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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

Department of Political and Social Sciences

TRADE UNIONS AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN BRITAIN, 1964-1987

Paul Webb

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view of obtaining
the Degree of the European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

Examining jury:

Prof. Ian BUDGE (University of Essex) (supervisor)
Prof. Gösta ESPING-ANDERSEN (EUI) (co-supervisor)
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Prof. Peter MAIR (University of Leiden)
Prof. Bo SARLVIK (University of Göteborg)

October 1991

Florence

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Paul D. Webb

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Chapter 1 - Trade Unions And Electoral Mobilisation.

Despite the abundance of literature and comment upon the political involvement of trade unions in Britain, surprisingly little work of any detail has been directed towards the impact that unions might have upon the the way that people vote in national elections (though for a little known exception see Freyman, 1980). Given that the burgeoning field of electoral studies has been indicating clearly for some time the widespread state of flux in which the British electorate finds itself, it would not be so unreasonable to assume that unions could comprise one element in this pattern of electoral change. After all, trade unions present us with an example of what are essentially *non-electoral* organisations which nevertheless play an important role in mobilising political consciousness and action. Trade unions have been crucial to the development of politics in the modern industrial society that Britain has been throughout the twentieth century. In founding and sustaining the Labour party they have played a seminal role in the crystallisation and institutionalisation of the class politics which has so manifestly characterised British culture since before the Great War. Moreover, and notwithstanding some speculation to the contrary, there is reputable and cogent research to remind us that Pulzer's famous injunction that "class is the basis of British politics - all else is embellishment and detail" remains more than pertinent (Marshall, Newby, Rose and Vogler 1988). To be more specific about their modern significance, one could imagine a variety of ways in which unions might affect electoral outcomes. For a start, it is conceivable that they could have an impact on the way that voters assess salient public issues at election time; or again, they might plausibly be regarded as able

to influence the ideological profile of parties and electors. Clearly, also, British unions maintain a capacity to provide organisational back-up for Labour's election campaign efforts. And, of course, they have long since been presumed to play some part in mobilising class linked attitudes and identities which might sustain support for the Party. Hence they should be regarded, in this context, as institutions which share a mobilisational capacity and role with organisations of explicitly electoral orientation - that is, with political parties. Indeed, it has been pointed out, for example, that, "...in a number of cases union membership is at least as important, if not more important, than occupational class in predicting socialist versus non-socialist support." (Mair 1983: 423) ¹ In this thesis, we shall be endeavouring to see how far it is possible to unravel the effect that trade unions have had in this continuing political process of electoral mobilisation, in particular since the 1960s. In seeking to achieve this, one of the initial steps to take is to establish a clear picture of what mobilisation consists of, analytically speaking, and this is one of the central purposes of this opening chapter.

Before turning to this, however, it is important to emphasise the more specific and central objective of this thesis. We have suggested that, owing to its importance as an actor in the process of mobilising political support, the trade union movement in Britain might comprise an important element in the well-documented pattern of electoral change that has marked the country since the 1960s. One feature of this is that, despite - or maybe because of - the growing number of trade unionists in Britain over the past twenty five years, a decreasing proportion of them have been willing to maintain their traditional

allegiance towards the Labour Party at election time. Thus in 1964 fully three fifths of all trade union members voted for Labour at the general election held that year, yet less than two decades later the corresponding proportion was down to barely a third (see table 5.1, below). This fact has been observed and commented upon not infrequently by politicians, commercial pollsters, journalists and academics alike. Yet, to reiterate, detailed analysis of this phenomenon has been virtually non-existent. This leaves a gap which it has become the central objective of this thesis to fill. Precisely how and why have trade union members turned away from the Labour Party since its triumphant return to power in 1964 after "thirteen wasted years" in the wilderness of frustrating political opposition? In 1964 the millions of ordinary members of trade unions were a vital part of the constituency that swept Labour back into national government. As the 1990s begin, Labour anticipates just such a return in the not too distant future, yet is fully aware that a successful appeal to the union constituency may be important if the dream is to come true once more.

There have been many studies which touch upon the electoral consequences of trade unionism in Britain. However, these frequently tell us little more about the nature of the changing union electorate than that it is subject to the effects of social change. Colin Crouch, for instance, informs us that:

"The proportion of union members who automatically support the Labour Party is declining...it also follows the changing social composition of union membership - a factor which also explains the declining proportion of members in unions affiliated to the party. The great increase in unionisation of the past decade has occurred primarily in white collar and professional unions, most of which are not affiliated, while unions in decline as a result of a shrinkage in their occupational base have been Labour strongholds." (Crouch 1982: 171)

To concentrate purely upon factors related to the social context is, I would suggest, not really enough. A further example of academic interest in the question of why Labour has lost the political support of trade unionists has been provided by the work of Andrew J. Taylor (Taylor 1987: 242-252). Taylor provides a rather different focus to Crouch, but one which is equally problematic. To be fair, the electoral question does not lie at the heart of Taylor's interest - nor indeed, of Crouch's - as it does mine, and their work is obviously thoroughly researched, undoubtedly well informed, and clear value. However, the electoral analysis again leaves something to be desired. Perhaps this is because it is more in the way of a brief review of potentially relevant research which has been conducted largely tangentially to the specific matter of the voting behaviour of unionists. Consequently, Taylor grasps at various factors which may have possible explanatory value, but he is really in no position to evaluate their importance with any precision. He never really succeeds in moulding all these factors into a parsimonious and coherent interpretation, for there is simply too much in there. In short, in explanatory terms he seems to say everything and yet he says nothing. Thus, the list of possible factors that he adduces might explain Labour's loss of support among union members runs to the following:

- i. Weakening affective loyalty for the party.
- ii. Increasingly negative instrumental assessments of the party's performance in government and opposition.
- iii. Various aspects of social change, such as the growing relevance of what have been called sectoral cleavages, the growing number of white collar, women and unskilled manual union members, and the disruption of communal solidarity that accompanies the divorce of residential from working locations.
- iv. Labour's loss of credibility as an alternative governing team.
- v. Labour's unpopular policies.

These factors are not necessarily uninformative in themselves - indeed, I shall be drawing upon several of them myself, in some way or another - though they are not very helpful as presented by Taylor, in my view. The reasons for this vary. In the first place, some of the factors he mentions help us understand the general electoral decline of the Labour Party rather than its particular decline within the union constituency. This is true of the points concerning Labour's policies and its widely perceived "credibility gap" for large sections of the electorate during the 1980s. Moreover, some electoral analysts have effectively questioned just how important direct assessment of policy alternatives by voters really is (see, for example, Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985: chapter 7). Then again, whilst social change provides an important contextual setting against which to consider the weakening of Labour support among unionists, it supplies few directly helpful explanations. Take the question of the impact of sectoral cleavages, for example. Though an interesting line of enquiry that has developed in British psephology during the 1980s, we shall be seeing that the matter of occupational location in either the public or private sector has little explanatory power for voting behaviour (see chapter 6, below). Similarly, the presence of greater numbers of female and unskilled employees within the ranks of union memberships proves to be something of a red herring (chapter 5). And so it is with regards to the growth of white collar unionism, for it is my contention that the most notable phenomenon requiring explanation is the heavy swing against Labour among blue collar union members (chapter 5). (Not that the growth of white collar membership is entirely irrelevant to the problem of political mobilisation faced by Labour, however, as we shall be seeing in

chapter 2). None of this is said to denigrate the generally useful contribution made by Taylor; on the contrary, it is merely to suggest that this thesis aims to build upon the work of researchers such as Taylor which has really concentrated upon other aspects of the party-union relationship in Britain. Consideration of the union electorate is usually tangential to the main thrust of these efforts.² But Taylor's book does serve as an illustration of the gaps in the existing literature. In my view there is a need to sharpen the analysis and specify our explanations.

Trade Unions And The Sources Of Electoral Mobilisation.

Before proceeding with the actual analysis of the trade union electorate in Britain, some comments of a general introductory nature on the concept of mobilisation, and the unions' involvement therein, are in order. The mobilisational role played by unions entails practical collaboration of some kind with political parties, and this may be so regardless of whether we are talking about class-left, christian democratic or right wing parties (all of which have links with unions in various European countries). Such ties as exist between parties and unions may be relatively loosely-drawn, however, reflecting the desire of union bodies to maintain a certain distance. Many unions are wary of casting all their eggs into one party political basket; it runs the risk of attracting hostility from governments of contrary political hue, and draws unions into the morass of internal party politics. On the other hand, unions with a clear ideological or social group identity may willingly become immersed in a close "organic" relationship with a party. Historically, the union

movement in Britain has experienced both types of relationship, though throughout the twentieth century this experience has far more closely resembled the latter alternative. From 1900 until well into the post World War Two era the Labour Party and many of the unions affiliated to the TUC unquestionably stood together as the institutional expression of the working class community's political consciousness.

Broadly speaking, there would seem to be three obvious potential sources of change in the voting behaviour of union members - through *social, political and organisational factors*. That is, as a general point, social change, political change and organisational change can all play their separate, though often inter-related, parts in producing electoral change. Consequently, in the course of this thesis various possible explanations of electoral change that fall into these broad categories are considered. To concentrate on social factors for a moment, the question of the changing social profile of the trade unions is faced; does the growth of white collar unionism explain Labour's losses within the unions? Mention of this offers an early opportunity of issuing a brief caveat regarding the phenomenon of *class dealignment* in British electoral behaviour. The point is that, whilst our major concern will lie with the specific role that trade unions play in affecting electoral behaviour, the impact they have is not easily distinguished from the broader, essentially non union-specific phenomenon of class dealignment. Stated simply, class dealignment refers to the apparent tendency for electors to vote less and less according to the social class of which they are members, and this is a phenomenon which is by no means exclusive to trade unionists. But, given that British trade unionism has historically been associated with class

mobilisation we would expect change in unionist voting behaviour to reflect, perhaps to a large extent, processes of class dealignment. Thus, we clearly cannot attribute all unionist electoral change to causes specifically connected with trade unions. To some extent, more general electoral change explains the behaviour of the specific constituency that we are interested in, and in so far as this is true, this thesis is without particular significance. It has to be made clear then, that to a certain extent, the behaviour we shall focus upon is merely an adjunct of a broader phenomenon which has already been examined in great detail elsewhere. This means facing up to the question, "how far is unionist electoral change simply a reflection of general class dealignment?" One of the things which can, I believe, be demonstrated in a quite straightforward manner, however, is that there is far more to change in union members' voting behaviour than just this. For instance, by comparing the voting behaviour of union members and non-members within each social class, we are able to identify behaviour peculiar to those situated within a union milieu, and consequently to suggest *union-specific* explanations. The major theme to be developed in the course of this thesis will be that union-specific factors interact with the processes of social change that underlie class dealignment to offer an explanation of the changing voting patterns of trade union members. That is, while accepting that the changing nature of class identities and values affects the working class community as a whole, its real significance for us lies in setting the context within which union members react to the political activity of their leaderships. If these statements seem a little cryptic at this stage then hopefully their detailed meaning will emerge as we proceed, but it is appropriate here to emphasise that there is no simple one to one relationship between

social change and electoral change. Other factors intervene to mediate the effect of the former upon the latter, factors which may be more purely "political" or "organisational" in nature. It is one of the purposes of this thesis to examine how far the political and organisational activity of trade unions might be important in this respect. To test the organisational factor, for instance, it is surely pertinent to reflect on the question of whether a weakening of the organisational linkage between the party and the unions might have undermined the capacity of the movement to mobilise trade unionist support for Labour. This will be considered in chapter 3; as will be seen, there is little or no convincing evidence to suggest that this is in fact the case. Consequently, we are left with the possibility that political factors best account for the particular behaviour of union members at the ballot booths. In particular, I shall argue that political conflict between party and union elites since the 1960s offers a convincing explanation for the exceptional electoral swing against Labour shown by manual union members over the period. This is not to say that social change has no part to play in our explanation; on the contrary, social changes already evident by the middle of the 1960s were important in undermining deep-seated affective loyalty previously felt for the Labour Party by many working class people in Britain. It is only in the context of the weakening of such psychological bonds that more purely instrumental evaluations of political factors like party-union relations gain in significance for the voting decision. And it was in the 1960s, of course, that union and industrial affairs were thrust onto the heart of the political agenda; in brief, these became increasingly salient issues, especially for trade unionists. This argument, along with supporting evidence, will be revealed in detail as the thesis

proceeds. The essential message is that social and political factors interact in structuring electoral choices, and it is the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate just how far this has been so in the context of the trade union movement.

To recap briefly on what has been said so far; it has been established, firstly, that the electoral impact of trade unions is a subject worthy of attention given the important mobilisational role that they have assumed in many nations, including Britain. This impact, it has been suggested, is likely to flow from the ways in which unions affect factors such as issue assessments, social identities, ideological profiles and flows of organisational resources. The most direct way of evaluating union effects is to compare the electoral behaviour of union members and non-members, and this is what we shall be doing. It must be acknowledged that unionist dealignment over the past twenty years or so is to some extent likely to be a consequence of the processes of social change that have underlain the broad phenomenon of class dealignment. Yet social change alone is unlikely to account for the changing partisan preferences of trade unionists; working class unionists, in particular, are likely to have been influenced by strictly political factors such as the adverse state of party-union relations.

Having stated the purpose, and anticipated the major themes, of the thesis, it is time to move on to the secondary aim of this opening chapter. Put simply, this is to try to articulate a working model of *mobilisation* in the electoral context. What is the value of such an undertaking? I believe that by doing so, we are able to look at the "nuts and bolts" of the act of voting, as

it were. In order to understand the way that trade unions might influence electoral behaviour, it is helpful to firstly identify, analytically, the various components of the voting act. Mobilisation is a notion that goes some way towards allowing us to do this. It draws together the social, psychological, political and organisational factors that structure patterns of electoral behaviour. Furthermore, it is a general concept which goes beyond basic electoral sociology and considers change from the specific viewpoint of political science. As Max Kaase has said:

"Individuals are embedded in institutional, organisational and local contexts; they are members of a multitude of personal networks that link them to society at large...this situation clearly leaves its mark on the discussion on dealignment and realignment, which are usually operationalised as aggregate or summary measures of the way that social and/or psychological groups/quasi-groups are aligned to politics through their vote. To look at these relationships is just to look at the *outcome of processes of alignment and dealignment, whereas the theoretically challenging question is how the processes operate in detail.*"
(Kaase, 1987: 485, emphasis mine.)

Mobilisation is a concept, then, which may help provide a basis for a detailed understanding of the processes underlying electoral change. An adequate if unspectacular working theory of mobilisation will supply us with a view of the building blocks of electoral support, and might then facilitate understanding of precisely how social change and union-party relations affect a union member as he or she goes to the ballot box. As a preliminary step in articulating this theory it is worthwhile giving some consideration to a pair of terms which form an integral part of the discourse on mobilisation; these are the notions of political cleavage and organisation.

Political Cleavages And The Role Of Political Organisation In The Mobilisational Process.

It is not simply the case that it would be as well to define the terms that will be employed throughout; it is also analytically restricting to try to come to terms with the notion of mobilisation without working through the significance of the idea of socio-political cleavage and the importance of organisation. "Cleavage" and "organisation" are in a sense both sine qua non of "mobilisation"; mobilisation is a redundant activity without the existence of a socio-political cleavage in the first place. And it soon becomes evident that it is difficult to consider the relationship of mobilisation to cleavage without reflecting upon the role of organisation. Organisation is the very stuff of mobilisation as an activity; it is the means by which a cleavage can be mobilised.

A cleavage is a persistent political division in a society which is strong enough to draw together sections of the electorate; these groups may cohere either on the basis of shared value-orientations, or similar positions within the social structure, or both. Thus, certain critical issues or entire "weltanschauung" may divide a society into more or less antagonistic groups, just as socio-economic interests may. It is, of course, further possible that these two basic types of cleavage may be overlapping, as in the case where social class interests become closely associated with socialist or conservative ideological stances. A useful account of cleavage development was formulated by the late Stein Rokkan, who identified six different stages in the process of translating a potential social cleavage into an institutionalised form of

political conflict. This scheme of mobilisational development has the merit of demonstrating where issues, ideology and organisation take effect; these are the ways, it may be recalled, through which it has been suggested that unions might affect voting behaviour. During the first stage of cleavage mobilisation that Rokkan identified, a line of social cleavage has to be actually *generated*, of course. Typically, macro-processes of social transformation such as urbanisation, industrialisation and secularisation have been responsible for generating cleavages in the modern European experience. The second phase involves the *crystallisation* of cleavages into manifest social groupings over issues of public policy. Following this, alliances of what Rokkan refers to as "*political entrepreneurs*" emerge and engage in the attempt to mobilise support over policy alternatives. At this point, the fourth stage occurs, when these entrepreneurs come fact to face with key questions of mobilisational strategy; should they attempt to inspire action through the medium of *pre-existing community networks*, or should they actually create *new membership organisations* to engage the interest, enthusiasm and imagination of clientele groups? They then have to decide upon the most effective arena for political action; is it best to compete for votes via a broadly aggregative party organisation, or should they opt for direct action in the "corporate channel" of interest articulation by a "single-issue" organisation? Finally, as a corollary of the decision taken regarding the arena of mobilisation, actual *pay-offs* emerge from the mobilisational process in the shape of legislation or corporately negotiated agreements. (Rokkan 1977, 567)

This scheme of cleavage development usefully emphasises a point already made about the interaction between social structure and human choice. Specifically, there is nothing necessarily deterministic about processes of political and electoral mobilisation; Rokkan covers social structure, political action and the deployment of organisational resources in his model. Indeed, at the crux of the relationship between social structure and political choice lies the variable of *organisation*. As Samuel Barnes has put it:

"No idea has ever made much headway without an organisation behind it...wherever ideologies seem to be important in politics they have a firm organisational basis." (Barnes 1966: 522)

It is worthwhile considering briefly the impact of organisation in general terms since, amongst other things, it provides the basis upon which we shall later address the issue of trade union organisational input into the Labour Party's mobilisational efforts in Britain. (See chapter 3.) A pertinent illustration of how crucial a role organisation has to play in mediating between structure and action is provided by Giovanni Sartori's reflections upon the mobilisational problems faced by class-left parties. (Sartori 1968) Sartori was interested in class mobilisation and, taking the four-fold scheme presented in Figure 1.1 as his point of departure, he posed the question: "How do we pass from class conditions to class consciousness and action?" The answer, he suggested, was that identifiable working class organisations are necessary to mobilise a sense of class consciousness within the working class:

"In summary, large collectivities become class structured only if they are class persuaded. The most likely and apt persuader is the party (or the union) playing on the class appeal resource." (Sartori 1968: 16)

Figure 1.1 - Sartorian Scheme of Thresholds of Class Mobilisation.

1 CLASS CONDITIONS	2 STATUS AWARENESS
3 CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS	4 CLASS ACTION

Note: *Class conditions* refers to the presence of the objective economic and social conditions underlying the class structure of industrialised society. Such conditions alone do not provide automatically for class consciousness or action. *Status awareness* refers to the capacity of an individual to locate him or herself upon a scale of social stratification. "Status" does not equal "class", nor does "awareness" equal "consciousness", which in the sense of *Class consciousness* involves "class devotees who actually live a class ideology". *Class action*, a form of which is "class voting", flows from class consciousness. Sartori takes pains to stress that "class action comprises class voting, but vice versa is not true". In practice, people may vote according to their "objective" class without displaying the genuine subjective consciousness. Thus, apparent class voting may also flow from simple status awareness.

Source: Sartori 1968: 12-13.

He underlines this by recalling Alford's point that "it seems probable that the relative strength of labor unionism is both a cause and consequence of class politics" (Alford 1963: 292). Essentially, Sartori implies that the critical impact that labour organisations can have during the mobilisational process is directed towards the nurturing of long term identities and values. Again, Rokkan is of help in expanding upon this. He suggested how organisation could be important in providing a mechanism of identity-building and identity-maintenance. According to him, the type of social cleavage in question was important.

"You do not need to build up a network of organisations to defend a peripheral language in its core areas: the physical distance from the centre of the dominant language constitutes enough of a barrier. You do need to build organisational barriers once enough of the peripheral population has moved into *direct physical day-to-day contact with the dominant culture*" (Rokkan 1977: 569-570, emphasis mine).

Organisational barriers are necessary to increase social distance where physical distance can not guarantee cultural distinctiveness. Although Rokkan had in mind centre-periphery, linguistic and religious cleavages, the general point is not without relevance for the class cleavage. In certain countries, the class-left tendency within the developing party system has attempted to deploy all the organisational resources at its disposal in order to "encapsulate" a target community within an extensive network of interlinking social, economic and political organisations; this strategy of "organising and incorporating within the political party as many of the every day activities of the membership as possible" (Wellhofer 1979: 171) was adopted in Italy, for instance, with the object of isolating the nascent industrial working classes from the influence of the dominant culture which was catholic and socially conservative (Barnes 1974). This point may not be entirely without relevance for the study of electoral change in modern Britain; in fact, it is interesting that such an approach has clearly never really been attempted by the Labour movement in the country. In terms of social identity alone, this probably mattered little (at least until the waves of social and economic change that took place after 1945), for the working class was largely static within a homogeneous set of occupational and residential communities. The Labour movement settled into this existing pattern of communities

and identities rather than mould them in a radical direction. But it is evident that encapsulation can play a role that extends beyond the reinforcement of social identity alone; if it goes far enough towards isolating and forging a distinct sub-culture, then it may also disseminate a system of social and political values, or an ideology. This is a point not necessarily lost upon the radical left in Britain who have long lamented the failure of Labour to become an "hegemonic" party and to provide an all-embracing ideological and cultural home for the domestic working class (Anderson 1965; Miliband 1972).³ I shall return to this theme in chapter 3, but for now it should be observed that the point is neither trivial nor a digression; from the perspective of electoral change, it seems plausible to suggest that parties unable or unwilling to invest strongly in influencing the values and identities of their potential supporters are likely to be especially vulnerable to the unmediated and direct effects of social and economic change. Paul Whiteley, for instance, has emphasised how important ideological conviction can be in supporting partisan loyalty. Whiteley contends that the working class Labour partisans typically base their support for the party upon "instrumental" motivations (for example, on the basis that the Labour Party promotes the interest of the working class, or that party membership is an outgrowth of union activities); conversely, middle class Labour followers are more inclined to have "expressive" motivations (for instance, a strong belief in socialism or social justice per se). The value of this greater expressive or ideological perspective lies in the fact that it makes for more secure partisan loyalty. Instrumentally motivated followers may suffer from "cognitive dissonance" when there is an inconsistency between ideals and real events, and they are likely to resolve this conflict by

changing or even abandoning those ideals. This is not so likely to happen to those of fundamentally expressive orientation, however, since:

"...their attitudes are more closely integrated into a web of beliefs, each of which supports the others in the face of dissonant information",
(Whiteley 1983: 66).

The electoral consequences of organisational presence within certain social groups can be considerable, then. It is interesting that, having eschewed such a thoroughgoing strategy in the past, the modern Labour Party is currently striving to become a mass membership party. In part, this new drive for members is focused upon union memberships, but one rather suspects that this is inevitably a case of too little, too late. Certainly it would seem that the time for encapsulating a class community and transforming its political culture is long since past. We shall be returning to the matter of union-party organisational effort and considering it in the chapter 3; however, this analysis is premised on the notion that the unions might affect the short term organisational effort of the election campaign, rather than the possibility that they could sustain long term values and identities.

We now have some notion of the relationship between mobilisation, cleavage and organisation. Organisation is essentially a crucial part of the activity of mobilisation; and a cleavage is the *structural element* of society towards which the mobilisational activity is directed. But what is mobilisation itself?

A Conceptual Outline Of Electoral Mobilisation.

Political mobilisation has been defined as the "collective and structured expression of commitment and support within society", (Nettl 1967: 123). In attempting to comprehend the processes that underlie the engagement of this structured support, I would propose that it is useful to break them down into two broad analytical dimensions. One of these dimensions is concerned with the internal motivations of the subjects of the mobilisational process, the "mobilisees" as it were. Thus one might conveniently refer to it as the *motivational* dimension. The second of the dimensions is concerned with the nature of the relationship between elites - "political entrepreneurs" in Rokkan's terms - and masses. I choose to refer to this as the *directional* dimension for reasons that will, hopefully, become obvious. We can look briefly at these in turn.

Broadly speaking, we have already encountered the major conceptual distinction involved in the motivational dimension of mobilisation. Whiteley referred to it as the difference between instrumental and affective or expressive motivations for supporting a political party. Essentially it is the difference between a strictly *rationalistic* basis of support and others. "Rationalistic" in this context refers to motivations which are bound up with the pursuit of interests by political means. Initially the rationalistic purpose involves the recognition and clear definition of interests by individuals in relation to others around them. As Birgitta Nedelmann has said:

"The recognition and definition of interests is the result of common efforts to structure the awareness of specific problems and give them a cultural meaning in the process of interaction", (Nedelmann 1984: 11)

It would be appropriate to make a couple of general observations about the rationalistic aspect of mobilisation at this point. Firstly, it is subject to pressure from the effects of social, economic and technological change. That is, socio-economic factors like occupational mobility are obviously likely to provoke citizens to think of revising their ideas about precisely where their interests lie. Just as importantly, the development of mass media communications since the war (particularly television) means that an important alternative source of public information now rivals that of explicitly political organisations. Since the management of such information is crucial to public acknowledgement of what "the truth" is, the mass media must be able to influence assessments that individuals make about issues of public importance and the way in which these relate to particular interests. Secondly, a corollary of this is that mobilisation is a continuous process of attempted persuasion under circumstances of changing political, economic and cultural conditions. Therefore, parties and trade unions may be faced with the awkward problem of staying with their followers' interest perceptions. In periods of social and economic change this can present difficult strategic choices about the need to either revise fundamental social group appeals or to reassert traditional ones more strongly.

In contrast to the instrumental is the affective or expressive aspect of motivational mobilisation. Strictly speaking, it may be possible to draw a distinction between affectivity and expressiveness; the former consists of identification with and loyalty to a community or institution, whereas the latter is concerned with a commitment to a set of values. However, as far

as we are concerned they may be said to share something in common, analytically speaking. Rather than narrow self-interest, the essence of this type of support seems to be founded in some kind of *emotional or moral loyalty* - whether it be to a group, an institution, or to a set of values. In other words we are confronted with some kind of clear normative commitment to, or belief in, a community, institution or value system. This creates emotional ties of belonging to a group or community; this might well be a socio-economic community or a group with a clear ideological identity. Often, of course, social and ideological identities go together. Moreover, it would not be surprising to discover that such affective loyalty to a group and its institutions is dependent upon a common cultural and material experience, a "way of life". (One is put in mind of Sartori's aphorism about class conscious individuals who "live an ideology".) Such a distinctive way of life may manifest itself in behavioural attributes such as attire, speech, eating and so on. In order to achieve this sense of group solidarity, mobilisational processes have usually to instill in individuals affective orientations towards abstract notions of community, and to simultaneously overcome traditional ties to parochial primary groups. It should be noted that factors of social and technological change can often weaken affective ties just as they can instrumental and rationalistic ties. Changes in the occupational, consumption and residential patterns of the working class in Britain have, for instance, clearly undermined a subcultural milieu which formed an important basis of class solidarity. (We shall return to this factor to some extent in chapter 2 and in the conclusion.) And once again, the modern

phenomenon of the mass media has also been significant, this time in cutting across the cultural symbols and values of class communities.

The crux of the second dimension of mobilisation - that which I have termed the directional - lies in a straightforward distinction between *downward* and *interactive* models of mobilisational activity. A downward model would be one whereby initiatives for political action, interest articulation, organisational and institutional formation tend to flow from elite to mass. The inherent passivity or deference of such a model from the viewpoint of the grass roots suggests that the mobilisation of affective loyalty is indispensable. To some extent or another, demands flow upwards in any elite-mass relationship, but the interactive model is further characterised by a greater degree of initiative on the part of the grass roots with regard to defining interests and formulating campaigns of political action and institutional control. Once again it is important to remark that the advance of electronic mass media can affect this aspect of political mobilisation. For surely it is plausible that citizens at grass root level will be better able to define interests and articulate demands, and even broad strategies for action, when they have access to sources of information that are independent of their political and corporate leaders. Television, in particular, provides ordinary citizens with such an alternative.

The Value Of Conceptualising Mobilisation.

How has it been of value to spend time introducing the notion of mobilisation, and the attendant concepts of cleavage and political organisation? The brief answer is that all these things have some place in the view of electoral change that is developed within this thesis. Perhaps this is best illustrated by anticipating the direction in which the thesis is to unfold.

Earlier it was suggested that the electoral alignment of trade union members is likely to have been affected by the state of union-party relations given the weakening of affective orientation towards the Labour Party. Had the political outlook of trade unionists been characterised by strong affective loyalty or expressive commitment to the ideals of the party, then it is arguable that this alignment would not have been so markedly altered. But the Labour Party has never attempted to create such a firm ideological commitment amongst its followers. It has relied upon the organisational resources of the trade unions, and it has to be said that the unions' own ideological perspectives have rarely been profoundly socialist throughout the history of their association with the Party. Their own commitment to the cause of the Labour Party has been characteristically instrumentalist. They have heavily influenced the ethos of the party (see Drucker, 1979 and 1982), and have often acted as a constraint upon the ideological aspirations its radicals. With the demise of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in the inter-war period, ideologues could no longer challenge the organisational influence of the unions. Thus, neither the unions nor the party have actively sought to encapsulate the working class and closely mould its ideological viewpoint. As we have already mentioned,

the orientation towards politics that seems to have most readily characterised the British working class has been a fundamentally instrumentalist one. This was fine for the stability of the party-union-class relationship as long as social structures remained more or less in place. But, of course, they did not. Important sociological research revealed in the 1960s that affective orientations towards the party, the unions and the community were declining even further in certain expanding sections of the working class (Goldthorpe et al, 1969). Under such conditions, it is not surprising that party-union conflict over public issues which touched directly upon the material interests of union members would dislodge their electoral support. Without a firm emotional commitment to the Labour movement or the values of socialism, what reason remained for many of them to continue voting Labour? Moreover, internal union elite-membership relations were becoming increasingly "interactive" in many unions by the 1960s; the growing influence of shop stewards and lay officials at shop-floor level is well documented. The significance of this lies in the fact that it further exacerbated the problems of mobilisation for union elites; even if they wanted to mobilise support for the Labour Government's incomes policies, they were rarely in a position to exercise much control. Often, unions simply found it impossible to pursue harmonious and supportive relations with the Labour leadership, even if their executives so desired. Thus, the growing "interactiveness" which characterised the internal relationship of some major unions in the 1960s added to the problems of instrumental political mobilisation by stimulating party-union conflict. These explanations of the changing electoral behaviour of British trade union members since the 1960s constitute elements of an interpretation that will be

elaborated upon in the following chapters. Notions like affective loyalty, instrumental assessment, the erosion of traditional socio-political cleavages, organisational strategy and commitment, and the growing interactiveness of elite-mass relations within unions all have a part to play in this interpretation. Such an interpretation should be rendered more readily comprehensible by the early introduction of these conceptual tools.

Hopefully, then, the basis has now been established upon which the argument may be developed. The theoretical foundations of electoral mobilisation have been uncovered, to some extent, and the major line of contention established. It is time to begin putting the flesh on the bare bones of the interpretation that has been sketched. Over the course of the next two chapters the political, social and organisational contexts of the relationship between the party and the unions are considered in detail, since these are assumed to be the major potential sources of electoral change among union members. In chapter 4 we review the work that has been conducted on British electoral change; this provides both a context and a practical theoretical basis upon which to proceed with the actual data analysis of unionists' electoral behaviour which ensues in chapters 5 and 6.

Footnotes:

1. A basic illustration of the relative significance of the trade union variable in structuring voting behaviour during the post-war era is provided by Table 1.1n. This table has been constructed using information first gathered together by Richard Rose in the mid-1970s (Rose 1974). Thus, we have an indication of the situation in various European countries during the early part of the period covered in our own study of the British case.

Table 1.1n The Percentage of Variance in Voting Behaviour Explained by Trade Union Membership: Selected Post-War Examples.

	Total Variance Explained (TV)	Variance Explained By Union Membership (UV)	UV/TV	Variance Explained By Class (CV)	CV/TV
Belgium 1972	34.5	1.6	4.6	4.2	12.1
West Germany 1967	19.7	5.6	28.4	2.1	10.6
Italy 1968	28.3	4.9	17.3	0.3	1.1
Finland 1966	33.2	0.3	0.9	31.8	95.7
Australia 1967	14.6	1.8	12.3	8.9	60.1
Britain 1970	12.0	3.3	27.5	-	-
Ireland 1969	3.1	0.9	29.0	-	-

Note: All figures are percentages. Percentage of variance explained by union membership was not reported in the case study on Swedish voting behaviour in Rose's book. However, union membership occurred at the fourth split in the tree analysis of Swedish voting behaviour, occupational class at the first.

Source: AID analyses published in Rose 1974, passim.

The differing amounts of variation in voting behaviour explained by chosen independent variables were derived from *Automatic Interaction Detector* (AID) "tree analyses" (see Sonquist and Morgan 1964). This is a useful, and in many ways illuminating technique, yet it is as well to be aware of some of its limitations. In particular, it depends upon a process of

continous dichotomisation down through various levels of structural variation in voting behaviour; this can be a somewhat constraining activity as it depends upon making what may be rather contrived assumptions about the actual nature of the party system (unless, perhaps, one is dealing with a pure two-party system). An example of this is provided in Whyte's chapter on the social bases of Irish voting behaviour. Thus, the tree analysis that he presents is based on the de facto political and coalitional dichotomy between Fianna Fail on the one hand, and Fine Gael and the Labour Party on the other. This produces an analysis explaining just 3.1% of the total variance in Irish voting behaviour; occupational class appears to have no structural explanatory significance at all. However, when a dichotomy between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael on the one side, and the Labour Party on the other, was taken as the starting point of the analysis, it then yielded an explanation of 14.8% of the total variance. Moreover, occupational class now became the single most important factor in terms of variance explained. (Furthermore, it should also be noted that trade union membership may well have played some significant role in structuring post-war voting choices in countries other than those included in Table 1n; for instance, the trade union variable was simply not introduced in to the analyses made of Norwegian and Dutch voting in the Rose volume. This preliminary "glance" at the general importance of trade union membership should not be regarded as comprehensive therefore. It is merely suggestive.) Table 1.1n reveals that in no case did trade union membership account for more than 30% of the total variance that was explicable by the chosen social background variables. However, it can be seen that of the eight relevant cases drawn from Rose's book (including Sweden), union membership appeared on the first or second split

five times. Occupational class did so on four occasions. In half of these eight cases union membership accounted for a higher degree of the variance than occupational class. In short, it would seem that the capacity of union membership to structure electoral alignment has often been of considerable significance in western democracies.

Moreover, a brief glance at Table 1.2n, which draws on a study of working class mobilisation by Walter Korpi, indicates broad prima facie support for the idea that trade union strength and working class politics go together. It is fairly evident that the level of unionisation and the strength of electoral support for class-left parties are associated. Korpi's categories of working class mobilisation are based on the combined rank order of proportions of unionisation and left-wing voting. Three cases seem to stand out for the relatively poor electoral performances of their left-wing parties given the rate of unionisation in the country. These cases are the USA, Canada and Ireland. Unions in the former two have never developed strongly working class identities, and neither have they pursued particularly strong links with specific parties. The incidence of craft as opposed to industrial unionism may go some way towards explaining this; it has also been suggested that the low development of class consciousness amongst workers reflects a general cultural setting conditioned significantly by the fact that the advent of democracy did not coincide with the mobilisation of the working class (by contrast with the prevailing European pattern). Rather, according to JD Stephens:

"...democracy was the product of urban petit bourgeois and artisanal and peasant mobilisation in precapitalist agrarian societies dominated by small landholders" (Stephens 1979: 113).

Moreover, Stephens adds that the strength of left-wing parties depends not only upon the strength of unionisation, of course, but also upon factors such as the degree to which union structures and bargaining are centralised. The cause of the relative weakness of the Labour Party in the Republic of Ireland reflects, to a significant extent, the fact that the struggle for national independence coincided with a period critical to the potential mobilisation of the working class there. As a result, union memberships often developed strong loyalties for Fianna Fail, the decisive party of Republicanism.

Table 1.2n - Unionisation and Left Wing Voting in 18 Democracies, 1946-1976.

<u>Country</u>	<u>National Rate of Unionisation</u>	<u>Percent of Votes Cast For Left</u>	<u>Working Class Mobilisation</u>
Sweden	71	43	High
Austria	55	45	High
Norway	46	41	High
Denmark	49	39	High
New Zealand	42	41	High
United Kingdom	44	35	High
Belgium	47	32	High
Australia	50	44	High
Finland	39*	37	Medium
France	25	32	Medium
Italy	23	34	Medium
Japan	27	28	Medium
Ireland	36	9	Low
Canada	26	11	Low
United States	27	1	Low
West Germany	35	31	Medium
Netherlands	30	31	Medium
Switzerland	23	18	Low

Note: * From Lane & Ersson 1991: 95. This separate calculation was necessitated by the reproduction of an evident mistake in Korpi's figures (presumably a misprint?), whereby the Finnish rate of unionisation was recorded as being a post-war average of just 3%.

Source: Korpi 1981: 308.

2. Other examples of the sort of work that I have in mind would include the following: Harrison 1960, Richter 1973, Simpson 1973, May 1975, Panitch 1976, Taylor 1978, Dorfman 1979, Coates and Topham 1985, Fatchett 1987.

3. In terms first articulated by Frank Parkin, it might be said that the Labour Party has neither adopted nor diffused an authentically "radical" system of political and social values. Parkin has specified three basic types of value systems; the *dominant* one is adhered to by the dominant socio-economic class. The *subordinate* value system is based upon the working class community, and in neither endorsing the present social system nor violently opposing it, it comprises an essentially accommodative position. The *radical* value system encourages consciousness neither of national identity, as the dominant system does, nor of parochial local community identity, as the subordinate system does, but of class identity, and it espouses an ideology of radical change. A genuinely radical party in this sense would have to attempt, through a strategy of organisational encapsulation, to:

"...provide its supporters with political cues, signals and information of a very different kind from those made available by the dominant culture." (Parkin 1971: 99).

Chapter 2 - Party-Union Linkages Since 1964: The Political And Social Dimensions

Our central objective is to explain the fluctuations - and beyond these, the underlying decline - in the Labour Party's electoral support amongst union members since 1964. It is the contention of this thesis that, whilst both social and political factors undoubtedly go some way towards explaining this phenomenon, it is the latter which offer an especially significant understanding from the standpoint of political science. In particular, I believe that the relationship between the party and the unions is critical to this understanding. Nonetheless, while I would contend that the political relationship between the two halves of the labour movement is of central importance, it cannot be entirely distinguished from the domain of social change. As we shall be seeing in this chapter, party-union relations have been considerably complicated by social changes that have affected the unions.

The story of the political relationship between the party and the unions since the 1960s revolves largely around the well-rehearsed issue of incomes policy; though much has been written and said of this subject, we cannot afford to ignore its major features since these will be central to the explanation of union members' voting behaviour that is to be developed.

1964-1970: Trouble Brewing

Incomes policies first emerged during the post war era under the Labour government of Clement Attlee; it was Chancellor Sir Stafford Cripps who introduced a voluntary policy of pay

restraint which was sustained by the loyalty of crucial union leaders like Arthur Deakin of the TGWU, Tom Williamson of the NUGMW and Will Lawther of the NUM. Ironically, there was little in the way of formal pressure for wage restraint throughout most of the "thirteen wasted years" of Conservative government that followed - until the severe sterling crisis of July 1961 provoked Selwyn Lloyd's decision to institute his infamous "pay pause". The government imposed this wage freeze upon the TUC, but attempted to sweeten the medicine somewhat through the introduction of the National Economic Development Council (NEDC). Though the TUC welcomed this move towards more permanent and formally institutionalised consultation with the government, it tried to insist from the start that a permanent incomes policy was to remain off the NEDC agenda (Panitch 1976: 49). Although voluntarism was the essence of the Labour movement's understanding of pay restraint, there were signs - even prior to its return to power - that the party was considering seriously the need for a more regularly instituted pay policy, however. This flowed, in part, from the growing attraction of economic planning for social democratic parties during the period. There was a widespread perception that planning had worked in France in the 1950s, and even the Conservatives under MacMillan, and the Federation of British Industries (FBI) had shown some interest (Blackaby 1979: 402). Prior to his untimely death, Hugh Gaitskell had indicated that an incomes policy could be an important element of a planned economy, so long as it fulfilled certain conditions. Such a step was regarded as central to controlling inflation during a period of planned growth, but any such policy had to be seen to be applied broadly and fairly to sources of income generated by both capital and labour. (Panitch 1976: 56)

In office, the Labour Party's problems began, quite literally, on day one; the new government of 1964 was faced with shocking news about the size of the current trade deficit, and pressure on the currency was exacerbated by a run on the pound (Stewart 1977). It is now a commonplace observation that the most significant decision taken by this government - and one that undermined its entire planning strategy and condemned it to years of growing tension with the unions - was the early refusal to countenance any devaluation of the pound. The only logical alternative to enhancing the attractiveness of exports by cutting the cost of the pound is to stem the flow of imports and simultaneously cheapen exports by deflating the economy. This reduces domestic aggregate demand and, it is hoped, curbs inflation. It also undermines any pretensions about promoting growth or industrial planning at a stroke. This is why it forms the central element of the depressing "stop-go" cycle that characterised British macro-economic management for much of the post war period. Furthermore, the deflationary process can obviously be developed by the adoption of a plan for incomes restraint - and this is the direction that was fairly rapidly taken by the Labour governments of 1964-70.

In December 1964 the general principles of an incomes policy were embodied in the tripartite "Joint Statement of Intent on Productivity, Prices and Incomes"; this envisaged a basically voluntary policy in which wage increases would be linked in some way to productivity. The government white paper "Machinery of Prices and Incomes Policy" (Cmnd. 2577: 1965) which was issued in February 1965 established the broad institutional basis for a further, and more detailed, white paper published two months later (Cmnd. 2808: 1965). Together, these papers proposed the

notion of a voluntary policy of restraining wage rises to 3.5% which was to be administered and vetted by the new National Board For Prices And Incomes (NBPI). This wage norm was founded on the assumption that planning would engender a growth rate of around 4%. Exceptions were to be countenanced only where productivity deals or relativity claims could be established. Infact, the policy achieved little on such a basis; the TUC was unhappy about the "unrealistic" level of the 3.5% norm - especially since there was no corresponding price control, and since the new National Plan unveiled by George Brown's Department of Economic Affairs was swiftly undermined by a package of deflationary measures introduced by the Government in July 1965. The one advantage the government had during this period was that it still retained much of the goodwill that unions in general wished to extend to it. Thus, when Harold Wilson's ministers harangued the TUC about lack of compliance with the new incomes policy, chairman George Woodcock prevailed successfully upon the General Council to accept the responsibility of "vetting" all claims by individual unions. Quite how this vetting procedure was expected to be effective given the TUC's relative lack of resources or central authority within the union movement was never clearly elucidated. With the benefit of hindsight it is perhaps all too easy to see, therefore, that the next stage of the government's strategy would breach the ramparts of the voluntarist consensus within the Labour movement.

