THE IDENTIFICATION OF FACTIONS IN THE
BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY LABOUR PARTY
1945 - 1970

by

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Abstract

Many studies of the British Labour Party have emphasised disputes within the Parliamentary Labour Party and attempted to explain them. There has, however, been no attempt to apply the concept of factionalism, with criteria detailing how a faction might be identified, to a study of the Parliamentary Labour Party over a period of time.

It is the aim of this paper to succinctly define the term faction; to establish criteria for the purpose of identifying factions and to determine to what extent parties to Parliamentary Labour Party disputes could be identified as factions. From the definition of a faction employed, six criteria were established, against which to assess a group as a faction. Employing histories of the Labour Party, biographies and autobiographies of contemporary Labour politicians and contemporary newspapers and journals, major disputes during the years 1945-1970 were isolated and examined.

It was found that there were four periods of intense Parliamentary Labour Party dispute. Application of the six criteria to groups involved in each dispute showed that four factions could be clearly identified. The policies expounded by three of these factions were identified as left-wing. One faction was identified as of the right-wing of the Labour Party. A number of implications of factionalism in the Parliamentary Labour Party were drawn.

10 June 1975
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Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One outlines the main concerns of this paper, defines the terms which will be used throughout, and outlines the methodology to be employed.

The history of the British Labour Party in Parliament has been, in part, a history of disputes and cleavages. The Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) has frequently aired in public its internal cleavages and disputes - disputes which have periodically threatened to split and destroy the Labour Party.¹

This paper will address itself to assessing the extent to which disputes in the Labour Party have been factional in nature. To do this a model of factionalism will be established. The model will comprise a rigorous definition of the term faction and a list of criteria in accordance with which a faction may be identified. Major disputes within the PLP will be analysed, through the application of the model, in an attempt to assess the extent to which the PLP was factionalised. The period 1945 to 1970 has been chosen. During these years the Labour Party held office for two periods, 1945-1951 and 1964-1970, and was in opposition from 1951-1964.

Various students of British politics have emphasised the cleavage-prone nature of the Labour Party and have sought to explain it. Three major causes of cleavage have been emphasised. It has been suggested that social and occupational differences among Labour MPs have led to class-related attitude differences.² There is also a degree of uncertainty in the Labour Party as a whole as to the location of ultimate power.³ Finally, the Labour Party's intense concern with
ideology has been seen as of major importance since many disputes within the Party are of an ideological nature.4

It is not going too far to say that factions are crucial to a study of the Labour Party. However, there has been no attempt to rigourously define the term faction, to refine the concept in terms of criteria that can be empirically evaluated, and, from that perspective, to carefully assess the degree and the form of factionalism within the Labour Party over a period of years. This paper attempts that task on one level, but is not concerned with explaining the emergence of factions within the Labour Party as a whole. It seeks to identify factions that have arisen within the Parliamentary Labour Party.

There are a variety of definitions of the term faction, but they all tend to emphasise common elements.5 A faction may be defined as a group of MPs, with an identifiable leadership, which is distinctly separate from the rest of the Parliamentary Party, by reason of organised activity, and, which seeks to promote, over a period of time, foreign and domestic policies which the faction perceives as different in principle from those espoused by others within the Parliamentary Party. Factions can be distinguished from interest groups because the members of factions are MPs while interest group membership is not solely based in Parliament. Factions can also be distinguished from ad hoc combinations of politicians in agreement upon one particular issue at one moment in time; a faction promotes its policies over a period of time. A faction may also be distinguished from an intra-party alliance of MPs, allied to work for the replacement of party policy on only one particular issue.6

The above definition of a faction suggests six
criteria by which factionalism in the PLP may be identified:

1. the members of a faction are MPs
2. the leaders can be identified
3. the faction is organised in order to promote its policies
4. other members of the PLP are aware of its existence
5. the faction promotes a range of policies which the faction perceives as different in principle from those espoused by others in the PLP
6. the faction promotes its policies over a period of time

These criteria should be considered in greater detail.

1. Membership: it should be quite straightforward to determine whether the members of a faction are MPs by reference to lists of Labour MPs published in Labour Party Annual Conference Reports. However, the total membership of a faction may not be easy to detect. Those members of a faction who participate very frequently in a faction's activities may be the only members who can be identified with any degree of certainty. The members thus identified may represent only a small proportion of a faction's total membership. Since a faction is essentially a voluntary, unofficial group, it does not have a formal membership. There is therefore a problem of identifying the less active members, who may identify themselves with a faction, but who may not openly provide evidence of such identification.

There are several ways in which students of intra-party groups have identified group membership, for example, analysis of Parliamentary Parties by means of signatories to Early Day Motions, signatures to public letters of support for a group's policy on one
issue\textsuperscript{8} and analysis of voting figures in the House of Commons.\textsuperscript{9} There are problems in using such sources. MPs may agree on one issue and sign an Early Day Motion but they are not all necessarily going to agree on other issues. An MP may be motivated to sign a public letter of support for a particular policy for reasons other than pure concurrence with the policy; for instance, he may regard it as advantageous to his personal career. Some MPs not normally associated with a faction may support a faction's policy on one particular issue by voting with a faction in the Commons. Examination of Commons voting lists may therefore provide evidence of MPs who sympathised with a faction's policy on one issue, but voting lists cannot be relied upon to provide concrete proof of a faction's membership. Examination of a series of votes may demonstrate that a number of MPs voted together consistently, but provides tenuous evidence of group membership. Nevertheless, examination of the voting lists of a series of votes may demonstrate that a group of MPs acted together, and thus provide evidence of group activity. A faction may be able to obtain the support of varying numbers of MPs on individual issues.

The problems of identification of a faction's membership led to the decision to identify membership somewhat narrowly, through authorship of articles or pamphlets advocating a faction's policies. The author of several articles that consistently expounded a faction's policies was considered to have identified himself as a member of a faction, and, by writing articles, to have actively demonstrated his membership. Because factional membership is so narrowly defined there will be important gaps in indications of the extent of a faction's membership. The gaps will
include those members of a faction who demonstrated a low level of factional activity and individuals who were not prone to express themselves in writing. The extent to which a faction can attract a higher level of support at certain moments in time will be demonstrated by Commons voting figures, i.e. the number of MPs who voted with a faction on an issue. The identification of membership used here will be tentative. In not dealing with the entire membership of a faction, this study will be concerned with the organisation of the most active factional members.

2. Leadership: The concept of leadership implies the exercise of influence in social collectivities, such as groups, communities or nations. The exercise of power and influence means that the leadership mobilizes the efforts of others toward goals widely held among the group, or mobilizes people to do what they would not do otherwise.¹⁰

There are a number of sources of a leader's influence which can be distinguished analytically. One source is personality traits: a leader may attract followers through the force and appeal of his personality. There are other personal qualities that a leader can use to mobilize a following, such as the skills and techniques of organising and the ability to attract followers through able and clear analyses and proposals for group action. These skills are those of a manager and an organiser. Both personality and acquired skills can be bases of a leader's influence over a group.¹¹

Secondly, an individual may exercise influence by virtue of the authority of his office or position in an organisation. That is, others may accept his decisions as binding - not because of agreement or even personal respect - but because of a belief that
they should defer to the office, regardless of its incumbent.\textsuperscript{12}

A third source from which a leader can acquire influence over others is through the exercise of sanctions. Sanctions are the ability to reward or punish for compliance or non-compliance. They are varied and can include the exclusion of followers from a group, denunciation, or the withdrawing or awarding of official political posts. The most formal sanctions will lie with the individuals who hold authority in the Party; they will have the power to exclude others from positions in the Party, e.g. Cabinet posts. However, leaders without such formal authority may also have some sanctions through personal endorsement of their followers, or public condemnation of others.\textsuperscript{13}

This categorization of a leader's sources of power makes it possible to suggest ways of identifying leaders:

1. evidence of respect for the personality of an individual and of organisational activity, by means of:
   (a) statements made by members of a faction or by contemporary observers that one or more individuals comprised the leadership, or
   (b) the member or members of a faction who are the most active in (i) writing pamphlets or articles advocating a faction's policies, or,
       (ii) organising meetings of the faction's members, or,
       (iii) making speeches concerned wholly or in part with advocating the faction's policies

2. Evidence of deference to the office of a member of a faction

3. The exercise of, or deference to, the use or possible use of sanctions.
However, there are difficulties in measuring personality and formal authority. It will be necessary to rely on primarily impressionistic statements made by individuals involved or by contemporary observers to indicate respect for personality and deference to office. It should be straightforward to identify a leader who bases his leadership upon organisational activity, because of the marked frequency of participation in factional activity. The measurement of power derived from sanctions presents problems too. It may be easy to assess this influence if there is clear evidence that the sanctions have been employed. Even if sanctions were not explicitly used, others may have been influenced by the possibility that they could be used, that is, some followers may have adapted their behaviour to avoid the exercise of sanctions. This phenomenon of adaptation to anticipated response produces difficulties in making an empirical assessment of power relationships and the conclusions one can draw about the influence of a leader will have to be qualified.

3. Organisation: the extent to which a faction is organised may be indicated by:

(a) holding meetings to discuss methods of pressing the faction's policies

(b) articles in journals, newspapers, pamphlets or manifestoes produced by members of the faction for the purpose of broadcasting the faction's policies

(c) a faction's members may demonstrate their policy preferences by voting in House of Commons votes, for or against policies upon which the faction has made policy statements. They can also draw attention to the faction's opinions on a particular
policy by abstaining on votes. Members of a faction may also be prepared to flout Party discipline in order to express the faction's policies, to the extent that disciplinary measures are taken against them, e.g. withdrawal of the Whip. The extent to which such disciplinary measures are not destructive of the faction may indicate the degree to which the faction is prepared to press its policies.

4. Seen by others: there should be indications that MPs other than those associated with a faction identify it as such, e.g. in speeches, articles or in autobiographies and biographies.

5. Policies: a faction's policies, as outlined by members of the faction in speeches or in written material may be compared with policy proposals put forward by other members of the party, in order to establish whether the faction was promoting policies at variance with other policies. A faction should advocate several policies which indicate that the faction has a wider view of social purpose than an intra-party alliance or interest group, promoting only one policy.

6. Duration: the minimum duration of a faction has been arbitrarily established at twelve months. A year seems to be a reasonable period of time within which a faction can form, organise and press its policies.

The above criteria will be used as a standard against which examples of factionalism can be assessed. Such assessment will necessarily be rough, but should indicate whether parties to PLP disputes can be identified as factions.

Method and Sources

The history of major disputes within the PLP during
the years 1945-1970 will be considered, in chronological order. In analysing disputes arising during the period of study it will be considered whether the parties to the disputes can be identified as factions according to the model outlined above. The emergence and decline of factions during the time period under study has determined the time spans with which the following chapters deal. Chapters two through five will consider the following time periods:

Chapter two: 1945-1951
Chapter three: 1951-1957
Chapter four: briefly with 1951-1959, in detail 1959-1961
Chapter five: 1966-1970
Chapter six: the conclusions

Each chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will deal with a chronological narrative, the second with an analysis of the extent to which the Labour Party was factionalised in that period.

Primary sources of information included the *Times*, the *New Statesman*, *Tribune*, an independent weekly publication which tends to a left-wing bias in discussing political events and *Socialist Commentary*, a weekly paper which tends to a Labour right-wing bias. *Labour Party Annual Conference Reports* and *Hansard* have also provided valuable information.

Secondary sources include biographies and autobiographies of Labour politicians, and in some instances they have provided information not available in primary sources, e.g. details of Cabinet meetings. Histories of the Labour Party and works concerned with specific disputes within the Party have also been consulted. Descriptive works of the Party's structure and operation have provided useful background details.

2. Finer, Berrington and Bartholomew note that, in terms of education, occupation and sponsorship (trade union or constituency) the PLP contains two distinct groups, one "working-class" and the other "professional". Seyd has also pointed out that the differences in social and occupational backgrounds of Labour MPs have tended to exacerbate intra-party conflict.


3. According to both Haseler and Janosik, many disputes in the Labour Party have been intensified by uncertainty as to the location of ultimate power. While the leader of the Conservative Party is normally the Party's final source of authority, the leader of the Labour Party is not.


4. Rose and Unwin have argued that the Labour Party is more concerned with ideology than the Conservative Party. Richard Rose and Derek Unwin, "Social Cohesion, Political Parties and Strains in Regimes", *Comparative Political Studies* 2 (1960), passim


6. Rose, "Parties, Factions....", p. 50; Seyd, p. 465

7. Finer, Berrington and Bartholomew, passim. An Early Day Motion is a resolution signed by a number of MPs of the same party which the signatories wish to have debated in the House.
8. Haseler, p. 217


11. Lester G. Seligman, "Leadership", in David L. Sills, p. 107

12. Robert L. Peabody, "Authority", in Sills, p. 473

13. Ibid., p. 474

14. The term Whip refers to an information sheet circulated to MPs by individuals in the PLP who are also called Whips. The information sheets direct the MPs on the PLP's official stance on issues coming before the House. The withdrawal of the Whip from an MP is an expression of formal disapproval.
Chapter Two

Keep Left and Keeping Left

Chapter two considers disputes arising within the PLP during the 1945 Parliament. In 1946 there was disagreement over the PLP leadership’s foreign policy - disagreement that was demonstrated in the House and in the form of a pamphlet, Keep Left. There were also arguments over the conscription period to be introduced, and over the nationalization of steel. The nationalization controversy was a forerunner of the pamphlet, Keeping Left. After brief consideration of these issues there will be an analysis of the extent to which MPs associated with both pamphlets can be considered a faction.

After the general election of 1945 the PLP was united as never before. Internal discipline was so good that, in June 1946, Standing Orders forbidding MPs to vote against official party decisions were suspended. These Standing Orders were not reimposed until March 1952. The PLP remained united until the autumn of 1946.

