THE 'PENNY FARTHING' MACHINE REVISITED: LABOUR PARTY MEMBERS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE 1950s AND 1960s

EPOP panel on the past, present and future of intra-party democracy (1)

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In her recent study of party membership in Britain and Germany Susan Scarrow warned against the 'myth' of the 'golden past'.[1] Firmly challenging this 'myth' she stated that participation levels within the Labour party were probably higher in the 1990s than in the 1950s and 1960s. This state of affairs was, she suggested, related to the Labour leadership's belief that a growing and active membership could help reverse the party's electoral problems after 1983. Thus, top-down initiatives were the main reason Labour had become more inclusive, less hierarchical and increasingly democratic since 1983 (Scarrow, 1996, 181, 190-2 and chapter 8).

According to Scarrow, despite being in opposition for thirteen years after 1951, party organizers 'did not fundamentally change their views about the tasks and structures of membership organization'. Moreover, once elected to office in 1964 the leadership focused on the problems of government. This preoccupation remained, despite Labour suffering a haemorrhage of members in the late 1960s. Scarrow explains this relative lack of interest by reference to the fact that individual membership was always 'something of an afterthought'. It would take the trauma of 1983 to force the leadership to shake itself free of the party's origins (Scarrow, 1996, 71-7, 120, 125). This view echoes the opinion of

most Labour specialists. Thus, Eric Shaw explained Labour's 'weak, ramshackle and rudimentary' machine by suggesting that, staying true to its union origins, the leadership merely sought to secure improved parliamentary representation. This meant the party did not engage in ideological and social mobilisation; instead, it concentrated on purely electoral concerns to the detriment of organisation. Labour's continuing financial reliance on the unions also meant there was little incentive to increase membership (Shaw, 1988, 141-53).

The purpose of this paper is not to challenge Scarrow's innovative analysis of the impact of organizational change since Neil Kinnock. Instead, it will question the conventional explanation of why the party failed to change during the 1950s and 1960s. The paper highlights the extent to which few Labour members wanted to undertake the tasks supposedly entailed by membership and will stress the scale on which such activists operated on their own terms. Thus, the absence of reform was as much due to membership opposition as any supposed leadership lethargy. The paper benefits from sources generated by regional, constituency and ward parties located in London, the south-east, midlands and north of England. It consequently gives an insight into the perspective of those vital engineers of party politics: the regional official and constituency activist. Such material, hitherto rarely used, helps construct an alternative narrative -more complex but more revealing - to the one normally invoked.

Whilst not leading to significant change, Labour's organisation was the subject of two major National Executive Committee (NEC) reports in this period. The first, under the chairmanship of Harold Wilson, followed Labour's 1955 general election defeat (Labour Party, 1955, 63-91). The Report described how 'deeply shocked' investigators were by what they saw, famously concluding that 'we are still at the penny-farthing stage in a jet-propelled era, and our machine, at that, is getting rusty and deteriorating with age'. After Labour's return to power in 1964 came an inquiry under William Simpson. This denied that Labour's machine was 'rickety or run down' and caused the NEC to declare:

'the fundamental basis on which the Party structure is established is sound in principle' (Labour Party, 1967, 237-53, 333-52; Labour Party, 1968, 119-23; Labour Party, 1969, 9).

By the early 1960s, however, an increasing number within the party were far from sanguine. Reformers were concerned that Labour's declining and largely inactive membership, as well as the inefficiency and ignorance of those who volunteered to help, harmed the party's electoral prospects. At the start of the 1950s Labour's official individual membership stood at just over one million whilst the party's electoral support reached nearly half of all votes cast. This, nonetheless, meant that less than seven per cent of Labour supporters were counted as members (see Table 1.1). Thereafter, both vote and membership went into steady decline as did the proportion formed by the latter of the former. Official membership figures, whilst inauspicious, actually comoflaged the party's real decline. This was partly because in 1957 and 1963 Labour increased the minimum number of members a constituency had to affiliate so as to send a delegate to conference (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, 14-15). Thus, after 1963 an ever-increasing number of parties affiliated only the 1,000 minimum. National officials knew this obscured reality. Analysing a situation she thought 'deplorable', in 1965 Labour's National Agent believed parties claiming 1,000 only had about 250 members. On that basis, membership that year was inflated by about one-third, a distortion which only increased with time.[2]