As part of a new package of deflationary measures announced in July 1966, the Wilson government introduced a compulsory six-month wage freeze, which was to be succeeded by a further six months of "severe restraint". This would, it was explained, enable the economy to take a "breathing space" of twelve months

during which productivity would catch up with "excessive" increases in incomes which had occurred. (Cmnd. 3073 1966: 7) But it was becoming increasingly evident that incomes policy was now a short term crisis measure rather than a Gaitskellite device of coherent and just long term planning (Blackaby 1979: 371). Although the TUC General Council formally supported the move, the political loyalty of the unions was now being severely tested; it was at this point, for instance, that Frank Cousins resigned from the cabinet in order to oppose the incomes policy. Within the cabinet some resentment of the "no devaluation" strategy was beginning to emerge, emanating chiefly - and not surprisingly - from George Brown whose National Plan had been rendered a non-starter. The deflationary package even produced Brown's resignation during one of the famous histrionic outbursts to which he was periodically given, but Wilson assuaged his cantakerous Minister for Economic Affairs and the resignation was withdrawn (Crossman 1979 : 222-230). The logic of the government's strategy was clearly likely to provoke conflict with the unions in the (not particularly) long run, moreover. Consider the government's position in the following terms:

- i. It insisted that incomes could only increase in line with output.
- ii. The deflationary measures that it introduced ensured that output would struggle to grow at all.
- iii. It therefore followed that incomes could not be allowed to grow.

The logic of this straightforward syllogism and the apparent success of the period of frozen wages and severe restraint (in terms of wage increases and industrial disputes) encouraged the government to urge continued restraint on the TUC after the

middle of 1967. In the new white paper published in March of that year, therefore, it refrained from explicitly mentioning an acceptable level of wage increases for the future - but it was clear that the expectation was of a continuation of the zero norm. (Cmnd. 3235: 1967) The vein of political loyalty that the government had been mining within the TUC was beginning to run very thin, however. The unions were particularly resentful of the fact that income restraint seemed to be directed far more at the wages sector than the profits sector, for one thing; and for another, although some union leaders still recommended continuing support for the government's policy, the rank and file memberships were becoming increasingly restive. The TUC therefore ignored the new white paper and proposed an alternative economic approach of its own, consisting largely of price controls and import quotas. (Panitch 1976: 145)

Commentators have often recognised 1968 as a critical year in the relations between the Labour Government and the unions (see, for example, Middlemas 1979: 439-440). In November of the previous year Callaghan and Wilson had finally admitted defeat in their battle to protect sterling at all costs and the pound had been devalued by 14%. Nonetheless, they were keen to maintain controls over wage rises and demand in order that devaluation would be fully successful. Accordingly, the government urged unions to accept the continuation of a zero norm and conferred statutory powers upon the NBPI to delay price and wage rises for up to eighteen months. Real wage rises were lower than in other OECD nations and the unions' rank and file were increasingly disinclined to acknowledge further exhortations for restraint on their part. In particular, the public sector and skilled manual employees were especially disgruntled at the compression of their

relative positions within the income pecking order - an exact foreshadowing of developments a decade later. Industrial disputes multiplied suddenly and dramatically (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1 - Industrial Dispute Statistics For Britain 1966-1970.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of strikes</u>	<u>Number of workers involved</u>	<u>Strike days</u>
1966	1937	530,000	2,400,000
1967	2116	731,000	2,800,000
1968	2378	2,255,000	4,700,000
1969	3116	1,654,000	6,800,000
1970	3906	1,793,000	11,000,000

Source: Coates and Topham 1986: 198

The ordinary union members became increasingly militant during this period as bargaining became more decentralised; in reality, wage and price rises drifted well beyond the implicit zero norm the government professed to have in mind. This situation continued into 1969, by which time it had become obvious to the government that incomes policy under the prevailing conditions was simply not working; moreover, the political costs were high, but the Labour government's next move seemed to belie any sensitivity to this fact. At the end of 1968 it announced that it would not renew that year's Prices and Incomes Act, but instead it proposed a short bill aiming at regulating the practice of industrial disputes. This legislation was to be based upon the White Paper *In Place Of Strife*. The union response was one of incredulous rage to the main provisions of this bill, which were threefold. Firstly, it was proposed that all strikes be preceded by compulsory ballots of all members, secondly, that a "cooling-off period" be imposed before unofficial strikes could start, and finally that restrictions be placed on certain forms of inter-union dispute. The unions reacted as a single unit against the thrust of these proposals and mobilised support

within parliament, the constituency parties and ultimately even the Cabinet against their implementation. When it finally became clear that Wilson and his Employment Secretary Barbara Castle were isolated within the Cabinet the bill was withdrawn. A face-saving device of sorts was concocted when the TUC General Council signed a "solemn and binding" undertaking to take responsibility in shepherding inter-union disputes, but much damage was already done. The conflict divided not only the party and union elites, but also provoked bitter divisions within the party itself, at all levels. Furthermore, it probably had the effect of emphasising the destructive power of the shop floor - the last thing the government had wanted to achieve. Incomes policy was now virtually redundant throughout the remainder of the Labour Party's period in office.

1970-1974: Party-Union Relations Retrieved.

The nation was subject to two distinct, but profound, shocks during the week beginning June 14th 1970; firstly, the English national football team was knocked out of the Mexican World Cup, and then later in the week the Labour government was soundly and surprisingly beaten in the general election of the day. There were disappointed men in high places who hinted darkly that the two events may not have been entirely unconnected¹; certainly, it seemed that there was at least one parallel between the vanquished teams, in that both seemed to have succeeded in grasping defeat from the very jaws of victory. England's perspiring soccer stars squandered a healthy enough looking early advantage that had been established over their West German nemesis, whilst the Labour government had entered the final

stages of the electoral campaign with most of the opinion polls predicting a comfortable victory. Unhappily for Labour and the embarrassed pollsters, these predictions proved utterly misleading (Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky 1971: Ch. 8). The real trauma for the Labour movement was only just beginning, however.

Heath's new government set out to embody the principles of "Selsdon Man", a characterisation invented by the press to describe the rightward shift the Conservative Party appeared to have undergone since the days of Butler, Macmillan and Douglas-Home. The initial postures of the Heath government were to find a certain reflection in the approach adopted by the Thatcher government at the end of the decade, although Heath's cabinet possibly lacked the conviction of its Conservative successor, and most certainly lacked its political good fortune. Heath and his acolytes were committed to reducing direct taxation and public expenditure, to trimming welfare budgets and withdrawing subsidies to nationalised industry, and to reform of industrial relations. It was this latter aspect of the new government's programme which - along with its approach to incomes policy - had the most profound ramifications for the labour movement in the country.

In December 1970 an industrial relations bill was tabled by the government setting out its strategy. The new bill envisaged various measures designed to curb traditional union rights and to enhance state control over the processes of industrial relations. In the first place, the closed shop was to be outlawed, and in the second place all unions were to register with a new body to be known as the Commission On Industrial Relations (CIR). This CIR would have the right to define and recognise legitimate

representative and negotiating organisations; unions failing to register with, or be recognised by, the CIR would not qualify for immunities from prosecution extended by the Trade Disputes Act of 1906. Thirdly, the government was to obtain the power to request either a cooling-off period of sixty days or a secret ballot of all members over all strike calls considered a threat to the public interest; a special National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC) was established to consider such cases. Fourthly, it was proposed that, unless expressly stating the contrary, collective agreements were to become legally binding. Finally, there were to be restrictions upon sympathetic and secondary industrial action. This new threat to the position of organised labour provided a common rallying theme around which the party and the unions could unite. The TUC-PLP Liaison Committee was established in January 1971 in order to develop a common strategy against the proposed legislation. Two months later the party agreed to back an initiative emerging from a special TUC congress at which it was decided to boycott the new law. All member unions were ordered not to register with the CIR, nor to appear before, nor cooperate in any way with the CIR and the NIRC. Unions had to take care to stipulate that all collective agreements lacked a legally binding status. In the face of a high degree of solidaristic opposition to it, the legislation lacked effective impact. Unions failing to de-register from the CIR were suspended from the TUC, while attempts to apply the new law's sanctions met telling resistance in many cases. For instance, the TGWU ignored fines that the NIRC imposed upon it for refusing to cooperate with the court.² Most notorious perhaps was the case of the "Pentonville Five" - five Dock union shop stewards who the president of the NIRC, Sir John Donaldson, sent to jail in July 1972 for organising an illegal picket. With the country on the point of a national general

strike, the prisoners were released as the House of Lords decided that it was the union as a whole, rather than the individuals concerned, that should be held responsible for the official activities of its shop stewards. (Freyman 1980: 130) Elsewhere the government discovered that the imposition of "cooling-off" periods and strike ballots could not be relied upon to dissuade unionists from striking. ³ On occasion it clearly decided that discretion was the better part of valour and did not even seek to employ the provisions of the act - for example in the case of the NUM's national strike of 1972. ⁴

The second aspect of the labour movement's troubles with the Conservative government during this period concerned the question of incomes policy. The Heath government initially declared its intention of eschewing a formal incomes policy, at least in the private sector. (Dorfman 1979: 51) By establishing a pattern of continually reduced wage increases in the public sector (the famous "N-1" formula), it was hoped that a knock-on effect would inspire the private sector to follow suit. To this end the CBI encouraged its members to adopt an informal 5% norm for price increases; however, by the end of 1972 the government felt obliged to rethink its strategy as the CBI's price policy came to an end, unemployment and wage settlements rose and signs of cooperation were not forthcoming from the unions. As talks with the TUC broke down the government imposed a ninety day wage and price freeze as the first part of a three stage strategy starting in November 1972. Stage Two ran from March to November of 1973 and consisted of a limit of 1 per week plus 4% up to a maximum of 250 per year. This was followed by the third stage of the government's policy which allowed for a 7% wage increase up to a maximum of 350 per year; the so-called "threshold clause" in the

policy meant that extra money was available if inflation exceeded 7%, and there was further scope for flexibility over relativities. (Barnes and Reid 1980: 177) The unions had already done much in the way of achieving a strategic victory over the government in the case of the Industrial Relations Act, however; some were now ready to move onto the attack over wage restraint. On the day after stage three began the NUM executive announced an overtime ban as it rejected a National Coal Board offer of 16%. The government responded by immediately declaring a state of national emergency and imposing restrictions on the use of electricity and energy supplies. By the new year, a three day working week was curtailing the use of resources in manufacturing. At this point the government signalled its intention of meeting fire with fire. It started by ignoring a TUC attempt at some sort of conciliation when the General Council issued a statement acknowledging the "exceptional situation" in the mining industry and promising that "other unions will not use this as an argument in negotiations over their own settlements". (TUC Report 1974: 220) Subsequently, after the NUM had won its membership's overwhelming approval for a national strike beginning on February 10th, Heath intervened to call a snap General Election to be held on the earliest possible date (February 28th). The clear question placed before the electorate was to be "who governs - the government or the unions?" At the time the election was called the polls suggested that the Conservatives held a lead over Labour, and that at least a third of the electorate saw prices and strikes as the most urgent problems facing Britain. (Butler and Kavanagh 1974: 178) However, aided not a little by the iniquities of the British electoral system, the Labour Party emerged from the election as the largest single party in the House of Commons, though without

any overall majority. Evidence suggests that perceptions of Labour's competence in handling industrial disputes and the unions helped sway the voters (Butler and Kavanagh 1974: 140)

1974-1979: The Corporatist Failure

Following the triumph of their resolute and united strategy, there was much sweetness and light in the relationship between the two wings of the British labour movement throughout 1974. The miners' dispute was swiftly resolved, the unions and the party collaborated closely in designing new legislation to replace the Industrial Relations Act and the TUC agreed to keep wage demands in line with inflation, rather than ahead of it. Labour's new strategy was based on the notion of a "social contract" that had been established with the unions in the period preceding the February 1974 election. The basis of this lay essentially in the hope that social democratic corporatism along the lines of the Scandinavian model could be introduced in Britain. In itself, this was a perfectly reasonable strategy from Labour's point of view, since studies have revealed how union-party cooperation along such lines is central to the longevity and programmatic success of social democratic parties (Stephens 1979; see also footnote 1.3, above). However, the conditions for the effective deployment of a corporatist strategy usually include the presence of a centralised union movement - a condition that has been singularly absent in the British case. Ultimately, this proved too great a handicap for the British Labour movement to overcome in the 1970s.

The basis of the Social Contract lay in a document published by the Liaison Committee early in 1973; "Economic Policy and the Cost of Living" promised to trade wage restraint on the part of the unions in return for the promise of various measures of social action by a future Labour government - for instance on price and rent control, food subsidies, industrial democracy and workers' rights (TUC 1974: 312-315). At the outset the strategy seemed promising; measures of this sort were put in place, major union leaders reiterated their willingness to exercise restraint in wage demands and the Labour Party managed to improve its parliamentary position a little in a new election held in October of 1974. In general the unions could look forward to a period of augmented influence via their political contacts with the government and their involvement in tripartite industrial planning. However, the eighteen months or so following the return to power of the Labour Party also witnessed developments which boded less well for the future. Pressure for higher wage settlements was building up at shop floor level; the public sector in particular had suffered from the Heath government's policies, and the inflationary impact of the OPEC oil price increases tended to exacerbate difficulties. Under pressure, the government agreed to refer a series of claims by public sector unions to pay review bodies; these reviews generally recommended large wage rises which the government somewhat uncomfortably agreed to implement. As a result, there was a change in the ratio of public to private sector income in favour of the former for the first time in some while. Consumer demand and inflation, inevitably, rose quickly and export sales were hit. Before too long Labour was playing its customary governmental role of having to defend a shaky pound.

By early 1975 ministers were appealing for restraint on the part of the unions, and these appeals were backed up by a mildly deflationary budget in the spring. The message was not lost on the union bosses; some sort of a voluntary incomes policy would have to be cobbled together or the government would be obliged to respond with further and more drastic bouts of economic rigour. The government published the white paper "The Attack On Inflation" in July, the main elements of which consisted of a flat rate 6 maximum increase with a freeze on incomes above 8500 per year. Jack Jones of the TGWU had lobbied for a flat rate policy in the name of equality and managed to persuade the majority of General Council delegates to accept this. Profits were subject to a 10% limit and the onus was placed upon employers to ensure that wage settlements did not surpass the stipulated limits; transgressors would be likely to find selective industrial assistance and/or contracts issued by the government withdrawn. It was also emphasised that the government was prepared to back these provisions with statutory powers if it proved necessary.

The stated aim of the government was to reduce inflation to 10%, and in many ways the first year of the new policy proved a success. The number of days lost in industrial disputes was virtually halved in 1976 (falling from 6,000,000 to 3,300,000) as was the level of inflation (declining from 30% to 16%). These developments greatly helped in the fight to control the trade deficit. Nonetheless, inflation remained higher than for most of Britain's OECD competitors, and the pressure on sterling remained; despite growing doubts within the unions and the left wing of the party, the government (now under the helmsmanship of Jim Callaghan) therefore pressed for another round of "the attack

on inflation". A special TUC in June 1976 endorsed this second stage of the policy which basically comprised of an "average" 4.5% increase staggered over three different income groups - that is, a flat rate 2.50 per week limit for the lowest paid, a 5% limit for those on or near average earnings, and a 4.00 flat rate maximum for the highest paid. (Cmnd. 6507 1976: 6) Although wage drift did not exceed these limits by more than two or three percent, the basis for continued restraint on the part of the unions was undermined in two ways. In the first place, the real living standards of the rank and file members were declining; in particular, the public sector employees and skilled workers felt frustrated by the relative compression of their earning capacities (Coates and Topham 1986: 42). In the second place, union leaders were increasingly dismayed at the government's inability to deliver its side of the bargain. In mid-1976 Chancellor Denis Healey felt constrained to request a major loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to stem the effects of a severe run on the pound. The IMF stipulated that this loan was to be contingent upon the government restricting the size of the public sector borrowing requirement, and as a direct consequence Healey announced a package of deflationary measures in December 1976. It is fair to point out that the Labour government's economic strategy might already have been moving in this direction prior to the intervention of the IMF - consider, for instance, the deflationary package of July 1976. Whatever, by the late summer of that year, the TUC was endorsing motions for an "orderly return to free collective bargaining". Thus, when a new white paper was issued in July 1977 stipulating a 10% wage norm, the government was unable to obtain any formal backing from the TUC beyond an agreement to urge members not to seek major pay settlements more than once a year. By now the

government was politically bound to an incomes policy, given that the parliamentary understanding entered into with David Steel's Liberals (the "Lib-Lab pact") was conditional upon its retention. For a while the government was afforded some moderate help from the prevailing economic circumstances; the developed economies of the world were recovering from the first OPEC shock to some extent, and, helped by North Sea oil, the pound had appreciated in value. The government even found room for some tax cutting exercises in 1977. Aided by these factors, perhaps, wage drift only mounted to around 4% on average in the year leading up to August 1978.

By this stage there was no realistic prospect of the unions agreeing to an incomes policy for the forthcoming twelve months, despite the government's contention that "the country should aim at a long term approach in which collective bargaining is based each year on a broad agreement between government, unions and employers about the maximum level of earnings" (Cmnd.7293 1978: 3). The union leaders were unlikely to be able to deliver their members' compliance even if they wanted. Nevertheless, with the expected autumn general election pending, it was decided to maintain the unilateral imposition of non-statutory policy, this time with a 5% norm. Callaghan made a brave but foolhardy decision to postpone the election in the wake of the TUC's categorical rejection of the incomes policy. His entertaining rendition of a comic music hall act might have stirred and amused delegates to the Labour Party conference in October, but it did little to sway them, as conference also dismissed the idea of a further round of wage restraint. Early in the wage round the Ford Motor Company decided to ignore the threat of government sanctions by settling on a 17% pay increase for its employees. A

wave of highly publicised and highly unpopular public sector strikes followed - the notorious "winter of discontent" (Taylor 1987a: 104-105). The number of strikes did not actually increase over the previous year - but both the number of workers involved and the number of working days lost in strike activity did, and dramatically so. (Coates and Topham 1986: 198) Callaghan's brittle parliamentary majority finally shattered in the spring, and the subsequent electoral defeat at the hands of Margaret Thatcher's brash and determined new generation of Conservatives was hardly a major surprise.

1979-1983: "The Battle For The Labour Party"

Superficially, the return to opposition might have been expected to generate something of a re-run of the experience undergone during the years of the Heath government. After all, there were clearly certain parallels; the problems of constructing and maintaining an effective incomes policy had contributed much to the defeat of the Labour government, and had embittered party-union relations to a significant extent. Yet faced with an apparently uncompromising Conservative nemesis intent upon clipping the wings of organised labour in Britain, there was obvious motivation for the re-establishment of a united front. Thus far, there would seem to have been an evident similarity with the situation that the party and the unions had found themselves in in 1974. Yet it would be odd indeed for history to repeat itself with total precision, and there were to be greater problems for the movement this time. For one thing, it is possible that the depth of bitterness on both sides ran deeper. More significantly, this ambience of mutual recrimination

coincided with the rise of an internal pressure for democratisation within the Labour Party. This pressure came from various bodies on the party's left wing, chief amongst which was the Campaign For Labour Democracy (CLPD). This became significant for party-union relations in so far as the unions found it difficult to avoid being drawn into the factional conflict that this provoked; consequently, the chances of establishing a coherent and unified opposition to the newly vaunted Thatcherite alternative were seriously undermined. Even more crucially, the involvement of the unions in questions of internal Labour Party reform led directly to the secession of what was to become the Social Democratic Party, and given the idiosyncracies of the British electoral system, this virtually precluded any prospect of replacing the Conservative government at forthcoming general elections. Under circumstances such as these, there was considerably less electoral pressure on Margaret Thatcher and her ministers to deviate from their stated industrial relations strategy than there had been upon their Conservative predecessors in the early 1970s. It was essentially for these reasons that the period following the 1979 election turned out rather differently to that between 1970 and 1974.

As a result of the failure of the neo-corporatist experiment and the "gradual and insistent spread of shop-floor power" in Britain (Crouch 1990: 326), the Conservative strategy for dealing with the unions in the 1980s was characterised by a rejection of the search for compromise in industrial relations. Instead, emphasis was placed upon the need to alter the environment within which the unions were obliged to operate. This showed itself in various features of government policy after the 1979 election. In the first place, it soon became clear that there was a willingness to

accept - or rather, to impose - a macro-economic climate that was broadly unfavourable to the way in which unions function. The adoption of monetarist financial policy produced (or at the very least exacerbated) an economic downswing; the unemployment associated with this affected union membership and discouraged militant action. This much is abundantly clear from the figures revealed in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 - Industrial Dispute Statistics, 1979-1983.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Strikes</u>	<u>Number of workers involved</u>	<u>Strike days</u>
1979	2080	4,580,000	29,500,000
1980	1330	830,000	12,000,000
1981	1338	1,499,000	4,300,000
1982	1528	2,101,000	5,300,000
1983	1352	571,000	3,800,000

Source: Coates and Topham 1986: 198.

This apart, probably the most distinct feature of Conservative industrial relations strategy has been the determination to impose a tough new legal framework upon trade unions. During the first Thatcher government, the first two in a series of pieces of relevant legislation were guided through parliament by Conservative Employment ministers. James Prior's 1980 Employment Act was notable mainly for the constraints that it placed upon secondary picketing and the closed shop, and for the provision of state funds to support the conduct of union postal ballots in matters of choosing officials and deciding whether to strike. Notwithstanding the observation that government legislation did not go as far as it might have done under the circumstances (MacInnes 1987: 55), the party and the unions reacted with predictable horror. This was hardly a great surprise for the government, of course; to paraphrase no less an authority than

Mandy Rice-Davies - a noted observer of British political life - they would, wouldn't they? The crucial thing was that the government had no great reason to be unduly concerned about the unions' reaction this time; the latter were in no position to actually respond in the way they had, for instance, to the 1972 Industrial Relations Act. For one thing, unemployment was rising rapidly and few union members would be coaxed into "political" action under such circumstances. For another, the new Employment Act was no Industrial Relations Bill; indeed, it was a far more modest project. The lesson had been learnt by those who had observed the experience of the Heath government. This time, it was decided that legislative progress would be made in a series of comparatively unambitious, but nonetheless significant stages. Accordingly, a further Employment Bill was introduced in 1982 by Prior's successor, Norman Tebbit. This concentrated on reducing some of the unions' traditional immunities - thus, for example, it was to become permissible for employers to dismiss strikers selectively in the future. Moreover, closed shops would henceforward only be legally ratified following a rigorously conducted ballot of all workers concerned. For the labour movement, there was no grand legislative edifice such as the 1972 Industrial Relations Act against which to mobilise this time. Instead, individual unions were more likely to find themselves involved in legal battles with employers, than with the government itself. These confrontations were conducted through the ordinary courts. Furthermore, the unions were faced with the virtually inescapable fact that parts of the new legislation were popular with their rank and file members (see references to political fund ballots in chapter 3).

Crouch has pointed out that, quite apart from the effects of legislation and unemployment, there have been at least two other notable aspects of the Conservative strategy for dealing with the trade unions. In the first place, an attempt has been made to reduce what he calls the "institutional regulation of conflict" so as to expose industrial relations more directly to the effects of the market (Crouch 1990: 331). This shows itself partly in the willingness of the government to abolish institutional constraints on the labour market such as the public sector pay research units established in the 1950s, certain minimum standards for the low paid, and the negotiating mechanisms for public sector pay and conditions such as those that the teaching profession lost in 1987. Furthermore, the imposition of public sector cash limits on wage increases had a similar effect. Employers and employees know in advance the sum of money that the government has made available for pay rises within a sector which means that any rise exceeding this level can only be accommodated through the shedding of labour or an increase in productivity. The Conservatives saw this as an effective substitute for an incomes policy in that the unions were obliged to recognise very directly the consequences of their wage bargaining in the labour market, without the government actually having to intervene.

The other notable aspect of policy introduced by the first Thatcher government consisted of the attempt to weaken the legitimacy of trade unions as participants in national political life. Crouch argues that the government has sought to exclude the unions from involvement on public bodies of general interest, although they may, of course, still be consulted about affairs which directly affect them (Crouch 1990: 332). For example, in 1987 union representation on the Manpower Services Commission was

halved relative to employer representation, and the following year the Commission was abolished, to be replaced by a new training agency which is not obliged to coopt union representatives at all. (It might be added that the unions themselves have occasionally exacerbated the problem by actions such as the boycotting of the National Economic Development Council over the Cheltenham GCHQ affair, although they would undoubtedly respond that the NEDC had been largely emasculated anyway since 1979.)

So how did the party and the unions respond to this onslaught on the position of organised labour? TUC and Labour Party policy was initially "grounded on the assumption that the Conservative victory was temporary" (Taylor 1987a: 116); accordingly, it was supposed by many that party-union cooperation would render life problematic for the new government. But there were others who wished to seize the opportunity to alter the balance of power within the Labour Party itself, almost as a prerequisite of effective resistance to the Tories. We shall turn to this presently, but first, what of party-union cooperation on economic and industrial policy?

In the wake of the traumatic experience of 1978-1979, it was hardly surprising that neither the unions nor the party were openly enthusiastic about the notion of incomes policy. In 1981 both the TUC and the Labour Party conference formally rejected the idea. The official taboo that was placed on incomes policy within the movement required that it yield to some new formula; this substitute was to become known as the "National Economic Assessment" (NEA). However, the NEA was in many ways a thin disguise; implicit within it was some notion of incomes planning,

although Labour's front bench politicians were unwilling to emphasise this until after the 1983 general election. Initially, the NEA was regarded as a means by which economic priorities and strategies could be developed in tripartite councils without threatening free collective bargaining in any sense. This was the position adumbrated in the document *Partners In Rebuilding Britain* which was issued by the Liaison Committee in early 1983 (TUC-PLP Liaison Committee 1983). The central idea was that NEA would strive to formulate a mutually acceptable division of resources between wages, profits and investment; the compliance of the unions would be secured by two things - the ideal situation of growth allied with low inflation that the NEA should engender, and the willingness of government to bestow national political responsibility upon the unions. Crouch has noted that British unions have habitually concentrated on the industrial level, whilst neglecting the political. The very decentralisation of the unions which has made them aggressive industrial bargainers has precluded their developing an overall strategic perspective of their position within the national economy. Essentially, unions have tended to see themselves first and foremost as the means of institutionalising private interests, rather than as participants in national policy making. The latter role would imply:

"..a union leadership capable of making strategic decisions and taking macroeconomic considerations into account when formulating wage policy. This is forestalled by union decentralisation."
(Crouch 1982: 183)

The point of the NEA is that it stands to offer the unions a new strategic influence in economic management in exchange for their traditional powers in local industrial bargaining. Naturally

enough, strategic power demands a sense of strategic responsibility; the unions would not be expected to continue acting as purely private interest representatives whilst exercising public policy responsibilities. Essentially, this is a reiteration of the corporatist message; the unions can expect greater long term benefits if they are able to widen their perspective beyond the constraints of shop floor bargaining. But in a very real sense incomes policy - in some guise or other - must underlie any corporatist strategy. The politicians, however, were wary of shouting this message loud and clear in the direct aftermath of the 1979 general election.

Between 1979 and 1983 the party and union elites actually expended much of their political and intellectual energy in internal battles concerned with the balance and structure of power within the Labour Party itself. This is a subject that has been dealt with in detail elsewhere (see, for instance, Kogan and Kogan 1982), and it is not strictly a matter of the development of national policy options as such. Nevertheless, its impact may ultimately have been critical for union members, indeed for the British electorate as a whole. Something, therefore, needs to be said of this episode.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy was an internal party grouping formed in the aftermath of the 1974 General Elections. Although the party had fared relatively well in these elections, there were those on the left who felt uneasy with the way they had been won. In particular, there was considerable disgruntlement at the apparently cavalier manner in which Harold Wilson had overlooked many radical elements of the party's programme in drafting the election manifestos. The party

programme was an amalgam of resolutions passed by the annual conference; however, the party leadership was not obliged to include such provisions in the final election manifesto. Left wing activists, convinced that Wilson and his governments were "betraying" the movement, decided to mobilise in order to challenge the balance of power within the party (Hatfield 1978). Subsequent to May 1979, grass roots party activists were not the only ones bearing a sense of betrayal. Many trade union activists felt similarly about the party leadership. This was a fortunate turn of events for the CLPD, who now made effective overtures to the leaders of several major unions. (For some while, they had already been forging links with rank and file unionists and officials.) One of the aims of the CLPD was to ensure that the party manifesto would be drafted by the NEC in future, an organ on which the right wing of the party could by no means be assured of a majority. The CLPD were, therefore, now able to argue that it was in the interests of unions to support the "democratisation" of the party, for NEC control of the manifesto was the only way of ensuring that incomes policy would not be reintroduced by the party leadership in the future. (Taylor 1987a: 133) In addition, the CLPD also proposed that the party leader no longer be elected solely by Labour MPs, but by an electoral college formed out of parliamentary, union and constituency delegates. Some union leaderships were clearly interested in having greater influence within the party; however, in retrospect it may have been naive of CLPD activists to expect that the majority of unions would be seduced by the prospect. For a start, the flirtation of the major unions with the left was a relatively new thing; for many years, there had been a tradition of support for the party leadership against opposition from the left. Things had only begun to change during the late 1950s as

became evident in the internal conflict over Gaitskell's attempt to alter clause four of the party constitution in 1960. For many trade union leaders this represented an unacceptable modification of the party ethos, which owed everything to the influence of the unions (Drucker 1982). The political rift between the major unions and the PLP leadership was widened in the 1960s, with the emerging influence of Jack Jones of the TGWU and Hugh Scanlon of the AUEW. Left wing pressure on the PLP leadership was maintained during the early 1970s, but the main sympathies of most trade union leaderships lay neither with the right nor the left, as such, but rather with the need for party stability and credibility. Andrew Taylor has suggested that:

"The unions as a group recognise that the electoral vitality of the Labour Party depends, first, on engaging and retaining the enthusiasm of the constituency activist, (so) overt use of union power (in party fora) might damage this commitment. Second, unions are aware that Labour's image as a trade union party is electorally unattractive and loses votes. From this stems the unions' conception of their stabilising role in the Labour Party."
(Taylor 1989: 7)

Consequently, the extent to which the major unions were willing to be drawn into factional strife within the party was limited. It was crucial that the Labour Party was not so damaged that it permanently forfeited all electoral viability, and the battles over inner party democracy did little to improve its image with the general voting public. Some union figures were even moved to muse publicly on the likelihood of their having to "give consideration to the question of continued support for such a political wing" (Graham 1981). Indeed, with the trend towards the exclusion of the unions from public consultation procedures, their reliance upon the electoral success of the Labour Party became even greater. The decision of the "Gang of Four" front

bench politicians to leave the party over the question of its growing left wing bias and the elevated influence of the unions only served to undermine the electoral position of the Labour Party, however. With the great public interest in the formation of the Alliance and the possibilities of centre party politics during the 1980s, the Conservatives were handed a major slice of political good fortune. Given the vagaries of the electoral system in Britain and the greater vulnerability of Labour's support to Alliance incursion, they became virtually irreplaceable at the polls. This was not lost upon the unions. By early 1982, they had taken the initiative of calling a special joint meeting between the party NEC and the Trade Unions For Labour Victory group (TULV) at the headquarters of ASTMS in the Hertfordshire town of Bishops Stortford; the latter was an organisation of major union leaders formed in the late 1970s in order to aid the party's electoral campaigning (see chapter 3). At Bishops Stortford a compromise was worked out between the left and the right whereby the former would present no more challenges to the annual re-election of party leaders at Conference, whilst the latter would not seek to overturn the constitutional changes already wrought on the party in the period prior to the next general election. An uneasy peace held throughout the next year or so, but to little avail; in June 1983 the Labour Party produced its worst national electoral result for more than half a century, only narrowly avoiding the ignominy of being pushed back in to third place in terms of percentage of the vote won.

1983-1987: The Emergence of "The New Realism".

In the run up to the 1974 general election, the Labour Party was able to promise that it would repeal the industrial relations legislation introduced by the Heath government. This was a strategy designed to appeal to both the trade union rank and file and the electorate as a whole, since it could be argued that the Tory legislation had provoked an unprecedented level of industrial conflict from which all members of society had suffered; the legislation lacked effectiveness and legitimacy in the eyes of many who were directly touched by it, and should be swept away. Only a Labour government could placate the unions and restore order to industry. The aftermath of the 1983 election was entirely different, however. The Labour Party was in no position to make credible and alluring promises about the abolition of Conservative industrial relations legislation, since the acts of 1980, 1982 and 1984 were in many ways popular - and not only with the non-unionised sections of society, as we have seen. In the mid-1980s a series of surveys conducted on trade union respondents all revealed high levels of support for various aspects of the Conservatives' legislation affecting trade unions, and in particular for the democratising of certain union procedures such as the initiating of strike action or the recruitment of leaders (Marplan 1984; MORI 1985). Table 2.3 highlights how far the labour movement needed to adapt its traditional responses; even amongst blue collar trade union members, only a minority were willing to accept the view that, overall, the government had "gone too far" in the legal restrictions it had sought to place upon the unions.

Table 2.3 - Views of union members on how far Conservative legislation affecting unions has gone, 1984.

	<u>Blue Collar Members</u>	<u>White Collar Members</u>
Too far	42	29
Not far enough	12	18
About right	36	45
Don't know	10	7

Source: Marplan 1984

Thus, by 1984 there were those in the Labour movement who doubted the possibility of returning to trade unions the old "immunities" from legal action that they had formerly enjoyed. It was in this year that the outgoing General Secretary of the Labour Party, Jim Mortimer, suggested to the Liaison Committee the alternative strategy of a future Labour government replacing the Conservative legislation with laws of its own. These would be designed to guarantee unions a set of "positive rights" to organise, bargain and initiate action on behalf of their members. Amongst other things, it became clear that these "rights" would very likely include certain provisions already laid down by the Conservatives, notably those relating to strike and leadership ballots (Macintyre 1985). This formula provided a fairly neat means by which to offer the unions and their members something positive without forfeiting the popular aspects of Tory reforms. Consequently, it would not be so easy for Labour's adversaries to accuse them of simply reintroducing the days of untrammelled union power. This is not an insignificant point; the provisions on strike ballots in particular may well have been of considerable benefit to the unions, ironically enough, in terms of enhancing the legitimacy of some of their actions amongst the wider public. The legislation has probably had some effect in contributing to the falling incidence of official strike activity, yet when it does occur, it must be clear to all and

sundry that it is duly and democratically constituted action. This is, arguably, one of the few advantages that the Conservatives have actually bestowed upon the labour movement since 1979, and from the latter's point of view it is not one that ought to be squandered. Accordingly, the 1987 election manifesto issued by Labour included proposals to replace the Conservative legislation with a new set of laws which would, amongst other things, provide for:

"..a right for union members to have a secret ballot on decisions relating to strikes, and for the method of election of union executives to be based on a system of secret ballots" (Labour Party 1987: 13).

In addition, the manifesto promised to establish the positive rights to belong to unions (even at Government Communications Head Quarters in Cheltenham) and for unions to organise and bargain; the other major elements of the new "positive rights" that Labour offered the electorate in 1987 included statutory protection of part time workers' employment, health and safety protection, the restoration of fair pay resolutions and the wages councils, the strengthening of ACAS and the appointment of a new independent complaints tribunal.

With regard to the question of incomes policy there were tentative developments in the wake of the 1983 election defeat. In particular, notable figures on the "right" of the trade union movement - the likes of Terry Duffy, Frank Chapple, Bill Sirs, Sid Weighell and Alan Tuffin, for instance - took it upon themselves to voice scepticism about the National Economic Assessment's failure to broach the subject (Taylor 1987a: 263). As Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, Roy Hattersley floated various ideas concerning

economic policy in a series of speeches at this time; in the course of these he indicated that the movement could not afford to ignore the question of incomes policy indefinitely. He argued that if and when Labour returned to national office the unions would be faced with a choice of either seeking to help reduce unemployment or improving the position of those already in work. The latter option simply entailed the adoption of a tough free collective bargaining stance on the part of the unions, but Hattersley pointed out that, as socialists, the Labour Party would prefer that priority was given to the problems of unemployment and low pay. This would imply some restraint by unions intent on pushing for wage rises for their members; in return, Hattersley suggested again that the unions might adopt a more responsible strategic role in industrial planning. At one stage he even went so far as to float the idea that social ownership might be extensively widened in the long run through the introduction of wage earner funds on the Swedish model. (Taylor 1987a: 285) This is a scheme by which company profits are used to buy shares for employees and are then administered by unions on their behalf. This shows a commendable willingness on the part of the Labour leadership to exercise its imagination, but arguably demonstrates a vaguer grasp of political reality, considering that wage earner funds have been highly controversial even in Sweden, a polity firmly based on, to employ the phrase of Francis Castles, a "social democratic image of society" (Castles 1978).

The 1987 election manifesto made considerable play of the notion of a national economic summit - to "assess fully the condition of the economy" - as the first stage of the NEA. It was seen as the means of establishing a priority programme of:

"concerted action that will need to be taken by government, employers in the private and public sectors, and trade unions to increase investment, contain inflation and achieve sustained recovery" (Labour Party 1987: 4).

The party claimed that a million new jobs could be created in two years through a series of public works recovery and improvement programmes, health and education job programmes, industrial training schemes and a voluntary Job Release Scheme. In addition, it planned for the introduction of a British Industrial Investment Bank, Regional Development Agencies and a new Ministry of Science and Technology; all these measures would form part of the five year project for the industrial and economic regeneration of Britain. Not one word was uttered about incomes policy, however. There seemed to be three reasons why it was supposed that the unions could be relied upon to exercise restraint. In the first place, it is clear that the party was still, officially at least, pinning its hopes on boosted productivity which would deliver inflation-free growth. Thus, the unions would not need to demand exorbitant wage rises in order to keep their members' incomes stable in real terms. Secondly, it was presumed that "responsible" trade unionism - that is, restrained trade unionism - had to be preferable to five more years of Thatcherism, from the unions' point of view. Finally, the unions were being offered greater strategic responsibility and involvement in the running of the economy - they were being invited back into Whitehall, to paraphrase the famous invocation of George Woodcock.

The scepticism of some on the right of the trade union movement about the national economic assessment and their willingness to accept that certain features of Conservative legislation were

here to stay came to be known as the "new realism". The new realism consisted essentially of a mood of resignation about the way that the political and social context in which trade unions had to operate was changing definitively. Certainly, the unions had every reason to look forward to a post-Thatcherite era in which they would undoubtedly expect to find themselves more comfortably situated, but there were those who felt that there was no point in expecting a return to the militant days of a world with extensive immunities. This new realism manifested itself most notably in the willingness to recruit and operate on the basis of new, comprehensive deals agreed with certain employers - most controversially those which stipulated single-union and no-strike conditions. The most newsworthy example of such a deal during the 1980s was probably the one signed by EETPU's combative general secretary, Eric Hammond, with press publisher Eddie Shah in 1985. This enraged the traditional print union NGA, which was effectively excluded from operating in Shah's companies (Hackett 1985: 9). The New Realism was also revealed in the attitude that new industrial legislation should not be challenged by extra-legal means and that industrial muscle should not be flexed for overtly political motives. There were even unions who felt justified in seeking to actively benefit by elements of the legislation; thus, though it provoked considerable internal TUC ructions, both EETPU and the AUEW chose to accept the government cash available to them under the terms of the new Employment Acts in order to pay for the conduct of postal ballots. This flew in the face of the TUC's decision to restrict compliance with the legislation, as far as was legally possible. Despite the apparent threat to the unity of the TUC, and the clear feelings of many within the unions that the government's offer of cash was "a case of Greeks bearing gifts",

the AUEW and EETPU challenged the TUC to do its worst (McIlroy 1985: 8). Clearly, this was a sharply different response to that evinced by the Industrial Relations Act of 1971, and it reflected the relative sophistication of the Conservatives' approach to "the union problem" in the 1980s. Yet it was a response that was resented in certain parts of the union movement. Some union leaders might have warned the TUC that their members were not interested in fighting the government, and that such a strategy risked further divorcing the rank and file from the leaderships, yet others were convinced that the unions had to go on the offensive. Thus, attempts were made to ignore the legal provisions concerning secondary and mass picketing (as in the disputes involving the Warrington Messenger or the Times Group of Newspapers at Wapping); most spectacular, of course, was the year long strike initiated by the NUM without a preliminary ballot of members in 1984. The result was probably decisive for the future strategy adopted by the TUC; the failure of the miners led by Arthur Scargill, a confirmed class warrior sure that his was as much a political mission as an industrial one, tipped the balance in favour of the new realists within the movement.

Labour And The Unions Since The 1960s: The Development Of A Mobilisational Problem

Since 1964 the task of mobilising support among ordinary trade union members has become an increasingly arduous and depressing one for the Labour Party. The 1966 pay freeze was the initial step on a path which led towards a more complex and in some ways more distant relationship with the unions. This was the first time that a Labour government had introduced a statutory incomes policy and it represented a serious violation of the principle of

voluntarism, which, it has been suggested, encapsulates the philosophy of the trade unions in Britain. As Anthony Fenley has put it:

"Trade union *political* activity must be seen in terms of the defence of the doctrine of voluntarism... when governments have no longer been prepared to accomodate the voluntarist ideology..unions have extended their political activity both in scope and content" (Fenley 1980: 51).

In broad terms voluntarism encompasses the feeling that the state should keep a relatively low profile in the sphere of industrial relations while taking centre stage in other economic and social affairs. It embraces the strategy of free collective bargaining and in many ways acts as a unifying theory in so far as it permits the coexistence within the unions of a number of competing ideologies. For those on the far left it can serve the purpose of destabilising the economic and political system through industrial action; on the other hand, to many from within the social democratic tradition of European politics, militant unionism is perceived as a means of redistributing income and wealth. In itself the breach of this principle ultimately forced the unions to contest the government's handling of industrial relations matters in the political sphere. Moreover, the unions were additionally disappointed by the failure of Labour administrations in the 1960s and 1970s to provide the optimal economic environment within which voluntarism could be sustained, that of expansion and full employment. By the late 1960s there is evidence that many in the unions were realising that they had put too much trust in a Labour government's capacity to hand down reform from above. To quote one contemporary example:

"It has really needed this last last three years of Labour government for them (the unions) to grasp that they cannot just assume that the government

will identify the needs of the working class of this country and then strive to meet those needs. It has taken a large part of those three years to recognise that the trade unions must identify their own priorities and must make their own independent analyses of the situation" (Hughes 1968: 81).

Allied to the unions' attempt to shift themselves "out of Trafalgar Square and into Whitehall" during the 1960s and 1970s, this realisation probably amounted to a certain distancing in the political relationship between the Labour Party and the unions. Notwithstanding the way in which periods of hostile Conservative government have succeeded in virtually ousting the unions from Whitehall once again by the end of the 1980s - and perforce back into the arms of Labour - it perhaps remains true that the party and the unions regard each other a little more circumspectly than they did in 1960. Mutual support clearly exists, yet seems now more contingent upon the right political bargain being struck. Neither side is likely to make an over-simplistic assumption about an identity of interest and ethos shared with the other. Such a condition tends to make the mobilisation of electoral support for Labour amongst union members more problematic than it once was. Interestingly, it is probably possible to break down further the the process by which the political relationship between Labour and the unions has been modified. More specifically, I believe that it is possible to isolate at least two general factors which have contributed significantly to the changes in this political relationship. Both are factors which have tended to complicate the relationship, and both have made the joint task of mobilising political support for Labour among union members more difficult. The first is the growing social heterogeneity of union membership, and the second is the altered balance of power between different levels of the trade union movement.

The Unions Since The 1960s: Growing Social Diversity

The most obvious way in which the social profile of trade unions has altered over the past twenty years or more lies in the growth of white collar and professional unionism. Indeed, the onset of this process precedes the period on which we are concentrating, though it most certainly continued to develop significantly after the middle of the 1960s, as table 2.4 reveals.