On November 18, 1946, R.H.S. Crossman, then a young left-wing backbencher, moved an amendment in the House criticising the foreign policy of Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Minister. Crossman specifically attacked Bevin’s policy of maintaining close military links with the USA.

Commenting on Crossman’s amendment, Tribune maintained that, for several months a section of the PLP had been "uneasy" about Bevin’s foreign policy. Those expressing discontent had been labelled "crypto-communists" by "Labour leaders", reported Tribune. However, the article continued, Crossman’s amendment
and the ninety PLP abstentions on the vote that followed, made it clear that disapproval of Bevin's foreign policy was not limited to a few extreme deviants. The abstentions constituted 24% of the PLP. During the next few months Tribune printed articles which reiterated Crossman's criticisms of November 1946.

During February and March 1947, Tribune criticised the government's conscription policy. In March 1947 the government put forward a bill to introduce an eighteen month conscription period. Such was the disagreement among the PLP on the eighteen month period that the government withdrew the bill. Tribune pointed out that the left-wing were not opposed to conscription but were concerned that the chronic manpower shortage be eased by quicker demobilization. In May, a bill was passed which stated that there would be a twelve month conscription period. The government's decision to reduce the proposed term to twelve months was regarded by James M. Burns and Stephen Haseler as a concession to the left of the PLP. The New Statesman commented at the time that the government had implicitly accepted backbench criticisms of the "inflated" size of the Armed Forces, which Britain could not afford to maintain, by reducing the proposed period for conscription.

Possibly the success of the conscription rebellion and the Crossman amendment of November 1946 were forerunners of a more formal statement of left-wing discontent. In May 1947 a pamphlet entitled Keep Left was written by fifteen Labour MPs, among them Crossman, and advertised in the New Statesman as a New Statesman publication.

Keep Left

Briefly, the main policy proposals in Keep Left
were:

1. Britain should construct a foreign policy independent of that of America, and concomitantly,
2. work for a closer association with France and the rest of Europe.
3. Demobilization should be speeded up.
4. A Minister of Economic Affairs, responsible for national economic planning should be appointed.
5. Britain should curtail her imports.

Some of *Keep Left*'s proposals reflected Cabinet disagreement. Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, had been advocating that the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, appoint a Minister for Economic Affairs. Britain actually did curtail her imports in the autumn of 1947. Michael Foot maintains that the authors of *Keep Left* arrived at their policies independently and that there had been no Cabinet leaks. After the publication of *Keep Left*, *Tribune* continued to criticise Bevin's foreign policy, but began to give greater prominence to the issue of steel nationalization.

**Keeping Left**

The Cabinet held differing views on steel nationalization with Aneurin Bevan, Minister of Health, "passionately" attached to it, while Attlee and Herbert Morrison, Lord President, were not so enamoured. Morrison was most concerned that the Labour government should follow a policy of "consolidation" rather than continue nationalizing more industries. At Morrison's instigation an enquiry was initiated into the possibility of the iron and steel industry accepting a Board of Control, appointed by the government, in return for abandonment of nationalization. This proposal was
hotly contested by Bevan, Dalton and possibly others in the Cabinet, and as a result it was abandoned.\textsuperscript{14}

In the autumn of 1947, a petition, signed by, what Foot terms, the overwhelming majority of Labour backbenchers, and a resolution moved by a PLP meeting, demanded the nationalization of steel at that Parliamentary session.\textsuperscript{15} The eventual decision to nationalize steel was seen by the \textit{Times} as "a ransom paid to radical insistence".\textsuperscript{16} The 1949 act, allowing the government to purchase the assets of the iron and steel companies without altering the industry's structure, gained approval in the Lords, with the proviso that the date for nationalization be postponed until after the next general election.\textsuperscript{17}

Differing opinions in the PLP over the nationalization of steel was probably one of the factors that prompted the pamphlet \textit{Keeping Left}. Written by twelve Labour MPs, among them Crossman, \textit{Keeping Left} was published in January 1950, like \textit{Keep Left}, as a \textit{New Statesman} pamphlet. While \textit{Keep Left} was mainly concerned with foreign policy, \textit{Keeping Left} focused on domestic policy.

Briefly, \textit{Keeping Left} suggested that Britain should progress toward a more socialist economy by increasing the number of industries publicly owned. Six main industries were identified as ready to be nationalized: road haulage, steel, insurance, cement, sugar and cotton. As part of a predominantly publicly owned economy the government should introduce a wages policy, subject to negotiation with the General Council of the TUC.\textsuperscript{18}

The fact that \textit{Keeping Left} specifically mentioned steel as one of the industries to be nationalized emphasised its authors' concern that a Labour government might adopt some measure of partial nationalization,
e.g. along the lines suggested by Morrison. Although Tribune applauded the pamphlet upon its publication, Tribune did not press Keeping Left's policies until March 1950. During February Tribune was more concerned with attacking the Conservative Party, prior to the 1950 general election. On February 23, 1950, the electorate reduced Labour's overall majority of 146 to a majority of 5.

The Keep Left MPs - a faction?

For the sake of brevity the term Keep Left MPs will be used throughout the following analysis. This term is intended to refer to MPs associated with both the Keep Left and the Keeping Left publications.

1. Membership

The seven MPs who contributed to both Keep Left and Keeping Left were: R.H.S. Crossman, Donald Bruce, Harold Davies, Leslie Hale, Ian Mikardo, Stephen Swingler, and George Wigg. The following MPs also wrote in Keep Left: Geoffrey Bing, Michael Foot, Fred Lee, R.W.G. Mackay, Benn Levy, J.P.W. Mallalieu Ernest Millington and Woodrow Wyatt. The MPs associated with Keeping Left only were: Sir Richard Acland, Barbara Castle, Tom Horabin, Marcus Lipton and Tom Williams.

The names listed above are those of twenty MPs associated with either or both pamphlets. Of these, Foot, Mallalieu and Mikardo contributed to almost every edition of Tribune during the 1945 Parliament. Another five MPs contributed sporadically to Tribune, namely: Castle, Crossman, Levy, Swingler and Wyatt. The opinions expressed by the MPs writing in Tribune were consistent with the pamphlets' policies. As the large number of abstentions on the foreign policy debate in November 1946 showed, the Keep Left MPs obtained the support of
other MPs on this issue. It is likely that the twenty MPs named above represented only the most active core of the Keep Left group.  

2. Leadership

Burns identifies Crossman as the leader of the Keep Left MPs. In addition to participating in the activities of the Keep Left MPs (see Organisation below), he also detailed the group's foreign policy preferences in the House in November 1946. Foot, Mallalieu and Mikardo may be considered part of the group's leadership because they regularly pressed the group's policy preferences through Tribune. There is no evidence that Crossman attracted followers through the force of his personality, nor that his leadership was based upon the authority of an official party post - he was a backbencher with no obvious likelihood of receiving an official post in the near future. He was not therefore in a position to use formal sanctions, nor is there any evidence that he employed any other informal sanctions.

3. Organisation

The Keep Left MPs appear to have considered themselves organised. Foot wrote that the Keep Left authors started what they called a "Keep Left Group" in early 1947. Jennie Lee, wife of Bevan, wrote in Tribune, that the pamphlet Keep Left was the outcome of a number of MPs meeting casually in the House. It is probable that similar meetings preceded the production of Keeping Left. Burns also noted that the Keep Left MPs met "weekly and rather openly." 

The Keep Left MPs produced two pamphlets and also wrote articles in Tribune expounding their policies. Apart from writing articles and pamphlets the Keep Left MPs appeared to be attempting to attract attention to
their policies in the House. All twenty MPs appear to have abstained in the vote following the debate on foreign policy in November 1946.\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Tribune} referred to the left-wing MPs amongst the abstainers as "rebels" who were trying to demonstrate their opinions on foreign policy.\textsuperscript{26} For two months after the abstentions \textit{Tribune} continued to reiterate the viewpoint expressed by Crossman in the House in 1946.\textsuperscript{27} Similarly, \textit{Tribune} pressed its viewpoint on conscription several times during February, March and April 1947.

There is little evidence to suggest that the \textit{Keep Left} MPs organised themselves to promote their policy on steel nationalization other than through the production of \textit{Keeping Left} and prominent articles in \textit{Tribune} throughout 1947 and 1948.\textsuperscript{28} Apparently they did not need to. According to Foot, the majority of the Labour backbenchers and, in the Cabinet, Bevan and Dalton, wanted the nationalization of steel.\textsuperscript{29}

4. The \textit{Keep Left} MPs seen by others

There is some slight evidence that the \textit{Keep Left} MPs were identified as a distinct group within Parliament. Emanuel Shinwell, a Labour MP at the time, refers in his history of the Labour Party, to "the \textit{Keep Left} movement".\textsuperscript{30} The \textit{New Statesman} reported that \textit{Keep Left} was not regarded by the PLP leadership as an "example of wicked rebellion".\textsuperscript{31} This statement indicates that the leadership was aware of the existence of \textit{Keep Left}, and its authors. A group of MPs do not have to be regarded as wicked rebels in order to be identified as a faction. It has been noted that \textit{Keep Left} reflected Cabinet arguments on import control and on the question of appointing a Minister of Economic Affairs. Perhaps this reflection helps explain why the leadership did not regard \textit{Keep Left} as rebellious. Similarly \textit{Keeping Left} reflected
Cabinet divisions on the specific issue of steel.

5. Policies

The Keep Left MPs expounded a range of policies which they perceived as different from those advocated by the PLP leadership. Their policies will be divided into domestic and foreign policy:

(a) Domestic. The Keep Left MPs did not differ from the majority of the PLP in wanting the nationalization of steel, although Attlee and particularly Morrison were not enthusiastic about it. However, where the Keep Left MPs did differ from the majority of the PLP was in regarding steel as only one of many industries that should be nationalized. They advocated the nationalization of the majority of large firms because they considered public ownership a method of obtaining an equitable distribution of wealth in society. An editorial in Tribune proclaimed:

The battle for steel is the battle between capitalism and socialism in Britain. It concerns the very foundations of our society. 32

Tribune stated that nationalization was an important step on the route to socialism. The building of socialism was one of the Party's principles. The Party should stand by its principles and present them to the public: no attempt should be made to deny them or to "gloss over them". The PLP should stick to its intentions to nationalize large firms, even if this proved to be unpopular with the electorate. If the electorate rejected the Party's policy of nationalization, which had been founded upon its socialist principles, then, said Tribune, "efforts must be redoubled to obtain converts in time for the next election." 33

Wage planning as advocated in Keeping Left was an additional feature of a predominantly publicly owned and controlled economy.
In contrast to the Keep Left MPs' opinions on nationalization, Morrison said:

Labour should not stand for immediate, universal nationalization; or for the use of economic controls merely for the sake of it, or where no public advantage is served. Each case should be argued on its merits by both sides in the controversy. 34

(b) Foreign. The Keep Left MPs felt that Bevin was trying to sustain a close military association between Britain and the USA. They considered that close military association with the USA would inevitably result in the division of the world into two power blocs, which would endanger civilization. 35 Instead of aiding in the development of two power blocs, Britain should work for closer cooperation with France towards a more unified Europe. A unified Europe could in the Keep Left MPs' opinion, act as a balance between Soviet and American spheres of influence. Britain's present close association with the USA was also hampering her in taking any initiative in promoting disarmament talks with the USSR. Association with the USA implied that Britain shared America's suspicion of the USSR. 36

On the subject of conscription the Keep Left MPs did not differ very much from the PLP leadership. The Keep Left MPs were not opposed to conscription per se but did not want conscription for as long a period as eighteen months.

6. Duration.

Crossman's speech in the House in November 1946 appears to have been the inspiration behind the emergence of the Keep Left group in early 1947. The actual date of the formation of the Keep Left group is unclear; they are reported to have held meetings prior to the
publication of Keep Left and were active in pressing their views on conscription from February 1947, through Tribune. The steel issue arose in the autumn of 1947 and the Keep Left MPs promoted their nationalization policies throughout 1947 and early 1948. If February 1947 is taken as the time at which the Keep Left MPs emerged as a distinct group, it appears that they were active during 1947 and early 1948 but that their activity dropped off until January 1950. Keeping Left was published in January 1950 and appears to have been an isolated attempt on the part of the Keep Left MPs to restate the policies on nationalization expressed in Tribune during 1947 and 1948.

The timing of the publication of Keeping Left, immediately prior to a general election, probably precluded both dissension within the PLP over its contents, and any activity in the House that might have ensued to promote the pamphlet's policies. After the publication of Keeping Left, articles in Tribune concentrated upon the forthcoming election rather than on promoting the pamphlet's ideas. It seems that the Keep Left MPs existed as a distinct group for a year, i.e. early 1947 to early 1948. However, the Keep Left MPs expressed their views from November 1946 (through Tribune and Crossman's amendment in the House) to January 1950 (the publication of Keeping Left), a period of three years.

It seems that the twenty Keep Left MPs can be identified as a faction. They had a leader in Crossman, a degree of organisation, and seem to have been identifiable to others as a group within the PLP. They articulated policies which they perceived as different from those of the PLP leadership for a period of three years, and were active in promoting their policies for one year.
Footnotes to Chapter Two


4. *Tribune* November 22, 1946, p. 6

5. Burns, p. 865


8. *New Statesman*, April 12, 1947, p. 245. According to this article the Cabinet, as well as the backbenchers, had been divided on defence policy for a while.

9. Foot, p. 90

10. Ibid., p. 89-91

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 219

13. By 1949 the Labour government had nationalized the Bank of England, coal, railways, canals, road haulage, cable and wireless and set up public corporations to run airlines, electricity and gas supply

14. Foot, pp. 224, 226; Pelling, p. 97

15. Foot, p. 225


17. Pelling, p. 97

18. *Tribune*, March 10, 1950, p. 3

19. Ibid.
20. There were ninety abstentions in the vote on the debate on foreign policy in November 1946

21. Burns, p. 862

22. Foot, p. 90

23. Tribune, May 9, 1947, p. 7

24. Burns, p. 862

25. Hansard, Vol. 430, col. 539. Hansard does not publish the names of abstainers, so it can only be inferred that, if an MP's name did not appear on the voting list, that he abstained. His name may be absent for other reasons too, e.g. illness and therefore absence from the House.