Labour's narrow 1964 general election victory did not assuage doubters: instead it gave rise to the Plan for an Efficient Party as well as Socialist Commentary's more developed suggestions for reform. As one member put it: whilst Labour's battle cry in 1964 was 'modernisation' it rode into battle on an 'antiquated old warhorse'.[3] Both reform proposals won support from ex-Bevanites and revisionists alike and benefitted from insights provided by numerous Labour employees (Socialist Commentary, 1965). One such, Jim Raisin, Regional Organiser for the Northern Home Counties, informed a gathering of his local office holders: 'The British Labour Party functions to-day in almost exactly the

same manner as it did 50 years ago ... it is probable that part of our relative failure as an instrument for change in the political and social conditions of our people is as much due to the unsuitability of some of our own devices as to external causes'.

Raisin's experience was considerable, having previously been an Organiser in London during the 1950s. His experience made him a severe critic of the Labour machine, going so far as to describe the constituency General Council (GC), the heart of any party, as both inefficient and unrepresentative.[4]

However strong their arguments, reformers did not improve matters much. As noted above, this is usually explained with reference to the leadership's lack of interest. As Simpson declared - an organisation which had just won the general elections of 1964 and 1966 was not in too bad a shape. Moreover, certain revisionists, following the fashionable verities of contemporary political science, were convinced elections could be won by national television campaigns independent of grass roots organisation. This is, however, not the full story. What is also clear is that those seeking to increase membership and improve the effectiveness of Labour's volunteers were often opposed by many activists. This, so far as can be discerned, was not a matter of left and right nor, in a pure form at least, of activists against leaders. Nonetheless, those who opposed reform, whether they sat in the Commons, on the NEC or in ward committee rooms, largely prevailed.

A study of Greenwich at the time of the 1950 general election noted that Labour membership was more onerous than that experienced by Conservatives. This was explained with reference to the party's relatively modest income (Benney, Gray and Pear, 1956, 41-6). Whilst lack of finance undoubtedly supplied part of the explanation, Labour's greater dependence on voluntary effort was also due to a particular perception of the Party's ultimate purpose, one at least initially encouraged by Transport House officials and leaders such as Herbert Morrison. In their eyes, voluntarism was not just a cheap means of administering the party: it also demonstrated the moral possibility of 'socialism'. Members

were expected to work together for the 'Great Cause' and, in so doing, learn fellowship and develop a 'more vital kind of citizenship'. Such 'selfless service' was seen as 'the reality of Socialism and the guarantee that it would "work"' (Fielding, Thompson and Tiratsoo, 1995, 93-4).

Given the significance voluntary effort held within the Party, it is not surprising that attempts seen as reducing its role were opposed. Indeed, according to Socialist Commentary, Labour suffered from a 'distrust of the professional' which meant that, 'in a mistaken interpretation of what "democracy" means, the Party clings to the belief that almost anything can be done by almost anyone' (Socialist Commentary, 1965, xxx). Even Wilson, despite its many criticisms, warned that 'an attempt to build up a streamlined professional machine would be offensive to our traditions and our principles'. Despite this, the Report called for Labour's volunteers to be given closer guidance as to how to operate more effectively. This view was enthusiastically endorsed by successive National Agents, Regional Organisers and many full-time constituency agents. According to them, volunteers needed to fully adhere to established procedures, standardise their activities and centralise executive control in fewer hands: they had to be subjected to party direction.

It proved difficult to give this guidance, if only because Labour had a small number of full-time officials, albeit far more than before 1939. During this period there were initially eleven, later twelve Regions each consisting of a Regional Organiser (RO), Assistant Regional Organiser (ARO), Women's Organiser and two clerical assistants. These operated under the direction of the National Agent on behalf of the NEC. Regional officials were the crucial means by which national rules and procedures were promulgated and, if necessary, enforced. However, whilst during the late 1950s each RO made an average of 152 constituency visits and their assistants 175, this was still insufficient to ensure conformity and efficiency as understood by Transport House.[5] Officials often could do little other than exhort, enthuse - or insult. Thus, unless they had been found to have broken party rules, Labour

activists enjoyed a great deal of discretion. Even on discovery, they often refused to change their own custom and practice.

