in December for example. R F O Bridgeman came within 1,350 votes of taking Uxbridge from the Conservatives in 1929, having given £20 to Labour in the seat in April. This was four times any single donation given in the run up to the 1931 election and five times the average bank balance held by the local party. The Times described Bridgeman as having 'gained some notoriety' as a Harrow-educated former Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service staff member, who turned against 'imperialism' and kept company with Saklatvala and James Maxton. Bridgeman ran against Labour in 1931, standing as a 'workers' candidate nominated by the 'League Against Imperialism', but he lost his deposit on this occasion. The Lambeth North party was also subsidised by George Strauss, MP in the 1929-31 period. Strauss had a majority of just 524 in 1929, and provided large loans for 'relieving the immediate difficulties' of the party. Strauss was described as a 'rich theorist' alongside Sir Stafford Cripps by the Daily Mail in 1937, when he was again MP for this seat.

In nearly every sort of Labour party where records survive - strong or weak, large or small, successful or unsuccessful - there is evidence that a characteristic was a marked tendency towards introspection. This was particularly so at election times, and after election times. Labour activists were prone to look in detail at the tactics they had adopted, and the machinery that they had used, in the fight for votes. They would debate and argue over what had happened and why, and generally try and learn lessons for the future. There is far less evidence of this happening formally in the Conservative side, although this could well have been because during this period conservatives won more often.

745 GCH, GLP 2.2, meeting of 8 Oct 1931.
746 LMA, ACC/3031 Ilford Labour party records (uncatalogued), executive committee minutes for 13 Dec 1920.
747 LMA, ACC/1267/1/3, Uxbridge Divisional Labour party, account book, entry for April 1929.
749 The Times, 22 May 1929, 7.
750 Craig, Results, 429. See also footnote in part four on Bridgeman.
751 LSE, NLLP 1/1, North Lambeth Labour party, minutes of finance committee meeting of 23 May 1930 and elsewhere.
Early examples of this phenomenon can be found in the records of the London Labour Party. Morrison’s *London Labour Chronicle* looked in detail first at a success, the victory at the by-election in Southwark South East in December 1921. Though ‘conditions [were] by no means favourable in the first instance’ in this constituency, the victory was credited to the large number of volunteers that helped out. A couple of months later, Morrison blamed the poorer performance at the March 1922 LCC elections on

(1) An increased poll.

(2) …coalition between the Municipal ‘Reformers’ and the Progressives … was effective in most of the constituencies where Progressives stood …

(3) … [the] practically solid newspaper campaign against the Labour party. 753

‘Post-match analysis’ was by no means confined to central London organisation. It occurred in the localities, and was occasionally very sophisticated. Sometimes, though, it was simply self congratulatory. The Shaftesbury Labour and Progressive Association in Battersea expressed in 1922

…general satisfaction … at the result of the borough council election on the 1st inst., the opinion being held that to retain a Labour majority whilst in so many London boroughs the reactionary forces had swept the Labour members off, was a performance reflecting credit on all concerned. 754

Sometimes the analysis involved swapping stories and sympathies. In 1923 in Wandsworth Central,

It was stated that 20 persons had come to the committee rooms stating that their names were not on the register. It was agreed that such irregularities should be inquired into. Some of the canvassers alluded to the fact that Sir Norton-Griffiths [sic] [the sitting

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753 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/08, presented papers - memo of 7 Mar 1922.
754 WWTH, Shaftesbury Labour and Progressive Association minutes 1913-1926, meeting of 2 Nov 1922.
Conservative MP and victorious candidate [ ] had been known to allow money to be thrown about very freely, and that he had allowed a barrel of apples to be distributed. Also that an old lady had been brought from her home in blankets to vote.  

After the 1924 General Election defeat there was widespread anger in Labour circles at the effect the Zinoviev letter had on their campaign. As has been shown, the party did try to counter it, but in the end, it felt, 'they [the Conservatives] frightened all the old women to vote for them over the Zinoviev [sic] letter.'  

Within a few years, as Labour's position improved, feedback became more positive. Success in local elections in Walthamstow's Higham Hill ward in April 1927 was followed by a report from the secretary  

...that a record poll had been secured and that the result was the work of but 40 members out of 340. He further expressed the hope that next time there would be a bigger rally of workers so that even a greater victory might be secured.  

In 1928 attempts to secure the return of a Labour candidate for the Essex County Council nearby, in Lloyd Park ward, failed. Here the failure was blamed on  

...the loyalty of ward members generally who, with a few notable exceptions, failed to render their adopted candidate or the party the degree of personal service that party loyalty entailed.  

The apathy of their own activists was a common theme of Labour's introspective surveys. This will be returned to later. Sometimes post-election feedback was handed down to local parties from the centre. For example, in December 1928 the Greenford Labour party were told that its organisation was 'far from satisfactory' by Morrison - who, significantly, was not officially in charge in this part of  

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755 WTH, Wandsworth Central Labour party women's section, meeting of 20 Dec 1923.  
756 Croydon Labour Outlook (published by the Croydon Labour party), Vol. II No. 23 (Feb 1926), 1.  
757 WFOR, W32.7 HHW/1, Higham Hill ward Labour party, minutes 1926-7, meeting of 29 Apr 1927.  
758 WFOR, W32.7 HHW/2, Higham Hill ward Labour party, minutes 1928-9, meeting of 11 Mar 1928.
Middlesex. In Greenwich in 1928 organisational shortcomings were also identified - at the LCC elections in March 'we had been placed in the balance and found wanting', and after the METB elections in November 'the Marsh ward had not been canvassed as it ought to have been' and other mistakes were noted. In 1929, shortcomings or no shortcomings, the Labour performance improved and in North Lambeth its victory over the incumbent was lauded.

In 1924 the Liberal candidate appeared to feel his position as member for the division quite secure but in 1929 we had [to] ... face a much more intensive campaign ... added to this was the fact that the remnants of the Liberal party had entered on what was probably the last stage in their fight for a mere existence as a political entity. North Lambeth rose to the occasion and despite the intensity of the Liberal campaign and a substantial Conservative 'core' which voted Liberal in order to beat us, we were victorious.

An unsuccessful challenge that same year in Hendon also resulted in navel-gazing, but with a positive slant:

The manner in which all sections of the party rallied, both in regard to work and finance, was wonderful, and at none of our elections has the machinery worked more smoothly.

Grumbles began to reappear from 1930 as the tide turned against Labour. In January, the secretary in Walthamstow Higham Hill complained,

Not yet are the majority of electors convinced of the justice of our cause - we must persist in our propaganda. We cannot even claim that all our supporters are yet

759 LMA, ACC/1972/9, Greenford Labour party, meeting of 12 Dec 1928.
760 GCH, GLP 1.1, Special General Council meeting of 22 Mar 1928, and General Council meeting of 8 Nov 1928.
761 LSE, NLLP 1/1, report of the General Council for the period 1928-9, presented summer 1929. There was a straight fight between Labour and Liberal in 1924, but in 1929 a Conservative also stood in the constituency.
762 BNT, Ms 11642, records of Hendon Labour party, file 6, executive committee report on General Election, 15 Sep 1929.
convinced Socialists (sometimes I even doubt whether some of our own folk understand the fundamentals of the creed they profess). 763

Election setbacks also led to disheartened activists complaining. After coming off worse in the March 1931 MCC elections, the party in Heston listed suggestions for improvement and comments:

(a) Allowing the car to go to North Hyde instead of short distances.
(b) In the [national] circumstances the result was not unsatisfactory.
(c) General opinion suggested that canvassers' efforts should be intensified.
(d) People needed reminding on polling day.
(e) We must have cars.
(f) We must have good canvassers.
(g) The civil service vote must be regained.
(h) Explore the possibility of a canvassing class in local propaganda.
(i) We want a larger number of canvassers.
(j) Propaganda should be our main object. 764

The confused nature of this list hints at the tempers that must have frayed at the inquest meeting. A similar thing seems to have happened in North Lambeth, where the sitting Labour MP - Strauss - was defeated in his attempt to sit on the LCC. Here the General Council felt that

There was reason to suspect a central arrangement between Liberals and Conservatives, affecting contests in the whole of London and adjusting candidatures with a view to defeating the largest possible number of Labour candidates.

Reasons For Result:

**MAIN:** Sympathetic vote for Frank Briant [the successful Liberal candidate and former local MP]; Tory support for Liberals

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763 WFOR, W32.7 HHW/3, Higham Hill ward Labour party minutes 1930-1, meeting of 10 Jan 1930.

764 HOUN, 'Heston Constituency Labour party' (actually a local party), Vol. 8 - minutes 1929-31, meeting of 9 Apr 1931.
[there was no MR candidate]; General apathy among Labour supporters.

**CONTRIBUTORY:** Dissatisfaction with the government; unemployment; ...the unfortunate personal character of the campaign against Mr Strauss; difficulty we experienced in securing the services of justices to sign papers ... 765

Detailed analysis such as this was encouraged by the Labour party at a national level, in a similar way to the inquest held by the Conservatives after their loss in 1929. A circular was issued by G R Shepherd, National Agent of the Labour party, including a questionnaire on why Labour had done so badly in the LCC elections in 1931. 766 The sorts of replies that have been shown above again emphasise that introspection was a particularly strong characteristic of Labour. As has also been shown, Labour was good at blaming a lot of factors outside its control when its tactics failed or its machinery let it down. An examination of the other problems that Labour genuinely did face in its efforts from 1918-1931 now follows.

**Problems and Opportunities Faced by Labour**

The difficulties faced by Labour in the period 1918-1931 generally fall into two categories - things that befell the party, caused by its political enemies and other outside factors, and things that the party did to itself. Potentially they were more serious than in Willesden West, where the women's section had to deal with the resignation of its literary secretary in 1923 because 'as she was not feeling well she found it all too worrying.' 767 The way that Labour's problems were presented was of importance too - what was a problem to some could be seen otherwise. This section will examine first Labour's internal difficulties, and then the

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765 LSE, NLLP 1/1, report adopted by General Council on 13 Mar 1931.
766 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/15, presented papers, circular of April 1931.
767 BRE, 1984/WWWS/1/1, records of the Willesden West Labour party, women's section, meeting of 8 Nov 1923.
problems that came at Labour from outside, and in doing so the extent to which the party turned problems into opportunities will also become clear.

Perhaps the clearest example of Labour having to deal with internal divisions came in 1931. The crisis that led to the formation of the National Government took the sitting Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, into a coalition government with Conservatives and Liberals, but without the rank and file of his own party, and without most of his MPs. In Greater London only two Labour MPs joined MacDonald in supporting the National Government. Only one of these stood for election again in 1931, George Gillett. At the 1931 General Election, only two National Labour MPs were returned in the area, Gillett as member for Finsbury, and Francis Palmer who beat the incumbent Labour MP, Fred Messer, in Tottenham South. One further candidate stood in Camberwell Peckham, and was defeated. Gillett's campaign was not an easy one, and he had to cancel a number of indoor meetings due to their being disrupted by his opponents. A cursory examination, therefore, would suggest that Greater London was not an area affected too greatly by the split in Labour's ranks, although it was affected by the electoral consequences of this. However, local parties faced a number of problems as a result of the split, and these occurred right across the region.

In Camberwell Peckham, Labour had to face both an ILP and a National Labour candidate at the 1931 General Election. What was worse was that the ILP candidate was incumbent MP John Beckett, who had won the seat for Labour by over 5000 votes in 1929. In the event Beckett came second to a Conservative candidate by over 8000 votes, with Labour coming bottom of the poll and losing its deposit. The London Labour Party concluded that the local constituency party would have to be re-formed after the election, Beckett's defection having

768 On the formation of the National Government see Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald, ch. 25 & 26 (604-670), or more briefly Ramsden, Appetite for Power, 280-282.
769 For details of candidatures, and 1931 results see Craig, Results. See also Kinnear, The British Voter, 50-51.
770 Thorpe, 1931, 191.
771 Craig, Results, 12.
come at the last minute. 772 Other last minute problems occurred, with the Labour candidate in Woolwich West withdrawing during the campaign, and Will Henderson - son of Arthur and incumbent MP - having to withdraw from the candidature at Enfield to do central propaganda work. 773 The LLP had to take action against Ishbel MacDonald, who sat as Labour councillor for Poplar South on the LCC. As she was such a high profile figure, and she campaigned in support of her father in the General Election, the LLP could not tolerate her failure to disown the National Labour candidates, and the Labour whip was withdrawn from her. 774 The problems of local parties in 1931 were not, however, confined to candidate issues. Most parties passed resolutions opposing the new National Government. For example Ilford Women's Section expressed

...unqualified opposition to the proposals for the reduction of benefits to the unemployed, ... it pledges unswerving support to those now engaged in mobilising the whole Labour movement in opposition to this policy. 775

However, some parties, while expressing their outrage at the formation of the National Government, were critical of their own former ministers. A meeting at Hounslow resolved in September 1931

that this executive committee, while agreeing with the attitude of the Labour party towards the National Government, registers its profound regret that the late cabinet failed in that it tentatively agreed to the suggested cuts in salaries and wages of the working class, thereby compromising the efficiency of the Labour party. 776

Whether their analysis of the situation was correct or not, activists clearly felt that their electoral chances with Labour voters, and potential voters, had been spoiled because they could not claim to represent a party that had taken a firm stand

772 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/02, executive committee meeting of 15 Oct 1931. See also Thorpe, 1931, 183.
773 Thorpe, 1931, 181.
774 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/02, executive committee meeting of 28 Nov 1931.
775 LMA, ACC/2527/1, Ilford Labour party women's section, minutes of meeting on 2 Sep 1931.
776 HOUN, 'Hounslow and District Labour party' minutes of executive committee meeting of 22 Sep 1931.
against the cuts. There was another way of looking at Labour's 1931 difficulties: as Hawtin has said, 'Liberals and Conservatives closed ranks, to put it kindly; or, put another way, stabbed Labour in the back.' Undoubtedly the electoral position of Labour was made much worse in 1931 by the collusion of its opponents. However the problems that occurred with splits and arguments in constituency parties were not new in that year. Divisions had occurred during the Great War between supporters and opponents of the idea of fighting. Local parties could enter into conflict with each other: Balham ward's secretary and parts of the Clapham party among Wandsworth's Labour groupings exchanged angry letters and accusations in late 1926 which almost resulted in litigation. 

There were also problems between the mainstream of the Labour party and extreme elements, whose views not only verged on the communist, but sometimes actually were communist. There was a particular drive to rid the party in London of Communism following the 1926 General Strike, and by 1929 15 London Labour parties had been expelled by the national organisation. There had been issues before then, for example the case of Shapurji Saklatvala in Battersea North. In 1923 The Times commented, 'his pernicious influence has crept like duck-weed among a large section of the electors', and in 1924 he fought the seat as a Communist. Herbert Morrison was not the only one who blamed Labour's loss of Bethnal Green METB in the 1928 elections on the 'bad behaviour' of Communist elements in the party locally. Such bad behaviour might have

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777 Hawtin, Early Radical Wimbledon, 119. Hawtin's text seems slightly strange - Labour was to all intents and purposes stabbed in the front, and had its self-inflicted wounds compounded.  
778 For example see Bush, Behind the Lines, 71 for an account of some of the machinations that occurred here during the War.  
779 LMA, LMA/4284/01/012, records of the Clapham Labour party, 'Enquiry into conduct and management of Clapham Labour party and non-partisan league and resignation of Dr Macgregor 1926-1927'.  
780 White, London, 371. From 1926-28, Labour expelled the following local organisations: Battersea Borough Labour party; Bethnal Green Borough Labour party; Camberwell Borough Labour party; Chelsea Divisional Labour party; East Ham Borough Labour party; East Ham Stratford Divisional Labour party; Hackney Borough Labour party; Holborn Divisional Labour party; Islington North Divisional Labour party; Lewisham Borough Labour party; Lewisham East Divisional Labour party; Poplar Borough Labour party. Local parties were usually re-constituted by the central organisation in one form or another. See Kinnear, The British Voter, 110.  
781 The Times, 29 Nov 1923, 13.  
782 Donoghue and Jones, Morrison, 102-3. The Liberals won a clean sweep of the council in 1928, no Labour representation remaining.
included the July 1927 renaming of its Parmiter Street estate the Lenin estate. 783 The new council renamed it the Cambridge Heath estate in December 1928. At times during the 1920s

Morrison felt that the Labour party was going to pieces, and so he mounted ... his offensive to clear out of the Labour party any Communist or fellow traveller. It was a difficult task since the Communists had their allies widely scattered within the Labour movement and amongst its leadership. But Morrison persisted. 784

Morrison was not assisted in his crusade against the Communists in local Labour parties when on occasion they refused to co-operate. For example, though it was officially outside his area of control, Morrison cannot have been happy when, in January 1927, Merton and Morden Labour party voted on the suggestion that action be taken. The '...vote was put and was carried with one dissentient that we do not expel the communists from the party.' 785 He may not have been happy either if he had known that Paddington South Labour party let its hall to the local Communists as late as 1930, but only if 'paid in advance.' 786 Disciplinary problems in local parties arose out of issues other than Communism and these caused Labour problems too. West Lewisham Labour party seems to have been one organisation with more than its fair share of internal difficulties - if anything could go wrong for Labour here it seems to have done so. There were financial problems relating to its premises at 157 Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, rooted in the fact that

... the said offices were taken by the secretary without the authorisation of the Executive Committee or the General Committee ... the General Committee ... wishes to reaffirm the principle that all activities of the Party, involving financial obligations,

784 Donoghue and Jones, Morrison, 99.
785 LSE, Merton and Morden 3/1, minutes of meeting of 3 Jan 1927 (27), 'communists' is as the original.
must be authorised and their cost borne by the whole party and not by any special group of members of the party. 787

It was the actions of another officer - the minute secretary - which caused the party problems in 1928. He had to resign after being caught with his hands in the till, and the sum of £11/5/- had to be repaid in instalments by the culprit, J Brock, under threat of a County Court summons. 788 Organisation was difficult in the area because the local party could not find a suitable hall for meetings. 789 But there was clearly a problem in the party in carrying out its campaigning initiatives, which did not seem to meet with much success. The clearest example of this was in 1926 when a Lamp Day was arranged in support of the striking miners. The organisation was chaotic, there were problems with the supply of lamps, and responsibilities were not clearly divided. Mrs Eldridge of the Women's Section

...strongly complained of overlapping at Brockley Rise and also of the lack of supplies, while there was a surplus at the Secretary's house and a great number issued to a collector who was a stranger. 790

Disciplinary problems also beset the party in Walthamstow: in 1926 the borough party attacked 'the holding of minority meetings of [Labour] councillors' to discuss issues that they felt should be decided by the party as a whole. 791 The problems Labour did have with discipline sometimes manifested themselves strongly at election times. A noticeable symptom was the failure of local parties to get their activists out to help them fight elections. Many examples can be found of this, including in North Lambeth in 1928 (for the METB elections) and in Merton and Morden in 1929 (for the General Election). On both of these occasions Labour was doing well nationally so there was every encouragement for activists to turn

787 LHAM, A89/100/1, minutes of General Council meeting of 14 Dec 1925.
788 LHAM, A89/100/2, minutes of executive committee meeting of 20 Feb 1928.
789 LHAM, A89/100/2, minutes of executive committee meeting of 4 Mar 1929.
790 LHAM, A89/100/1, minutes of General Council meeting of 14 Jun 1926.
791 WFOR, W32.7 BLP/1, minutes of meeting of 21 Sep 1926.
It was not just the activists who caused problems. In Uxbridge in 1930 it was the aforementioned parliamentary candidate, R F O Bridgeman, who was the cause of difficulty. His views on imperialism (he was strongly against it) meant that the national party would not endorse him, so the local organisers could not allow him to stand. Clapham feared adopting an ILP-nominated candidate in May 1930 in case its decision was not endorsed by the national party 'owing to action of certain members of ILP in opposing the government.' Here a dispute over the selection of a candidate followed, and following the refusal of national endorsement an ILP candidate fought the seat in 1931, having the implicit backing of local Labour activists who did not put up a candidate.

Though it did suffer from disciplinary and organisational difficulties at election times, Labour also suffered from lack of funds occasionally. This seems to have stunted its ambitions in Middlesex in particular, with Greenford Labour party not being able to afford to contest the local MCC seat in 1931, and Hounslow activists refusing to go into debt fighting local elections. Labour was affected by financial difficulties on other occasions too. These sometimes meant that local parties were unable to carry out their propaganda plans to the full. For example, in Walthamstow the Observer newspaper, which the borough Labour party had launched, failed in 1926 when the money ran out.

So far the list of Labour's problems has been a long one. However Labour could use these problems as opportunities for development. Perhaps the clearest example has already been shown - the way that Morrison reacted to the problem...
of Communist infiltration of the party by taking his chance to launch a concerted purge of Communists from the organisation. However, another clear example is worthy of attention. At the beginning of the 1920s Labour faced the problem of the absence of proper divisional organisation in a number of Greater London constituencies. 15 London borough constituencies had no Divisional Labour Party in 1922, as well as seven other Greater London constituencies. 797 Kinnear explains that this often meant that borough parties took responsibility, and the most frequent cause of the lack of a DLP seems to have been the strength of Communists or ILP-ers in the areas affected. 798 However, the experience of Chuter Ede, candidate at the Mitcham by-election in 1923, was not unique either. He got to the constituency to discover '...that the local Labour party, founded in 1918, was a secretary and what few trade union branches there were in the division.' 799 The existence of a Labour party did not mean that it was a strong one. During the 1920s, Labour turned this whole situation around, so that by the end of the period the absence of formal organisations was far less of a problem than it had been in 1918. Perhaps the most visible evidence of this is given in Table 2B, where statistics show a rise in Labour candidate numbers throughout the 1920s so that it contested almost every Greater London seat in 1924, 1929 and 1931. In the exceptional circumstances of 1924 and 1931, it ran more candidates than the Conservatives. McKibbin gives much of the credit for this to Morrison, though it goes without saying that, unless there had been sufficient local people willing to go along with the Labour cause and work on its behalf the turnaround would not have been possible either. 800 Labour took the opportunity of setback, of absence of organisation and of the problem of infiltration to work on its own structure, so that by the end of the 1920s a stronger machine was in place to work for them.

797 Kinnear, The British Voter, 108. One of the 15 borough seats was the City of London, which returned two MPs.
800 McKibbin, Evolution, 142.
On occasion Labour also attempted to turn the problem of adverse propaganda to its advantage. The case of the Zinoviev letter, and Morrison's reaction to it, has already been examined. A similar thing also happened when local Labour candidates were being accused of supporting 'Poplarism', that is to say the actions of the local Labour METB council in that borough in refusing to levy part of the rate in a political protest, usually also described alongside general attacks on the high spending and high taxation of the council. In Battersea in November 1925, the Labour candidates in one ward tried to use the controversy to their advantage.

Misrepresentations of Labour rates and Poplar will be plentiful during the election. Available figures show that a 1d rate in Westminster produces £32,000; 10d has to be levied in Poplar to secure a similar amount. In spite of this glaring disproportion of property value, Poplar’s rate is not ten times more, but about twice that of Westminster only.

The contention that Poplarism was a problem for Labour outside Poplar but not within the borough appears justified by consistent electoral success there from 1919, and efforts to tackle the Poplar image in other localities. By 1931 Labour had produced a detailed list as part of its Municipal Handbook for the LCC election, entitled 'The Truth About Poplar - Record of Work Done that Gives the Lie to Attacks on Much-Abused Borough'. All this is not to say that Labour did not occasionally protest against the treatment of its councillors by the District Auditor, the courts, and central government. In January 1926 the LLP arranged for a three pronged campaign of support for councillors who faced surcharges as a result of losing their appeal to the House of Lords. This campaign involved going to see Neville Chamberlain (the Minister of Health) to protest; encouraging local Labour parties to hold public meetings for the voicing of discontent; and

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801 On Poplarism see the comprehensive study Noreen Branson, Poplarism, 1919-1925: George Lansbury and the Councillors' Revolt, London (Lawrence and Wishart), 1979.
802 GLPB, LMS 139, Election Address of C Barrington, J Bruce, E W Coles, C S King, J W O'Neill, and T G D Varran, Labour candidates in Church Ward, Battersea METB, November 1925.
803 Branson, Poplarism, 134-135.
encouraging local Labour organisations to send in resolutions to the Prime Minister and Chamberlain, expressing their complaints. But it is clear that Labour tried by its own actions to make the best of the problems that it faced as a result of 'Poplarism' and related accusations.

An example can also be found to show how Morrison could make the best of a difficulty in propaganda against him personally. He faced a difficult campaign as he tried to be elected MP for Hackney South in 1923.

Some of Morrison's meetings were rowdy; hecklers jeered at the 'conchie' and contrasted his cowardice with the martial qualities of the two captains [his opponents]. Morrison bore this with quiet dignity; in Hackney he was always most reticent about his wartime experiences and said not a word, even to fellow objectors. He was also careful never to attack Horatio Bottomley [the former MP] whose reputation was still high in the slums where he had distributed his, and other people's largesse so lavishly. Morrison ostentatiously declared that 'you will not hear one word from me in criticism of your former member. He is in a place from which he cannot answer [he was in prison] and the Labour party does not believe in hitting a man when he is down.' These words 'fetched the roof off', and he won goodwill as news of his speech spread.

Morrison's skill lay not only in turning defence to attack on negative issues for Labour, but also in changing the emphasis of the campaign, or the perception of himself, so that negative issues mattered less. Labour activists could follow his lead, and thus a problem could become an opportunity. Adaptability was crucial to Labour's progress.

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805 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/01, minutes of executive committee meeting of 7 Jan 1926.
806 Donoughue and Jones, Morrison, 105.
807 For another example of this see Morrison's work in Hackney for the 1925 METB elections, where his campaigning succeeded in getting Labour a proportionally better poll than elsewhere in London. See Donoughue and Jones, Morrison, 61.
When looking at the fortunes of the Labour party in Greater London in the 1920s, the picture is clear. Labour managed to develop strongholds in inner London, in the East End and the inner South, as well as in other locations as shown. In good years it managed to make advances into other territory, and at the 1929 General Election won a majority of seats in the Greater London area for the first time.

Some differences between Labour's performance at local elections and parliamentary elections have emerged from an examination of the results. There was a link between the improved Labour performance and the decline of the Liberals during the 1918-1931 period; more follows on the latter in the next chapter. Nonetheless, it has become clear that using tactics suitable for local areas and local circumstances was a common weapon in Labour's armoury. This finding concurs with those historians, cited earlier in this chapter, who emphasised the local aspect of the rise of Labour. 808

Pugh has argued that

...the six elections from 1910 to 1929 show a steady rise in Labour support that reflected the expansion in candidates and organisation rather than a dramatic leap caused by a change in the character of the electorate. 809

This study supports this view. It shows that Labour was more developed than would at first seem apparent in areas of London dominated by conservative forces. Labour's own efforts, as much as help from new voters or the collapse of the Liberals, were key in this achievement. The very structured nature of Labour's organisation has been noted - and the fact that this led to a multiplicity of committees being established to run things. Internal disciplinary problems did occur within Labour's ranks, throughout the period, at grass roots level as well as the 1931 high level split.