26. Tribune, December 6, 1946, p. 2; December 20, 1946, p. 3; January 3, 1947, p. 1

27. For example, Tribune, December 6, 1947, p. 2; December 20, 1946, p. 2

28. Ibid., July 30, 1947, p. 7; August 13, 1947, p. 9; October 10, 1947, p. 1

29. Foot, pp. 224-7


32. Tribune, October 1, 1948, p. 3

33. Ibid., March 10, 1950, p. 3


36. Tribune, December 6, 1946, p. 2; December 20, 1946, p. 2; November 22, 1946, p. 2
Chapter Three

The Bevanites

During the years 1951-1956 a number of left-wing Labour MPs became known as the Bevanites. They expressed opposition to some foreign and domestic policies of the Labour Party leadership in two pamphlets, One Way Only and Going Our Way? and through the weekly paper, Tribune. After consideration of the main disputes in which the Bevanites were involved there will be an analysis of the extent to which the Bevanites were a faction.

In the autumn of 1950, Tribune began to express alarm at the cost of Britain's defence programme. While recognising that the present arms programme would be accepted by the Commons, Tribune was strongly opposed to any increase in arms expenditure. As expenditure on rearmament increased, so the British standards of living would decrease, argued Tribune.¹

Aneurin Bevan, Minister of Health from August 1945 to January 1951, and Minister of Labour from January 1951 to April 1951, had been instrumental in establishing a free National Health Service and had always strongly opposed any suggestion that prescription charges be levied.² When Hugh Gaitskell, Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed that defence expenditure be further increased at the cost of the totally free National Health Service, Bevan resigned.³ Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade and John Freeman, Under Secretary at the Ministry of Supply, resigned with Bevan. All three resigning Ministers agreed that Britain was financing a foreign policy, akin to that of the wartime coalition government, at
the cost of the social services.  

*Tribune* wholeheartedly endorsed the resignations and proceeded to attack Gaitskell for causing disunity within the PLP, maintaining that disunity could have been avoided had Gaitskell not encroached upon the National Health Service to pay for increased defence expenditure.

In July 1951, *Tribune* published a pamphlet entitled *One Way Only* in which Bevan, Freeman and Wilson restated their argument that Britain did not need to spend so much on defence. On September 21, 1951, *Tribune* produced another pamphlet, *Going Our Way?* which was attacked at the 1951 Conference by trades union leaders. There were two reasons for this attack and neither were related to any policy proposals made in the pamphlet.

1. *Going Our Way?* attacked five trades union representatives on the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party (NEC) for voting for an NEC resolution which supported the defence increases. The pamphlet claimed that rank-and-file members of the five unions had put forward resolutions to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) disapproving the defence increases. The five representatives had voted for a policy which, said *Going Our Way?* contradicted the expressed wishes of the trade union members they represented.

2. The pamphlet appeared two days after Attlee had announced that a general election would be held on October 25. Apparently, those associated with *Tribune* were unaware that Attlee was going to announce an election when the pamphlet was authorized.

The accusations against the trades union members of the
NEC publicly proclaimed disharmony within the Labour Party and did nothing to enhance the Party's appeal to the electorate. The timing of the pamphlet, just prior to an election, augmented reaction within the PLP against the Bevanites.

Rampant Bevanism

The defeat of the Labour Party at the 1951 general election had three immediate and lasting effects:

1. Bevan, Freeman and Wilson had no further need to continue voting with the party simply to keep the Labour government in being. (During 1950-51 the government had a slender majority of five seats over all other parties together).^9

2. Released from government obligations, Gaitskell was free to concern himself with a group of "new thinkers" or "revisionists" of Labour Party socialist ideas.\[10\]

3. The PLP as a whole was released from trying to maintain unity in order to avoid defeat on the floor of the House.

During November and December 1951, Tribune continued to print articles attacking the increase in defence expenditure. When the Conservative government announced that military expenses were too high, Tribune assumed a jubilant "told you so" attitude toward the PLP leadership.\[11\]

In the early months of 1952, the Bevanites, through Tribune, were expressing intense concern that the Conservative government might attack the social services. The PLP leadership was attacked for approving the government defence plans and for too uncritical an approach to the government's foreign policy. Disapproval of the PLP leadership's line on defence was openly expressed in March 1952. The PLP proposed an amendment in a defence debate which essentially approved Conservative defence policy, but maintained that it could not be
executed by a Conservative government. Fifty-seven Labour MPs abstained on this official Opposition amendment and voted against the Conservatives so that they would not appear to support the government's defence plans. The fifty-seven MPs, according to Tribune, comprised the Bevanites and other Labour MPs who disagreed with the Labour leadership on this specific issue. The immediate result of the fifty-seven MPs' action was the re-imposition of the PLP standing orders on discipline, which had been in abeyance since June 1946.

In October 1952, a decisive attempt was made to curtail the Bevanites, to whom Attlee referred as a "party within a party." Attlee submitted a resolution to a PLP meeting which called for the abandonment of all unofficial groups within the PLP and also required members of the PLP to cease making public attacks on each other. This resolution was endorsed by a majority of the PLP.

Of course, Tribune attacked the PLP decision to abandon all unofficial groups, but expressed itself ready to accept the decision of the majority. After the official disbanding of unofficial groups, Bevan Crossman, Driberg, Castle, Mikardo and Wilson continued to meet. These six MPs were joined in their meetings by Jennie Lee, wife of Aneurin Bevan, and Michael Foot, editor of Tribune.

The slow disintegration of the Bevanites

On April 13, 1954, Sir Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, said in the House that the governments of Britain and the USA were considering the establishment of an organisation to protect the peace of South East Asia and the Western Pacific. Attlee asked Eden whether the new organisation would be open to any nation to join. Bevan regarded Attlee's question as an expression
of concurrence with the idea of establishing such a defence unit and immediately stated his objection to it.\textsuperscript{19} On April 15, Bevan announced his resignation from the Shadow Cabinet because he could not agree with Attlee's implied acceptance of Eden's proposals.\textsuperscript{20}

When Bevan resigned, Wilson was next in line to take a seat on the Shadow Cabinet. Against Bevan's wishes he took Bevan's vacant place.\textsuperscript{21} Wilson stated that he agreed with Bevan in disapproving the proposed South East Asia organisation. However, he said, he was accepting a seat in the Shadow Cabinet for the sake of Party unity. By taking Bevan's place on the Shadow Cabinet, against Bevan's wishes, Wilson appeared to be turning his back on Bevan.\textsuperscript{22} Wilson's desertion of the Bevanites appears to be the first step toward the disintegration of the Bevanites as a cohesive group in Parliament.

The second step in the disintegration of the Bevanites occurred in March 1955. During the early months of 1955, \textit{Tribune} had been expressing concern that Britain might use nuclear weapons to defend herself. \textit{Tribune} regularly published articles urging a reduction in defence expenditure and more decisive moves toward international disarmament.\textsuperscript{23} On March 2, 1955, Bevan openly expressed \textit{Tribune}'s objections in the House. Bevan asked Attlee if the Labour leaders had agreed that Hydrogen bombs would be used "against any sort of aggression."\textsuperscript{24} According to Dalton, Bevan appeared to be attacking his own front bench.\textsuperscript{25} Bevan stated that he did not intend to vote with the PLP in that debate if Attlee's policy was to employ H-bombs to defend Britain. Attlee's reply to Bevan was that he considered that the mere possession of thermonuclear weapons as a deterrent was a way of preventing another war.\textsuperscript{26} Bevan and sixty-two other Labour MPs abstained
in the vote that followed. The vote concerned whether or not Britain should rely upon the threat of using thermonuclear weapons as a deterrent to aggression. The official PLP line in this instance was that, while it accepted that possession of nuclear weapons could act as a deterrent, it did not regard the Conservative government as competent to carry out its defence policy. The sixty-two Labour MPs who abstained on the vote did not include six MPs who had been associated with the Bevanites. Wilson, Crossman, Freeman, Stephen Swingler, Leslie Hale and Hugh Delargy voted with the PLP. Foot attributes the lack of cohesion among the Bevanites to confusion over which way they should vote. The result of Bevan's open challenge to Attlee was the withdrawal of the Whip from Bevan.

Bevan disagrees with his followers

In 1956 Bevan was re-elected by the PLP to the Shadow Cabinet and accepted the post of Shadow Foreign Secretary. Thereafter he appeared to cease openly advocating foreign policies that differed from those of the leadership. On September 27, 1957, Tribune published its first statement for unilateral nuclear disarmament. At the 1957 Labour Party Annual Conference, Bevan spoke against a resolution which called on Britain to renounce the testing and manufacture of nuclear weapons. The essence of Bevan's argument was that, if the Conference accepted this resolution, it would affect Britain's policy towards her allies. Britain would in fact appear to be deserting her allies. Bevan went on to say that, in attempting to negotiate with other nations, a British Foreign Secretary would be only preaching sermons, if Britain had no nuclear weapons. Preaching sermons would not help to take away the menace of nuclear weapons from the rest of the world.
In commenting upon his speech the New Statesman maintained that Bevan had made a pact with the right wing of the party to support its views. According to Foot, Bevan resented this accusation. Considerations of Party unity had influenced Bevan's opinions. Bevan appears not to have shown such concern for party unity prior to this, e.g. March 1955.

After the Conference, Tribune continued to publish articles advocating unilateral nuclear disarmament. In private there was a good deal of bitterness between the regular contributors to Tribune, i.e. Bevan's erstwhile followers, and Bevan.

Victory for Socialism (Bevanism without Bevan)

In early 1958 Victory for Socialism (VFS) emerged as an attempt to rally the former Bevanites, without the central figure of Bevan himself. The main concern of the VFS was to stimulate anti-H-bomb activity in the constituencies, but VFS created very little disturbance within the PLP.

According to Lord Windlesham, VFS was formed by a number of left-wing MPs in February 1957. The formally organised executive committee of VFS comprised Sir Frank Messer, M.P., president; Stephen Swingler, chairman; A.E. Oram, M.P., vice-chairman and Ian Mikardo, chairman of the VFS Home Policy Committee. Two other former Bevanites, Silverman and Frank Allaun, were also closely associated with VFS.

In March 1958, the Times reported that PLP leaders had warned MPs connected with VFS that they should not break the Party rules which stipulated that no unofficial organisations should exist within the Labour Party. According to the Times, VFS went out of its way to insist that it was not a party within a party. The Times also reported that the majority of Labour MPs saw no reason to be concerned about VFS'
activities erupting into conflict within the PLP.\footnote{39}

As VFS did not involve factional conflict within the PLP its relevance for the purposes of this study is minimal. The central question is one involving the activities of Bevan and his followers and the issue of conflict within the PLP.

The Bevanites - a faction?

1. Membership

It is difficult to systematically identify every MP associated with the Bevanites. Those MPs named below represent only the most active members of the group. Regular articles appearing in *Tribune* between 1951 and 1956 identify twelve MPs as Bevanites. The twelve are: Allaun, Bevan, Castle, Crossman, Delargy, Driberg, Freeman, Hale, Mikardo, Silverman, Swingler and Wilson. Foot, editor of *Tribune*, may also be considered a Bevanite, but he was not an MP during these years. As the fifty-seven Labour abstentions in March 1952 and the sixty-two abstentions in March 1955 show, the Bevanites could attract the support of a number of other MPs. It is possible to say that the maximum number of Bevanites was sixty-two and the minimum the twelve identified above.\footnote{40}

2. Leadership

During 1950 and 1951 *Tribune* was decrying increases in defence expenditure. When Bevan resigned in 1951 he was calling attention to the disapproval of the Labour leadership's policy expressed by himself and *Tribune*. Bevan's resignation in 1951 was the first of several occasions upon which he was prepared to attract the hostility of the leadership by declaring openly his opposition to the leadership's policies. His open defiance of the Labour leadership seems to indicate that he was the leader of the group. In March 1952, fifty-seven Labour MPs abstained on the official
Opposition amendment in the defence debate. The *Daily Herald* reported that Bevan led the abstainers.\(^{41}\) In April 1954 Bevan resigned from the Shadow Cabinet over the proposed establishment of a South East Asia Treaty Organisation. This was his second resignation from an official PLP post, and demonstrates that Bevan was prepared to do more than simply write articles in *Tribune* and contribute to the pamphlets, *One Way Only* and *Going Our Way?* to express his disapproval of the leadership's policies. In March 1955, Bevan, then a member of the Shadow Cabinet, disagreed openly with Attlee in the House. This may be seen as another indication of his defiance of the Labour leadership.

Bevan also had a great ability to rally the rank-and-file Labour supporters to him.\(^{42}\) Rank-and-file support was demonstrated during the early 1950s, when constituency Labour Party delegates to the Annual Conference consistently returned Bevan top of the poll for the constituency section of the NEC. Within Parliament Bevan evinced a quality of leadership that gained him the respect of his followers in the PLP. Foot refers to Bevan as "the outstanding Parliamentary debater on the Labour benches."\(^{43}\) The term "Bevanite" first gained currency in the autumn of 1951. Used to refer to Bevan's friends in Parliament, it was employed by Labour MPs outside Bevan's close circle of associates and indicates that others identified him as the leader of the group.\(^{44}\)

Bevan's leadership appears to have been based on his personality and Parliamentary debating skills. Bevan held Shadow Cabinet posts from 1952-4 and his followers may have deferred to his official Party position. Holding Shadow Cabinet posts meant that he may have been able to employ sanctions, but there is no evidence that he ever did.
3. Organisation

In his biography of Aneurin Bevan, Foot states that the Bevanites met regularly from January 1952 until Attlee outlawed unofficial groups in October 1952. At the meetings they discussed methods of attacking the Conservative government's policies from their own standpoint. They also considered parliamentary tactics, which Foot does not detail, by which they could press their opinions more forcibly than the Labour ex-Ministers could theirs.\(^{45}\)

The Bevanites organised through Tribune to publicise their policies and produced two pamphlets, One Way Only and Going Our Way? which reiterated arguments presented in Tribune. Tribune was identified by Arthur Deakin, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union as a medium of publicity for the Bevanites. Deakin said:

It seems to me that the paper can only be regarded as a medium of publicity for a dissident element who constantly seek to challenge decisions which have been reached in a democratic manner within the Movement. \(^{45}\)

On several occasions Tribune printed articles written by Labour MPs who held views in opposition to those expressed by the Bevanites. In May 1951, C.A.R. Crosland defended the Labour government's decision to impose prescription charges; in December 1951 Hugh Gaitskell also wrote defending the prescription charges; in October 1952, Denis Healey contributed an article that attacked Tribune's anti-American stance.\(^{47}\) In publishing the opinions of those who strongly disagreed with Bevanite policy proposals, Tribune illustrated policy differences within the PLP in detail, and thus highlighted and exacerbated intra-
party cleavages.