Those who volunteered to help Labour formed a tiny universe of the elect amounting, in some urban wards, to less than three per cent of known members.[6] Within this world party, family and friendship were often interlinked: in Greenwich membership was said to be 'a family rather than individual commitment' whilst in Manchester members attended 'meetings rather as they would go to a club, to meet friends' (Benney et al, 1956, 52; Feinburgh and the Manchester Fabian Society, 1952, 32). Wards were also the focus of a variety of social activities, ostensibly to raise funds, but often given higher priority than more directly political matters.[7] Such events drew the elect together, both against the perceived apathy of the wider membership and electorate as well as the unwelcome intrusions of Regional Organisers.

Whilst this 'fellowship' was welcomed by officials at one level, it also meant that many active members' first loyalty was owed to their ward or constituency, rather than the national organisation. Thus, they were often reluctant to offer assistance to those outside their immediate district. Thus, Wilson noted the 'lamentable' assistance granted by constituencies with assured majorities to their marginal neighbours (Labour Party, 1955, 81-3). Some activists even resented the help of 'full-time strangers' in by-election campaigns.[8] This attachment to the local, at least reinforced by party activity, undoubtedly explains why reconciling members to the consequences of boundary change was one of the more taxing of a Regional Organiser's responsibilities. Indeed, so deep was their distress that, when certain Bermondsey wards amalgamated, some volunteers refused to collect subscriptions for their new comrades.[9]

Reformers, then, firmly believed unbridled voluntarism was a major contribution to the widespread

ignorance and inefficiency of Labour activists. To counter this, the Party produced informative guides and ran educational courses - but few took advantage of them; regional offices also held day and weekend schools with the same limited take-up. Consequently, too many problems required the attention of the Regional Office due to local officers' 'pathetic lack of knowledge of the Party Constitution'.[10] Especially in working-class areas, the party was 'heavily handicapped in that very few of our election workers are used to doing paper work'. This led to 'a good deal of running about due to muddle and lack of precision in communications'.[11] No wonder Raisin dreamt of a membership of minor executives, technical teachers and skilled mechanics as 'this sort soon grasp the value of really good electoral schemes'.[12] Thus, in Abingdon, Oxfordshire in 1966 he noted with relief how membership had become 'very greatly changed' with activists having become 'nearly all middle-class people of a scientific sort'. Unlike more established members, the new group, he said, 'are more concerned with the acquisition and application of power'.[13]

Ignorance, inefficiency and idiosyncrasy were evident across the country, even in marginal seats such as Chigwell and Rugby.[14] This was most striking in safe Labour constituencies. Thus, in the 1967 local elections in Stoke South regional officials discovered that many wards had not canvassed voters nor organised polling day activities. These, some members considered, 'a waste of time'. When, to counter this view, the West Midlands region held a day school on organisation in the city, one official was 'very aware that in the case of some members, this is the first time they have become acquainted' with contemporary electioneering methods.[15] Parties enjoying the affiliation of a 'Labour' club were similarly inactive. As such associations made a party subscription a condition of membership they recruited hundreds, if not thousands, whose idea of socialism was confined to the provision of cheap alcohol. Whilst most constituency parties approved of this arrangement the NEC was concerned at the link between these clubs and poor organisation.[16]

Reformers believed the single most important means of improving Labour's efficiency was the widespread employment of full-time constituency agents (Socialist Commentary, 1965, xi-xii). An agent, they thought, could implement fund-raising schemes; increase membership and the number of affiliated organisations; as well as be familiar with the constitution and approved electoral techniques. Almost by definition, then, an effective agent would meet with considerable local opposition. In Stockton-on-Tees, for example, one agent was forced to seek alternative employment despite the support of his RO, given the presence of 'some strong individualists in high places ... wedded to the casual conduct of business'.[17]