808 For example Tanner, 'Class Voting' and Political Change, Goss, Local Labour, Callcott, 'Durham', Gillespie, 'Poplarism and Proletarianism' - see first section of this chapter.
809 Pugh, 'Rise of Labour', 515.
Labour strongholds have been shown to have developed where they did because of the types of housing and people there, and because of the problems that were faced in these areas. This all meant that, once universal (or near-universal) suffrage was introduced, a party with Labour's policies together with Labour's local, and national, aspirations was bound to do better. The strongholds developed when they did partly because these areas were most naturally disposed towards what Labour had to offer, in the post-1918 political climate, and also because among their inhabitants sufficient activists could be found to take the Labour message, examples of which have been given, to the electorate. These activists were drawn from among the generation Childs spoke of, and the strongholds were the areas they were most concentrated in. It was not simply the electoral system changing, but the fact that Labour were ready, able and equipped to grow that allowed them to prosper in such places. The strongholds developed as they did - that is to say slowly at first, but with increasing strength and resilience in the face of such setbacks as 1931 - because of the ways in which Labour developed its organisation, because of the tactics adopted by local activists, because of the decline of the Liberals, and because of the way they overcame problems. When making a comparison with the Conservative position, outlined in the previous chapter, there is a clear similarity in the use of local tactics in local circumstances, and more of a difference in terms of the formality of structure and attitudes taken by activists. The Liberal party, as the next chapter shows, had nothing like the success of the other two parties during this period. Labour in Greater London became the main opposition to the Conservatives instead.

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Childs, 'Labour Grows Up', cited in the first section of this chapter.
Chapter Five:
A Story of Progressive Decline: The Liberals in London 1918-1931
Introduction

The Liberal party faced the 1918 General Election in disarray. It had two leaders, Herbert Asquith, former Prime Minister and titular head of the party, and David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of the Coalition government, backed by the Conservatives and by a portion of the Liberal party. Riven by this division, activists and MPs were, for the most part, lacking morale and financial support for their work. Lloyd George's 'coupon' managed to save 127 Liberal government supporters from electoral defeat; in addition to that, only 36 other Liberals were elected - and Asquith lost his seat. \(^{811}\) While the election left Lloyd George triumphantly re-elected as Prime Minister for another four years, the Liberal party had lost the pre-eminent position it had held in the British political scene in the decade before the outbreak of War. Although there were attempts to revive it in the 1920s, and it twice held the balance of power in the House of Commons, its decline continued during this decade. Historians have long debated how and why this decline - which affected Greater London as much as anywhere else - happened. In 1910 the Liberals had 29 MPs in Greater London (compared to 43 for the Conservatives and four for their Labour allies), by 1929 they had only two. \(^{812}\)

What might perhaps be cited as the original account of the decline and fall of the Liberal party is George Dangerfield's work *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. \(^{813}\) Published in 1936, this book argued that the Liberal supremacy was destroyed by working class protests, the suffragette movement, and the issue of Ulster in a Home Rule Ireland in the 1910-1914 period. \(^{814}\) There have been many other contributions to the debate since then. Trevor Wilson's 1966 study *The Downfall of the Liberal Party* argued that

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\(^{812}\) See Table 2A.


The Liberal party can be compared to an individual who, after a period of robust health and great exertion, experienced symptoms of illness (Ireland, Labour unrest, the suffragettes). Before a thorough diagnosis could be made, he was involved in an encounter with a rampant omnibus (the First World War), which mounted the pavement and ran him over. After lingering painfully, he expired. 815

In other words, Wilson accepts that the Liberals were affected by events before 1914, but argues that it was the war which proved fatal. Indeed, some Liberals can be shown even at the time to have blamed the war for their failure, for example Horace Crawfurd, the standard-bearer for the Liberals in Walthamstow West from 1922-1929, MP 1924-1929:

As always in a period of war, Liberalism has been overshadowed. The voice of reason is unheard when fear and hate take possession of the minds of men. Wise counsel is unheeded, and humanity, listening to false prophets ever ready to seize their opportunity, has to learn the bitter lesson of experience before reason returns. 816

Jon Lawrence has joined those who have said '...there can be little doubt that the real turning point for popular politics came, not with the intensified party squabbles of the 1900s, but with the Great War of 1914-18.' 817 But there have been those who have advocated other theories as being to blame for the Liberals' demise. The views of Matthew, McKibbin and Kay on how the change in the franchise from 1918 boosted Labour strength at the expense of the Liberals have already been mentioned. 818 So have the challengers to this view. In addition to these, Michael Hart has also made a considered assault on the Matthew, McKibbin and Kay position, blaming the downfall of the Liberals primarily on themselves rather than the franchise, and demonstrating that the 1918 changes made little political difference in areas of London where they had the greatest impact.

815 Wilson, Downfall, 18.
817 Lawrence, 'Urban Politics', in Lawrence and Taylor (eds), Party, State and Society, 79-105, 97.
818 See chapter four.
It is ironic ... that those seats in the East End which had the largest numbers excluded from the register in 1911 retained so much of their old political allegiance in the 1920s. 819

Others have reasserted the importance of the franchise change, such as Stefan Berger, who says, 'it simply cannot be explained away that the vote in pre-war Britain was not a basic right but a privilege of property owners.' 820 Michael Childs has argued that the principal factor in the Liberal decline was related to the franchise, and the fact that working class voters could now support Labour from the start of their voting lives, as attitudes had changed and candidates were more widespread:

…it is hard to see how the Liberal party could have avoided demise in the long run as its working class supporters died and were not replenished in like proportion. 821

Hart considers that the Liberals were particularly at fault in the December 1923 to January 1924 period, when they turned out the Conservative government and installed Labour, 'under a "progressive" delusion', and without any formal supporting arrangements. 822 Austen Chamberlain noticed in the following few months that both Labour and the Conservatives were gaining from the Liberals' predicament. 823 Chris Cook has pinpointed the moment when the Liberal decline became the party's downfall as 1922-1924. 824 He argues that '... it was a succession of political blows coming on top of the changing social structure that reduced the Liberal party from supremacy to impotence.' 825

Some have sought a compromise between the points of view, such as Keith Laybourn, who has stated that

819 Michael Hart, 'The Liberals, the War, and the Franchise', in English Historical Review No. 97 (1982), 820-832, 824.
820 Berger, 'Decline of Liberalism', 89.
821 Childs, 'Labour Grows Up', 143.
822 Hart, 'Liberals', 821.
A more balanced approach is necessary which accepts that the First World War was responsible for significant political and social change but admits that the Liberal party was finding great difficulty in containing Labour's pre-war challenge.  

As well as arguing about the fundamental reasons for the decline or downfall of the Liberal party, historians have also debated aspects of this decline, starting with the circumstances of the 1918 General Election. Maurice Cowling clearly blames Asquith for the Liberal split at this time, and has argued that

When Lloyd George arranged to fight an election on a coalition basis at the height of his popularity at the end of 1918, Asquith failed to stop him.  

Wilson has shown how the Liberals would have done far worse in 1918 were it not for the fact that Lloyd George's coupon saved a number of them. John Turner has seen the 1918-1922 Coalition government as the bridge between the eras of Liberalism and Labour as the party of opposition to the Conservatives, between 'the strange death of Liberal England' and 'the impact of Labour'. Wilson has shown the Liberals to have been still firmly divided in the 1922 election campaign, after the Coalition had fallen. This division was reflected in the official Liberal manifesto for the 1922 campaign, which criticised the Coalition's '...unexampled record of extravagance and failure. It must be remembered that both wings of the Coalition are responsible for its misdeeds, and neither can escape its share of public condemnation.' In Camberwell North West, Thomas Macnamara, the sitting MP, defended his seat as a National Liberal against a Liberal, and a Labour candidate, and only hung on because the threat of a Conservative candidate did not materialise. As The Times commented,

825 Cook, Alignment, 342.
826 Laybourn, 'Rise of Labour', 223.
827 Cowling, The Impact of Labour, 91.
829 Turner, British Politics, 54.
830 Wilson, Downfall, 228.
831 Liberal Manifesto 1922, 'Manifesto to the Nation', in Craig, Manifestos, 41.
Dr Macnamara wants all the help he can get from the Unionists, for although it is not likely that the Liberal vote has greatly increased since the [1920] by-election, it is certain that Labour in Camberwell is a growing force. If the Unionists decide to run a candidate, therefore, there is grave danger that the Labour representative may gain the seat. 832

Some Liberals, usually from the ex-Coalition side, were that year saved simply by a desire to keep Labour out by some Conservatives, rather than anything else. Pushed into reunion by Baldwin's surprise calling of the December 1923 General Election on the issue of tariffs, the two wings of Liberalism did fight that contest together, with both Asquith and Lloyd George standing up for the defence of free trade.

Wilson has underlined the way in which the 1923 revival in Liberal fortunes, achieved defending free trade against 'a specific proposal which was anathema to it', was in fact a mirage. 833 Facing another contest a relatively short time afterwards, the Liberals were stymied by their own actions in seeming to support Labour under the 'progressive delusion' but having no say over what they did. Their lack of candidates in 1924 was a great hindrance, something which John Ramsden has argued was fatal to their chances of success. 834 It is certainly true that, of the list of '38 seats to be won' in 1924 written by Herbert Gladstone, including nine in Greater London, three in the end did not even have a Liberal candidate (and in none did the Liberals come close to victory). 835 After the 1924 debacle, more and more ex-Coalition Liberals moved towards the political right, as Kenneth Morgan has shown. 836 Liberal decline continued, and was matched by the decline of the Liberal press, markedly so at a national level, according to Colin

833 Wilson, Downfall, 254.
834 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 201.
835 BL, Herbert Gladstone papers, Add Mss 46482, 58 f (Gladstone's underlining). The nine were St Albans (where there was no candidate), Brentford and Chiswick, Hendon, Bromley, Ealing (marked '?' by Gladstone - no candidate appeared), Hornsey, Ilford, Lambeth Norwood (where there was no candidate) and Wood Green.
Seymour-Ure. Although Garry Tregidga, who based his work on the example of south west Britain, has argued that the Liberals held up well in rural areas, Cook has argued that the Liberal decline during the 1920s was worse at a local level than nationally, especially in the cities. The lack of a distinct municipal policy was seen by Cook as 'a major factor in the decline of the Liberal party.' At the 1925 LCC elections, the 'plight of [the] Progressive party' was described by The Times:

While the Progressives are again fighting some of the seats which they contested three years ago, they have actually abandoned some of those which they held on that occasion. This has happened at [Camberwell] Peckham, where neither of the two retiring Progressives offers himself for re-election and where only one Progressive is nominated. ... It was realized (sic) early in the campaign that the main fight would be between the Municipal Reformers and the Socialists ...

By 1929, Wilson has argued, the Liberals were clearly seen as the third party in the British electoral system, something that made their position worse given the way that it was two main parties that the system favoured.

This poor position in 1929 was despite the fact that the Liberals, at least nationally speaking, had enjoyed a revival during the late 1920s. Shorn of Asquith's lethargic post-war leadership, and with the backing of Lloyd George's considerable financial resources, they developed policies of depth and radicalism on many issues, most notably the tackling of unemployment. The very absence of division, which Lloyd George's supplanting of Asquith held out as a possibility, heartened some London Liberals:

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839 Cook, Alignment, 79.
840 The Times, 26 Feb 1925, 17.
It is a great satisfaction to be able to close … with a note of hope due to unified leadership … in the words of Mr Lloyd George, the party appears to have rounded its Cape Horn, and to be in safe waters with the favouring wind driving it forward. \(^{842}\)

At elections in the run-up to May 1929 the Liberals scored victories which heartened them. Even when they missed out on victory, their improved performance was used by the leadership to boost their spirits, such as here by Lloyd George after the 1928 Ilford by-election:

At the last General Election the Conservative candidacy in a very representative constituency, also in a constituency which is traditionally Conservative, won by a majority of between 14,000 and 15,000. Labour was the runner-up. Liberalism was third. Today the Conservative majority is down by between 9,000 and 10,000. If we can achieve the same electoral result, that is, make the same impression upon the electoral figures throughout the country, there will be as few Tories in the next parliament as Liberals in the present one. \(^{843}\)

In the end the Liberals did improve on their 1924 performance, moving up to second place and reducing the Conservative majority to under 5,000. \(^{844}\) The Lloyd George revival was not supported by all Liberals. Lord Grey, who as Sir Edward Grey was a former Foreign Secretary, presided at the first meeting of the Liberal Council on 21 January 1927, which resolved

\[\ldots\text{to form an association of Liberals who desired to maintain the independence of the Liberal party and to work together for the aims of Liberalism.}^{845}\]

They might have added, 'against Mr Lloyd George.' By the time of the 1929 election campaign, Lloyd George's efforts did certainly have effects. While the

\(^{841}\) Wilson, *Downfall*, 350.
\(^{842}\) WFOR, ACC 10208/3, East Walthamstow Liberal and Radical Association Annual Report for 1926, 3 (Chairman's Report).
\(^{843}\) *The Liberal Magazine* Vol. 36 No. 44 (March 1928), 132, reporting a speech by Lloyd George at Cambridge.
\(^{844}\) Craig, *Results*, 151.
other two main parties, as Campbell has said, avoided the subject, the Liberals pushed their policy to tackle unemployment strongly. 846 The Yellow Book on Britain's Industrial Future, and We Can Conquer Unemployment, a part of that work, contributed to a political programme described by the admiring Robert Skidelsky as '...intellectually the most distinguished ... placed before a British electorate.' 847 Certainly the Conservatives noticed the effects of the Liberal 'revival', and in particular the greater number of Liberal candidates. 848 Stuart Ball has commented of the Conservatives' loss of the 1929 General Election,

Lloyd George's attempts during the previous three years to revitalise the Liberal party was one of the principal causes of this defeat. 849

By 1931 the Liberals were in a worse state than ever. They had almost always failed to act as a united body in the 1929-31 parliament - some MPs voting more with Labour, some, led by Sir John Simon, were heading towards the Conservatives, and the centre was become increasingly small. In the critical period of 1931 Lloyd George was ill, and Sir Herbert Samuel led the Liberals in his absence. He had a crucial role in the formation of the National Government in the late summer of 1931, making perhaps the last significant Liberal contribution to the shaping of the politics of the period. 850 When the General Election came soon afterwards, Liberals were split again, this time in three ways, with Lloyd George and his personal supporters disputing strongly the holding of a poll they saw as a ramp for protection. In his election broadcast, Lloyd George urged Liberals to vote Labour where no Liberal free trader was standing in their constituency, contradicting the 'official' Liberal view that it was the National slate

847 Skidelsky, Slump, 51.
848 See chapter three.
849 Ball, Baldwin, 6.
850 Taylor, English History, 292.
which had to be supported. Inevitably, opponents took advantage of this, as in Bethnal Green South West:

To Liberals - if you desire to preserve FREE TRADE and keep down the price of the people's food - Vote Labour. Vide Mr Lloyd George ... he is reported to have said, 'where there is no genuine Free Trade Liberal Candidate ... I would vote Labour without hesitation.' The National Liberals will become the catspaw of the Tory party. To vote Liberal in South West Bethnal Green means that you are voting for tariffs.

The Liberals in this seat, with their renowned local candidate Percy Harris, had to counter by issuing a clarification sent to Harris from Lloyd George himself.

Sorry to learn that your Labour opponent is misrepresenting my broadcast appeal - it need hardly be said that my advice to free traders was only in reference to those constituencies in which a free trade candidate was not standing - as the sitting member with a lifetime's devotion to free trade and all progressive causes I feel certain you must command the support of every Free Trader in Bethnal Green.

Harris won the seat by over 6,000 votes. At the 1931 General Election, the Liberals ended up as an insignificant rump in parliament. Four Lloyd George supporters were elected and sat with the opposition, the remaining mix of 67 Liberals supported the National Government as Simonites or as Samuelites, at least until those free traders followed Samuel across the floor in September 1932. Without Conservative support they had won very little. In Greater London there were now only four Liberal MPs (plus two National Liberals), none having fought a Conservative opponent. Their decline had truly become their downfall.

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851 Thorpe, 1931, 170.
852 THAM, Records of the 'Poplar Borough Labour Party' (but actually Bethnal Green), TH/8214, leaflet of 27 October 1931. Capitalisation is as in the original.
853 THAM, TH/8214, copy of Post Office telegram, 1931 (no further date).
854 Craig, Results, p. 8.
The Liberal Record in London 1918-1931

London in the forty years following the first Reform Act [1832] was overwhelmingly Liberal. ... It was just as overwhelmingly Conservative after 1885. This change [was] perhaps one of the most profound in British political history. \footnote{Craig, Facts, 17.}

Although there was a Liberal record of success in nineteenth century London, by 1918 it was fading further into the past. There were exceptions: the Liberals had John Burns, 'the first member of the British working class to reach cabinet office' and one who '...made a worthwhile contribution to the advancement of both working class interests and municipal socialism' as MP for Battersea and LCC leading light. \footnote{MB Baer, 'Social Structure, Voting Behaviour and Political Change in Victorian London', in Albion 9 (1977), 227-241, 229.} There was also the partial exception of 1906, but in the main Conservatives had been more successful most recently, and even in 1906, shortly after their party's electoral disaster, its future leader Andrew Bonar Law beat a local Liberal to be elected MP for Dulwich. \footnote{Kenneth D Brown, 'London and the Historical Reputation of John Burns', in London Journal Vol. 2 No. 2 (Nov 1976), 226-238, 226.} Paul Thompson has argued that the writing was clearly on the wall for the Liberals in London before 1914, that '...the working class roots of London Liberalism were no longer reliable.' \footnote{R J Q Adams, Bonar Law, London (John Murray), 1999, 28.} By 1918 they were clearly suffering the same problems as their party nationally. Split into Coalition and non-Coalition wings, the official Liberals had to face both this division and the powerful weapon of the coupon, often wielded by their former allies against them. The then secretary of the Home Counties Liberal Federation was driven to write to Herbert Gladstone, the demoralised son of their party's greatest leader, to urge him to participate more fully in the campaign.

...I feel more than ever sorry that you feel unable to lend the great influence of your personality and name to the cause of your party - and I believe of your country at
...Even in these dark days ... if we had boldly led the constituencies, most of
them would have gone along. ... I should have liked to see a bold, straightforward,
open attempt to co-operate with the sane section of Labour ... The country never
needed Liberal principles, fearlessly preached, more than it does today. In that Liberal
faith I have lived, and in that faith I shall die. Here in the muck of the fight, it does not
seem to me so much worse than 1900. It is worse, but not hopelessly worse.

In the event, it was hopeless, and worse than 1900. 16 Coalition Liberals were
returned in Greater London in 1918, but only 3 Asquithians. These three
victories were in: Stepney Whitechapel and St George's, by 503 votes over Labour
(Labour won the seat at every subsequent election until 1931); Bermondsey West
(by 1262 votes over a couponed Coalition Liberal - but Labour won the seat at
every other election except 1923); and in Lambeth North (by 2885, in a straight
fight with a Conservative). The Stepney and Bermondsey seats were both
retained by the sitting members, and although, as Turner says,

...in Lambeth North the sitting Conservative, Sir W H Gastrell, a Tariff Reformer and
a senior figure in the Primrose League, managed to lose convincingly to the Liberal
chairman of the borough council [Frank Briant] despite the advantage of a coupon ...

it is without doubt because Labour did not put up a candidate that the Liberals
won the seat. The Liberals' three successes in 1918 can easily be explained by
local circumstances, rather than any great residual support for the party itself.
Those defeated included Sir John Simon, standing in Walthamstow East as the
incumbent.

Those Coalition Liberals returned in 1918 were thus more numerous than the
Asquithians, but their 16 included 11 who had been MPs in the 1910-1918

859 Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour, 179.
860 BL, Herbert Gladstone papers: Add Mss 46024, letters to Gladstone from Montgomery Crook
of the Home Counties Liberal Federation, letter of 7 Dec 1918.
861 See table 2A.
862 Figures taken from Craig, Results, 6, 35, and 53.
863 Turner, British Politics, 427.
864 Craig, Results, 265.
parliament: these men were elected in Bethnal Green North East; Camberwell North West; Camberwell Peckham; Poplar South; Shoreditch; Southwark Central; Southwark North; Southwark South East; Stepney Limehouse; East Ham North; and Dartford. 865 It is not certain that all of these would have survived if they had not been sitting members, and thereby saved by the coupon. The victor in Shoreditch was Christopher Addison, who was to suffer at the hands of the Conservatives as a Coalition minister, and was later to join Labour. The victor in Dartford was dead within 18 months, and the seat went to Labour. 866 The Stepney Limehouse seat was to become Attlee's stronghold from 1922. 867 Sir John Bethell, who won East Ham North, had been Liberal MP for the neighbouring Romford seat since 1906, and beat a National Party candidate in a straight fight. 868 Of the five elected in 1918 who were not already Liberal MPs, one was unopposed (Hackney Central), one beat a Labour opponent in a straight fight in John Burns' old constituency (Battersea North), one was to leave Coalition Liberalism shortly after victory (Leyton East), and one beat Labour and NSP opponents but no Conservative (Romford). 869 Only Henry Purchase (Lambeth Kennington) and Cecil Malone (Leyton East) beat both a Conservative and Labour opponent. 870 If the factor of the coupon protecting MPs who had sat in the 1910-1918 parliament is taken out of the calculation, the 1918 Coalition Liberals stood on ground just as unstable as that the Asquithians occupied.

After the 1918 disaster the Liberals tried to recover. They were soon buoyed by their win in the Leyton West by-election in March 1919, and John Burns recorded in his diary how

Leyton result disturbs government [], delights the Liberals and disturbs Lloyd's too numerous defendants [sic] 871

865 Derived from Craig, Results.
866 Craig, Results, 383.
867 Craig, Results, 51.
868 Craig, Results, 131. and Who's Who 1931, 255.
869 Derived from Craig, Results.
870 Craig, Results, 34 and 170.
In November 1919, on the day of the first post-war METB elections, The Times commented,

The decline of the Progressive Party is one of the most notable features of the outlook. The diminution of candidates may be taken as a sign of a dwindling in policy. The Progressive programme is so ill-defined that it would be difficult to say what exactly the party stands for. 872

Perhaps especially spurred on by such criticism as this, the London Liberal Federation began to draw up a programme of policies intended to inspire its activists and revive its fortunes. It included a far-sighted view of how London should be governed:

(1) The boundaries of London should be extended to cover the present Metropolitan Police area.
(2) An elected body should be created having wide powers over the whole of this area; and should, amongst other things, control -
   (a) the Police
   (b) All forms of relief
   (c) Public Services
   This elected body should have powers to enforce uniformity and economy of administration over the whole area.
(3) The powers and constitution of existing local authorities should be modified in such a way as to make them subordinate and complementary to this authority.
(4) One uniform rate and system of assessment should be established throughout the new areas. All existing debt should be consolidated.
(5) The present anomalies and overlapping in the local government of the London area should be rectified. 873

It is possible to detect here a 'big idea', a properly defined programme such as The Times commented was lacking. It contrasts with the absence of an overall Liberal

871 BL, Add Mss 46341, John Burns' diary for 1919, entry for 15 Mar 1919.
872 The Times, 1 Nov 1919, 9.
municipal policy, noted by Cook and mentioned earlier. The Federation established a library of political books for the use of members in 1919. In the run-up to the 1922 General Election (though before the downfall of the Coalition) it delighted in supporting Liberal candidates nominated against sitting Coalition Liberal members, and organised a speakers class for women as an aid to campaigning. Some Liberal Associations appeared quite healthy, for example in Walthamstow the formation of a large Junior branch, a healthy income and even a cricket team were all symbols of liveliness.

However, attempts to revive London Liberalism were not all met with success. The Beckenham Liberal Association found a distinct lack of interest in the Liberal party from those who had been local members before 1914, only 10 out of 90 responding to its overtures. It must be noted that 90 was a very low figure anyway: in 1921 the Conservative organisation in Epsom reported a membership of 3,630; in Woolwich the Labour Party reported a membership of 2,194 that same year. When the 1922 election came, the Liberals got no further forward. They once again won only three seats, though only Lambeth North was retained - Bethnal Green North East and South West were both gained. The Coalition Liberals were reduced to just seven MPs, with Labour the big gainers, winning 16 seats. The London Liberal Federation raged at the injustice of the result:

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874 Cook, *Alignment*, 17, as cited in the first part of this chapter.
876 LMA, records of the London Liberal Federation, ACC/1446/2, Annual Report of Organisation Sub-Committee to the Federation, presented 21 Apr 1922, and minutes of meeting of executive committee, 7 Sep 1922.
877 WFOR, ACC 10208/3, Annual Reports of the East Walthamstow Liberal and Radical Association, 1920 (3 and 5), 1921 (3).
878 Bromley Local Studies and Archives (BMY), records of the Beckenham Liberal Association, 708/1/1, minutes of meeting of 20 Feb 1920.
879 Epsom figure given in research notes of J A Ramsden, taken from minutes of Epsom division Conservative Association, executive committee meeting of 6 May 1921. Woolwich figure given in Annual Report for 1920, reported 31 May 1921, GCH: WLP 40.2.
880 Craig, *Results*, 7-8, and 35.
881 See table 2A.
There is no doubt that a month before the election the position of the Liberal party stood much higher than it did at the election. The Coalition was hated by everyone and had the government gone to the country as Coalitionists the result would have been vastly different[.] but curiously enough the Tories, though forming three fourths of the Coalition Government, were able to disassociate themselves from it in appearing as a separate party and were so accepted by the electorate. 882

They gave six principal reasons for their defeat:

(1) Much confusion in the minds of non-party electors. The last government was regarded as a Liberal one because Mr Lloyd George was Prime Minister so they voted for Bonar Law to have a change.

(2) Labour had a valuable ally in the vast number of unemployed.

(3) Not enough Liberal candidates in the field to form a government.

(4) ...Weak-kneed Liberals voted Tory to ensure Labour being kept out.

(5) Dense fog [in the East End on the evening of polling day].