As *Tribune* was on sale in the constituencies it proclaimed widely the disputes on policy that were conducted between the Bevanites and the Labour leadership. *Tribune* may be seen as a means for recruiting support for the Bevanites outside Parliament. Extra-Parliamentary support for the Bevanites was evinced at the Labour Party Annual Conferences of 1952, 1953 and 1954, when six of the seven seats on the constituency section of the NEC were filled by Bevanites, namely: Bevan, Castle, Crossman, Driberg, Mikardo and Wilson. The Bevanites claimed that, because they enjoyed a large amount of support from constituency delegates to the Annual Conferences, they were representative of the Labour Party rank-and-file. They therefore considered that the Parliamentary leadership should take Bevanite opinions into consideration when formulating policies.  

The Bevanites needed to prove that they represented rank-and-file opinion, because, within Parliament, they represented a small minority. The dearth of support for the Bevanites in Westminster is illustrated by the 1952 Shadow Cabinet election results. While the NEC is elected by delegates to the Labour Party Conference, the Shadow Cabinet is elected by the PLP. The twelve Labour MPs who receive the most votes in the poll for the Shadow Cabinet are elected. In the 1952 Shadow Cabinet elections, Bevan was the only Bevanite to secure a seat, although Wilson, Driberg and Castle also ran.

4. The Bevanites seen by others

Attlee referred to the Bevanites as a "party within a party", as also did Patrick Gordon Walker. Emanuel Shinwell, a Labour MP in 1952, has referred to the Bevanites as a "faction" that was "virtually a second Opposition to the Shadow Cabinet." Gaitskell
described "Bevanism" as a "conspiracy", with Bevanaas its leader, "an organisation run by Mikardo and a newspaper run by Foot." 52

5. Policies

Throughout the 1950s Tribune continued to repeat that a policy of widespread nationalization was essential to establishing socialism in Britain. The arguments were identical to those employed by the Keep Left MPs. It is not necessary to repeat here what has been dealt with in Chapter two.

Bevan firmly believed that the USSR did not intend to encroach upon Western Europe simply because the USSR was not producing enough steel to enable her to launch an offensive against the Western allies. He considered that overestimation of Soviet military strength, implicit in excessive rearmament on Britain's part, and belief in the likelihood of Soviet aggression, might dangerously excite international friction. Bevan also disapproved of Britain rearming extensively because he considered that money spent on arms could be better spent on the social services. Bevan was decisively against Britain rearming in response to American pressure to do so. In responding to American pressure Britain would be placing herself in a position of increasing identification with US foreign policy. The more she identified with US foreign policy, the less restraint she could be expected to exert on America. Too close an association with the USA also implied that Britain was losing any claims to an independent foreign policy. 53

Bevan differed from the PLP leadership with regard to the degree of association that Britain should have with the USA. Neither Bevan nor Tribune advocated total severance from the USA. They were arguing for a less close association, particularly in the fields of
foreign policy and defence. The Bevanites considered that, Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Minister from July 1945 to March 1951, seemed to be too ready too frequently to concur with the USA's foreign policy.\textsuperscript{54} Attlee, Bevin and Herbert Morrison, Lord President from July 1945 to March 1951 and Foreign Minister from March 1951 to October 1951, were in favour of a strong alliance with the USA, particularly for the purpose of defence against possible Soviet encroachment into Western Europe.\textsuperscript{55}

There was disagreement within the PLP over the question of German rearmament. The Bevanites argued that East and West Germany should be re-united and that the rearmament of West Germany might be at the cost of re-unification. They considered that if Britain supported the rearmament of West Germany and her inclusion in a European Defence Community, the USSR might be unaccommodating in negotiations for the re-unification of Germany. The USSR might feel threatened by a European Defence Community which symbolised a consolidation of Western military strength.\textsuperscript{56} According to Foot, Attlee and Bevin were opposed to German rearmament until 1951, when the US president Truman, pressed them to accept the principle of rearmament. In September 1951 Morrison gave the Labour government's support to the idea of a European Defence Community which would include Western Germany. In 1954 Gaitskell and Morrison insisted that the Labour Party should support German rearmament.\textsuperscript{57}

At a PLP meeting in February 1954, a resolution opposing German rearmament, proposed by Wilson was defeated by two votes. The Annual Party Conference in October 1954 also evinced a small majority for rearmament. The Conference defeat for those against German rearmament was regarded by \textit{Tribune} as a defeat for the Bevanites' policy.\textsuperscript{58}
The Bevanites aroused disagreement within the PLP over the questions of German rearmament, Britain's association with the USA, the feasibility of a Soviet attack on Western Europe, the cost of Britain's defence expenditure, and the introduction of prescription charges. They also perceived their policy on nationalization as distinctly different from the leadership's policy.

6. Duration

At the general election of February 1950 the Labour government was returned to power with an overall majority of five seats. In October 1951 the Party went to the country in an attempt to increase its majority but lost the election to the Conservative Party. Labour's loss of the 1951 election meant that Labour MPs, such as Bevan, who disagreed with the policies of the Labour leadership, were freed from the necessity of voting with the Labour Party in order to keep a Labour government in existence. The emergence of the Bevanites may be dated from October 1951. During 1951 and 1952 the Bevanites organised to promote policies which varied from those of the PLP leadership. After the outlawing of unofficial groups in 1952, six Bevanites continued to meet. The six were joined in their meetings by Foot, in order, Foot himself has written, to maintain links with Tribune, the Bevanites' main medium of expression.

In 1956 Bevan was elected to the Shadow Cabinet and accepted the post of Shadow Foreign Secretary. In September 1957, Tribune began publishing articles which advocated unilateral nuclear disarmament. At the Party Conference of 1957 Bevan spoke against British unilateral nuclear disarmament, and thus opposed Tribune's policy. Bevan's opposition to a policy of his former followers appears to have marked
the end of the Bevanites. The attempt through VFS to re-group the Bevanites was more an example of extra-Parliamentary factionalism than PLP factionalism.

The Bevanites were MPs, with a clearly identifiable leader. They promoted a range of policies, over a period of some five years, that aroused disagreement within the PLP. They were seen by other members of the PLP as a faction. They were organised to press their policies both within and outside Parliament. Thus, the Bevanites appear to fulfill the criteria for designation as a faction.
Footnotes to Chapter Three

1. Tribune, September 15, 1950, p. 3; November 3, 1950, p. 2; January 26, 1951, p. 2; February 9, 1951, p. 7

2. Since 1949 Bevan had made it clear that any charge on the Health Service would mean his resignation. For details of Bevan's role in the establishment of the Health Service see Michael Foot, Aneurin Bevan Vol. II (London: Davis-Poynter, 1973), pp. 102-218


4. Tribune, May 18, 1951, p. 6. Tribune argued that the right-wing of the Party was failing to see the non-socialist ends toward which it was moving through its foreign policy.

5. Tribune, May 4, 1951, pp. 4,5

6. The trade union leaders concerned were: Arthur Deakin, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union; William Lawther, President of the National Union of Mineworkers, and Tom Williamson, General Secretary of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers Union

7. Times, September 21, 1951, p. 3. The representatives and unions concerned were: W.T. Potter, National Union of Railwaymen; E.G. Gooch, National Union of Agricultural Workers; W.A. Burke, Transport and General Workers Union; S. Watson, National Union of Mineworkers; E. Irwin, Electrical Trades Union.

8. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 8 (II), June-July 1950-52, 11734A, col. 2; Brand, p. 271; Foot, p. 352. Tribune had been advertising the pamphlet for two weeks before it was on sale and could probably not have withdrawn it from sale at the last minute.

9. David Butler and Jennie Freeman, British Political Facts (London, 1968) and Haseler, p. 21. Foot argued in Tribune that the imposition of charges on teeth and spectacles provided under the Health Service had been passed in the House because the only alternative for those MPs who disagreed was to allow a government defeat. Tribune, December 28, 1951, p. 3
10. This point is dealt with in Chapter Four


12. Ibid., March 21, 1952, p. 1

13. Both Haseler and Foot label all 57 as "left-wing". Foot, p. 364 and Haseler, p. 22


15. Haseler, p. 22

16. The resolution is reprinted in the *Times*, October 24, 1952, p. 8, cited by Haseler, p. 23. This resolution was carried by 188 votes to 51. There were 295 Labour MPs at the time.


18. Foot, pp. 390-1. Foot was an MP from 1945 until 1951. He lost his seat in the 1951 general election and was not returned to Parliament until 1966.

19. Foot, p. 430

20. Ibid., p. 431

21. Dalton, p. 409; Foot, p. 433


24. Ibid., March 11, 1955, p. 1

25. Dalton, p. 409

26. M. Foot, pp. 461, 464. Foot points out that Bevan was attacking Churchill, not Attlee

27. Ibid., p. 458

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 465
30. Attlee was, according to Foot, against withdrawing the Whip, but Gaitskell was in favour of decisive disciplinary action. M. Foot, pp. 468-474

31. Tribune, September 27, 1957, p. 7

32. Labour Party Annual Conference Report (LPACR) 1957, pp. 181, 183. Conference voted against unilateral nuclear disarmament by 5,836,000 votes to 781,000

33. M. Foot, p. 581

34. Ibid., p. 579

35. Ibid., p. 602


37. Lord Windlesham, Communication and Political Power (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 84. Lord Windlesham is a Conservative Peer. He cannot necessarily be regarded as knowing as much about the inner details of the PLP in this period as a Labour MP.

38. Times, March 6, 1958, p. 10; New Statesman, March 8, 1958, p. 1

39. Times, March 6, 1958, p. 10; March 7, 1958, p. 10

40. Both the vote in March 1952 and that in March 1955 concerned opposition amendments in defence debates.

41. Daily Herald, March 6, 1952, p. 6, cited in Haseler, p. 22


43. M. Foot, p. 360

44. Ibid., p. 343

45. Ibid., pp. 359-60

46. Tribune, March 21, 1952, p. 8

47. Ibid., May 4, 1951, pp. 4,5; December 14, 1951, p. 1; October 10, 1952, p. 3, respectively.

48. Ibid., October, 19, 1952, p. 2
49. Ibid., December 5, 1952, p. 4. Gaitskell, Alfred Robens, Hugh Dalton, James Callaghan, Emanuel Shinwell and Philip Noel-Baker were all elected to the Shadow Cabinet, but failed to be elected to the NEC.

50. M. Foot, pp. 378, 384

51. Shinwell, p. 193

52. Crossman's unpublished diaries, cited by M. Foot, o. 473

53. M. Foot, pp. 306-7; Tribune February 23, 1951, p. 10

54. Tribune, January 3, 1947, p. 1

55. Attlee pointed out that it was not until the Berlin airlift that the Americans became aware of the potential threat posed by the USSR - a threat of which Britain had been aware for some time. Francis Williams, *A Prime Minister Remembers* (London: Heinemann, 1961), p. 172

Brand points out that symptoms of non-cooperation by the USSR after the war were primary factors in determining Britain's foreign policy. According to Brand, Britain had to protect herself from a "possible one-power domination of the Continent". Brand, p. 258

56. Tribune, March 21, 1952, p. 2; April 18, 1952, p. 2; May 2, 1952, p. 2; November 20, 1953, p. 1; November 27, 1953, p. 1

57. M. Foot, p. 403

58. Ibid., p. 427; Haseler, p. 128; Brand, p. 277

59. M. Foot, pp. 390-1
Chapter Four

The Revisionists

Chapter four considers the Labour Party disputes of the late 1950s and early 1960s. During the 1950s a number of Labour MPs became identifiable as revisionists of traditional Labour policies. The leader of the Labour Party from 1955 to 1963, Hugh Gaitskell, was closely associated with the revisionists. From Gaitskell's leadership arose the Clause IV debate in 1959-60. In 1960 Conference voted for a policy of unilateral disarmament. From Gaitskell's refusal to accept this decision as binding upon the PLP arose the unilateralism dispute of 1960-61.

While the Clause IV debate excited controversy within the PLP, the unilateralism debate was more a dispute between the PLP and Conference. However, the unilateralism argument prompted Harold Wilson to challenge Gaitskell's leadership. After brief consideration of these disputes, the extent to which the revisionists were a faction will be explained.

During the 1950s a number of Labour MPs began to advocate a reappraisal of the Labour Party's traditional policies. Their efforts to restate Party policies earned them the name of revisionists, or "new thinkers". The revisionists expressed most of their opinions through the periodical, Socialist Commentary, which, by the mid-fifties, had become known as a distinctly revisionist journal.

From 1953 to 1955, Hugh Gaitskell was closely linked with Socialist Commentary, as were several other Labour MPs, namely: Austen Albu, C.A.R. Crosland, Denis Healey, Alan McCulloch, Fred Mulley, Alfred Robens, J. Roper, H.A. Turner and Kenneth Younger.