Table 2.4 - Changing Levels of Manual and White Collar Union Membership, Selected Years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Union Membership</u>	<u>Manual Membership</u>	<u>Manuals As Proportion Of Total</u>	<u>White Collar Membership</u>	<u>White Collar Proportion Of Total</u>
1920	8,348,000	7,124,100	85.3%	1,129,200	13.5%
1948	9,363,000	7,055,700	75.4%	2,062,000	22.0%
1968	10,200,000	6,636,900	62.4%	3,056,000	30.0%
1973	11,456,000	6,968,000	60.8%	3,966,300	34.6%
1979	13,447,000	7,577,500	56.4%	5,124,700	38.1%
1989	8,478,000	4,153,000	49.0%	4,325,000	51.0%

Note: No figures are readily available for the 1980s, although the 1989 Labour Force Survey provides data from which the relevant figures can be calculated. This means that the 1989 figure should be regarded as an estimation only.

Sources: Bain 1983: 5; Department of Employment Gazette, August 1990.

Many of the fastest growing areas of union membership in the 1970s and 1980s were white collar, moreover; for example, of the TUC's twenty biggest unions in 1986, just nine had grown during the previous decade, and of these, only two (COHSE and SOGAT) were not primarily white collar or professional. The top five growth unions (TASS, NAS-UWT, BIFU, NCU and NALGO) were all white collar or professional (Labour Research 1987: 14). Interestingly, the growth of white collar unionism accelerated from the late 1960s onwards precisely because of the impact of incomes

policies. Bain and Price have pointed out that white collar earnings generally kept up with, and even exceeded, manual workers' wages during the post war period up to 1968, but that this situation was reversed in the ensuing decade.

"The white collar/manual earnings differential was severely squeezed, primarily as a result of the flat rate characteristics of a series of incomes policies... Hence, there can be little doubt that the behaviour of prices and earnings encouraged large numbers of workers, particularly those in white collar jobs, to unionise in an attempt to defend or improve their standards of living" (Bain 1983: 16).

Table 2.5 provides an indication of this. A brief glance at the figures reveals that the considerable increase in manual density during the years between 1968 and 1979 owed much to the decrease of potential membership (that is, to the loss of 866,400 manual jobs in the manufacturing sector). By contrast, the vast increase in white collar density owes very little to the loss of potential - just 33,700 white collar jobs were lost in net terms - and rather more to an increased propensity to join unions. In particular, the public sector white collar employees who stood to lose most by pay policies (these policies being really enforceable only where the government was the actual employer) showed a markedly greater inclination to join.

Table 2.5 - Union Membership And Density In Manual, White Collar And Public Employment Sectors, 1968 and 1979.

Sector	1968			1979		
	Membership	Potential	Density	Membership	Potential	Density
Manual	3,808,100	6,139,900	62.0%	4,234,600	5,273,500	80.3%
W/Collar	330,300	2,146,000	15.4%	922,800	2,112,300	43.7%
Public	3,661,000	5,536,900	66.1%	5,189,900	6,297,200	82.4%

Note: Figures for manuals and white collar workers are for the manufacturing sector only.

Source: Bain 1983: 11

Elsewhere, the same writers have calculated that there was an 18.7% increase in white collar unionism just between 1970 and 1974 (with a 4.2% increase in union density), compared to a 1.3% decline for manuals (and a 1.9% drop in density) for the corresponding period (Price and Bain 1976: 347). The ethos of unions who wish to appeal to such a clientele is bound to be different to that of the old bodies who were sure of their working class identity. In a sense, one is put in mind of the new sort of interest group that Otto Kirchheimer identified as becoming more prevalent in Europe during the 1960s. The image was of an independent, non-ideological group which tempered its partisan links in order to recruit from a broad social basis and to nurture contacts with all potential governing parties. The old ethos borne out of a sense of "joint strategy towards a common (ideological) goal" is transformed in such a group (Kirchheimer 1969: 364). Certainly, this changed political and social ethos is typical of many white collar unions. Indeed, in analysing the different outlook and goals of white collar unions, Robin Blackburn once argued that many were barely unions at all, but merely "professional associations" when examined against various criteria of traditional values which truly indicated "unionateness". These criteria included:

- i. An inclination to regard collective bargaining and the protection of members' interests against employers as the union's main function;
- ii. A determination to ensure that independence from employers is maintained when it comes to negotiation;
- iii. A willingness to accept the use of the strike sanction and industrial action;
- iv. Self declaration as a trade union;
- v. Registration as a trade union;
- vi. Affiliation to the TUC;
- vii. Affiliation to the Labour Party (Blackburn 1967).

As M.P. Jackson has said, Blackburn,

"..clearly has a view of a trade union as being something more than simply an expression of cooperation between employees in the same industry or trade; he views a union as being part of a social movement." (Jackson 1982: 38)

The relative growth of white collar trade unionism has been accompanied by the wider geographical and occupational dispersion of unionism in general. In the 1980s, the gradual process of industrial decline was particularly accelerated in the traditional heartlands of British unionism. This in turn affected many of the historical bastions of industrial unionism; the unionisation of the workforce instead began to spread out of the major conurbations to peripheral areas and smaller towns. In particular, the skilled manual and craft unions have lost members through these processes, and the non-manualisation of union membership has been accompanied by its de-skilling, feminisation and growing public sector character (Massey and Miles 1984: 19-22). Taken together, these processes mean that the traditional model upon which British industrial unionism was built have been modified considerably, if not to say altered out of recognition in many instances. Amongst other things, it especially means that the nature of the union movement as a "working class institution" has been diluted; for instance, there are relatively few remaining instances of immobile communities which are founded largely upon a single industry and a heavily unionised working class culture. It is most certainly to be doubted that the executives or memberships of unions such as BIFU or IRSF regard their organisations as part of such a milieu. At the beginning of the period that we are studying, in 1964, about 65% of all white collar unions were affiliated to the TUC, and they represented a little more than 20% of total TUC membership; already by 1979,

however, 85% of white collar unionists were affiliated to the TUC, and they comprised around 36% of TUC membership. What is more, in 1982 the TUC finally adopted contentious proposals to introduce automatic representation on the General Council for all unions with a membership of more than 100,000, a move which "almost certainly means a larger say for the civil service and white collar unions in the affairs of the TUC than hitherto", according to Rod Hague (Hague 1983: 141).

What is the significance of all this for the political relationship the unions enjoy with the Labour Party? Broadly speaking, it is twofold. Firstly, as we have already said, it means that the character of the union movement as a working class institution has been diluted. This fact alone may well go some of the way towards explaining why union-party relations have become a little more contingently based; the easy assumption that the party and the TUC are all part of a social movement sharing broadly homogeneous values and identities can no longer be made. Partly because of this, the party can no longer adopt a straightforward class-based electoral strategy. Secondly, it also creates structural problems of response for the Labour Party in relation to union demands. The interests and ethos of the union movement have become so diverse and heterogeneous that it has become very difficult for the party to identify and respond to those interests effectively. To take one example, it has become increasingly problematic for the party to construct incomes and taxation policies which coherently represent the best interests of all trade unionists. Rather, policies are bound to favour some union members as against others. Flat rate incomes policies suppress differentials, frustrating skilled manual and white collar workers; progressive taxation and benefit policies have in

the past been shown to have similar effects, as income and wealth tend to simply be redistributed within society's more modestly endowed groups. On the other hand, these redistributive effects are in the interest of lower paid manual trade unionists. Then again, there is the potential problem of the often divergent perceptions of interest that public and private sector union members have. And what of the "no strike" or "single union" deals that some unions have controversially agreed with employers in the 1980s? Should a future Labour government look to intervene and legislate against such deals? To reiterate, the potential for coherent party-union relations has become undermined by the increasing structural heterogeneity of the latter.

The Changed Balance Of Power Within The Unions

As has been said, the party and the unions can be regarded as jointly comprising a mechanism of electoral mobilisation. It is also important to bear in mind that relationships between political-industrial elites and the grass roots of their organisations can vary within this mobilisational context. To reiterate briefly, elites can either find themselves in a situation of relative control over their mass base (that is, in a situation in which they are able to exert *downward control*), or they may find themselves largely constrained by the articulated initiatives of that base (a more *interactive relationship*). Within many union organisations since the 1960s the mobilisational nexus has become more interactive. One can see this, for example, in the way that Geoffrey Hodgson has done:

"Since the 1960s a democratic ethos has developed within the trade union movement..Whilst..leaderships may be formally in control, their power is constrained and checked on a number of issues." (Hodgson 1981: 135)

Interestingly, Hodgson refers explicitly to political, as opposed to purely industrial, issues. It might be questionable to suppose that union elites have ever had comfortable downward control over their rank and file on industrial questions that have remained de-politicised. In the context of modern British politics, of course, industrial affairs have frequently become politicised, particularly since the introduction of the incomes policies and industrial legislation that we have witnessed since the 1960s. While it is true that few in the unions actually welcomed this incursion of the political into what had long been regarded as the discrete domain of the industrial, it is clear that this served to heighten the political consciousness of many union activists. A direct consequence of the pay policies of the 1960s was a sudden and massive upsurge in the levels of union recruitment, as we have seen. In many unions, this was accompanied by a parallel development of devolved shop steward power. Unions were not always able to meet the organisational requirements necessitated by this sudden growth without recourse to the stewards. The erstwhile role of full time officials had to be increasingly delegated to lay officials (convenors, shop stewards, branch secretaries and the like, who are paid by their employers, but who spend part or most of their time concentrating on union responsibilities). This was not necessarily true of all unions - for instance, the POEU and UCATT both maintained central control to an effective degree - but it certainly characterised some major unions like the TGWU, NUPE, ASTMS, AUEW (Engineering section) and NALGO. All this emerges from an exhaustive study of

union change conducted over several years and published at the beginning of the decade by Undy and his colleagues. It is worth quoting their findings on the TGWU in detail:

"In the case of union government we noted two distinct forms of change. The first was towards decentralisation and diffusion. This happened in both non-bargaining and bargaining channels of internal decision making in some unions. The process was taken furthest in the TGWU, where regional secretaries were encouraged to expand their influence at the expense of national officers and an additional layer of government was introduced at the district level. At the same time greater reliance was placed on lay representation and the development of workplace-based forms of participation. This resulted in a shift of the balance of influence from full-time officers to lay activists - especially shop stewards - at the district and local level."
(Undy, Ellis, McCarthy and Halmos 1981: 314)

It is clear, moreover, that these lay officials have not necessarily been inclined to accept directives from union elites very easily. As Hague has observed:

"To union leaders, the incomes policy was at best a necessary evil, but could also be used as a bargaining counter in negotiations with government about a wider range of issues. To shop stewards the pay off from such high level encounters was remote and largely irrelevant, whereas incomes policy was a straitjacket on their activities and a chafing frustration." (Hague 1983: 137)

This was amply illustrated by the outburst of unofficial union activity that occurred during the late 1960s. In our terms, this phenomenon of the "wildcat strike" confirms that the elites were losing their "downward" control over the rank and file. A perfect illustration is provided by the London Dustmen's dispute that took place in the autumn of 1969, a dispute that Leo Panitch has referred to as "trend setting" (Panitch 1976: 218). Whereas the TGWU, NUPE and GMWU leaderships were all claiming a fifteen shilling a week rise, they were obliged to "chase their

memberships" by making the lay officials' demand for a 14.5% increase official - or risk the formation of a breakaway union. Where it has developed in major labour organisations, this growing shop steward power has made the nature of the mobilisational relationship within unions preponderantly interactive. However, it ought to be stressed that the trend towards interactiveness in the relationship between union leaders and lay officials was underpinned by greater rank and file autonomy. It would be misleading, therefore, to regard the rank and file membership as simply being under the control of a new breed of lay militant. That these ordinary members were not easily manipulated even by lay officials was illustrated by incidents like the notorious Thornett Affair that took place at British Leyland's Cowley plant in 1974. An avowedly Trotskyite steward, Alan Thornett was stripped of his responsibilities after losing the confidence of management and workers alike through his activities (Taylor 1978: 141-143). What was significant about the growth of lay officials in numeric terms is that it provided a vehicle for the upward transmission of the dissatisfaction that was provoked among ordinary members by some of the industrial and political events of the 1960s and 1970s. The significance of this in mobilisational terms is that, once again, it makes Labour's job potentially harder. One of the clear lessons of the 1960s and 1970s was that even if the union leaders were inclined to be as loyal as they could be to the party when it was in government, they were in reality constrained by the desires of the rank and file. They had to remain union men first and Labour's allies only second. Ultimately this forced the hands even of union leaders who wished to hold their fire. This was evidently a contributory factor to the collapse of Labour's incomes policies in 1968 and 1978-79. Equally evidently, this message was not lost on the

party leadership, since an important element of In Place Of Strife was the proposal to bolster the power of the centre of the trade union movement over its periphery; that is, the government of the day would have liked to introduce new powers for the TUC to discipline recalcitrant member unions. All this makes it clear that Labour could not make any simple assumptions about the capacity of union elites to inspire automatic loyalty towards the party and its policies. When we recall that constructing those policies in a coherent fashion that would appeal to the membership of the union movement as a whole was becoming increasingly fraught thanks to the developing occupational and social diversity of that membership, it is obvious that Labour was entering an era of perplexing problems of electoral strategy. These factors have complicated the political relationship between the party and the unions, and have made the basic task of creating an initial appeal to union members an onerous one; inspiring an enduring loyalty is correspondingly more difficult.

Footnotes:

1. It is remarkable to reflect upon the way in which these sorts of consideration seem to have exercised the minds of members of the 1964-1970 governments. Crossman provides a particularly astonishing piece of political analysis in speculating on the effects of England's World Cup victory of July 1966. This, of course, took place shortly after the introduction of the government's deflationary package, yet he ebulliently asserts that England's success on soccer field could in some way "change Wilson's luck". Even more amazingly, perhaps, he goes on to eulogise the tremendously gutsy performance of the English players at Wembley, and feels sure that this will influence foreign bankers in a positive way! (Crossman 1979: 234) More recently, Denis Healey has revealed that the coincidence of timing between of the 1970 general election and the World Cup held in Mexico that year was a factor that concerned Harold Wilson (Healey 1989: 344).

2. In the middle of 1972 the TGWU was fined 5,000 for refusing to attend a session convened by the NIRC to deal with the blacking of container lorries at Liverpool. This was later increased when the union refused to pay.

3. For example, in April and May 1972 the government employed both tactics against the rail unions, but a national strike ensued regardless.

4. The government decided to ignore the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act and instead appointed a special Court of Inquiry headed by Lord Wilberforce. This recommended that the miners be considered a "special case" and the NUM wage claim was virtually conceded.

Chapter 3 - Party-Union Linkages: The Organisational Dimension.

During the course of the opening chapter, the importance of organisational resources for processes of mass political mobilisation was emphasised. Particular studies by scholars have sometimes gone beyond this intuitively plausible generalisation in an attempt to gauge more precisely just how much of an impact organisational resources can have - through, for instance, estimating the effect of electoral campaigns on voting behaviour (Weir 1985) or considering the consequences of local constituency efforts (Bochel and Denver 1971). By and large these studies have confirmed the general message that organisation matters. We have already seen that social and political factors have affected Labour's mobilisational efforts among trade unionists. It is now important to complement this with a consideration of the impact of organisational factors. To be more precise, is it possible that the Labour Party's electoral decline amongst trade unionists is to some extent a function of weaker organisational links between the party and the unions?

The landmark study on this subject remains that of Martin Harrison, although it is thirty years old now (Harrison 1960). This is not to say that the topic has been ignored since the time Harrison wrote, but rather that nobody has dealt with it so comprehensively or impressively in the succeeding period. Authors such as May did, however, go some way towards updating Harrison's work in the 1970s (May 1978). May, essentially, adopted the skeleton of Harrison's original framework as a baseline for his own, less substantial, study. Where Harrison provided a book length treatment of the subject, May concentrated his efforts

into a chapter of a book with a wider substantive scope. Such is, clearly, the situation with this thesis. Whilst it is not my intention to follow precisely the format offered by either Harrison or May, the area covered in this chapter is in many ways similar to that which their work encompasses. Many crucial facts relating to the organisational relationship between the Labour Party and the trade unions require updating; in certain respects - for instance, with regard to TULV or TUFL - my work necessarily breaks newer ground. It seems to me that there are at least eight distinct aspects to the organisational linkage between the party and the unions which are worth concentrating upon - party membership, finance, the Labour Party annual conference, the party's National Executive Committee, the sponsorship of MPs, TULV, TUFL and political education. We can look at these in turn. But first, a few general observations of an introductory nature concerning the importance of the unions for the Labour Party organisation.

A fundamental point about Labour Party organisation was alluded to in the opening chapter; Labour has never really developed into a genuine mass membership party in the way that some of its continental European counterparts have done. For classic observers of European political parties like Maurice Duverger and Otto Kirchheimer, a mass membership organisation (or as Duverger put it, a party of mass integration) was one whose most important resource was its individual membership. It was therefore vital that this membership be as large as possible, and that it was isolated from alternative ideological influences. In Britain, however, Labour did not attempt to encapsulate the working class community through the development of a widespread and thoroughgoing organisational presence. Its organisational

strength lay instead with the unions, who were the real mobilisers of the working class in Britain - at first industrially and later politically. The main focus of the unions has always been upon the industrial sphere, however, and this has been reflected in the forms of class consciousness that have characterised the working class in the country. The British Labour Party has had the rare distinction among European class-left parties of having "grown out of the bowels of the trade union movement", to employ the famous and somewhat graphic phrase coined by Ernest Bevin. It has been observed that this has had the virtue of ensuring a relative lack of ideological division within the union movement, compared with other countries where each party has forged links with a sympathetic industrial movement. This may be so. It might be added that a further consequence is that the party has formed in a relatively unideological way, or more precisely, has formed a certain reformist, non-abstract ideology (Hodgson 1981: 15). Historically, the union-party nexus was born only after socialist attempts to mobilise the working class had proved disappointing. Tom Nairn has written of the attitude of the foremost such socialist body of the turn of the century, the Independent Labour Party (ILP):

"They speedily realised that...they must either induce the trade unions to throw in their lot with them or be content to build up very slowly a party based on individual membership on the continental socialist model..most of them preferred the shorter cut of a Labour party based on trade union affiliations, even though they realised that they could get such a party only by considerable dilution of their socialist objectives." (Nairn 1965: 169)

This view is to some extent confirmed by contemporary observers such as Wertheimer, whose own roots lay in the experience of the continental European mass membership social democratic party

(Wertheimer 1929). As Tom Forester has much more recently commented, the Labour Party's aim was never to create a "clean break with the British political culture" (Forester 1976: 38). From its inception the party had a more limited and explicitly electoralist remit. Thus the founding conference of the Labour Representation Committee (the party's pre-1906 title) in 1900 declared amongst its aims the "securing of better representation of labour in the House of Commons (and) promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour." Beyond this, there was little or no explicit articulation of ideological, cultural or normative purpose. The consequences of this have been felt even after the party did adopt a formal commitment to socialism in 1918. To cite an example, RS Moore (in a study of a core section of Labour's constituency, to wit a Durham mining village in the early part of the century) concluded that Labour's approach was essentially "opportunistic": "Labour in fact compromised with existing social outlooks in order to win votes" (Moore 1975: 50). Forester felt that Labour paid a certain price for this, which was that it exerted little "social control" upon the working class "beyond habitual electoral allegiance" (Forester 1976: 94). As we shall see in chapter 5, it is doubtful whether the party can honestly be said to manage even this any more. It is generally those on the left who lament this narrow concentration on the "single moment of the vote" to the exclusion of a commitment to continuing political education, though there is evidence to suggest that by the 1980s the party and the union leaderships may have come to similar conclusions. Hence, TUFL represents an attempt to build upon the unexpected successes of the political fund ballots by developing more regular political contacts with union and constituency party memberships. Political education is ostensibly part of its objective. Whether this can actually

overcome the narrow electoralism which left the party vulnerable in the long run through having "neglected to build a more durable community which alone could create the basis for solid and habitual victory at the polls" remains to be seen (Anderson 1965: 256). There is an enormous residue of inertia and ignorance to overcome, if certain studies of the Labour Party's organisation are to be given credence. It is far from uncommon for these to report that the nature of most constituency participation is organisational or social in orientation (Birch 1959; Fienburgh 1952). On the other hand, political interest and knowledge often seem to be distinctly limited; in one study of constituency activity, it was discovered that less than half of the membership had actually heard of clause four of the party constitution, despite the fact that the survey was conducted during 1960-61, the very period of the famous "revisionist" debate concerning clause four (Bealey, Blondel and McCann: 1965). Perhaps all this suited the unions well enough so long as the party could reel in a guaranteed body of unreflecting working class support come election time. Ultimately, the unions may not have been interested in a heavily politicised class community, for taken to its logical end, the strategy of profound political awakening and mobilisation implicit in the idea of a radical "hegemonic" party could threaten the autonomy of the unions. It should be remembered that the lynchpin of their strategic considerations is the notion of voluntarism. The problem for the unions is that most radical socialist ideologies have tended to allocate to the unions an ultimately subordinate role; they might be important as agents of political mobilisation, but once socialist transformation takes place they are to be subject to the political direction of the radical state. This clearly threatens the prized autonomy that British unions have sought to protect

through their commitment to voluntarism (Fenley 1980: 52). Be this true or otherwise, the unions have almost certainly done much to shape the organisation and ideology of the working class and the Labour Party, and to embark on a programme of heightened awareness and mobilisation at this stage is ambitious. Key studies of British working class culture since the 1960s describe an increasingly inward-looking and privatist consciousness which is less susceptible to collective and solidaristic perspectives than hitherto. Communal patterns of living and working have been eroded, and this hardly suggests a context readily conducive to a strategy of encapsulation. Therefore, present and future membership drives have to be understood as representing a slightly different exercise. For instance, the drive for new individual members embarked upon at the end of the 1980s is primarily concerned with objectives related to income generation and internal political balance (see below).

Apart from the influence the unions have had upon its electoralist strategy, the Labour Party has traditionally "solved" the problem of its weak organisational condition by "extreme dependence upon the unions" (Crouch 1982: 175). Consequently, for example, it is almost a commonplace that the party has consistently had the lowest ratio of members to voters of any of the major European social democratic parties - even before the party reformed the practices which produced habitual official overestimation of the true individual membership position (Hodgson 1981: 56). At its inception the LRC accepted recommendations that no uniform system of constituency organisation be instituted, but that the task simply be left to affiliating bodies. In the earliest days of the new party the role of the ILP was particularly important in this regard:

"The ILP provided most of the speakers in the country, it did most of the campaigning and practically all the propaganda." (Williams 1950: 203)

Moreover, by 1918 there were 672 ILP branches spread around the country compared to just 158 local LRCs. However, most of these cells were tiny, and McKibbin has argued that after 1910, in particular, it was the unions who were really responsible for the Labour Party's growth. The ILP could not hope to match the contribution and input of the unions, especially in the financial sphere (McKibbin 1975). Thus Sidney Webb reported Ramsay-MacDonald as having said that, "only by them (the unions) could the party have got mass support and money" - whilst, incidentally, lamenting the "terrible incubus" this represented for Labour (Forester 1975: 96). Compare also Arthur Henderson's comment to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* in December 1918 on the party's new-found potential to run 500 candidates at the impending general election:

"They (the party activists) were better equipped for this than either of the two great parties because they had an existing trades union organisation in every town" (Wrigley 1982: 86).

It seems clear enough, then, that the trade unions were in many ways responsible for the manner in which party doctrine and organisational structure developed from the earliest days of Labour's existence. But HM Drucker has pointed out that there is another level on which the unions have also influenced the Labour Party's organisation and values. Though less immediately tangible it is none the less significant for that. It is the level of *etho*, which is to be distinguished from the purely *doctrinal*, but which contributes equally to the overall ideology of the party.

An ethos incorporates a set of values arising out of the "experience of the people whom it characterises", and it affects personal and political relationships. This highly implicit spirit of a party, its "traditions and habits, its feel" reflects the experience of the dominant group within it - that is, the British industrial working class. Whereas doctrine characterises the way that intellectuals think, ethos exemplifies the "less demanding, less articulate level" at which the workers typically operate in a political context. Consequently,

"the centre of gravity in the Labour Party is located in working class institutions - overwhelmingly in the trade unions." (Drucker 1979: 11)

As a result, many of the organisational principles adopted in the earliest days of party development were taken "unreflectively from the characteristic practices of the unions". For example, Drucker is inclined to the view that certain typical party expressions of internal democracy, solidarity and loyalty are derived from the unions. Similarly, notions such as responsibility to the party conference, delegated representation and the need for loyalty to the elected party leader owe much to the ethos of the unions themselves. More especially, the belief that an organisation requires a declared principle to guide it - clause four of the party constitution - has been bequeathed by the unions. Drucker summarises what lies at the heart of union - and therefore party - ethos in the following way. He is worth quoting at some length:

"Notoriously, the rules and practices of unions vary... But..they all exemplify a form of democracy. The unions, especially the older unions, were formed by people who had slowly built them in a hostile world. Thus the unions tend to be slow moving, defensive organisations. Their rules are remarkably elaborate and self-contained. They leave little to the initiative of the unions' own

leaders and less to the public law. They often incorporate generous universalistic aspirations and narrow formalistic procedures." (Drucker 1982: 261)

So the unions dominated the organisation of the Labour Party virtually from the time of its inception, and were of consequence in a position to influence its goals, doctrine and ethos. This necessarily had an important effect upon the political and ideological mobilisation of the British working class. It is time to turn to the details of the unions' input to the organisation of the Labour Party since the early 1960s.

1. Party Membership.

It is by now a cliché of British politics that Labour's mass membership base is a "myth" (see, for instance, Taylor 1989: 21). This assertion rests on the distinction between individual and affiliated membership of the party. To be an individual member, it is necessary, firstly, to be a member of an affiliated organisation one is eligible for, and secondly, to actually obtain direct membership of a Constituency Labour Party. On the other hand, organisations affiliated to the Labour Party are also entitled to take a political levy off those of their members who are happy to pay it. This money can be passed on to the Labour Party in affiliation fees, and the levy payers designated the "affiliated membership". Whilst trade unions are not obliged to affiliate for all who pay the levy it is nonetheless clear that the bulk of Labour's claimed national membership over the years has comprised this affiliated element rather than the individual element. It is, furthermore, almost certain that many who pay the political levy do so out of apathy rather than out of conviction;

that is, they pay the levy automatically unless they can be bothered to specifically "contract out". (When it was necessary to specifically "contract in" in order to pay this levy between 1927 and 1945, affiliated membership income declined significantly, as Table 3.1 demonstrates.) Thus the true indicator of committed membership must be taken to be the individual membership, not the affiliated membership.

Table 3.1 - Affiliated Membership Income For The Labour Party, Selected Years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Union Affiliation Fees</u>
1918	20,000
1926	56,000
1927	43,000
1928	33,000
1939	44,000
1946	51,000
1947	81,000
1948	130,000

Source: Pinto-Duschinsky 1980: 76

To understand just how significant affiliated membership is, it is enough simply to cast a cursory glance over the figures presented in table 3.2. It is immediately obvious that by far and away the greatest component of total party membership is that comprising trade union affiliated membership. More to the point, it is equally evident that there has been little or no change over the years; the unions' affiliated members have generally accounted for around 90% of total party membership since the foundation of the Labour Representation Committee. Thus, it is clear that the Labour Party remains as dependent on the unions for its nominal membership as ever it did, and by implication, for its financing too, as we shall be seeing. Moreover, this dependence is largely focused on a few major trade unions. "The dominance of a few is not a recent phenomenon", as Upham and

Wilson have pointed out, but it has become exaggerated. In the mid-1950s, the top six affiliates accounted for two-thirds of the total membership of the party, whereas thirty years later the top four amounted to 60% of the total (Upham and Wilson 1989: 14).

Table 3.2 - Labour Party Membership, Selected Years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Affiliated</u>		<u>Affiliated</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Affiliated</u>
	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Societies</u>		<u>Union Memb- ship as a</u>
<u>Membership</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Of Total</u>	
1900	-	353,070	22,861	375,931	93.9%
1945	487,047	2,510,369	41,281	3,038,697	82.6%
1964	830,116	5,502,001	21,146	6,439,893	85.4%
1966	775,693	5,538,744	21,285	6,086,625	90.1%
1970	690,191	5,518,520	23,869	6,222,580	88.7%
1974	691,889	5,787,467	39,101	6,518,451	88.8%
1979	666,091	6,511,179	58,328	7,235,598	90.0%
1983	295,344	6,101,438	58,955	6,455,737	94.5%
1987	288,829	5,564,477	54,843	5,908,149	94.2%

NB: Estimates of individual membership levels have fallen in the 1980s since Constituency Labour Parties are no longer required to affiliate for a minimum number of 1000 members.

Source: Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, 1987.

Interestingly, although it may be the case that the membership links between the Labour Party and its affiliated unions are as close as ever, it does not necessarily follow that those between the party and the TUC as a whole are. Somewhat curiously, if typically, whilst the TUC as a body founded the Labour Representation Committee at the turn of the century, it is not the case that all its member unions are individually affiliated to the party, nor that the TUC itself, as a body, is. The TUC has always resisted any pressure for the fragmentation of the union movement along ideological lines; it preceded the birth of

Labour, of course, and has never lost sight of its primary goal of presenting a comprehensive and united national federation of labour in the industrial arena. Consequently, Britain is not characterised by the continental European model of rival union federations that are divided by ideological and political identity. Thus the TUC can reasonably claim all-inclusiveness but not political coherence.¹ The inevitable corollary of this is a certain amount of internal political tension that the TUC has to live with. There are those who are happy to affiliate to the TUC in order to be a part of its combined industrial muscle, while resisting the further step of explicitly identifying the Labour Party as their political flagship. Taylor has claimed that the influence of these types of union may be increasing within the TUC given the growth of white collar unionism: "As so few white collar unions are affiliated to both the TUC and the Labour Party this hints at a growing separation between the two..." (Taylor 1987a: 170) It is especially pertinent in the case of private sector white collar union members who might be inclined to regard politics as a thing divorced from purely industrial concerns. There are certainly many examples of the officials of white collar unions, mindful of their own memberships, nervously reminding delegates at annual congress that the TUC must always retain a separate identity from the party which it founded. To take one minor but illustrative instance, on the opening day of the 1989 congress Bill Brett of the IPMS displayed his clear irritation at the fraternal address presented by Dennis Skinner, chairman of the Labour Party; Skinner's speech "verged on the rude", according to Brett, in so far as it implicitly assumed that everyone at the congress was a card-carrying member of the Labour Party. ² However, we must take care not to exaggerate the extent of the potential wedge that some may perceive being driven

between the TUC and the party. Significantly, table 3.3 indicates that these "non-partisan" - though not necessarily non-political - unions are by no means necessarily a growing component of the TUC. Labour Party affiliates today account for around three-fifths of TUC membership, just as they did twenty years ago.

Table 3.3 - TUC Membership and Affiliation to the Labour Party, Selected Years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Unions In TUC</u>	<u>Total TUC Membership</u>	<u>Unions Affiliated to Labour Party</u>	<u>Total Affiliated Union Membership</u>	<u>Number of Labour Affiliates as a Proportion of TUC Total</u>	<u>Labour's Affiliated Membership as a Proportion of TUC Total</u>
1900	184	1,250,000	41	353,070	22.3%	28.2%
1945	191	6,575,654	69	2,510,369	36.1%	38.2%
1964	175	8,325,790	81	5,502,001	46.3%	66.1%
1966	170	8,867,522	79	5,538,744	46.5%	62.5%
1970	150	9,402,170	67	5,518,520	44.7%	58.7%
1974	109	10,002,224	63	5,787,467	57.8%	57.9%
1979	112	12,128,078	59	6,511,179	52.7%	53.7%
1983	102	10,510,157	47	6,101,438	46.1%	58.1%
1987	87	9,243,297	40	5,564,477	46.0%	60.2%

Sources: TUC Annual Reports; Reports of the Annual Conference and the NEC of the Labour Party.

This brief analysis seems to suggest that the link between the Labour Party and the unions remains as important as ever in so far as party membership is concerned. Labour's affiliated membership is proportionately as significant as ever it was, the proportion of the TUC affiliating to the party has not weakened notably and the TUC still encompasses the vast bulk of union members in Britain. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the party may well consider that this is no longer good enough. As a corollary of the party's much-vaunted policy review it has been suggested that the traditional reliance on the myth of a mass membership (while in reality power lies with a relatively

small number of constituency activists and union barons who dominate the annual conference) needs to be replaced. The only way to curb the influence of radical activists who are out of touch with the wider electorate may be to generate somehow a genuine mass membership of a million or more individuals who are socially and attitudinally representative of the wider electorate. To be effective, it follows that it is also necessary to diminish the power of the unions at conference; what is the attraction of joining a party as an effective member if the real influence continues to lie with a few union leaders? Similar logic has been used to explain the political inactivity of trade union members themselves:

"The very existence of the block vote seemed to hinder the development of a politically active trade union membership. The party's own internal surveys showed that very few active trade unionists devoted much time to the Party. Out of 6 million union members and 10,000 union branches affiliated to the Party, possibly no more than 4,000 trade union activists were similarly active in the Party. The trade unions with the busiest Labour Party members were white collar professional unions which were not affiliated...The manual unions, the life-blood of the party, had relatively few members in the party" (Hughes and Wintour 1990: 190).

Hence, we may expect to see the national drive for individual Party members accompanied by the modification of the union block vote at party conference in the future. The 1988 conference empowered the party's NEC to look into the reform of the block vote, and the 1990 conference agreed to the principle diminishing its overall weight. None of this, it should be noted, automatically implies that the unions will have no place in the business of building party membership in the future. Indeed, if the projected recruiting drive is to become manifest, the opposite is quite likely given the growing feeling within the movement that unions' own memberships are an untapped mine of

potential card-carriers for the party. The process of joining the Party has been simplified and trade unionists are entitled to a temporary discount on subscription rates. But we should not be deceived into imagining that this holds out the real prospect of the unions losing their traditional significance as the party's pay masters.

Financial Links Between The Party And The Unions.

The aspect of organisational interlinkage which has always attracted most attention in the case of the Labour Party and the unions is, of course, that of finance. It has often been controversial at the level of partisan rhetoric; occasionally, it has been thrust onto the heart of the agenda of national politics, most notably so in the middle of the 1980s. But is the financial dependence of the party upon the unions as strong as ever? This is the essential question that we shall try to answer in this section. In many ways it is crucial to the broader question of the continuing organisational input of the unions.

For the most part, I intend to concentrate upon the financial connection between the party and the unions at the national level. It is most appropriate to split the discussion between the party's General Fund, its General Election Fund and various other miscellaneous spending projects. How far do the unions contribute to these different funds?

Table 3.4 shows at a glance just how important the unions remain to the Labour Party's general finances. The vast bulk of all affiliation fee income that the party earns comes from the trade

unions; comparatively little is contributed by the party's other affiliated organisations, the cooperative and socialist societies, although it has to be said that these bodies do contribute a slightly greater proportion of all affiliation fees than formerly. Nonetheless, the proportion of the total General Fund represented by union affiliation fees has remained fairly steady since the early 1960s. That it has not actually increased - as it threatened to do in the 1970s - is only due to the substantial real increase in individual membership fees that was imposed in the 1980s. The annual membership fee was 30 pence per member in 1964, rising to 60 pence in 1966, and 1.20 in 1974. But as recorded individual membership plummeted in the 1980s, the party forced up the subscription to 6 in 1983 and 10 in 1987. The only other possible source of General Fund revenue is that derived from returns on investment. In 1960 Martin Harrison complained that the Labour Party was relatively unadventurous in this respect ("The insignificance of investment income is remarkable." Harrison 1960: 61), and in all honesty it appears that little has changed. Thus, for example, in 1983 the entire contribution to the party's General Fund of 3,776,000 made by investment income amounted to just 7,000. (The situation vis a vis the General Election Fund was little different, investment returns totalling 23,000 out of 2,590,000.) To reiterate then, the unions surely remain as important to the Labour Party's general financing as ever they did.

The second major national party fund is that which has just been alluded to, the General Election Fund. The Labour Party appears to be a little less forthcoming in reporting details of the sources of this fund. Table 3.5 simply informs of the total donations to the fund in general election years.

Table 3.4 - Trade Union Contributions To The Labour Party's General Fund, 1964-1987.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Income</u>	<u>Total Affiliation Contrib's</u>	<u>Trade Union Affiliation Contributions</u>	<u>Trade Union Proportion of total Affiliation Contrib's</u>	<u>Trade Union Proportion of Total Income</u>
1964	385,576	315,539	276,237	87.5%	71.6%
1966	386,945	313,976	273,716	87.2%	70.7%
1970	516,110	443,625	401,792	90.6%	77.9%
1974	869,027	743,208	670,488	90.2%	77.2%
1979	2,151,238	2,112,830	1,842,383	87.2%	85.6%
1983	3,776,000	3,568,000	2,969,000	83.2%	78.6%
1987	5,873,000	5,328,000	4,180,000	78.5%	71.2%

Source: Annual Reports of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party.

Table 3.5 - Total Donations To General Election Funds, 1964-1987.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Donations</u>
1964	611,464
1966	357,085
1970	513,035
1974	914,998
1979	857,592
1983	2,183,000
1987	3,760,000

Source: Annual Reports of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party.

For most of these years, the party's annual report tends to satisfy itself - if not the inquisitive reader - with somewhat vague comments to the effect that these donations were made "principally by trade unions" (1964) or derived "mainly from the unions" (1966). Such comments are not uninteresting, but they lack precision, of course. However, we are able to be a great deal more exact about the situation since 1979. Table 3.6 indicates that the unions have been no less responsible for financing Labour's election campaigning than for its general operations. As Pinto-Duschinsky says:

"Despite the use of direct mail fund-raising, the party

still relied overwhelmingly on trade unions contributions. The main story of Labour Party fund-raising during 1983-7 and in the 1987 campaign was the success in attracting money from the unions. This was achieved despite the sharply falling membership of trade unions..." (Pinto-Duschinsky 1989: 17)

Table 3.6 - Sources of Labour's General Election Fund, 1979-1987.

	<u>Trade Unions</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Union percent of total</u>
1979	834,870	102,722*	937,592	89.0
1983	2,147,000	36,000	2,183,000	98.4
1987	3,775,228	300,000	4,075,228	92.6

* This figure includes a grant to the election fund from the general fund, which itself is heavily dependent upon union sources, of course. Consequently, the percentage figure in the final column of the 1979 entry is something of an underestimate of the true degree of union input.

Source: Annual Reports of the National Executive Committee; Pinto-Duschinsky 1989: 18.

Table 3.7 breaks down the overall figure for union donations by major individual contributions for 1983 and 1987. From this it becomes clear that seven trade unions alone (plus the TULV in 1983), accounted for over 70% of the total union input for each of these elections. And this ignores far from insubstantial efforts made by unions like COHSE, the NUR and ASTMS. Clearly, some major unions are still quite prepared to regard the connection with Labour as something serious enough to pay big money for.

Table 3.7 - Major Individual Contributions to Labour's General Election Fund, 1983 and 1987.

	<u>1983</u>		<u>1987</u>
TGWU	508,252	TGWU	1,279,000
GMBATU	306,805	GMBATU	630,750
NUM	234,150	NUPE	260,000
NUPE	220,048	AUEW	250,000
AUEW	217,500	NUM	207,000
TULV Levy Fund	100,000	NUR	161,000
UCW	87,163	UCW	158,000
USDAW	80,000	USDAW	62,150

Source: Annual Report of the National Executive Committee; Pinto-Duschinsky 1989: 23.

Quite apart from the financing of Labour's General and General Election Funds, the unions have also shown themselves willing to foot bills which benefit the party in various other, not insignificant, ways. The most notable such example concerns the provision of a party headquarters. For many years lodgings were provided at Transport House in Smith Square, Westminster, the national headquarters of the Transport and General Workers' Union. Towards the end of the 1970s, however, it was decided that the party should be re-housed in new premises of its own. A site was secured south of the Thames at Walworth Road, and a comfortable new building erected. The precise cost of the exercise has never been published but the price of development in London has never been cheap; the project was financed by a consortium of major trade unions which now holds a 999 year lease on the property. Other examples of union spending which benefit the party are provided by the specific issue campaigns that certain unions run from time to time. Most typical in this respect are the anti-privatisation and spending cuts campaigns which have been run during the 1980s by some of the public sector unions. Obviously in the unions' own interest, these campaigns nonetheless undeniably dovetail with Labour's philosophy and political rhetoric. Such would be true of, for instance, NALGO's *Stop The Cuts* campaign which was run in 1983.

Martin Harrison posed the question in 1960 of whether the unions really "pulled their weight" in funding the Labour Party as a political organisation. He concluded that, broadly speaking, they probably did not ("..the unions have been enjoying the benefits of political action on the cheap" [Harrison 1960: 100-102]), but I would contend that the material we have considered so far all

tends to suggest the unions have paid a substantial price for their political link with Labour. At the very least, it is worth noting that their financial input has been maintained in real terms in spite of the frequently tense relationship they have enjoyed with the party over the past thirty years. In the first three decades after the war the unions benefited from the steady growth of trade union membership in Britain, which permitted them to increase the contributions they made to the party without actually pushing up the contribution per member in line with inflation (Fatchett 1987: 48). However, they have been obliged to demonstrate the real extent of their commitment to Labour in hard financial terms over the course of the most recent decade. This has been accomplished mainly through boosting affiliation levels to the party. In 1979 the amount of money paid to the party by the unions amounted to 84% of all income that they were actually able to generate through the political levy. Nine years later the unions were affiliating for 105% of the numbers paying the levy. Thus, although the number of levy paying union members declined by 29% during the period, actual affiliation levels dropped by just 11%. Moreover, affiliation fees increased by more than 80% in real terms between the elections of 1979 and 1987, and the levy increased as a proportion of total union subscriptions. Overall, union contributions increased by more than 50% in real terms, even though they lost a quarter of their levy-paying members in this time (Upham and Wilson 1989: 7). A final piece of evidence underlining the sense of commitment that many unions manifestly demonstrate about the organic link with Labour has been provided in the 1980s by the fight to save their political funds.

The story of the battle over trade unions political funds is one that has received much coverage in the media as well as in academic circles during the 1980s (Coates and Topham 1986, Fatchett 1987, Grant 1987). In the early 1900s the unions financed the Labour Representation Committee out of their general funds or, occasionally, out of special parliamentary funds. The former required no special balloting of members in order that it be established, though the latter did. During these years the battle lines were drawn up over various issues involving the legal rights and liabilities of unions; the notorious "Osborne Judgement" of 1909 was one such instance which focused on the rights of unions to continue financing the Labour Party. A lay official of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants sought to legally restrain his union's right to levy and distribute money for political ends, and the House of Lords acceded to his demand. A rash of similar injunctions was subsequently and quickly imposed on other unions seeking to support the Labour Party, but the Liberal government returned to office in 1910 required Labour's parliamentary support and so introduced the Trade Union Act of 1913 which largely continued to define the legal parameters of union activity until the 1980s, (this despite the fact that, according to Coates and Topham, it was "...regarded by the whole movement at the time of its passage as an unfair and discriminatory piece of law", [Coates and Topham 1986: 118]). The new law permitted the establishment of special political funds which could be used by unions for, amongst other objects, the purpose of making contributions to the Labour Party. ³ However, these funds had first to be approved by union memberships in secret ballots. This was to be a once and for all time consultation procedure, though dissenting union members were subsequently to have the right to contract out of participating

in the political fund. With the notable exception of the hiatus created by the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927 (which replaced the "contacting-out" proviso with a "contracting-in" one, until its repeal in 1946), little changed, legally speaking, until the 1980s. In January 1983, however, the Employment Secretary Norman Tebbit introduced the Green Paper *Democracy In Trade Unions* (Cmnd 8778: 1983). This criticised the traditional arrangements and argued that there should be a regular re-balloting of members on the question of the maintenance of political funds, that the present definition of "political" was no longer adequate and that contracting-in should be re-established since there were too many practical hindrances to the act of contracting out. Subsequent to the election that summer, legislation was introduced which was broadly based on the rhetoric and recommendations of the Green Paper, although contracting-in was not proposed. The TUC managed to avoid this after consultations with Tebbit and his successor, Tom King; as a result of these negotiations, the TUC produced a new "code of practice" which promised to make the contracting-out procedure fairer and easier for union members who wished to follow this course of action. Nevertheless, the Trade Union Act of 1984 appeared to do the unions and the Labour Party very few favours. Amongst other things, this new piece of legislation introduced a new provision requiring unions to re-ballot their members every decade on the need for political funds, whilst also redefining the meaning of the term "political" within the context of the law. This latter point promised to be crucial since it threatened to prevent individual unions running specific issue campaigns which might in some way conceivably benefit the public standing of a party - unless that campaign was also financed out of the political fund. (Taylor 1987a: 214-215) In retrospect, it is

possible to argue that this provided many unions with a vital key to the strategy they were to adopt in going to their memberships on the matter of the retention of the political funds. Unions such as NALGO, for instance, were able to claim that under the provisions of the new Act, efforts like their "Stop The Cuts" campaign of 1983 would have been outlawed unless the political fund was retained - even though it did not specifically involve contributions to, or polemic on behalf of, the Labour Party. Opinion polls commissioned at the time all tended to reveal how unpopular the link with Labour was amongst ordinary union members, and yet a closer reading of some of them indicated that clear majorities were in favour of union involvement in certain political issues, especially those which "directly" affected members' interests. Table 3.8 provides an illustration of how union members felt about the different forms of political activity that unions engage in.