(6) The cry that the Liberals were prohibitionists is said to have seriously damaged us in many areas. 883

Some of these explanations seem more reasonable than others. Presumably, fog affected all parties equally. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, historians have identified Liberal divisions as a prime factor in their defeat. 884

For most of the rest of the decade, London Liberalism was in financial difficulty and made little electoral headway. In February 1923 there were reports of agents being sacked or having left, and income being hard to come by. 885 The Home Counties Liberal Federation had to dispense with the services of a women's organiser it could no longer afford. 886 Records of the London Liberal Federation in the late 1920s are full of applications from local Liberal associations for financial support. In September 1927 the Federation's overdraft was £1000, while

882 LMA, ACC/1446/2, minutes of executive committee meeting of 30 Jan 1923.
883 LMA, ACC/1446/2, minutes of executive committee meeting of 30 Jan 1923.
884 See Wilson, Downfall, 228, and discussion in first part of the chapter.
885 LMA, ACC/1446/2, minutes of executive committee meeting of 1 Feb 1923.
in 1929 an 18-month economy drive had to be launched. 887 The Home Counties Liberal Federation suffered alongside its neighbour - and typical of the complaints that appeared in annual reports is this from 1925:

Our annual expenditure - though very carefully supervised - still exceeds our income. Liberalism is worth treatment less meagre than this. The Treasurer strongly urges every present subscriber to double his or her contribution … 888

Cook has pointed out how, because London (and Home Counties) candidates and associations were particularly dependent on support from central Liberal funds, the problems with these affected London severely. 889 At the 1924 General Election, the average grant from Headquarters in London was £503, in the Home Counties £572, and Herbert Gladstone's notes on London candidates in the contest include some with ringed figures of grants, such as £500 for the Liberal in Chislehurst. 890 Grants such as these would have met almost all election expenses for a candidate, but they were still low: the average spent per candidate nationwide in the 1924 contest was £645. 891 Financial difficulties were sometimes compounded by dwindling memberships of local parties. For example, there was a particular problem noted by the Beckenham Liberal Association in drumming up support from the young in their area, thus potentially undermining their whole future, in the mid-1920s. 892 Both money and membership problems stemmed from the diminished social base of Liberalism, noted by Childs and others and cited earlier in this chapter. 893

887 LMA, ACC/1446/3, minutes of the London Liberal Federation General Purposes Committee / Finance Committee, 1927, Sep 1927, and 19 July 1929.
888 BRIS, DM668, records of the Home Counties Liberal Federation, Annual Report for 1925, 16.
889 Cook, Alignment, 285.
890 BL, Herbert Gladstone papers, Add Mss 46482, 20 r.
892 BMY, records of the Beckenham Liberal Association, 708/1/1, executive committee meeting of 12 Nov 1924.
893 Childs, 'Labour Grows Up', 143; see first part of this chapter.
Despite their difficulties, the Liberals carried on fighting both at local and parliamentary elections when they could. In June 1923, and to boost their LCC electability following their failure to regain ground in the March 1922 contests, the London Liberal Federation voted to accept a 'definite and recognised relationship' with the Progressives on the LCC. \(^{894}\) Although this process encountered the problem that some Liberal Associations affiliated to the London Liberal Federation were in Outer London, it did mean that later in the 1920s (certainly from 1928) it was 'Liberals' and not 'Progressives' who clearly stood for election to the LCC. \(^{895}\) Ambitious promises were inserted into their manifestos for the LCC elections, including a pledge to tackle 'the traffic problem' in 1925. \(^{896}\) Attempts at revival were not all failures. In Croydon, the local party reported increasing membership in 1925, and happily related the fact that many of the new members were young people, in contrast to Beckenham a year earlier. \(^{897}\) In Beckenham itself, and though starting from a low base, the number of members rose from 89 'paid-up' in 1925, to 175 by 1929, with 21 new members being obtained as a result of canvassing during 1928. \(^{898}\) Again, though, these are very low figures indeed compared to other parties: in Woolwich in 1926 the Labour party membership was 5,179; there were 2,312 in Lewisham West Conservative Association by 1928. \(^{899}\) An education programme aimed at the young, as a result of their earlier problems, brought in new members too. \(^{900}\) This area was also particularly strong on canvassing, with, for example, one producing '153 opinions

\(^{894}\) LMA, ACC/1446/2, minutes of executive committee meeting of 7 Jun 1923. For an example of Liberals standing under this label for the LCC, see GLPB, LMS 183, LCC Election Addresses 1928, election address of A J Cook and W Freeman, Liberal candidates in West Bermondsey. This includes the comment: 'the word LIBERAL is not a mere label, but a real description of the party to which we belong, and it is as Liberals that we confidently ask for your support.'

\(^{895}\) LMA, ACC/1446/2, minutes of executive committee meeting of 15 Apr 1924.

\(^{896}\) HKY, M/4312/8, 'Election Material', Manifesto for 1925 LCC elections for Miss Adler and Mr Mortimer in Hackney Central, 3. They still stood as 'Progressive'.


\(^{898}\) Figures derived from BMY, records of the Beckenham Liberal Association, 708/1/1, minutes of executive committee meeting of 22 Oct 1925; 708/1/2, minutes of AGM 24 Feb 1928; 708/1/3, minutes of executive committee meeting of 11 Sep 1929, Annual Reports for 1928 and 1929.

\(^{899}\) Lewisham West figure given in research notes of John Ramsden, taken from records of Lewisham West Conservative Association, Annual General Meeting of 23 March 1928. Woolwich figure given in Annual Report for 1926, reported 26 Apr 1927, GCH: WLP 40.2.

\(^{900}\) BMY, records of the Beckenham Liberal Association, 708/1/1, note of public meeting 'Why I Am a Liberal' held on 27 Jan 1925.
of definite political leaning … 69 Liberal[,] 48 Labour[,] 36 Conservative. 901
Guidance on canvassing was provided in *The Liberal Agent*, which, while
accepting that since 1918 the job had got much harder, argued:

> The experience of having to run an election without a canvass - a thing hardly dreamt of in pre-war days - has, we believe, emphasised in most agents' mind[s] the absolute necessity of pressing for as complete a canvass as possible. 902

It is not clear how, with so few members, they intended to complete a full canvass.

The Home Counties Liberal Federation (which covered nearly a hundred constituencies) reported the holding of numerous meetings in the later 1920s, some with the help of Lloyd George's injection of funds. The table below gives details, and in doing so shows how the Liberal revival grew with Lloyd George's efforts, but then fell away after 1929. 903

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of meetings held, according to Annual Report</th>
<th>Comments (from Annual Report)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>477</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>Including 86 meetings on the Front in nine of our seaside towns'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>528</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Approximately 1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Nearly 2000</td>
<td>including those arranged in conjunction with the Land and Nation League [a Lloyd George body] and the Liberal Campaign Committee'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Over 1500</td>
<td>including those arranged in conjunction with the Liberal Campaign Department'</td>
</tr>
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901 BMY, records of the Beckenham Liberal Association: 708/1/1, including meeting of the Propaganda Sub-Committee, 12 May 1925; 708/1/2, executive committee meeting of 16 June 1926, executive committee meeting of 16 Sep 1926, AGM of 24 Feb 1928.
902 The Liberal Agent, Vol. 25 No. 8 (Jan 1924), 13-19, 17. Copy held at BRIS.
903 Figures and comments from BRIS, DM668, records of the Home Counties Liberal Federation, Annual Reports 1924-1931.
In 1929 the Liberals' campaign was a good one, though the result was not so good. They used the latest tactics of campaigning available to them - Lloyd George's speech at the Albert Hall in March 1929 was relayed by the Home Counties Federation to six large towns and cities, including St Albans. Vans were also used by the party - the Federation had two of its own which were 'continuously at work throughout the year' in 1928, and the additional loudspeaker vans the Federation borrowed were popular: 'as a novelty they proved very attractive.' The initiation of a 'flying squad' of leafleteers, summoned by postcard and driven around a target constituency, was attempted too. Locally, Liberals used their past record as a campaigning tool, particularly with regard to the LCC. In 1928 they produced a poster associating themselves with the successful Kingsway road project that the Progressives had initiated under their rule at Spring Gardens.


Though there was little success on the LCC, there were some areas where Liberals performed remarkably well. Foremost among these was Bethnal Green. The verdict of one historian on the tenure of Percy Harris as Liberal MP for Bethnal Green South West from 1922-1945 is that this '...owed a lot to the personal popularity of ... [this] particular MP ... who had built up a strong rapport with the poverty-stricken people of South West Bethnal Green.' Another has said that

Harris's continued hold of his parliamentary seat even after he had lost the LCC division in 1934 affords a clue to his success. He was, in the truest sense of the phrase

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<th>1930</th>
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<td>1931</td>
<td>Nearly 300</td>
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<td>This figure is for meetings the Federation 'arranged speakers for'</td>
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a good constituency MP, and had had the sense to grasp at the outset of his LCC
career [in 1907] that housing was and was going to remain the dominant issue in the
Bethnal Green neighbourhood. 909

Looking at the election results for the parliamentary contests here gives the
impression of a great success story. 910 Though Harris won by just 484 in 1923
and 212 in 1924, these were both in three-cornered fights, and 1924 was a very
bad year for the Liberals. He won a four-cornered contest (with a Communist
candidate as well as a Labour and Conservative one) in 1929 by 1,260, or over 7%
of those voting. He won by over 6,000 in 1931, and, in a straight fight with
Labour, by over 1,000 in 1935. Harris was very successful in LCC elections for
the area, winning a seat on the council for the same Bethnal Green South West
constituency every time it was contested in this period, losing it only in 1934. 911
It would be easy to gloss over the constituency as a Liberal stronghold maintained
against a tide of attacks, rather as has been done by historians. However, there was
more to the political position of Bethnal Green than that. Earlier in this study the
struggles for control of the METB council, and the local Labour party's
attachment to Communism, have been dealt with. In such circumstances Harris's
grip on the seat was a loosely held one, and he was no doubt assisted in keeping
his seat in the Commons by the lack of a Conservative opponent in 1931 and
1935, and perhaps by the fact that local Communist influence meant he received
moderate Labour votes. His majorities at elections, while mostly reasonable in
percentage terms, were low numerically most of the time. There was also the issue
of the Jewish vote in the constituency, which had a high Jewish population. The
success of Harris has been described as 'the last surviving example of the Jewish
attachment to Progressivism', something which had been strong before 1914. 912
Here, therefore, is another element in the story of Harris's success. However, there
is also evidence that the issue of the Jewish minority excited great feeling in the

909 Alderman, London Jewry, 72.
910 For results see Craig, Results, 8.
911 LCC results derived from The Times. Harris sat on the LCC for Bethnal Green South West from
1907-1934 and again from 1946-1949, and sat for Bethnal Green from 1949-1952 (after
boundaries were redrawn).
Bethnal Green area. Labour activists tried to garner the Jewish vote, as they had successfully done in other parts of the East End. One Labour supporter '[recently] ...attending a meeting of Mr Percy Harris [in 1924] ... found that there was a strong anti-Jewish feeling among the majority of his supporters,' perhaps in an attempt to persuade Jewish voters to support Labour rather than the Liberals. Harris obviously had a fine line to tread to maintain his position. He also faced difficulty in Free Trade propaganda at the 1931 general election, as shown, although he went on to retain the seat comfortably.

Another of those involved in the Bethnal Green triumphs, and another with a Jewish connection, was Harry Nathan, who won there in 1929 and 1931, and was one of the authors of the Liberals' Yellow Book. The example of Bethnal Green was used by The Liberal Agent journal to encourage others facing difficulties. An article by 'Perigrinator' on Alan J Herbert, the Liberal Agent in Bethnal Green North East, entitled 'How He Does It', appeared in the January 1928 issue, and it is worth quoting at length:

[When Herbert arrived in June 1926] ...he found no organisation. Previously there had been no Liberal meetings in between elections. Now he can account for 21,000 of the 28,000 electors and the published list of Liberal engagements for the current month - a copy of which, with a covering letter, is posted, each month, to every member of the Executive - includes 45 open air meetings and 33 other functions - whist drives, socials, ward concert-meetings, Young Liberals, WLAs [for women], Executive meetings, etc. The Association has a membership of over 3,700.

How has this been done? The first steps were concert meetings, all over the constituency, till every elector had received a personal invitation to at least one. The job was done systematically, ward by ward. At every concert the candidate spoke. At every concert opportunity was given for the signing and collection of forms giving adhesion to Liberalism …

912 Alderman, London Jewry, 71.
This has been accomplished by a staff consisting of an Agent and a girl, and two men who are used for distribution and for the work of checking members forms ...

He's [Herbert] a funny chap. I am amazed by the things he has accomplished ... But he seems more proud of the fact that he won the National Liberal Club Billiard Handicap in 1925 and was a finalist in 1927! A kind of 'swank' which is really true modesty. 915

In spite of local successes like Bethnal Green, the Liberal record was more usually one of failure. Their failure to repeat the pre-war success of the Progressives on the LCC was blamed by some on the voting system. If there had been Proportional Representation (PR) or some other system of voting than first-past-the-post, it was argued, the Liberals would have polled their true strength. *The Liberal Magazine* of April 1928 articulated this view in relation to the March 1928 LCC elections:

...under a proportional system, London Liberals would have had some seventeen seats [compared to five] and, if they contested all areas, possibly more. ... Can democracy be safe if elections are a gamble and the results grossly unfair? 916

Liberal campaign literature for the LCC elections had included an explicit call for PR for such contests in future:

The present method of voting is specially unsuitable at local elections. It deprives minorities of their fair share [of] representation and prevents many who might make excellent representatives on local bodies from offering themselves as candidates. We believe that the system known as Proportional Representation would go a long way to remedy these admitted evils. 917

No doubt the candidates whose address this was included themselves and their friends among those 'who might make excellent representatives on local bodies' but would not get the chance without PR. Both these last two views are those of a

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party not now expecting to win under a system by which it formerly had won. But when considering such questions, it is worth bearing in mind, with the usual caveats about the fact that people could have chosen to vote differently, that it has been shown that the Liberals would have been unlikely to win any of the 1920s General Elections in any case. 918 In no General Election would they have come second rather than third.

Whatever the suppositions, the Liberals never had the chance to try contesting elections for the LCC or parliament under PR, but instead were frequent users of the post-election post-mortem, just as Labour and, to an extent, the Conservatives were. 919 One example from the 1922 contest has already been mentioned. The London Liberal Federation's inquest on the 1924 General Election debacle blamed the lack of candidates as well as Zinoviev for their failures:

The sudden election in 1924 was fought by the Liberal party under the most adverse circumstances. With the small number of candidates in the field and a panic stricken electorate, it is hardly to be wondered at that Liberalism was for the time being submerged, and that London, in common with most of the other areas in the country, lost a greater part of its Liberal representation. 920

In that same year, the local party in Walthamstow East looked retrospectively at their loss in the constituency, blaming '...the special circumstances surrounding the election'. 921 It was, of course, an election called after the government's failure to defeat a Liberal parliamentary motion, and historians such as Cook and Hart clearly blame the Liberals own actions and failings, rather than 'adverse

917 GLPB, LMS 183, LCC Election Addresses 1928, Election address of A M Hewitt and S W Rowland, Liberal candidates in Dulwich.
918 Butler, Electoral System, 190-191. Butler gives a table of results under an alternative system of voting, with the best performance for the Liberals being in 1923 where, he calculates, they would have won 182 seats to 188 for Labour and 234 for the Conservatives. The system Butler uses for the calculations is pure PR, and he states that his table of results '...shows simply how parliaments ... would have been composed if seats had been distributed in the same proportion as the votes that were in fact cast.'
919 See chapter four.
920 LMA, ACC/1446/2, Annual report for 1924, presented to Council meeting 30 Mar 1925.
921 WFOR, W32.6 BA2, East Walthamstow Central Liberal and Radical Association minute book 1919-1925, resolution of executive committee meeting of 7 Nov 1924.
circumstances', for their collapse. In 1929 their analysis of the campaign certainly resembled the detailed soul-searching of the Conservatives that year, and Labour at many elections:

The chairman opened the discussion and said he felt that little more could have been done as far as the organisation was concerned; but he felt they could have greatly improved on their figures if more canvassing had been done.

The general discussion that followed contained some criticism of the organisation particularly in regard to committee rooms and their work. It was generally felt that the agent had under the circumstances done all he could and that the work done from the committee rooms was largely dependent on the good organisation of the wards. Tributes were paid to the great assistance given by the women and the young Liberals who, although fewer numerically had done more useful work than had perhaps been done in any previous election.

The experience gained was valuable, and although mistakes had been made they had been noted [and] it was certain that the organisation at the next election would be considerably benefited [sic].

In 1931, under different circumstances, the Liberals came third and lost their deposit.

After the disappointment of 1929, the 1929-31 period was one of confusion for London Liberals. The notebook in which details of Liberal contacts were kept for the 1929-31 period contains numerous crossings out, changes of address, and similar notes relating to the London constituencies: for example, the entry for Romford is struck through with the endorsement 'Gone Away 22.3.30', and Lewisham West is struck through with the comment 'Not known 24.10.32'.

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922 Hart, 'Liberals', 821, as cited in first part of this chapter.
923 WFOR, W32.6 BA3, East Walthamstow Liberal and Radical Association minute book 1925-1936, minutes of executive committee meeting of 7 June 1929.
924 Craig, Results, 265.
Organising the Liberals at this time was a problem on the ground as well as in parliament. They were not, however, without initiatives. The London Liberal Federation launched a Consumers League which crusaded against tariffs (and the organisations of Beaverbrook and Rothermere) in October 1930, although their choice of a 'swastika design' as a logo for the campaign does not seem a wise one in the light of other current and later events. But they were still in trouble. There was no advance in the LCC election in March 1931, despite Labour's unpopularity by this time. The confused way in which London's Liberals responded to the political crisis of August-September 1931 was typical of the party at a national level. In July 1931, the Liberal executive in Walthamstow East passed a resolution firmly rejecting any cuts in unemployment benefit. Barely two months later they withdrew from local elections in view of the new situation - though unusually they remained in the field for the 1931 General Election standing against both Conservative and Labour candidates, but coming bottom of the poll. Conservatives in Finchley thought they saw sufficient disarray in the Liberals that they should welcome any converts to tariffs from the Liberal party. Though the local MP, Major Cadogan, no doubt had those such as Sir John Simon primarily in mind, the same applied to Liberals at a local level: 'we should welcome Liberals who cared to join us on the tariff issue, and admire their patriotism and loyalty.' In his former Walthamstow constituency Sir John Simon became persona non grata as a result of his alliance with the Conservatives, especially after 1932 when he persisted in supporting the government, and he and the 'Slymonites' were subject to persistent attack. With only four MPs elected as Liberals in 1931, and only six LCC councillors by this point, the 1918-1931 period ended in disaster for Greater London Liberalism.

926 LMA, ACC/1446/3, meeting of 'Consumers League Sub-Committee', 16 Oct 1930.
927 See table 3.
928 WFOR, W32.6 BA3, East Walthamstow Liberal and Radical Association minute book 1925-1936, minutes of executive committee meeting of 8 July 1931.
929 WFOR, W32.6 BA3, East Walthamstow Liberal and Radical Association minute book 1925-1936, minutes of executive committee meeting of 9 Sep 1931, and Craig, Results, 265.
931 WFOR, ACC/10126/7, records of the East Walthamstow Liberal and Radical Association, report of Annual Meeting of 1931 [although dated 1931, this seems more likely to date from another year shortly afterwards].
At the end of the period the Liberal party was in a mess as a result of a combination of several factors and events. It can clearly be seen that, in London, the Liberals had been affected by the two main problems that had affected the party nationally: the split between the two 'wings' of Liberalism that began in December 1916; and the dilemma that faced, and still faces, any third party in the British political system - whether to campaign against the party more to the left, more to the right, or both, and in a deadlock situation, which of the two parties to support. Examples relating to the former problem have been given already in this chapter, and another can be added. The records of the London Liberal Federation show that, as late as July 1923, there was a debate on the merits of Liberal reunion within the organisation, but that in the end an Executive Committee resolution in favour of it was lost by 10 votes to 4. 932 Barely six months later, and following the successful joint defence of Free Trade at the December 1923 General Election, the Federation reported somewhat unconvincingly that 'every Liberal welcomes the joining up of the two wings and there is no doubt that in the future the full benefit of amalgamation will be felt.' 933 Any movement that had to make such an abrupt switch would have suffered in some way; one politically weakened and financially troubled suffered more than the other parties might have done in similar circumstances.

The second of the two fundamental problems was particularly acute since, and unusually, there were two deadlock general elections in the 1920s in which no party won an overall majority - in 1923 and in 1929. The difficulty can be easily demonstrated by looking at the problems Liberals had when trying to decide which of the other two parties to support if there was no Liberal candidate standing in their electoral district. The differences between Lloyd George urging a vote to save Free Trade if there was no Liberal standing, and the official Liberals under Samuel implying that the National Government, including Conservatives, should be supported in all cases, in the 1931 General Election, have already been

932 LMA, ACC/1446/2, executive committee meeting of 5 July 1923.
933 LMA, ACC/1446/2, report to Council meeting of 21 January 1924.
pointed out. Sometimes a questionnaire could be issued to the candidates of other parties, asking how they stood on issues close to the hearts of Liberals. The answers received would help determine how Liberals should vote. The example of the Romford contest in 1931 is typical. There was to be no Liberal candidate, so both Conservative and Labour candidates received a questionnaire, on which the dominant question was 'are you in favour of or against protection?' The Labour candidate and sitting MP, Henry Muggeridge, replied, but somehow the reply from the Conservative was mislaid in the post and never reached them, although he repeatedly insisted it had been sent. 934 As it happened, most of the Liberals in Romford supported the Conservative in 1931, some signing his nomination papers, and when

On Monday 19th October Mr Hutchison [the Conservative candidate] addressed one of the largest gatherings of the campaign in Salisbury Road School, Squirrels Heath, ... significantly the vote of confidence in him was moved by Capt E C Price, formerly Treasurer of the Divisional Liberal Association. 935

David Close has argued that, in 1931, Liberal withdrawals throughout London helped the Conservatives, as London Liberal voters had rightward (as against leftward) tendencies when no Liberal was standing. 936 James Smyth has said that the same was true of Liberals in the same period in Glasgow. Their vote was an anti-Labour one, when it came to brass tacks, and co-operation between them and the local Conservatives '... came to be seen as crucial in order to thwart labour's ambitions and secure moderate control of the [city] corporation'. 937 Further to this, Smyth argues,

...any interpretation [of political history] which posits a labour-liberal alliance after the war misses the point completely, since the essential political divide in the inter-war period - both at the national and, more explicitly, at the local level - was between the

934 Frost, 'Romford Election', 22.
935 Frost, 'Romford Election', 23.
936 Close, 'Realignment', 401.
right and the left, between liberal and conservative on the one hand, and labour on the other. 938

A brief look at some London examples can be used to support Smyth's view. In Croydon the Conservative vote in the parliamentary seats shot up when Liberals withdrew in 1924 and 1931, and it seems clear where the Liberal votes went. 939 A similar effect occurred in Holborn and in Lambeth Norwood, where the Conservative total in both 1924 and 1931 was close to the total for the combined Liberal and Conservative vote in 1923 and 1929 respectively, the Labour vote changing by far less. 940 It has already been shown that, in 1922, the London Liberal Federation saw their own 'weak-kneed' supporters voting Conservative to keep Labour out. 941

More follows on the relations of Liberals with the two other parties. It is, however, important to point out that examples can be found of Liberals inclining towards both other major parties, even from the same local organisation, during the 1918-1931 period. In Walthamstow in 1919, Liberals tried to fight alongside Labour and arrange joint candidatures for local elections in the Northern Ward. 942 Just four years later, they successfully agreed a deal to fight alongside the local conservatives (in the guise of the Walthamstow Ratepayer and Tenant Federation) in the council elections. 943 The Liberal dilemma was neatly encapsulated in this one locality. It was a dilemma their opponents made the most of. For example, in Stoke Newington, the Liberals were attacked as 'Mr Facing Both Ways', in a poster subtitled 'the Liberal MP condemns Socialism but voted with Socialists in parliament', depicting a man facing in two directions, and produced by the National Unionist Association as part of core national campaigning against the

938 Smyth, 'Resisting Labour', 376. Capitalisation is as in the original.
939 Craig, Results, 119 and 120.
940 Craig, Results, 26 and 36. In Lambeth Norwood the figures are: (1923) Conservative 12,725; Liberal 8,127; Labour 5,002; (1924) Conservative 22,178; Labour 8,927; (1929) Conservative 19,821; Labour 11,042; Liberal 7,823; (1931) Conservative 30,851; Labour 7,217.
941 LMA, ACC/1446/2, executive committee meeting of 30 Jan 1923.
943 WFOR, W32.6 WDA/3, executive committee meeting of 12 Feb 1923. The Liberals ran one candidate alongside two run by the Ratepayers.
Liberal role in the first Labour government. \(^944\) It may have been, as McKibbin has argued, that after 1923 '...the Liberal vote was ... or was becoming a quasi-Conservative vote ...', but locally and nationally Liberals were torn in different directions at different times. \(^945\) In London, as elsewhere, the evidence shows that this dichotomy, and the problems caused by their internal splits, undermined their chances of revival after 1918.

**The Liberal Decline, the Conservatives, and the Labour Party**

The electoral arrangement between the Conservatives and the Coalition Liberals in 1918 was not the first instance of cross-party co-operation, albeit that other examples were, up to that point, under the wartime electoral truce. There was a by-election in the Wandsworth Clapham seat in early 1918 where the return of the Conservative Sir Arthur Du Cros was secured. But this was not without help from the other party: as the constituency party annual report said, 'it is but fair to place on record the fact that at this by-election we had the hearty co-operation and support of the Liberal organisation and party in this division, from whom we received valuable assistance.' \(^946\) Here it was the Conservatives who were grateful for the help of the Liberals - and Liberals without prefix, not 'Coalition' or otherwise. But it was not long before the Liberals were supplicants to strong local Conservative organisations. In 1919 in Lewisham West, the local Conservative Association rejected the chance to select compromise 'coalition' candidates for the LCC in favour of 'two candidates representing the views of this Association'. \(^947\) In 1922 the Westminster St George's Conservatives received a letter from the City of Westminster Liberal Association, signed by the secretary, S C Morgan:

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\(^944\) HKY, SN/CEP/13, Stoke Newington Election Material 1924-1929, poster from 1924. The 'Mr Facing Both Ways' slogan had cropped up in the Newport by-election campaign of 1922, when used by the Liberal candidate Lynden Moore to deny he was all things to all people. See John Ramsden, 'The Newport By-Election and the Fall of the Coalition', in Cook and Ramsden (eds), *By-Elections*, 13-36, 25.

\(^945\) McKibbin, *Ideologies*, 260.


\(^947\) Lewisham West Conservative Association, minutes of Council meeting 7 Feb 1919.

236
I am writing on behalf of the City of Westminster Liberals to know whether the Conservative party could grant us say half a dozen seats in St George's out of the 27 seats. This would undoubtedly bring about a good working spirit and avoid the bitterness of party.948

Someone has endorsed the top of the letter 'Committee cannot cede seats', and they did not. What is clear though, even given the national rancour going on between Liberal and Conservative Coalitionists at this time, is that the (prefixless) Liberals thought they could get something from the Conservatives. The fact that they were rebuffed was indicative both of the future, and of the fact they had little to bargain with anyway.