In 1955 Clement Attlee retired as leader of the Labour Party and was succeeded by Gaitskell. Thereafter Gaitskell ceased to associate overtly with
Socialist Commentary. He did, however, continue to meet with a group of close political friends at his house in Frognal Gardens, Hampstead, and his friends were known to be revisionists. Those Labour MPs meeting at Gaitskell's house were: Crosland, Roy Jenkins, Douglas Jay and Patrick Gordon Walker. The Sunday Times referred to these MPs as the "Frognal Group."

Despite being clearly identifiable as a group of MPs who presented their views in a particular journal, the revisionists did not excite argument within the PLP over their policies until after the 1959 general election. In October 1959 the Conservatives won the general election for the third consecutive time.

Clause IV

Inevitably the Labour Party discussed the election. At the post-election Party Conference, held in Blackpool in November 1959, Gaitskell attributed the loss of the election to Labour's lack of appeal to an increasingly affluent working-class. He suggested that the Party should make a special effort to gain votes from the ever-widening middle-class. Gaitskell made specific reference to Clause IV, Section 4, of the Labour Party Constitution. He argued that this clause was the only clause that explained Labour's aims, and it implied that the Party's only precise objective was nationalization. Voters, he claimed, were confused about Labour's intentions regarding public ownership, and thought that the Party intended to "take over everything indiscriminately." The Labour Party had many aims other than nationalization and Gaitskell expressed the hope that they could be incorporated into the Constitution.

At no point in his speech did Gaitskell say that Clause IV should be removed from the Constitution. However, his speech was interpreted by many at the Conference as a suggestion that Clause IV be removed.
J. Dugdale, MP for West Bromwich, said that Gaitskell had told the Conference "that we have got to scrap the policy of nationalization." In the closing debate at the Conference, Aneurin Bevan stated his opposition to Gaitskell's suggestions and argued that the Party should not change its policies because the electorate had rejected them, but should try and present its policies more attractively.

After the Conference the debate over Clause IV continued with MPs from both right and left of the PLP speaking against the removal of Clause IV from the Constitution. For example, George Brown, the Labour Party's official spokesman on defence, who considered himself right-wing, argued for its retention. In Tribune Bevan wrote an article in which he said that he was certain that the majority of the Labour Party would not agree to excising the idea of nationalization from the Constitution.

The Clause IV debate appeared to be settled in March 1960, when the NEC accepted an amendment to the Constitution. The amendment retained Clause IV intact but added twelve aims of the Labour Party to the Constitution. The new aims were similar to those suggested by Gaitskell at the 1959 Conference. The Times reported that Gaitskell had achieved what he set out to do at the Conference, and also noted that all sections of the PLP seemed content with the outcome. The new aims were not in the end incorporated into the Constitution. By July 1960 it had become obvious that the NEC would not obtain a sufficient majority of votes at the 1960 Conference for an amendment. The annual conferences of individual Trades Unions revealed a large vote against an amendment. The NEC therefore presented the twelve aims, not as an amendment, but as a "valuable expression of the aims of the Labour Party in the second half of the twentieth century", a resolution that was accepted by
the Conference. However, at the 1960 Conference another argument arose within the Labour Party.

Nuclear Disarmament

At the Labour Party Conference in October 1960, an NEC statement on nuclear defence was presented. The statement said that, in view of the Conservative government's decision to abandon Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, the Labour Party should work for an agreement to end all nuclear tests. According to the New Statesman, the PLP had "overwhelmingly endorsed" the statement. The Conference, however, voted by a small majority against the NEC statement and for a resolution advocating unilateral nuclear disarmament. Gaitskell said at the Conference that he would, "fight and fight and fight again" to reverse the unilateralist decision.

Gaitskell's open defiance of the Conference decision provoked a reaction in the PLP. In November 1960 Harold Wilson, backed primarily by Labour MPs who favoured unilateral disarmament, challenged Gaitskell's leadership. Gaitskell polled 166 votes and Wilson 81. In subsequent elections to the Shadow Cabinet, Barbara Castle, Richard Crossman and Anthony Greenwood, three left-wing MPs, declined to be candidates because, they said, they would not serve under Gaitskell's leadership. Wilson did stand in the Shadow Cabinet elections and was returned ninth. He had been top of the Shadow Cabinet poll in 1956, 1957 and 1959, and had come second in 1958. This result seems to indicate that his stance against Gaitskell's leadership had lost him his former popularity, and also that Gaitskell's support within the PLP was firmly established. Gaitskell's main opposition appeared to be in the Labour movement outside Westminster, among those constituency parties and trades unions who had
voted for unilateral disarmament at the 1960 Conference. It was in an attempt to change the unilateralist Conference decision that the Campaign for Democratic Socialism was created.

The Campaign for Democratic Socialism

The Campaign for Democratic Socialism (CDS) was essentially an extra-Parliamentary campaign. It is mentioned briefly here to indicate the extent to which revisionist MPs were involved in its organisation.

On October 19, 1960, the Times reported that twenty-six former Labour Parliamentary candidates, local government leaders and trade unionists had launched a campaign to support Gaitskell as leader of the Labour Party and to reverse the trend in the Labour Party toward unilateralism. According to Lord Windlesham, the CDS went to great lengths to appear as a spontaneous, grass-roots demonstration of support for Gaitskell, and to suppress mention of the participation of four Labour MPs who played a major role in its establishment. The four MPs were Crosland, Jay, Jenkins and Gordon Walker, Gaitskell's closest political associates. According to Haseler, Gaitskell never formally associated himself with CDS. It seems inevitable that Gaitskell must, at the very least, have been well aware of the activities of CDS.

Throughout the autumn of 1960, CDS sent copies of its manifesto to all Labour MPs and Peers, all NEC members, and distributed some 20,000 copies throughout constituency Labour Parties. From May to June 1961 CDS was active in trying to persuade trades unions to vote for multi-lateralism at their annual conferences. At the Labour Party Annual Conference of 1961 the unilateralist resolution of the previous year was reversed. The 1961 Conference voted by a substantial majority to accept a joint NEC-PLP-TUC statement that was against unilateral nuclear disarmament. After the
1961 Conference, the Labour Party appeared to be united, with the arguments over Clause IV and unilat­eralism behind it.

The revisionists – a faction?

1. Membership

Nine Labour MPs have been identified as associated with the revisionist journal Socialist Commentary. John Strachey was also noted as a revisionist through his book, Contemporary Capitalism. Crosland, Jenkins, Jay and Gordon Walker were Gaitskell's closest political associates and constituted the Frognal Group. Including Gaitskell, fourteen revisionists can be definitely identified, representing 5.5% of the PLP. There were probably more revisionists within the PLP who did not identify themselves as such by means of written mater­ial. Haseler has indicated that there were about 45 revisionists within the PLP.30

2. Leadership

Gaitskell, Crosland, Jay, Jenkins and Gordon Walker appear to have comprised the leadership of the revisionists. All five met regularly at Gaitskell's home, and Crosland, Jenkins, Jay and Gordon Walker were also instrumental in the establishment of CDS. They were therefore, in collaboration with members of the Labour Party outside Parliament, organisers of activities designed to promote a revisionist policy and Gaitskell's leadership. As leader of the Labour Party Gaitskell could not openly associate with CDS, yet it can be assumed that he was well aware of its activity given the meetings of the Frognal Group.

All five leading revisionists openly articulated their policies. For example, Crosland contributed to Socialist Commentary and wrote a book expounding revisionist views on equality, the economy and nation­alization, The Future of Socialism. Jay and Jenkins
also wrote articles in other journals, in which they expressed their revisionist views. In July 1955, Gordon Walker had gone one step further than Gaitskell did at the 1959 Conference, and suggested that the Labour Party should "drop the policy of common ownership of the means of production" from the Party Constitution. He modified this view somewhat, when, speaking to his constituency at Smethwick in March 1960, he supported Gaitskell's proposal to amend the Constitution.

Gaitskell spoke for a de-emphasis of Labour's nationalization policy at the 1959 Conference, suggesting an amplification of the aims of the Labour Party. The aims he suggested were in fact accepted by the NEC as a Constitutional amendment but later dropped as an amendment. After the 1959 Conference Gaitskell continued to press his opinions on nationalization, for example, in March 1960 in a speech to Leeds University Labour Society. On this occasion he explained that there were many types of public ownership, other than outright nationalization, which the Labour Party could adopt. At the 1960 Conference Gaitskell spoke decisively against the unilateralist position.

Gaitskell's speeches occasioned a great deal of dissension within the Labour Party, and attracted public accusations that he was disrupting Party unity. Gaitskell attracted attention to his policies that was the great because he was the leader of the Party. In this respect he may be considered to be the leader of the revisionists. Gaitskell's position within the PLP endowed him with additional authority among his revisionist followers. As leader of the Party Gaitskell also had a range of sanctions at his disposal, but there is no evidence that he applied sanctions in connection with his leadership of the revisionists as a faction. The other four members of the Prognal group may have contributed just as much to the leadership
of the revisionists through their writings and through their direct links with CDS.

3. Organisation

As already noted, the leading revisionists held meetings at Gaitskell's home. The establishment of CDS indicates a greater degree of organisation between the leading revisionists and individuals outside Parliament. The fact that CDS distributed copies of its manifesto to all Labour MPs and Peers indicates that it was attempting to persuade those not already anti-unilateralist to change their minds. Since, though, the rest of the CDS activities were extra-Parliamentary, the extent of its organisation bears little relevance to the main concern of this paper.

The revisionist MPs produced a number of articles advocating their policies, mainly through Socialist Commentary. In 1952 and 1953 MPs associated with Socialist Commentary made a deliberate attempt to promote the journal. In particular, Gaitskell was responsible for fund raising efforts that helped increase the paper's circulation.36

There is no definite indication that the revisionists organised Labour MPs to vote in Parliament in favour of the specific revisionist policies under present consideration, i.e. Clause IV and nationalization and unilateralism. The Clause IV debate aroused disagreement within the PLP but was not the subject of a vote in the House. On the issue of unilateral disarmament the majority of the PLP was, according to George Brown, in agreement. Before the 1960 Conference, he said that the majority of the PLP were opposed to unilateralism.37

4. The revisionists seen by others

The revisionists were identifiable in the PLP as MPs who were trying to refashion the Labour Party's traditional political philosophy. In his memoirs,
Brown has referred to Gaitskell and his associates as a distinct group of "practical reformers". Bevan, in an article in Tribune referred to the "Socialist Revisionists" who were suggesting that public ownership was outmoded. Emanuel Shinwell referred to the Frognal Group as:

A typical cabal of the kind that has frequently attempted to denigrate the fundamentally democratic rule of the Labour Party....

The revisionists were seen by Brown and Bevan as a number of MPs expounding a particular philosophy; by Shinwell the leading revisionists were identified as a cabal.

5. Policies
(a) Nationalization and economic equality

The Labour Party Constitution states that one of the aims of the Labour Party was to obtain an equitable distribution of wealth upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, i.e. Clause IV. The 1945-50 Labour government had nationalized a large number of industries and had thereby tried to follow this aim. The revisionists suggested that the abolition of capitalism, through state ownership of firms, was not prerequisite to an equal society. They advocated a mixed economy, i.e. private and public ownership, in which public ownership could take various forms, e.g. the government could own a number of shares in a private concern. Equality could be obtained in a mixed economy, with a stratified society, through the provision of maximum scope for individual self-advancement. According to Crosland:

Continuous traffic up and down the ladder [i.e. social scale] would inevitably make society more mobile and dynamic and so less class bound.
Revisionist beliefs on public ownership culminated in Gaitskell's proposal that the Constitution be amended. Within the PLP other views on nationalization were held. Bevan considered that:

If the Labour Party was to abandon its main thesis of public ownership it would not differ in any important respect from the Tory Party. 42

Brown pointed out that the Constitution should not be altered because it was a symbol of the Labour Party's tradition. 43

(b) Foreign Policy

According to the revisionists, Britain should retain her close alliance with the USA and continue the foreign policy lines developed by Ernest Bevin. Gaitskell argued that a split between England and the USA would alter the balance of power in the world. 44 Arguing against unilateralism, Gaitskell said that a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament was tantamount to suggesting that Britain withdraw from any alliance that relied on the possession of nuclear weapons, i.e. with the USA. 45 The revisionists were in favour of multi-lateral nuclear disarmament, but did not consider that Britain could give a moral lead to the rest of the world if she disarmed alone. 46

In comparison to the revisionists, the left of the PLP thought that Britain could and should take a moral lead and disarm unilaterally. 47

The revisionists were expounding a philosophy, particularly in reference to domestic concerns, that resulted in disagreement within the Party on two specific issues, the Constitution and nuclear disarmament. Underlying the Clause IV issue were the revisionists' broad perceptions of the social structure that differed quite distinctively from those of the PLP left.
6. Duration

During the 1950s the revisionists were identifiable as a distinct group of MPs, advocating their policies through Socialist Commentary. The height of PLP discussion over the Clause IV debate dated from the 1959 Conference and lasted until the NEC agreed to accept Gaitskell's amplification of aims of the Labour Party in March 1960. The subsequent NEC decision not to propose a Constitutional amendment to the 1960 Conference did not arouse a great deal of controversy. In submitting a resolution that the amplification of aims were a valuable expression of the Labour Party's objectives, the NEC effected a compromise that precluded further argument. The unilateralism controversy dated from October 1960 until October 1961, with revisionist activity, in the form of CDS, extending from October 1960 to July 1961. Revisionist activities in the form of pressing their policies, can therefore be said to date from the early 1950s to the end of 1961. After the deliberations of the 1961 Conference, issues surrounding revisionism ceased to become as relevant or significant as they had in the previous two years.