Table 3.8 - Affiliated Union Members' Level Of Approval Of Various Forms Of Political Action, 1982-1984.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
Of political activities on behalf of members	44%	45%
Of affiliation and donation of money to the Labour Party	38%	52%
Of using up to 5p. of a member's weekly contribution for political activities	42%	47%
Of supporting MPs in the interest of the union's members	63%	27%
Of campaigns which directly affect members' pay and jobs	60%	32%
Of campaigns which indirectly affect members' pay and jobs	26%	61%
Of industrial action against government economic policies	37%	53%
Of full participation in key decisions affecting economy	57%	34%

Sources: MORI 1982; Taylor 1987a: 210

Writing in *The Guardian* in 1984, the journalist John Torode succinctly summarised the position emerging from data of this nature:

"..what MORI suggests is that most trade union members want their unions to be able to indulge in political campaigning. They also want to be able to fund MPs of their choice. What most trade unionists object to is specifically the direct and exclusive constitutional link with the Labour Party." (Torode 1984: 21)

Following the passage of the new legislation the unions started mobilising amongst their members for the campaigns on the retention of political funds. The *Trade Union Coordinating Committee* (TUCC) was established as an umbrella organisation comprising 37 unions required to ballot their memberships. Although this might have seemed a duplication of the functions of the TULV, it was felt that a new single purpose body was needed since the NUM and AUEW had both quit TULV through concern over the political direction it was taking. TULV therefore took the step of establishing a TUCC which incorporated both these unions, and donated an initial grant of 50,000 towards its costs. It was chaired by the former general secretary of SOGAT'82, Bill Keys, and he was assisted by two full time officers who were lent by individual unions; these were Graham Allen and Sheila Field. The TUCC had a General Management Committee and an Executive Committee (representing just the major unions) at national level, and a regional structure. In total the TUCC spent around 200,000 which made it a comparatively inexpensive national campaign; this largely reflected the fact that it relied far more on the existing structures of the union movement in order to communicate with the rank and file, than it did on high profile media

advertising (Fisher 1987: 69). The workplace branch was the crucial focus of the campaign, in which five major lines of argument were stressed to members:

- i. The government's legislation was unfair and undemocratic.
- ii. The political background influenced most of the issues affecting ordinary working people.
- iii. Important gains were made on behalf of members through the political action that unions were involved in.
- iv. The central issue was not how the political fund was spent, but its very existence.
- v. Even those not paying the levy should vote for the funds in order that others had the freedom to choose whether or not to pay (Fisher 1988: 70).

The TUCC preferred not to hold all individual union ballots simultaneously, partly for fear that it would provide the opportunity for a hostile media campaign to focus on "national polling day", and partly because, by commencing with the unions most likely to retain the funds, a bandwagon effect might be created. Various examples of literature were produced by the TUCC and the individual unions, videos released and meetings held. The Labour Party itself played a fairly low key role in the campaign, unsurprisingly given the nature of a strategy which made relatively little play of the party link. This held at both national and local level, as Fatchett has taken pains to illustrate (see table 3.9).

Table 3.9 - Constituency Labour Involvement In Political Fund Ballot Campaigns, 1984-1985.

No involvement	44.6%
Internal CLP discussion, but no external activity	31.2%
Offered assistance, but not taken up	6.9%
Assistance with facilities	6.9%
Involved in actual union campaign work	8.4%
No response	2.0%

Source: Fatchett 1987: 78.

As the first ballot results became known - all affirming the intention of maintaining political funds - some Conservatives complained that the campaigns were misleading, and had sought to divert members attention from the underlying nature of the link with Labour (Fatchett 1987: 79). However, criticism was somewhat restrained, possibly out of a desire to avoid drawing heavy counterfire over the sources of Conservative Party funding. Voting took place either in the workplace or through postal balloting, turnout generally being higher in the former case. In no case did a union reject the idea of continuing an established fund, as table 3.10 illustrates; indeed, in fully eighteen subsequent cases unions which had not previously had any political fund decided to hold ballots on the matter and voted to establish new funds (Upham and Wilson 1989: 9).

The lowest "yes" vote in a political fund ballot was 59% by the ACTT, and regional variations were not great, although the south of England was slightly less positive in support for the funds. (Fisher 1987: 85-93) Moreover, the whole process of mobilising support for the retention of the funds has demonstrated a point which may have long term ramifications for Labour's electoral strategy in the future. The unions were forced to go to their grass roots memberships and justify their political activities and, to a degree, their link with the Labour Party (Leopold 1986). This inspired the sort of political awareness campaign among ordinary union members that had never taken place before. The lessons of this were by no means entirely lost on Party and union activists; in the wake of the political fund campaigns the Trades Union For Labour organisation (TUFL) was established, a body whose work we shall be considering in greater detail subsequently. Its basic goal, however, was to build upon the

momentum generated by TUCC's work in order to develop a consistent political education effort amongst union members. Although there are those who are disappointed that this work has not really gone far enough, it may yet prove a significant departure in Labour's electoral strategy. It has already been claimed that TUFL helped win the party new electoral support in 1987 (see below).

There is little or nothing in this review of financial links that suggests a weakened organisational connection between the party and the unions. In real terms the unions seem to pour as much money in the party as ever they did; the campaigns over political funds clearly demonstrated how important the financial link continues to be to them. Moreover, it has arguably had the spin-off effect of generating an extra strand to the organisational nexus between the party and the unions via the TUFL. It seems to me that the only other argument which can possibly be brought into play regarding the question of finance concerns the views held by the unions on the matter of state aid to political parties. A groundswell of opinion within the union movement in favour of state financial aid might be taken to be evidence of a shift towards a weaker link. For sure, a Labour Party that could rely upon the state to pay a major proportion of its bills would not be so beholden to the unions politically, and there are many who would regard such a development as beneficial to both sets of actors in the relationship. The journalist John Lloyd provides an example that encapsulates this position. Lloyd has argued quite plausibly that the unions' memberships have been changing, and this has forced them to become more flexible and competitive in seeking members from new industrial and occupational sectors in a context of high unemployment, low

inflation and hostile governmental and employer relationships. Allied with a process of longer term social change this has produced union memberships which are "more diverse and individualised", and an inevitable consequence of this has been

Table 3.10 - Political Fund Ballot Results, 1985-1986.

<u>Union</u>	<u>In Favour</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Turnout</u>
SOGAT'82	78.0%	22.0%	56.0%
ISTC	87.0%	13.0%	67.0%
FTATU	72.0%	28.0%	30.0%
UCW	75.5%	24.5%	69.0%
NCU (Engineers)	81.0%	19.0%	79.0%
GMBATU	89.0%	11.0%	61.0%
APECCS	73.0%	27.0%	60.0%
EETPU	84.0%	16.0%	37.0%
NUR	87.0%	13.0%	61.0%
NUS	86.5%	13.5%	34.0%
PLCTWU	75.0%	25.0%	98.0%
ASLEF	93.0%	7.0%	85.0%
TSSA	69.0%	31.0%	67.0%
CATU	77.0%	23.0%	73.0%
National Union of Scalemakers	77.0%	23.0%	54.0%
TGWU	81.0%	19.0%	49.5%
COHSE	91.0%	9.0%	40.0%
NUDAGO	84.5%	15.5%	68.0%
NUTGWU	91.0%	9.0%	87.0%
NLB	90.0%	10.0%	83.0%
NUFLAT	78.0%	22.0%	84.0%
USDAW	88.0%	12.0%	39.5%
ACTAT	59.0%	41.0%	49.0%
NGA	78.0%	22.0%	73.0%
TWU	90.0%	10.0%	76.0%
NACODS	87.0%	13.0%	76.0%
TASS	76.0%	24.0%	55.0%
NUPE	84.5%	15.5%	9.0%
RUBSSO	78.0%	22.0%	40.0%
GUALO	84.0%	16.0%	92.0%
MU	76.0%	24.0%	36.5%
NUM	91.0%	9.0%	76.0%
FBU	80.0%	20.0	87.0%
ASTMS	81.0%	19.0%	32.0%
UCATT	91.5%	8.5%	25.0%

Note: Results given in chronological order in which polls took place.

Source: TUCC

the declining demand on the part of those memberships for "...the unions to provide a political service of which the majority do not approve and which, even if they did, they would normally wish to do for themselves." It is hard to break the party-union relationship for it is founded on solid foundations of "money, power and a certain corruption", but on the whole it would be better for both if this relationship was now sundered. The unions dominate the party's policy making process through the conference block vote, and this inevitably kills the incentive of all but the extreme few to join and be active in the constituencies. Lloyd concludes that there is a need for the union role and input to be greatly downgraded so that the membership would have a real task to undertake in raising funds and running the party. To make their targets realistic, their work would have to be underpinned by the substantial state funding of party expenses. All this could have the effect of stimulating a new membership drive and rendering the party and the unions "at least semi-detached", and so freer to act. The party would not be seen to be the puppet of the unions, and would not thereby suffer from the virtually permanent unpopularity of the latter, though nothing would actually prevent the unions from making contributions to the party or engaging in a constructive and friendly relationship with it. The point is simply that the organic link between the two would be weakened, but this would have the paradoxical effect of revitalising the party (Lloyd 1988: 34-39). An essentially similar argument has been proposed by Eric Hammond, General Secretary of EETPU, who has complained about the way that certain public sector unions have used their political influence "unreasonably" within the party. He too hopes that "Britain will soon follow the rest of Europe towards a level of state aid for political parties", yet it is interesting to note the limits to

which he takes his argument. Controversial and right wing he may have been regarded as by many within the labour movement, and yet he is happy to state emphatically enough that, during the course of the political fund campaigns:

"Not only did we argue that our union needed a political voice but, in particular, both ourselves and the AEU argued that that voice needed to find expression through the Labour Party." (Hammond 1988: 25-27)

Maybe this is an example of the "sentimentality" that Lloyd regards as continuing to bind the party and the unions to one another; others like Geoffrey Goodman prefer to speak of the shared "ethos" they both manifest (Goodman 1988: 28-29). Either way, they both make an important point. The sheer cultural legacy of the shared history the party and the unions enjoy makes it highly unlikely that the two will undergo some process of organisational divorce in the foreseeable future, no matter how politically estranged they appear from time to time. None of this is meant to imply that the party and the unions have set themselves irreversibly against all possibility of an increase in the level of state aid beyond the contribution to parliamentary parties that is presently maintained (the so-called "Short Money"). Indeed, it has been noted that, during the consultations preceding the publication of the Houghton Report on political finance in 1976, affiliated unions "strongly supported" state aid, "fully conscious that this would reduce the party's dependence on them" (Crouch 1982: 178). Moreover, the party has recently affirmed that it is "committed to a major extension of state aid to benefit the activities of political parties" (Labour Party 1988: 5). The point is, however, that state aid is regarded by neither the party nor the unions as a potential replacement for union contributions. It is merely a possible complement to

the unions' input. Whatever, it has to be said that there is little immediate prospect of the extension of state financial aid to political parties in Britain. Even if the notion of a "semi-detached" relationship sustained by state aid becomes a logically compelling scenario in the long term, its arrival is far from imminent; in the mean time it is hard to argue that the unions are gradually withdrawing meaningful financial backing from the Labour Party. The political funds question more than exemplifies this point.

Broadly then, the unions put as much into the party financially, at national level, as they ever did. What of the local linkage? In this respect, the published sources provide somewhat sketchy information. Labour's annual reports tend to gloss over connections with unions in the regions and constituencies in rather broad terms; few statistics are provided. To take one of the election years of interest to us, for example, in 1979 three out of the eleven regional organisations of the party actually made no reference whatsoever to the unions in their contributions to the NEC annual report (1979: 33-38). Of the remainder, most were satisfied with brief and on the whole rather uninformative comments; for instance, we learn simply that the Labour Party in the South West conducted "regular consultations with trade union officers", or that "excellent efforts by our trade union colleagues could not stem the tide" against the party in the Southern region during the general election. Only the North West, North East and Greater London Labour Parties actually report how many union members were affiliated to the regions (1,150,000, 645,430 and 729,963 respectively). Such lack of emphasis may either reflect the fact that connections with the unions in the regions are so obvious a political fact of life as to be taken

largely for granted in such official accounts, or alternatively they may indicate the paucity of union input on this level. Certainly, we have no basis for analysing the financial commitments of local and regional union organisations if we rely solely upon party publications. Fortunately, some relatively detailed research on this theme has been conducted. For instance, Martin Harrison felt able to conclude in 1960 that around two-thirds to three-quarters of the Labour Party's regional funds originated with the trade unions (Harrison 1960: 76). More recently, Derek Fatchett has generated a rare data set on the separate contribution that unions make to the finances of local constituency Labour Parties. As a general rule local parties do not generate more than a few thousand pounds a year in income, and of this only a certain amount comes directly from unions. Pinto-Duschinsky has explained that this follows from the traditional demand from the NEC for union money to be directed to the centre as far as possible, rather than risk "frittering it away on various local Labour causes" (Pinto-Duschinsky 1980: 175). However, presuming that this demand is generally adhered to, it would be surprising if Pinto-Duschinsky's claim that "every level of the Labour Party organisation (is) heavily dependent on the unions" actually holds true. Thus, Fatchett found that less than 2% of constituency Labour parties relied on union contributions for more than half of their income; nearly 90% of parties obtained less than a quarter of their income from this source. On the basis of this information he went on to conclude that "it can be tentatively estimated that some 60% of the Labour Party's total income at all levels comes from the trade unions" (Fatchett 1987: 50-51). Interestingly, he claims that the pattern of greater union input at the central level rather than the local level tends to be repeated in the sphere of

party policy making. Thus, it was rare in his experience for union branch delegations to constitute a majority of either constituency General Management Committees or Executive Committees. Indeed, in as many as 36% of cases, affiliated unions could not even find enough delegates to fill all the places that they were entitled to on these bodies. Nonetheless, nearly a third of constituency party chairmen, and a quarter of party secretaries came from the unions (Ibid: 54-55). Clearly, the party-union organisational relationship has traditionally been, and continues to be, concentrated at the centre rather than in the locality. Unions are as happy as ever to finance the party nationally, but do not regard the local and regional organisations as important enough to invest heavily in - and they probably never have done. At once this explains the weakness of Labour's local organisation in general and illustrates the extent of the party's reliance on the unions for organisational development. It is worth observing, however, that it is one of the objectives of TUFL, a relatively new forum of party-union linkage, to try and strengthen the local connection. We shall return to this later.

Labour's Annual Conference

Table 3.2, by showing how more than 90% of Labour's membership is still affiliated union membership, reminds us of the capacity of the unions to influence the party's annual conference through the block vote. This system affords the unions voting power at conference in direct proportion to the weight of their membership; obviously, as a combined group this enables them to overwhelm the voting power of individual members from the

constituency parties. The major unions, in particular, have tremendous potential leverage through this voting power. The TGWU alone is able to account for around a fifth of the conference's total voting strength. For many years this was a method by which the party leadership sought to stave off the advance of radicals in the constituency parties since it knew that it was able to count on the support of major union leaders at conference. None of these leaders had to worry about their union's conference delegations splitting their vote; all members of a delegation were obliged to vote the same way. It was simply a matter of successfully influencing the decision about how the delegation was to vote. A combination of the block vote and the influence of the unions on the Conference Arrangements Committee (on which they are in a majority) habitually ensured that "much of what emerged as the decisions of the conference" bore marks of the interaction between Party and union elites (Minkin 1980: 317). Over the past twenty years, however, the major unions have not always made such reliable allies for the party leadership. As we have seen, the leadership has often come under severe pressure over questions of incomes policy and industrial relations legislation. Moreover, during the 1970s and early 1980s the left wing Campaign For Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) began to make notable inroads into the ranks of union activists and officials over questions of Labour Party constitutional reform (Kogan and Kogan 1982). This too produced occasional differences at conference between the party leadership and some of the major unions. Indeed, even at the best of times, as far as the party-union elite relationship is concerned, Lewis Minkin - the author of the definitive work to date on the party conference - has taken pains to stress that "it was difficult for the party leadership to make positive commitments which ran counter to the

policy boundaries set by the unions" (Minkin 1980: 317). He has spoken of the "delicate interaction with the unions" which which has produced a characteristic "pattern of collective restraint" in the party power structure; this obliges the party leadership - particularly when in opposition - to make major accomodations over a range of policy issues extending well beyond the narrower industrial matters of direct interest to the unions. Thus, the apparent "passivity" of the major union leaderships in the 1950s and most of the 1960s was "always a contingent and not an endemic feature" of the power structure. In fact, Minkin insists, each separate issue produces a different relationship and balance of power between the party leadership, the unions and the constituencies.

Since its inception the block vote has come in for criticism, often from radical constituency activists. Yet it is only as the 1980s draw to a conclusion that the prospect of its reform actually becomes tangible. The reason for this change of heart within the labour movement's elite centres upon the wide ranging policy review that the party embarked upon following its third consecutive general election defeat in 1987. The general thrust of the review, stated crudely, has been to produce policies that will be more likely to attract the support of the ordinary and, it is assumed largely moderate, voter than the political enthusiasts in Labour's constituency parties. As part of the strategy developed to make this new policy package stick, and in order to dilute the influence of the activists, the leadership has decided that certain constitutional changes are required of the party. Most notable is the proposal to reform the block vote. This is ironic in some senses, since the block vote has been important to the passage of the policy review, and yet many

regard the proposal to reform it as unavoidable if a new mass membership is to be developed. Curiously, such a strategic shift might seem a virtual anachronism, since Kirchheimer warned of the demise of the mass membership model of a social democratic party over twenty years ago (Kirchheimer 1969). Nonetheless, the Labour leadership in Britain has decided that it is important to revitalise its mass base in order, partly, to outweigh the influence of the comparatively few radical activists who are perceived to have dominated many constituencies and conference delegations for years. Yet how are new members representative of the "ordinary electorate" to be attracted in large numbers if their real influence is to be lost in a barrage of union block votes at annual conference? Hence, the need for its reform. The individuals in the constituencies are to have greater power within the movement, above all at the focus of the party's democratic policy making process - its annual conference - in order that more are inspired to join and participate. Consequently, the relative importance of the unions in such a policy process must be down-graded. The 1988 party conference referred the question of reform of the block vote to the NEC. Subsequently, the NEC considered various possibilities, including the notion of replacing block voting with a one-man one-vote system of voting at national conference. However, the 1990 conference finally chose to endorse the retention of the block vote in principle, whilst reducing its overall weight to 70% of the total conference vote. The precise details of how this is to be done will only emerge after the next general election, but it is obvious that they may have implications for the structure of power and organisation within the Labour Party. However, we should avoid the temptation of speculation. Above all, it should be reiterated that our purpose is fundamentally that of

explaining the changing electoral behaviour of union members between 1964 and 1987; obviously, the imminent reform of the unions' role at party conference can in no way account for this. In these terms, then, we can really only say that there is no evidence that the unions have diminished their input into the annual conference of the Labour Party over the course of the period which interests us. Organisationally, the party-union linkage has been maintained in this context, and cannot help explain the political divorce between Labour and so many union members which has been apparent. Indeed, the impression of a union role of continued significance at party conference is reinforced when we consider the available data on agenda-setting and debating. Minkin argue strongly that the Conference Arrangements Committee, the organisational nucleus of the agenda-setting process at conference, is not only genuinely independent of the PLP leadership, but is moreover "the preserve of the largest unions" (Minkin 1980: 321). Though always certain to "sound out" the party leadership in the months preceding conference, the Arrangements Committee has consistently been prepared to place potentially contentious issues - such as incomes policy - on the agenda.

Conference is, formally speaking, the summit of party policy formulation. It is a key aspect of linkage at the centre, and as such it precludes the need to intervene too much in the locality. Unions are able to influence the filtering and controlling of local policy initiatives through this central role, as Fatchett points out (1987: 58). It is not, of course, the only arena of policy making, however. In particular, the various committees of the party - and above all the NEC - are crucially important to the policy process. What role have the unions played here? >

The National Executive Committee

Labour's National Executive represents the heart of the party's policy making process. Table 3.11 makes it readily apparent that the unions are as well represented in this forum as ever they were; their representation has increased slightly from around 32% to 37.5% of the total committee size. Indeed, when allowance is made for the fact that some of those sitting on the NEC in a strictly non-union representational capacity also often have union backgrounds, it becomes obvious that the unions do not suffer from a lack of adequate means by which to extend their voice to this level of the party apparatus. For instance, in 1987 two of the five NEC members who sat in their capacity as women's representatives were also trade union officials.

Table 3.11 - Union Representation on Labour's NEC, 1964-1987.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Unions</u>	<u>Socialist & Cooperative Societies</u>	<u>CLPs</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>LPYS</u>	<u>Union Representation As A Proportion Of Total NEC Membership *</u>
1964	9	1	7	5	-	32.1%
1966	11	1	7	4	-	37.9%
1970	12	1	7	5	-	38.7%
1974	12	1	7	5	-	38.7%
1979	12	1	7	5	1	37.5%
1983	12	1	7	5	1	37.5%
1987	12	1	7	5	1	37.5%

* In addition to the members included here, NEC membership is always supplemented by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the party, the Leader and Deputy Leader, plus the General Secretary and the Treasurer. These have been taken into account in calculating the union proportion of NEC membership.

Source: NEC Annual Reports

Table 3.12 - Union Representation On NEC Sub-committees, 1964-1987.

<u>Year</u>	<u>F&GP</u>	<u>Home</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Internat.</u>	<u>Campaign</u>	<u>Liaison</u>
1964	7/16 (43.8%)	5/19 (26.3%)	4/18 (22.2%)	5/25 (20.0%)	4/14 (28.6%)	-
1966	8/16 (50.0%)	7/18 (38.9%)	5/18 (27.8%)	7/21 (33.3%)	3/14 (21.4%)	-
1970	5/16 (31.3%)	6/19 (31.6%)	6/19 (31.6%)	5/18 (27.8%)	2/16 (12.5%)	-
1974	6/15 (40.0%)	4/23 (17.4%)	7/18 (38.9%)	6/21 (28.6%)	3/15 (20.0%)	8/22 (36.4%)
1979	5/11 (45.5%)	2/16 (12.5%)	4/16 (25.0%)	7/16 (43.8%)	3/11 (27.3%)	N/A
1983	6/10 (60.0%)	8/18 (44.4%)	8/18 (44.4%)	8/14 (57.1%)	6/15 (40.0%)	5/9 (55.6%)
1987	12/22 (54.5%)	12/26 (46.2%)	7/18 (38.9%)	12/20 (60.0%)	6/17 (35.3%)	3/10 (30.0%)

NB: F&GP - Finance and General Purposes; Home - Home policy; Internat. - Overseas/International; Campaign - Press and Publicity/Campaign and Communications; Liaison - TUC-PLP Liaison.

These calculations are based upon a system of counting only those who are known trade union officials during the year under consideration; thus, ex union officials who later become MPs, for example, are not considered union representatives. This gives a fairly conservative estimate of actual "union representation".

Source: NEC Annual Reports

The NEC has a number of permanent sub-committees upon which the unions are also represented. Five of these have existed throughout the period under investigation, some under a variety of titles, whilst the sometimes important TUC-PLP Liaison Committee has been around since the early 1970s. The numbers and proportions of places on these committees taken up by union officials are reported in Table 3.12. Once again, it is clear that there is no obvious pattern of declining involvement on the part of the unions. Indeed, with the exception of the Liaison Committee, the rate of participation by union officials has actually increased in all cases. The lowest recorded level of union representation on any of these committees is 12.5%, and the highest 60%. The average rates of union involvement for the various committees over the years are as follows:

Finance and General Purpose Committee	- 46.4%
Home Policy Committee	- 31.0%
Organisation Committee	- 32.7%
Overseas/International Committees	- 38.6%
Press & Publicity/Campaign & Communications Committees	- 26.4%
TUC-PLP Liaison Committee	- 40.7%

In addition, it should be said that each of these permanent committees sustains a structure of further sub-committees, all of which seem to bear a similar level of union representation. In short, there is no evidence that the unions have shown any inclination to withdraw from this level of party policy making.

Before concluding our brief discussion of the unions in Labour's committee structure it is worth devoting a few comments to the TUC-PLP Liaison Committee, since this appeared for a while in the 1970s to lie at the very heart of party-union organisational and political linkage. At the end of 1970, the committee was formed - largely at the instigation of Jack Jones of the TGWU - as a forum in which representatives of the NEC, the TUC and the Parliamentary Labour Party could meet. Its initial brief was to consider the movement's response to the industrial relations legislation of the Heath government. The scope of its work quickly expanded, however, and it was influential in the development of the policies proposed in the TUC's *Economic Review* and *Labour's Programme For Britain 1972*. Indeed, these were succeeded by a series of documents which served as the basis of what was to develop into the Social Contract after 1974. For an experienced commentator such as Lewis Minkin the Liaison Committee "...had good claim to be the most important committee in the party during this period" (Minkin 1980: 337). In a similar vein it has been emphasised that "...the main thrust of union activity in Labour policy making after 1970 took place in the

Liaison Committee and not in the customary machinery of the party executive sub-committees" (Stallard 1987: 47). As a consequence, some tension was to develop between the NEC and the Liaison Committee; in some quarters the latter was, inevitably, regarded as a devious piece of chicanery through which Harold Wilson was able to bypass the NEC, whereon he could not be assured of a majority. Nonetheless, Stallard has pointed out that there were few substantive policy differences between the two bodies at this stage. Once in government the Liaison Committee continued to serve as a forum for regular contact between union and governmental elites over matters of direct concern to the former; institutional linkage alone was not enough to guarantee political convergence when the chips were down, however, as we have seen. It has been suggested that the TUC became increasingly uncertain of its institutional presence within the Labour Party hierarchy, and preferred to revert to the formal apparatus of the National Economic Development Council (Minkin 1980: 352), and this is perhaps hardly surprising, given that the TUC as a body has no formal affiliation to the party. Moreover, political divergence between the TUC and the government during the period made the committee less attractive to the unions; they were almost bound to re-emphasise their independence from the party as they came under pressure from their own rank and file. The Liaison Committee never had a clear formal status within the party, and consequently its political star simply waxed and waned according to the prevalent political exigences of the day. There was nothing created to bind the body formally and concretely into the institutional fabric of the Labour Party. Consequently, it was of little significance to the development of election manifestos in 1979 or after. It continues to exist as a forum for regular contact and consultation, but in the 1980s has not challenged the

formal policy formulating preeminence of the NEC and its sub-committees as it did a decade earlier. In itself this hardly constitutes evidence of the weakening presence of the unions in the councils of the party, however.

The Trade Union Group In Parliament

Writing in the 1970s, RW Johnson and John Ellis reported the often rueful responses of union group members to the question of how they felt they were regarded by TUC leaders.

"They're amiable tyrants. They used us when they felt they needed us. In general they're suspicious of political action."

"As a bloody nuisance to them, to be used only when it suits their individual purposes...unions only have sponsored MPs for reasons of prestige."
(Johnson and Ellis 1974: 19)

The sponsoring and maintaining of MPs by trade unions is the oldest form of collaboration between unions and political parties in Britain. Initially, this did not involve the Labour Party, of course, but rather the Liberals. It was only in 1900 that the Labour Representation Committee was formed by the unions as a way of sending working men to parliament; even this did not automatically bring to an end the parliamentary links that were forged with the Liberals, especially in the case of the Miners (Pelling 1971: 126-128). Eventually, however, TUC affiliates interested in parliamentary links concentrated their efforts upon the new Labour Party. It is, of course, not the case that all members of the Parliamentary Labour Party are directly sponsored

by unions, but a significant proportion continue to be. Why should this be so, given the jaundiced views of sponsored MPs like those referred to above?

The group of MPs who are sponsored by unions is not especially cohesive or unified, though it does meet formally from time to time and elect officers. It rarely takes a united view of an issue, but is far more likely to be guided by the individual interests of the constituent elements of which it is comprised. Johnson and Ellis pointed out that, although the sponsoring unions generally maintained fairly regular contact with their MPs, they were frequently loath to actually encourage energetic advocacy on their behalf in parliament. Since 1945 union leaders have been increasingly able to bypass the parliamentary channel and to concentrate on the corporate channel in their efforts to influence public policy. To reiterate George Woodcock's resonant phrase, the unions were moving "into Whitehall", and could elicit greater benefit from direct behind the scenes contact with ministers and civil servants. It may be that this access has been considerably restricted over the course of the past decade, and consequently the use of sponsored MPs has taken on renewed significance for unions; on the other hand, against such a resolutely hostile government the unions hardly need to single out the sponsored members for their defence. Almost any member of the PLP can be relied upon to actively reject Conservative employment and industrial relations legislation in the 1980s. But unions have never shown any inclination to withdraw their commitment to sponsorships. In part this can be attributed to sheer habit and, as the above-quoted MPs suggested, prestige, but there are other, more tangible factors which come into play. For a start, there is the claim that "without the sponsorship system

the actual representation of the working class would be virtually nil", as Johnson puts it (Johnson and Ellis 1974: 15). Recent research into the social profile of the trade union group of parliamentarians in fact shows two factors of note in this regard. Firstly, in terms of occupational class and educational experience the sponsored MPs are indeed more typically working class than the rest of the PLP (table 3.13); nonetheless, it also seems clear that the union group has moved somewhat away from its traditional working class profile over the years (table 3.14).

Table 3.13 - Comparison Of Union-Sponsored And Other Labour MPs, 1983.

	<u>Union Group</u>	<u>Other MPs</u>
MPs with higher education	34.7%	68.0%
MPs from professional occupations	24.8%	62.9%
MPs from working class occupations	37.6%	22.7%

Source: Park, Lewis and Lewis 1986: 311

Table 3.14 - Social Class Characteristics Of Sponsored Labour MPs, 1951 and 1983.

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1983</u>
Experience of higher education	5.7%	34.7%
Professional, executive administrative or managerial occupation	9.6%	43.6%
Supervisors and other non-manual grades	45.2%	34.7%
Manual workers	45.2%	21.8%

Source: Derived from Park, Lewis and Lewis 1986: 309.

One wonders, therefore, how much longer the traditional rationale for sponsoring MPs that consisted of ensuring the place in parliament of men with a substantially similar background to the ordinary union members can continue to be justified. The temptation to speculate along these lines is somewhat reinforced by the further information provided by Park and his colleagues

that the proportion of union group members having no recorded experience of trade union work has leapt from 12.3% in 1951 to 49% in 1983; furthermore, those who had actually been full time union officials prior to becoming sponsored MPs dropped from over a third to little more than a tenth in the same period (Park et al 1986: 310). This fact is particularly interesting since it stands out as one of the few pieces of evidence we have uncovered that actually would tend to suggest that there has been a significant weakening of the organisational linkage between Labour and the unions. However, interesting as it is, it hardly constitutes a persuasive case in its own right, given that the sponsoring of MPs has long since been relatively unimportant to the party-union political relationship.

The most tangible reason of all for maintaining the sponsorship of Labour MPs is that it can be of direct benefit to union interest. Despite the clear preference for negotiation with ministers and state bureaucrats, there are still likely to be occasions when the trade union group can be of service in this way. Johnson and Ellis cited a couple of examples from the 1960s which both illustrated how sponsored backbench MPs could be used to exert effective pressure on a Labour government; TGWU MPs were quietly influential in the process of producing desired amendments to the Merchant Shipping Bill which followed the Seamen's strike of 1966, and the union group as a whole played a crucial role in the *In Place Of Strife* episode of 1969. In this latter instance the group acted with rare cohesion even though relatively little pressure was brought to bear upon it by the sponsoring unions (Johnson and Ellis 1974: 16-23). But this was a particular and unusual instance; May has pointed out that during the 1960s the sponsored MPs were twice as likely to respond to

the call of the party whips as they were to the protests of their unions over the question of incomes policy (May 1978: 33). The final way in which the sponsored MPs can be of direct service to trade unions is for them to pursue casework on behalf of individual union members. Nonetheless, in terms of general policy influence most union leaders seem to feel that there are better ways to approach governments; given that, additionally, the background experience of sponsored MPs is increasingly likely to distance them from their unions, one is bound to wonder if it has not occurred to leaders and officials that sponsorship is an anachronism of, at best, marginal relevance. Is there any evidence that the unions are withdrawing from the sponsorship role?

Table 3.15 reveals the broad picture since 1964; it is obvious that there are just as many sponsored candidates and members as ever. Moreover, the trade union group constitutes a greater proportion of the PLP than at the beginning of the period. In this sense, the organisational link between Labour and the unions has in no way been diminished.

Table 3.15 - Parliamentary Candidates And Members Sponsored By Trade Unions, 1964-1987.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Number Of Candidates Sponsored By Unions</u>	<u>Total Number Of Members Sponsored By Unions</u>	<u>Trade Union Group As A Proportion Of PLP</u>
1964	138	120	37.9%
1966	138	132	36.4%
1970	137	114	39.6%
1974 (Feb)	155	127	42.2%
1974 (Oct)	141	127	39.8%
1979	165	133	49.4%
1983	153	114	54.5%
1987	145	130	56.8%

Source: NEC Annual Reports.

In Table 3.16 we are able to trace the half dozen major sponsoring unions at each of the general elections covered; the most notable features presented are the decline of the NUM, the growing importance of NUPE and ASTMS, and the steady commitment of the major general unions TGWU and GMBATU as sponsors. Though always important the AEU has had a somewhat fluctuating record of sponsorship, whereas the NUR has maintained a steady commitment despite its declining membership.

Table 3.16 - Major Sponsoring Unions, 1964-1987.

1964		1966		1970				
<u>Candidates</u>	<u>MPs</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>MPs</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>MPs</u>			
NUM	29	28	NUM	28	27	TGWU	23	19
TGWU	23	21	TGWU	27	27	NUM	21	20
AEU	19	17	AEU	17	17	AUEW	21	16
USDAW	10	10	NUGMW	10	10	GMWU	12	12
NUGMW	7	7	USDAW	8	8	USDAW	7	7
TSSA	7	7	NUR	8	7	NUR	6	6
NUR	7	6				NUPE	6	6
1974 (Feb)		1974 (Oct)		1979				
<u>Candidates</u>	<u>MPs</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>MPs</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>MPs</u>			
AUEW	26	22	TGWU	23	22	TGWU	29	20
TGWU	23	22	NUM	18	18	NUM	18	16
NUM	21	18	AUEW	18	16	AUEW	18	16
ASTMS	14	9	GMWU	13	13	GMWU	14	14
GMWU	13	13	ASTMS	13	10	NUR	13	12
NUR	7	7	NUPE	7	6	ASTMS	12	8
NUPE	7	7	NUR	6	6			
			APEX	6	6			
1983		1987						
<u>Candidates</u>	<u>MPs</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>MPs</u>					
TGWU	29	24	TGWU	34	31			
AUEW	27	17	GMBATU	13	13			
NUM	14	14	NUM	13	13			
GMBATU	14	11	AEU	13	12			
NUR	12	10	NUPE	12	9			
ASTMS	11	10	USDAW	9	8			

Source: NEC Annual Reports

One final point to make is that, after the 1987 general election defeat Labour elected a shadow front bench team, more than three-quarters of whom were sponsored by trade unions ⁴. This tends to reinforce the view that, if there has been any weakening of the organisational connection between the party and the unions, it certainly has not happened in the context of the sponsorship of MPs. Most of the present shadow cabinet are union members and union sponsored, and so is a good portion of the PLP.

Trade Unions For Labour Victory (TULV)

Since the time that Martin Harrison wrote about the trade union-Labour Party relationship it has found expression in new institutional linkages beyond the traditional arenas of conference, executive and parliament. We have already mentioned the Liaison Committee, of course, which was a formal extension of the inevitable process of elite level accomodation within the labour movement. More interesting in some ways has been the development over the past decade of linkages which focus directly upon the the role that unions can play in renewing the party organisation and aiding electoral mobilisation. In the strictest sense this is literally an organisational role rather than a political one, and there are signs that the labour movement may even regard this as a more appropriate role for the unions in the future. That is, whilst it would undoubtedly be fatuous to expect the unions to withdraw from their positions on the NEC they do seem prepared to renounce the block vote in its present form, and the Liaison Committee clearly no longer threatens the supremacy of the NEC in the party's committee system; thus, to a certain

extent, the involvement of the unions in party policy making may be diminished and replaced by a new emphasis on the organisational role to be played. The chief institutional devices so far developed to permit the unions to engage in such activity have been Trade Unions For Labour Victory (TULV) and Trade Unions For Labour (TUFL).

TULV was largely the inspiration of the former leader of the General and Municipal Workers, the late David Basnett. It was initially launched in August 1978 (in mistaken anticipation of an autumn election) largely as a way of coordinating the unions' financial investment in, firstly, the new party headquarters at Walworth Road, and secondly, the forthcoming election effort. Previously, senior party officers had been obliged to contact individual unions and request donations. This was followed by a certain amount of informal union contact aimed at establishing the "going rate" for contributions according to union size. The establishment of the TULV provided for a more efficient centralised apparatus through which this process could occur. It was not long before the new body began to spread its wings, however, becoming more intimately bound up with the business of campaigning in particular. When it was formally constituted on a permanent basis in 1981 it announced its objectives in these terms:

"To establish a means by which trade unions can discuss matters of common interest in relation to the Labour Party and make recommendations on matters of finance, organisation and membership with the objective of ensuring the return of a Labour government."
(Labour Party NEC Annual Report 1983: 22)

Clearly, the emphasis was placed upon the organisational and mobilisational tasks that the unions could undertake, rather than the policy making ones. Accordingly, in the 1979 general election the TULV concentrated largely upon coordinating the provision of full time union officials who could do campaign work for Labour in marginal seats; the TGWU and the GMWU proved particularly supportive to the work of the TULV in this respect. In addition, the TULV made some sort of an attempt to communicate more directly in a political way with the trade union rank and file than had hitherto been normal. This was illustrated by some of the publications that it issued for the campaign, which had titles like *Why Trade Unionists Must Vote Labour* and *The Tory Attack On The Unions*. As a result of this activity the TULV felt able to claim credit for having had some impact on the outcome of the election; for instance, it was stated that the seats where TULV had been involved suffered less from the anti-Labour swing in 1979 than did either surrounding seats or other marginals where TULV had no presence. Subsequent to the 1979 election the TULV busied itself in developing its role and set itself the following goals:

- The raising of the overall level of political funds in unions.
- The improvement of Labour's financial management.
- The improvement of union membership and affiliation levels.
- The covering of key seats in all future elections.
- The general improvement of party organisation, structure and efficiency.

Before long, moreover, the TULV actively engaged in encouraging greater union-party rapport at regional level, stimulating joint rallies (Northern region), the birth of regional versions of the Liaison Committee (South West) and joint regional executive meetings (Northern). Indeed, by 1982 a regional TULV committee existed everywhere save Scotland. The recommendations of a party

enquiry on finance and organisation presented to the 1980 conference clearly reflected the TULV's preoccupation with developing party-union links at grass roots level, what is more. These recommendations included a demand for an end to the practice of under-affiliation by some unions, an exhortation to publish greater political content in union journals, and the proposition of deeper party-union communication in the constituencies and regions. As a result, TULV claimed that almost every major union, and most smaller unions, altered the basis of their political fund levies between 1979 and 1983. This did much to boost Labour's income as is reflected in the turnaround after 1982 in the net loss the party had become accustomed to running on its General Fund. The following figures tell briefly the story of Labour's net losses on its General Fund.

1978	-140,000	1981	-320,000
1979	-153,000	1982	-141,000
1980	-165,000	1983	+132,000

For one thing the TULV negotiated with the party on the need for a substantial increase in affiliation fees paid by unions; as a result, these fees rose by nearly 90% between 1980 and 1983, which clearly benefited the party enormously - though it did nothing to reduce general dependence on the unions, of course. Furthermore, the TULV was instrumental in the restructuring and computerisation of the party's Finance Department during this period. An attempt was also made about this time to recruit more individual members for the party from within the unions' own rank and file, although it was admitted that this was less successful an initiative than anticipated. It is worth mentioning also that TULV granted a request worth more than 30,000 per year so that more research assistance would be available to the party's front bench spokesmen in parliament after the 1983 general election. In

short, TULV had become very active very quickly in pursuit of its objective of rendering the party every possible assistance in its bid to augment its organisational and campaigning profile⁵.

In addition, the TULV became involved in the internal factional conflict of the Labour Party during the early 1980s, acting as a sort of "party political ACAS", in the words of Andrew Taylor (Taylor 1987a: 145). In particular it took steps to encourage the resolution of such conflict by organising major internal summit meetings on union premisses at Bishops Stortford (ASTMS) and Woodstock (GMWU) in the hope that "peace deals" could be struck between the left and the right. Taylor claims that there were those on the left who were suspicious of the TULV's role in this period, regarding it as a right wing plot to undermine the advance of the CLPD, an impression that those involved with TULV sought to dispel. This did not prevent the NUM from withdrawing as early as 1980.

By the time of the 1983 election the TULV was running on a well established basis; unions representing over 90% of the affiliated party membership were associated with the body which was financed and staffed by the unions, had an annually elected executive of its own and held regular general meetings. A special levy fund had been established in 1981, with unions contributing 10p. for each of their affiliated members, and this helped the general election effort in 1983 (see table 3.7). Labour officially assessed its contribution to the 1983 election effort to be "of enormous value", and went on to describe its main activities in the campaign:

"They cooperated in the training of key workers at regional level and in allocating trade union officers to work in

the key marginals...they established an office at Walworth Road and their officers worked closely and in harmony with party officers at national and regional level."
(Labour Party NEC Annual Report 1983: 7)

TULV claimed to have been responsible for organising a funding drive which raised more than 2,000,000 for the election, and to have instituted programmes of election work training, the recruitment of volunteer campaign workers, the allocation of union officers to work in key seats, the provision of speakers' notes and of election articles for union journals throughout the campaign. This last point touches on the issue of political education through the unions, which is something worth reflecting upon. It is interesting that the unions seem traditionally to have neglected to take responsibility for this task. This is not necessarily surprising when it is remembered that the British Labour Party has never been the kind to take on the task of building a distinctly radical working class sub-culture, to reiterate a point made in the opening chapter. That is, it has never set about encapsulating the domestic working class by providing a range of social and political services and facilities from which its members could benefit from the cradle to the grave. As has been pointed out, there are those on the left - especially that part influenced by the theoretical legacy of Antonio Gramsci, and inspired by the Italian Communist Party's strategy of mass "presence" - who have berated Labour for this historical shortcoming. Whatever, the fact is clear enough; the Labour Party has rarely delved deeply and explicitly into the exercise of attempting to mould working class culture in Britain. This seems to be reflected in the comparative ineffectiveness of traditional political communications with their members by unions. In the 1960s, for instance, Butler and Stokes discovered a remarkably low level of reported impact made by the political

content of union journals. They concluded that their evidence could hardly be reconciled with an image of the unions actively seeking to "shape their members votes". They discovered, amongst other things, that although nearly two-thirds of union members reported reading their union journals, only 20% could recall having seen any articles on political matters subsequent to the 1964 election. Ironically, readers of union journals actually turned out to be slightly less inclined to vote Labour than non-readers. Moreover, less than 2% actually recalled any union representative approaching them and asking about their voting intentions (Butler and Stokes 1969: 201-202). However, the advent of the TULV and the sort of thinking that it has inspired about the need to sell the Labour Party's cause more directly to ordinary union members has produced some effects in the area of political education. For instance, the party was able to report that prior to the 1983 general election:

"A series of courses on election campaign preparation were held jointly for full time union officers and Labour Party designated agents and key workers... (these provided) practical training on publicity, canvassing techniques, polling day organisation absent voters and electoral law." (Labour NEC Annual Report 1983: 45)

Needless to say, these courses were hosted by the trade unions; the colleges of ASTMS, GMBATU, EETPU and TGWU were all used. Moreover, table 3.17 displays an evident upward trend in the deployment of party political education officers.