This is not to say that there were no examples of co-operation between the two parties at a local level in some areas following the end of the Coalition in 1922. One on the Hackney METB council has already been pointed out - by November 1925 Labour did not hold a single one of the 60 seats available.949 Co-operation sometimes caused anger in one of the two sides. In Hammersmith, elections to the METB in 1925 saw a slate of 'Ratepayers' candidates stand in at least one ward against the established and 'official' MR-supporting ratepayers' 'Constitutional Alliance', on the grounds that 'the alliance is greatly composed of Liberals and fence-sitters with no right to use the name or machinery of the Conservative party ... [they] pledged themselves to fight against the Socialists. They have on the contrary combined with them against you [the local electorate] and your interests.'950

At General Elections in Southwark, Conservatives gave Liberals a free run in 1922 and 1923 in the North division, and did so again in 1931.951 In the South East division, the Liberals had a free run again in 1922 and 1923, but interestingly

948 WMIN, ACC/1267/14, undated letter. The assumed date would coincide with then run-up to the November 1922 METB election in Westminster, and fit with the position of the letter in the file.
949 GLPB, LMS 19, The Ratepayer No. 38 (Nov/Dec 1925), 9. See also chapter three.
950 Hammersmith Archives and Local History Centre [HMTH], William Bull collection, DD/375/356, election leaflet for the River Ward, November 1925.
951 Craig, Results, 49.
not in 1924, and the Liberals gave the Conservatives, who had finished bottom of the poll in a three way contest in 1929, a free run in 1931 against Labour - which they won. 952 In the Central division, coalitionism did not last beyond 1922, save for in 1931 when both Liberals and Conservatives withdrew in favour of a single candidate to fight Labour. There is little information on Ian Horobin, who successfully beat the Labour incumbent, but his membership of the Reform club suggests more Liberal than Conservative tendencies. 953 In 1924, the Liberal candidate, Major Horace Crawfurd, won Walthamstow West at the General Election assisted by the Conservatives absenting themselves from the contest. However, they gave other reasons for their success:

The principal reasons for this triumph: We place first the Major's personality and strong and sincere lead he has always given with his clear and able exposition of Liberal principles, coupled with the unflagging zeal of the ward secretaries and their committees, whose work, year in and year out, has at last met with its reward. 954

Informal co-operation can be seen to have existed in Bethnal Green in 1928. From being a Labour-controlled (some, including Herbert Morrison, said a Communist-controlled) METB earlier in the 1920s, the 1928 November elections to the Council saw a Liberal whitewash - there being no others elected. 955 However, this was not without the connivance of the local Conservatives, who seem to all intents and purposes to have written the manifesto of the Bethnal Green Liberal and Radical Association for them at the previous election:

We stand for Sane and Steady Progress, True Economy with Efficiency, and good Local Government, run on Sound Business Lines. ... We shall endeavour to Reduce

952 Craig, Results, 50.
953 Who's Who 1947. Horobin had a farm in Essex, and was decidedly not a local man, promising to 'see as much as I can of Central Southwark' if elected. See The Times, 16 Oct 1931, 8.
954 WFOR, ACC 10242/4 West Walthamstow Liberal and Radical Association Annual Reports and Accounts, Annual Report for 1924, 2.
955 Cook, Alignment, 77. 30 out of the Progressive party's 37 councillors returned in November 1928 were on Bethnal Green METB council. This was a gain of 17 seats from November 1925. As Kinnear points out, the Liberal strength in Bethnal Green could also have been helped by the presence of a large Liberal drinking club in the borough. (Kinnear, The British Voter, 112.) On Morrison's view see Donoghue and Jones, Morrison, 102-3, and chapter four.
Rates as far as is consistent with efficiency. ... Our watchwords are Economy, Efficiency, No Favouritism and Lower Rates. 956

The LMS were proud of the fact that, in 1925, the only Progressive candidates returned to the LCC had their support, or at least were given a free run. 957 This was despite the fact that 39 Progressive candidates stood in 22 LCC wards. The comment of the LMS was, 'the fact that on nearly every occasion in the last council the Progressive party had gone into the same lobby with the Labour-Socialists told heavily against the Progressive candidates.' 958 Again, the Liberal dilemma of 'facing both ways' had proved disastrous. The overriding commitment to beat Labour had come back to the fore by November 1925, when the LMS presented the results of the METB elections to its members in terms of socialist and anti-socialist candidates, rather than separating the Progressive candidates from their own.

There is, perhaps not surprisingly, a strong correlation between the parliamentary constituencies in which a Lloyd George Liberal party was established during the Coalition years, or where the local Liberal Association switched support to Lloyd George, and where local Conservative-Liberal co-operation was strong. Some of the most active parties on the Lloyd George side before October 1922 were in areas like these: Hackney Central; Camberwell Peckham; Lambeth Kennington; and Southwark; as well as East Ham North, just outside the LCC area. 959 Indeed, the Lloyd George Liberal organisation made a serious attempt to get going in the rest of London as they had few Liberal Associations supporting them, but in the end this attempt was unsuccessful. 960 The support, or lack of it, for a Conservative Coalition MP from local Liberals, and that MP's need for Liberal support, correlated with how that MP felt about the Coalition, and how he voted at the Carlton Club in October 1922. John Newman, the MP for Finchley, said he

956 GLPB, LMS 139, Election Addresses for Borough Elections 1925, Election Address of the Bethnal Green Liberal and Radical Association (North East).
957 GLPB, LMS 19, The Ratepayer, No. 34 (June 1925), 6. The Ratepayer was a journal of the LMS.
958 GLPB, LMS 19, 7
had no Liberal support, Coalition or otherwise, so he saw no reason to support the Coalition. Only four Middlesex MPs backed the Coalition at the Carlton Club: William Prescott (Tottenham North); Patrick Malone (Tottenham South); Sir A H Warren (Edmonton); and Walter Morden (Brentford and Chiswick). All but the last faced a serious threat from Labour in their constituencies, and wanted Liberal help. 961

The occasional counting together of LMS and Progressive or Liberal candidates in the LMS records of results, as shown above, suggests that the Progressives were not always considered the enemy, despite their voting records. 962 Sometimes, however, they did seem a threat. Many Conservatives blamed their General Election defeat in 1929 on the intervention of so many Liberal candidates, who took votes from them and left the way open for Labour. However, the implicit flip-side of this problem is that Liberal withdrawals benefited Conservatives rather than Labour, as has also been shown. It was not just in General Elections but also local elections where the effect of Liberal withdrawals was seen, and certainly on the LCC, which had been fiercely contested in the past. Fewer and fewer Progressives stood for the LCC as the 1920s went on - 48 in 1919, 49 in 1922, 41 in 1925, an ultimately unsuccessful hike to 89 in 1928, and just 27 in 1931. 963

Only in 1928 were enough candidates standing for the Liberal forces to even theoretically win control of the council in their own right. The Liberal decline at local level can be detected in the local council by-election results as well as the LCC and METB triennial results. 964 For example, the LMS reported with glee the fact that, at six by-elections in mid 1920, the Municipal Reformers had won two seats from Labour, while the Progressives had lost two METB seats, in Bermondsey St John's ward and Hackney West ward, to Labour. 965 The decline of the Liberals in London - the 'blip' in candidates in 1928 apart - was a gradual but

960 Kinnear, The British Voter, 90.
961 Kinnear, The British Voter, 90 and 105. See also table 8.
962 See table 4 and GLPB, LMS 121, 'Borough Council Elections 1931 Leaflets and Pamphlets' - Municipal Reform Leaflet No. 10, 'The Metropolitan City and Borough Councils'.
963 Figures taken from The Times reports of election results.
964 See table 3 for LCC results.
965 GLPB, LMS 172, London Municipal Notes No 132, July 1920, 27.
distinct one with roots in the 1907 defeat at the LCC elections, and reflected their decline nationally. The crucial factor as far as the London area was concerned, for the most part, was that the Conservative forces were the larger beneficiaries.

In Outer London there was far less politicisation, and evidence can be found that Conservatives and Liberals collaborated in the form of Ratepayers or Residents Associations to run councils. A good example of this was in Croydon. There was consistent Conservative representation in parliament for the 1918-1931 period for both of the Croydon constituencies, and the County Borough (CB) council was controlled by the Croydon Federation of Ratepayers' Associations (CFRA), an umbrella group for the ratepayers' councillors that were regularly elected for most of the wards. However, given all this, Croydon still came close to having a Liberal MP elected at the November 1919 by-election in Croydon South, as has been shown. 966 Perhaps what was of most interest in this contest, however, is the fact that the Liberal candidate, Howard Houlder, was an Alderman on the CB Council, and had been Mayor of the council since 1916. 967 All the Aldermen at this time were Ratepayers' 'councillors'. At CB election times no Liberal or Progressive candidates stood, so, while the local council may well have been controlled by a de facto Coalition, hostilities could resume with a vengeance when it came to parliamentary contests. 968

Further evidence supporting the view that there was considerable Liberal-Conservative co-operation in Croydon is the fact that Liberal candidates appear to have been withdrawn from the parliamentary field to give Conservatives a clear run against Labour in 1924 and 1931. 969 In 1931 Liberals even went as far as signing the nomination papers of the Conservative candidate in the South division,

966 See chapter three and also Craig, Results, 120.
967 The Times, 31 Oct 1919, 9.
968 A full set of results (including party labels) for Croydon appears in CDN, Croydon Borough Council 1889-1951: Aldermen and Councillors Election Results, County Borough of Croydon, 1951. While no candidates stood as 'Progressives' or as 'Liberals', there were a few independent candidates, and it is impossible to fully explore their political beliefs.
969 It is not certain that a Liberal had been nominated for Croydon North in 1924, but in 1923 there had been a three-cornered contest in Croydon South, and there was one in both the North and South division in 1929. See Craig, Results, 119-120.
Sir William Mitchell-Thompson. 970 Liberals also took pride in the achievements of the CFRA. One Liberal wrote to the *Croydon Advertiser* in 1926, after the municipal elections, in praise of the CFRA and encouraged Liberals to 'join up then ... in readiness for the coming revival.' 971 Some Liberals, however, disagreed with the strategy of co-operation. 'Interested' protested in the local Liberal journal in 1925 against 'acceptance of another society's doctrines' at election times, arguing that this would 'lend colour to the charge of collaboration with one set of opponents to defeat another.' 972 While there was obviously a Liberal presence in Croydon, which manifested itself in parliamentary candidates and local activists, why did it not appear at municipal election times in its own right, and why did it disappear from parliamentary elections in 1924 and 1931? 973 The only answer that makes sense is that Liberals - despite occasional dissent - participated in the CFRA as a coalition, and were close enough to local Conservatives to withdraw their candidates if Labour appeared to be a threat. Anti-Socialism was strong in Croydon, not necessarily Conservatism in its own right. This just manifested itself in Conservative parliamentary representation and a CFRA dominated council throughout the period. The Liberals had little to show for their efforts.

Conservatives took advantage of the polarisation of politics that naturally occurs under a voting system like that used in London at this time - the 'first past the post' method - and of the Liberals' 'facing both ways' predicament, particularly at difficult times for the Liberals such as during the 1923-4 parliament. The *South Paddington Man In The Street*, the localised version of a Conservative organ, commented

"One outstanding feature of the session is the assistance given to the Labour party by the Liberals, first, in placing them in office, and then, throughout the session, in

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970 *Croydon Advertiser*, 24 Oct 1931, 11.
971 *Croydon Advertiser*, 6 Nov 1926, 2.
973 Liberals in Croydon were active enough to produce their own journal, the aforementioned *Common Sense*, during the mid 1920s, which survives at CDN. They also had a football team in
keeping them there, but these signal services are not likely to be acknowledged. As regards their attitude to the Labour party, the Liberals remind one of the picture in 'Punch' of the drunken man clinging to the railings, who says, 'if I leave go I shall fall down, and if I don't leave go I shall miss my train.' It remains to be seen whether the survivors of the Liberal party will throw in their lot with the socialists, or not. 974

Conservatives hoped that messages such as this would attract frightened Liberal voters to their cause, something that did happen as the Liberal vote was squeezed from both sides. Another approach, in the wake of the Poplarism controversies, was to frighten Liberal voters at local elections with talk of the way that 'bad administration' by Labour local authorities could undermine good Conservative, or Liberal, Acts of Parliament. 975 In 1931 special efforts were made to woo Liberals on the issue of the Labour-proposed Land Tax, and, as has been shown, to attract Liberal followers of such men as Sir John Simon. To get these voters, Conservatives also employed reassuring tactics as this fictitious account, written by an ex-Liberal candidate, of a Conservative campaign meeting in a marginal constituency outside London suggests:

An immense mezzotint of Mr Gladstone hung on the wall behind the chairman, for there was no Liberal candidate and it was of paramount importance to catch the votes of all right-thinking Liberals. 976

And so the 'right-thinking' Liberals did go over to the Conservative side, the 'left-thinking' Liberals more and more firmly lined up behind Labour, as will be shown next, and there were far fewer Liberals left in the middle. As has been noted, Close has argued that, towards the end of the period, Liberal voters in London had a pro-Conservative bias rather than a pro-Labour one, and were thus more likely

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974 WMIN, Pamphlet 324.24104, South Paddington Man In The Street September 1924, 2. The 'Man in the Street' series was national Conservative propaganda.
975 LMS 64 (1928), 12.
976 A G Macdonnell, England, Their England, London (Macmillan), 1942, 195. This is a fictional account of an election in Eldonborough, Lincolnshire. Macdonnell had stood for the Liberals in Lincoln in 1923 and 1924. The book was first published in 1933.
to vote Conservative than Labour when they had, for whatever reason, no Liberal
candidate to support. 977 This can be seen as part of the electoral forces that were
to produce a substantial Conservative victory at the general election in October
1931. 978 Close's view can be challenged with some evidence that relations
between Conservatives and Liberals could vary: such as, in addition to those
examples already given, the case of Shoreditch where there was a fight between
them in 1919 for the LCC seats, in contrast to the lack of one in 1922, and in
contrast to the picture at parliamentary contests. 979 But this example is among
those from earlier in the period - Close refers to the later part. Overall, and as
could be expected in the kind of territory in question, it was the Conservatives,
and not Labour, who gained the most from the decline of the Liberals in London.
Close's view has been borne out.

Looking at how Labour approached the Liberals' decline is particularly important
given that, before 1914, Labour nationally was a part of a 'Progressive Alliance'
with the Liberals, and, as has been shown, part of the Progressive party on the
LCC with the Liberals (although the same was not true in Outer London where, as
shown, Conservative-Liberal 'non-party' accommodations were stronger). 980
Facing a transformed political landscape from 1918, Labour now fought on its
own in most cases and had to campaign for votes against its erstwhile ally. While
this is not the place to debate the reasons for the split between Liberals and
Labour, this final section will show how Labour faced the Liberals in London, to
demonstrate how their approach worked in practice.

Andrew Thorpe is among those who have pointed out that Labour's 1918
manifesto, and its Clause IV commitment to Nationalisation, meant that it had
become a very different party, and a distinct one from the Liberals, in terms of the

977 Close, 'Realignment', 401. This is covered in chapter five.
978 Thorpe, 1931, throughout argues 'much of what happened in 1931 was perfectly logical given
the events of the preceding years. ... Little about the events of 1931 should be regarded as
"fantastic" today' (from page 7).
979 The Times, 6 Mar 1919, 4, and 2 Mar 1922, 14.
980 For more on the Liberals and Labour in London before 1914 see Thompson, Socialists, Liberals
and Labour. On the pre-war 'Progressive Alliance' see Searle, Liberal Party, 71-76.
programme it offered. Ideologically, then, the split between Labour and the Liberals was a clear one. This was a clear contrast to 1903, when Herbert Gladstone, Jesse Herbert and Ramsay MacDonald concluded the 'Lib-Lab pact' or 'Progressive Alliance' between Liberals and Labour, founded on 'the fact that very little separated the LRC [Labour] from the Radical wing of the party'.

Circumstance had also created a greater divide between the two parties - there were divisions between them, as well as within them, regarding the War for example. On the ground it was the effects and implications of the War which led to conflict. For example, in Battersea the old Progressive group on the METB council split badly over how to deal with the high inflation resultant from the War. Once more the classic Liberal divide could be seen, identical to the gulf between Gladstonian retrenchment and New Liberal taxation, with some favouring expenditure cuts and some favouring raising more in rates. Those Progressives who argued for the latter course, with only one exception, stood for Labour at the November 1919 elections. An examination of the minutes of one Battersea ward Progressive Association shows that it had become Labour-dominated after the War. Greenwich Labour party, formed in 1918, contained many local Liberals including three who became officials. In 1918 the London Labour Party put out strongly anti-Liberal messages in their propaganda, in particular aimed at the Asquithians:

On Mr Asquith and his followers I need waste no space. Their war administration was at once incompetent and tyrannical, their record is one of betrayed causes, and there ought to be no room for their meaningless heffiness in British politics.

In general, from 1918, Liberal-Labour co-operation was over. This, combined with the greater ideological divide now present, contributed to the Conservatives,

981 Thorpe, Labour Party, 53.
982 Searle, Liberal Party, 73.
983 Wrigley, Changes, 4.
984 WWTH, Shaftesbury Labour and Progressive Association, minute book 1913-1926. The clear trade union involvement in the affairs of the association demonstrates the Labour dominance in this body.
985 Benney, Gray and Pear, How People Vote, 41-2.
and not Labour, attracting more ex-Liberal votes in London. However, at the 1919 LCC Elections Labour candidates did not appear in some divisions, leaving the Progressives a straight fight against the Municipal Reformers. In Finsbury one of the two Progressives to take on the MRs was George Gillett, who as we have seen became Labour and later National Labour MP for the constituency. As shown earlier, in Walthamstow attempts were made to prolong the Liberal-Labour alliance in 1919, but they failed. In other LCC divisions, such as Bethnal Green South West and St Pancras South East, there was a straight fight between Progressive and Labour candidates. A 'look of disgust' followed attempts to persuade the Labour National Executive to accept a Lib-Lab pact in Camberwell North parliamentary constituency in 1918, on the terms of the Secretary of the London Liberal Federation, and of the sort advocated in the letter to Gladstone quoted earlier. However, on other occasions close links were permitted. Arthur Peters, Labour's national agent from 1908-1918, was accused of signing the nomination papers of a Liberal candidate in Croydon, 'an accusation which neither Peters nor Head Office bothered to deny'. So, in 1918 and just afterwards, when Labour was weaker in some areas than others, instances of co-operation did survive at a local level. In Southwark South East an attempt to expel the Treasurer of the local constituency Labour Party failed in 1921, the accusation against him being that he was also a member of the Liberal party. The accused, Mr Osborn, defended himself, saying he '...considered there was not a great difference so far as the LCC were concerned. He agreed in general with the aims of the Labour Party in its opposition to capitalism.' Kinnear has gone so far as to argue that there was some co-operation in 1922 and that 'at least until 1924 it was possible to regard the Liberal Party as a partial ally of Labour: it was only the fall of the Labour government which really shattered this illusion.' At the 1924 General

986 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/P/01, London Labour Chronicle Dec 1918 (No. 38), 1, editorial by Herbert Morrison.
987 The Times, 6 Mar 1919, 4.
988 McKibbin, Evolution, 115. See also Kinnear, The British Voter, 110.
989 McKibbin, Evolution, 125.
990 SWK, 1983/121/1, minutes of meeting of Southwark South East Labour party on 7 July 1921.
991 Kinnear, The British Voter, 110 and 112.
Election Labour saw the end of the Liberal challenge in urban areas, giving them further encouragement to go their own way. 992

Cline's 1963 work *Recruits to Labour* includes a number of examples of London Liberals who ended up in the Labour party in addition to the Treasurer of the Southwark South East constituency party, some of whom are mentioned elsewhere in this study. All are presented in the table below: 993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Liberal Connection</th>
<th>Labour Connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Addison</td>
<td>Liberal MP for Hoxton 1910-1918; Coalition Liberal MP for Shoreditch 1918-1922</td>
<td>Joined Labour shortly after his election loss 1922; stood for Labour in Hammersmith South 1924; Labour MP for Swindon 1929-31 and 1934-5; entered House of Lords 1937; Labour leader in the Lords from 1945, also holding other posts in the 1945-51 government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Percy Alden</td>
<td>Liberal MP for Tottenham 1906-1918; rejoined the Liberals in 1927</td>
<td>Labour MP for Tottenham South 1923-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Wedgwood Benn</td>
<td>Liberal MP for Tower Hamlets St George's 1906-1918; Liberal MP for Leith 1919-1927</td>
<td>Labour MP for Aberdeen North 1928-1931; Labour MP for Manchester Gorton 1937-1942</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

992 See Table 2B for candidate numbers in Greater London, 1918-1931. The rise in 1929 can be considered a 'last hurrah' backed by Lloyd George's campaign and funding.

993 Table derived from Cline, *Recruits*, 149-178.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation and Role</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles R Buxton</td>
<td>Liberal MP for Ashburton Jan - Dec 1910; 1912-1915 Liberal candidate in Hackney Central; endorsement withdrawn over his advocacy of peace</td>
<td>Joined ILP in 1917; Labour MP for Accrington 1922-1923; for Elland 1929-1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willoughby H Dickinson</td>
<td>1906-1918 Liberal MP for St Pancras North; Chair of London Liberal Federation 1896-1918</td>
<td>1930 joined Labour and entered House of Lords; 1931 left Labour as a follower of MacDonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Chuter Ede</td>
<td>Active in NUT and local government in Surrey as a Liberal before 1914</td>
<td>Converted to Labour during the War; Labour MP for Mitcham 1923; Labour MP for South Shields 1929-31 and from 1935; Home Secretary in post-war Labour Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecil L'Estrange Malone</td>
<td>1918-1922 Coalition Liberal MP for Leyton East (with changes of affiliation)</td>
<td>1928-1931 Labour MP for Northampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Martin</td>
<td>1910-1918 Liberal MP for St Pancras East</td>
<td>By 1918 joined Labour party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Leo Chiozza Money</td>
<td>1906-1910 Liberal MP for Paddington North; 1910-1918 Liberal MP for Northamptonshire East</td>
<td>1918 stood for Labour in Tottenham South; 1920 stood for Labour in Stockport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vickerman Henzell</td>
<td>Liberal MP for Brentford 1906-1910</td>
<td>1920 Labour candidate in Sunderland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, George Garro-Jones, Liberal MP for Hackney South from 1924-1929, and a former Private Secretary to Sir Hamar Greenwood, joined the Labour party in 1929. Examples can also be found of Liberals going over to the Conservatives: for example, Winston Churchill, a Greater London MP from 1924,

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was a former Liberal (and Conservative); the aforementioned Greenwood, Conservative MP in Walthamstow East from 1924-1929, was a former Liberal MP in York and Sunderland; and Sir John Simon, Liberal MP in Walthamstow before 1918, was very closely attached to the Conservatives from 1931. \(^ {995}\) But with a clear pattern of Liberal candidates, activists and MPs converting to Labour after 1918, it is not surprising both that Liberals suffered, and that left-leaning Liberal voters followed their former political champions in transferring their support to the Labour party.

Broadly speaking, fighting as a distinct entity Labour enjoyed a good deal of success, replacing the Liberals as the main opposition to conservatives in London in the 1920s. In this it was not only assisted by the breakdown of co-operation outlined above, and the transfer of Liberal politicians, but also because the important issues of the day had changed. It is significant that the Liberals' best parliamentary electoral performance came in 1923 when the main issue was their strongest and most unifying suit, free trade. \(^ {996}\) Increased unemployment during the 1920s gave political advantage to Labour against the Liberals. Indeed Chris Wrigley has argued that 'the major engine of change in switching much working class support away from the old Liberalism was the periodic unemployment engendered by the capitalist economy.' \(^ {997}\) Even when the Liberals campaigned on a strong policy of tackling unemployment in the 1929 General Election, it was in fact Labour who benefited for the most part, despite the fact that both Labour and Conservatives nationally tried to deflect attention from the whole issue. \(^ {998}\) Generally speaking, up to 1931 voters were inclined to support Labour if their prime concern was unemployment.

The Liberals did make a miscalculation in the way that they dealt with Labour. It was only in January 1924, in analysing the results of the December 1923 poll, that the London Liberal Federation realised that 'It is very difficult to uphold the

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\(^ {995}\) Information from Who's Who 1931 and Craig, Results.

\(^ {996}\) The Liberals won 12 seats, their highest score during the period. See Table 2A.

\(^ {997}\) Wrigley, Changes, 1.

\(^ {998}\) Campbell, Goat, 230 and 239, and see earlier in this chapter.
opinion frequently expressed that the absence of a Labour candidate means that the bulk of Labour votes will be given to Liberals.\(^{999}\) This realisation took place though at the same time as the Liberal miscalculation at Westminster in putting Labour in without any formal arrangement. Labour voters might just as easily prefer a local Conservative to a Liberal, or might well not vote at all. Having to try in different areas to take votes from both of the other two parties, by reaching first one way and then the other, was always a Liberal problem. For example, Cook reports that in the 1923 General Election, the Liberals attacked Labour for 'Bolshevism' in Battersea North and Poplar South.\(^{1000}\) Here they were then taking on, to all intents and purposes, the role of the Conservatives. Labour activists did not take kindly to the onslaught from their former partners. 'Scratch a Liberal and you find a Conservative' said Croydon activists, even when their party was being propped up in office nationally by the Liberals in 1924.\(^{1001}\) Liberal success in beating Labour in a straight fight with Conservative support in 1924 led to future problems. In North Lambeth in 1929, when the Conservatives returned, the Liberals in the person of Frank Briant lost the seat. Local Labour activists gloated that

...in 1929 we had a face [sic] a much more intensive campaign ... added to this was the fact that the remnants of the Liberal party had entered on what was probably the last stage in their fight for a mere existence as a political entity. North Lambeth rose to the occasion and despite the intensity of the Liberal campaign and a substantial Conservative 'core' which voted Liberal in order to beat us, we were victorious.\(^{1002}\)

Other historians have shown how weak Liberals were in three-cornered contests in the 1920s, and in these in particular Liberal attempts to appear differently to

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\(^{999}\) LMA, records of the London Liberal Federation, ACC/1446/2, minutes of council meeting of 21 Jan 1924.

\(^{1000}\) Cook, Alignment, 147.

\(^{1001}\) Croydon Labour Outlook (published by the Croydon Labour party), Vol. 1 No. 2, May 1924, 4.

\(^{1002}\) LSE, NLLP 1/1, report of the General Council of North Lambeth Labour party for 1928-29, dated Summer 1929.
different voters in different areas did not help them. Nor did the Liberals' own miscalculations.

Notwithstanding Labour's strategy of fighting the Liberals as well as the Conservatives in most cases, Labour was not averse to pitching for Liberal votes for its own candidates, whether or not a Liberal was participating in the contest. This sometimes meant going back on previous propaganda. For example, the LLP's *London News* of April 1929 took care to attack Lloyd George, whose 'party lies a-mouldering in the grave but his Fund goes marching on'. This was aimed in part at pleasing and attracting former Asquithian Liberals, as was the comment shortly afterwards that 'the Tory party is reactionary, but in practice it is by no means as reactionary as it would wish, owing to the existence of the Labour party as an alternative government'. Asquithians had been the subject of Labour attack in 1918. The political climate of 1931, in which Labour was on the defensive, saw another change in propaganda towards the Liberals. Labour's Leah Manning, who stood in Islington East in October 1931, and who had won the seat in a by-election that February against a divided Conservative vote, tried to get Liberal support as no Liberal was standing in the seat. She issued a leaflet entitled 'Free Trade is the Real Issue', which contrasted with the February 1931 contest in which Empire Free trade was the 'real issue'. As with others mentioned earlier in this chapter, she gave prominence to Lloyd George's statement that 'I earnestly hope that Liberals will in every case cast their votes for Free Trade candidates'. Labour lost the seat by 14,000 votes when polling day came. And contradicting its own argument of 1929, the LLP promoted what they saw as the 'wise words' of Lloyd George, and his son Gwylim, in 1931 urging support for them where no Liberal was standing. Despite all their attacks, when in trouble

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1003 Cook, *Alignment*, 316 notes that at the 1924 General Election, for example, the Liberals won only seven three-cornered contests nationwide, including in London Lambeth North by just 29 votes, and Bethnal Green South West by only 212 votes.

1004 Both extracts from LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/P/02, *London News* April 1929 (No. 54), 1.

1005 LSE, COLL/MISC/0940, Election Leaflet of Mrs E L Manning, Oct 1931.

1006 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/15, Enclosure No. 2 to the London Labour Party General Election notes No. 4, 17 Oct 1931, by Herbert Morrison.
Labour was grateful for any help it could get from Liberals. However, it does seem that it gained little from Liberal Free Trade votes in 1931.