As the foregoing data have shown, the revisionists closely approach the model of factionalism. There were fourteen clearly identifiable revisionist MPs, of which five provided the leadership. The revisionists were organised insofar as they wrote articles promoting their policies, attempted to promote the journal in which most of their opinions were presented, and circulated other Labour MPs with their opinions on unilateralism, through the CDS manifesto. There is evidence that they were seen by other Labour MPs as a distinct group. Their policies differed from those held by other MPs on the PLP left; there was also right-wing opposition to the revisionists' policy on Clause IV and the opposition to the philosophy that gave rise to the Clause IV debate.
Footnotes to Chapter Four


3. Ibid., p. 68

4. Gaitskell ran against Bevan and Herbert Morrison. The final poll was Gaitskell, 157 votes; Bevan, 70; Morrison 40.

5. Haseler, p. 155

6. Ibid., Sunday Times, November 15, 1959


8. In the election the Conservatives won 365 seats; Labour 258; Others 7

9. Clause IV, Section 4 of the Labour Party Constitution states that one of the Labour Party's objects is, "To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service." Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1959, p. 112

10. LPACR, 1959, p. 112

11. Ibid., p. 145

12. Ibid., pp. 152-3


15. Times, March 17, 1960, p. 17

16. Ibid., p. 12

17. For details of the influence of the trades unions on this decision see Haseler, pp. 170-3
18. For the full statement see LPACR, 1960, pp. 13-14; New Statesman, July 16, 1960, p. 74

19. The vote for the NEC statement was 3,042,000 with 3,339,000 against. The vote for the Amalgamated Engineering Union's unilateralist resolution was 3,303,000 with 2,896,000 against. LPACR 1960, p. 202

20. Ibid., p. 201


22. Ibid.

23. Keesings Contemporary Archives 1960, Vol. 12, p. 17773A

24. Windlesham, p. 127


26. Windlesham, p. 98

27. Haseler, p. 216


29. The vote was 4,526,000 for and 1,756,000 against. Windlesham, p. 142

31. Haseler, pp. 65, 89, 95, 163
32. Tribune, July 22, 1955, p. 2
33. Times, March 7, 1960, p. 6
34. Ibid., March 12, 1960, p. 4
35. New Statesman, March 5, 1960, p. 320
36. Personal information cited by Haseler, pp. 68-9
37. New Statesman, October 1, 1960, p. 461
38. Brown, pp. 80-1
42. M. Foot, p. 651
43. Times, March 7, 1960, p. 6; Brown, p. 80
45. LPACR 1959, p. 201
46. Haseler, pp. 184, 185
47. Tribune, October 11, 1957, p. 7
Chapter Five

The Tribune Group

Chapter Five deals in chronological order with six major disputes arising in the PLP during the 1966 Parliament. The disputes concerned British support for American policy in Vietnam, prices and incomes policy, defence expenditure, Britain's application for entry into the European Common Market, post-devaluation economic measures and the government White Paper In Place of Strife. An attempt is made, in the course of the chronology, to indicate the extent of these disputes within the PLP by means of voting figures in the House. It is significant, that, in each dispute, a number of MPs associated with Tribune, repeatedly abstained or voted against the government to emphasise their own policy preferences. In the second part of the chapter there is an analysis of the extent to which the Tribune MPs can be considered a faction.

On January 18, 1963, Gaitskell died. On February 14, 1963, Wilson was elected leader of the Labour Party. In October 1964 the Labour Party was returned to power for the first time since 1950. Labour's overall majority was only four seats.

The Labour Party seemed united during the 1964 Parliament. As in the 1950 Parliament, the Party's small majority inhibited demonstrations of dissidence within the PLP. Tribune protested the government's reluctance to totally disassociate itself from American action in Vietnam. However, as Michael Foot pointed out, if a PLP demonstration of dissent on Vietnam brought down the government, the rebel MPs would not be endorsed as Labour candidates in a subsequent election. Foot wrote:

The hard fact of the present Parlia-
mentary situation is that the left of the Labour Party could not destroy the government without exterminating itself and any influence it might hope to exert for years to come. 2

In 1966 Wilson went to the country in an attempt to increase the Party's majority. On Thursday March 31, 1966, Labour was returned to power with an overall majority of ninety-seven. Foot's observations on the restrictions of a small majority were now no longer valid. During the 1966 Parliament, a number of left-wing Labour MPs protested against the government's policies on Vietnam, prices and incomes legislation, defence expenditure, the Common Market, post devaluation economic measures and proposed legislation to curtail strikes.

Vietnam

Wilson tried to maintain the concept of a special relationship between the USA and Great Britain. As part of this policy he implicitly supported American policy in Vietnam, but refused to let Britain become militarily involved. 3

Throughout the 1964 Parliament, and during 1966, Tribune criticised the British government for backing the USA in Vietnam. Tribune said that the PLP left should be exerting its influence to the full to persuade the government to do all it could to stop the war in Vietnam. 4

On June 29, 1966, Wilson announced that the British government would not associate itself with the US bombing of oil installations in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas. On July 7, a government motion was presented to the House endorsing Wilson's statement of June 29. Before the vote on this motion, the New Statesman reported that twenty left-wing Labour MPs had indicated that they would abstain; they wished to show their disapproval of American bombing, but wanted
to abstain on the vote in order to demonstrate their dissent from American policy in Vietnam as a whole.\textsuperscript{5}

The government's motion was approved by 331 votes to 230 votes. The names of the MPs who had said they would abstain did not appear on the \textit{Hansard} voting lists; they must therefore have abstained or been absent from the House for some other reason.\textsuperscript{6} After the vote \textit{Tribune} continued to print articles criticising the Vietnam war, but, as the year went on, the articles became less prominent.

\textbf{Prices and Incomes}

The 1964 Labour government inherited a balance of payments deficit of £747 millions from their Conservative predecessors.\textsuperscript{7} In February 1965, in an attempt to increase productivity and maintain stable price levels the government established a Prices and Incomes Board (PIB). In September 1965 it was decided to give the PIB statutory powers. This meant that the Secretary of State for the Department of Economic Affairs, George Brown, would have the power to refer any price or wage issue to the PIB. Wage or price settlements could be deferred while the PIB conducted enquiries into whether the increase was justifiable. Decisions made by the PIB could then be enforced by ministerial order. Progress of the prices and incomes bill embodying this decision was delayed by the 1966 election. On July 20, 1966, Wilson announced that, in order to contain domestic inflation and prevent increased costs and prices from adversely affecting exports, a six months' standstill on wages, salaries and other types of income would be imposed. The six months' standstill, which came to be known as the "freeze", would be followed by six months of what Wilson called "severe restraint".\textsuperscript{8} The freeze would be legalised as an additional clause to the prices and incomes bill.
On August 10, 1966, the prices and incomes bill, originated in September 1965, with the addition of a clause imposing the wage and price freeze, was presented to the House. The Commons voted by 272 to 214 votes to accept the legislation.\(^9\) There were 30 Labour abstentions.\(^{10}\) The names of fourteen MPs closely associated with Tribune did not appear on the voting lists: therefore they may have abstained.\(^{11}\) Tribune repeatedly criticised the prices and incomes legislation, especially the freeze.\(^{12}\) In addition to criticising the prices and incomes bill, Tribune devoted several articles, during the latter half of 1966, to attacking government defence expenditure, which it considered too high.

**Defence Expenditure**

Wilson also felt that Britain's defence expenditure was too high, and in February 1967, Denis Healey, Minister of Defence, presented proposals to the House for reducing Britain's military commitments. The main points of his speech were:

1. a reduction of military and civilian personnel in the Far East from 80,000 to 40,000 by 1970-71
2. a total withdrawal from British bases in Singapore and Malaysia by the mid-1970s
3. total withdrawal from Aden by January 1968

There was PLP opposition to these cuts. In his memoirs, Wilson commented that, "a substantial section of the PLP going much wider than the traditional left, wanted more i.e. cuts and wanted it more quickly."\(^{13}\)

There were sixty-two Labour abstentions on the vote on the defence proposals. Tribune commented that the abstentions were evidence that opposition to the "crippling economic and political burden of defence spending has spread to all sections of the party."\(^{14}\)

The Times concurred with Tribune in saying that the abstainers were from all sections of the party.\(^{15}\) No
PLP disciplinary action was taken against the abstainers, but, at a PLP meeting after the vote Wilson warned Labour MPs that the Labour Party might be reluctant to endorse as candidates in a subsequent election, MPs who abstained frequently.16

The 1967 vote on defence cuts was not the only instance in which MPs other than those associated with Tribune objected to government policy. In 1967 the Common Market issue divided the Party.

The Common Market

On May 2, 1967, Wilson announced that the British government would apply for admission into the European Economic Community (the Common Market). Opinion within the Labour Party was divided over the Common Market. According to both Haseler and Brand, opinions on this issue did not follow the usual left, right, centre lines of cleavage.17 Tribune firmly opposed entry.

On May 10, a vote in the House supported Wilson's intention to apply for membership in the Common Market by 488 votes to 62. 34 Labour MPs voted against entry and 51 abstained, representing together 23.5% of the PLP.18 Argument within the PLP on this issue was halted in December 1967, when President de Gaulle of France vetoed British entry. The Labour government made no further formal application for membership during the 1966 Parliament.

Although giving greater prominence to defence expenditure and the Common Market issue during the latter half of 1966, and the early months of 1967, Tribune sporadically commented upon the economic situation. In May 1967 a Tribune editorial called for "limited devaluation" accompanied by "effective price controls and substantial defence cuts."19
Devaluation and Post-devaluation Measures

Wilson was reluctant to devalue the pound sterling, maintaining that devaluation provided a "featherbed" for the exporting industries. He wanted to restore a balance of payments surplus and make British industry genuinely competitive. However, by November 1967, Wilson agreed that Britain would have to devalue from US$2.80 to $2.40.

According to the *New Statesman*, devaluation was greeted with relief by the PLP, who had been afraid that Wilson might have tried to bolster the pound with a large US loan with onerous conditions attached, e.g. stringent wage and price controls. Tribune welcomed devaluation.

On January 16, 1968, Wilson announced to the House a series of post-devaluation measures. The measures included cuts in defence spending and cuts in domestic public expenditure. The main points were:

1. Britain would withdraw from her bases in Malaysia and Singapore by 1971 (In 1967 Healey had said that withdrawal from these bases would take place by the "mid-1970s").
2. The government's order for US aircraft for the RAF was to be cancelled.
3. Prescription charges would be re-introduced (they were abolished by the Labour government in 1965).
4. Plans to raise the school leaving age from 15 to 16 were to be postponed.
5. The provision of free milk in the majority of schools was to be ended.

Tribune applauded the defence cuts but vehemently disagreed with the social service cuts.

On January 18, twenty-six Labour MPs abstained on a motion in the House approving the economic
measures proposed by the government. Wilson firmly chastised the abstainers at a PLP meeting, and took disciplinary action. The abstainers were banned from PLP meetings for the month of February.

Considering that the social service cuts would alienate many Labour voters, Tribune instituted what it called a "Chartist Movement". This involved the publication in Tribune and subsequent distribution from Tribune's offices in London, of a Socialist Charter. The Charter specified that the government should cut defence expenditure; nationalize the majority of large private concerns; establish a guaranteed minimum wage and work actively for world disarmament. The Charter was signed by seventeen Labour MPs closely linked with Tribune.

The Socialist Charter was a purely extra-Parliamentary movement, designed largely to support the Labour Party, but also heavily emphasising the PLP left's policies of extensive nationalization and desire for radical defence cuts. It is mentioned here to indicate that MPs linked with Tribune were active in propagating their policies both within and outside Parliament, and appear to have been organising themselves to do so. During the last few months of 1968 Tribune began to focus its attention on the government's proposals to solve the problem of widespread industrial disputes, and disagreed with them.

In Place of Strife

On January 17, 1969, Barbara Castle, Minister of Employment and Productivity, produced a White Paper, entitled In Place of Strife. Opposition to the White Paper, within the PLP and the Labour Movement as a whole, was focused on three recommendations, intended as short term solutions to industrial disputes. The
recommendations were:

1. a twenty-eight day conciliation pause between the beginning of a dispute and the commencement of strike action

2. a compulsory ballot to be taken among those intending to strike before a decision to strike was made

3. the government to assume the power to impose a settlement on inter-union disputes.

On March 3, 1969, In Place of Strife was debated in the House as a possible basis for legislation. It was accepted by 224 votes to 62. Forty Labour MPs abstained on the vote and fifty-three voted against the White Paper, representing together 25.6% of the PLP. Twelve MPs associated with Tribune were amongst those voting against. Peter Jenkins comments that the voting represented a revolt "more serious than the party managers had anticipated."

On April 15, Roy Jenkins, Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in his budget speech that the government would immediately initiate legislation based on In Place of Strife. The announcement provoked an outcry within the PLP.

On May 7, at a PLP meeting, Douglas Houghton, chairman of the PLP, declared that he was speaking for the whole PLP when he said that the government should not attempt to halt strikes by intervening between management and unions. James Hamilton, speaking on behalf of the 130 trades union sponsored MPs, informed the Chief Whip, Robert Mellish, that the trades union MPs would not vote for the bill. Peter Jenkins maintains that, except for Wilson and Castle the whole Cabinet agreed that the bill should be dropped. On June 19, Wilson announced to the House that he had accepted an undertaking from the TUC to increase its
powers to halt strikes. The intended legislation was to be dropped. The PEP was jubilant.

After the disagreement over *In Place of Strife* the PLP presented a more united front to the nation than it had since the 1966 election. At the end of 1969 *Tribune* commented that the bitterness temporarily aroused over trades union legislation had been erased and the whole party was united in facing the future. On June 18, 1970, the British electorate rewarded the Labour Party's newly found unity by returning the Conservative Party to power.

The *Tribune* MPs - a faction?