However, the decision whether to employ an agent could only be made by individual GCs: they, after all, had to pay their wages. At Wilson's behest, after 1955 Transport House increased subsidies to marginals wishing to engage an agent whilst also improving the scope of training courses so as to enhance the quality of potential applicants. Yet, despite their perceived importance, an ever-declining minority of parties employed an agent: in 1951 there were 296 but by 1970 this had slipped to 144.[18] Wilson also called for the formation of a National Agency Service to increase the influence of the centre on agents' deployment, but costs proved prohibitive (Labour Party, 1955, 75-7). In any case, whilst lack of finance was an important factor it was by no means the only one inhibiting the employment of agents. Some parties were also 'anti-Agent in principle': they feared such a figure would undermine volunteers' enthusaism.[19]

Organisational improvement often floundered on the question of finance. Nodding towards Labour's voluntarist tradition, Wilson suggested that the importance of money was exaggerated: the party could be efficient without an injection of cash on the Conservative scale (Labour Party, 1955, 66). Those following tended to disagree: even Simpson stated that 'most of the problems of Party organisation and activity stem from inadequate financial resources, nationally and locally' (Labour Party, 1967, 336).

One response was to raise membership subscriptions as well as union contributions. In 1965 Socialist Commentary argued that the six shilling membership was far too cheap, suggesting a £3 rate could become the symbol of a 'more serious attachment to the Party'. Whilst accepting that some members might be lost, it countered by suggesting that at least parties would have a greater incentive to recruit (Socialist Commentary, 1965, xxv-xxvi). A year later, the Party did raise subscriptions, doubling them to 12 shillings. Even this modest increase was said to have caused a loss of those in households in which lived more than one member.[20]

Safe seats remained Labour's great unmilked cash cows; the object of various proposals was to force them into the cattle shed. Wilson described parties sitting on assured majorities as 'not making anything like the effort, in terms of membership, and affiliation fees of which they are capable'. Consequently, the Report recommended setting affiliation fees against either the size of membership or the Parliamentary vote, whichever was greater (Labour Party, 1955, 84-5). Nothing came of this. Similarly, after Simpson proposed imposing stiff levies on parties in safe constituencies, the matter disappeared without trace (Labour Party, 1967, 339).

The crucial question of how to raise membership was also never satisfactorily answered. At least prior to 1966, in established working-class districts there appears to have been a significant latent membership. Many would have joined, if only they had been asked: there were many instances of a few nights canvassing producing spectacular results.[21] Transport House initiated numerous national membership campaigns during this period to encourage parties to tap this incipient demand. Even when the party was at its million-strong peak some Organisers thought it possible to do better.[22] The importance of raising membership was also appreciated by certain activists. According to Bethnal Green's 1952 Annual Report: membership 'is the really important aspect of our organisation, without a large and effective membership we cannot hope to make progress'.[23]

Despite this, many parties were reluctant recruiters. In May 1966 the NEC launched a two-year campaign to increase membership: it took most parties until 1967 to respond.[24] As Table 1.2 indicates, regions with the highest proportion of Labour MPs usually also had the lowest memberships. This was due to a number of factors relating to, among other things, the role of particular trade unions in certain types of constituencies. A majority of miners, for example, might vote Labour but few became members.[25] Another common problem was that constituencies controlled by well-established cliques saw new members as a threat.[26] There is even a common and presumably apocryphal story, still current today, told to illustrate just how little some wanted to recruit. This involves an enthusiastic applicant turned away by a cynical membership secretary because the party was 'full up'. Such a phenomenon was not, however, confined to areas of traditional Labour dominance. Even in the Northern Home Counties Region there was, according to Raisin, an 'unspoken reluctance on the part of activists' to take raising membership seriously.[27] When Uxbridge turned down financial help to establish a full-time agency he said this was 'because, at root, the ruling clique would not be long in that position in a well-developed party'.[28]

Recruitment also divided volunteers, with more committed GC delegates finding themselves at odds with their less keen ward comrades. Thus, in 1953 Bethnal Green's GC, concerned at the first intimations of decline, held a conference to discuss the matter. Despite constant urging from the centre, the wards did little or nothing to stem the flow.[29] Similarly, after a successful canvass instigated in St Thomas's ward by West Salford GC during 1957, the ward asked the GC to cease its efforts, claiming it was impossible to process more recruits due to a lack of collectors. St Thomas's was, then, 'full up'.[30] This latter example was probably typical: many activists did not want to recruit new members as an evening's success would only mean more work for already hard-pressed collectors.[31]