The whole phenomenon of the Lloyd George parties demonstrates how the Liberals were on the defensive against Labour. They were set up in Inner London areas where, with the help of local Conservatives, they were aimed at holding back the Labour advance. They had some success at parliamentary elections in 1918 and 1922, but nothing on that scale at local elections, where Coalition Liberalism was not an official force. Overall, Labour succeeded in 'beating' the Liberals in London. They did this with the help of electoral forces, by fighting hard on their own, and by gaining from the errors the Liberals made in dealing with them. In areas where they were strong they did suffer at the hands of coalitionism at the start of the period, but when this crumbled they were able to dominate. The only gains Liberals managed to make were when they were given a free run - generally by the Conservatives - and at the occasional by-election in the mid-1920s where circumstances favoured them. Labour's development in London as a single party was aided, in the longer term, by the collapse of their alliance with the Liberals, and the demise of the Progressive joint venture. The Liberals' own mistakes and actions harmed them, and helped Labour to grow. Hart's view, cited earlier, that the Liberals were to blame for their own downfall has in large part been substantiated. Wilson's contention, that the 1922 divisions were serious, and the 1923 revival a mirage, have also been reinforced. Despite the intellectually impressive attempt at resuscitation in 1929, admired by Skidelsky, the political blows and changing social structure noted by Cook were also felt in Greater London and blighted Liberal fortunes. By 1931 the Liberals were not contenders for political power, and barely contenders for political representation, in Greater London.

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1007 For example in Southwark North in 1927, as covered in chapter four.
1008 Hart, 'Liberals', as cited in first part of this chapter.
1009 Wilson, Downfall, as cited in first part of this chapter.
1010 Skidelsky, Slump, and Cook, Alignment, as cited in first part of this chapter.
Chapter Six:
'The Nostrums of Stunt Newspapers': The Press and Politics in Greater London 1918-1931
'The Nostrums of Stunt Newspapers': The Press and Politics in Greater London

In this chapter the important role taken, and perceived to be taken, by the local and national press, in the political development of Greater London will be examined. While drawing conclusions about both local and national press together at the end, it will first deal with them separately, partly because the national press had a particular role in and concern with the politics of London. For the most part, it was based in London, its readers and writers had a particular metropolitan bent and sympathies, and, as will be shown, it got directly involved in the London political scene. It is also partly because the local press had a different position in the lives of the people of Greater London, when compared to the national press. National titles were (with the obvious exceptions of a few Sunday titles) published daily, whereas most local newspapers were published weekly, or twice or three times a week. There was no London regional equivalent of, say, the *Birmingham Post*, a morning, daily, locally produced paper covering national and international news. The circulations of the national titles were obviously larger, not only by definition but in terms of Greater London as well - they covered the whole of the geographical area, and local titles normally covered just one or two local council areas. London-wide evening newspapers had a greater potential geographical reach than the more local titles. However, their demographic reach was different - the majority of copies were sold to commuters travelling home from central London rather than in the boroughs themselves.


1012 Seymour-Ure has explained how, during this period, the circulations of local dailies such as the *Birmingham Post* were falling, and the number of such publications were also falling - from 43 to 25 between the wars. He comments, 'by the end of the Second World War, the principal provincial market was for evening papers.' See Colin Seymour-Ure, 'Northcliffe's Legacy', in Peter Catterall, Colin Seymour-Ure and Adrian Smith (eds), *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996*, London (Macmillan), 2000, 9-25, especially 15.

1013 Later on, 'the *Evening Standard* was far outsold by the *Evening News*, and it was never a financial success, but it was the evening paper that anyone who mattered read.' See Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Beaverbrook: A Life*, London (Hutchinson), 1992, 512. The *Evening Standard* was also in trouble in 1931, making a profit of only £8,000 for the whole of the year. See A J P Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, London (Hamish Hamilton), 1972, 313.
For the purposes of this discussion they will be treated as national titles. They certainly covered General Elections as national rather than local events, as here in 1929:

Many More Socialist Gains To-day. Results of the Polls Cause a General Decline on the Stock Exchange. \(^{1014}\)

Studying the press at this stage is of especial value because it will illuminate the workings of the local political scene, and show too how local parties responded to the actions of the press. The differences between the roles of the local and national press will also become apparent, particularly as the section on the national press will deal with by-elections in safe, Conservative-held seats, in many of which the press played a major role in one way or another. The section will aim to show the part played by the press in Greater London politics of the 1918-1931 period.

Party activists certainly took their local press seriously. Earlier chapters have included examples of the employment of press agents by political groupings in one form or another. There was the engagement of a press agent by the London Labour Party in 1925, for example, and the use of one of the councillors as press agent by the West Lewisham Labour Party from 1927. \(^{1015}\) Local activists were pleased when their parties received favourable local press coverage. For example, the Finchley and Friern Barnet Conservatives went out of their way to say thank you - 'to the local press we are indebted for their unfailing courtesy and help in reporting our activities' - in 1930. \(^{1016}\) The reports they liked in that year might have included this from the *Finchley Press* in March, on a Finchley Conservative meeting:

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\(^{1014}\) *Evening News*, 31 May 1929.  
\(^{1015}\) LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/01, executive committee minutes 1919-1930, meeting of 7 May 1925. LHAM, Records of the West Lewisham Labour Party, A89/100/2, Minute Book 1927-1927, General Committee meeting of 12 Sep 1927.  
\(^{1016}\) BNT, Records of the Finchley and Friern Barnet Conservative Association, Ms 18037/2, Minute Book 1929-1934, Annual Report for 1930.
Mr Harold A Rutt, Chairman of the Central Council, congratulated the women's section of the Association on the excellent work done. It was the experience throughout all constituencies that a large proportion of the work of the Conservative Association was being carried out by the women. He urged the men of the association to take their places in the work as they did before the ladies were given the franchise, and the Association would then become much stronger. He emphasised the necessity of being prepared for the next election, for he was sure they would not be given a long warning. 1017

In this area relations were particularly cordial, with the press reporting a vote of thanks given them by the conservative-dominated council that same Spring:

A vote of thanks to the Press was proposed by Cr (sic) Briant. The proceedings of the council, he said, would be reported in the Press as a matter of course, but the way they were reported depended on those gentlemen who attended monthly to report the proceedings. He thought that during the past year Finchley had been singularly fortunate in the representatives of the Press who has attended the meetings. 1018

In Hounslow, Labour party members were so upset when the local newspaper editor died that they sent a wreath to his funeral, apparently with great sincerity rather than merely to keep up appearances. 1019 As would be expected, politicians could get angry when press coverage did not go their way. For example, in 1925 'London Labour beats the press' was the cry of the London Labour Party after an election campaign for the METBs fought against what they saw as a hostile press environment. 1020 In 1922 Morrison had described a '... practically solid newspaper campaign against the Labour party' as has been shown, and was without doubt referring both to the local and national press. 1021

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1018 Finchley Press, Friern Barnet Press, Muswell Hill Mercury and Highgate Post, 4 Apr 1930, 12.
1021 LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/A/08, executive committee presented papers, 1922-1923, paper of 7 Mar 1922 (following the LCC elections).
did have to face hostile press coverage of local elections, and it is this sort of thing
to which they referred:

'REDS' November 2 plot.
Red Attack on Local Councils.
Masquerade as 'Pinks' for Nov. 2 Elections.
New Campaign Plan.

Vote to Keep Out the Communists
To-day's plain duty of the municipal elector

The municipal elections take place to-day, and the issue, stripped of all unnecessary
words, is - Economy or Waste. The electors have their future in their own hands, and
if by carelessness or sloth they allow the party of Waste to triumph they will have
themselves to thank for the burden that they will have to bear.

London ratepayers have £10,000,000 at stake on Monday. That is the huge sum which
they will have to find if the Socialists sweep London at the borough council elections.

Six Days Left Before London Polls. Fight for Sane Rule in the Boroughs. ¹⁰²²

Clearly politicians and activists saw the press as important, and wanted to see that
it showed them in the best light. After all, those participating in local political
activity were, by their very nature, more acutely aware of how their activities were
treated in the local press. Having made an effort to join a political party,
presumably to try to change and influence things, they would also feel better
equipped to change or influence the way the local press behaved. However, the
press at a local level was not simply about coverage, for the local press also
provided a forum for the conduct of political life in the localities, when
newspapers were the main media that could be used in this way.

¹⁰²²*Evening News*, 2 Oct 1925, 1; *Evening News*, 1 Nov 1922, 1; *Evening News*, 1 Nov 1919, 4;
One way in which the local press acted as a forum for the conduct of local politics was as an advertising medium. Many local political parties advertised in their local newspapers, both at election times, and at other times when, for example, they were putting on a fundraising event or a public meeting. The reasonably well off Westminster St George's Conservative Association had a standing advertising slot in the Westminster Record at a rate of £2/10/- per quarter in the late 1920s.

As has been shown, other, less well off, bodies also did the same sort of thing. Advertising was not confined to the Conservative side, for example Labour's Women's Section in Harrow was advertising its events in the local press in the mid 1920s. In Croydon, both the Croydon Federation of Ratepayers' Associations and the local Labour party took advertisements in the Croydon Advertiser in the run-up to municipal elections in 1921. 'Vote Solid Against Revolutionary Spendthrifts' said the Ratepayers, and Labour replied, 'Is Labour Awake? Vote to free Croydon of Unemployment, Overcrowding and Bad Houses!'

Newspaper-style publications would also be produced by local political parties as a vector for their propaganda, and this was particularly common at election times, rather as it is at the time of writing. For example, in Walthamstow the local Liberals had their own publication, the Walthamstow News, with (they claimed) a circulation of 25,000 in 1924. In Leyton, there were a number of titles run by local political parties, which appeared in fallow periods as well as more often at election times. There was the Leyton and Leytonstone Truth Teller and the Leyton Electors' Gazette published by the local ratepayers' groups; the West Leyton Record was published by the Conservatives; and the Leyton and Leytonstone

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1024 See examples given in chapter three relating to Woodford: ERO, Records of the Wanstead and Woodford Conservative Association and predecessors, ACC A6853 Box 9, Junior Imperial League (Woodford Branch) minute book 1925-1936, meeting of 17 Dec 1925.

1025 HRW, Records of the Harrow, Wealdstone, and Harrow Weald Labour Party Women's Section, Minute Book 1923-1927, meeting of 16 Apr 1924.

1026 Croydon Advertiser and Surrey County Reporter [known as Croydon Advertiser], 29 Oct 1921, 8 (both advertisements).

1027 WFOR, W32.6, typescript note Account of the Liberals in Walthamstow by R Jarvis, 1968, 5.
Pioneer was published by the Labour Party, though this latter publication contained national propaganda as well as local news such as reports on the Leyton Woodcraft Folk. 1028 These publications were sometimes put for free through letterboxes, and sometimes sold. Additionally, there is at least one instance where the Leyton Borough Council, anti-Socialist controlled at the time, put advertising for its Electricity services in the publication of the local Labour party. 1029 At election times, parties often nationally produced newspaper-style publications, which could then be given a local slant in the constituencies, for example with a cover sheet being added, and then distributed. These were dealt with in earlier chapters and are not considered here. Overall it is clear that existing local newspapers were used by political parties for advertising and promotional purposes as well as for propaganda, and that parties saw local newspapers as so important that they could also try to imitate them with publications of their own.

A second way in which the local press was instrumental in local political life at this time was through the medium of letters pages and comment columns. Here was a way in which very local political debate could be safely conducted, outside election times when public meetings were more common. To take one example, a letter appeared in the Hendon Times in 1923, signed by 'indignant patriot', in response to the establishment of a local Labour party branch in Golders Green:

... I have read with pain and disgust that the Labour party are daring to disturb the peace of our Golders Green ward by bringing into our midst their insidious and dangerous propaganda. 1030

In the same title, this letter from T W Cox of Cricklewood appeared in the run up to elections to the local council in 1931:

1028 WFOR, where copies of all publications (though not complete sets) are held.
1029 WFOR, L32.7S, Leyton and Leytonstone Pioneer, Jan-Mar 1928, 1.
Sir - Your readers will have noted that the Hendon Urban District Council is in a very bad way, and the result is depressing to the ordinary ratepayer, as well as to many others, like the writer, who are not attached to any political party ... we cannot expect that Hendon will be a fit and proper place to live in, will never be carefully and economically administered, will never be made thoroughly safe for [sic - meaning 'from'] hypocrisy and humbug until more true and tried Anti-Socialists are elected to our Council, and until the Socialist party, as a party, are deprived of all representation on that authority! 1031

During the 1931 general election campaign, a letter from the secretary of the Croydon League of Young Liberals appeared in the Croydon Advertiser, warning that the 'protectionists' in the National Government would attempt to force through Tariff Reform on the 'quiet'. 1032

If there were no letters on a political subject, local newspapers could editorialise on them. For example, the Croydon Advertiser could describe '...the peril which confronts [us] if Labour of the extremist sort is allowed its way' after an election campaign. 1033 After the same contest, in 1920, which had seen a win for the ratepayers' candidates, the paper also commented,

For the general result of last Monday's election we are profoundly thankful, and hope it may give greater play to what we are sure is the general feeling of the council in favour of more measures of production and economy, for which the present local circumstances so loudly and emphatically call. 1034

Such editorials were fairly common in the local press, even in metropolitan districts where Labour was strong. Another example was in Islington, where, at a by-election in December 1923, Labour won the Upper Holloway ward on the METB council from the MRs by 1,306 votes to 1,300:

1031 Hendon Times and Guardian, 13 Mar 1931, 18.
1032 Croydon Advertiser, 17 Oct 1931, 16
1033 Croydon Advertiser, 6 Nov 1920, 9.
1034 Croydon Advertiser, 6 Nov 1920, 9.
The result of the Election ... is a bitter pill for the Municipal Reformers. They had an excellent candidate in Mr A C Knight; but he did not receive the support he deserved. ... The unfortunate part of this election lies in the encouragement which it will give to the Labour party to throw even greater energy into the fight for the general election and shows the great effort that must be made to retain the Unionist seat in North Islington. 1035

The third way whereby the local press took a key role in local political life was the clearest cut - the way in which they provided coverage of the local political scene. To take the example of Croydon again, the Croydon Advertiser was very clear during most of the 1920s that the local political scene was adversely affected by apathy. In commentary on the 1926 municipal contests it said, 'it is many years since such apathy at the municipal elections has been shown'. 1036 The 1923 elections to the council were also described as 'about the tamest November election[s] on record. Public meetings were very few.' 1037 Comment has already been made on how the paper's views were part of a more general attack on apathy, on all sides of the political spectrum. 1038 However, the apathy, general calm and lack of excitement did not always lead to good administration in the eyes of the paper, and its own views were even quoted in local debate. For example, it reported a (Labour party) political meeting at which

The comments of the Croydon Advertiser with regard to the council's recent waste of precious time in shelving housing decisions for a lengthy discussion as to whether certain telephone boxes should be erected were quoted as evidence of the supineness of the City Fathers. 1039

A speaker at the meeting, Mr Ray,

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1035 ISL, Cutting YL280.789 (1923), Islington and Holloway Press, 1 Dec 1923.
1036 Croydon Advertiser, 30 Oct 1926, 9.
1037 Croydon Advertiser, 3 Nov 1923, 9.
1038 See chapter three for particular use of Croydon Advertiser views.
1039 Croydon Advertiser, 19 Oct 1929, 11.
Again quoted the *Advertiser* which affirmed that some day a better Croydon would have to come into being and the administration of the town would have become an inspiration. 1040

The local paper in Croydon was clearly not an unconditional supporter of the local administration of the town, even though at other times it had warned against an alternative being chosen.

The local press was uniquely able to cover small-scale local events, thereby giving some publicity to minor bodies that would otherwise have been ignored. For example, the North Lambeth Young Liberals' mock trial event in November 1924 was covered by the *South London Press*:

> The 'charge' was one of profiteering in tea, Mr Jack Wadley being the profiteer ... After many amusing scenes and rather clever speeches by counsel, the judge summed up and the jury, after consultation, declared the 'prisoner' not guilty. 1041

It is hard to imagine how else such events as these, during election times or otherwise, could come to the attention of the public without the local press. The local press also had larger scale coverage of big events too, which also helped the local political wheels to turn smoothly. Lawrence has explained how party activists often arranged their public meetings at election times, in what was almost 'the golden age of the public meeting and public speaking', with a view to 'secure[ing] good coverage in the ... press.' 1042 Co-ordination with high calibre speakers, arranging suitable venues, and tipping off the local journalists was key here. The local press could really bring to life political events in their areas, especially elections, at this time. Some of the best examples of this come from Shoreditch:

1040 *Croydon Advertiser*, 19 Oct 1929, 11.
1042 Lawrence, 'Urban Politics', in Lawrence and Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society*, 79-105, 96. It is the 1867-1914 period that Lawrence is really describing as the 'golden age'.

262
'Dusty' Joins the County Council

One of the most interesting personalities returned to the new LCC is Mr Councillor ['Dusty'] Taylor, who won a seat for the Labour party in Shoreditch. He fascinates you first with his beautiful shiny bald head, like an ostrich egg waiting to be hatched ... [He said] 'on the day of the poll I got a bell, and went round ringing it like the old fashioned bellman, and making a little speech, telling everybody "Today's the day to vote, or you may be too late!" They seemed to like that idea."

At Shoreditch things were fairly quiet during the day, but in the evening there was a good deal of liveliness and voting was brisk at most of the polling stations. The Liberals were hopeful that Mr E G Price would be returned by a comfortable majority, but it was felt that a last minute circular suggesting that the 1923 Rent Act which was supported by Mr Price, would result in the turning out of their houses of widows and poor people, had done the Liberal cause a lot of harm. It was stated that a whole street had turned over to the Labour side in consequence.

On such things could the outcome of a contest turn. There are other good examples, such as this from Hammersmith, on polling day for the local METB council:

The candidates, with a number of supporters, assembled at the entrance of the school [the polling station] and did their best to enlist the votes of wavering electors by distributing cards and shouting out the names of the aspirants for municipal honours. On a portable platform fixed in front of the entrance was a placard with the words 'Vote for Barnett, the Labour candidate' ... Placards in support of the other candidates were also displayed in the vicinity. ... A certain amount of 'chipping' went on during the day outside the Thornfield Road school between supporters of the rival candidates.

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1043 HKY, S/LD/1/7, Shoreditch Local Cuttings (clipped by the then Shoreditch METB Library Service), 1916-1925, cutting from an unknown newspaper regarding the 1919 LCC election, 24.
1044 HKY, S/LD/1/7, cutting from the Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 7 Dec 1923, about polling for the general election. Price had beaten Addison in Shoreditch in 1922, but this time lost to Labour by over 3,000 votes - see Craig, Results, 47.
1045 HMTH, Press Cuttings collection Volume H920 BUL for 1920-21, 98, cutting from the West London Observer for 22 Jul 1921.
And in Islington, a fiercer exchange was recorded during the 1924 general election campaign:

On Thursday night after the election meeting Labour sympathisers and Conservatives had a fight in Upper Street. Mr W Gentry, of Mentone Road Highbury, was hit on the head and taken to hospital in a police ambulance. 1046

While national titles, especially *The Times* with its reasonably strong team of correspondents, could provide something of the flavour of election campaigns from different parts of the country, it was impossible for it to compete with the local press when it came to this sort of coverage. 1047 Thus the local press in Greater London had a substantial role in the politics of the area in the 1918-1931 period. As part of the main media of the day, it provided a forum for political debate, it allowed local political groupings to advertise both events and propaganda, and it provided the local public with access to news on the local political scene, and electoral events, in a way that nothing else could.

The national press also took on a role in the politics of Greater London, but a different one. One thing that historians of the period agree on most clearly is the link between the political opinions and leanings of the newer urban areas of Greater London, spawned in the 1920s and 1930s, and the popular press of the time. 1048 The example which is usually given is that of Rothermere's *Daily Mail*, described by Morgan as '...that unequalled vehicle of Mass Conservatism', and noted as of huge influence in suburbia by Ball. 1049 The *Daily Express* of Beaverbrook is similarly viewed, and when taken together with the two London evening newspapers, the *Evening Standard* and the *Evening News*, also controlled by the Beaverbrook-Rothermere axis, there was so much power held by these

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1047 Tanner, 'Elections', 894, underlines the problems historians face if they rely on the national press to look at local politics. He notes that the areas covered by the national titles varied from year to year depending on the enthusiasm of local correspondents, making comparisons difficult, and says that it is very hard to confidently identify party labels for candidates in local elections in many cases.
1048 See chapter two.
organs that one historian has described London as 'Beaverbrook's stamping ground'. The circulations of the evening titles were undoubtedly boosted by the lack of a regional daily press, mentioned earlier. The circulation of the Evening Standard was always lower than that of the Evening News, and that of the other evening title, the Star. But when combined they had a great reach, with the Evening Standard particularly popular among the more well-to-do. In 1930 the Evening News sold an average of 667,000 copies daily, compared to the Star's 744,000, the Evening Standard selling rather fewer. It is acknowledged that in smarter areas of the metropolis, such as Westminster, '... the leaders of opinion tend to be readers of The Times, the Morning Post, or perhaps the Daily Telegraph...' rather than the Daily Mail or the Daily Express, but even The Times was run by Rothermere's brother, Lord Northcliffe, from 1908-1922. In addition, the circulation of the Daily Mail and Daily Express were far greater at about 3.5 million copies daily nationwide in 1930, compared with under half a million for the Daily Telegraph and The Times combined. This difference gives some idea of their power in London.

The Beaverbrook and Rothermere newspapers had a substantial role in significant political events specific to Greater London during the 1918-1931 period, though not throughout it. The London evening titles always exhorted readers to turn out and vote in their local elections:

In London there are about two million voters who are expected during the day to decide who shall administer their local affairs for the next three years. A big poll is essential if London is to be saved from Socialist misrule. A special appeal is made to business men [especially those among the readership] to register their votes before dinner to-night.

1050 Ball, Baldwin, 80.
1051 Taylor, Beaverbrook, 215.
1052 Circulation figures from Butler and Butler, Facts, 501. No exact figure is given for the Evening Standard.
1053 Ramsden (ed.), British Politics, 643. See also Thompson, Politicians, 14-15.
1054 Ramsden, Appetite for Power, 273-274.
Every three years it is necessary to warn the inhabitants of London that if they do not vote in the elections for the London County Council, whatever unpleasant consequences there may be will be entirely their own fault.

Remember to Vote! Write it in the Diary for November 2! Out with Socialism!

Don't Forget Your Vote on Monday
You know the day - Monday
You know the occasion - the borough council elections
You know what to do - vote ¹⁰⁵⁵

Although both proprietors had been Coalition government ministers, both became critical of the Lloyd George coalition government in the years after 1918, and this discontent impacted upon the Greater London political scene. The first signs of discontent came in the campaign for the Leyton West by-election, mentioned previously, which took place in March 1919 and saw the Liberals overturn a 5,668 Coalition Conservative majority scored just four months before, on a swing of 17.4%. ¹⁰⁵⁶ Conservative chairman Sir George Younger was furious with the *Daily Express*’s coverage of the contest, ‘… particularly in the way that the Tory [Coalition] candidate was "made the subject of an attack by a recognised Unionist organ".’ ¹⁰⁵⁷ H A Collins, Secretary of the St George’s Hanover Square Conservative Association (in Westminster) reported in 1920 that

I do feel that the committee should realise that with the Harmsworth (sic) press against the Coalition, it causes many to refuse to have anything to do with political organisation, and throws extra burdens on Members of Parliament, and the local leaders of the Conservative party. ¹⁰⁵⁸

¹⁰⁵⁶ Craig, *Results*, 171. Swing calculated by Butler method, see previous references.
There were other by-elections where the newspapers' influence was felt, including those surrounding the Anti-Waste League before 1922. Anti-Waste League prospective parliamentary candidates appeared with alacrity during the 1920-21 period, but never really registered as a political event outside a small number of by-elections. This was partly because, by the time of the next general election in the autumn of 1922, the political landscape had changed and the Coalition government had gone. It was also partly because few Anti-Waste League candidates stood as such at local elections, though lower rates and cutting 'waste' were part of the platforms of many Ratepayers' candidates, as has been shown. Westminster St George's itself saw the first victory in London for the Anti-Waste League on 7 June 1921. Describing this event, the Evening News wrote

'Kill Waste!' The Nation's Order
The safest Conservative seat in England has been lost to the Coalition, and though a Conservative still represents St George's, Westminster, he is unfettered by party ties - a free-lance who has rolled the official party champion in the dust.

This by-election followed one on 12 January in Dover, also won by a candidate of similar sympathies. Twenty candidates were adopted in the months after the Dover by-election, most of these in London. These were often in 'safe' Conservative seats, such as that of Sir Samuel Hoare in Chelsea. This demonstrates the scale of difficulty that was faced by political parties in the coalition, coming from the Anti-Waste movement and largely because of its supporters in the press. Had a general election been held by the Coalition as an entity in January 1922, as some had wanted, the outcomes in the Greater London seats affected by the Anti-Waste League candidates may well have been very different to what actually happened in November 1922.

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1059 See chapter two.
1060 Evening News, 8 Jun 1921, 4.
1061 Craig, Results, 384. The victor in Dover, Sir T A Polson, beat a Conservative who was defending the seat for the Coalition, and joined the Anti-Waste League when it was founded shortly after the by-election.
1062 Cross, Hoare, 65.
The other major period in which by-elections were influenced by newspaper campaigning was the 1929-31 parliament. In 1929 Twickenham was the first of this series of by-elections, fought in what was described by the previous MP as 'a Daily Mail constituency'. The contest took place in August 1929, as a result of the ennoblement of the local MP and former Home Secretary Sir William Joynson-Hicks. The official Conservative candidate was Sir John Ferguson, who had contested Hammersmith South for the Conservatives, and lost it by just over 400 votes, at the general election earlier that same year. During the campaign, it became clear that Ferguson had developed his own policy on Empire Free Trade, which was far closer to that of Beaverbrook and Rothermere than to Baldwin. Beaverbrook and then Rothermere too had embarked upon what became known as the 'Empire Crusade', for tariffs on imports to the United Kingdom, with exemptions for goods from Empire countries. Ferguson's stance meant that Conservative Central Office ceased to support him during the campaign. Support did, however, come from the pro-Empire Crusade press, and, as it reported, from Joynson-Hicks:

'Jix' declares for Empire Crusader

Appeal to 'old friends and supporters to stand firm' by Sir John Ferguson ....

The significance of this letter [of support, by Joynson-Hicks] is great, coming as it does after the bar originally placed by Central Office against Conservative MPs speaking for him, the boycott of him by Conservative front benchers, and the letter of remonstrance which he received from Mr Baldwin.

On the eve of the poll Ferguson had become 'the Conservative and Empire Crusader candidate', and the Evening Standard headline read 'Empire Free Trade a

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1063 Cross, Hoare, 65.
1064 HLRO, J C C Davidson papers, DAV/186, letter to Davidson from William Joynson-Hicks, 4 Mar 1929.
1065 Craig, Results, 24.
1066 See Ramsden (ed.), British Politics, entry on the Empire Crusade, 220-221. The entry incorrectly states that the usual effect of the intervention of Crusade candidates in by-elections was a win for the left - in fact, this only occurred in Islington East in 1931. See Gillian Pele, St George's and the Empire Crusade, in Cook and Ramsden (eds), By-elections, 65-86. See also Chisholm & Davie, Beaverbrook, 275. Rothermere only declared in favour of food taxes in June 1930.
Real Live Issue at Last'. Ferguson got the sort of publicity in the press that another candidate without the formal support of a party organisation would have lacked, and could thus perform better; the same was true of other Rothermere and Beaverbrook-backed candidates. However, on 8 August Labour came within 500 votes of victory in a seat it had never looked like winning before or since. Nevertheless after the poll the Empire Crusaders were jubilant, and the Evening Standard ran a piece headed 'Empire Crusade Victor. Sir John Ferguson on an inspiring fight'. Ferguson himself commented, '... if the Conservative party miss their chance, the Labour party will steal the thunder available to them.'