1. Membership

Peter Jenkins and Carl Brand both refer to the dissident left in the 1966-70 Parliament as "the *Tribune* Group", so called because they expressed their policies through *Tribune*. Seventeen Labour MPs can be firmly identified as the *Tribune* group. MPs who contributed on a regular basis to *Tribune*, i.e. at least once a month between 1966 and 1970 were: Frank Allaun, Tom Driberg, Michael Foot, Lena Jeger, Hugh Jenkins, Russell Kerr, Ian Mikardo and John Mendelson. MPs who contributed more than one article a year to *Tribune* during this period were: Eric Heffer, Emrys Hughes, Stan Newens, Stanley Orme and Konni Zilliacus. In 1966 *Tribune* referred to David Kerr and Archie Manuel as *Tribune* MPs. Anne Kerr and Chris Norwood were also considered members of the *Tribune* group since they assisted in the preparation of articles. It is unlikely that these seventeen represented the entire *Tribune* Group. J. Richard Piper has indicated that there were between twenty and twenty-five MPs who formed the core of the Group. As the 30 abstentions on the August 1966 prices and incomes vote, the 62 abstentions on the February 1967 defence vote and the 26 abstentions
on the 1968 post devaluation measures show, the Tribune MPs could obtain fluctuating degree of support from other MPs. The maximum amount of support they received was in February 1967 when 62 MPs abstained. The total membership of the Tribune Group was therefore between seventeen and sixty-two.

2. Leadership

Michael Foot appears to be the most likely single candidate for the leadership of the Tribune Group. He was editor of Tribune during the period under examination. He wrote more articles presenting Tribune's policies than any other contributor to Tribune. In this respect he might be considered the most vocal of the Tribune group and the focus around which other Tribune MPs rallied. However, there is no evidence that Foot was more than a vocal focal point. The New Statesman referring to the left in the 1964 Parliament, pointed to Foot and Mikardo as potential leaders, but stated that the left was in fact leaderless. Peter Jenkins specifically refutes any idea that Foot led the PLP left in the 1966 Parliament. It would appear then that the Tribune Group was leaderless.

3. Organisation

There is no specific evidence that the Tribune MPs held meetings at which all seventeen were present. However, it seems likely that at least the Socialist Charter was launched with some prior consultation within the Tribune Group.

While there is no direct evidence of organisation there were several instances, other than articles in Tribune in which Tribune MPs showed that they shared the same views on policy, indicating that some minimum degree of consultation existed between them. On July 8, 1966, Tribune reported that 114 Labour MPs had signed a motion which called upon the government to
disassociate itself completely from the war in Vietnam. The signatories included the 17 Tribune MPs. On July 22, 1966, Tribune published the texts of two letters which, it reported, had been sent to President Johnson of the USA and to President Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam. The letters appealed to the Presidents to stop the war. The five signatories to the letter comprised three Tribune MPs, namely: Allaun, Foot and Orme, and two other Labour MPs, Fenner Brockway and Joyce Butler.

On May 5, 1967, Tribune published a lengthy statement against Britain joining the Common Market. Tribune said that 74 Labour MPs, of all sections of the Party had signed the statement, but did not publish their names. In this, and subsequent issues, Tribune advertised copies of the statement as available for bulk order for distribution in the constituencies. The collection of the signatures must have required some organisation by the Tribune MPs.

The production of the Socialist Charter, in 1968, is additional evidence of organisation to advertise Tribune's policies. Like the Tribune statement on the Common Market, the Socialist Charter was advertised as available for bulk order and distribution. While aiming these statements primarily at an extra-Parliamentary audience, Tribune expressed the hope that constituents would exert pressure on their MPs to adopt Tribune's policies.

In October 1966, twelve Labour MPs wrote a letter to the New Statesman in which they criticised the government's wage freeze. Of the twelve, eight were Tribune MPs, namely: Allaun, Hugh Jenkins, Anne Kerr, Russell Kerr, Mikardo, Newens, Orme and Zilliacus. In Tribune Foot expressed the same opinions.
It was suggested in Chapter One that an additional indication of factional organisation would be demonstrated by a faction's members voting together in the House, in order to demonstrate their unanimity on the policies that the faction advocated. In the six issues considered in the foregoing pages upon which there was PLP disagreement, all seventeen Tribune MPs voted together on two occasions: on the February 1967 defence cuts and on the January 1968 post-devaluation measures. In these instances all seventeen abstained.

The foregoing data indicates that there was some degree of organisation among the Tribune MPs, but they do not appear to have been highly organised.

4. The Tribune MPs seen by others

According to Peter Jenkins, the Tribune Group were physically distinct in the House of Commons, insofar as they always sat together in the same place, looking "more like a party of opposition than a part of the party in government". Jenkins says:

> Ministers at the Despatch Box spent as much time debating over their right shoulders as in addressing the Conservative Opposition across the floor of the House. 46

At least one member of Parliament agreed with Jenkins. In the House, on July 24, 1967, Conservative MP, Ian Macleod said that the Tribune Group were:

> The true opposition ...........
> for the simple reason that our present discontents must surely be solved either by a Tory or a Socialist solution ..... [to which the policies of] the front bench opposite are absolutely irrelevant. 47

The Tribune Group were clearly identifiable to others.

5. Policies

The Tribune MPs advocated a range of policies which were different from those expressed by the PLP leadership.
(a) Vietnam: while the PLP leadership was only prepared to disassociate Britain from the specific US bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, the Tribune MPs wanted total disassociation and outright condemnation of American action in Vietnam. 48

(b) Defence: Tribune consistently advocated that the government should curtail its defence expenditure, and suggested in its Socialist Charter that Britain should end all existing military alliances. 49 Wilson agreed that the government should curtail its defence expenditure, but considered that this could be done neither as fast nor as drastically as the left wanted. 50

(c) Common Market: Tribune opposed Wilson's application for British entry into the Common Market, considering that the Common Market was too concerned with "doctrinal adherence to private competition." Tribune also expressed the fear that membership would increase British food prices and that preferential tariffs for trade with Commonwealth countries would be lost. 51

(d) Prices and Incomes: Tribune considered that, in trying to operate a prices and incomes policy in a mixed economy, the government was interfering with the rights of the working-class to negotiate wage increases. Negotiation of wage increases was a fundamental right of the workers in a predominantly capitalist economy. Tribune stated that it favoured wage planning only as part of a planned, publicly managed, economy. The government should, said Tribune, bring the overwhelming majority of the private sector of the economy under the control of the public sector. Under a predominantly public-owned economy the government would negotiate with the TUC over wage increases; the TUC would represent all unions. 52

(e) Trades Union legislation: Tribune maintained that
the government should not attempt to curtail trade union powers, because this was an infringement of a worker's right to strike.\(^53\)

(f) Post-devaluation measures: Tribune objected to any cuts in social services, believing that the social services should be increased and expanded, paid for by the imposition of wealth taxes and gift taxes.\(^54\)

6. Duration

The Tribune MPs articulated their policies prior to and throughout, the 1966 Parliament, although, during the months preceding the 1970 general election, they concentrated on attacking the Conservatives rather than criticising the government and pressing their own ideas. From June 1966 to June 1969, the Tribune MPs were also active in pressing their policies through means other than Tribune, e.g. letters in the press, abstentions in the House. As an active group they operated for three years.

The Tribune MPs were clearly identifiable to the PLP, and indeed to the whole House, as a number of MPs, of which it is possible to definitely name seventeen, who, over a period of three years, pressed their policies. The Tribune MPs appeared to lack a specific leadership, appearing as a headless, loosely organised group. The Tribune MPs therefore approach the model of factionalism presented in Chapter one, falling short only on the criterion of leadership. It seems reasonable to say that the 1966 Parliament was one of PLP disunity, in which a number of MPs seemed to be acting as a faction, while not actually fulfilling all criteria for definition as a faction.
Footnotes to Chapter Five

1. On the first ballot Wilson obtained 115 votes, Callaghan 41 and Brown 88. As no one individual had a majority of the votes a second ballot was held between Brown and Wilson. In the second ballot Wilson obtained 144 votes and Brown 103. For an interesting account of the leadership election see Anthony Howard and Richard West, The Making of the Prime Minister (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), p. 23


3. President Johnson's requests for a visible gesture of support, even a single regiment to show the British flag, were firmly refused. Carl F. Brand, The British Labour Party (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1974), p. 320

4. Tribune, June 24, 1966, p. 6

5. New Statesman, July 15, 1966, p. 77

6. Hansard, Vol. 731, col.s 815–9 Hansard does not publish lists of abstentions. If an MP's name does not appear on the voting lists it can be inferred that he abstained, or that he was absent from the House when the vote was taken. The New Statesman did not name all 20 MPs intending to abstain, but did name Eric Heffer, Hugh Jenkins, Ian Mikardo, Stan Newens, and Stanley Orme. Michael Foot and John Mendleson were reported as saying that they would vote for the government, and the voting lists show that they did. After the vote, Konni Zilliacus wrote in Tribune that he had abstained. Tribune, July 15, 1966, p. 5


10. Wilson, p. 268

11. The fourteen MPs were: Frank Allsoun, Tom Driberg, Michael Foot, Eric Heffer, Emrys Hughes, Hugh Jenkins, Anne Kerr, David Kerr, Russell Kerr, Ian Mikardo, John Mendelson, Stan Newens, Stanley Orme, Konni Zilliacus. The following Tribune MPs voted with the government: Lena Jeger, Archie Manuel and Chris Norwood.

13. Wilson, p. 376


16. Wilson, p. 378. During the 1966 Parliament, Wilson and his Chief Whip, John Silkin, permitted MPs to abstain in a vote if they had grounds for a conscientious objection to the government policy concerned.


18. Brand, p. 369. There were 363 Labour MPs at the time. If the Labour abstentions and votes against are deducted from the total of 488 pro-Market votes, it shows that 210 Conservatives and Liberals voted with the government.

Of those voting against the government, 11 were *Tribune* MPs, namely: Allaun, Driberg, Hughes, L. Jeger, H. Jenkins, Anne Kerr, R. Kerr, Manuel, J. Mendelson, Norwood and Orme. Two *Tribune* MPs, Newens and D. Kerr voted with the government, *Hansard*, Vol. 746, col. 1654


24. Ibid., January 26, 1968, p. 5. *Tribune* said that all the *Tribune* MPs had abstained


28. Jenkins, p. 68
29. Ibid., p. 104
30. Ibid., p. 121

31. Ibid., p. 122. Mellish replaced Silkin as Chief Whip in April 1969. Silkin was appointed Minister of Works

32. Ibid., pp. 153-4
33. Ibid., p. 159

34. Tribune, October 10, 1969, p. 1
35. Jenkins, p. 62; Brand, p. 330
36. Tribune, July 8, 1966, p. 3

37. Information from personal conversations with Russell Kerr


40. Jenkins, p. 62

41. Tribune, July 8, 1966, p. 3
42. Ibid., May 5, 1967, p. 7; June 7, 1968, p. 5

43. New Statesman, October 28, 1966, p. 623. The other signatories were: Norman Atkinson, Sydney Bidwell, John Lee and Trevor Park

44. Tribune, July 15, 1966, p. 4
45. Ibid., January 26, 1968, p. 5; March 3, 1967, p.1
46. Jenkins, p. 62
47. Tribune, July 28, 1967, p. 1
48. Ibid., June 24, 1966, p. 6; July 1, 1966, p.1
49. Ibid., June 7, 1968, p. 5
50. Wilson, p. 377
53. Ibid., January 17, 1969, p. 1
54. Ibid., January 12, 1968, p. 1; January 26, 1968, p. 5
Chapter Six

Conclusions

Chapter Six provides a summary of the preceding chapters. The factions identified are compared under each of the six criteria of factionalism. The periods of factionalism in the PLP during the period under study are isolated. Some conclusions about the PLP's style of factionalism are drawn.

The foregoing pages have presented brief chronologies of disputes within the PLP during the years 1945-1970. The extent to which parties to PLP disputes can be identified as factions, according to the six criteria enumerated in Chapter One, has been assessed. The following factions have been identified: the Keep Left faction, the Bevanites and the revisionists. The Tribune Group approached the model of factionalism but did not fulfill the criterion of leadership. The three factions identified and the Tribune Group can now be compared in terms of each of the six criteria of factionalism.

1. Membership

It was decided that membership of a faction would be determined on the basis of self-identification, i.e. MPs who contributed to pamphlets or who wrote articles that exemplified a distinct viewpoint. In the case of the Keep Left MPs it seemed appropriate to take the authors of the two pamphlets, Keep Left and Keeping Left as being members of the Keep Left MPs. In the case of the Bevanites, revisionists and Tribune MPs each group appeared to articulate its policies through a particular journal. The Keep Left MPs also wrote articles reiterating Keep Left's
policies in a journal, and this was considered in attempting to identify the leaders of the Keep Left MPs. The Keep Left MPs, the Bevanites and the Tribune group all wrote in the same journal, Tribune. The revisionists wrote in Socialist Commentary. It was decided that MPs who wrote regularly in these journals, expressing mutually held ideas, would be identified as members of each particular group. After scrutiny of the journals the term regular was taken to mean writing more than one article a year during each period of time under consideration. As indicated in Chapter One, there are important gaps in the membership of each faction identified. The MPs identified as members comprised the following percentages of the PLP: Keep Left MPs, 5%; Bevanites, 4%; revisionists, 5%; Tribune MPs, 4%. It is unlikely that these figures represent the total number of MPs associated with each faction. They do however provide an indication of the size of the hard core of each group.

2. Leadership

In the case of the Keep Left MPs, leadership was determined on the basis of apparent centrality of one MP to the group's activity. Crossman was identified as leader of the Keep Left MPs because he wrote articles in Tribune, contributed to both Keep Left and Keeping Left, and presented the group's foreign policies to the House in the form of an amendment. Crossman was a backbencher at the time and so cannot be said to have held a great deal of authority over others in the Keep Left faction. Nor was he likely to be in a position to wield sanctions in the foreseeable future. The leadership of the Bevanites and the revisionists differed from that of the Keep Left MPs. Both Bevan and Gaitskell held prominent party posts
during the years when the Bevanites and revisionists existed as factions. They were therefore in a position to frequently expound their faction's policies with an authority not permitted to Crossman. Both Bevan and Gaitskell were prepared to openly challenge prominent sections of the Labour Party as a whole: Bevan defied Attlee in the House in 1954 and 1955; Gaitskell defied the 1960 Labour Party Annual Conference. As a result both drew more publicity to factional cleavages within the Labour Party than did either Crossman or the Tribune MPs. Neither Bevan nor Gaitskell based their leadership upon organisational skills; their leadership appears based on their standing within the PLP. Bevan was also respected for his oratorical skills. As noted in Chapter Three Gaitskell referred to Bevan as the leader of the Bevanites, but pointed to Mikardo as the organiser of the faction. In Chapter Four the point was made that, although Gaitskell led the revisionists, Crosland, Jenkins, Jay and Gordon Walker were concerned with organising factional activities.