There was, in fact, an 'unofficial understanding' that somebody paying half their subscription could still be counted a Labour member (McKitterick, 1960, 312). The principal reason for this was the imperfect means by which subscriptions were gathered. Most members paid monthly to a collector. As was stated, collecting 'should not be regarded merely as a means of bringing in revenue. It is an essential part of the Party's political and economic machinery'. Lewisham South's agent thought collectors were 'often our only link with the many members of the Party' so they needed to be 'fairly intelligent persons, presentable likeable, and have a reasonable knowledge of Party activities'.[32] Unfortunately, they often were not; and if they were, such figures were burdened with many other responsibilities (Gould, 1954, 13-14). It is hard to convey how difficult the apparently simple matter of collecting subscriptions and so retaining members proved to be. As a consequence, a large number of parties could only guess how many members they actually had. Retaining members was more of a problem than recruitment. For example, after a national summer canvass held in 1955 many parties claimed to keep hold of most of their new members. Others did not pretend: within weeks Craighton had lost 80 per cent of these recruits.[33]

Reformers had hoped to improve collections by paying commissions, but this was rejected by some as 'opposed to Socialist principle'. Despite decline, Bethnal Green's GC rejected payment because 'it was not desirable to abolish the spirit of voluntary service in the Labour Movement'.[34] By no means did all parties agree; yet those who paid their collectors frequently used the services of the elderly, disabled or unemployed, people presumably selected due to need rather than ability (Labour Party, 1955, 84). This well-intentioned practice subverted one covert reason for introducing a financial incentive. Officials believed it would sidestep those cliques who 'insisted they had a right to determine the rate at which the Party should advance'.[35] As one national official put it at the end of our period, the 'biggest barrier' to improving income 'is getting through to the constituencies - there were too many people attending EC and GMC meetings who only wanted to talk and not do any work'. There was, he went on, 'lots of

money waiting to be collected for the Party in many constituencies and all they had to do was put into effect the necessary machinery to collect it'.[36]

Over and above the promotion of membership and electoral efficiency, reformers also hoped to improve member 'education' which, so far as this paper is concerned, meant fostering the discussion of policy. Various studies suggested that party meetings rarely discussed anything other than internal administration (Bealey, Blondel and McCann, 1965, 102; Donnison and Plowman, 1954, 157, 160). If this was the case, it was not endorsed by officials. In the 1940s Transport House encouraged the formation of ward discussion groups and produced pamphlets on a variety of topics to facilitate debate (Fielding et al, 1995, 94-6, 154-5). Even Wilson urged the NEC to look into education as a matter of urgency. This entreaty was endorsed by a paper presented to the NEC's Organisation Sub-Committee which thought it 'desirable to bring political education more easily within the reach of the active Party member in circumstances which will enable him (sic) really to understand the problems of policy and organisation and to discuss their implications in a detailed and practical way'.[37] Simpson also accorded political education a 'very high priority' (Labour Party, 1967, 241, 343-4).

This national concern, as certain inquiries discovered, echoed the 'very genuine interest' in discussion within a number of local parties (Feinburgh, 1952, 28; Donnison and Plowman, 1954, 157-8; Gould, 1954, 15). That the 'trouble with most of us who are active ... is that we spend all our time administering the status quo' and not debating the issues was an often-recurring theme within the ranks.[38] This sentiment was encouraged by regional officials who spent much time promoting the incorporation of policy discussions into meetings.[39] Some GCs - and even wards - also appointed a Political Education Officer (PEO); formed committees to encourage discussion; established libraries; and launched newsletters. For such activists, education was central to their work. In 1967, Birmingham Yardley's PEO wrote in the first issue of his constituency newsletter: 'Making Socialists is

an educational process and there is a pressing need for people to gain an understanding of the socialist solutions to the grave social problems of the day'.[40] Parties in largely middle-class areas, such as Warwick and Leamington, certainly saw merit in education.[41] At least some of Labour's working-class activists were similarly interested. In 1952 Transport House asked constituencies to discuss 'Problems of Foreign Policy' a request taken seriously at least in the East End constituency of Poplar. There the GC urged wards to study the pamphlet and report on their conclusions: some held two meetings to discuss the matter with attendances increasing as a result.[42] This exercise was repeated in 1953 when 'Challenge to Britain' was also distributed to wards. Whilst less extensive than the previous initiative, it nonetheless concluded with a special GC meeting which saw the unusually large number of - twenty - delegates debated the document.[43]