I won because the people of the Twickenham Division, as the people of this country will, realise that in the Empire lies our one great hope. Our prosperity in the future - as indeed does that of the whole world - hangs on the development and the unification of the Empire. Unemployment can be cured by the development of the Empire; world peace can only be ensured if the Old Country is in fact the central part of a gigantic Imperial system. The subject I put before the electors of Twickenham was of such an engrossing nature that they had to consider it thoroughly before arriving at a decision, and because they addressed the matter so wholeheartedly they were brought round to a very strong and fixed opinion. ... This constituency is very highly organised, and it is a keen Empire trade centre. The electors thoroughly understood the subject and had no hesitation in arriving at a decision. This fine result is but the start of a great popular movement the enormous value of which the people of this country appreciate. It must not be allowed to be lost sight of for one moment, but must be continually before us all.

From these in part contradictory remarks, it is clear that Ferguson saw himself as an Empire Free Trade candidate as much as a Conservative one. Labour's proximity to victory was actually more down to a collapse in Liberal support in just three months: the Conservative share of the vote held steady (falling less than 1% to 47.7%), but the Liberals collapsed from 16.7% to 6.2%, or from 7,246 votes

1067 Evening Standard, 6 Aug 1929, 1.
1068 Evening Standard, 7 Aug 1929, 1. Capitalisation is as the original.
1069 Craig, Results, 428. See also Ball, Baldwin, 42, and Chisolm & Davie, Beaverbrook, 280-282.
to just 1,920, allowing Labour to gain (up from 34.8% to 46.1%) and run the Conservatives very close. In this first case it was perhaps more the campaign than the result that was influenced by the Empire Crusade press controversy, the result perhaps a reflection of the wind coming out of Liberal sails since the General Election disappointment, and some early support for the Labour government.

In May 1930 there was a by-election in Fulham West. Conservative party chairman Neville Chamberlain, writing in April as the campaign begun, thought:

We shall see now what happens in Fulham. My information is that we shall probably win but that it will be a close thing. It is hard to get a reliable account of the feeling there. The Empire Free Traders report unbounded enthusiasm. 1072

As discussed in chapter three, the Conservatives won this seat from Labour, the Empire Free Traders being delighted as this indicated that the Conservatives new policy (a departure from Free Trade) was not a bar to electoral victory. 1073 Because they accepted the candidate's views they did not stand against the Conservatives. However, in Bromley later that year, divisions had again become apparent. A by-election on 2 September saw the Conservative majority cut to around 1600, on a swing of 4.5% to the Liberals, with a candidate of the United Empire Party, the Empire Crusaders' political incarnation, coming a very respectable third (on 24% of the vote) behind the Liberal. Chamberlain was furious with the Beaverbrook / Rothermere decision to run a candidate at Bromley, despite negotiations with him. He wrote,

this was a staggering blow and it hit me in a tender spot ... I had given my trust and it had been abused and I was bitterly humiliated and outraged. However it was a time for action rather than lamentation. I went straight back to my colleagues and told them it was war .... 1074

1071 *The Times*, 9 Aug 1929, 12.
1072 Self (ed.), *Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*, 175, letter of 4 Apr 1930.
1073 Craig, *Results*, 18, and see last part of chapter three.
In Paddington South the Crusaders actually won the seat. On 30 October they beat the official Conservative candidate by nearly 1,000 votes. The victor, Admiral Taylor, went on to become the official Conservative candidate in this safe seat at the next three general elections.

It was in Islington East, however, that the Crusaders were to have the greatest effect on the actual outcome of a contest. This seat, in an area with a strong Liberal tradition before 1918, but which had been won by the Conservatives in 1918, 1922 and 1924, was captured for the first time by Labour in 1929 with a majority of just over 1,500. Given the political and economic situation of winter 1930-31, this was clearly at risk at the by-election caused by the death of Labour's MP Dr Ethel Bentham, for which polling took place on 19 February. However, Labour hung on, retaining the seat by an increased majority over the Empire Crusade candidate, who beat the official Conservative into third place. Combined, the votes of the Conservative and the Empire Crusader would have seen Labour beaten by about 5,000 votes. The by-election in this case was not as simple as just looking at the result suggests. As Ball has stated, 'the campaign was bitter, even violent', and it brought the hostility between the official Conservatives under Baldwin and their Empire Crusader rivals to a head. Some more examples of the press coverage follow later in the chapter, but it was typified by these endorsements of the Empire Crusader candidate:

The cheers which greet him at every meeting when he amphasises [sic] his plan as a purely business proposition is a very good indication of the temper of the electors. Everybody is talking of his brilliant fight to bring Prosperity back to Britain.

1075 Craig, Results, 40. See also Chishom & Davie, Beaverbrook, 299.
1076 Taylor had been Conservative candidate in Woolwich East in 1923 where he had lost badly, and in Finsbury in 1924 where he had come closer, losing to Labour by just 720 votes. He had also been nominated for the Conservative candidacy in East Ham North in the 1926 by-election, but withdrew at the last minute 'for private reasons'. See Craig, Results, 16 and 62, and The Times, 13 April 1926, 11.
1077 Craig, Results, 27.
1078 Ball, Baldwin, 140. See also Philip Williamson, National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire 1926-1932, Cambridge (CUP), 1992, 179.
As the names of the candidates are given in alphabetical order on the ballot paper General Critchley's appears third, but all good judges who know the constituency are convinced that he will head the poll.

Through such endorsements and 'talking up' of their preferred candidate, the newspapers were making as well as reporting news. Islington East was followed almost immediately by the final showdown at Westminster St George's in March 1931, a contest which was essentially a trial of strength between the Crusaders and Baldwin as Conservative leader. The by-election victor was Alfred Duff Cooper, the pro-Baldwin official candidate, who beat the Empire Crusade candidate by about 5,700 votes. Peele has dealt with the issues surrounding this contest in depth, and more on this, including the press coverage, follows shortly.

So the 1929-1931 contests saw a protracted campaign mounted by Beaverbrook and Rothermere in favour of variations on the theme of Empire Free Trade. Williamson has argued that

During the East Islington by-election of February [1931] Beaverbrook's principal theme was that, while Baldwin constantly changed policy and was not really serious about the Empire, he himself so much wanted a proper Conservative policy [on Empire Free Trade] that in order to get it he was not afraid of breaking up the Conservative party.

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1079 All from Evening News: 12 Feb 1931, 1; 17 Feb 1931, 1; 18 Feb 1931, 1 and 5.
1080 Craig, Results, 61.
1081 See Peele, 'St George's'. Koss has argued that St George's was not at risk from the Crusaders as it had been from the Anti Waste League in the early 1920s: 'given the lacklustre quality of the rebel candidate, the strength of the local Tory machine, and the social complexion of the constituency, Duff Cooper - and Baldwin - would have triumphed at St George's in any event'. Koss, Political Press, 504.
1082 Williamson, National Crisis, 179.
The fact that the national press, and in particular the organs of Rothermere and Beaverbrook, had a strong role on the political scene of Greater London at certain times during this period is all the more significant when considered in the light of comments Williamson quite rightly makes about how the voters of the time related to their politicians.

It can … easily be forgotten that while historians can observe the inner workings of party and government, these were hidden from all except a tiny number of contemporaries. Everyone else could only 'know' and respond to political leaders through their constructed and projected public characteristics, especially as revealed by speeches and media presentation. 1083

Because most voters got to know politicians and their views through the newspapers, using newspapers for a political end, as Beaverbrook and Rothermere did at certain London elections, was a powerful way of promoting a particular party, policy or candidate, as well they knew: Beaverbrook famously said to the Royal Commission on the Press in 1948, 'I ran the paper [the Daily Express] purely for the purpose of making propaganda.' 1084 Colin Seymour-Ure describes the way '…a thunderstruck Royal Commission … reacted like the astonished characters in an old Bateman cartoon.' 1085 Activists and politicians in local political parties responded to the power of the national press in different ways. Many got annoyed with the way in which they saw their party's fortunes perverted by the press barons. The Conservative MP for Finchley, Major Edward Cadogan, said to his party activists in June 1930 that while '…he had to admit that the position of the party [on Empire Free Trade] had been rather obscure, … a united Conservative party was absolutely essential. If Lord Beaverbrook intended to split the party then we must stand behind Mr Baldwin.' 1086 The prospective parliamentary candidate for the Conservatives in Lambeth Kennington, and

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1083 Williamson, Baldwin, 15.
1084 Chisholm & Davie, Beaverbrook, 458.
1085 Seymour-Ure, The Press, 95
1086 BNT, Records of the Finchley and Friern Barnet Conservative Association, Ms 18037/2, Minute Book 1929-1934, Council meeting of 20 Jun 1930.
former and future MP for the constituency George Harvey, told his local party at about the same time that 'it is not reasonable that the party should be controlled and dragooned by the press.’\textsuperscript{1087} Even Labour activists in Croydon railed at the time against what they saw as 'the nostrums of stunt newspapers'.\textsuperscript{1088}

The London evening papers had had a particularly prominent role in the Islington East and Westminster St George's campaigns in 1931, and they behaved like the national titles their proprietors owned, with perhaps more scope to print locally-based stories. In February 1931, as mentioned, the \textit{Evening News} campaigned strongly on behalf of the Empire Crusade candidate, General Critchley. His picture was regularly on the front page of the newspaper in the week prior to polling, and no photograph was featured of any other candidate. He was depicted in military uniform on one day, and on other days his picture was accompanied by such headlines as 'The Danger in India. Warning by Viscount Rothermere. Voters' Chance in East Islington', and 'Islington's Most Popular Candidate. More and More Support for General Critchley. Bring Back Prosperity! The Last Big Push for Victory', and on the eve of the poll 'Last Day of the Prosperity Fight. General Critchley's Final Push. The Alternatives. The Man with a Plan or the Old Muddlers.'\textsuperscript{1089}

In the Westminster St George's contest, campaigning was just as intense. The \textit{Evening Standard} highlighted support for the Empire Crusade candidate from Sir Malcolm Campbell (the holder of the 'world speed record'), Sir Philip Nash (described as an 'Industrial Leader', he was chairman of Metropolitan Vickers), and Sir William Wayland ('Conservative MP declares for Sir Ernest Petter', he was the MP for Canterbury) on its front page.\textsuperscript{1090} The paper gave heavy coverage to the campaign from the point of view of the Crusaders. It reported a speech

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1087}LSE, COLL/MISC/463/1, records of the Kennington Conservative Association, minutes of meeting of 23 Jun 1930.
\textsuperscript{1089}\textit{Evening News}, 12 Feb 1931 - 19 Feb 1931, front pages.
\textsuperscript{1090}\textit{Evening Standard}, 11 Mar 1931, 1, 12 Mar 1931, 1, and 14 Mar 1931, 1.}
given by its proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook, on 10 March, in which he tried to justify the split he was trying to cause.

We have a point of difference with Mr Baldwin, much as we regret it. We do not like these differences with him. (Cries of dissent) … In spite of your Baldwin press, in spite of the Liberal press, and in spite of the Socialist press that is supporting Mr Baldwin, we are going to win. (Applause) 1091

The *Evening News* printed an article by Rothermere entitled 'Press, Peers and Politics' which also tried to gloss over the divisive nature of the campaign which he was taking part in, and which concluded,

The aim for which Lord Beaverbrook and I, by independent ways, are both working, is not to split the Conservative party, but rather to bring it back to real Conservatism, and to make of it a sure bulwark against the insidious dangers of Socialism and Bolshevism. 1092

Exhortations to readers to help the Empire Crusade campaign were also printed. On 14 March the appeal on the back page read 'Your help would be welcomed. Although Sir Ernest Petter's campaign is going excellently he still needs urgently more canvassers, especially full-time.' 1093 Like the *Evening Standard*, the paper also brought the personal clash with Baldwin into the campaign. Two days before polling, it commented

Mr Baldwin's refusal to accept Lord Rothermere's challenge to a public debate on the leadership of the Conservative party and his insolent description of Lord Rothermere as a Liberal are reacting decidedly against Mr Baldwin. 1094

Both newspapers said virtually nothing following the defeat of the candidate they supported. On 20 March there was nothing about the election whatsoever on the

1091 *Evening Standard*, 10 Mar 1931, 12.
1092 *Evening News*, 18 Mar 1931, 10. The article was also printed in the *Daily Mail*.
front page of the *Evening Standard*, and when it was mentioned on page two, the story took the form of interviews with the defeated champion of their cause, and their fellow Crusader Rothermere. That same day, the *Evening News* did cover the story on the front page, but reported 'Lord Rothermere on St George's Socialist Votes Given to Mr Duff Cooper', and thus would take no blame for what had occurred. However, Rothermere's intriguing comment on Duff Cooper was printed.

Mr Duff Cooper revealed himself as a fighting candidate of the first order, who should have a great political future. The adroit manner in which he exploited the popular bogey of Press dictatorship filled me with amused admiration.

He would hardly have confessed to feeling the same way about Baldwin.

It is, therefore, not in doubt that the national press, including the London evening papers, had a role, and a strong one at that, in London by-elections. The common thread that runs through these contests is that, with the exception of the 1931 Islington East by-election, they all took place in safe, Conservative-held constituencies. Taking a view detached from the emotion the newspaper campaigns engendered at the time, it is possible to argue that factions of the Conservative party were fighting out political struggles in these constituencies, and whoever came out the strongest became the *de facto* Conservative MP there. In many of these struggles, the egos and opinions of Beaverbrook, Rothermere and the Conservative leadership were involved. However, this also happened in other constituencies, where there was no overt newspaper involvement, but where Conservative factions or candidates fought it out in safe seats, and the winner took on the role of the 'official' and recognised MP. The clearest example is Richmond. Given its location and social composition it could also be said to be safe Conservative territory. It was indeed represented by someone nominally a

1098 For example see Pelling, *British Elections*, 67-68.
Conservative throughout the 1918-1931 period, and for long afterwards. However, this masks the fact that a bitter dispute broke out following the emphatic election of a Conservative MP in 1918. This MP, Clifford Edgar, became unpopular in his constituency, and has been described by one historian as

...obviously an able man but one without the common touch. People still living [in 1972] can remember his habit of lecturing poverty-stricken wretches in the dock at Richmond where he was a magistrate. He apparently liked to draw the proceedings out before passing sentence. There is no doubt that this attitude was responsible for his [1922] defeat ...

When Edgar stood for re-election in 1922, The Times observed that

...a section of the [Conservative] party [locally] are dissatisfied ... It is alleged that Mr Edgar has not been diligent in his parliamentary duties, and that his votes on financial questions have not always been on the side of economy.

Ostensibly on a platform of support for servicemen and anti-waste, Harry Becker, 'whose meetings have been well attended' and who gained 'a considerable number of votes in his favour' from ex-servicemen, stood against Edgar in that election as an Independent Conservative and beat him by over 6,000 votes. After the election he applied for and received the Conservative whip, established his own 'Richmond Constitutional Association', and 'then visited the Conservative Central Office ... and by some means got it recognised as the official body in the Richmond division.' However, Becker was self-confessedly 'ineffective in parliament and did not get on with the influential people of Richmond.' There was still trouble in 1923 when, despite Becker being the official candidate,

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1099 Craig, Results, 223.
1100 W S Carroll, 92 Years in Richmond and Barnes: A Chronicle of the Richmond and Barnes Conservative Association 1880-1972, Richmond (Thameside Property Trust), 1972, 59.
1101 The Times, 10 Nov 1922, 10.
1102 The Times, 10 Nov 1922, 10.
1103 Carroll, 92 Years, 54.
1104 Richmond and Twickenham Times, 16 Nov 1973, no page number. Cutting held at Surrey History Centre [SRY], Ref.: 4041(b).
The official Conservatives are bent on opposing Mr Becker's independent Conservatism and are still searching for a suitable candidate [to do this]. ... It has been suggested locally that Mr Reginald McKenna should be invited to contest the seat as a Conservative candidate. Mr Becker, however, ... with his excellent organisation, seems to be in a comfortable position. He is popular locally and possesses the confidence of the ex-Service men, of whom there is a very large number in the constituency. 1105

In 1924, the local party having been re-constituted, he lost the contest to be re-selected as official Conservative candidate for the seat to Sir Newton Moore, in a close vote of 116-110. 1106 After the vote the new local party chairman, Sir Henry Penson, explained

Two years ago Mr Becker came forward as an independent candidate, which split the party into two halves. This has gone on ever since, and this year the two parties resolved that the split should end, and last night's meeting was the formation of a new association, which should reconcile the differences and form a united front. Before the meeting Sir Newton Moore and Mr Becker, the two candidates, gave a written undertaking that they would abide by the resolution of the meeting and would not stand if they were not chosen. Sir Newton Moore was chosen ... 1107

Becker did not contest the seat as an independent again, although press reports suggest he thought about it: instead he drifted towards the Labour party. 1108 He became a member of the ILP, and was invited to stand for Labour in Richmond in 1929 but declined. 1109 Continuous Conservative representation from 1918-1931 in Richmond masked the fact that infighting was going on in the constituency.

1105 The Times, 19 Nov 1923, 16.
1106 Carroll, 92 Years, 57. Moore was the former MP for Islington North (until 1923), and a former premier of Western Australia.
1107 The Times, 27 Sep 1924, 9.
1108 The Times, 25 Oct 1924, 7 reported 'the definite withdrawal of Mr Becker' only at this late stage.
1109 Richmond and Twickenham Times, 16 Nov 1973, no page number.
Two further examples of Conservatives fighting it out came in central London. On 1 February 1924 polling took place in a by-election for one of the two City of London seats. Though two Conservatives had been returned unopposed in the recent general election, the Conservative candidate this time, Sir T Vansittart Bowater, faced a Liberal. He won by nearly 7,500 votes, and remained one of the City's MPs until he died in 1938.\(^{1110}\) Bowater, however, had tried to stand for the seat in 1922, but lost a battle to be nominated as Conservative candidate. Undaunted, he forced a contest for the vacancy caused by the ennoblement of Balfour, and came within 4,000 votes of beating the official Conservative. The official Conservative candidate, Edward Grenfell, was reported in *The Times* as stating to the electors,

> I want the City to show in the most emphatic manner that it is dead against this effort to make trouble in the Conservative ranks.\(^{1111}\)

No hard feelings were shown to Bowater, however, as in 1924 he was allowed full official status as a Conservative.

Perhaps the more remarkable 1924 by-election occurred in the Westminster Abbey seat, the second there in the space of three years. This was Winston Churchill's first contest in Greater London, following his loss of the Dundee seat he had held as a Liberal of sorts since 1908 in 1922, and his failure to win Leicester West as a Liberal at the 1923 general election.\(^{1112}\) He was now standing as a 'Constitutionalist', opposed to the Liberal party's decision to permit the formation of the first Labour government.\(^{1112}\) He was given tacit support by some in the Conservative establishment (though not the leader, Baldwin), and the contest was watched from within it with great interest, but the official nominee of the local Conservatives, Otho Nicholson, opposed him, and he also had to fight off a Liberal challenger, as well as Fenner Brockway, the Labour candidate and later

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\(^{1110}\) Craig, *Results*, 14.

\(^{1111}\) *The Times*, 20 May 1922, 10.

\(^{1112}\) This is the label given by Craig, *Results*, 50. *The Times*, 21 Mar 1924, 12, described Churchill as 'Independent & Anti-Socialist.'
prominent left-wing MP in the party. In the end, after a contest which created 'tremendous publicity', some of which was generated by the Churchill-supporting Beaverbrook, Churchill lost to Nicholson by just 43 votes on polling day, 19 March. 1113 On this outcome, Charmley has commented,

It was a magnificent effort. Had he won, Churchill would have incurred further wrath from many Conservatives for losing them a seat; as it was he gained great kudos from an honourable defeat - and established himself as a central figure in any struggle to win over former Liberals to vote Conservative. 1114

Nicholson felt at the time that it was his own effort that was magnificent.

Mr Nicholson, in an interview after his election, said that he won because he stood firm to Conservative principles, and Conservative electors - or at any rate a majority of them - refused to be deflected from their loyalty to the party or to its leader, Mr Stanley Baldwin. Westminster had always been 'true blue', and 'true blue' it had remained, despite all manner of cross-currents. 1115

Cook has also dealt with the issues of the campaign in detail. 1116 His description of the constituency as a 'Tory playground' - like Nicholson's own label of 'true blue' for the seat - is well worth bearing in mind when considering the result. This is especially because, as at St George's, a number of Conservative MPs would actually have had a vote in the election. 1117 What was in effect a popularity contest between Churchill and Nicholson, who had in different ways sought the official Conservative nomination, who were well-connected in politics, and who had links with the seat (Churchill was supported by Erskine, MP for the St George's side of Westminster, and Nicholson was the nephew of the late MP for the Abbey seat), ended up with one narrowly beating the other. The result is of interest to those looking at the strength, or lack of it, of the Liberal vote - just 291

1114 Charmley, Churchill, 197.
1115 The Times, 21 Mar 1924, 12.
1116 Cook, 'By-elections', in Cook and Ramsden (eds), By-elections, 37-58, in particular 43-50.
- although Cook disputes this for a number of reasons. ¹¹¹⁸ But also of interest is that, yet again, conservatives of sorts stood against each other in a safe seat, with the winner being officially recognised, and even the loser becoming a Conservative MP later in the year. The contests in Paddington South in 1930, and Westminster St George's in 1931, as well as possibly that at Bromley in 1930, can be seen in the same 'Tory playground' context as the Abbey by-election in 1924. In each case there was no danger of an opposition party taking the seat. The role of the national press in Greater London politics included participating in 'Tory playground' popularity contests, and this characteristic of Metropolitan Conservatism has been well illuminated in this examination.

It should be said that it was not simply Conservatives who were concerned with the press. As has been suggested in chapter three, Labour activists could also get upset about newspaper coverage of their own side. Morrison and the London Labour party complained to the *Daily Herald*, a Labour-supporting national title, and its editor, Hamilton Fyfe, about their coverage of the activities of the LCC Labour group.

The London County Council Labour party are dissatisfied with the reports of LCC meetings in that they do not give (1) adequate attention to the work of the Labour party on the council, and (2) are sometimes so inaccurate as to give a wrong impression of what took place. ¹¹¹⁹

Some evidence can be found supporting their complaint. In April 1926, the month prior to the letter to Fyfe, the *Daily Herald* covered many Labour party events from around Britain, but the London Labour party only got covered twice. On 24 April the paper ran a small article 'More Powers for LCC. What Labour Will Propose at Next Meeting', but this merely reproduced a LLP motion to the LCC. Next to the article was an advertisement for a LLP demonstration on disarmament

¹¹¹⁷ Cook, 'By-elections', 44.
¹¹¹⁸ Cook, 'By-elections', 50.
¹¹¹⁹ LMA, LLP, ACC/2417/C/78, minutes of the LCC Labour Party 1925-1952, meeting of 18 May 1926.
and the League of Nations, at Kingsway Hall the following month, at which MacDonald was to speak. 1120 On 29 April the debate on the LCC budget was reported:

From the Labour benches it was moved that a competition for the design of the new [Waterloo] bridge should not be confined solely to British subjects, but the recommendation of the committee was carried making this restriction. Another proposal on which there was a division was one to confer the municipal franchise on companies, which brought forth a protest from Mr Herbert Morrison that the rights of property were being placed above those of humanity. 1121

This coverage may not have been bad in itself, but there were several opportunities during the month when LLP views could have been put in London-based stories, but were not. On 8 April 'Traffic Wars in London', competition for taxis and buses, were covered without LLP comment, as were 'Dismissals at Arsenal' (in Woolwich) on 13 April, and a conference on the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund, which the LLP felt strongly about, was reported without LLP views on 20 April. 1122 It may have been this that angered activists. They may also have resented the fact that smaller parties close to London, such as Romford, got positive front page coverage for their events that same month, though, in mitigation, it should be said that the Daily Herald did reasonably devote much front page space to the build-up to the General Strike, and the East Ham North by-election, during April 1926. 1123

However, sometimes politicians got favourable coverage in the national press, from titles that would naturally support them, or otherwise, and they were grateful when it occurred. The London Liberal Federation passed a resolution of thanks for favourable press coverage of its activities and political case in the 1923 general election campaign, and sent it to the Star, the Daily Chronicle, the Westminster

1120 Daily Herald, 24 Apr 1925, 5.
1121 Daily Herald, 29 Apr 1926, 7.
1122 Daily Herald, 8 Apr 1926, 5; 13 Apr 1926, 6; 20 Apr 1926, 6.
1123 Daily Herald, 12 Apr 1926, 1.
Gazette, and the Daily News. 1124 These newspapers had a combined circulation of over 2.6 million (the Star was a London evening title, as was the Westminster Gazette 1921-1928). 1125 Herbert Morrison got a particularly favourable write-up in the Daily Sketch in 1919, which, no doubt, would have raised a smile of satisfaction from him:

THE MAN WHO WON LONDON FOR LABOUR
Herbert Morrison is half businessman, half idealist, and wholly Socialist.
If he has a super-virtue, it is enthusiasm.
He will lead a forlorn hope as readily as he will analyse the voting potentialities of a constituency, and he will enjoy every moment he does both. 1126

The same electoral triumph that generated this was editorialised about by the Evening News:

The Labour party have won the municipal elections by the personal touch. Their candidates are of their own class; they know the electors individually and collectively. They have perfected their electoral machinery by giving it a personality. 1127

This was a complete contrast to the hostile coverage Labour usually got in this particular title. By 1931, the Daily Herald was providing Herbert Morrison with coverage more pleasing than that of April 1926:

Mr Morrison's Call to LCC Electors.
Every Ounce into Fights.
Putting Labour in Power.
A powerful appeal to Labour to throw every ounce of its weight into the fight, and give its representatives a majority on the LCC on Thursday was made by Mr

1124 LMA, Records of the London Liberal Federation, ACC/1446/2, meeting of executive committee on 10 Jan 1924.
1125 Butler and Butler, Facts, 500-501. No figure for the Westminster Gazette is given, and it is not included in the total calculation.
1126 Daily Sketch 7 Nov 1919, article by E Pogson, in LSE, Morrison papers, MORRISON/8/29.
1127 Evening News, 3 Nov 1919, 4.
Morrison, Minister of Transport, in an interview with a Daily Herald representative yesterday ... 1128

There was thus an important role played by both the local and the national press, and the two roles were distinctive. The local press was a vital cog in the operation of local political systems and scenes. The national press took on a role in certain contests of political advocacy and campaigning, and was important in the way that politicians viewed the work of campaigning and politics in general. 'The nostrums of stunt newspapers' took on great weight in the popularity contests and political struggles fought out in the 'Tory playground' safe seats. While the London-centric views taken by certain national titles may have exaggerated the importance of some contests, it is clear that Beaverbrook and Rothermere, via their newspapers, exercised noticeable political power at many Greater London elections.