The Tribune MPs appear to have been leaderless, and, as a possible consequence, were not so well organised as the other three factions identified. The lack of a leader casts some doubt on whether the Tribune MPs can be defined as a faction according to the definition. Foot appeared to be the most probable individual to qualify as a leader, but, according to at least one contemporary, was not. Foot had no official part post and therefore was not in a position to command the respect and authority over the Tribune MPs as could Bevan over the Bevanites or Gaitskell over the revisionists. He was not instrumental in organising factional activities within the PLP but concentrated on editing and writing in Tribune. Tribune was the organ through which the group expressed
its policies, and, as a focal point of the group's activities, provided a medium through which some organisation might result.

3. Organisation

The criterion of organisation was three-fold; meetings, publications and voting. The Keep Left faction held meetings from which the pamphlet Keep Left was a direct outcome. It has been assumed that they held meetings prior to the production of Keeping Left but there is no definite proof of this.7

The Bevanites held meetings in order to determine how they should act, as a group, in Parliament. The leaders of the revisionists met, but there is no positive evidence that the meetings were for a specific purpose other than general policy discussion. There is no direct evidence that the Tribune MPs met as a group in order to consider policies or ways of promoting them. It can be inferred that at least some of the Tribune MPs met prior to the production of the Socialist Charter.8

The revisionists were a faction that gained the support of the majority of the PLP, with a revisionist as leader of the Party. Therefore, unlike the other two factions and the Tribune MPs, they did not need to consider tactics to persuade a majority of the PLP to adopt their policy preferences. The Clause IV and unilateralism disputes were not the subjects of votes in the House; hence the revisionists did not invite open demonstrations of PLP disunity. The revisionists did not then need to organise to the extent that minority factions needed to do, in order to press their policies.

The Keep Left MPs, the Bevanites and the Tribune MPs, being in a minority in the PLP, and not, apparently, capable of gaining majority support consistently, were
in a position where organisation was important. They needed to demonstrate that they represented a weight of opinion, either in the PLP or within the Labour Party as a whole, in order to prove that their policies were not just sporadic criticisms of the leadership. While the Keep Left MPs met to produce a pamphlet and the Tribune MPs rallied around a journal, the Bevanites met to debate means by which they could act as a coherent group in Parliament. The production of the pamphlets One Way Only and Going Our Way? and articles in Tribune, were in addition to their planning of Parliamentary strategy. Insofar as the Bevanites held meetings to discuss policies and tactics in the House and produced pamphlets, presumably too the result of meetings, and articles, they evinced a higher degree of organisation than did any other group.

It has not always been necessary to indicate voting figures in order to demonstrate factional organisation. There have been instances when a faction advocated policies that were not the subject of a vote in the House, e.g. Clause IV. The Keep Left faction abstained in the vote on defence in 1946 in order to demonstrate their policy preferences, but did not need to abstain or vote against the leadership on the issues of conscription and steel nationalization in order to press their policies. At the height of the Bevanites' factional activities, in 1952, Bevan led the abstentions in the vote on the March defence debate. The Bevanites also showed their opposition to the leadership's policies on other issues by alternate means, e.g. Bevan's resignation from official party posts. During the 1966 Parliament the topics on which the Tribune MPs were disagreeing with the leadership were all the subject of votes in the House. Chapter five has therefore laid greater emphasis on
voting figures than have the other chapters. The six votes considered in Chapter five reveal that the Tribune MPs voted together on two instances, but were divided on all others. If voting together is taken as an indicator of a faction's organisation, then it seems that the Tribune MPs were not highly organised, but did demonstrate a measure of sporadic cohesion. Their main means of attracting attention to their policies seems to have been through Tribune. The fact that, on all six issues discussed in Chapter five, there were substantial numbers of MPs voting against, or abstaining, on votes concerning official party policy, demarcates the period as one of PLP disunity but not as one in which a well organised faction was operating.

Comparison of the organisation of the three factions and the Tribune group leads to the conclusion that the Bevanites were the most highly organised, the Keep Left MPs evinced the second highest degree of organisation; the revisionists were not as organised as the Keep Left MPs, but did organise through CDS. The Tribune MPs were the least organised. The revisionists did not need to organise to the same extent as the minority left-wing factions and the Tribune MPs because the revisionists commanded the support of the majority of the PLP.

4. Seen by others

The Keep Left MPs were identified as a number of MPs who instituted a Keep Left Movement. The Bevanites were identified as a party within a party. The revisionists, as a whole, were identified as a number of MPs expounding new policies, and the leading revisionists as a cabal. The Tribune MPs were clearly identifiable as a physically distinct group in the House. The groups were therefore identified in somewhat different ways, but all were nevertheless distinct
in their own ways.

5. Policies

The three factions and the Tribune group expounded policies which they perceived as different from policies put forward by a section of the rest of the PLP. The Keep Left MPs differed from the PLP leadership in wanting a policy of widespread nationalization and in wishing Britain to loosen her military ties with the USA. The Bevanites precisely reiterated Keep Left's policies on nationalization. They also differed from the PLP leadership on the questions of the likelihood of Soviet aggression, on German rearmament and that Britain should reduce her defence expenditure, and cease to finance it at the cost of the social services. The Tribune MPs, like the Bevanites, adamantly defended a free National Health Service and wanted an increase in social service expenditure; like the Bevanites and the Keep Left MPs, the Tribune MPs wanted a curtailment of defence expenditure. The Keep Left MPs, the Bevanites and the Tribune MPs all wanted an economy predominantly under public ownership, and the Keep Left and Tribune MPs argued that an aspect of such an economy should be a nationally planned wages policy. The Tribune MPs disagreed with the Labour government's proposals to institute wage planning while the majority of the economy remained in the hands of private enterprise. Like the Bevanites and the Keep Left MPs, the Tribune MPs emphasised that Britain should not closely associate herself with American foreign policy, precisely, Vietnam. While the Keep Left MPs had advocated that Britain work toward European unity, the Tribune MPs were against Britain joining the Common Market. The philosophy underlying this policy was based on the same rationale which led the Keep Left MPs and the Bevanites to advocate
widespread nationalization. All three factions wanted an economy under public ownership. The Tribune MPs objected to the Common Market because the then members of the Common Market all had private enterprise economies.

The Tribune MPs, Bevanites, and Keep Left MPs shared a similar political philosophy that was distinctively left-wing. The revisionists' approach to policy formation was essentially right-wing for the Labour Party. The revisionists emphasised that outright nationalization was only one type of public ownership and argued for partial public ownership along with private enterprise - suggestions that were anathema to the left-wing. In foreign policy the revisionists advocated the retention of close links with the USA and the necessity of retaining existing military alliances. Disarmament, they believed, should be multi-lateral. The point of separation between Bevan and his followers came over the question of disarmament and military alliances. Bevan opposed unilateral disarmament, as did the revisionists, because it would sever Britain's links with her allies. However, Bevan differed from the revisionists in not favouring strong military links with the USA.

6. Duration

The Tribune MPs and the MPs in each of the other factions, began advocating policies that became associated with the factions before the factions were identifiable as such. The Keep Left MPs expressed their policies in pamphlets and Tribune from 1946 to 1950 but operated as a faction from 1947 to 1948. The Bevanites published their opinions from 1951 to 1956 but the peak of their factional activities was from 1951 to 1952; the faction still existed and was active but entered a decline between 1952 and 1956. The
revisionists wrote in *Socialist Commentary* from 1951 to 1961, but excited Party disunity from 1959 to 1961. The Tribune MPs argued their policies throughout the 1964 and 1966 Parliaments, but only operated as a faction during the 1966 Parliament, precisely from 1966 to 1969. Taking the periods when the factions were most active it is possible to identify the following years as the ones of greatest factional activity in the PLP between 1945 and 1970: 1947-48, 1951-56, 1959-61, 1966-69.

The numbers of MPs identified as associated with the three factions and the Tribune MPs did not differ greatly; the leadership did differ. The Bevanites and revisionists were led by MPs holding official Party offices. The Keep Left MPs were led by a backbencher while the Tribune MPs were leaderless. Degrees of group organisation also differed. All three factions and the Tribune MPs were seen as distinct groups by other MPs. The period of time during which each group acted as a faction varied: Keep Left, one year; the Bevanites, five years; the revisionists, two years; the Tribune MPs, three years.

All four groups expounded a range of policies which they perceived as different from policies expressed by other sections of the PLP. The policies of three groups were strikingly similar, and left-wing. The fact that the Tribune MPs and two out of the three factions identified were left-wing leads to the conclusion that the PLP is more prone to left-wing factionalism than right-wing factionalism. The emergence of the revisionist faction seems somewhat of an aberration. The fact that the revisionists made themselves identifiable as a faction at all seems to emerge from Gaitskell's leadership. Had he not personally elaborated upon Clause IV and had he not declared he would
fight the 1960 Conference decision on unilateralism the revisionists might not have taken action that led to their identification as a faction, e.g. the establishment of CDS.

Apart from the similarity of policies exhibited by the three left-wing groups and the use of the same journal, *Tribune*, there appears to be a strong consistency of membership running throughout all three groups. Foot and Mikardo were members of all three groups. The *Keep Left* faction and the Bevanites shared the following members: Castle, Crossman, Hale and Swingler. The Bevanites and the *Tribune* MPs shared the following members; Allaun and Driberg. The elements of continuity; policies, personnel and paper, indicate that there has been an unbroken tendency in the Labour Party that periodically organises itself into a faction. As noted above, always in the minority, the three left-wing groups evinced a similar style of factionalism - particularly the attempts to appeal to the rank-and-file of the Labour Party, through *Tribune* and its subsidiary publications, e.g. the *Socialist Charter*. - and through their appeals to the rank-and-file justified their policy differences from the leadership's policies.

As can be seen from the preceding chapters, the left-wing cannot always be considered a faction. A cursory glance indicates that the main stimulus for left-wing factional organisation seems to be a policy dispute: the *Keep Left* MPs were stimulated by disputes over foreign policy; the Bevanites rallied around Bevan upon his resignation in 1951 over the question of defence expenditure and prescription charges; the *Tribune* group appear to have been provoked by a series of issues. Examination of the emergence of the *Tribune* MPs as a group indicates another factor that seems instrumental to the formation of a faction.
The Tribune group themselves indicated that they were restricted by the Labour Party's small majority from active, Parliamentary, expression of their policies during the 1964 Parliament. When in 1966 Labour increased its majority the Tribune MPs felt no compunction in refraining from Parliamentary support of their own government. Similarly, in 1950-51 when Labour had a small majority, the left did not demonstrate, in the House, their opposition to the government's imposition of prescription charges. Bevan, Freeman and Wilson resigned but did not hamper the government in getting its bill through, they voted for it. To have demonstrated opposition to the government's measures by means of votes against or abstentions, would have brought down the government.

The emergence of a left-wing faction appears to be contingent upon two factors - the promotion by the PLP leadership of a policy to which the left are so opposed that they organise to demonstrate their opposition and Labour's position in Parliament. The two factors are inter-dependent. If the Party is in power with a majority, or in opposition, and if the leadership promotes a policy to which the left strongly object, then the left appears to organise into a faction. When the PLP governs with a small majority, the left is quiescent, supporting the leadership, and waiting for Labour to be returned to power with a large majority, or for Labour to lose an election, in order to indulge in the free expression of its own particular philosophy and that philosophy's resultant policies.

This paper has not attempted to explain the emergence of factions, although it has been indicated that policy disputes and the Party's position in or out of government may be influential factors in stimulating factionalism. The availability of MPs prepared to lead, or
capable of leading, a faction may also be another factor. It has been suggested that a long period in opposition may encourage open dispute within the PLP. This seems to have been borne out by the findings. When Labour was in opposition from 1951 to 1964 two factions were identifiable. The existence of factions within the PLP may have implications for the Party's approach to policy formation when Labour governs. Further research could be directed towards an assessment of the influence of factions upon policy formation. To what extent is a Labour Cabinet compelled to compromise with backbench factions? Do individual Cabinet members in agreement with a faction's policies, discretely encourage factional activity?

An analysis of the relationship between the Party leader and a faction might assist in explaining the emergence of factions. To what extent, and in what ways, does a Labour leader stimulate or preclude the emergence of a faction? What action can a leader take to forestall intra-Party disruption or to curtail the life of a faction? Does a Party leader necessarily regard factionalism as detrimental to the Party? The instinctive assumption is that factionalism is dysfunctional to parties, insofar as it disrupts party unity, absorbing the energies of MPs in petty backbiting. It may be though that the Labour Party itself has grown accustomed to the existence of factions and benefits from the debates stimulated through factionalism. But how is PLP factionalism viewed from outside the Party? How does the electorate regard a faction-ridden party? Do PLP disputes endow the Labour Party with an air of lively debate, or does the electorate consider that a party internally divided should not form a government? Is the electorate in fact aware of factions within the PLP? These important questions remain to be explored.
Footnotes to Chapter Six

1. See p. 16
2. Ibid.
3. See pp. 27-8
4. See p. 35
5. See p. 49
7. See p. 16
8. See p. 66
9. See p. 33
10. See p. 16
11. See p. 34
12. See p. 51
13. See p. 68
14. See pp. 19-20
15. See p. 36
16. See p. 69
18. See pp. 35, 52
19. See pp. 57-8
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