Poplar's initiative was not sustained: in this it was fairly typical. Across the country, initiatives floundered due to lack of enthusiasm: despite official encouragement, less than one-third of constituency parties formed ward discussion groups in the 1940s (Fielding et al, 1995, 94-6, 154-5). Within local parties a minority of enthusiasts battled against general indifference. In Brixton during 1950-1 ward delegates avoided propaganda committee meetings; there was little support for its weekly discussions; a Quiz Night failed to attract numbers; and open-air gatherings were abandoned due to lack of support. In 1953 a resolution calling for policy discussion to be placed higher up the GC agenda was proposed. It took a year before the motion was passed - and then it made no difference to the conduct of meetings. A by-then presumably frustrated constituency chair complained in 1956 of the lack of political discussion at meetings, exhorting members to 'take more interest in Socialism and not the "Social Committee"'.[44]

In 1969 the NEC's Home Policy Committee responded to what it took to be a demand for a greater role for members in policy-making by instituting 'Participation '69'. This involved the circulation of a

background document to 2,000 organisations accompanied by a questionnaire to be submitted to the NEC. General Secretary Harry Nicholas described this as an attempt get members 'personally involved in the policy making work of the Party ... in the knowledge that they will be fully considered at the policy-making level of the Party'. The first topic selected was women and social security: the NEC had already established a study group on women and discrimination which had published an interim report whilst the Government had also produced a pertinent White Paper. The object was to inform the NEC of membership opinion so it could brief MPs in time for the forthcoming Commons debate on the Bill.[45] However, only 198 questionnaires were returned by the deadline, although something over 250 were eventually submitted: a mere 2,343 individuals had taken part in discussions. Reflecting its own low expectations, the NEC considered these numbers represented a helpful first step towards integrating members into policy formulation.[46]

It might be thought that the main reason for the absence of enthusiasm for policy discussion was the marginal impact this had on policy-making. Apart from the initiatives noted above, the constituencies' voice was restricted to sending one motion and delegate to an annual conference where the leadership usually mobilised the union block to vote down dissent. If so, this was a little-articulated view. In contrast, it is clear that some members were uncomfortable tackling unfamiliar ideas and complicated issues. There were undoubtedly many like the Brixton activist described after his death as 'a good member, not an outstanding one as regards getting up and making speeches or voicing his thoughts at meetings', but 'one that helped to keep the Party going by his background work'.[47] Other volubly asserted that discussion was pointless. As one councillor stated in a debate which decided not to introduce a discussion period to GC meetings: 'What do we want to talk politics for? It's a waste of time. We all know what we mean by the Labour Party' (Anonymous, 1954, 23).

As Scarrow has indicated, the 1950s and 1960s constituted no 'golden past' for Labour. From

unimpressive levels, membership declined; the extent and effectiveness of activism, already subject to bitter critique at the start of the period, at best, did not increase; and, despite much encouragement, most activists saw little merit in discussing policy. In explaining Labour's failure to overcome such ingrained problems, the standard account undoubtedly has some merit. Knowing what was to come after 1970 it now seems clear that the leadership should have viewed improving organisation with a greater sense of urgency. However, the purpose of this paper was to highlight the fact that, during this period, many Labour figures did take reform seriously. In so doing, it has not completely explained Labour's lack of innovation. It has, nonetheless, highlighted one neglected factor: the opposition of a significant proportion of the party's own members. In establishing this point - in some detail - the paper raised general questions about the nature of authority in the Labour party and other comparable political organisations. The ability of active members to subvert officials' plans to improve the effectiveness of the party's organisation should at least qualify the enthusiasm of advocates of Michels' 'iron law of bureaucracy'. The party elite was not as powerful as some suggested at the time (MacKenzie, 1963). In so doing, the paper, if it has achieved anything, revealed the need for a more nuanced appreciation of the motives which underpin the relationship between leaders and led.