1128 Daily Herald, 28 Feb 1931, 13.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion
Looking Forward

FRANK: It was the fault of the old men at the top. It always is the fault of the old men at the top. They're the ones that muck things up. We can't afford to have much more of that sort of thing, you know.

BOB: Well, we've got a brand new Government now and everything in the garden's lovely.

FRANK: (raising the glass) Here's hoping. 1129

The view of Noel Coward's Londoners Frank and Bob, in This Happy Breed, of the National Government in 1931 reflected that hope, widespread after the 1931 General Election, that at last the right set of politicians were in place to tackle the problems Britain faced. The 1930s are seen by historians as a decade of Conservative political dominance. Despite internal problems over issues such as India, the party managed to reduce opposition at a national level to frustrated impotence. 1130 In 1935, restored to the Premiership, Stanley Baldwin called a General Election at which, despite some Labour gains, the National Government's parliamentary supremacy was preserved. 1131 Conservatives and their allies won 68 seats to Labour's 34 (and one for the Liberals) in Greater London. 1132 There is reason to believe that, had war not intervened, much the same would have happened in 1939 or 1940. 1133

However, there were some signs in London that the Conservatives did not have things all their own way. At the March 1934 elections to the LCC, Labour won control, and despite a close call in 1949 was not to lose control again as long as the council existed, as the table of election results below shows: 1134

1130 For commentary on the India Act and opposition to it see Charmley, Churchill, 273-285.
1131 On the 1935 General Election see Stannage, Baldwin Thwarts the Opposition.
1132 See table 2A.
1133 Butler, Electoral System, 184, and John Ramsden, 'Note: 1931 to 1939', in Cook and Ramsden (eds), By-Elections, 87-93, 92, both use by-election results from the 1930s to justify this contention.

286
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MR/Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Labour retained control by virtue of its aldermanic seats from the previous council.

Once in control of the LCC, Labour began shaping its vision of London. The previous year another part of their plan had fallen into place with the creation of the London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB). Initially introduced into parliament by Herbert Morrison while Minister of Transport in the 1929-31 government, the legislation behind the LPTB had enough cross-party support to survive the 1931 upheavals and thus the longed-for single transport authority for London was born - although, as now, mainline trains were excluded from its remit. At a local level, and encouraged by the LCC victory, Labour organisations in the London area consolidated and grew, so that by the end of the 1930s,

some of the largest and best-organised constituency parties in the country were to be found in London and on its outskirts, in Greenwich and West Woolwich, Hendon and Harrow, all represented by Conservative MPs.

When the 1945 General Election came, Labour made a breakthrough in Greater London: 1137

1134 Derived from Young, *Local Politics*, 223.
1135 Donoughue and Jones, *Morrison*, 140-150.
1136 Jeffery, 'Suburban Nation', in Feldman and Stedman Jones (eds), *Metropolis London*, 189-216, 190.
1137 Table derived from Craig, *Results*, and based on the same Greater London region as used in Table 2A - save for the following seats which were divided up as a result of an emergency
<table>
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<th>Party</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergency redistribution of seats that preceded the election, reflecting the expansion of London's suburbs discussed in chapter two, preserved a few Conservative enclaves. The results of elections to the new seats went to signify how far Labour had progressed. The party won, among other newly-created seats, Heston and Isleworth, Hendon North, Ilford South, Bexley, Wembley North and Wembley South, all in previously safe Tory territory. It also captured improbable seats which had been untouched, such as Brentford & Chiswick, Wimbledon and Spelthorne, from the Conservatives.\(^{1138}\) Most famously, Herbert Morrison won Lewisham East from the Conservative Sir Assheton Pownall - incumbent since 1918 and described by John Burns in 1919 as

\[
\ldots\text{one of the sentimental yet really reactionary Tories who are chloroforming the voters of London. (with opiates they mistake for elixirs[)]... London is dying municipally through this type of person.}\(^{1139}\)
\]

Morrison's victory symbolised the defeat of the type of Conservatism that dominated London before 1945.

In 1948 there was a full redistribution of parliamentary seats, which extended some of the temporary provisions of 1945 for the expanding suburbs, and by way of redress took some seats away from the inner areas of London where populations had diminished. Now Prime Minister, Attlee was himself a victim: the Limehouse constituency he had represented since 1922 was abolished along with 18 others in the LCC area, and he was forced to seek an Outer London political redistribution, and where all of the new component parts have been counted: Ealing; Romford; Hendon; Dartford; Harrow; Ilford; Mitcham; Twickenham.

\(^{1138}\) See Craig, *Results*.

\(^{1139}\) BL, Add Mss 46341, John Burns’ diary for 1919, entry for 21 Feb 1919.
home in Walthamstow. 1140 Under the new boundaries Labour lost ground at the 1950 General Election, particularly in more prosperous areas captured for the first time in 1945. 1141 With the partial exception of 1966, until 1997 Labour was unable to repeat its 1945 Greater London performance: the remark of The Times in 1923 that 'the cult of Unionism in Surrey seems to be as natural and as permanent a feature of the county as the Hog's Back' holding good for most of the post-war period, and for other home counties and local landmarks also. 1142

Since 1934 the greatest political upheavals in London have been related to the London-wide elected bodies, or absence of them. As Ken Young has shown, following defeat at the hands of Labour in the LCC elections of that year, Conservatives in the capital soon converted to the idea of a Greater London authority, extending beyond the LCC boundaries - something which Labour had argued for in the previous decade. 1143 Following the Herbert commission established in the 1950s, and the 1963 London Government Act, in 1965 the Middlesex County Council and London County Council were both abolished, and the boundaries of the other surrounding counties amended, to make room for a new Greater London Council (GLC). 1144 At the same time the local councils were reorganised into 32 London Boroughs, and the Inner London Education Authority was created. Elections to the GLC took place in April 1964 (for councillors to take office in 1965) and thereafter every three years until 1973, then in 1977 and 1981. More often than not, the party in opposition to the government at Westminster was victorious, and the council spent time under both Labour and Conservative control. The 1985 elections to the GLC were cancelled and the council abolished in 1986 as part of a central government strategy to remove what were seen as unnecessary metropolitan county council authorities. Following a period of limbo that lasted over a decade, and a referendum in the Greater London area, a form of

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1140 Hennessy, Never Again, 389.  
1141 Hennessy, Never Again, 389.  
1142 The Times, 30 Nov 1923, 14.  
1144 'Facts About the GLC: (1) Council', GLC note 385/0459k/GD, copy supplied by London Metropolitan Archives.
strategic authority, the Greater London Authority (GLA), was restored in 2000, alongside - for the first time - a directly elected executive mayor. ¹¹⁴⁵

After 1931 the political landscape of Greater London changed, sometimes slowly over a long period, and sometimes abruptly. While as a whole it remained a Conservative bastion, Labour showed in 1945, 1966 and since 1997 that it could compete on equal terms across much of the region at parliamentary elections, something it could not do before 1945 with the single and partial exception of 1929. The Conservatives retained the ability to defeat Labour in the region at other times, and in 1959 and 1983 Labour was beaten back to its safest seats - in areas like those won consistently in the 1920s. ¹¹⁴⁶ The changing party fortunes on the GLC from 1965 to 1981 also showed that, when competing across the region, both Labour and Conservatives could win, dependent upon the prevailing political circumstances. London remained a political barometer of the nation after the period studied in this thesis had ended.

**Summary of Findings**

In the preceding chapters of this thesis the Greater London political scene from 1918-1931 has been examined and contextualised, and a number of points have become clear. In the second chapter, an examination of the growth of London into surrounding areas, and the changes in composition of more central areas, led to a number of conclusions. Importantly, it was shown that the expanding suburbs were linked to the growth of a middle class ideal, the 'ideal home' factor, and something closely linked with Conservative party strengths and values. The exodus of the better off to the suburbs left room for Labour growth in the vacated territories, and between these class-concentrating trends the Liberals were squeezed out. Amid these general currents, however, it is worth remembering that it was not just factors of social change, population movement and economic and

¹¹⁴⁵ See Ramsden (ed), *British Politics*, 397-398, note on 'London local government' by Ken Young.
¹¹⁴⁶ For an at-a-glance view of post war General Election results see Robbins, *Eclipse*, 415-416.
class circumstance that affected political party fortunes. As David Jarvis has argued,

For too long the attribution of the party's success to 'given' socio-political alignments has restricted the scope of historical enquiry .... Rather than shepherding hordes of 'natural' supporters to the polls at periodic intervals .... party activists understood all too well that ... alliances were contingent and fluid .... Historians need to conceptualise voter alignment as a similarly open-ended process. To do so is to reflect the true volatility of party politics in the 1920s and 1930s and to reassert the importance of politicians in the electoral process. 1147

Although Jarvis is referring here to the Conservative party, Labour and the Liberals took nothing for granted either. While it is of crucial importance to have recognised and understood the growth, trends and consequences of the changing nature of Greater London outlined in chapter two, it would be wrong to see political party fortunes solely in such terms. As Jarvis says, the nature and qualities of politicians and parties were also important, and their importance has been confirmed by this study.

The third chapter dealt with the conservative forces in Greater London. As the dominant political force in the region, the chapter found that they were aided by clever tactics, including the use of the London Municipal Society as a front organisation with which to fight local elections. Although the type of Conservatism found in some central London Tory playgrounds differed from that in the suburbs, both types of local association were aided by reliable financial support from either rich people or mass memberships, backed up by fundraising social events suited to the growing middle classes described in chapter two. As a general rule, and as Turner has also noted, the enfranchisement of women was a net benefit to the Conservatives (although Labour was to capture a lot of the new younger vote in 1929), and constituencies more likely to tend toward the

1147 Jarvis, 'Conservative Electoral Hegemony', in Lawrence and Taylor (eds), Party, State and Society, 131-152, 146-147.
Conservatives also tended to have more women voters in them. The benefit from women voters came despite the fact that some men were less than confident about this newly-enfranchised set of voters:

That some men had their doubts as to whether their wives would know how to exercise their newly acquired privilege is evident from the fact that at one polling station [in Ealing] a voter remarked to the presiding officer, 'my missus will be along this afternoon, put her right.'

The Conservatives were also shown to be adaptable. After 1929 they gave up the idea of trying to win every seat at each General Election, and this allowed them to concentrate efforts where they were needed to make a difference. This included switching activity away from some London Labour strongholds. During the late 1910s and the 1920s they also switched away from attacking the Progressives as their main LCC opposition, to attacking Labour instead - a realistic and appropriate response to the changed political landscape. As the chapter makes evident, and as others have found for other areas, the Conservatives were not simply the unwitting beneficiaries of favourable circumstances but helped to cultivate support too. In London they managed to thrive in the 1920s and, helped by the acquisition of former Liberal supporters, the growing middle class and this effort, grew into the dominant force. Despite this, as foreshadowed, they were to lose the prized LCC permanently from 1934.

In the fourth chapter the Labour party in Greater London was examined. The party both built up its strongholds where the ground was favourable and, at least in this period, did not give up trying to win wherever it could outside these areas. As Goss found in her study of Southwark, the evolution of Labour at local level could be different from that of the overall national party in these early years. In the

1149 Hankinson, Ealing, 24. This refers to the 1918 General Election.
1150 Smyth, 'Resisting Labour', 375. Smyth also cites the work of Jarvis, Williamson and Hutchison in this respect.
1151 Goss, Local Labour, 184.
county of London, the London Labour Party, moulded into an efficient fighting machine by Herbert Morrison, was a significant factor in the increased success for the party. Despite setbacks, this led ultimately to its incumbency on the LCC for thirty years from 1934. Part of Morrison's strategy was, as the chapter shows, to fight local elections as political contests despite the opposition to politicisation among non-Labour locals. The LLP was helped by local political organisations as efficient as that in, for example, Bermondsey, encouraged here by Alfred Salter MP:

We know ... that we shall not advance while we are a disorganised rabble, that we shall only win when we become a compact, organised, disciplined force. And so we want to strengthen our party, to assign each his duty and function, to co-ordinate all the sections, and gradually to forge an irresistible weapon for the achievement of our purpose.\textsuperscript{1152}

The high noon for Labour in this period came in 1919. The dissatisfaction at the post-war coalition was at a peak, and as yet no aversion to Labour in bad economic times, such as hampered it in 1931. It is clear from this, and from what the chapter says, that unlike the pattern described in some accounts, and as Tanner has also argued, the rise of Labour did not end in 1918 but continued to 1931 and beyond.\textsuperscript{1153} The fact that in 1929 Labour could overtake the Conservatives in Greater London, albeit briefly, winning with votes from outside their central strongholds, showed that it could attract substantial support from non-working classes in favourable times. The chapter showed how Labour activity could be detected beneath a veneer of Conservative dominance in what appeared, until 1945, to be hopeless territory for the party.

At the 1929 contest Labour had particularly tried to attract newly enfranchised young (21-30 year old) women voters. Propaganda aimed at people such as shopkeepers underlined the fact that Labour were trying to get support from a wide range of people, not just a working class core. The chapter also shows that,

\textsuperscript{1152} SWK, \textit{Bermondsey Labour Magazine} No. 1 (October 1923), 1.
alongside this strategy, Labour could use a target audience or marginal ward strategy to focus efforts in areas they particularly could, or wanted to, win. Under the direction of Morrison and the LLP there was particular attention paid to what the press was saying about the party, and to getting good publicity for it - often to counter negative press elsewhere. The LLP machine, inspired by Morrison, was undoubtedly significant in Labour's growth in London, both for what it did and what it encouraged local Labour parties to do. Growth was also generated in localities, sometimes aided by religious minority groupings such as the Jewish or Roman Catholic communities. After the problems at the centre in 1931 - which all but seized up amid the split in the party and the end of the 1929-1931 government - localities and the London regional party took on more responsibility. It was here, and starting with the capture of the LCC in 1934, that the Labour recovery was founded, and the road to 1945 embarked upon.

Chapter five considered the Liberals in Greater London in a period of decline. Although pointing out strange exceptions, such as the clean sweep of victories on Bethnal Green METB council in 1928, their general success in this borough, and their involvement in coalitions like the Croydon Federation of Ratepayers Associations, the chapter chronicled the extent of the party's difficulties. Both the split between 'coalition' and 'independent' Liberals, and the divergence between those who were inclined towards the Labour side and those inclined towards the Conservatives, tore at their support. In the British electoral system, which favoured two parties, the Liberals found themselves on the horns of the classic third party dilemma of 'facing-both-ways'. They also suffered from a lack of leadership, finance, morale, and were at the mercy of national events. There was no strength in depth and no solid base of support. As Kinnear also found in his national study, they were victims of an inability to hold on to seats that they won once, the changing circumstances and issues between elections battering them further. For Liberals, despite 'high' points (well below their pre-war peaks) like the December 1923 General Election, the 1920s were not a happy time.

1153 Tanner, 'Class Voting', in Lawrence and Taylor (eds), Party, State and Society, 106-130, 106.
1154 Kinnear, The British Voter, 84-86.
The sixth chapter dealt with the role of the press in Greater London politics. The peculiar link between national titles and the 'Tory playground' areas in safe metropolitan parliamentary constituencies was explored. Included in this discussion were the London evening papers, which acted at times as vehicles for Conservative infighting. The local press was also shown to have played an important role as, amongst other things, the forum in which local political debate could be conducted.

David Butler has argued that

> It is hard to assess what is signified by the individual vote, which constitutes the foundation of all electoral analysis. A vote is too easily taken as a declaration of unwavering faith in the preferred candidate, in his party, and in every item in its programme. But it may, of course, be an expression of anything from a mere whim to a deep-rooted prejudice, or from a reasoned assessment of the lesser evil to a confident assertion of political faith. ¹¹⁵⁵

It is true that a historian can never know exactly why each voter chose to vote as they did in every election, and that in very close contests the lack of this knowledge could undermine a proper understanding of the outcome. However, a detailed and thorough study of a region is still able to properly analyse the changing political landscape, and the changing fortunes of the political parties inhabiting it. Enough information has been deployed to make it a well-grounded examination, and it has drawn clear conclusions as outlined above. It is also possible to extend these conclusions to illuminate two of the wider debates historians have had, and continue to have, about this period.

¹¹⁵⁵ Butler, Electoral System, 205.
General Conclusions

A principal debate surrounding the political history of the early twentieth century is that on the 'franchise factor'. The main contributions to the debate were outlined in the beginning of the fourth chapter. The debate revolves around the extent to which the extension to the franchise in 1918 and, to a lesser degree, in 1928 finally allowed Labour to poll its true support and thus overtake the Liberals as the party of opposition to the Conservatives nationally. As well as the works looked at earlier, there has also been commentary on class as a basis for voting in general, for example from Henry Pelling, and on how religion determined voter choice before 1918, and thus the decline in this influence correlated with the decline of the Liberals, from Kenneth Wald. McKibbin, one of the authors of the 1976 piece that ignited the main debate, has replied to some of those who have engaged with his arguments:

First, it is clear that as a whole, however critical they are of our original essay ... [critics] are in no sense in agreement with each other. While not perhaps entirely intact, our argument still stands, therefore, if only for negative reasons. Second, our essay tried to explain why it was that the Liberal party could not mobilise the post-1918 electorate as well as the Conservative or Labour parties - and that it could not do so seems indisputable. We offered a political-cultural explanation which still seems to us more satisfactory either than no explanation at all or one which loads all the explanation on to the First World War.

This thesis deliberately did not look at the pre-1918 period in great detail, and cannot therefore be used to draw authoritative conclusions on a 'before' and 'after' basis in relation to the franchise factor. However, this study did deal with the two different franchises used in Greater London in the post-1918 period, one for local and one for parliamentary elections. As Tanner has argued, because Labour did so

1156 Pelling, British Elections, and Wald, Crosses on the Ballot.
1157 The original piece was Matthew, McKibbin and Kay, 'The Franchise Factor'. This was reproduced with the additional commentary in McKibbin, Ideologies, 66-100. The commentary is on 66-67. See also the later article by Chris Stevens, 'The Electoral Sociology of Modern Britain Reconsidered', in Contemporary British History Vol. 13 No. 1 (1999), 62-94.
well at the 1919 local elections under the more restricted franchise, and especially so in London, it cannot be sustained that Labour was always at a disadvantage under the local government franchise. Chapter three mentioned that disenfranchisement at local government elections could be an issue, and could cause confusion. The different franchise had the greatest effect in Labour-supporting areas such as Stepney. In the post-war period, therefore, the franchise was something that political parties, as well as voters, had to bear in mind and deal with. By way of example, the study shows that Labour had success in attracting newly enfranchised voters in 1928 when it deliberately targeted them. Despite these points, however, the balance of the thesis shows that at a regional and local level, post-war politics was primarily governed by post-war events, circumstances and phenomena, rather than on factors from the past. Only the 1923 General Election can be said to have been fought on a genuinely pre-war issue, that of Free Trade, and this also produced the result least typical of the 1920s. While the post-war conditions for electoral battle were, in part, shaped by the events of the Great War and before, the battlefield itself in London was changing all the time. It was becoming less and less dominated by the War, perhaps less so than later in the 1930s when the spectre of the War returned to haunt the elections surrounding appeasement. On balance, the thesis shows that London's political scene, and the changing fortunes of its political parties, were shaped after the war by contemporary and local or regional factors, rather than anything else. Greater London politicians were not forever comparing their performances in the 1920s with those of 1914 and before. Rather they were focussed on trying to win, or in the case of the Liberals perhaps on not losing so badly, in the circumstances they now faced.

Another historical debate concerns whether it was the centre of government or the localities where events had the greatest political effect. The nature of the studies carried out by historians can show what their own views on the issue are. Maurice Cowling's chronicle of The Impact of Labour, on the 1920-1924 period, and Robert Skidelsky's Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929-

1931 focus primarily on what happened in the world of high politics, which they saw as most significant. Other historians have emphasised the role of the localities. It is not only the authors of the many local case studies considered in the preparation of this thesis, but other historians such as Tanner, Thorpe, and Ramsden who have deployed a good deal of local material in their works. Dunbabin has devoted an article to 'a regional approach' to election studies. As might be expected from a regional study, this thesis finds that regional and local phenomena, events and issues were crucial in determining electoral outcomes and political party fortunes. However, it does not do so simply by inference but with good reason. All three chapters on the political parties show how local and regional party activists and managers could shape tactics and propaganda to local circumstances, and show that in most cases such activity could be effective. Because it deals with local as well as parliamentary election results - 'fertile ground' for the historian - the thesis recognises the role of such contests as indicators of political opinion between general elections in an age without the opinion poll. It is also clear that parties treated local elections differently: for the Conservatives, the level of rates and the provision of efficient local services was key; for Labour there was an overriding political motive to gain control of as many bodies as it could. Both these motivations fitted in to national politics too. It follows that looking at local elections improves an understanding of the political scene. Ramsden has described how local Conservative political activists were fierce guardians of their independence, or at least relative independence, from central control during this period. Labour parties could be equally independent of central control, as some of the cases of argument over Communist influence or other matters cited in chapter four show. Given this, a proper understanding of political parties, and the changes in their fortunes in the 1920s, would be impossible without looking at evidence from the localities, and this evidence shows how important events at a local and regional level were.

1159 Cowling, The Impact of Labour, and Skidelsky, slump.
1160 Tanner, 'Elections', Thorpe, 1931, and Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin.
1161 Dunbabin, 'British Elections'.
1162 Tanner, 'Elections', 905.
1163 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, 244.
This thesis has made specific conclusions in explanation of the changing fortunes of the three main parties, and it is worth emphasising some again. The fortunes of the Conservatives, and in particular Labour, were not simply determined by class representation and strength. While the class composition of an area could be said to be indicative of how that area is likely to vote as a whole, this was not consistently the decisive factor. In particular, in the 1918 General Election the coupon, the campaign, incumbency, and other things besides determined that Coalition Liberalism would represent areas of Inner South London which a class analysis might award to Labour, and Labour was indeed successful in similar areas nearby. Labour successes came not simply through motivating the working class but on attracting other support too, and thus their support cannot have been just class-based: their best performance was in 1929 when they won with support from outside their 'core'; it was the 'core' to which they were beaten back in despondency in 1931. The point made by Jarvis earlier in this concluding chapter, that it was the efforts of the parties and not simply commanding a horde of supporters that led to success, is given stronger credence. Labour could not have broken through in 1945, especially in the constituencies in which they did, if their efforts in the 1920s and 1930s had focussed on a class-based consolidation of a core vote.

Another party-specific conclusion worth restating is that the Conservatives' changing fortunes were a factor of their organisational strength and efficiency, as well as the way their clever campaigning tactics generated support. Where the Conservatives ran a poor campaign, one that was criticised by their own activists as has been shown, in 1929, their performance was the worst of the period. Similarly, when divided and surprised, and organisationally unprepared, in 1923 they lost out. When they were galvanised into action in opposition, and given time to rebuild and consolidate, again as has been shown, their subsequent poll performances (in 1924 and 1931) were the best of the period, albeit assisted by other factors. The contrast with the Liberals changing fortunes was great, their decline following general national political trends rather than high and low water
marks in their organisation during this time. Rendered all but helpless, the Liberals were as much victims of the changes in the fortunes of the other parties as they were the arbiters of their own level of success. With all three parties, and in general, the conclusions of this regional case study confirm national trends in fluctuation of party fortunes.

In dealing with its subject matter the thesis has shown how significant Greater London was in the political nation of 1918-1931. That the region continued to be important afterwards can be signified in many ways, but one that is clear and of interest in its own right is this: of the eleven post-war British Prime Ministers, five sat for Greater London constituencies while in office (Churchill, Attlee, Macmillan, Heath and Thatcher); and a further one grew up in South London and sat on a local council (Major). In addition, as recently as the 1980s the Conservative government chose London local authorities, such as Wandsworth and Westminster, as flagships for their programme of reforms. The region continued until recently to elect a sixth of all MPs.

Despite all the conflict between them, flare-ups at major events such as the General Strike and the 1931 economic crisis, and the gulf in ideas and idealism, the main political parties in Britain in the 1920s confined their activities to a system of which they, to a greater or lesser degree, respected and observed the rules. This is symbolised by this fictitious account of events following a dead heat at an election in Lincolnshire:

Both candidates then thanked the returning officer, both claimed the result a smashing victory for their respective principles, both emphasised the cleanliness and true British sportsmanship of the contest, and they shook hands amid deafening cheers.  

In contrast to what happened in other countries, particularly in Europe, British political parties could shake hands at the end of elections; all the economic and social turmoil of the period was contained within the political system, and events

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like the battle of Cable Street were rare enough to prove this rule. In this respect, Greater London was just like the rest of the UK. It was, in addition, the crucible of British Politics, not only the place in which most national political activity took place but a barometer of the political weather. This thesis has shown what, during the 1918-1931 period, this barometer of changing party fortunes signified.

1165 Thurlow, Fascism, 110-111.
Statistical Tables
### TABLE 1A: Definition of Greater London: Parliamentary Constituencies

The following parliamentary constituencies (expressed in terms of the 1918 redistribution of seats) are included in this study as being within, or partly within, the Greater London area. Only whole constituencies are included here, though, as explained in the introduction to the study, the area covered may split them up as it is defined by the local authority boundaries (see table 1B).

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Lambeth Brixton
Lambeth Kennington
Lambeth North
Lambeth Norwood
Lewisham East
Lewisham West
Leyton East
Leyton West
Mitcham
Paddington North
Paddington South
Poplar Bow and Bromley
Poplar South
Richmond Upon Thames
Romford
St Albans
St Marylebone
St Pancras North
St Pancras South East
St Pancras South West
Shoreditch
Southwark Central
Southwark North
Southwark South East

Spelthorne
Stepney Limehouse
Stepney Mile End
Stepney Whitechapel and St George's
Stoke Newington
Tottenham North
Tottenham South
Twickenham
Uxbridge
Walthamstow East
Walthamstow West
Wandsworth Balham and Tooting
Wandsworth Central
Wandsworth Clapham
Wandsworth Putney
Wandsworth Streatham
West Ham Plaistow
West Ham Silvertown
West Ham Stratford
West Ham Upton
Westminster Abbey
Westminster St George's
Willesden East
Willesden West
Wimbledon
Wood Green
Woolwich East
Woolwich West

103 seats (102 constituencies)

The London University seat is not included in this study, it not being possible to state that its constituents represented either the population or the area (or part of the area) of Greater London.
TABLE 1B: Definition of Greater London: Local authorities within 'Greater London', 1918-1931

The following local authorities are included in this study as being within, or partly within, the Greater London area. The suffix following the name of the authority indicates its type. Counties, but not County Boroughs, have been excluded - these local authorities come from the 1888-1965 counties of Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, London, Middlesex and Surrey. Boundaries may have been altered, but in general this study has fixed the geographical areas as being those equivalent to the boundaries of Greater London at the time of the London Government Act 1963. The type of authority could change, for example from an Urban District to a Municipal Borough, and some authorities were amalgamated, abolished or created during the 1920s. Some areas could have both a Rural District and Urban District named after them, though this was more common outside London. Wherever possible, changes of types of authority have been given if they occurred in the 1918-1931 period. Apart from the two exceptions noted at the end of this table, the local authorities listed are included in the study in their entirety as at 1918-1931.