Table 3.17 - Labour Party Political Education Officers, 1976-83.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1976	249	1980	498
1977	279	1981	579
1978	340	1982	696
1979	473	1983	641

Source: NEC Annual Report 1983: 45

Furthermore, the party took the step of establishing a Political Education Advisory Panel on which the TULV was represented; one of its earliest objectives was to encourage the editors of union journals to introduce more material on the Labour Party. Fairly obviously, the party has got the message that political education is important in order to communicate with and mobilise the grass roots of the movement, and the unions have involved their own officials in this political education effort.

It is evident that in 1983 the TULV represented some sort of an organisational innovation in the traditional party-union relationship with respect to electioneering, but this was not enough to avert a near electoral catastrophe for Labour. This exceptionally poor performance at the polls encompassed trade unionists as much as it did other members of the electorate. It may be that this partly reflects the underlying tension between many constituency activists and the TULV, a factor which Minkin has identified as hindering the effectiveness of the latter (Minkin 1986). On the other hand, it certainly provokes one to wonder how far the real problem for Labour lay in its fundamental political appeal rather than its campaigning infrastructure.

TULV was, in some ways, a victim of the internal party political tensions that constituted the environment into which it was born. These tensions always hindered its work. It was perhaps fortuitous in some respects that the political fund ballots absorbed the party and the unions after the 1984. Amongst other things, these campaigns provided the circumstances in which the formal demise of the TULV could take place, for in early 1986 the decision was taken to merge it with the TUCC. A new organisation

was to be formed out of the ashes of the former two, and it was hoped that this would avoid the weaknesses and build upon the strengths of these. This new body was to be TUFL.

Trade Unions For Labour (TUFL)

TUFL is in many ways a variation on the theme of TULV, and in 1987 usurped, and indeed surpassed, the role played by TULV at the previous election. It was launched in February 1986 as a body with a specifically electoral purpose rather than a policy one. The SOGAT'82 leader Bill Keys, who had been so active with TUCC during the political fund ballot campaigns, now took over at the helm of TUFL, working from an office in Walworth Road. The NEC was to be represented on TUFL's executive and financial committees by experienced men like Larry Whitty (the party general secretary) and Sam McCluskie of the NUS. "Intensive" consultation quickly developed at this level over matters of membership, affiliation, finance, campaigning and organisation, but the real thrust of the new body's work was to be directed to the grass roots level of the movement.

It was the aim of the new organisation to encompass as wide a degree of union representation as possible, and to avoid policy matters at all costs. This was regarded as essential if the problems faced by the TULV were to be avoided. In its constitution, TUFL laid particular emphasis on:

- i. The need to build on the momentum provided by the political fund ballots by enhancing political education efforts within the union rank and file.
- ii. The need to maximise party membership and levy payment among union members.

iii. The need to maximise political activity by union members within the party.

Writing in 1986, Derek Fatchett summarised the philosophy and hopes which underpin TUFL in the following terms:

"TUFL, it would seem, is not designed as an organisation which will provide the Labour Party with a financial drip feed, or which will come to life at general elections in the, judging by past experience, forlorn hope of suddenly persuading their (ie, trade unions') members to vote Labour. TUFL is regarded as an organisation which will campaign amongst rank and file members before, during and beyond the next general election." (Fatchett 1987: 97)

Consequently, we are bound to ask how significant a role TUFL played in the 1987 general election campaign.

As in the case of TULV before them, TUFL officers provided campaign workers and speakers, arranged meetings and produced literature for dissemination; thus, for example, all regions received material on issues like defence, low pay and workers' rights as well as more general electoral advice briefings. The main focus of TUFL's work in 1987, however, was to concentrate on providing union resources and expertise for specially targeted constituencies that the party hoped to win. The expert input was channelled largely through the medium of *Trade Union Liaison Officers (TULOs)*; these positions are intended to remain as permanent positions and a little over a year after the election some 70% of all constituency Labour Parties had a TULO, in fact (Table 3.17). Consequently, there are now more TULOs in the Labour Party than any other type of rule book position. 28% of all constituencies had one full time trade union official working for them on a full time basis in the 1987 election campaign, 21% had two, 22% had three and 18% had four or more. In addition, 10%

of constituency Labour Parties benefited from the services of a union official part of the time, 20% from two part timers, 9% from three and 38% from four or more. 10% of seats had no full timers, 17% no part timers (TUFL Annual Report 1986-87: 3-7).

Table 3.18 - Trade Union Liaison Officers Active In The Labour Party As Of August 1988.

<u>Region</u>	<u>Number of TULOs</u>	<u>Number of Constituencies</u>	<u>Proportion with TULOs</u>
Scotland	82	72	72%
Wales	23	38	61%
North	20	36	56%
Yorks	41	51	80%
North West	57	74	77%
East Midlands	31	44	70%
West Midlands	46	58	79%
East	30	51	53%
London	58	84	69%
South	53	77	69%
South West	30	48	63%
	441	633	70%

Source: NEC Annual Report 1987: 25

Understandably, the bigger unions were more inclined to be involved in constituency work during the election, as table 3.19 indicates, though it is interesting how few seats some of the traditional bastions of the labour movement like the NUM and the NUR were involved with.

Table 3.19 - Number Of Constituencies Unions Were Involved In, 1987 General Election Campaign.

TGWU	67	ASTMS	19	COHSE	10	NACODS	4	BFAWU	1
GMBATU	49	USDAW	19	SOGAT	10	NUHKW	4	FBU	1
NUPE	46	UCAAT	15	EETPU	8	UCW	4	FTAT	1
AEU	30	NGA	14	NCU	7	NUM	3	NUS	1
TASS	27	APEX	13	NUR	5	ISTC	2	Students	1

Source: TUFL Annual Report 1986-87: 7

What of the actual activities of trade union officers who were involved in the campaign at grass roots level? It appears that officials and ordinary union members involved were largely consumed by the business of traditional campaigning - canvassing (40% of those campaigning), organising meetings (35%), leafleting (29%) and arranging transport (26%) (TUFL Annual Report 1986-87: 9). These are no doubt very worthy activities but, as Taylor has intimated, they do seem to rather miss the point of TUFL's original central rationale, which was to specifically reactivate Labour's bases of support within the trade union memberships (Taylor 1989: 25-26). Nonetheless, subsequent to the election fully three-quarters of the special target seat coordinators that the party had appointed during the campaign claimed that union officials had been employed "effectively"; moreover, virtually all of them had used the good offices of TUFL to contact union members. This notwithstanding, certain problems do seem to have arisen in union-constituency relations during the election campaign. One-third of target seat coordinators reported that there had been "very little" union participation, and had found it difficult to obtain direct access to union memberships. This was most frequently due to a lack of interest or cooperation on the part of union officials; for instance, union officials were on occasion apt to refuse to provide lists of their members, and on others they simply failed to circulate election materials they had been provided with.

Nevertheless, the party was sufficiently enthusiastic about the work of TUFL in 1987 to claim that it had a positive effect on, firstly, the levels at which unions affiliated to constituency parties, and secondly, the actual voting behaviour of union members.

"There is some evidence that the union vote did rise as a result of unions and local parties campaigning among trade union members. Although the overall union vote rose only a disappointing 3%, this hides large changes in overall union membership since 1983, changes towards more white collar service jobs which we would not expect to favour Labour. However, within the overall 3% increase there was a very substantial rise in the manual unionist vote. This, of course, is where much of the campaigning effort was directed." (NEC Annual Report 1987: 8)

This claim based on essentially circumstantial evidence is backed up by the view that techniques such as the use of target letters, localised literature and an emphasis on employment rights issues like unfair dismissal, a statutory minimum wage and health and safety legislation were what impressed the manual unionsists, of whom half voted for Labour (NEC Annual Report 1987: 14). It is contended by Labour that this approach was especially appealing to women; thus, the most significant swings to Labour since 1983 seem to have occurred amongst working class women in general (where Labour's lead over the Conservatives has advanced by 17 percentage points), and amongst unionised women in particular (12 points). There may be something in this, since it is well established that both these groups of women are highly likely to be concentrated amongst the ranks of the poorly paid and the unskilled; the attraction of minimum wage and health and safety provisions is obvious. Moreover, Labour go on to add that, whilst the evidence may not be conclusive, they feel that trade union assistance has had a marked effect on voting in some local authority elections, such as those held in parts of Birmingham and Scotland in 1987 (NEC Annual Report 1987: 26).

Since the 1987 general election the work of TUFL and the TULOS has broadened. Joint regional campaign training sessions for constituency party and union officials have been established by

TUFL, and a monthly bulletin of news and facts concerned with employment and union issues is now circulated to all TULO's, constituency Labour Party secretaries and party branches. Further evidence of collaboration between TULO's and constituencies has been made manifest in some of the campaigns that have been run over issues such as the poll tax, the National Health Service and local industrial disputes. In addition, TULO's were encouraged to communicate their views about the way the party's major policy review was developing. This latter fact has provoked some to argue that TUFL is more or less bound to take on more of a policy role as time goes by, something which may well provoke the sort of suspicions on the left that became apparent in the case of TULV. Whatever, it is clear that inspite of any misgivings the left may feel, TUFL is here to stay for the present. In the most general terms, the notion of drawing the unions ever closer into the institutional heart of the party in the name of reactivating party organisation and membership is unlikely to attract strong disapproval from the grass roots party activists; any input of resources is a help, obviously. More importantly, though, the internal balance of power within the party at the end of the 1980s is such that, grumble as they might, the far left are no longer in a position to prevent the progress of the moderate reformism of the leadership's policy review - and the unions are regarded as important to this. The policy review, in the thinking of the leadership, needs to be complemented by the dilution of the influence of the militant activists through an influx of new "ordinary" members; TUFL can play a role in this, so TUFL are likely to be around for some time to come.

The discussion of the development of new forms of involvement like TUFL and TULV concludes our examination of the organisational links between the party and the unions. In chapter 1 it was suggested that there were three possible sources of explanatory influence on the electoral behaviour of trade unionists that we would consider - organisational factors, social factors and political factors. From what we have uncovered in the course of this chapter it ought to be fairly self evident that purely organisational sources of electoral change can be discounted. For stated simply, there has been no substantial weakening of the organisational links between Labour and the unions. Individual membership has declined over the past 25 years, and consequently affiliated membership is relatively more important to the party than ever, even though it is regarded in some quarters as "mythical" membership. It follows almost as a matter of course that the party is more than ever dependent on the unions for financial solvency, and there is no evidence that the unions are shirking these responsibilities; they pay most of the day to day general expenses of sustaining the party organisation, have provided new and better premisses and facilities when called upon, and they foot most of the bill for the increasingly sophisticated and expensive election campaigns. They remain crucial to the party's policy making process at present, with their presence heavily apparent in committee and at conference. Thus, they were central to the (in retrospect) somewhat brief ascendancy of the left on constitutional matters in the early 1980s, just as they have been to the resurgence of the moderates during the progress of the post 1987 policy review. This is true despite the virtual demise of that institutional device without any clear definition within the party rules, the TUC-PLP Liaison Committee; and even though the conference role of

the unions may be modified through the proposed reform of the block vote, this can only have an impact on the future. It cannot account for the changing electoral behaviour of union members between 1964 and 1987. During this period the power of the unions at conference was in no way diminished. The unions remain, for a variety of instrumental and sentimental reasons, wedded to the system of sponsoring candidates for parliament, moreover. And through the medium of TULV and TUFL, they have even managed to extend the nature of their organisational connection with Labour, so that the coordination of grass roots connections is more effective. If the party and the unions have "grown apart" in any meaningful way since the 1960s, then, it must be in the political and social senses of the phrase rather than the organisational one. In chapter 2 we saw that there have indeed been periods of political estrangement and social flux which have left their imprint upon the labour movement. It must be concluded, therefore, that these are the factors to concentrate upon when seeking to understand the electoral shift away from Labour of those within what was formerly its core constituency. Before attempting to focus directly on electoral change among trade unionists, it is necessary to paint a broad picture of electoral change in Britain since the early 1960s, for this is the general context in which the phenomenon of interest is located. We need to understand the changing union electorate as part of this context; in addition, an understanding of the wider context is of help in the formulation of a research strategy.

Footnotes:

1. Table 3.1N illustrates that there exist a host of small trade unions who remain outside the structure of the TUC. Nonetheless, roughly 90% of Britain's entire union membership is affiliated to the TUC.

Table 3.1N - The Proportion Of Union Membership Absorbed By The TUC, Selected Years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total No. Of Unions</u>	<u>Number In TUC</u>	<u>Prop'n In TUC</u>	<u>Total Union Membership</u>	<u>TUC Membership</u>	<u>Prop. of Members In TUC</u>
1976	473	113	23.9%	12,386,000	11,036,326	89.1%
1979	453	112	24.7%	13,289,000	11,865,390	89.3%
1983	394	102	25.9%	11,236,000	10,510,157	93.5%
1985	370	91	24.6%	10,821,000	9,855,204	91.1%

Sources: Labour Research Department Fact Service 51/19; Labour Party Annual Report 1987.

2. Bill Brett's comments were made during the course of an interview broadcast on BBC 2's coverage of the TUC (4th October 1989).

3. More specifically, the 1913 Act legalised political action in so far as the following activities were concerned:

- i. Paying the election expenses of candidates for public office.
- ii. Holding and publicising election meetings.
- iii. Financial maintenance of elected public officials.
- iv. Registering electors.
- v. Selecting candidates for elective public office.
- vi. Holding public meetings or distributing political literature.

In addition, it might have been legally permissible for a union to spend money from General Funds on political objects outside the terms of the 1913 Act, so long as the purpose of such spending was not specifically electoral.

4. Of the shadow spokesmen elected to the PLP in 1987, only Bryan Gould, Jo Richardson, Jack Straw and Denzil Davies were not sponsored by trade unions. The remaining spokesmen and their sponsor were:

N. Kinnock	(TGWU)	J. Cunningham	(GMBATU)	J. Smith	(GMBATU)
R. Hattersley	(USDAW)	D. Dewar	(NUR)		
D. Foster	(USDAW)	F. Dobson	(NUR)		
S. Orme	(AEU)	R. Hughes	(AEU)		
G. Brown	(TGWU)	G. Kaufman	(GMBATU)		
D. Clark	(NUPE)	M. Meacher	(COHSE)		
R. Cook	(NUR)	J. Prescott	(NUS)		

5. A good impression of the scope and extent of TULV's activities and its value to Labour is provided by its patterns of expenditure during the period leading up to the 1983 general election:

Table 3.2N - Labour's General Election Expenditure, 1983.

<u>DIRECT LABOUR PARTY SPENDING</u>	<u>1981/02</u>	<u>1982/83</u>
Campaigns	95,000	
General Election Fund		100,000
Constituency parties	4,450	6,000
Fund raising		40,500
Head Office Study/Finance Department		45,000
<u>TULV ACTIVITY</u>		
Regional activity		36,894
General election campaign		47,252
Membership drive		10,486
Election training		4,077
Conferences	2,593	5,383
Legal and accounting	1,375	1,041
Clerical and administration	<u>2,088</u>	<u>7,296</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	105,706	263,448

Chapter 4 - Electoral Change In Modern Britain.

The contention that trade unions have in some ways affected British electoral behavior since the 1960s seems inherently plausible, but in seeking to establish the truth of this proposition, one is faced with the problem of eliciting persuasive evidence. What sort of questions should we be asking, and which variables selecting? The broad answer to these questions is that existing electoral theory can guide us. Such theory provides a cue for the approach to adopt. As with many areas of academic inquiry, the study of voting behaviour is characterised by alternative theoretical perspectives and by variations within broad theoretical schools. We are bound to engage in some attempt at a critical review of the field of electoral theory in order that we may settle upon a specifically useful approach to the study of union effects upon voters. This is the prime purpose of this chapter. In addition, a review of the literature on voting in Britain will provide a broad impression of the major themes of electoral change; this will serve as a wider context within which to set our understanding of the role and effect of trade unions.

Until the middle of the 1970s, it was something of a cliché in political science that electorates - and consequently, party systems - throughout western Europe were remarkable for the stability which they displayed. There are one or two frequently cited observations that demonstrate the mood which predominated in electoral studies at that time:

"...the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s." (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 50)

"Whatever index of change is used - a measure of trends or any of several measures of fluctuations - the picture is the same; the electoral strength of most parties in western nations since the war had changed very little from election to election, from decade to decade, or within the lifespan of a generation. The consistency of this finding increases confidence in the indicators used. In short, the first priority of social scientists concerned with the development of parties and party systems since 1945 is to explain the *absence of change* in a far from

static period in political history."

(Rose and Urwin, 1970: 295)

Yet since the time these words were written, what has most frequently grabbed the attention of political scientists has, in fact, been electoral change, not stability. Given the perception that change has started to occur in some political systems, analysts have turned to the question of how general such a phenomenon might be. Britain in particular has been the subject of many studies concerned with understanding if there has been greater electoral instability, and if so, to what extent.

Measurements And Indicators Of Electoral Change.

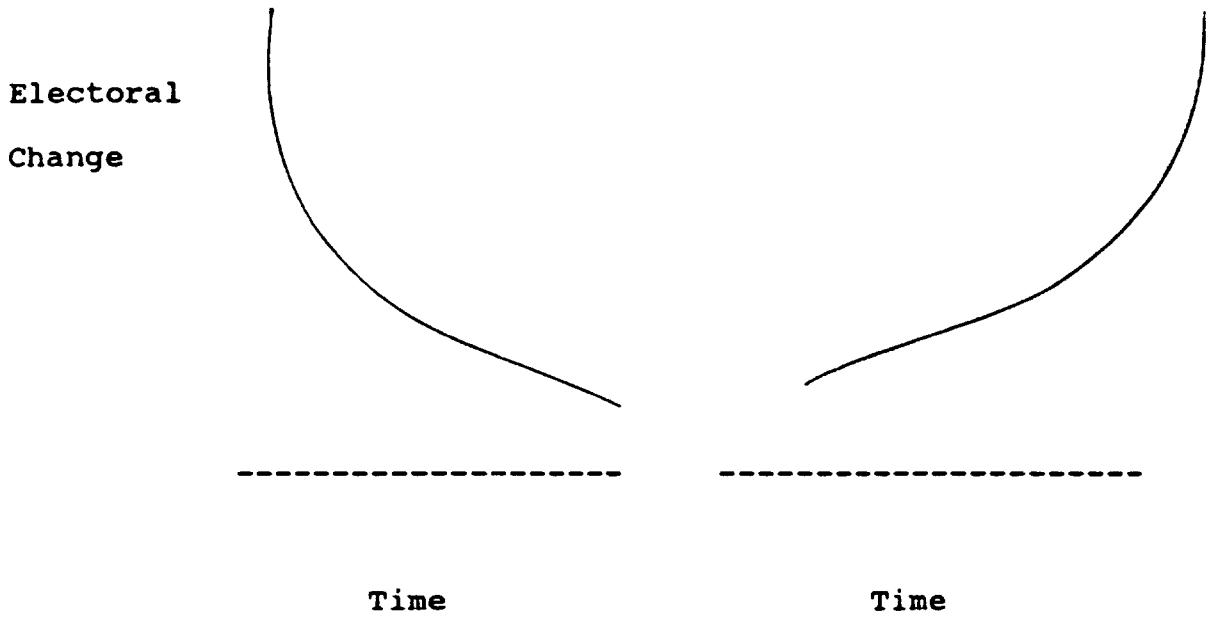
How do we measure "electoral change"? To start with, it might be worth noting the distinction referred to by Rose and Urwin (above) between "trends" and "fluctuations". In its own way each is indicative of change - though one would only expect to find evidence of a significant degree of gross change between the beginning and end of a given period in the former case. A pattern of trendless fluctuation may

involve significant changes between any given pair of consecutive elections, without producing significant change across the period taken as a whole. (See Figure 1.) In our analysis of trade union members we shall seek to identify trends across the entire period between 1964 and 1987.

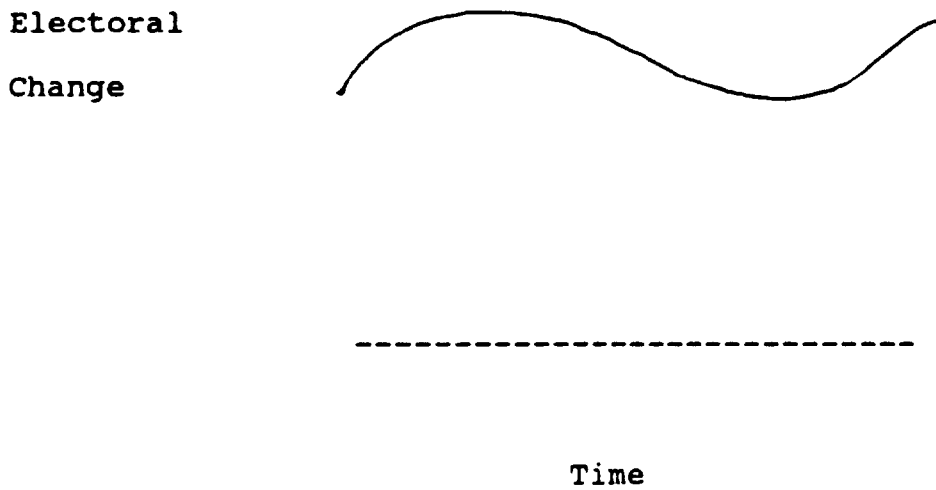
The literature on voting behaviour seems to have thrown up three main ways of measuring electoral change - by looking at the stability of a political party's aggregate vote (Rose and Urwin 1970; Maguire 1983), by focusing on electoral volatility in a party system (Pedersen 1979; Pedersen 1983; Crewe and Denver 1985; Lane and Ersson 1987) or by identifying changing rates of partisan identification (Crewe 1977; Crewe 1983; Mair 1984). Maria Maguire, in updating work initially conducted by Rose and Urwin, made two important discoveries about the stability of aggregate party support at elections in western Europe; firstly, during the years between 1960-1979, virtually one half of all west European parties experienced a significant trend in their level of electoral support. (Interestingly, for a majority of these parties, such change involved a *downward* trend.)¹ This in itself represented a change from the more immediate post-war period; thus, from 1948-1960 around two-thirds of all parties experienced virtual stability of support. In the second place, Maguire noticed that the parties most vulnerable to instability tended to be older parties in general, and the Social Democratic parties in particular. (Maguire 1983: 85) In the case of Britain, if we take the period from 1945-1987, it transpires that the Conservative Party's support remained virtually stable, by the criteria

Figure 4.1 - Examples Of Trend And Fluctuation.

a) *Trend*



b) *Fluctuation*



employed in the Rose/Urwin and Maguire studies; by contrast, the Labour Party suffered a significant decline (that is, losing support at a rate easily surpassing 0.25% per year).
2

There have been two broad approaches to the concept of *electoral volatility*. In the first place, *gross volatility* can be taken to refer to the total amount of vote switching by individuals from one election to another. Panel study evidence suggests that this increased somewhat in Britain during the 1970s, until "...only half the electors who were eligible to vote at any two successive elections cast the same vote twice" (Miller et al 1990: 9). The bulk of these switchers chose to abstain at the second election, it should be noted (Crewe and Denver 1985: 110). *Net volatility* measures the relative change in the various parties' share of the vote across a pair of elections. It is net volatility that has tended to exercise the interest of political scientists (no doubt because it is considerably easier to identify), and it has commonly been measured by the *Pedersen Index*. This is expressed in the formula:

$$\text{Volatility} = 1/2 * \sum_{i=1}^n [P_{i,t}] ,$$

where n is the number of parties participating in elections at time t and/or the previous time period $t-1$, and p represents the change in the share of the vote of the party p_i across the pair of elections. Perhaps it easiest to explain that the index is calculated by "summing the percentage point changes in each party's share of the vote compared with the previous election, and dividing by two"

(Norris 1990: 122-123). On reflection, moreover, it is clear that this is equal to the sum of the cumulative gains of all winning parties (or obversely, the sum of cumulative losses of all losing parties) at an election. Thus, for example, in a three-party system where party A lost 10% at election t, party B gained 7% and party C gained 3%, total net volatility would be:

$$10 + 7 + 3 / 2 = 10.$$

The Pedersen Index has a range running from 0 - 100, and most western European party systems have tended to produce a score of between 5 and 15 throughout the twentieth century; this, it should be said, demonstrates the limits of electoral change in the continent, as much as anything else.

In general, levels of net volatility often seem to have fluctuated - notably in countries like Italy, West Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Studies have tended to show up both countries where electoral net volatility has increased notably since 1970 (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) and others where it has declined in an equally significant manner (France, West Germany and Ireland - see Lane and Ersson 1987: 178; Pedersen 1983: 39). However, taking western Europe as a whole, it has been pointed out that, firstly, average net volatility does appear to be increasing (specifically, from 6.5% in the early 1960s to 9.3% twenty years later, according to one study. [See Mair 1984: 170]), and secondly, that the number of "low volatility" elections has declined - from about one-third of all elections held in the continent during the

twenty years immediately subsequent to the second world war, down to around one-eighth of all elections that took place during the following decade (Pedersen 1983: 42).³

Compared to the rest of western Europe, Great Britain is in fact a country characterised by a relatively low level of net volatility; since 1945, only Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands have experienced lower levels of volatility, and as we have already pointed out, all these have undergone fairly dramatic increases since 1970. Table 4.1 shows in detail how Britain ranks on the European volatility scale. In terms of its own history, Britain does not present a neat secular trend. Throughout, there is a fluctuating pattern of low and high volatility (see table 4.2). However, if we divide the twelve post war general elections into two chronological groups, it becomes clear that average net volatility is higher for the

Table 4.1 - Net Volatility In Western Europe Since 1920.

	<u>Pre-1945</u>	<u>Post-1945</u>	<u>1920-1984</u>
Austria	15.9	30.7	19.9
Belgium	20.9	17.2	13.1
Denmark	15.4	13.5	13.0
Federal German Republic	16.7	38.3	20.4
Finland	20.7	21.7	14.9
France	15.4	20.8	15.0
Greece	20.4	18.7	14.0
Ireland	11.5	16.9	11.4
Italy	-	21.4	23.1
Netherlands	10.1	12.6	9.7
Norway	13.9	21.1	13.9
Sweden	10.3	12.3	9.5
Switzerland	29.1	18.4	15.4
United Kingdom	23.0	16.6	14.6

Source: Lane and Ersson 1987: 174.

later group. The 1970s and 1980s have seen some relatively high volatility elections; in particular, it would seem that the elections of 1974 represent something of a turning point for contemporary Britain in so far as rates of net electoral volatility are concerned (although 1987 saw a notable decline in net volatility once again).

Table 4.2 - Net Volatility in Britain Since 1945.

1945-50	3.9	
1950-51	6.8	
1951-55	1.7	Average inter-election net
1955-59	3.2	volatility 1945-1966 = 4.3
1959-64	5.9	
1964-66	4.4	
1966-70	6.0	
1970-74 (F)	13.3	
1974 (F)-74 (O)	3.1	Average inter-election net
1974 (O)-79	8.2	volatility 1966-1987 = 7.6
1979-83	11.8	
1983-87	3.2	

The third major way in which electoral analysts have attempted to trace patterns of change is by focusing their attention upon rates of *partisan identification*. Although it has sometimes been argued that this concept has little genuine relevance in the context on non-American party systems, it does have the value of demonstrating the depth of enduring loyalty that parties maintain within the electorate. By concentrating upon rates of partisan identification it is possible to obtain an impression of the underlying trend of party support undistorted by the effects

of short term factors that may be relevant only to specific election campaigns (such as candidate images, marketing approaches and special issues).

If we exclude countries where democratic party competition has only been established comparatively recently - and where, consequently, there has been little opportunity for the establishment of long-standing party attachments - there is evidence to suggest that rates of partisan loyalty are falling in many parts of western Europe. For instance, in the late 1970s the proportion of electors who claimed to maintain a general party attachment appeared to increase only in the case of Belgium; in at least eight other nations the contrary turned out to be the case. Indeed, Britain was among four countries where the declining rate of partisan dealignment was especially notable (that is, between 4.5% and 10%) during a period of just six years. (Mair 1984: 176-9) ⁴ However, of possibly greater significance than the fall in the *proportion* of electors claiming a general partisan allegiance has been the change in the *strength* with which that allegiance has been maintained. After all, in the case of Britain some 86% of electors do still claim such a loyalty, but there has been a marked decline in the numbers willing to call this a "very strong" loyalty. They used to amount to more than two-fifths of all electors; now, it seems, they comprise less than one-fifth (See Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 - The Decline Of Party Identification, 1964-1987.

	<u>Partisans</u>	<u>"Very Strong" Partisans</u>
1964	93	44
1966	92	44
1970	91	42
1974 (F)	90	30
1974 (O)	90	27
1979	87	22
1983	87	21
1987	86	19
Net Change 1964-87	-7	-25

Source: Norris 1990: 127.

Realignment Or Dealignment?

So much for the indicators; Britain appears to be a country of comparatively low, but nonetheless growing, electoral instability, particularly in so far as the Labour Party is concerned. Whether or not these general patterns of electoral change and instability are replicated amongst trade union members in particular we shall consider in the course of the next chapter. But for now it might be of interest to turn briefly to the question of the significance of these changes. In the broadest terms it is possible to treat electoral change as evidence of one or the other of two types of process - *either realignment or dealignment*. These terms were coined by the American political scientist V.O. Key (Key 1955). *Realignment* refers to the process of transition that party systems undergo periodically when new ties between social and political structures are formed. That is to say, in the wake of a period of realignment, there exist clear links between certain social or ideological communities and party organisations, but these

are not the same links that preceded the transition. New cleavages come to structure the party system and patterns of electoral support. By contrast, the process of *dealignment* is one whereby established patterns of connection between party and society break down, but are not replaced by new structural associations. The party system comes to float increasingly free of its social moorings. Moreover, the long term scenario for dealignment suggests that a relatively small proportion of the electorate will maintain any general partisan loyalty; consequently, short term factors such as candidate and issue assessments are likely to have a permanently enhanced bearing upon the way that people decide to vote.

Are western party systems which show themselves to be susceptible to electoral change, such as the British one, undergoing processes of realignment or dealignment? Unfortunately, there is little that is really conclusive in the evidence as yet available. This is because the initial symptoms of both phenomena are likely to be similar - for instance, weakening partisan identification, declining electoral turnout and increasing volatility. Only time will really tell whether these phenomena herald the onset of a realignment of parties in line with new social or ideological cleavages or a radically different phase of enduring partisan dealignment. However, it has been pointed out that the view that one takes of the causes of electoral change may well guide one's interpretation (Flanagan and Dalton 1985: 8). Crudely, it is possible to collapse many of the possible explanations of electoral change into two broad

categories - those which emphasise the decomposition of social cleavages, and those which stress the declining functional relevance of political parties.

Emphasis on the *decomposition of social cleavages* is compatible with the view that party systems are undergoing processes of *realignment*. This follows from the perception that certain cleavages "age" and become gradually obsolete.

"Any given set of issues that provokes a particular pattern of social cleavage and party alignment will inevitably wane in salience over time... voters who are two or three generations removed from the issue conflicts which precipitated the original alignments should show little further commitment to these issues as they are resolved or lose their relevance."
(Flanagan and Dalton 1985: 10)

This, it is suggested in some quarters, is the fundamental reason underlying the declining electoral performance of some parties in western Europe which have traditionally depended upon specific clienteles; christian inspired political parties which have suffered from the decline of the religious cleavage present an obvious example. ⁵ Similarly - and more pertinently in our particular case - the aforementioned instability of social democratic party support might conceivably be a consequence of the decline of the class cleavage in some western societies. The view that realignment is a consequence of the ageing of the class cleavage has often been proffered, albeit in various forms, to explain electoral change in Britain. (See below for a more detailed review of the debate over class voting in Britain). From this perspective it is generally argued that

class is of diminishing relevance to electoral and political mobilisation as a result of one or more, possibly interconnected trends, including the following:

i) The changing shape of the social structure

Thus, an ever larger proportion of the electorate is coming to share similar occupational, material and cultural characteristics as the growth of the tertiary sector and widespread affluence become the norm. In terms of class characteristics, this group is somewhat "cross-pressured", and it is typically less partisan than other social formations. Rose and McAllister, for instance, have spoken of "a block of voters who are caught in the middle by conflicting pressures", and they go on to elaborate:

"The ideal-type manual worker, who left school at the minimum age, thought of himself or herself as working class, belonged to a trade union, and was a tenant, is a small minority of the working class today... The ideal-type middle-class person, who has some further education, owns a home, thinks of himself or herself as middle class, and would not belong to a trade union, is also very much in a minority. More than five-sixths of the British electorate today is mixed in social position, having some stereotype working class and stereotype middle class characteristics." (Rose and McAllister 1986: 99)

ii) Greater social mobility.

The possibility of mobility is now such that one might conceivably expect proportionately more people to have blurred class identities and values. In a sense, this argument is linked to the previous point, since mobility may generate numbers of people with mixed class characteristics, or encourage marriage across class

boundaries. Marshall and his colleagues, for example, have discovered that the attitudinal distributions of cross class couples on a series of issues about class inequality, distributional justice and voting intentions perceptibly differed from those of class-homogeneous couples (Marshall, Newby, Rose and Vogler 1988: 134). Marshall also admits that liberal social theorists like Daniel Bell would find support for their views about the end of class politics in countries like Britain where the level of upward social mobility has been great; as against this, however, they take pains to point out that evidence on relative mobility rates reveals that "the association between an individual's class of origin and his or her eventual destination has proved remarkably stable" (Ibid: 271-272). Therefore, many clearly remain locked within class boundaries.

iii. Weaker community integration.

Advanced industrial societies are associated with high levels of urbanisation and residential mobility, both of which serve to break down the narrow homogeneity and social solidarity of small, one-class communities. Therefore, there exist fewer communities which serve effectively to propagate and reinforce clear-cut class identities and values. This is a phenomenon that, in the opinion of some sociologists, has been exacerbated by the development of an excessively "privatist" outlook by many within the working class. For instance, Eric Hobsbawm has written of the replacement of solidaristic forms of community consciousness by "the values of consumer-society individualism and the search for private and personal satisfactions above all else" (Hobsbawm 1981).

It is ironic that a noted social historian like Hobsbawm should find these views criticised on the grounds that they are essentially ahistorical, but Marshall has objected that there is no good evidence to suggest that class solidarity was ever a defining characteristic of the British working class. (Marshall et al 1988: 196-206)

iv. The presence of new cleavages that cross-cut the class cleavage.

In this respect, there are perhaps two particular types of "new cleavage" that, it is sometimes suggested, put pressure upon established patterns of alignment in countries like Great Britain. Firstly, there is the "post-materialist" or "new politics" cleavage which is particularly associated with the name of Ronald Inglehart (Inglehart 1971; Inglehart 1977). By altering the agenda and strategic partisan options of politics, new politics activists promise to disrupt the established patterns of links between party and elector. ⁶ Secondly, it has been suggested - particularly in the case of Great Britain - that sectoral cleavages may be developing. Especially associated with the name of Patrick Dunleavy, sectoral arguments assert that divisions between people who consume and/or work predominantly within either the public or the private sector are of increasing political significance. These sectoral alignments cross-cut class alignments and offer a potential explanation of the apparent weakening of the latter in Britain. We shall be looking at Dunleavy's general model of voting behaviour in more detail later in the chapter, but for now it is worth observing that the sectoral argument potentially offers an especially relevant account of the political proclivities of trade

union members in Britain, and consequently our data analysis in subsequent chapters will have to devote itself in part to the specific question of sectoral effects and unionism.

It might be appropriate at this juncture to make the point that if a notion such as the "ageing of the class cleavage" is to be of any help to us, it is important to appreciate that the waning of certain social cleavages is not a simple matter of unmediated social processes alone. As Peter Mair has said, "issues and conflicts become relevant to politics partly, if not largely, because parties make them so" (Mair 1983: 420). Traditional European parties based upon religious and class appeals may well survive widespread social change if they are able to sustain the position of religious issues and class issues on the political agenda, and/or to keep "new" issues or demands off this agenda, or in the last resort to at least adopt new appeals that fit any new issues that do emerge. In the opening chapter, it was observed that Mair suggested that class parties may be especially vulnerable to processes of social and political change when they share their political agenda-setting influence with trade unions. In the case of the British Labour Party it seems that electoral support has sometimes diminished within the ranks of trade union members despite attempts to adapt to the effects of social change. For instance, we have noted how the social and occupational profile of union memberships has altered in recent decades; some of these featured changes might be interpreted as heralding the decomposition of the class cleavage and the emergence of new conflicts such as the sectoral cleavages (see chapter 6). In chapter 2 it was argued that the party

has been faced with the prospect of attempting to reconcile a welter of increasingly divergent material interests in a period when it has been constrained by an evaporating reservoir of affective loyalty. Individual unions, supported by the mass media, have sought to press certain issues, analyses and demands on to the public agenda regardless of the wishes of the party leadership. The party's task has been confounded in this way; occasionally, attempts to adapt to new demands espoused by sections of the union movement have backfired by actually exacerbating the disillusionment of traditional supporters from other parts of the movement. uThe tension between public and private sector union members in the late 1970s is one example of this. As we shall see, therefore, political factors connected with trade union structure and bargaining strategy have played a role in undermining class mobilisation. Realignment due to the decline of socio-political cleavages can be a matter of some detail, therefore, and one which encompasses party and union organisation strategy, as well as social change per se. A class cleavage may "age" in the sense that relevant class organisations permit it to.

So electoral change might, to some extent, be a result of the erosion of cleavages. An alternative view is that political parties are gradually losing their functional relevance for modern political systems. This perspective tends to coincide with the view that certain party systems are undergoing permanent dealignment. The thrust of the argument is that voters are coming to rely less and less upon party leaders and their own loyalties to provide cues about issues and voting decisions. Rather, such voters are

characterised by increasing interest in, knowledge of, and sophistication about modern politics and are therefore more prepared to make "independent" judgements about its complexities (Barnes and Kaase 1979). Parties themselves are, in various ways, being superceded by new institutions. For example, input functions like interest articulation are falling increasingly within the remit of single issue groups and the mass media, whereas output functions such as policy-making are being usurped by bureaucrats and interest groups in technocratic and/or corporatist style political systems. Indeed, some of these points may well be of some relevance for the case of British trade union members; as we have seen, there appears to be evidence that a conclusive majority of union members in Britain would like to see the end of the exclusive organic link between the unions and the Labour Party, although they are quite happy to countenance a continuing role for unions in political affairs. Such political involvement would take the form of representation of members' interests in single issue campaigns, or perhaps directly in the public policy-making arena, on occasion. (See table 3.8; see also Webb 1987: 20, Taylor 1987: 12, Torode 1984). The growth of non-partisan, but political, unionism seems to exemplify the developing independence of groups of electors from political parties. Union members prefer to see thier unions either as single-issue interest organisations or corporatist policy actors, but they no longer perceive an advantage in maintaining exclusive partisan connections or identities. This point spills over into the debate about partisan dealignment, which has played a central role in the literature on electoral change in

Britain. Indeed, this is a question that can be considered as we turn to the matter of competing models of voting behaviour.

Electoral Change And Models Of Voting Behaviour.

Much of the debate about electoral change in Britain has centred around the question of which theoretical model of voting behaviour is most appropriate. It is neither easy, nor desirable, to circumvent this question in surveying the literature. Specifically, it is proposed to concentrate upon three broad model types - the partisan identification model, attitudinal models and the so-called "radical model".

The Partisan Identification Model.

The partisan identification model of voting behaviour was developed in the U.S.A. in the 1950s, and it emerged from the shortcomings of earlier notions of electoral choice. In the first place, it was fairly readily apparent - as Lazarsfeld and his associates were able to demonstrate at the end of World War Two - that most voters were not really independently minded and coolly calculating "consumers" of party policies (Lazarsfeld et al, 1944). However, it was to emerge that the social group model preferred by Lazarsfeld also had its weaknesses. Lazarsfeld argued in *The People's Choice* that social environment predisposed electors to choose one party rather than another, and that the mechanism through which this happened was social communication within

groups. Later, these researchers discovered that the social communication process was enhanced by election campaigns (Berelson et al, 1954). Although it is true that students of American voting behaviour were subsequently able to use the social group model to predict patterns of voting with some success ⁷, problems did arise. Chiefly, it became apparent that this straightforward social group model tended to exaggerate the degree of aggregate net partisan stability within groups. For example, evidence suggested that Eisenhower won the 1952 presidential race on the back of quite substantial shifts in group support. Paradoxically, however, further analysis revealed that this coincided with a surprising degree of stability at the *individual* level. This encouraged the adoption of a theoretical perspective borrowed from social psychology. The partisan identification model which emerged from this relies largely upon two important concepts derived from, alternatively, psychology and sociology. Firstly, *identification* itself refers to a persistently held affective attachment to some group-object in the social environment - such as a political party. The group-object acts as a reference point by which other objects in the social and political environment may be evaluated; in short, it becomes a source of cues about interpreting the political world. Those who initially developed the partisan identification model (that is to say, the authors of *The American Voter* who were based at the University of Michigan in the 1950s), explained that it was parties that structured an "individual's cognitive and affective map of politics" (Campbell et al, 1960).

Why is it that parties are so central to the voting act? According to the Michigan model, it is because they are the most enduring objects in the political environment, and thus they offer comparatively stable guides to the evaluation of other political "objects" (for example, policies or candidates). Thus, affective orientation towards a party produces general orientation towards the wider political universe. Partisan identification leads to selective perception of the voter's political environment, and so tends to be self-reinforcing. Since the voter depends so much upon party cues, his or her perception of issues is such that it always confirms initial partisan commitment.

The second important concept introduced into political science with the partisan identification model is that of *socialisation*. Mark Franklin has pointed out that the notion of socialisation lies in the "deep-seated human desire for conformity" (Franklin 1985: 50). Face to face contact, it is suggested, is inclined to produce a mimicry of attitudes and values, just as it is of patterns of speech and dress. Thus, people are first induced to adopt a partisan identification during childhood, before they have any well-developed cognitive understanding of politics. This initial family socialisation experience may be reinforced by other primary and secondary group links so that partisan identification actually tends to harden with age.