Table 1.1 Labour Party Vote and Official Membership, 1950-70

	Votes cast	Members	% mems of votes
1950	13,266,592	908,161	6.9
1951	13,948,605	876,275	6.3
1955	12,404,970	843,356	6.8
1959	12,215,538	847,526	6.9
1964	12,205,814	830,116	6.8
1966	13,064,951	775,693	5.9
1970	12,178,295	690,191	5.7

Source: Labour Party, 1970 and Butler, D. and Pinto-Duschinsky, M., 1971.

Table 1.2 Proportion of Constituencies Returning a Labour MP, Affiliating only 1,000 Members and employing a full-time agent, by Region in 1965

% Labour MPs	% affil. only 1,000 members	% FT agents
89 (Wales)	21 (Eastern)	60 (Eastern)
86 (London)	26 (London)	60 (London)
81 (Northern)	26 (Nth Home)	54 (Nth Home)
73 (Nth East)	49 (Nth West)	38 (Northern)
69 (Nth West)	52 (Southern)	37 (E Mids)
68 (E Mids)	61 (Wales)	37 (Sth West)
65 (Scotland)	68 (Northern)	31 (W Mids)
59 (W Mids)	71 (E Mids)	30 (Nth West)
51 (Eastern)	71 (Sth West)	30 (Southern)
43 (Nth Home)	82 (Nth East)	22 (Wales)
26 (Sth West)	83 (W Mids)	20 (Nth East)
21 (Southern)	86 (Scotland)	7 (Scotland)

Source: Labour Party Archive, NEC Organisation Sub-Committee minutes, 19th July 1966, 'Individual membership' (NAD/43/5/66) and 23rd February 1966, 'The Agency Service'.

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Notes

1. Thanks are due to Susan Scarrow for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2. Labour Party Archive (LPA), National Executive Committee (NEC), Organisation sub-committee (OSC) minutes, 19th July 1966, 'Individual membership' (NAD/43/5/66).

3. LPA, Egham Clarion, January 1966.

4. London Metropolitan Archive (LMA), J.W. Raisin papers, Acc 2783/JWR/AG/2. See also Modern Records Centre, Warwick University (MRC), East Midlands Regional Labour Party papers, MSS9/3/1/17 and /8/4.

5. OSC, 17th November 1955, 'Note on the Report of the Sub-Committee on Party Organisation' (NAD/59/11/55) and 17th April 1958, 'Preliminary Enquiry into the work of the Organising Staff and the Regional Councils' (NAD/29/4/58).

6. Lambeth Archives (LA), Brixton Labour Party papers, Town Hall ward minutes, IV/156/1/8, 9th January 1958, 8th January 1959, 1st February 1960.

7. LA, Clapham Labour Party papers, IV/156/2/3, Clapham Divisional Labour Party GMC minutes, 21st June 1951.

8. OSC, 16th January 1958, 'Memorandum by the Executive Committee of the Hornsea Labour Party'.

9. Southwark Local Studies Library (SLS), Bermondsey Labour Party, Annual Report 1953.

10. East Midlands papers, MSS9/3/15/26.

11. Raisin papers, Acc 2783/JWR/ORG/67/63.

12. Raisin papers, Acc 2783/JWR/ORG/67/68.

13. Raisin papers, Acc 2783/JWR/ORG/66/104.

14. OSC, 16th January 1958, 'Regional Schemes' (NAD/16/2/58) and 20th March 1958, 'Regional Schemes' (NAD/23/58).

15. MRC, West Midlands Regional Labour Party papers, MSS6/3/3/259 & 302, 1968 and /4/8, 19, 24, 60 & 159.

16. OSC, 16th May 1956, 'Affiliation of National Union of Labour and Socialists Clubs' (NAD/42/5/56); West Midlands papers, MSS6/3/2/42 & 240.

17. OSC, 7th May 1957, 'Regional Schemes. Organisers' Reports' (NAD/35/4/57) and 9th July, 'Regional Schemes. Organisers' Reports' (NAD/56/7/57).

18. See the comments in SLS, Bermondsey Labour Party papers, 1980/54/E2.

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