Suffix Key:  MB = Municipal Borough  METB = Metropolitan Borough  UD = Urban District  CB = County Borough  RD = Rural District

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<td>Hackney METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ham UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampstead METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton Wick UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanwell UD (to 1926)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrow on the Hill UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes UD (to 1930)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes and Harlington UD (from 1930)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendon RD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendon UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heston and Isleworth UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holborn METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornchurch UD (from 1926)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornsey MB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilford UD (to 1926), MB (from 1926)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsbury UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston Upon Thames MB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambeth METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewisham METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leyton UD (to 1926), MB (from 1926)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Maldens and Coombe UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merton and Morden UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitcham UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddington METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penge UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poplar METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond MB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romford UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romford RD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruislip Northwood UD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Marylebone METB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Pancras METB</td>
<td>Uxbridge UD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoreditch METB</td>
<td>Walthamstow UD (to 1926), MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidcup UD (from 1921)</td>
<td>(from 1926)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southall Norwood UD</td>
<td>Wandsworth METB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southgate UD</td>
<td>Wanstead UD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Mimms RD</td>
<td>Wealdstone UD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southgate UD</td>
<td>Wembley UD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepney METB</td>
<td>West Ham CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoke Newington METB</td>
<td>Westminster METB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surbiton UD</td>
<td>Willesden UD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton UD (to 1928)</td>
<td>Wimbledon MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton and Cheam UD (from 1928)</td>
<td>Woodford UD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teddington UD</td>
<td>Wood Green UD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tottenham UD</td>
<td>Woolwich METB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twickenham UD (to 1926), MB</td>
<td>Yiewsley UD (to 1929)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from 1926)</td>
<td>Yiewsley and West Drayton UD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uxbridge RD (to 1929)</td>
<td>(from 1929)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: as at 1931, 97 local authorities.


Two of the Rural Districts are not included in full in the study, but are included in this list because a part of them did form a part of an area which the study defines as being in Greater London. Dartford RD is included to 1920 because what became Crayford UD was part of Dartford RD before 1920. Not all of Bromley RD is included in the Greater London area, but it appears in this list because many parts of it - such as West Wickham and Orpington - are included.
TABLE 2A: Parliamentary Election Results in 'Greater London' (excluding by-elections), 1910-1935

The table below shows the total number of seats won by each party at the general elections, 1910-1935. The seats covered are those listed above, except for December 1910 when equivalent seats as mapped by the 1885 redistribution are used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Co Lib (N Lib)</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910 (Dec)</td>
<td>43*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>4A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16B</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>75CD</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38E</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>71F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A* Includes Jones (West Ham Silvertown) - stood as NSP and sat with Labour.

*B* Includes Malone (Leyton East) - stood as BSP / Co Lib and later renounced the Coalition Liberals to the Labour Party conference.

*C* Includes Becker (Richmond Upon Thames) - stood as Independent Conservative with Anti-Waste League support, and sat as a Conservative from 1923.

*D* Includes Erskine (Westminster Abbey) - stood as Independent Conservative then sat as Conservative.

*E* Includes Mosley (Harrow) - stood as Independent and sat (briefly) as Labour.

*F* Includes Churchill (Epping) - stood as Constitutionalist and served in Conservative government.

* of these 43, 3 can be counted as Liberal Unionists.

TABLE 2B: Candidates at Parliamentary General Elections in 'Greater London' 1918-1931

The table below shows the total number of candidates put up by each party at the general elections, 1918-1931. The seats covered are those listed above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Co Lib (N Lib)</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>93&lt;sup&gt;A&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;B&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;C&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21&lt;sup&gt;D&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>A</sup> Includes Churchill (Epping) - stood as Constitutionalist and served in Conservative government.

<sup>B</sup> Includes 3 Communists.

<sup>C</sup> All 5 Communist candidates.

<sup>D</sup> Includes 8 Communists, 3 ILP and 3 National Labour.

TABLE 3: Results of Triennial General Elections of London County Councillors

The election took place on the first Thursday in March.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Municipal Reform</th>
<th>Progressive / Liberal</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken from Ken Young, *Local Politics and the Rise of Party*, Leicester (Leicester University Press), 1975, 223.
TABLE 4: Results of Triennial General Elections of Metropolitan Borough Councillors, County of London

The election took place on the first Thursday in November.

**Total Number of Councillors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Municipal Reform / Conservative</th>
<th>Progressive / Liberal</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1013</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>1093*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>7+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1125*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* MR/Con and Prog/Lib counted together
+ Plus 11 communist

**Total Councils with Majority Control**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Municipal Reform / Conservative</th>
<th>Progressive / Liberal</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken from Ken Young, *Local Politics and the Rise of Party*, Leicester (Leicester University Press), 1975, 224-5.
TABLE 5: Classification of Parliamentary Constituencies by Class District

Based on socio-economic structural analysis - see below.

**Middle Class**


**Mixed Class**

Battersea South, Brentford and Chiswick, Chislehurst, Croydon North, Croydon South, Dartford, Deptford, Edmonton, Enfield, Finchley, Fulham East, Fulham West, Greenwich, Hammersmith North, Hammersmith South, Harrow, Hendon, Ilford, Islington East, Islington North, Kensington North, Mitcham, Paddington North, Romford, St Pancras North, St Pancras South West

**Working Class**

Battersea North, Bermondsey Rotherhithe, Bermondsey West, Bethnal Green North East, Bethnal Green South West, Camberwell North, Camberwell North West, Camberwell Peckham, East Ham North, East Ham South, Finsbury, Hackney Central, Hackney South, Islington South, Islington West, Lambeth Kennington, Lambeth North, Leyton East, Leyton West, Poplar Bow and Bromley, Poplar South, St Pancras South East, Shoreditch, Southwark Central, Southwark North, Southwark South East, Stepney Limehouse, Stepney Mile End,
Stepney Whitechapel and St George's, Stoke Newington, Tottenham North, Tottenham South, Walthamstow East, Walthamstow West, West Ham Plaistow, West Ham Silvertown, West Ham Stratford, West Ham Upton, Woolwich East, Woolwich West.

Urban/Rural

St Albans, Epsom

Rural

Epping

Taken from John Turner, British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict, London, (Yale University Press), 1992, 472-479. Turner explains that he has drawn upon the work of Pelling and Blewett (see bibliography) for the basis of his classification scheme, and has used 'socio-economic structure' as the main factor in determining his labelling of seats. Pelling had drawn on Booth's counting of female domestic servants for the LCC area classifications. Turner also states he uses Ordnance Survey maps to determine the nature of constituencies outside built up areas. However, he does concede (469) that 'that allocation of urban seats outside London to one of the three urban categories is extremely uncertain. Census data on which it could be based is recoverable only for boroughs...'.

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TABLE 6: The Middle Class Vote in 1921

List of constituencies in this study with more than 20% middle class population, according to the classification given at the end of the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acton</th>
<th>Ilford</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battersea (both seats)</td>
<td>Kensington (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentford and Chiswick</td>
<td>Kingston Upon Thames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromley</td>
<td>Lambeth (all four seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camberwell (all four seats)</td>
<td>Lewisham (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea</td>
<td>Leyton (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chislehurst</td>
<td>Mitcham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of London (two members)</td>
<td>Paddington (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon (both seats)</td>
<td>Richmond Upon Thames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deptford</td>
<td>Romford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ealing</td>
<td>St Albans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ham (both seats)</td>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield</td>
<td>St Pancras (all three seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsom</td>
<td>Spelthorne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epping</td>
<td>Stoke Newington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finchley</td>
<td>Tottenham (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulham (both seats)</td>
<td>Twickenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenwich</td>
<td>Uxbridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney (all three seats)</td>
<td>Walthamstow (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith (both seats)</td>
<td>Wandsworth (all five seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampstead</td>
<td>Westminster (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrow</td>
<td>Willesden (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendon</td>
<td>Wimbledon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holborn</td>
<td>Wood Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornsey</td>
<td>Woolwich (both seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington (all four seats)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The classification used is to define 'middle class' as being in Census categories 23, 24, 25 and 28 in 1921. The categories, which related to the occupation of male householders, are:

23: Commerce and finance, excluding clerks
24: Public administration, including military
25: Professional
28: Clerks, including Company Secretaries, registrars and office managers

TABLE 7: Parliamentary By-election results in Greater London, 1919-1931

*In chronological order*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Candidate (Party)</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>14 Nov</td>
<td>CROYDON</td>
<td>Sir A M Smith (Co C)</td>
<td>11,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H Houlder (Lib)</td>
<td>9,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co C majority</td>
<td>2,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with 10,807 Co C majority over Lab, 1918</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>10 Dec</td>
<td>ST ALBANS</td>
<td>F E Fremantle (Co C)</td>
<td>9,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J W Brown (Lab)</td>
<td>8,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M Gray (Lib)</td>
<td>2,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co C majority</td>
<td>713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with Co C unopposed 1918. 713 lowest Con majority 1918-45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>17 Dec</td>
<td>BROMLEY</td>
<td>Hon C James (Co C)</td>
<td>11,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F P Hodes (Lab)</td>
<td>10,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co C majority</td>
<td>1,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with Co C majority of 12,501 over Lib, 1918</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>27 Mar</td>
<td>DARTFORD</td>
<td>J E Mills (Lab)</td>
<td>13,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T E Wing (Lib)</td>
<td>4,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R J Meller (Co C)</td>
<td>4,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*R V K Applin (Nat P)</td>
<td>2,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F E Fehr (Ind C)</td>
<td>1,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lab majority 9,048</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with Co L majority of 9,370 over Lab in 1918</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1920 31 Mar CAMBERWELL (NORTH WEST) T J Macnamara (Co L) 6,618
Miss A S Lawrence (Lab) 4,733
J C Carrol (Lib) 3,386
Co L majority 1,885
Compared with Co L majority of 3,039 over Con, 1918

1920 25 Sep ILFORD F Wise (Co C) 15,612
J King (Lab) 6,577
J W H Thompson (Lib) 6,515
Co C majority 9,035
Compared with Co C majority of 11,249 in 1918

1921 2 Mar WOOLWICH (EAST) R Gee (Con) 13,724
J R MacDonald (Lab) 13,041
Con majority 683
Compared with Labour unopposed return in 1918, with a coupon

1921 7 Jun WESTMINSTER (ST GEORGES) J M M Erskine (AWL) 7,244
Sir H M Jessel (Co C) 5,356
AWL majority 1,888
Compared with Co C majority of 9,313 over Lib, 1918

1921 25 Aug WESTMINSTER (ABBEY) J S Nicholson (Con) 6,204
*R V K Applin (AWL) 4,970
A Lupton (Lib) 3,053
Con majority 1,234
Compared with Co C unopposed return, 1918
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921 13 Sep</td>
<td>LEWISHAM (WEST)</td>
<td>Sir P Dawson (Con)</td>
<td>9,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W G Windham (AWL)</td>
<td>8,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F W Rafferty (Lib)</td>
<td>6,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Con majority</td>
<td></td>
<td>847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with Co C unopposed return, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921 10 Nov</td>
<td>HORNSEY</td>
<td>Viscount Ednam (Con)</td>
<td>15,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E L Burgin (Lib)</td>
<td>13,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Con majority</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with Co C unopposed return, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921 14 Dec</td>
<td>SOUTHWARK (SOUTH EAST)</td>
<td>T E Naylor (Lab)</td>
<td>6,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T O Jacobsen (Co L)</td>
<td>2,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H L P Boot (Ind C)</td>
<td>2,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab majority</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with Co L majority of 4,490 over Lab, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922 20 Feb</td>
<td>CAMBERWELL (NORTH)</td>
<td>C G Ammon (Lab)</td>
<td>7,854</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R J Meller (Con)</td>
<td>6,719</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab majority</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with Co C majority of 3,833 over Lib, with Lab 3rd, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922 9 May</td>
<td>WANDSWORTH (CLAPHAM)</td>
<td>Sir J Leigh (Con)</td>
<td>unopposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compared with Co C majority of 6,706 over Ind, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922 19 May</td>
<td>CITY OF LONDON (ONE SEAT)</td>
<td>E C Grenfell (Con)</td>
<td>10,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sir T V Bowater (Ind C)</td>
<td>6,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Constituency</td>
<td>Conservative Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>18 Aug</td>
<td>HACKNEY</td>
<td>C C A L Erskine-Bolst (Co C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G W H Knight (Lab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co C majority</td>
</tr>
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Compared with 8,315 majority for Horatio Bottomley (Ind) over Co L, 1918

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Labour Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>8 Feb</td>
<td>STEPNEY</td>
<td>H Gosling (Lab)</td>
<td>8,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J D Kiley (Lib)</td>
<td>6,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S M Holden (NPP)</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lab majority</td>
<td>2,200</td>
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Compared with Lab majority of 428 over Lib, 1922

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Conservative Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>3 Mar</td>
<td>MITCHAM</td>
<td>J C Ede (Lab)</td>
<td>8,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sir A S T G-Boscawen (Con)</td>
<td>7,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A E Brown (Lib)</td>
<td>3,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J T Catterall (Ind C)</td>
<td>2,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lab majority</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Compared with 5,036 Con majority over Lib, 1922

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Labour Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>3 Mar</td>
<td>WILLESDEN</td>
<td>H Johnstone (Lib)</td>
<td>14,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G F Stanley (Con)</td>
<td>9,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lib majority</td>
<td>5,176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared with 1,314 majority for Con over Lib, 1922
1924  1 Feb  CITY OF LONDON  Sir T V Bowater (Con)  12,962  
(ONE SEAT)  H Bell (Lib)  5,525  
Con majority  7,437  
Compared with an unopposed return in 1923

1924  19 Mar  WESTMINSTER  O W Nicholson (Con)  8,187  
(ABBEY)  W L S Churchill (Const)  8,144  
A F Brockway (Lab)  6,156  
J S Duckers (Lib)  291  
Con majority  43  
Compared with Con unopposed return, 1923

1926  29 Apr  EAST HAM  Miss A S Lawrence (Lab)  10,798  
(NORTH)  G W S Jarrett (Con)  9,171  
E L Burgin (Lib)  6,603  
Lab majority  1,627  
Compared with 1,057 majority for Con over Lab, 1924

1926  28 May  HAMMERSMITH  J P Gardner (Lab)  13,095  
(NORTH)  S Gluckstein (Con)  9,484  
G P Murfitt (Lib)  1,974  
Lab majority  3,611  
Compared with Con majority of 1,955 over Lab, 1924
1927  28 Mar  SOUTHWARK  E A Strauss (Lib)  7,334  
(NORTH)  G A Isaacs (Lab)  6,167  
Dr L Haden-Guest (Const)  3,215  
Lib majority  1,167  
Compared with Haden-Guest's 1,030 majority for Lab over Lib, 1924

1927  27 Jun  LAMBETH  N C D Colman (Con)  10,358  
(BRIXTON)  J Adams (Lab)  6,032  
F J Laverack (Lib)  5,134  
Con majority  4,326  
Compared with 8,545 majority for Con over Lab, 1924

1928  23 Feb  ILFORD  Sir G C Hamilton (Con)  18,269  
A S Comyns Carr (Lib)  13,621  
C R de Gruchy (Lab)  8,922  
Con majority  4,648  
Compared with Con majority of 14,365 over Lab, 1924

1928  30 Apr  ST MARYLEBONE  Sir J R Rodd (Con)  12,859  
D A Ross (Lab)  6,721  
B A Murray (Lib)  3,318  
Con majority  6,138  
Compared with Con majority of 15,577 over Lab, 1924

1928  28 Jun  HOLBORN  S J Bevan (Con)  6,365  
P Allott (Lab)  2,238  
T E Morton (Lib)  2,062  

322
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Candidate Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>4 Jul</td>
<td>EPSOM</td>
<td>A R J Southby (Con)</td>
<td>13,364</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>S P Kerr (Lib)</td>
<td>5,095</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Miss H M Keynes (Lab)</td>
<td>3,179</td>
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<td><strong>Con majority</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,269</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Compared with 14,868 Con majority over Lab, 1924</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>7 Feb</td>
<td>BATTERSEA (SOUTH)</td>
<td>W Bennett (Lab)</td>
<td>11,789</td>
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<td>H R Selley (Con)</td>
<td>11,213</td>
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<td>V C Albu (Lib)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lab majority</strong></td>
<td><strong>576</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Compared with 5,217 majority for Con over Lab, 1924</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>8 Aug</td>
<td>TWICKENHAM</td>
<td>Sir J Ferguson (Con)</td>
<td>14,705</td>
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<td>T J Mason (Lab)</td>
<td>14,202</td>
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<td>F G Paterson (Lib)</td>
<td>1,920</td>
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<td><strong>Con majority</strong></td>
<td><strong>503</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Compared with Con majority of 5,966 over Lab, 1929</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>6 May</td>
<td>FULHAM (WEST)</td>
<td>Sir C S Cobb (Con)</td>
<td>16,223</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J W Banfield (Lab)</td>
<td>15,983</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Con majority</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Compared with Lab majority of 2,211 over Con, 1929</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>2 Sep</td>
<td>BROMLEY</td>
<td>E T Campbell (Con)</td>
<td>12,782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
W G Fordham (Lib) 11,176
V C Redwood (UEP) 9,483
A E Ashworth (Lab) 5,942

Con majority 1,606
Compared with Con majority of 7,077 over Lib, 1929

1930 30 Oct PADDINGTON
(SOUTH) E A Taylor (EC) † 11,209
Sir H Lidiard (Con) 10,268
Miss D Evans (Lab) 7,944
Mrs A N S-Richardson (UEP) 494

EC majority 941
Compared with Con unopposed return, 1929

1930 3 Dec STEPNEY
(WHITECHAPEL & ST GEORGE'S) J H Hall (Lab) 8,544
B Janner (Lib) 7,445
T L E B Guinness (Con) 3,735
H Pollitt (Com) 2,106

Lab majority 1,099
Compared with Lab majority of 9,180 over Lib, 1929

1931 19 Feb ISLINGTON
(EAST) Mrs E L Manning (Lab) 10,591
A C Critchley (EC & UEP) 8,314
Miss T Cazalet (Con) 7,182
H E Crawfurd (sic) (Lib) 4,450

Lab majority 2,277
Compared with Lab majority of 1,558 over Con, 1929

1931 19 Mar WESTMINSTER A D Cooper (Con) 17,242
(ST GEORGE'S) Sir E W Petter (Ind C) 11,532

Con majority 5,710

Compared with Con 16,154 majority over Lab, 1929

1931 15 Apr WOOLWICH E G Hicks (Lab) 16,200

(EAST) E S Shrapnell-Smith (Con) 12,357

Lab majority 3,843

Compared with Lab majority of 8,541 over Con, 1929

* Applin was supported by Horatio Bottomley, 1920, stood for the Anti-Waste League in the Westminster Abbey by-election in 1921, and won Enfield for the Conservatives as their official candidate, 1924 and 1931.

† Taylor later sat as a Conservative, and was the official - and successful - Conservative candidate in the constituency in 1931, 1935 and 1945.

TABLE 8A: Conservative MPs in Greater London who voted for the continuation of the Coalition at the Carlton Club, 19 October 1922

Greater London only


G O Borwick (Croydon North)

*Did not stand for re-election in 1922 - G K M Mason (Con) returned unopposed.*

Sir W J Bull (Hammersmith South)

*Won in 1922, beating Lab*

W R Greene (Hackney North)

*Won in 1922, beating Lib*

J R Lort-Williams (Bermondsey Rotherhithe)

*Won in 1922, beating Lab but only by 46 votes*

P B Malone (Tottenham South)

*Won in 1922, beating Lab*

W G Morden (Brentford and Chiswick)

*Won in 1922, beating Ind*

W H Prescott (Tottenham North)

*Did not stand in 1922, but seat lost to Lab*

W R Preston (Stepney Mile End)

*Won in 1922, beating Lab but only by 795 votes*

Sir H S Samuel (Lambeth Norwood)

*Did not stand for re-election in 1922*

Sir A H Warren (Edmonton)

*Lost to Lab in 1922 by 1709 votes*

Sir H K Wood (Woolwich West)

*Won in 1922, beating Lab*
TABLE 8B: Conservative MPs who voted to contest the next election outside the Coalition at the Carlton Club, 19 October 1922

Greater London only


M Archer-Shee (Finsbury)
  *Won in 1922, beating Lib*

G Balfour (Hampstead)
  *Won in 1922, beating N Lib*

Sir F G Banbury (City of London, one seat)
  *Returned unopposed in 1922*

R W Barnett (St Pancras South West)
  *Won in 1922, beating Lib*

I H Benn (Greenwich)
  *Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lab*

Sir G R Blades (Epsom)
  *Won in 1922, beating Lab*

R Blair (Poplar Bow and Bromley)
  *Did not stand in 1922. Seat lost to Labour by 6776 votes*

H F Bowles (Enfield)
  *Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lab*

Sir H E Brittain (Acton)
  *Won in 1922, beating Lab*

A H Burgoyne (Kensington North)
  *Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lab*

J G D Campbell (Kingston Upon Thames)
  *Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Ind*

Sir C S Cobb (Fulham West)
  *Won in 1922, beating Lab*

R B Colvin (Epping)
  *Won in 1922, beating Lib*
Viscount Curzon (Battersea South)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lab*

Sir D Dalziel (Lambeth Brixton)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lib*

Sir W H Davison (Kensington South)
   *Won in 1922, beating Ind*

Sir P Dawson (Lewisham West)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lib*

J C D Denison-Pender (Wandsworth Balham and Tooting)
   *Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lib*

C B Edgar (Richmond Upon Thames)
   *Lost seat to Ind Con, supported by AWL, in 1922*

Viscount Ednam (Hornsey)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lib*

Sir G S Elliott (Islington West)
   *Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lib but by only 692 votes*

C C A L Erskine-Bolst (Hackney South)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lab*

Sir H Foreman (Hammersmith North)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lab*

F E Fremantle (St Albans)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lab*

R Gee (Woolwich East)
   *Lost seat to Lab in 1922 by 3906 votes*

E C Grenfell (City of London, one seat)
   *Returned unopposed in 1922*

Sir F Hall (Camberwell Dulwich)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lib*

Sir H P Harris (Paddington South)
   *Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Ind Con*

C F Higham (Islington South)
   *Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lib but by only 525 votes*

Sir S J G Hoare (Chelsea)
   *Won in 1922, beating Lab*

Sir J Hood (Wimbledon)
Won in 1922, beating Lib
J W W Hopkins (St Pancras South East)

Won in 1922, beating Lab
C James (Bromley)

Won in 1922, beating Lib
Sir L S Johnson (Walthamstow East)

Won in 1922, beating Lab
G W H Jones (Stoke Newington)

Won in 1922, beating Lib
Sir W Joynson-Hicks (Twickenham)

Returned unopposed in 1922
Sir J Leigh (Wandsworth Clapham)

Won in 1922, beating Lab
Sir P Lloyd-Greame (Hendon)

Won in 1922, beating Lib
G L T Locker-Lampson (Wood Green)

Won in 1922, beating Lab
J W Lorden (St Pancras North)

Won in 1922, beating Lab by 991 votes
C E L Lyle (West Ham Stratford)

Lost seat to Lab in 1922 by 1376 votes
Sir H M Mallaby-Deeley (Willesden East)

Won in 1922, beating Lib
Sir W L Mitchell (Wandsworth Streatham)

Won in 1922, beating Lib
Sir N J Moore (Islington North)

Won in 1922, beating Lab
J R P Newman ( Finchley)

Won in 1922, beating Lib
J S Nicholson (Westminster Abbey)

Won in 1922, beating Lab
Sir H Nield (Ealing)

Won in 1922, beating Lab
Sir H G Norris (Fulham East)

Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lab
Sir J Norton-Griffiths (Wandsworth Central)

Won in 1922, beating Lab

S Peel (Uxbridge)

Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lab

W G Perring (Paddington North)

Won in 1922, beating Ind Lib

Sir P E Pilditch (Spelthorne)

Won in 1922, beating Lab

C Pinkham (Willesden West)

Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lab by 799 votes

A Pownall (Lewisham East)

Won in 1922, beating Lab

A B Raper (Islington East)

Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lib

Sir J F Remnant (Holborn)

Won in 1922, beating Lib

S Samuel (Wandsworth Putney)

Won in 1922, beating Ind Con

Sir S E Scott (St Marylebone)

Did not stand in 1922. Seat retained by Con with unopposed return

Sir A M Smith (Croydon South)

Won in 1922, beating Lab

A W Smithers (Chislehurst)

Did not stand in 1922. Seat retained by Con, beating Lib

Sir E E Wild (West Ham Upton)

Did not stand in 1922. Con retain seat, beating Lab

Sir M R H Wilson (Bethnal Green South West)

Lost seat to Lib in 1922, and came third behind Communist candidate

F Wise (Ilford)

Won in 1922, beating Lib

Dr T C Worsfold (Mitcham)

Won in 1922, beating Lib
TABLE 9: Unopposed returns in Greater London Parliamentary General Elections, 1918-1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Co Lib</th>
</tr>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were no unopposed returns of candidates from other parties.

The City of London provided the Conservatives with unopposed returns of two candidates at each General Election except 1929, when there was a challenge from the Liberals.

TABLE 10: Local Authority Areas in Greater London with population increases over 30%, 1921-1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>1921 Population</th>
<th>1931 Population</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beddington and Wallington MB</td>
<td>16,451</td>
<td>26,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bexley MB</td>
<td>21,104</td>
<td>32,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carshalton UD</td>
<td>13,873</td>
<td>28,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chingford MB</td>
<td>9506</td>
<td>22,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagenham MB</td>
<td>9127</td>
<td>89,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrow UD</td>
<td>49,020</td>
<td>96,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes and Harlington UD</td>
<td>9842</td>
<td>22,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendon MB</td>
<td>57,566</td>
<td>115,640</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heston and Isleworth MB</td>
<td>47,463</td>
<td>76,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malden and Coombe MB</td>
<td>14,495</td>
<td>23,350</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merton and Morden UD</td>
<td>17,532</td>
<td>41,227</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mitcham MB</td>
<td>35,122</td>
<td>56,872</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruislip Northwood UD</td>
<td>9122</td>
<td>16,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton and Cheam MB</td>
<td>29,733</td>
<td>48,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uxbridge UD</td>
<td>20,626</td>
<td>31,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wembley MB</td>
<td>18,239</td>
<td>65,799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table is adapted from Alan A Jackson, *Semi-Detached London: Suburban Development, Life and Transport, 1900-1939*, Didcot (Wild Swan), 1991, 260, which gives figures derived from census returns and *London Statistics*. The areas are adjusted to 1938/9 local authority boundaries (and types) and are therefore not perfectly comparable with those listed in table 1B as comprising this study - though they are close enough to be of use.
### TABLE 11: Churchgoing in Inner Greater London

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1903</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1979</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning / Evening attendances:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean as % of population</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C of E attendance</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Church attendance</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC Church attendance</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total attendances:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C of E</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Church</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC Church</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of churches in total</td>
<td>2626</td>
<td></td>
<td>1424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per church</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td></td>
<td>1692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendances per church</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of C of E churches</td>
<td>1014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per church</td>
<td>4409</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendances per church</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>304</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendances per service</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>152</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Free Churches</td>
<td>1512</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per church</td>
<td>2957</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendances per church</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendances per service</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of RC Churches</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per church</td>
<td>44703</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendances per church *</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations:

C of E - Church of England
RC - Roman Catholic

Taken from Robin Gill, *The Myth of the Empty Church*, London (SPCK), 1993, 313 (his table 12).
A blank space indicates that no figure is given by Gill.

* - no figures are given for attendances per RC service.
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