When the partisan identification model was first adapted to the British case by Butler and Stokes social class location was also seen as being important; in a sense, the partisan identification and social group models of voting were being

married together. Thus, the political values and identifications that new generations learn were seen as going hand in hand with class values and identifications. Indeed, the latter were very often the basis of the former. Butler and Stokes also discovered that British voters tended to switch partisan identification along with changes that they made in their actual voting choices - unlike most of their American counterparts. Though confident that an increasing proportion of the British electorate seemed capable of retaining a partisan loyalty despite occasional aberrations in the polling booth, Butler and Stokes were forced to concede that:

"British voters are less likely than the Americans to make distinctions between their current electoral choices and more general partisan dispositions. The majority of voters do in fact have general dispositions toward party which give continuity to their behaviour in a succession of specific choices. But in transferring their vote from one party to another they are less likely to retain a conscious identification with a party other than the one they currently support" (Butler and Stokes, 1974: 44).

The partisan identification model has been criticised on various grounds. In the first place, some have questioned the theoretical usefulness of a concept which is not easily disentangled from the act of voting itself in countries like Britain. For this reason, some argue it would be best to simply dispense with the partisan identity variable itself and to concentrate upon other potential independent factors like issue preferences or social background.

A second line of attack upon the partisan identification model questions the continuing importance of the notion of stable partisan loyalty as a lynchpin underlying voting behaviour. It perhaps helps to understand that the strength of the model lies in its ability to account for electoral stability, rather than change. Its chief purpose and value, perhaps, has been to explain the continuity of voting patterns and the entrenchment of cleavages into patterns of political alignment once they have been initially mobilised. Put simply, it helps us to understand the half of the electorate in Britain that always votes in the same "habitual" way. Theoretically, however, the model has limitations when it comes to accounting for electoral change; emphasis necessarily is laid upon the breakdown of socialisation processes due to social group (for instance, class) decomposition. Accordingly, we shall be considering this explanation in more detail in a moment. For now, it is worth reiterating that we have already seen how levels of partisan identification appear to have been falling in many western European electorates, especially Britain's. It is not so easy to remain convinced of the centrality of partisan loyalty to the voting decision. Moreover, there are commentators who clearly doubt the notion that partisan attachment continues to harden with age. Rose and McAllister, for instance, have discovered that pre-adult primary socialisation explained less of the vote in 1983 than it did in 1964; that is, whereas such influences explained fully 28.6% of the variance in Labour and Conservative voting in 1964, they were only able to account for 20.7% in 1983.

"The weakness of the traditional closed-class model of political socialisation is just that it is traditional. It assumes that people do not think for themselves, or that learning stops as soon as a person is old enough to be independent of parents. Moreover, the model is static in its assumptions about old parties. It is assumed that parties salient in the parents' lifetime will always remain salient... The recurrence of multi-party competition in Britain demonstrates the limits of political socialisation in determining the vote... In place of the dead hand of the past, contemporary circumstances gain influence" (Rose and McAllister 1986: 114).

Those who, like Rose and McAllister, are sceptical about the influence of the "dead hand of the past", are inclined to supplement their criticisms of the Michigan model with a new-found confidence in the growing sophistication and cognitive wisdom of electors. Electoral change for these writers is often, therefore, a question of dealignment borne of the growing independence of voters from parties. Those who retain some sympathy for the partisan identification perspective, however, may remain sceptical about the alleged sophistication and independence of voters; for them, electoral change has more to do with a fundamental realignment that results from the decomposition of the class cleavage. It is to this that we now turn.

The Partisan Identification Model And Class Dealignment In Britain.

The debate over class dealignment in Britain is distinguished by the quantity of literature that it has generated, if not necessarily for having produced any conclusive arguments. Our aim here will be to consider the main lines of the debate rather than to analyse the minutiae

of each significant contribution to it. Bearing this in mind, our approach will concentrate upon two broad questions that seem to lie at the heart of the debate; has class dealignment really occurred? And if so, then why?

Those who incline to the view that class dealignment has indeed occurred point to some striking evidence. For instance, relative class allegiance to the major parties has changed; whereas the working class Labour vote was 2.7 times greater than the middle class Labour vote in 1964, it was just 2.3 times greater in 1983 (Harrop 1986: 40). Relative class voting can also be measured by the odds ratio (see footnote 9), and this fell from 6.4 to 3.9 between 1964 and 1983. Moreover, the overall proportion of electors voting according to their occupational class has fallen from 63% in 1964 to just 47% in 1983 (Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985: 30).

But not all commentators have been readily persuaded that such findings constitute evidence of the existence of genuine class dealignment (see, for instance, Barton 1986, Heath et al 1985, and Marshall et al 1988). Arguments have, inter alia, ranged over methodological issues (for example, how should we measure class voting?), theoretical questions (how should we define "class"?), and empirical questions - which may well depend, in part, upon methodological and theoretical positions (for example, is Britain a less class divided society than it once was?) Illustrative of some of these points is the work of Anthony Heath and his

colleagues. They are broadly inclined to reject the view that class dealignment has taken place since the 1960s, on at least four different counts.

In the first place, they claim that the apparent fall in class voting that occurred between 1979 and 1983 "is in fact almost wholly spurious, an artefact of the inadequate manual /non-manual dichotomy." These authors insist that such a crude distinction, whilst valuable "as a rough first approximation...is wholly inadequate for studying the social bases of politics since it ignores important divisions which have little to do with the colour of a man's or woman's collar" (Heath et al, 1985: 34). Consequently, they prefer a more complex five-fold class scheme comprising a salariat, routine non-manual workers, petit bourgeoisie, foremen/technicians and the working class. ⁸ Such a class model produces a far less dramatic decline in class voting between 1964-1983, than does the simple two-class dichotomy. Writers like Ivor Crewe have maintained that there remain certain advantages in employing the simple manual/non-manual distinction, however; he insists that the working class is an "ideologically laden" term for a certain section of manual employees who mount to barely one-third of the workforce. Moreover, if the middle class is restricted to the salariat alone, then researchers may be obliged to work with a sample that is no larger than 60% of the electorate. For instance, in constructing measures of class voting, one has to compare the behaviour of the salariat with that of the working class; the intermediate classes have no part to play in such measures. By contrast, the manual/non-manual

dichotomy enables one to base one's findings on a considerably greater sample which divides neatly into half (Crewe 1986: 623-4).

Table 4.4 - The History Of Class Voting 1964-1983, According To Different Class Models.

	<u>Manual/Non-Manual</u>	<u>Heath's Five Class Model</u>
1964	6.4	9.3
1966	6.4	7.3
1970	4.5	3.9
1974 (Feb)	5.7	6.1
1974 (Oct)	4.8	5.5
1979	3.7	4.9
1983	3.9	6.3

Note: All figures quoted are odds ratios (see footnote 9).

Source: Heath, Jowell and Cutice 1985: 30-33.

The second, and perhaps most important, point raised by Heath is that it is misleading to concentrate, as many commentators have done, upon levels of "absolute class voting"; rather, it is better to focus upon "relative class voting".

"...while the overall proportion of the electorate voting for its natural class party can be thought of as a measure of *absolute class voting*, what we are really interested in is a measure of *relative class voting*." (Ibid: 31)

The advantage of measuring cross-class voting with the odds ratio - and thereby focusing upon relative class voting - is that it avoids the pitfall of attributing too much of, for example, the Labour Party's 1983 general election defeat to the decline of class voting; Heath points out that Labour's losses in 1983 were far from specific to the working class. However, while accepting the general validity of the odds

ratio in this context, it is arguable that Heath's interpretation and construction of the odds ratio is misleading. ⁹

The third objection raised by Heath to the notion of class dealignment is that commentators have often falseley attributed electoral change to it when much is really down to the impact of the changing relative sizes of different classes. Table 4.5 illustrates how the salariat has grown relative to the size of the working class since 1964.

Table 4.5 - Class Composition Of The Electorate, 1964 And 1983.

	<u>1964</u>	<u>1983</u>
Salariat	18	27
Routine Non-Manual	18	24
Petit Bourgeoisie	7	8
Foremen/Technicians	10	7
Working Class	<u>47</u>	<u>34</u>
	100	100

Source: Heath et al 1986: 36.

Heath suggests that too many observers are quick to regard Labour's electoral slump in the decade following 1974 as a result of class dealignment, which leaves the simple, but highly significant fact of the shrinking of the working class out of the argument. Although these changes to the shape of the class structure do not explain all electoral change, as Heath is ready to admit, they do perhaps merit greater attention on the part of electoral analysts than

they have generally been accorded - particularly in view of the dearth of clear evidence of any trend towards class dealignment.

Finally, Heath and his collaborators also reject arguments in favour of the existence of class dealignment on the grounds that they have frequently been a product of the specific time period under scrutiny. This reflects the fact that thoroughgoing analysis of general election surveys only commenced in 1964.

"In general, the period from 1945 to 1974 shows no consistent trend. There are certainly ups and downs, but we would see these as having more to do with changing political events - the nature of parties' programmes, their success in office, etc. - than with any underlying evolution of the classes. The mistake of recent commentators is that they have taken 1964 as their baseline. As we now see, this was a rather unfortunate choice since it marked a peak in relative class voting (as measured by the odds ratio). The adoption of a longer time perspective clearly calls into question claims about any secular trend towards class dealignment."
(Ibid: 34) ¹⁰

An interesting variation on the theme of class dealignment has been suggested by William Miller. For Miller, class dealignment has both occurred and it has not, depending upon the level at which one conducts analysis. The paradox of class voting is that whilst it appears to have weakened at the level of the individual, quite the opposite has proved to be the case at constituency level. People, apparently, are pulled towards voting in line with their "class environment"; thus, in predominantly working class constituencies, non-manual groups of electors are more likely to vote Labour than the national norm, whilst in middle class areas, manual groups are more Conservative than

normal (Miller 1978). Partisan identification theorists refer to socialisation in emphasising, as Miller does, that this is because "those who talk together, vote together"; other writers prefer to place greater stress upon more purely economic interest factors that might underlie this pattern of behaviour. Dunleavy and Husbands, for example, argue that manual workers in inner city areas are more likely to rely on public services, to live in poorly-maintained council housing, to belong to an ethnic minority, or to be unemployed, all of which might incline a voter to choose the Labour Party in the polling booth. Their counterparts in the leafy suburbs stand a far greater chance of owning their own homes, driving their own transport, maintaining reasonably well-paid employment and being white. Thus, political and economic interests, not social contact mechanisms, could in fact underlie "constituency effects" (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985: 21-25, 137).

Notwithstanding Miller's intervention in the debate, the main concern has been with dealignment at the individual level. If we accept that to some extent class dealignment has occurred at the individual level - and bearing in mind Scarbrough's comments about the odds ratio (see footnote 9) and my own findings in chapter 5, the evidence is, I would suggest, quite persuasive - then we are confronted with the question of why this should have been so. Broadly speaking, there would appear to have been two general approaches to this particular question - those of the partisan identification school and the issue voting school.

The partisan identification theorists incline to the view that class alignment is weakening as the class cleavage ages - possibly making way for a long term realignment of the electorate according to a new socio-political cleavage structure. Thus, the generation growing up in the 1920s and 1930s was class mobilised, and its successor generation of the 1940s and 1950s inherited quite strong class and partisan identifications; subsequent generations have been less responsive to class appeals, however. Butler and Stokes themselves initially suggested that the class cleavage was likely to weaken as the basis of British electoral support for at least three reasons: firstly, the ideological erosion of the Labour Party's distinctive class appeal following the establishment of a Butskellite two-party consensus; secondly, growing working class affluence (but see Goldthorpe et al 1969, and Westergaard and Anderson 1965 for various criticisms of this view); and thirdly, the increasingly middle class nature of the Labour Party's leadership. In retrospect, none of these seem to offer highly persuasive reasons for the quite sudden growth of class dealignment after 1974.

Issue voting theorists (whose models we shall be considering shortly) generally prefer to regard class dealignment as a consequence of partisan dealignment rather than as a cause of it. For partisan identification writers, partisanship is founded upon class identity; therefore, when class consciousness fades, it follows that partisan consciousness is likely to, also. However, issue voting theorists perceive a gradually widening rift between traditional party supporters and their parties over certain political issues,

and this is regarded as central to any explanation of weakening partisan loyalty. Since party support in Britain has traditionally been about class support it follows that this too is undermined. Ivor Crewe is probably the best known exponent of this line of interpretation; he has produced much evidence of the growing attitudinal divergence between parties and their (erstwhile) supporters. For example, he has taken pains to demonstrate the

"...quite exceptional movement of opinion away from Labour's traditional positions amongst Labour supporters over the last twenty or thirty years. There has been a spectacular decline in support for the collectivist trinity of public ownership, trade union power and social welfare."
(Crewe 1985: 138)

Moreover, Crewe has pointed out that people have usually maintained class identifications, even if they have not held on to their partisan loyalties; consequently, he argues that since class seems to remain in the consciousness of the electorate as a whole, notwithstanding partisan decline, this suggests that the latter is more than a straightforward corollary of class dealignment.

The Michigan model of voting behaviour, embodying a British scenario in which class and partisan values are learnt by new generations, has been criticised heavily since the middle of the 1970s, largely because it fails to offer an adequate explanation of electoral change. Electoral change has been too sudden and too great for the breakdown of socialisation mechanisms to offer anything like a comprehensive or convincing explanation. Within the partisan identification perspective trade unions were typically

regarded as "secondary socialisation variables" which served to reinforce class and partisan values; in the following chapter we shall see that such a conception of the role of trade unions in influencing electoral choice is no longer feasible. This obliges us to consider the interpretation of union effects in terms of other models of voting behaviour, and it is to these models that we now turn, starting with what might broadly be called attitudinal models.

Attitudinal Models Of Voting Behaviour

It is a basic tenet of democratic theory that public policy should in some meaningful sense be subject to popular control. In practical terms, the "popular will" has commonly been understood to be indicated by the majority of citizens' individual preferences with regard to a public issue or programme of policies. The act of voting is therefore regarded, at least implicitly, as a coherent assessment of the programmatic alternatives on offer at election time. Those who seriously take this to be a realistic account of the relationship between democracy and electoral processes, base their credulity upon certain important assumptions; for a start, the voter is taken to be a relatively sophisticated and rational actor in the realm of politics. Interestingly, such a view is not necessarily important to the Michigan model with its emphasis on psychological identifications, socialisation and social background. Thus, Rose and McAllister have pointed out that twenty years ago or more, electoral choices were "closed" or limited by the constraints imposed by social class ties, and Franklin has

suggested that the weakening of the class-vote association might permit electors to be "more open to rational argument than in the past" (Rose and McAllister 1986; Franklin 1985: 152). It is suggested that voters were locked unthinkingly into traditional and habitual patterns of group-oriented behaviour; authentic political reflection was of no necessary consequence in the matter.

The general view that voters are sophisticated and rational actors in turn generates further, more specific assumptions. Thus, to suggest that individuals cast their ballot in order to elect a government likely to promulgate their preferred policies is to imply that voters do indeed have a set of crystallised public policy preferences, that they clearly and correctly understand the positions of the various parties or candidates on these issues, and they then vote accordingly. None of these things can be freely and easily assumed, as we shall see. Another area of controversy which has concerned those involved in the partisan identification versus issue voting debate revolves around the question of whether partisan identification itself actually *prefigures* and shapes issue preferences and attitudes, or whether it *follows* from those attitudes. Issue voting theorists like Hilde Himmelweit maintain the latter position, and therefore contend that the concept of partisan identification adds nothing to our ability to understand and predict voting behaviour. That is, it is not a genuinely independent influence upon voting choice (Himmelweit 1981: 192-4). Partisan identification theorists counter this by pointing out that partisanship actually seems to develop in many young children before they are old

enough to have a really developed cognitive appreciation of political issues. Consequently, writers like Miller are able to maintain that partisanship still helps shape policy preferences (Miller 1980). Finally, Martin Harrop has even suggested that partisanship is of value in explaining electoral choice if for no other reason than because to dispense with it produces an exaggerated impression of the impact of attitudes (Harrop 1986: 48). For many observers, there remains a sense of a natural "base line" of solid support that most parties can generally count upon - although powerful short term effects might produce considerable deviations from this. Taking account of this base line of partisans indicates the true extent of issue effects.

Arguments such as these lie at the heart of the intellectual conflict between the issue voting and partisan identification schools; we can trace the background of these arguments by briefly reviewing the main lines of the debate.

Partisan Identification Versus Issue Voting: A Brief Review Of The Debate.

The roots of this debate lie beyond the shores of Britain's well-insulated isles. In some ways we might plausibly trace the roots back to Schumpeter's classic mid-twentieth century critique of modern democracy, in which he showed his clear scepticism about the place of rational behaviour in the era of mass politics. For instance, he questioned how far it was possible to seriously attribute a rational and independent political will to the citizenry. This will, he suggested,

"must be something more than an indeterminate bundle of vague impulses loosely playing about given slogans and mistaken impressions. Everyone has to know what he wants to stand for. This definite will would have to be implemented by the ability to observe and interpret correctly the facts that are directly accessible to everyone, and to sift critically the information about the facts that are not...And all this the model citizen would have to perform for himself and independently of party groups and propaganda, for volitions and inferences that are imposed upon the electorate obviously do not qualify for the ultimate data of the democratic process."
(Schumpeter 1952: 253-254)

Schumpeter recognised that many citizens remain essentially detached from politics: "Without the initiative that comes from immediate responsibility, ignorance will persist in the face of masses of information, however complete and correct." Consequently, he argues that:

"...the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyses in a way that he would readily recognise as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive again. His thinking becomes associative and affective." [Ibid: 262]

Later, Campbell and his associates who went on to establish the Michigan model discovered that, across a range of foreign and domestic policy issues, only around one-half to two-thirds of American electors actually seemed to have clearly crystallised attitudes about issues they were familiar with. Still less did these people actually perceive any party difference on such issues - and where they did, there was no guarantee that this would be the correct perception. For these reasons, no more than 20-30% of electors could be regarded in a prima facie sense as being potentially issue voters. Moreover, even where a link between issues and voting was found, Campbell pointed out that party loyalty itself might be a cause, not a consequence, of attitudinal formation. "The identifier who sees his party take up new issues is likely to be influenced thereby" (Campbell et al 1960: 97). As we have already seen, this is a view that runs directly contrary to that expressed by later issue voting writers like Himmelweit. For partisan identification writers, short term issue effects may well be apparent, but issues tend to be interpreted in the light of prior partisanship. In the 1960s, writers suggested that this could happen in one of two ways. Firstly, a voter might be persuaded to alter his or her own issue position in order that it be congruent with that of a party or candidate with whom there was a prior identification. Such would not represent a case of genuine issue voting. Secondly, voters who favourably identify with a given party or candidate might even project their own issue positions on to that party or candidate, regardless of the latter's actual attitudes. An illustration of this could be found in the way that Republican identifiers who were "hawks" on the question

of the Vietnam war regarded Nixon as a hawk at the time of the 1968 presidential election, whereas Republican "doves" perceived him to be a dove (Page and Brody 1972: 988-9).

The first detailed consideration of these types of argument in relation to Britain was undertaken by Butler and Stokes in the 1960s. Notwithstanding the widespread view that British politics was then - and still is in all probability - more programmatic and ideological than American politics (see, for example, Epstein 1967), they were sceptical about issue voting in Britain. In the first place, they pointed out that British voters held issue positions in a random manner over a relatively short period of time (Butler and Stokes 1974: 280-1). Thus, as in America, voters' attitudes were seldom crystallised. Moreover, the electorate as a whole appeared to display a remarkable lack of consistency across related issues - a point that was to be reiterated by commentators in the 1980s like Patrick Dunleavy, as we shall see. Butler and Stokes seem to have been indicating that the cognitive development of the British electorate was too limited for us to countenance seriously the notion of issue voting (Ibid: 320).

The first writers to challenge clearly Butler and Stokes' view - and, indeed, the general relevance of the Michigan model for Britain - were Alt, Sarlvik and Crewe in an important article published in 1976. These writers claimed that where partisan identification conflicts with issue preferences, the latter are at least as likely to determine voting choice as the former. Moreover, they met the problems of "persuasion" and "projection" head on. Firstly, they

demonstrated that about 95% of the sample that they worked with was correctly able to identify the various party positions on a range of issues, thus suggesting that projection was not likely to have greatly distorted perceptions of party positions:

"...most people appear to display a considerable grasp of the issues and where the parties stand on each...it appears that, the conventional wisdom notwithstanding, the great majority of the British electorate have both partisan preferences and realistic perceptions of the parties' policies." (Alt et al 1976: 284)

With regard to the problem of persuasion they pointed out that, even though very strong partisans continued to support their own party when, on balance, an alternative was closer to them on the issues, such was not the case for weaker partisans. Therefore, they argued, the evidence suggested that perhaps people *did* recognise differences between themselves and "their" parties over issues, and were even inclined to withdraw their support if those differences were considered significant enough. Indeed, even among "very strong" partisans, only 57% continued to prefer their party when they acknowledged themselves to be closer to an alternative party on the issues, compared to fully 87% of those who saw themselves as closer to their party on the issues. It might be countered that this begs the question of why 57% voted "irrationally" (that is, voted in spite of, rather than because of, their issue preferences), but Alt, Crewe and Sarlvik argued strongly that many people "who disagree with their party are to a large extent aware that they are doing so." (ibid: 289) ¹¹

Allied to growing evidence of the partisan dealignment and volatility of the British electorate, the arguments of Alt, Crewe and Sarlvik encouraged a widespread reappraisal of Butler and Stokes' view of voting behaviour this side of the Atlantic. Over the ensuing decade or more, publications with titles such as "Party Identification And Beyond" (Ian Budge et al) "The Rise Of Issue Voting In British Elections" and "The Decline Of Class Voting In Britain" (Mark Franklin), "Class Does Not Equal Party" (Richard Rose) and "Voters Begin To Choose" (Rose and Ian McAllister) all indicated the progression of British psephological study beyond the initial work of Butler and Stokes. Partisan dealignment, volatility and the ilk have meant that the focus of contemporary studies has shifted to the question of explaining electoral *change*. Notwithstanding the title of Butler and Stokes' major opus, their adaptation of the Michigan Model was really most appropriate as an explanation *stability* and habit in voting behaviour. Although the majority of the British electorate are to this day probably somewhat rooted in their partisan proclivities, proportionately more have been less predictable. The interesting questions for British electoral analysts are therefore now fixed around this new changeability. This is precisely where attitudinal models have been most helpful - that is, in terms of offering an insight into the apparently shifting patterns of electoral choice that have confronted political scientists. For instance, Budge and Farlie have tried to demonstrate how useful an understanding of issue preferences can be in "explaining and predicting elections" (Budge and Farlie 1983). However, there is nothing conclusive about issue models, and the debate has been a

lively one. Heath and his associates, for example, have pointed out that the clear victor of the 1983 general election, the Conservative Party, actually held no clear lead over the Labour Party on any of the five issues that electors felt were most important during the campaign (Heath, Jowell and Curtice: 91-96). Attitudinal models, it should be said, are far from monolithic; various types of such model have been produced, and it may therefore prove instructive to consider briefly one or two of the most influential examples.

The earliest and in many ways most elegant of attitudinal models was that proposed by Anthony Downs in his *An Economic Theory Of Democracy* (1957). The Downsian model was strictly rationalistic, instrumental and individualistic. Downs never considered that people voted for reasons other than those which were purely and narrowly political; for instance, the notion that people might sometimes choose a partisan identity as a way of forming or maintaining a social or cultural identity plays no part in Downsian logic. His work really represents the transposition of the simplified rationality of economic models into the domain of political science.

Downs assumes that voters are able to calculate their personal "incomes" in terms of the amounts of utility that they would individually derive from the implementation of alternative party programmes. They would then vote accordingly in order to maximise their utility. In practice this is, of course, a highly simplistic account of reality. In particular, the pure Downsian model has been criticised

for assuming an unlikely level of political knowledge and calculation on the part of the ordinary voter; the benefit to be gained from a rational vote might well be outweighed by the cost of executing it in terms of time and effort. Moreover, writers like McLean (1982) have pointed out that the chances of a particular individual vote having any decisive bearing upon the outcome of a national election are so infinitesimally small that strictly rational individuals would probably not bother going out to visit the polling booth at all. Nonetheless, whilst it may not stand up as an entirely convincing model of reality, Downs' model has the merit of representing a serious attempt to work out how voters would vote if they were rational. As such it amounts to an important step along the path towards the development of attitudinal models.

Hilde Himmelweit's "consumer model" of voting focuses not directly upon individual utility maximisation as such, but upon personal policy preferences (Himmelweit et al 1981: 11-16). It is assumed that the voter knows his or her own mind with respect to a range of potential policy alternatives, and that he or she then seeks out the party programme that best matches these preferences. Like a shopper in the market place, the voter may develop partisan "brand loyalties" to some extent, but this does not mount to partisan identification in the sense of the Michigan model. Loyalties are rarely as deeply rooted as the Michigan model suggests since voters approach each election like shoppers returning to the market place on the look-out for fresh ideas and bargains. Himmelweit's model is more realistic than its Downsian counterpart, and its focus upon policy

preferences per se rather than personal self-interest complements work which indicates that people rarely vote with their own wallets in mind. For instance, Alt (1979) and Mosley (1984) have both suggested that individual economic circumstances probably matter less to a person's vote than perceptions of overall national performance. Nonetheless, the consumer model has met criticism on several counts. One of these criticisms might be levelled at rational choice models in general; this concerns the question of whether voters genuinely do hold "political attitudes". As we have seen, the work of writers like Brody and Page, and Butler and Stokes, in the 1960s suggested that they do not. In a variety of ways this message has been confirmed by Converse (1964), Scarbrough (1986) and Dunleavy and Husbands (1985), who have shown up logical inconsistencies in voters' attitudes in related policy areas (the problem of low attitudinal "constraint"), whilst Lievesley and Waterton (1985) have demonstrated that many voters change their policy preferences over a comparatively short period of time. These criticisms, if accurate, threaten to render the consumer model - along with other issue models - inherently implausible, since they imply that it is unlikely that many voters are ever in a position to match up party programmes to their crystallised policy attitudes. In many ways, this question goes to the heart of the debate over issue voting. Crewe has maintained that examples of coherent and consistent trends in electors' attitudes are to be found (witness, for instance, the growing disapproval of Labour's "collectivist trinity" referred to above), and these are indicative of "real views". Nevertheless, even Crewe admits that a certain amount of equivocation was evident in the

voters' views on several party issues in 1979 (Crewe 1985: 138-140). One can avoid these criticisms to some extent by redefining voter rationality. For instance, Budge and Farlie have argued that most voters have a limited, but meaningful sense of issue awareness; they tend to understand the broad issue stances of parties in given issue areas. Often, issue areas are "owned" by parties in that there is longstanding and widespread voter acceptance of their views in these areas. Thus, welfare policy is generally an electorally positive issue area for socialist parties, as law and order is for conservative parties. This voter awareness becomes significant as different issue areas become salient in given election campaigns. Some areas remain almost permanently salient (for instance, economic performance) whereas others are far less frequently so (constitutional or ethnic questions; see Budge and Farlie 1983: 36). This is an effective way of making issue models realistic and workable, since perceptions of an issue's importance count for more than detailed policy preferences. It suggests a degree of rationality in voter behaviour. However, it should be said that this argument does not necessarily satisfy the stringent conditions of citizen sophistication and knowledge laid down by Schumpeter. Moreover, evidence has been produced which suggests that even salient issues may not be all that decisive for the outcome of elections (Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985: 91-96).

In addition, Himmelweit's model has drawn criticism on methodological grounds relating to the small and allegedly biased nature of the sample that it has been tested against (Kuchler 1984: 2; Dunleavy 1983: 3-7). More damning,

perhaps, has been the suggestion that Himmelweit overemphasised the role that issue preferences play compared with partisan identity since, firstly, the latter has proved more stable over time, and secondly, partisans often seem to follow changes in their parties' policy views rather than desert their party (Harrop and Miller 1987: 153). This latter point refers to what is essentially the "persuasion" phenomenon again. Finally, in common with other issue voting models, Himmelweit's approach has been criticised for neglecting the sources of voters' attitudes (Scarborough 1986). However, there is logically no need for this to weaken attitudinal models per se; various writers have, in their differing ways, shown how such models may allow for the influence of social background upon attitudinal formation (Farlie, Budge and Laver 1983; Robertson 1984; Heath et al 1985: 174).

Leaving aside the models of Downs and Himmelweit, there is a third attitudinal approach which, it has been suggested in some quarters, is "analytically sharper, less demanding of the voter and intuitively more plausible..." (Harrop and Miller 1987: 153). This is Fiorina's "retrospective performance" model. Fiorina is less concerned with deductive model building than Downs, perhaps; his is more an intuitive common sense notion of how people probably make political choices, transformed into a formal model. According to Fiorina, ordinary men and women seldom have clear preferences about political issues. Instead of attempting to compare crystallised policy preferences with party programmes, Fiorina suggests that most voters probably undertake an intellectually less ambitious and time cp200

consuming task; namely, the evaluation of how effectively the government of the day has performed in terms of the pursuit of certain broad and uncontroversial policy objectives - low unemployment, stable prices, industrial calm and so on. Thus, their vote becomes a retrospective judgement of the managerial record of the government of the day, as much as of its philosophical attributes or policy proposals, and electors are likely to punish any government that they regard as a disappointment. Fiorina, in seeking to construct as realistic a model as possible, is faced with the problem of all rational choice theorists - how to explain the large numbers of electors who rarely change their partisan inclinations. This he does by conceding that many do in fact develop a form of party loyalty, but it is not one built upon "irrational" emotional and affective attachments, as the Michigan theorists suggested. Instead, it is based upon a form of long term cognitive mobilisation: that is, voters develop a view of the overall historical performance of parties, and this view will only be modified in the light of the most recent party performance. Established partisanship will only be rejected when the most recent performance is radically different to those of the past (Fiorina 1977).

In Britain, writers like Whiteley and Miller have employed models of retrospective performance evaluation in attempts to explain the slump in the electoral fortunes of the Labour Party in the 1980s (Whiteley 1983; Miller 1984). Moreover, since performance in economic management is the most salient of retrospective judgements, the growing body of literature on "political business cycles" may well be of relevance

here. (See, for example, Alt and Chrystal 1983: Paldam 1981.) That is, retrospective evaluations may well reflect in large part media-influenced perceptions of the government's recent economic performance. Because of the empirical value and sheer plausibility of retrospective performance models, I shall later be incorporating one such model into the analysis of the behaviour of union members in Britain. How far have their assessments of governmental performance influenced the electoral choices that trade unionists have made since the early 1960s? We shall be turning to this question, amongst others, in the course of the next chapter. It is worth emphasising that, regardless of one's view of issue models, it would be unwise to reject them altogether; even partisan identification models allow for some influence by short term issue assessments. Moreover, it is possible that they are not so bad at explaining stable behaviour as has been sometimes contended. Budge and Farlie have argued that the key to explaining individual electoral stability may lie with certain issues upon which voters have "abiding fixations", rather than with the partisan identification variable. If true, this provides an issue based account of long term partisan predispositions, rather than a socialisation based one (Budge and Farlie 1983: 41). Whatever, many now believe, like Mark Franklin, that the decline of class voting in Britain has "opened the way to choice between parties based on issue preferences rather than class loyalty" (Franklin 1985: 176). For this reason alone, some consideration of issue effects is surely desirable.

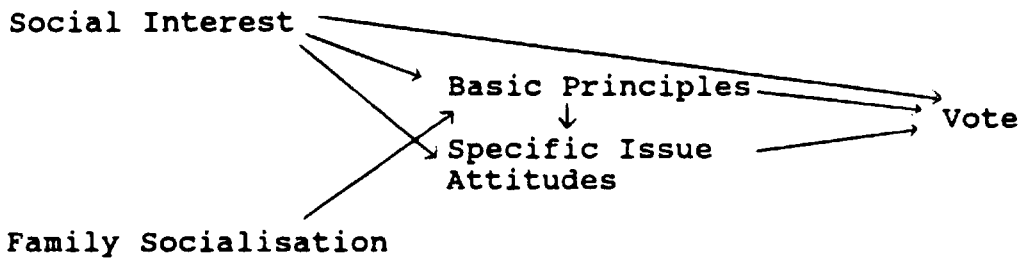
There remains one further category of voting model that might broadly be classified as "attitudinal", and which we have yet to consider; these are the models that concern themselves with *ideological voting*. As we have already mentioned, Butler and Stokes were quick to reject the notion that ordinary voters were governed by coherent ideological systems of belief; it was parties, rather than principles, that provided the focus for the way in which voters viewed politics:

"...it is clear that the theory that voters choose among parties on the basis of distances from their own positions along a left-right spectrum is very far from describing how the the great bulk of British electors make their choice. The assumption that people order their preferences for the parties according to the parties' distance from their own position on the policy spectrum is contradicted by the preferences expressed by many of our correspondents. The assumption that voters see themselves or the parties on a left-right dimension at all is contradicted by our evidence on the slightness of the role that the words left and right played in the political thought of the British mass public. A thin layer of the most ideologically aware did seem to use left and right to organise their views about where the parties stood on current issues. But such people were vastly outnumbered by those who had more impoverished and static interpretations of the concepts. A large majority of the electorate apparently gave left and right no political meaning at all."
(Butler and Stokes 1974: 336-337)

Nonetheless, in recent years more commentators have been willing to contend that ideological thinking of a sort does underlie partisan choice. Indeed, if short term issue preferences are important to electoral choice, the question of the origins of such preferences arises; one possible source of these preferences might be the general and enduring principles or beliefs by which people abide. (What is more, these ideological values, if we can properly so call them, may in turn derive from factors connected with

social location and family influence, as suggested in Figure 4.2.) On the other hand, underlying values and short term assessments might each influence vote quite discreetly of one another.

Figure 4.2 - Possible Connections Between Vote, Basic Principles, Short Term Attitudes And Social Background.



What is "ideology" in the context of voting behaviour? By ideology - sometimes more blandly referred to as "belief system" - is meant a set of underlying and general normative and cognitive attitudes that (some) people adhere to, and which are broadly consistent internally, and not easily modified or shed. The question does perhaps arise as to whether or not ideological models are properly to be regarded as a version of the rational choice model. Writers like Harrop and Miller sometimes appear to infer that they are: "In the rational choice model...voters choose the party which comes closest to their own interests, values and priorities" (Harrop and Miller 1987: 130, my emphasis). In this broad notion of rational choice, a truly ideological model is somewhat similar to the Himmelweit model, perhaps. Yet it should be emphasised that ideological imperatives go beyond the narrow rationality of self-interest or even with the assessment of effective managerial performance. Cognitive strands are intermingled with non-bargainable

moral sentiments which may be, in the last resort, incapable of purely rationalistic justification. Ultimately, people with clear and consciously held principles and commitments may well continue to vote for a given party or candidate as an act of moral affirmation or expression, regardless of particular policy shortcomings or demonstrable managerial incompetence that the party in question might display. In this sense, it could be somewhat surprisingly contended that authentically ideological voting has as much affinity with the partisan identification model as it does with the rational choice approach. Whatever, ideological models clearly fall within the broad category of attitudinal models, and are interesting and worth consideration.

The place of ideology in voting decisions has been considered by several authors over the past few years, most thoroughly perhaps in the book-length treatment accorded the subject by Elinor Scarbrough (1984). She tested a "preliminary" model based upon four ideal-type ideologies which are located in historical political forces. In addition, Rose and McAllister have argued that general political principles are the most important of all influences at work in their preferred model of voting (Rose and McAllister 1986: 129-131, 135). Interestingly, several researchers - most notably, perhaps, Robertson (1983) and Heath et al (1985) - have claimed that such principles can be reduced to just two underlying ideological dimensions; firstly, there is a left-right dimension concerned with questions about economic redistribution and social ownership that are typical of class and status politics, and secondly, there is a "north-south" dimension which focuses upon issues

connected with social liberalism or authoritarianism (See, Robertson 1983, Figure 6.1., or Heath et al 1985, table 8.6). Heath's "interactionist model" concerns itself with very broad principles; eschewing the roles of habitual loyalty, narrow instrumentality or careful and close consideration of specific policies, it contends that voters are inclined to vote in accordance with broad or "synoptic" evaluations of what parties stand for: "It is the fit between the general character of the party and the voter's own general ideology which...best accounts for electoral choice" (Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985: 99).

Broadly speaking, there exist two kinds of criticism that are of particular pertinence with regard to ideological models. In the first place, researchers have questioned the ability of voters to employ abstract ideological concepts. Again, we must refer back to Butler and Stokes for the starting point of this line of research in Britain (see above). Subsequently, Hans Klingemann confirmed that around four-fifths of the British electorate appeared unable or unwilling to spontaneously evaluate political parties in terms of both "left" and "right" concepts (Klingemann 1979). The second main line of criticism concerns the question of how far electors can be regarded as having coherent and enduring belief systems. Converse (1964) issued the classic pioneering study in this vein; his study of the American electorate in the 1950s revealed that few voters had a developed and stable system of coherent attitudes. Butler and Stokes found a similar pattern of substantial attitudinal instability (on questions of nationalisation and nuclear disarmament) over time during the 1960s (Butler and

Stokes 1974: 315-316). More recently, Dunleavy and Husbands have reiterated an essentially similar message. Their approach consisted of an attempt to focus on the degree of logical inter-connection between different questions on the same subject (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985: 177). Thus, for instance, they claimed that between 2% and 8% of the voters of the various parties in 1983 offered strongly inconsistent responses to a series of questions on nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, up to 30% displayed "weakly inconsistent" attitudes on the subject. The highest incidence of "strong inconsistency" was found in the case of 11% of Alliance voters when asked about their views on public and welfare services. This, one might contend, hardly amounts to overwhelming evidence of the incoherence of electors' belief systems. What is more, the authors themselves admit that the question of precisely what constitutes a "consistent" position over these two attitudes is a little "esoteric" - perhaps even "casuistical" (ibid: 180). Therefore, whilst Dunleavy and Husbands focus upon something significant for the question of ideology and voting behaviour, their case is not entirely conclusive. In addition, it should be emphasised that electors are unlikely to be static in terms of their attitudinal and ideological development; for example, American writers like Nie and his colleagues have made the interesting point that "ideological" candidates or party programmes can stimulate a more ideological response from voters (Nie et al 1976).

In conclusion, whilst the evidence for the existence of deeply-rooted and well-developed ideological voting in Britain may be far from compelling, there is enough that is

suggestive - added to the inherent plausibility of the notion that underlying principles can influence electoral choice - to encourage electoral researchers. Therefore, it would be interesting and informative to look at some of the broad political values held by union members in Britain. This shall be done in the course of the following chapter, by applying Heath's relatively simple, but useful, concept of synoptic values.

Before concluding our discussion of electoral change, there is one final model of voting behaviour worth our particular consideration; this is the so-called "radical model" that emerged in the 1980s, and which stands somewhat outside the established lines of electoral interpretation.

Dunleavy And Husbands' Radical Model.

This model of electoral behaviour in Britain has developed as an outgrowth of Patrick Dunleavy's work on "sectoral cleavages" in politics (Dunleavy 1980). In collaboration with a colleague based at the London School Of Economics, Chris Husbands, Dunleavy contrived the radical model as a rather self-conscious alternative to the partisan identification versus issue voting debate in the mid-1980s. In precisely which sense Dunleavy's model is actually "radical" is never really made clear by the author; perhaps it is because the model has emerged from a particular sociological approach that he adopts. Indeed, sociology remains very close to the heart of Dunleavy's view of politics, since the fundamental influences upon electoral

choice are, for him, quite simply the socio-economic interests that people have as members of various social groups. Dunleavy and Husbands explain that:

"People will not necessarily (and perhaps not often) articulate the influence of their social location in structuring their votes - the phenomenon may be objectively apparent to an analyst without being explicitly recognised by voters as involved in their decisions" (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985: 19).

However, whilst people always vote to "promote the collective interests of their social location", it is important to recognise that certain ideological agents - chiefly the media and the political parties - can affect the way in which these interests are perceived. One gets the feeling that Dunleavy and Husbands find that the interminable detail of the partisan identification versus issue voting debate somewhat trying; hence, in their "radical" way, they insist on cutting through it all to boldly reassert the overwhelming importance of the real sources of attitudes - social interest and ideological and cultural hegemony. One might suppose that there is nothing potentially extraordinary about this. Social location and group attitudes could conceivably fit in with either partisan identification or issue type models of voting. However, the creators of the radical model are definite in rejecting both these approaches.

We have already referred above to their work in relation to the (lack of) logical coherence in people's political beliefs. Thus, they insist that social interests and ideological conditioning operate in some manner that bears

directly upon the voting decision - not via the prior mechanism of issue assessment. However, the argument does not always seem crystal-clear at this point:

"They (issue attitudes) do not constitute important causal factors in structuring the way in which people vote, however closely voting and attitudes may be associated. Even if shifts in attitudes predate shifts in alignments, these leads and lags demonstrate only that a change in people's overall orientations shows itself first in more finely graduated responses to issue questions, and only later becomes evident as a switch in the relatively crude indicator provided by actual behaviour" (Ibid: 20, my emphasis).

So, we are asked to believe that people may change their attitudes about political issues (due to changing interests or changing receptiveness to ideological messages presumably); later, they might realise that the time has come to alter their partisan allegiance, given these new circumstances. Yet in a certain sense, we are supposed to regard the two occurrences as entirely coincidental and unconnected. At least, Dunleavy and Husbands assure us that it would be quite erroneous to infer that people actually change their vote as a result of their new attitudes about the political world. Is there a possible confusion in the argument here? Surely there is nothing so implausible in the suggestion that attitudes might operate as some kind of intermediary mechanism linking social location and vote under such circumstances. It may be that their real point is to indicate how issue voting writers have often ignored the social sources of attitudinal change; in this sense, the ultimate source of electoral change may be social location and/or ideological agents, but there seems to be little point in rejecting the place of attitudes altogether, even if it is only an intervening variable. This is simply to

throw out the baby with the bathwater. Indeed, even the Michigan model allows a place for influence due to short term issue assessments. Moreover, as I have pointed out elsewhere about Dunleavy and Husbands' work on the 1983 general election:

'Given the accompanying exposition of the shortcomings of the issue voting approach...the ensuing emphasis on the role of issues at the 1983 general election is a little confusing; refer, for example, to statements to the effect that, "In the 1983 general election, Labour lost the issue battle" (p. 180), and that it "...was unable to push to prominence one issue - public services - where it might have been able to gain votes' (Webb 1986: 348).

So do Dunleavy and Husbands regard issues as significant in determining electoral behaviour or not? It sometimes appears that they are not altogether able to make up their minds. They make a serious and strongly worded attack on the issue voting school, yet then go on to infer that issues might be of some importance after all.

So how does the radical model deal with the question of the actual mechanism by which electoral decisions are made? Some sort of rationalistic or instrumental assessment on the part of the voter would seem to be implicit - although, as we have seen, this apparently does not actually involve consideration of any of the issues. Dunleavy and Husbands seek to deny that issue assessment is important. However, they also seem intent upon rejecting the arguments of the partisan identification theorists; socialisation - "social contagion" - of values and identities is not considered by them to offer a serious explanation of why people living and working in close proximity should vote similarly. Rather,

they insist upon the direct impact of social location. This is where they introduce the notion of "sectoral" cleavages. It is evident that one of the most significant socio-political divisions in modern Britain, we are told, lies between those who work and/or consume largely in one or other of either the public or private sectors. These divisions cross-cut lines of class conflict; thus, for instance, manual workers who own their own homes and rarely depend upon public transport may well consider themselves to have different social and political interests to their council house-dwelling, non car-owning counterparts. Stated thus, the consumption sectors theory does perhaps sound uncomfortably like a reformulation of the embourgeoisement thesis for the 1980s. Nevertheless, since the 1960s evidence has quite strongly suggested that housing, at least, is one of the most powerful structural influences on voting in Britain. Indeed, in chapter 5 my own data reveals something of the impact of housing upon voting, but table 4.6 indicates how research traced the growing influence of housing through the 1960s and 1970s.

Table 4.6 - The Influence Of Housing And Other Structural Variables Upon Voting In Britain 1959 - 1979.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Housing</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Sex</u>
1959	15.0	-	3.7	0.6	-	0.5
1964	13.5	-	3.8	0.5	0.6	-
1966	9.7	5.8	3.1	0.5	-	-
1970	4.1	7.1	2.1	-	-	-
1974 (Feb)	9.6	3.1	4.1	-	-	-
1974 (Oct)	3.1	11.9	3.9	-	-	-
1979	0.7	8.4	2.5	-	0.5	-

Note: All figures are percentages derived from an AID tree analysis (see footnote 1.1).

Source: Rose 1982: 152.

However, Heath, Jowell and Curtice have pointed out that occupational effects confound the picture when it is a question of arguing that change in housing tenure has brought about electoral change. They stress that working class home owners in 1983 equalled broadly the same proportion of the electorate as they did in 1964; that is, increases in home ownership had occurred mainly amongst (possibly upwardly mobile) members of the middle class. Therefore, the Conservatives might have benefited from the effects of occupational change as much as from tenure change (Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985: 51-2).

The production sector effect is particularly interesting from our point of view since it provides a potentially direct explanation of the changes in the voting behaviour of trade union members. That is, one could envisage that the pattern of trade unionists' voting behaviour might have changed because of an ever more critical divide between those who work in public and private sectors. Unions may, indeed, even be in the process of becoming important chiefly for the role they play in mobilising the production sector cleavage rather than class cleavage. For this reason we shall be taking a particular look at trade unionists and the production sectors argument in the course of chapter 6. However, for now it is worthwhile noting that little evidence has yet been produced that suggests production sector effects are much more than negligible.

For these reasons, some commentators are rather sceptical about Dunleavy and Husbands' sectoral theories and about the criticism that they level at socialisation or "social

contagion" (See, for example, Franklin 1985: 50-55). Moreover, the sectoral arguments are also open to some doubt on grounds of causal inference; for instance, are graduates in public sector jobs and council housing left wing because of their sectoral locations, or do they choose to live and work in the public sector because of their political convictions? (Harrop 1986: 45) To be fair, the radical model does have the virtue of forcing political scientists to re-think certain matters. For example, Harrop - otherwise largely critical of Dunleavy's work - has conceded that it may have been easily assumed in the past, but "rarely demonstrated", that trade unions do indeed have some sort of a socialisation effect upon their members. Infact, writers like Verba and Nie have reported that political discussions within American labour union milieux are comparatively rare (Verba and Nie 1972: 176-179), and similarly, Butler and Stokes discovered that, at the time of the 1964 general election:

"...there is remarkably little evidence to suggest that the ethos of the workplace, and still less the persuasive efforts of the unions themselves, have much impact on the direction of the worker's party allegiance" (Butler and Stokes 1969: 208).

In short, Dunleavy and Husbands' radical model is a stimulating alternative in many ways - the sectoral arguments are clearly of potential usefulness - but overall the model seems to have too many shortcomings to be really convincing. In a sense, it is perhaps something of a structural anachronism in electoral studies at a time when voting behaviour appears to be floating freer of social anchors than in the past.

Conclusion.

It has been the purpose of this chapter to review critically the literature on electoral change in modern Britain. This is prerequisite to establishing the line of analysis to adopt in the case of trade union members. Thus, for example, the literature review started by considering definitions and measurements of electoral change; this provides a cue to examine the electoral volatility and dealignment patterns of trade unionists between 1964 and 1987. Time has also been spent considering the arguments about models of voting behaviour, and this should be of use for the analysis of union members in Britain. But what can be extracted from the confusing detail of the debates? Some observers have commented upon a certain sterility that has attached itself to aspects of the argument. For instance, Heath, Jowell and Curtice have suggested that the voting act comprises both expressive and and instrumental elements:

"We believe that this antithesis between expressive and instrumental theories of voting behaviour is a false one. We doubt if voters were ever quite so loyal and unthinking in their voting decisions as the old orthodoxy maintained... Programmes and policies have always been important. But it is equally evident that on its own the new orthodoxy of instrumental voting will not do either. If people voted purely on the basis of rational calculation about the benefits the rival parties would bring them, they would never vote at all. The individual vote can make so little difference to the outcome of an election that the rational, instrumental elector would never waste his or her time in going to the ballot box. We have to introduce an expressive or moral element to explain the act of voting itself" (Heath et al 1985: 9).

In a similar vein, Martin Harrop and William Miller have argued that empirical reality is obliging a certain inevitable convergence between partisan identification and issue models.

"...both models portray a voter who pays relatively little attention to politics, who develops a standing commitment to a particular party but is also susceptible to influence by major government successes or failures" (Harrop and Miller 1987: 162).

They also make the not unreasonable point that "we will increasingly ask when particular models are useful rather than whether one particular model has the edge." That is, in periods of stable alignment the partisan identification model is clearly instructive; during times of dealignment and stability, however, issue models will offer a useful guide to the sources of change. If there is a simple way of summarising the outcome of these debates to date, it is perhaps this; modern accounts of electoral behaviour all tend to agree that it comprises both long term partisan predispositions that are characterised by a certain loyalty, and the impact of short term cues. The long term element may be regarded as partisan identification in the sense of the Michigan school, as synoptic values (Heath et al), as critical issues upon which voters "fixate" (Budge and Farlie), or as accumulated retrospective evaluations of party performance (Fiorina); whatever, it is a tangible phenomenon. No less significant, however, is the effect of short term factors such as issues that are salient in the context of particular elections. The evidence of issue and retrospective voting models is testament to this, as is the more recent work on short term individual change during the

election campaign itself (Miller et al 1989, Miller et al 1990). Thus, it is important to focus upon both the long term predispositions of trade unionists as well as their responses to short term cues. We have already mentioned our intention of focusing upon the long term partisan loyalties (or lack of them) that union members have displayed over the past twenty years; in the British context it is also particularly important to look at the question of class alignment and the trade unions. The possibility of weakening class behaviour implies a need to consider the impact of the production sector cleavage, moreover. The retrospective performance model associated with the name of Fiorina is one of the most telling attitudinal models, and will be adopted in chapter 6. Through its introduction we propose to look at the retrospective evaluations of government performance made by union members at recent British elections. This will be complemented by a study of the underlying, or synoptic, political principles by which members adhere. In this way it is hoped to provide a rigorous analysis of the electoral behaviour of British trade unionists which incorporates its basis in long term predispositions and short term cues.

Footnotes.

1. A "significant" trend was designated in both the Rose and Urwin and the Maguire studies as a change equal to at least 0.25% per year.

2. Dividing this forty two year period at approximately the same point as Maguire, we actually find that both the Conservative and Labour parties experienced significant trends in the levels of electoral support that they were able to sustain within each. Thus, between 1945 and 1959, the Labour Party experienced a significant downward trend, and the Conservative Party a significant upward trend; between 1959 and 1987, both parties sustained significant losses - an especially heavy haemorrhage in the case of Labour (see Table 4.1n).

Table 4.1n - Significant Trends In British Party Support, 1945-1987.

National Support			
	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	
1945	39.6	48.0	
1959	49.4	43.8	
1987	42.3	30.8	
<i>Gross electoral change equal to significant trend (ie, 0.25%)</i>		<i>Actual electoral changes</i>	
		<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Labour</i>
1945-87	Plus or minus 10.5%	+2.7%	-17.2%
1945-59	Plus or minus 3.5%	+9.8%	- 4.2%
1959-87	Plus or minus 7.0%	-7.1%	-13.0%

3. Mair has pointed out that it is perhaps possible to obtain an exaggerated impression of electoral change from these figures on volatility. He suggests that it may be more interesting to concentrate upon "inter-block" volatility

than straightforward inter-party volatility. For instance, in Scandinavian countries (some of which include the most volatile electorates of recent years) inter-block volatility (involving a shift of support between parties of the left and the right) amounted to just one-quarter of total net volatility during the 1970s. That is, 75% of all volatility involved a shift of electoral support from one right wing party to another, or from one left wing party to another.

4. The other three countries were Denmark, Ireland and Luxembourg. Less marked decreases in the rate of partisan identification were registered in France, the Federal German Republic, the Netherlands and Italy between 1975 and 1981. Interestingly, perhaps, Mair noted that declining rates of partisan identification seem to have afflicted social democratic parties the most - a similar pattern to that discovered by Maguire in her study of party support.

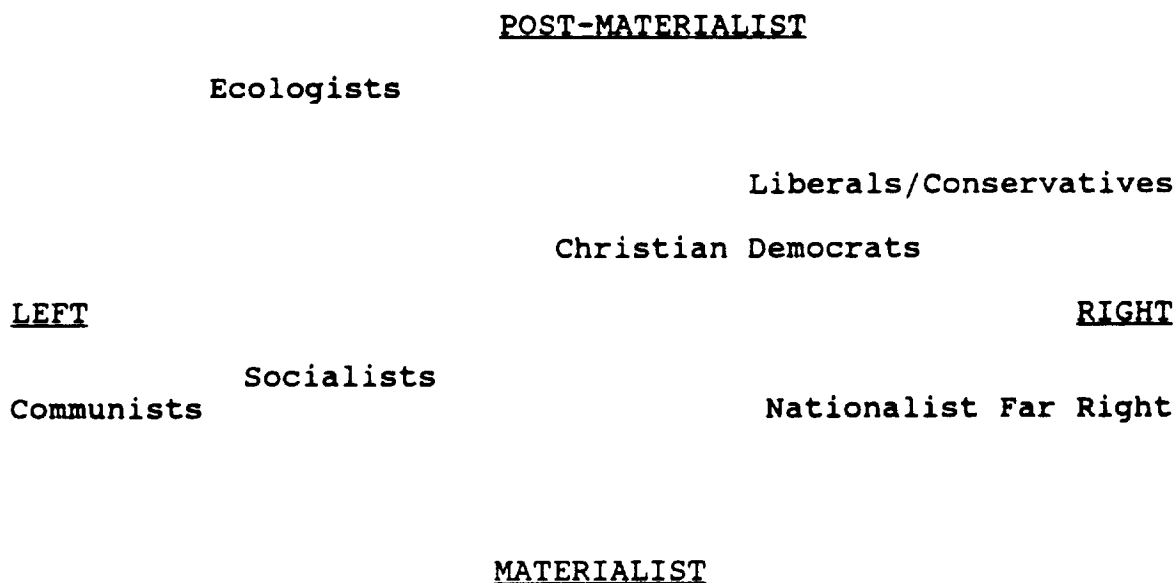
5. An example of a party system suffering electoral instability due to the decline of religion, it has been suggested, is provided by the case of the Netherlands. The theory of cleavage development in modern west European polities was elaborated in a famous piece of work by Stein Rokkan and Seymour Martin Lipset. Briefly, they envisaged the development of modern socio-political cleavage structures out of the impact of two broad historical processes - the "national revolution" and the "industrial revolution". The former was associated with one of two major historical periods in most countries, the Reformation or the "democratic" revolution subsequent to the socio-political earthquake of 1789. Both involved a challenge to the

authority of the Roman church, and provoked conflicts based on religious identity. The industrial revolution provided the basis for two other types of cleavage in modern politics - urban-rural conflicts, and employer-worker conflicts. This latter socio-economic class division has been given a further historical twist by the advent of the Bolshevik revolution, which served to fragment many of the working class movements of western Europe (Rokkan and Lipset 1967: chapter 1).

6. Inglehart's interest in the idea of post-materialism in politics was initially aroused by the view of some observers in the 1960s that advanced industrial society (or "post-industrial" society) was less and less characterised by conflict based upon class interest and ideology (Bell 1960; Lipset 1964). His idea of post-materialism starts from the notion that men have a clear hierarchy of needs - with "materialist" needs (associated with physical and economic security) uppermost in this hierarchy; consequently, he is drawn to the conclusion that generations born into conditions of relative material security will be less concerned with such "basic" goals. He proposes that post-war generations of citizens whose earliest political socialisation took place under conditions of comparative material security, will be characterised by particular concern with "post-material" political issues (or "quality of life" issues, as they are sometimes called). These issues place emphasis on objectives associated with, amongst other things, personal "self-actualisation" (for example, minority rights and fully participatory forms of democracy), unilateral military disarmament, solidarity with, and

support for, under-developed nations, and - above all, perhaps - a concern for the environment. The implications of the irruption of post-materialist issues onto western political agendas - if such there be - could be of great significance. The concerns of the "post-materialist left" do not always coincide happily with those of the traditional left; indeed, Inglehart has demonstrated that, by employing techniques of factor analysis, it is possible to distinguish two distinct and quite unrelated "lefts" and "rights" in terms of the attitudinal profiles of modern European electorates. Post-materialist activists may pursue various strategies of political mobilisation; for instance, they might actually attempt to create a new political party that embodies all they claim to stand for. Alternatively, they may try to win influence within established parties (Poguntke 1987: 79-80). Either way, they wield some potential to disrupt established patterns of alignment.

Figure 4.1N - Materialist And Post-Materialist Political Space.



Source: Inglehart and Rabier 1986: 471

7. For example, Pool et al simulated the aggregate voting patterns by state in the USA by employing the assumption that inter-state differences depended upon the internal distribution of various social groups. By cross-classifying demographic variables such as region, occupation, gender, race and so on, a set of 410 different voter types were defined. Final predictions were then based upon the proportion of usual Democratic voters within each type, and the proportion of each type within the electorate of each state (Pool et al 1964).

8. The salariat comprises managers, supervisors of non-manual employees, professionals and semi-professionals. Such individuals all have some degree of authority over other workers, have greater prospects of promotion, more job security and better fringe benefits than working class employees; since they are often less dispensable because of their particular skills, and more likely to negotiate their own work and pay conditions, these employees are also less given to collective action than other workers. The petit bourgeoisie have different economic interests to both the salariat and the working class. It is a category that slices across the manual/non-manual barrier, but its members are directly exposed to the whims of the market being without the cushioning effects of either "bureaucratic employment or trade union membership". Foremen and technicians comprise a kind of "blue collar elite" with authority over the mass of the workers, and for that reason they are set apart in Heath's scheme. Finally, routine non-manual employees include clerks, salesworkers and secretaries who have some of the advantages of bureaucratic and professional

employment but for low wages and with little authority. For practical purposes, Heath often collapses this five-class model into a simpler three-class one; this is effected by combining the routine non-manual, petit bourgeois and foremen categories into a single "intermediate" class. This helps to maintain the size of frequencies in table cells and eases substantive interpretation, and is a practical step that I repeat in chapter 5 (Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985: 13-16, 53).

9. The odds ratio is a useful technique for measuring relative, as opposed to absolute, class voting. Measures of absolute class voting (such as the Alford index, which we shall be encountering during the course of subsequent analysis) concentrate upon the aggregate of electors who vote according to their nominal social class. By contrast, the odds ratio focuses upon the question of the relative proportions of party support coming from different classes. "Thus, for example, a decline in the Labour vote which is due to both middle class and working class socialists switching to the Alliance means that absolute class voting has declined, though relative class voting has remained constant. If, on the other hand, Labour loses votes among the working class but retains its middle class supporters then relative and absolute class voting will both decline" (Marshall, Newby, Rose and Vogler 1988: 230). The potential weakness of relying upon measures of absolute class voting is that they can encourage misleading impressions of class decomposition; absolute class voting may decline as a party adopts universally unpopular policies which lose it support equally across all classes - but under such circumstances we

can properly infer nothing about class cohesion. All we know is that purely political factors have affected party support. The odds ratio works by comparing the odds on a working class voter supporting Labour rather than the Conservatives with the odds on a middle class voter doing so. The debate between Crewe and Heath on the comparative merits of relative and absolute measures of class voting can be viewed in Heath et al 1985: 31-4, and Crewe 1986, but further comments of considerable interest have been made by Elinor Scarbrough (Scarbrough 1986: 10-11). She makes two points which to some extent counter Heath's attack upon absolute class voting; firstly, she claims that the odds ratio can distort the overall picture of class voting by giving excessive weight to what is happening in one class. A simple illustration serves as the best explanation. If 80% of the working class voted for the Labour Party, and 10% Conservative, whereas 45% of the middle class voted Labour and another 45% Conservative, then this would produce an odds ratio of 8, indicating a high degree of class voting. Yet clearly, class voting would actually only be occurring in one class, the working class. At the very least, reference to something like the Alford index would constitute a useful supplement in such a case. The second point raised by Scarbrough is really a criticism of the particular way in which Heath calculates the odds ratio, rather than a tilt at the odds ratio per se. Her argument here is that Heath's version of the odds ratio is useful only in the case of a two-party system. In this instance, a non-class vote is the same thing as a cross class vote. However, in a two-class, three (or more) party system, a non-class vote "can be cast without engaging in cross-class voting" (Scarbrough 1986:

8). Scarbrough insists upon the importance of accounting properly for third party voters. Thus, whereas Heath constructs an odds ratio in the following manner:

Conservative vote/Labour vote within working class
 Conservative vote/Labour vote within middle class,

it ought really to be constructed as:

Labour vote/other party vote within working class
 Conservative vote/other party vote within middle class.

This substantially alters the picture that odds ratios present of the history of class voting in Britain. As table 4.2n illustrates, regardless of the class scheme employed, the odds ratio now seems to support the contention that class dealignment has, in fact, taken place. Far from the pattern of "trendless fluctuation" that Heath (and indeed, Marshall et al) adamantly suggest we find, it would appear that the level of class voting - even relative class voting - did indeed fall between 1964 and 1983.

Table 4.2n - The History Of Class Voting 1964 - 1983: Comparing Heath's And Scarbrough's Methods Of Constructing Odds Ratios.

	Manual/Non-manual		Salarial/Working Class	
	Heath	Scarbrough	Heath	Scarbrough
1964	6.4	2.8	9.3	3.7
1966	6.4	3.3	7.3	3.5
1970	4.5	2.5	4.9	2.2
1974 (Feb.)	5.7	1.5	6.1	1.5
1974 (Oct.)	4.8	1.3	5.5	1.5
1979	3.7	1.5	4.9	1.7
1983	3.9	0.9	6.3	1.2

Source: Scarbrough 1986: 11.

10. Heath claims to be able to demonstrate his argument by presenting the following evidence on class voting (using the manual/non-manual dichotomy only) since 1945:

Table 4.3n - Class Voting Since 1945.

	<u>Non-manual Conservatives plus manual Labour voters as a proportion of electorate</u>	<u>Odds Ratios</u>
1945	62	4.8
1950	62	5.5
1951	67	6.3
1955	65	5.9
1959	61	6.1
1964	63	6.4
1966	66	6.4
1970	60	4.5
1974 (Feb.)	55	5.7
1974 (Oct.)	54	4.8
1979	55	3.7
1983	47	3.9

Source: Heath et al 1985: 30

11. Alt and his colleagues summarised their evidence against the likelihood of persuasion taking place on a widespread scale in the following table, which reports the extent to which electors actually voted for the party with whom they identified.

		Strength of partisan identification			
		Very	Fairly	Not	Very
		<u>Strong</u>	<u>Strong</u>	<u>Strong</u>	<u>All</u>
Perceived proximity to party on issue	Own party closer	87	77	60	78
	Parties Equidistant	71	56	40	57
	Other party Closer	57	35	18	35
	All	80	65	44	

Note: All figures are percentages.

Source: Alt et al 1976: 288.

**Chapter 5 - Voting Behaviour Of Trade Union Members (1):
Partisan And Class Dealignment, 1964 - 1987.**

Having reviewed much of the literature that has been produced on electoral behaviour in Britain, it is time to turn directly to the analysis of trade union members. Specifically, this will entail examination, over the course of the next two chapters, of the impact that union membership has on vote, partisanship, broad political and social values, and the way that people assess governmental performance. We shall start in this chapter by considering questions of the stability of union members' voting behaviour, their rate of partisan dealignment and of class voting. In Chapter 6 we shall turn to the questions of how far, if at all, unions are able to mobilise the production sector cleavage or to affect members' political attitudes (both synoptic predispositions and short term performance evaluations). The data comes from a series of election studies started by Butler and Stokes in the 1960s, before switching to the direction of Crewe, Sarlvik, Alt and Robertson, and more recently to that of Anthony Heath. ¹

The Changing Vote.

In this section, we shall commence our analysis by considering the basic pattern of electoral change among trade unionists, and the general impact of union membership on vote. For the most part, we shall be concentrating upon gross changes across the years between 1964 and 1987, but

table 5.1 permits us to look at the broad relationship between vote and union membership for every election during the period. This is a useful introduction, for it enables us to see two basic things that have happened; firstly, by concentrating the Labour vote, we can see a basic pattern of change which suggests a prima facie link with the estrangement of the party from the unions. In 1970, Labour lost support amongst members and non-members alike, recouping some of this loss among members, but *not among non-members*, by October 1974. (The detailed electoral consequences of party-union estrangement between 1964-1974 have been established in Freyman 1980.) In 1979, unionists turned away from Labour once more, whilst non-union alignment did not alter greatly. Table 5.1a provides the second point of interest, which is that the overall impact of unionisation upon the two-party vote seems to have declined, at least since 1974. This is evident from the simple indices created by subtracting the percentage of non-members voting for a party from the percentage of members doing so. We can see in table 5.1a that this union/non-union difference has diminished since 1979. The nature and extent of change is demonstrated especially clearly by the odds ratios between unionists and non-unionists on two-party voting. The odds ratio was introduced in Chapter 4, and it is a simple technique that we shall be using again later as we consider the importance of trade unions for class voting; but at this point it serves as a useful means of examining the general distinctiveness of trade unionist voting. There is, in fact, more than one set of odds ratios reported in table 5.1a; the different ratios are designed to take account of slightly

different processes of electoral change that might conceivably have been occurring since 1964. The ratios reported in the top row are conceptually the simplest, and correspond to the classic assumption of two party competition in Britain. Here, we simply take the odds on a trade union member voting Labour rather than Conservative, and divide them by the odds on a non-member doing so. An odds ratio of 1:1 would indicate that the relative strengths of the two parties were identical amongst unionists and non-unionists alike. To reiterate, the emphasis here is really upon the relationship between the levels of electoral support garnered by the major two parties alone. The odds ratios reported in the second row go beyond the assumption that only two parties are really important to party competition and voting in Britain, however. Here trade unionists are contrasted with non-unionists in terms of the odds on them voting for Labour as against any other party, rather than just the Conservatives. The point here is that we are allowing for flows of support away from Labour to third parties as well as to the Conservatives; this is an important consideration in view of the well recognised growth of minor party voting in Britain over the past twenty years. Thus, these ratios might be called *third party effect odds ratios*, as opposed to the simple two party effect odds ratios we considered first. Finally, it is interesting to consider the possibility that trade unionists might be increasingly distinctive in terms of whom they do not support, rather than whom they *do* support. Modern unionists might not be as strongly pro-Labour as they once were, but they may well remain resolutely anti-Conservative given the well publicised onslaught of Conservative governments upon

traditional union privileges and forms of action over the past decade. Therefore, the odds ratios in the final row compare trade unionists and non-unionists in terms of the chances of them voting for any party other than the Conservatives rather than for the Conservatives. These can consequently be thought of as anti-Conservative odds ratios.

These ratios not only indicate the overall decline in trade unionist distinctiveness since 1964, but also have the added advantage of summarising very neatly the effect of the switches in alignment mentioned above. What is interesting is that all three different types of ratio are in fundamental concurrence with regard to the essential story they convey. Up to 1970, the odds on union members voting distinctly, however that is defined, fell slightly. That is, the distinctiveness of unionists vis a vis non-unionists diminished a little, in terms of the pattern of their two-party vote, their pro-Labour support and their anti-Conservatism. What is more, these changing odds ratios owe more to the vagaries of union members' behaviour than to that of non-members. It tends to be trade unionists' odds which change more than those of non-unionists. By October 1974, the pattern of odds ratio movements reverses itself, however; no matter how it is defined, the odds ratio increases notably as trade unionists again swing back to Labour. And once more it is the shift of union members' preferences - this time against Labour - that produces a sharp decline in the odds ratios in 1979; this decline continues in 1983 and is consolidated in 1987. Throughout, it seems that the volatile factor is the pattern of alignment displayed by the unionists in our sample;

Table 5.1 - Vote By Union Membership, 1964-1987.

	1964		1966	
	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>
Conservative	23.3	46.5	19.4	41.9
Labour	58.3	30.6	59.3	34.9
Other	8.1	13.4	8.1	8.1
Abstained	<u>10.4</u>	<u>9.6</u>	<u>13.1</u>	<u>15.2</u>
	100.1	100.1	99.9	100.1
	1970		Feb. 1974	
	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>
Conservative	23.1	45.2	20.3	43.4
Labour	51.0	28.9	48.7	25.6
Other	5.6	7.9	19.4	18.1
Abstained	<u>20.4</u>	<u>18.1</u>	<u>11.4</u>	<u>12.9</u>
	100.1	100.1	99.8	100.0
	Oct. 1974		1979	
	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>
Conservative	17.1	39.5	27.1	45.8
Labour	52.2	26.6	42.7	27.3
Other	16.1	18.6	15.5	12.2
Abstained	<u>14.4</u>	<u>15.4</u>	<u>14.6</u>	<u>14.8</u>
	99.8	100.1	99.9	100.1
	1983		1987	
	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>
Conservative	27.3	40.9	27.5	41.5
Labour	33.0	20.8	37.1	23.3
Other	23.2	20.4	24.3	20.6
Abstained	<u>16.3</u>	<u>17.8</u>	<u>11.2</u>	<u>14.6</u>
	99.8	99.9	100.1	100.0

Note: Union member category for February 1974 includes "household members", that is, respondents who are not actually unionists themselves, but who live in households which have members. Throughout, all crosstabular relationships based on election survey data are statistically significant at the 1% level.

Source for the figures for 1966-74, Freyman 1980: 145.

Table 5.1a - The Effect Of Union Membership On Vote, 1964 to 1987.

	<u>1964</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1970</u>
Conservative	-23.2	-22.5	-22.1
Labour	+27.7	+24.4	+22.1

Odds ratios

Two party	3.79	3.69	3.45
Third party	3.17	2.70	2.54
Anti-Conservative	2.86	2.99	2.75

	<u>February 1974</u>	<u>October 1974</u>	<u>1979</u>
Conservative	-23.1	-22.4	-18.7
Labour	+23.1	+25.6	+15.4

Odds ratios

Two party	4.07	4.55	2.63
Two party	2.79	3.03	1.97
Anti-Conservative	3.02	3.17	2.28

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1987</u>
Conservative	-13.6	-14.0
Labour	+12.2	+13.8

Odds ratios

Two Party	2.37	2.41
Third party	1.88	1.97
Anti-Conservative	1.85	1.87

Note: These figures for Conservative and Labour voting are simply the differences in rates of alignment between members and non-members, expressed in terms of percentage points. The odds ratios presented summarise the differing likelihoods of, alternatively, voting Labour instead of Conservative, or Labour instead of any other party, or any way other than Conservative, for unionists and non-unionists (see text).

non-unionist voting odds are far less likely to alter significantly. ² The only irregularity of any note in the message conveyed by the different types of odds ratio concerns their sizes relative to one another. At all elections trade unionists are most sharply distinguished

from non-unionists in terms of their two-party voting; between 1966 and 1979 the next criterion by which they differed was their anti-Conservatism, but in 1964, 1983 and 1987 the third party ratio proved a slightly stronger basis for differentiation.

Table 5.2 - Vote By Union Membership For Manuals And Non-Manuals, 1964 And 1987.

	1964			
	Manual		Non-manual	
	Member	Non-member	Member	Non-member
Conservative	20.5	35.6	40.3	60.9
Labour	65.5	37.6	27.3	18.5
Other	4.4	13.3	20.6	13.9
Abstained	9.7	13.5	11.7	6.7
	100.1	100.0	99.9	100.0

	1987			
	Manual		Non-manual	
	Member	Non-member	Member	Non-member
Conservative	22.8	31.0	33.2	49.8
Labour	43.6	34.5	28.9	14.1
Other	21.3	17.5	28.1	23.5
Abstained	12.3	17.0	9.7	12.6
	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0

Table 5.2a - Union Effect On Vote For Manuals And Non-Manuals, 1964 And 1987.

	1964		1987	
	Manual	Non-manual	Manual	Non-manual
Conservative	-15.1	-20.6	- 8.2	-16.6
Labour	+27.9	+ 8.8	+ 9.1	+14.8

Odds ratios

Two party	3.02	2.27	1.72	3.11
Third party	3.17	1.65	1.48	2.56
Anti-Conservative	2.14	2.31	1.52	1.99

Table 5.2 is interesting in so far as it suggests that the apparent weakening of the relationship between unionisation and vote is more than a simple consequence of the changing occupational structure of union membership. That is, we might expect that as trade union membership has been becoming less typically manual in composition (see table 5.3n), unionisation could quite spuriously appear to be less closely correlated to Labour vote than hitherto. Thus, whilst unionism per se might be having as much effect as ever on the way people vote, it could possibly be the case that less unionists are voting Labour because less of them are working class.³ Indeed, others have demonstrated that such was the case in 1974; after controlling for the confounding influence of other social background variables (chief amongst which came occupational class), it was found that unionisation actually had a greater impact on voting choice than a decade before (Freyman 1980: 155-156; Franklin 1985: 119-120). Our evidence may initially bring us to question whether this remained the case by 1987, however; as can be seen, there was a notable decline in the impact that it had, even - indeed especially - upon manual workers. This is confirmed by the substantial drop in the sizes of all the odds ratios for manual workers; moreover, it is clear that this drop is mainly provoked by the declining distinctiveness of the electoral preferences of those manuals who are union members. For instance, whilst the two-party and third party odds for non-members remained virtually unchanged between 1964 and 1987, they declined heavily for their counterparts in the trade unions. The

anti-Conservative odds tell a slightly different story; while these fell moderately for manual trade unionists, they actually increased notably for non-unionist blue collar workers. ⁴ Nevertheless, it is evident that it has been within the "core" Labour constituency of manual trade unionists that the move away from the party has been particularly heavy. Being a member of a trade union was far less likely to make a manual worker pro-Labour, and somewhat less likely to make him or her anti-Conservative, in 1987 than it was in 1964. This finding, in turn, is interesting in so far as it hints once again at the political estrangement of important sections of Labour's traditional core constituency. Remember also that, in one sense at least, the impact of social change upon manual workers must be discounted given that, by definition, they can not have been subjected to the effects of *upward social mobility*. And such mobility constitutes a major, if not the only, kind of social change. ⁵ Consequently, the *prima facie* view that the particularly heavy swing away from Labour amongst unionised manuals has resulted from the particular disillusionment of this group with the Labour Party over the past twenty years or so is strengthened. Moreover, as Freyman has shown, this trend away from Labour has not been a continuous and smooth one over the entire period; again, he found that it followed a pattern which coincides with the state of political relations between the party and the unions. Broadly, this means that there was a shift from Labour amongst manual workers generally in 1970 - largely in the form of abstention rather than a vote for the Conservatives - followed by a switch back to Labour by October 1974 within the ranks of *unionised manuals* only.

Thus, we have a fairly clear indication that the traditional core of working class trade unionists was sensitive to the political events of the period.

However, it should be noted that the net overall impact of union membership can only really be assessed in the context of the potential influence of a broad range of other factors in the social background of individuals that help determine their voting behaviour. That is, occupation is only one possible factor that could obscure the picture of the true relationship between trade union membership and vote. Thus, whilst bivariate relationships are interesting, it has to be said that the voting decision is very likely to result from the interplay of a number of influences, both social and political. Therefore, it is useful to construct a model of voting behaviour from which we can derive an impression of the particular importance of trade unionism in a wider context. An appropriate way of doing this is to include unionisation and a series of other social background variables in a model of voting which is subjected to a *multiple classification analysis*. Using this technique, derived from a simple analysis of variance procedure, coefficients may be produced which summarise the relationship between unionisation and vote whilst controlling for the effects of other influences in the social background of individuals. In some ways these coefficients (based on the eta statistic) are analogous to the beta weights of regression analysis. ⁶ Given that the essence of social background effects in Britain for the greater part of the period since the war has generally been held to be that of social class, and that historically

unionism has been closely bound up with class in the country, it follows that our model should basically be one of class voting. The variables selected for this model are those of unionisation, occupation, housing status, years in education, and the occupation of parents. Introducing these variables into a model of vote, we are able to extract a beta coefficient expressing the uncontaminated relationship between union membership and vote whilst holding constant the effects of all other independent variables. Whereas this coefficient stood at 0.16 in 1964, it had declined to just 0.11 by 1987. ⁷

	Beta coefficient		Significance of effect	
	1964	1987	1964	1987
Occupation	0.19	0.15	0.000	0.000
Unionisation	0.16	0.11	0.000	0.000
Housing	0.16	0.22	0.000	0.000
Parental occupation	0.12	0.13	0.000	0.000
Education	0.04	0.03	0.000	0.186
Multiple R ²	0.183	0.145	0.000	0.000

Thus it would seem that union membership lost some of its importance in determining vote over the period that concerns us, and that this probably reflects to a considerable extent the decline in its capacity to make manual workers vote Labour. At this point, one might suggest three plausible reasons for the weakening of this effect. The first two are linked to somewhat opposed conceptions of how people vote; one is concerned with the development in the course of the 1970s of the production sectors cleavage, an important effect of which might have been the cross-cutting of unionist alignment patterns as those in the private sector

turned away from Labour. Of this, more anon (see chapter 6)⁸. The second possible explanation is drawn from the school of thought which stresses the growing impact of *issue assessments* on the way that people vote. Here we would be concerned with the impact of trade unions on the issue evaluations that people make. Thus, the reason that trade unions seemed to be growing in importance for voting choice in 1974 might very simply have been that industrial relations and the political role of unions were issues of central importance to the elections of that year. (As they were, of course, to the subsequent election in May 1979.) By the middle of the 1980s, however, it is arguable that the question of industrial relations, whilst not unimportant as a political question in general terms, was in many ways not contentious as an election issue which split union member from non-member in the way that it had done a decade earlier. That is, it was no longer a salient issue at election time. As we have seen, there is evidence to suggest that major elements of the Thatcher government's legislation on unions and industrial relations were popular with unionist and non-unionist alike. Finally, the factors undermining class alignment within the ranks of manual union members might have rendered the unions obsolete as determinants of voting behaviour; if it was once the case that the influence that unions had upon voting stemmed from the role they fulfilled in mobilising class politics, then it follows that social, political and organisational changes eroding this role would have left unions with no way of maintaining any impact on electoral behaviour for the present.

Indications Of The Extent Of Electoral Change Among Union Members

At the outset of chapter 4, we mentioned that there seem to be three main ways of measuring electoral change; it is interesting at this juncture to expand our analysis by considering union members in terms of these measures. For example, if we apply the criterion first developed by Richard Rose and Derek Urwin, and later replicated by Maria Maguire, it is possible to see that there has indeed been significant change in the levels of partisan support displayed by trade union members. Recalling that Rose and Urwin declared that a rate of change equal to a minimum of 0.25% a year could reasonably be considered "significant", we should need to find a net change of at least plus or minus 5.75% in the support received by any given party over the twenty three years covering the period from 1964 to 1987. The changes that have actually been recorded are presented in table 5.3.

Table 5.3 - Net Changes In Party Support Between 1964 And 1987.

	<u>Members</u>	<u>Non-members</u>
Conservative	+ 4.2	- 5.0
Labour	-21.2	- 7.3
Other	+16.2	+ 7.2
Abstained	+ 0.8	+ 5.0

Note: All figures are percentage points.

As can be seen, changes in Labour and third party support have reached the standard of significance laid down by Rose and Urwin. However, it is also fairly obvious that overall

Figure 3. The total amount of water and
 the amount of water in the soil (mm)

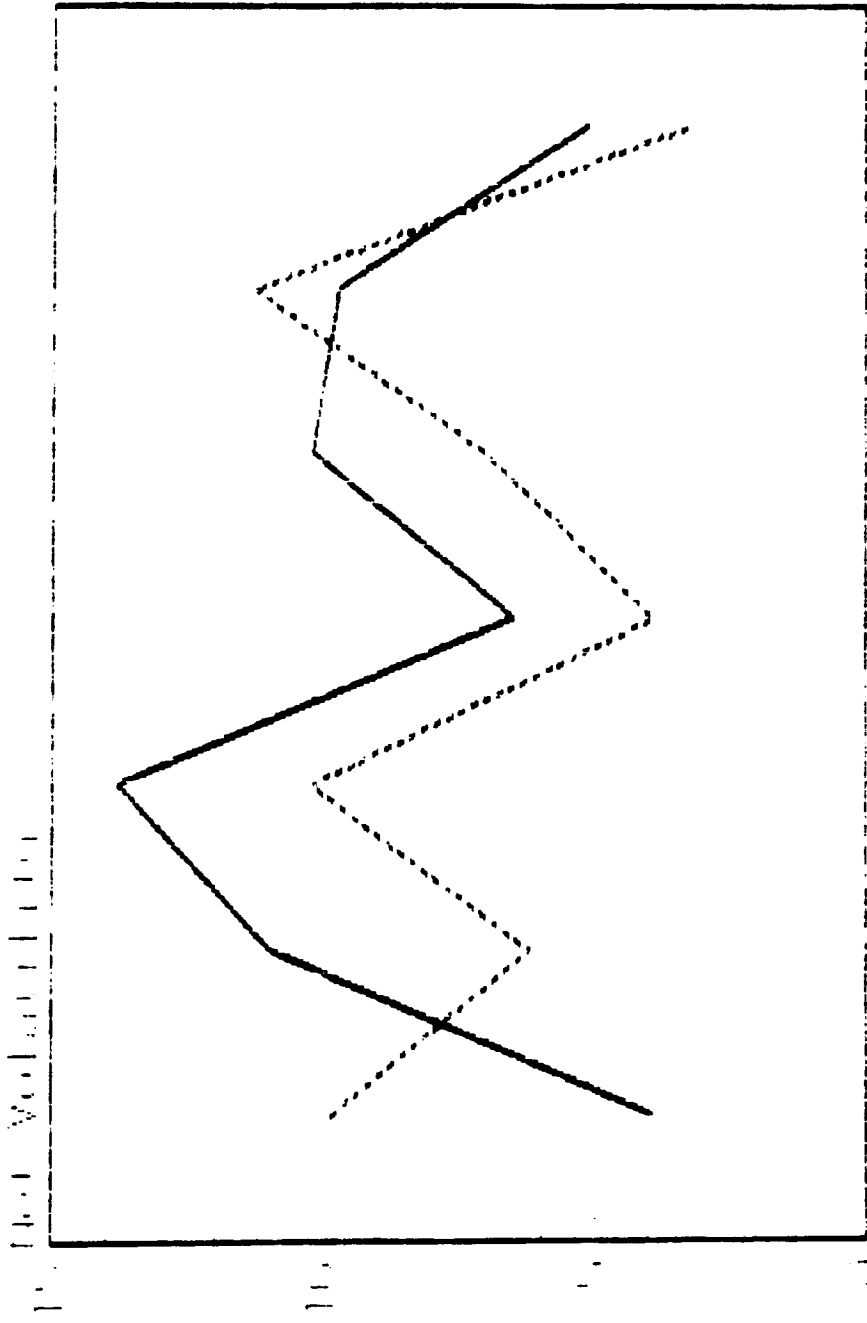


Figure 3. The total amount of water and the amount of water in the soil (mm)

electoral change has been greater among members than it has been among non-members. (The average net change amongst members is 10.6, compared to 6.1 amongst non-members.) Indeed, this impression is confirmed when we turn to the second of the three measures of electoral change that were introduced in chapter 4, that of electoral volatility. Figure 5.1 illustrates the changes in net volatility (Pedersen Index) displayed by members and non-members across every pair of elections between 1964 and 1987.

This graph reveals several interesting points. Firstly, as suggested above, union members' behaviour seems to have been somewhat more volatile than that of their non-union counterparts, taking the period as a whole. Aggregate net volatility (based on overall change between the beginning and end of the period of study) for members was 21.2, compared to 12.2 for non-members; the average figures for net volatility between any consecutive pair of elections within the period are not so greatly differentiated, since they stand at 8.6 and 7.4 respectively. But behind the apparent fluctuations, it should be said that the net volatility of trade unionists is higher than it was at the start of the study, whereas that of non-unionists is now lower. This lends an impression of an upward trend in the level of volatility displayed by union members which is not apparent for non-members. A further contrast between the patterns of volatility shown by members and non-members is revealed within the graph; union members manifested a quite distinct and sharp up-turn in volatility between the elections of 1966 and 1970. Clearly, events during the intervening period are likely to have done something to

disturb the political loyalties of union memberships. Once again, the political history of the years between 1970 and 1974 shook up the electorate in general - but union members proved especially sensitive. The period between the two elections of 1974 was clearly too short to expect any great alterations in political alignment; in many ways, October served to consolidate the pattern emerging in February. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find a drop in net volatility by October 1974. But by 1979 the union question was once more to the fore in British politics, and this was reflected in the universal increase in electoral volatility; once again, it was union members who proved most volatile. By contrast, 1983 was probably the first election since 1966 in which union issues did not play a particularly prominent role in the election, and this is reflected in the fact that, for the first time since 1966, trade unionists' net volatility falls below that of non-unionists.

The third of the indicators of electoral change that was originally outlined in the last chapter was the rate of partisan dealignment; specifically, this is revealed by the changing rate and strength of partisan identification displayed by various sections of the electorate. The details of partisanship and unionisation since 1964 are introduced in tables 5.4 and 5.4a; as with vote, it seems that the effect of union membership dropped over the period. It is particularly interesting, perhaps, that the most notable fall in trade unionists' partisan feeling for Labour occurred in 1974, even though the relative odds on them actually voting for the party at the polls improved that year. Again, the story of changing partisan loyalty is best

conveyed by considering odds ratios; such ratios can be calculated for partisanship in precisely the same way that they were for actual voting (see table 5.4a). The two party pattern resembles that found for vote in so far as the (rather slighter) decline of union impact in 1970 was recouped in February 1974 only to be followed by a more considerable decline in 1979. In general, the decline in distinctive partisan loyalty declared by trade unionists provides a smoother and more obviously linear trend than actual voting change does, but it is no less tangible for that. The pattern is in some respects a little different when third party effects are allowed for (indeed, it is a smoother linear trend), and even more so when the odds on identifying with any party other than the Conservatives are considered. However, in one important regard there is concurrence; odds ratios are much smaller in 1987 than in 1964, no matter how they are conceived. The most notable drop in the size of two party odds ratios occurs in 1979, whereas it occurs in February 1974 in the case of third party ratios and 1970 for anti-Conservative ratios. But the essential feature emerging from all these measures is that trade union membership makes much less difference to partisan identification now than in 1964. Thus, union membership has less impact on both partisanship and vote. As much is confirmed by the percentage point differences between unionists and non-unionists, which are also reported in table 5.4a. And once more, it would seem that the crucial element in these changes is the behaviour of trade unionists themselves rather than that of non-unionists. ⁹

Table 5.4 - Partisanship By Unionisation, 1964-1987.

	1964		1966	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Conservative	24.6	49.2	20.2	47.4
Labour	62.7	34.2	61.8	35.0
Other*	<u>12.7</u>	<u>16.5</u>	<u>18.1</u>	<u>17.6</u>
	100.0	99.9	100.1	100.0
	1970		February 1974	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Conservative	26.0	48.7	23.1	47.1
Labour	60.7	33.7	53.9	31.5
Other*	<u>13.4</u>	<u>17.4</u>	<u>23.0</u>	<u>21.4</u>
	100.1	99.8	100.0	100.0
	October 1974		1979	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Conservative	22.5	44.0	25.0	45.5
Labour	52.6	31.0	49.6	32.0
Other*	<u>24.8</u>	<u>24.9</u>	<u>25.4</u>	<u>22.5</u>
	99.9	99.9	100.0	100.0
	1983		1987	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Conservative	29.0	46.1	30.4	48.0
Labour	48.0	31.1	46.3	31.2
Other*	<u>23.0</u>	<u>22.6</u>	<u>23.3</u>	<u>20.8</u>
	100.0	99.8	100.0	100.0

Note: *Other figures include those without partisanship.

Source for 1966-1974, Freyman 1980: 190.

Table 5.4a - Union Effect On Partisanship, 1964-1987.

	1964	1966	1970	Feb.1974
Conservative	-24.6	-27.2	-22.7	-24.0
Labour	+28.5	+26.8	+27.0	+22.4
<i>Odds ratio</i>				
Two party	3.64	4.14	3.38	3.48
Third party	3.23	3.00	3.02	2.54
Anti-Conservative	2.98	3.56	2.71	2.97
	Oct.1974	1979	1983	1987
Conservative	-21.5	-20.5	-17.1	-17.6
Labour	+21.6	+17.6	+16.9	+15.1
<i>Odds ratio</i>				
Two party	3.34	2.83	2.48	2.34
Third party	2.47	2.09	2.04	1.91
Anti-Conservative	2.29	2.50	2.09	2.12

Peculiarities in the rate of partisan identification claimed by union members can be elaborated upon in further ways. Even the most cursory glance at table 5.5 reveals that net change in the rates of partisan identification was greater for members between 1964 and 1987 than it was for non-members.

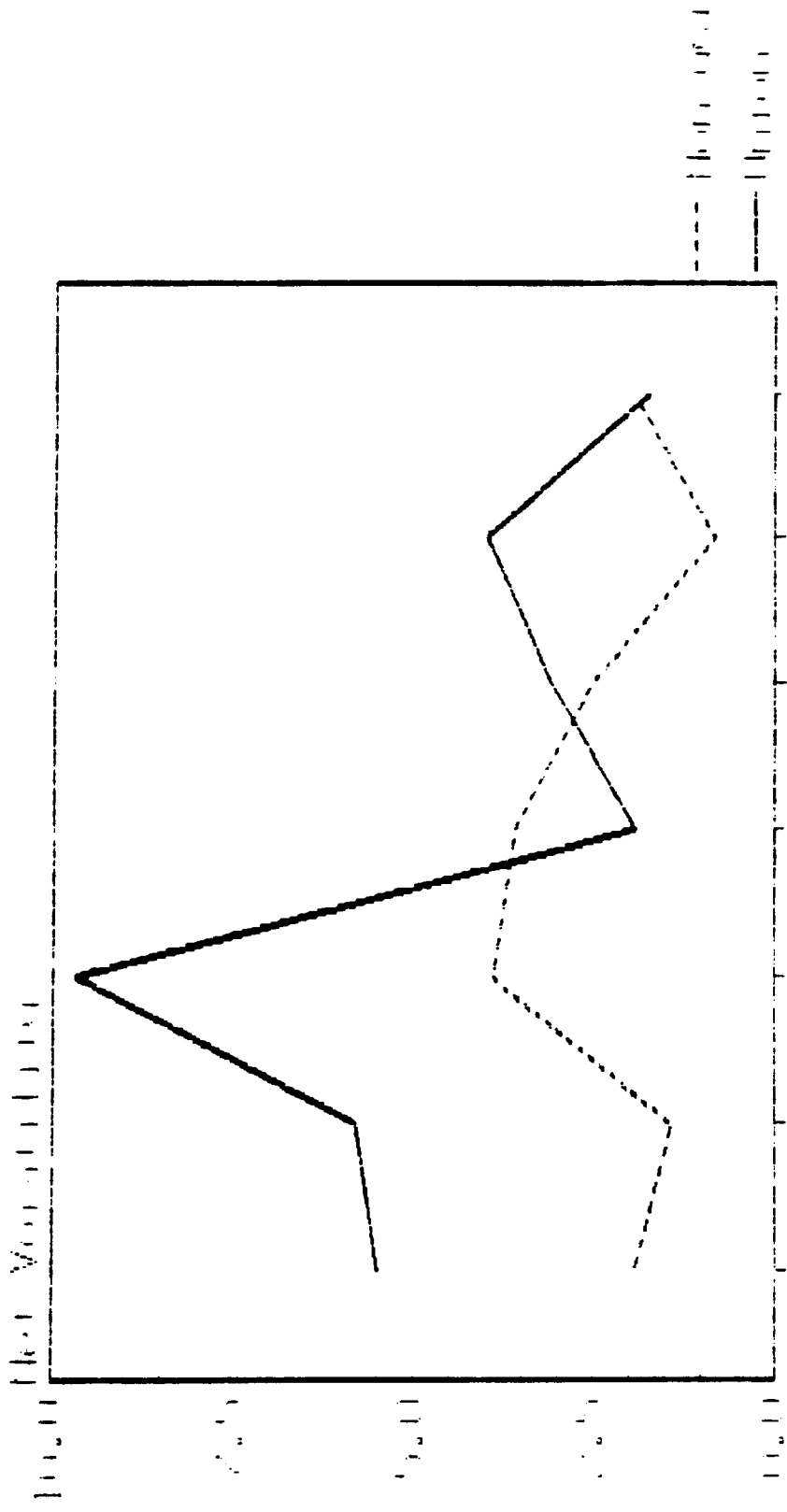
Table 5.5 - Net Change In Partisan Identification Between 1964 And 1987.

	<u>Members</u>	<u>Non-members</u>
Conservative	+ 5.8	- 1.2
Labour	-16.4	- 3.0
Other	+10.6	+ 4.3

Note: All figures are percentage points.

A useful way of summarising these changes is to calculate rates of net volatility of partisan identification, as we did for vote itself. Aggregate volatility of partisan

Estimation of the Generalized Probability by Method and the number of Trials and Days



Estimation of the Generalized Probability by Method and the number of Trials and Days

Estimated Probability

identity across the entire period works out to be 4.5 for trade union members, compared to 2.3 for non-members. As one would expect, these actual figures are considerably lower than the corresponding calculations for volatility of vote; (to recollect, for instance, aggregate net volatility of vote for members over the period as a whole was 21.2). Again, this tends to confirm that people do not necessarily change their underlying sense of partisan identity when they change their vote. Nevertheless, the pattern of change is substantially the same for partisan loyalty and for actual vote. In particular, it is clear that the Labour Party suffered from a particularly acute haemorrhage of partisan loyalty amongst trade union members (see figure 5.2).

However, it should be remembered that we are only looking at part of the picture in so far as partisan identification is concerned, for it is useful to know not only of the *direction* of partisanship, but also of the *strength* with which it held. This is interesting since it is very likely that some relationship exists between the strength of partisanship and the impact of short term issue effects on voting choice. For example, Freyman discovered that unionism had a clearly independent effect on vote, over and above that of prior partisanship, only amongst those with "fairly" or "not very" strong partisan identities. That is, in so far as union membership had an effect that could not be accounted for by partisan identification, it only operated on those with weaker partisan identities (Freyman 1980: 194-196). And since partisan identification is about

engrained long term loyalties, we may presume then that this must be an effect that works via people's assessments of short term factors.

Table 5.6 - Strength And Direction Of Partisanship By Unionisation, 1964 And 1987.

	1964		1987	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Very strong Labour	33.5	13.8	12.5	8.9
Fairly strong Labour	23.0	15.7	21.1	13.7
Not very strong Labour	6.2	4.7	12.5	8.6
Other partisanship	12.7	16.5	23.6	21.0
Not very strong Conservative	3.2	5.5	8.6	10.6
Fairly strong Conservative	10.5	20.9	17.3	24.8
Very strong Conservative	<u>10.9</u>	<u>22.8</u>	<u>4.4</u>	<u>12.4</u>
	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0

Table 5.6 permits us to see that between 1964 and 1987 there was a definite shift from strong major party identification to weak major party identification, and towards minor party identification and no identification, which affected unionists and non-unionists alike, but more especially the former. Overall, we see that there was a 16.6 percentage point drop in the level of Labour partisans amongst union members compared with a 3.1 percentage drop amongst non-members. But in addition, it is clear that even of those who do claim to retain a basic affinity with Labour, fewer are inclined to view this as a reasonably strong attachment. Over half of all trade unionists who claimed a Labour partisanship in 1964 felt that it was "very strong" (compared to two-fifths of non-unionists); by 1987, just 27.1% of the former, and 28.5% of the latter, maintained such a firm sense of commitment to the party.

The overall changes in these tables are not easily absorbed at first glance; it is therefore helpful to calculate the lead that Labour has over the Conservatives in terms of a measure of partisanship that accounts for the strength as well as the direction of partisan feelings. This is done by simply weighting the proportion of the electorate in each of the groups of members and non-members holding a Labour or Conservative partisan identification by a factor of 1, 2 or 3 according to whether it is "not very", "fairly", or "very" strongly held. This is then divided by 3 so that we are effectively left with a sort of weighted average Labour and Conservative partisanship for each group. The weighted Conservative partisanship score is then subtracted from the weighted Labour partisanship score so that a net partisanship evaluation may be arrived at. This final quotient has a range running from -100 (ie, all respondents within a certain group are very strongly Conservative) to +100 (all respondents are very strongly Labour). Table 5.7 presents these weighted partisanship scores for trade unionists and non-unionists, both manual and non-manual, in 1964 and 1987.

Table 5.7 - Weighted Partisanship By Occupation And Unionisation; Labour's Lead Over The Conservatives, 1964 And 1987.

	1964		1987	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Manual	37.4	4.5	21.3	8.8
Non-manual	-8.6	-36.2	-0.1	-27.5

The interesting feature of this table is that trade unionism now makes far more difference to the partisanship of non-manuals than it does to that of manuals - quite the reverse of the pattern found in the 1960s. In fact, relatively little seems to have changed in the overall pattern of non-manual partisanship; trade unionism still reduces the Conservative advantage considerably, and to virtually the same extent (by 27.6 points in 1964, and by 27.4 points in 1987). For manual workers, however, the difference made by union membership is much slighter now (20.4 points slighter, to be precise). We see very clearly, then, the weakening overall impact of union membership upon the partisan identification of manuals between 1964 and 1987.

So the partisan loyalties of trade union members - and particularly their affinity for the Labour Party - have dwindled. Before leaving the subject of union members and partisan identification, however, it is worthwhile posing one further question: To what extent have the various parties been able to mobilise their nominal level of support amongst union members? This question might even enable us to gain some preliminary insight into the potential impact of unions upon the issue assessments that voters make. This is because people's voting decisions, unlike their long-standing partisan ties, are liable to be affected by short-term factors specific to the circumstances of a particular election. To recall, most accounts of voting behaviour accept that the voting choice itself comprises the dual elements of long standing partisan predisposition and the assessment of significant short term political factors,

whereas partisan identification itself comprises solely the former. "Short term" factors in this case might typically include the impact of policy stands on certain issues which become prominent at an election, the role of major personalities in the political arena, or confidence in the general capacity of parties to manage the affairs of government competently and/or to enact a programme of government. By comparing vote and basic partisanship we can therefore obtain an idea of how far short-term influences might be intervening between the two. If there is relatively little difference between partisanship and vote, then it may well simply be that it is enough for trade union membership to inspire general partisan identities from which voting alignments follow. If, on the other hand, there is a considerable discrepancy between them, we would have some indication that other factors could play a role in influencing unionists to reject their basic loyalties at election time. Such differences as there are between voting and partisanship are clearly demonstrated in Table 5.8, which shows the percentage of partisans that each of the main parties was able to rely upon for support at the elections of 1964 and 1987, by union and occupational status. It is obvious that, at least for Labour and the Conservatives, nearly all partisans voted for "their" party in 1964. It is equally clear that such was no longer the case in 1987; Labour was definitely "under-performing" in relation to the number of partisans that it had, losing out, it would seem, to both the Liberal-SDP Alliance, who formed a major part of the "Other" category, and the Conservatives. Hence, we have a clear indication that by 1987 short term political factors were indeed intervening to influence

Table 5.6 - Vote as a percentage of partisanship, by occupational status and unionisation, 1964 and 1987.

1964

	Non-manual		Manual	
	Union	Non-union	Union	Non-union
Conservative	101.8	101.6	103.7	106.8
Labour	96.6	105.3	104.5	94.0
Other	101.7	87.6	55.8	101.3

1987

	Non-manual		Manual	
	Union	Non-union	Union	Non-union
Conservative	103.7	99.0	99.0	104.8
Labour	89.4	87.6	91.2	88.3
Other	108.4	112.1	127.9	122.0

Note: These figures are obtained by comparing the percentages of the electorate that the parties received at a general election with the percentages of partisans that they had within the electorate.

people to vote for a party other than that to which they normally felt allegiance (at least in the sense that basic partisanship alone seems to have been a much less sufficient guarantee of electoral loyalty towards Labour than it was in 1964). The balance of short term factors having most probably run against Labour at the 1987 election - notwithstanding widespread admiration of its campaigning revival since 1983 - the party obviously suffered; what is particularly interesting for us, though, is the question of whether trade union membership could do anything to affect the balance of these short term forces which were specific to the election period. The brief answer would appear to be that by 1987, union membership seemed to make little or no difference to the mobilisation rate of Labour's partisans.

Union members were not noticeably more likely to vote for the party they professed to identify with than non-members. The most notable aspect of this change concerns Labour and the manual working class, once again; in 1964, the difference between the Labour Party mobilisation rates of unionised and non-unionised manuals was fully 10.5 percentage points, whereas it was just 2.9 points by 1987.

We might conclude that short term factors are generally becoming more important to Labour partisans given that mobilisation rates are straying further away from 100%. And perhaps most importantly, table 5.8 gives us an early indication of the fact that any electoral decline that the Labour Party may have suffered can not be attributable solely to declining partisanship. That is, if voters have turned away from Labour it is not only due to the fact that, as a group, less of them feel any general sense of long term attachment to the party; this may well have happened (indeed, we have already seen that this is in fact the case), but the point is that the party is additionally less able to count on the vote of those who do retain such an attachment. So, it would seem that we have a situation in which union membership is less able to reinforce long term loyalties, especially those of manual workers. We may surmise that dealignment has particularly affected the growing number of manual trade unionists (implicit in table 5.7) who only maintain a weak loyalty to the Labour Party. However, we should be careful not to assume that the potential for union impact on the short term element of these voters' decisions has diminished, it should be noted. Indeed, we would suggest that this is largely how trade

unionism continues to affect voting behaviour. It is interesting in this regard that Freyman put the enhanced union impact upon voting during the decade after 1964 down to the fact that union members with weakening partisan identities were turning to unions as an alternative source of political cues. That is, they replaced one object of political attention and guidance (the political party) with another (the trade union). But then why have they not continued to do so in the subsequent decade? The most likely explanation is that unions were not the salient election issues in 1987 that they were during the 1970s. Moreover, as we have seen, the scope for conflict between different types of unions - blue and white collar, public and private sector - has become exacerbated. This was particularly the case at the time of the 1979 general election. Such conflicts may well have undermined the cohesive impact of trade unionism as a whole upon voting behaviour. What Freyman could not know at the time he wrote was that the the impact of unionism would continue to fluctuate in relation to its connection with issues that are salient at election time, and that this salience diminished in the 1980s. 1974 was clearly likely to represent a high point of union impact on voting choice given the importance of unions themselves as an issue at the elections of that year. By 1987, however, other issues had taken over the precedence formerly held by the question of union power and interests.¹⁰ However, the potential that unionism as a short term factor may have is probably now enhanced given the fact that union membership is mediated by partisanship to a lesser degree. That is to say, unionists are considerably less likely to be strong Labour partisans now (possibly because of the experience of

party-union conflict between 1966 and 1979), and strong partisans would probably vote Labour regardless of short term factors. But should the unions become important either as issues themselves (as in 1974 and 1979), or should they develop a significant capacity for exerting influence upon the assessments that voters make about other short term factors at election time (such as the constraints placed upon public spending and services), then they will still be able to affect the outcomes of elections.

To summarise what we have discovered so far then, it would seem that Labour has been decreasingly able to mobilise the support of its declared partisans at election time, especially those who are union members. Put simply, the party has lost more actual voters than it has lost partisans since 1964; the proportionate drop in the level of Labour voting support among trade unionists was 36.4% between 1964 and 1987, which clearly outruns the respective decline of 26.5% in the proportion of Labour partisans. It may well be, however, that the vote loss is associated with a weakening, if not a disappearance, of partisanship. Such vague affinity is relatively easily overcome at election time if the balance of short run factors runs negatively for the party. In this respect, we have seen that Labour suffered particularly from the loss of strong partisan loyalty amongst trade unionists; and it is equally evident that it has been precisely within this group that the greatest electoral dealignment from Labour has occurred. This, incidentally, affords a preliminary indication of the limits of purely social factors in explaining electoral change; one of the most important aspect of social change,

that of upward social mobility, is hardly likely to offer a very convincing explanation of such dealignment, since partisanship and vote have been most attenuated amongst those who have not been upwardly mobile. In general, it seems clear that the effect of union membership upon vote and partisanship has declined since 1964 - though this decline has not been by any means monotonic; in particular, unionisation was important in 1974, but was not so decisive in determining voting choice in 1987. The pattern of electoral change throughout the period tends to suggest that short term considerations about the state of political relations between the Labour Party and the trade unions may have affected the voting decisions of union members. Moreover, the fact that the impact of union membership upon long term partisan ties has weakened may well mean that in the future, in so far as unions can have an impact upon vote at all, it will have to be through the way they affect assessments of short term factors. In chapter 6, we shall be turning to this question of the impact of unions upon short term issue assessments, but before that we need to concentrate further on the interplay of social and political factors; the unions, of course, have played an historically vital role in the political mobilisation of the British working class, and this leads us to pose the question of whether they are still important to the phenomenon of class voting.

Unions And Class Voting.

"One of the hallmarks of class-inclusive explanations has been the assimilation of virtually all social influences from production or workplace contexts directly into the occupational class cleavage."
(Dunleavy & Husbands 1984: 9)

The orthodox position of partisan identification writers on the role of trade unions in British electoral mobilisation is that they have played an essential role in reinforcing class identification and solidarity via a process of socialisation (See, for instance, Franklin 1985: 112-113). The most basic reason for questioning the relevance of union membership for class voting, however, is simply that it is probably no longer accurate to think of unions as "class typical" institutions. Patrick Dunleavy has demonstrated that with a control for the influence of production sector (see chapter 6 below), there is little overall association between class and unionisation (Dunleavy 1980). Table 5.9 sets out very simply the proportions of manual and non-manual workers in the unionised and non-unionised groups in our data for 1964 and 1987. It is not only clear that the proportion of non-manuals has grown in general, but that it has advanced particularly within the group of unionised respondents. In fact, the proportion of non-manual trade union members has more than doubled to exceed two-fifths, compared with the present situation in which non-manuals have advanced in more modest terms to comprise slightly more than half of all non-unionists. 11

Table 5.9 - Occupational Status By Unionisation, 1964 And 1987.

	1964	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Non-manual	17.6	44.0
Manual	<u>82.4</u>	<u>56.0</u>
	100.0	100.0

	1987	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Non-manual	43.6	55.3
Manual	<u>56.4</u>	<u>44.7</u>
	100.0	100.0

So by 1987, the composition of our unionised sample was not heavily biased towards the working class. This is important in relation to the orthodox view that unionisation affects voting behaviour by socialising members into a sense of class identity and loyalty. Clearly, this can no longer be accepted as offering a plausible account of the impact of union membership on vote.

This in itself is interesting since it provokes the obvious question of whether the sheer fact of this changing occupational profile alone can go far towards explaining the Labour's loss of support among union members. That is, is it the case that electoral change has followed, not from class dealignment as such, but rather from the simple fact that there are less and less manual workers to be found within the union-based electorate? We can conduct a relatively simple test to verify this proposition. To do this, it is necessary to make a projection of the share of the electorate that the various parties would have obtained among union members at the 1987 election had the only source

of electoral change since 1964 been that derived from the changing relative sizes of occupational groups. Thus, we assume that, in 1987, the same relationship held between occupation and vote amongst union members as in 1964, and that, consequently, the only source of electoral change is the differing relative sizes of manual and non-manual groups. This can be done in a straightforward manner by weighting the conditional probabilities of voting a certain way in 1964 by the 1987 occupational group frequencies. ¹² Table 5.10 compares this simulated vote with the actual vote in the 1987 union sample; the fairly considerable difference between the two indicates that the changing rate of non-manual employment amongst the unionised can only offer a very limited explanation of the change in voting behaviour between 1964 and 1987. Had this factor been the only source of electoral change, the Conservatives would have received the support of 1.7% more of the unionised electorate in 1987 than they actually did, and Labour of fully 10.8% more; by contrast, the minor parties in our data would have received 12.8% less of the support of unionised electors than they did, and the rate of abstention amongst these voters would have been 0.6% lower. We therefore have to look either to other potential demographic sources of change as yet unconsidered, but which might be connected with class (for instance, the growing rate of home ownership ¹³), or to political sources of change. To a large extent, of course, this latter source of change is all about short term political factors specific to particular elections.

Table 5.10 - Union Members' Vote In 1987, Projected From 1964 On The Basis Of Changing Rates Of Occupational Status.

	<u>Projected vote</u>	<u>Actual vote</u>
Conservative	29.2	27.5
Labour	48.7	37.9
Other	11.5	24.3
Abstained	<u>10.6</u>	<u>11.2</u>
	100.0	100.1

Thus, the increasingly white collar nature of trade union membership is not on its own an adequate explanation of Labour's losses. At this point it is therefore important to turn our attention to the following questions: firstly, has class dealignment occurred among trade union members? (And, indeed, are unions of any remaining importance for class mobilisation?) And secondly, if class dealignment has taken place among trade union members, then why? We may use the information in table 5.2 to construct three basic but useful measures of the impact of trade union membership on "class voting"; firstly, it can be seen that the proportion of respondents voting according to their occupational class declined between 1964 and 1987. This is particularly true of union members. If we take the average proportion of manuals and non-manuals who vote according to their class we find that this fell from 52.9% to 38.4% among trade unionists, and from 49.3% to 42.2% among non-unionists.

The second, and perhaps most widely employed, measure found in the literature on electoral behaviour has been the "Alford Index" (Alford 1963). This is calculated by subtracting the percentage of the middle class - or more strictly speaking, the non-manual group in our case - that supports Labour from the percentage of the working class

(the manual group) supporting the party. We can calculate this for trade union and non-union groups to compare the levels of class voting in the two. This reveals that whereas there was virtually no change in the level of class voting amongst non-unionists between 1964 and 1987, the index moving from 19.1 to 20.4, there was a very distinct fall in the index for the unionised group of respondents, from 38.2 to 14.7. Thus, going by the Alford Index, there was little remaining difference in the level of class voting that occurred, respectively, within groups of trade union members and non-members by 1987; indeed, it seems that it is now the non-unionists who are more inclined to vote in a class typical way. However, as we saw in the last chapter, the Alford Index has been criticised on various grounds, and particularly in the sense that it "confuses relative with overall support" (Heath, Jowell & Curtice 1985: 41); that is, a decline in overall support for Labour within all classes may produce a drop in the Alford Index even when the relative support it receives from the two classes is unchanged.¹⁴ Consequently, a more appropriate measure of "relative class voting" may well be the odds ratio, which we have already met. In the context of class voting, we may calculate the two-party odds ratios by taking the odds on a manual worker voting Labour rather than Conservative and comparing them to the odds on a non-manual worker doing so; as before, we "compare" these odds in the form of the ratio of one set of odds to the other. In this case, an odds ratio of 1:1 would indicate that there was no class voting, as the relative strengths of the two parties were identical amongst manual and non-manuals. By comparing manual with non-manual behaviour in a similar fashion we can also compute what I

have called third party and anti-Conservative odds ratios, of course, but there is one further type of ratio of interest now. As we saw in chapter 4, Elinor Scarbrough has argued that a more appropriate way of calculating an odds ratio on class voting is to divide the odds on a manual worker voting Labour rather than anything else by the odds on a non-manual employee voting Conservative rather than anything else. In this way, we are constructing an odds ratio which contrasts working class-typical behaviour with middle class-typical behaviour. When we now proceed to examine the odds ratios on class voting for unionists and non-unionists we do indeed find a picture of considerable change between 1964 and 1987. On the basis of these ratios we would infer that class voting was higher among union members than among non-members in 1964, but that by 1987 the reverse was true, given a considerable fall in class voting among members and a moderate increase among non-members. Indeed, we can not really say that unionism remained of any importance to class voting in 1987, on the basis of these figures. This is so, irrespective of how we actually operationalise the measure of class voting, and it should be noted that the odds ratios all confirm the initial impression emerging from the Alford Indices. These ratios, along with the Alford Indices are presented in Table 5.11. Nevertheless, one should take care not to exaggerate; it remains apparent that trade union membership still seems to help Labour in some ways. In particular, Labour maintains a lead over the Conservatives amongst manual workers only when they are unionised; however, such lead as they do have within this group has been considerably curtailed since

1964, declining from 45 percentage points down to just 20.8. By comparison, it has remained practically constant amongst non-unionists, changing from 2 to 3.5 (See Table 5.12).

Table 5.11 - Measures Of Class Voting: Alford Indices And Odds Ratios For Unionists And Non-unionists, 1964 And 1987.

	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	
			<u>1964</u>
Alford Index	38.2	19.1	
<i>Odds Ratio</i>			
Two party	4.71	3.53	
Third party	5.00	2.61	
Anti-Conservative	2.62	2.83	
Scarborough ratio	2.79		0.38
			<u>1987</u>
Alford Index	14.7	20.4	
<i>Odds Ratio</i>			
Two party	2.20	3.96	
Third party	1.88	3.31	
Anti-Conservative	1.69	2.20	
Scarborough ratio	1.54		0.54

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Table 5.12 - Labour's Lead Over The Conservatives, By Unionisation And Class, 1964 And 1987.

	<u>Union Members</u>	<u>Non-Members</u>
<u>1964</u>		
Manuals	40.0	2.0
Non-manuals	-13.0	-42.4
<u>1987</u>		
Manuals	20.8	3.5
Non-manuals	-4.3	-35.7

This is the point at which the matter of alternative models of socio-economic class becomes most pertinent. We have made a case about the decline of class voting among trade union members which is based on the assumption that the simple manual/non-manual distinction is an adequate definition of "class". This, as has already been acknowledged, is a questionable assumption, although it is true that no model of socio-economic class is entirely beyond criticism, on either conceptual or operational grounds (see footnote 5.3). Nevertheless, at the very least, it would surely be prudent to check whether our major findings with respect to class voting still hold when an alternative to the manual/non-manual scheme is employed. A variation of the so-called Goldthorpe-Heath model of socio-economic class can be introduced for this purpose. This is a Weberian model which conceives of class in terms of socio-economic interests. Manual labourers have comparatively poor security of employment, access to fringe benefits or authority in the workplace. Collective action is typically their only source of economic power. The salaried manager or bureaucrat represents an obvious contrast, since security, authority and promotional prospects are all likely to be greater for him or her. Professionals occupy a similar economic location in many respects and can therefore be considered as part of the same social stratum. Then there are various other economic groups, which for the sake of simplicity, yet without doing violence to the data or the theory, can be combined together to form an intermediate class that falls between the working class and the salariat we have already described. This intermediate class includes routine

non-manual employees with limited autonomy and prospects at work, small independent entrepreneurs and the self-employed, and manual foremen and technicians who have a certain authority over the bulk of the manual workforce (Heath, Jowell & Curtice 1985: 14-16; see also footnote 5.3). Tables 5.13 and 5.14 present the story of unions and class voting in terms of this three-fold alternative model of class. There is little need for lengthy discussion of these tables, since they confirm in almost every detail the message emerging from the original class voting measures. The indices and odds ratios are consistently slightly higher when the Goldthorpe-Heath variable is used, indicating that it probably captures the nature of socio-economic class more successfully in modern Britain, but the pattern of change is virtually identical.

Table 5.13 - Voting By Union Membership For The Goldthorpe-Heath Classes, 1964 and 1987.

	1964					
	Salariat		Intermediate		Working Class	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Conserv.	41.6	62.4	28.3	52.4	19.4	28.5
Labour	24.9	15.4	42.7	23.6	67.8	47.6
Other	28.4	16.1	13.0	15.4	4.4	9.4
Abstained	<u>5.1</u>	<u>6.2</u>	<u>16.0</u>	<u>8.3</u>	<u>8.4</u>	<u>14.6</u>
	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1
	1987					
	Salariat		Intermediate		Working Class	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Conserv.	32.0	52.4	31.3	47.6	22.9	26.9
Labour	25.8	10.4	36.1	18.2	44.0	37.9
Other	32.0	25.8	23.1	20.3	20.6	17.5
Abstained	<u>10.2</u>	<u>11.4</u>	<u>9.6</u>	<u>13.9</u>	<u>12.5</u>	<u>17.7</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 5.14 - Alford Indices and Odds Ratios On Class Voting For Goldthorpe-Heath Classes, 1964 and 1987.

1964

	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Alford Index	42.9	32.2
<i>Odds Ratios</i>		
Two party	5.82	6.68
Third party	6.39	5.06
Anti-Conservative	2.96	4.18
Scarborough ratio	2.97	0.55

1987

	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Alford Index	18.2	27.5
<i>Odds Ratios</i>		
Two party	2.37	7.05
Third party	1.91	5.08
Anti-Conservative	1.58	2.99
Scarborough ratio	1.43	0.55

Note: Alford indices are calculated by subtracting Labour's percentage of support within the salariat from its percentage of support within the working class. Similarly, the odds ratios are based on a comparison of working class and salariat only.

It is clear, once again, that class voting among trade union members declined radically between 1964 and 1987. Again, this owes much to the dramatic loss of support Labour sustained among working class trade unionists; of all the cells in table 5.13, this is the one manifesting the biggest decline over the period. And once more, we find that the incidence of class voting has probably not declined among non-members. If anything, rather the opposite if one concentrates upon two party and third party voting effects.

It may of course be argued that the mere fact of manual workers voting for Labour - or not, as the case may be - can not be taken to constitute "class voting"; some evidence of genuine class consciousness may be required too. Whilst our

data does not exactly permit us to distinguish the voting behaviour of "class devotees who actually live a class ideology" (Sartori 1968: 12), we might at least focus upon the relationship between voting and *subjective class*. Does the self-perception of working class status increase the probability of voting Labour, and if so, is trade union membership important to the development of working class identity?

Table 5.15 - Vote By Subjective Class For Union Members And Non-Members, 1964 And 1987.

	1964							
	Union Members				Non-members			
	Middle Class		Working Class		Middle Class		Working Class	
	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaw.	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaw.
Cons.	42.5	57.8	17.5	19.4	64.8	63.7	30.0	43.5
Lab.	19.9	21.8	69.8	68.0	8.5	22.4	43.8	36.6
Other	27.6	13.6	5.9	4.3	18.1	9.5	12.5	8.9
Abst.	9.9	6.8	6.8	8.3	8.5	4.5	13.7	11.0
	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.1	100.0	100.0

	1987							
	Union Members				Non-members			
	Middle Class		Working Class		Middle Class		Working Class	
	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaw.	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaw.
Cons.	38.6	38.5	18.0	28.6	56.9	56.6	24.3	41.0
Lab.	25.4	26.5	50.8	32.2	13.7	8.7	40.3	22.5
Other	24.6	26.5	21.0	27.2	20.4	20.9	19.9	20.3
Abst.	11.4	8.5	10.2	12.0	9.0	13.8	15.6	16.2
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.0

Note: "Aware" respondents are those who offered a specific class identity without being prompted. "Unaware" respondents are those who initially replied that they "did not know" to which class they felt they belonged, but chose between middle and working class when prompted.

David Robertson has said that, electorally speaking, "Labour requires class consciousness...the Conservatives do not" (Robertson 1983: 86), and it has to be said that even in 1987, four-fifths of all Labour supporters regarded themselves as working class. ¹⁶ Even so, there was a decline in the proportion of working class identifiers opting for Labour between 1964 and 1987, indicating that subjective class is less sufficient a reason for voting Labour than it was hitherto. This holds more or less regardless of union membership or degree of class awareness, although once again we find that the heaviest loss of support is clearly found amongst the unionised. Labour support fell by 19 percentage points among members readily aware of their working class identity, and by fully 35.8 points among those less aware. The corresponding losses among subjectively working class non-members were 3.5 points and 14.1 points. Looking at table 5.15, it can be seen that these changes not surprisingly affect the lead that Labour is able to maintain over the Conservatives. Within the "aware" section of the unionised working class, Labour's lead over the Conservatives has dropped by 19.5 percentage points since 1964, and by 35.8 points within the "unaware" group. Again, changes are not so dramatic within the ranks of the non-unionised; indeed, Labour's lead actually increased slightly (by 2.2 points) amongst the non-unionised aware working class. A more sophisticated check on the class behaviour of trade unionists and non-unionists can be executed by calculating their levels of "subjective class voting" in terms of Alford Indices and odds ratios again. These are presented in table 5.16. Not surprisingly perhaps, "class voting" appears to be a stronger social phenomenon

when we define it in terms of subjective awareness rather than on the basis of simple occupational categorisation. Nonetheless, for trade union members, there has been a palpable decline in its strength across the years since 1964. Each of the various types of odds ratio confirms this, as does the Alford Index. ¹⁷ The most striking point about the vote-subjective class relationship which emerges from a consideration of the odds ratios, however, is probably the existence of an interaction with unionisation across time for those not so immediately aware of their class identity. Quite simply, in 1964 trade union membership seemed to be important in enhancing the level of class voting amongst those who were less aware of subjective class; by 1987 this was no longer the case. ¹⁸ Overall, we can say that trade union membership appeared to make no difference to the level of what may be called subjective class voting amongst those most aware of class either at the beginning or at the end of our period; if a respondent is particularly aware of class and class identity anyway, there is probably no reason why the fact of being a union member should actually increase the probability of voting on the basis of this prior awareness. But those less immediately aware of their class identity were considerably more likely to vote according to that identity if they were also union members in 1964. The odds ratios suggest that this was no longer so by the late 1980s, however.

So trade union membership no longer increases the likelihood of subjective class voting, yet it should not be forgotten that subjective class still has an impact on voting behaviour. Table 5.15 demonstrated that Labour maintains a

Table 5.16 - Alford Indices And Odds Ratios For "Subjective Class Voting" By Unionisation, 1964 And 1987.

	Union		Non-union	
	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaware
<i>1964</i>				
Alford Index	49.9	46.2	35.3	14.2
<i>Odds Ratios</i>				
Two party	8.49	9.24	11.23	2.40
Third party	9.24	7.61	8.67	2.00
Anti-Conservative	3.49	5.68	4.31	2.28
Scarbrough ratio	3.12	1.55	0.42	0.33
<i>1987</i>				
Alford Index	25.4	5.7	26.6	13.8
<i>Odds Ratio</i>				
Two party	4.27	1.64	6.92	3.67
Third party	3.03	1.32	4.25	2.90
Anti-Conservative	3.08	1.56	4.11	1.87
Scarbrough ratio	1.63	0.75	0.52	0.22

Note: Alford indices are calculated for differences between the rate of Labour support given by those perceiving themselves to be working class and those perceiving themselves to be middle class. Odds ratios use self perceived class similarly. For instance, the two-party ratio is calculated in terms of the odds on a subjectively working class individual voting Labour as opposed to Conservative, divided by the odds on a subjectively middle class individual doing so. Figures are given for both "aware" and "unaware" categories of respondents.

notable lead over the Conservatives within what I have called the aware working class. Although it may seem unlikely given the foregoing analysis of class voting, it still needs to be asked, therefore, if union membership can be significant in terms of influencing subjective class identity in the first place. This is tantamount to asking if unions can be important in generating (a degree of) class consciousness. "Class consciousness", of course, means

somewhat more than nominal class identity alone. At its most developed, perhaps, it implies Sartori's class ideologist who sustains a radical perspective over a series of related issues, incorporating perceptions of exploitation in modern industrial society and alternative conceptions of the distribution of power and resources. In these terms it is hard to see British trade unions as responsible for directly mobilising radical class consciousness. However, this is not necessarily to say that trade unions in Britain have been without influence over the values typical of the labour movement and the working class. Whatever, our immediate purpose is, of course, quite limited; can the membership of modern British trade unions be said to affect one component of class consciousness, that of subjective identity? Note that in Sartori's terms, we are actually concerned with *class awareness* rather than with class consciousness. It is hard to know what to expect of the data; certainly, industrial sociologists like Duncan Gallie have recorded that the fact of belonging to different types of unions (that is, general or craft unions) in Britain has no discernible effect on class linked attitudes (Gallie 1983: 114). On the other hand, there is evidence arising from research conducted in the 1970s which suggests that "the data undeniably point towards union membership serving to assist in the development of a corporate class consciousness amongst British unionists" (Hill 1979: 282 ¹⁹). Table 5.17 suggests that, although unions might formerly have had an effect upon the subjective class identity of manual workers, it has certainly diminished. One would doubt that union membership really counts for very much in this context.

Table 5.17 - Subjective Class By Unionisation For Manual Workers, 1964 And 1987.

	1964		1987	
	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>	<u>Union</u>	<u>Non-union</u>
Middle class	11.8	22.6	16.7	21.9
Working class	<u>88.2</u>	<u>77.4</u>	<u>83.3</u>	<u>78.1</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Amongst non-union manuals there has been virtually no change in subjective class identity; amongst union members, there has been a decline in working class identification, however, with the result that there is little union effect apparent at all now. This is clearly shown by the fact that the difference in rates of working class identification displayed amongst manual unionists and non-unionists stood at 5.2 percentage points in 1987 compared to 10.8 points in 1964. This impression of the relatively slight impact of union membership on subjective class awareness is confirmed by a multiple classification analysis, moreover. When subjective class identity is used as the dependent variable, unionisation appears to have the weakest of all social background influences upon it; the beta coefficients for the relevant social background factors are as follows:

	Beta coefficient		Significance of effect	
	<u>1964</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1987</u>
Occupation	0.20	0.13	0.000	0.000
Unionisation	0.05	0.06	0.000	0.000
Housing	0.08	0.12	0.000	0.000
Parental occupation	0.09	0.17	0.002	0.000
Education	0.26	0.20	0.000	0.000
Multiple R ²	0.211	0.195	0.000	0.000

Why Has Class Dealignment Occurred Among Union Members?

Our conclusions from the evidence would seem to be that in so far as the trade unions still have the capacity of mobilising a class vote, it can not be through socialising a sense of working class identity and loyalty. What we have discovered is that genuine political and class dealignment has occurred among trade unionists, and that the changing occupational profile of memberships alone does not account for this change. Therefore, the question that obviously has to be confronted is why has this happened? We might start by reiterating that one can not expect a comprehensive explanation of the apparent decline in class voting in terms of the impact of social changes such as general class decomposition or social mobility. Apart from anything else, if the former were to be the case, then we would expect to find some evidence of an increase in the size of the non-manual Labour vote and of the manual Conservative vote (ie, "cross-class voting"); as class communities break-up and class values are eroded, class itself ceases to be such a powerful cue for electoral behaviour and individuals are far less likely to vote for the party that is putatively "typical" of their class. In fact, there is little evidence to suggest that this has really been the case; between 1964 and 1987 non-manual Labour support hardly changed - rising by 1.6 points among union members, and falling by 4.4 points among non-members - whilst Conservative manual support dropped by 4.6 points among non-unionists and remained virtually unchanged among unionists (up 2.3 points). Recent commentators have, moreover, criticised the idea that class solidarity is breaking up and that electoral class

dealignment is occurring as a consequence. That internal class decomposition has occurred has never been clearly demonstrated. Indeed, the weight of evidence from important works of sociological inquiry into this field has been such as to suggest rather the contrary (Goldthorpe et al, 1969; Marshall et al, 1988).

Moreover, it might be reiterated that the central phenomenon for which we must seek explanation is the heavy rates of dealignment from Labour which have occurred amongst those whom we might least expect to be affected by class decomposition or social mobility; it is precisely amongst the "core" of "stationary" manual workers who are trade union members that the shift away from Labour has been most severe. (Interestingly, non-manual trade unionists who had manual parents continued to support Labour at virtually the same rate in 1987 that they had done as a group in 1964 - 39.3% of them choosing the party, which was just 0.7 of a percentage point down. By contrast, the group of second generation manual trade unionists reduced the rate at which it opted for Labour by 25.1 percentage points, leaving around half of its contingent voting for the party in 1987. Despite the fact of their changing social status, mobiles as a group were very evidently less likely to defect from Labour than stationary manual workers.) Similarly, we also find heavier rates of dealignment away from Labour amongst those who actually retain a sense of working class identity. On the face of it, these are almost by definition those least likely to manifest signs of the weakening class attachment that is supposed to accompany class decomposition. After all, they still regard themselves as

working class. Yet we find that it is the subjectively working class who deserted Labour, rather than those regarding themselves as middle class. Between 1964 and 1987, the proportion of the trade union electorate voting Labour declined by 19 points amongst the aware working class, but actually increased by 5.5 points amongst their middle class counterparts. The pattern is repeated among those less aware of class identities, with the working class offering 35.8 points less support to Labour in 1987, and the middle class offering 3.6 points more support (See table 5.15).

What of the impact of other forms of social change that may be potentially relevant? In Chapter 2 we learnt that union memberships are, amongst other things, increasingly comprised of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, women and public sector employees. Could any of these changes help explain manual dealignment? In principle, they could if it were the case that any of these groups proved less inclined to support Labour than other manual union members. However, empirical evidence has long-since suggested the precise opposite, as it happens. That is, these categories of employee tend to be more inclined to vote for the Labour Party, if anything (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985: 132-133; Rose and McAllister 1986: 58). Our data confirms this. Manual workers are considerably more heavily unionised in the public sector (nearly half of all respondents being members), and certainly more inclined to vote Labour; 55.9% of public sector manual unionists chose Labour in 1987, compared to 45.4% in the private sector. Neither does the skill level of manual trade union members offer any answers, there being practically no difference between the electoral

alignment of the skilled on one hand and the semi-skilled or unskilled on the other. 49.3% of the former and 50.9% of the latter opted for Labour in 1987. Finally, female manual unionists proved more likely to support the party, some 57.7% of them swinging Labour's way, compared to only 47.3% of their male counterparts. In summary then, social change, though hardly irrelevant, comes nowhere near providing a satisfactory explanation of electoral change amongst manual trade unionists on its own; therefore, we must give serious consideration to explanations based upon political sources of change. That purely political, as opposed to social or organisational, factors can generally affect a left wing party's electoral support seems inherently plausible. Can we conclude that political factors are important to an understanding of manual union members' voting behaviour in Britain since 1964? Chief among the likely such political factors emerging from our discussion so far would seem to be, firstly, the impact of housing policy in Britain since 1979, and secondly, the effect of political relationships between the Labour Party and the trade unions.

Gosta Esping-Andersen has demonstrated how, in the case of Scandinavia, the process of electoral decomposition can be triggered by political actions as much as by social, industrial and demographic transformation. In particular, he has shown how crucial a role state housing policy can have to play in affecting the electoral support that Social Democratic parties have been able to mobilise. Since we have already observed the growing importance of housing location for voting choice in Britain, we can not afford to overlook the possible impact of housing policy.

"The social democratic response to the housing question differed dramatically in the three Nordic countries. In Denmark, the social democrats permitted re-marketisation of housing supply and distribution, combined with generous tax incentives for single-family homeowners. Sharp inequities between renters and owners were practically built into the reform, and the housing issue became one of the single most politicised questions in post war Danish policy-making...The Norwegian and Swedish democracies took exactly opposite paths...housing policy favoured a considerable extension of public sector intervention, primarily through state intervention and preferential treatment for cooperatives. The net result was that housing shortages were eradicated along quite solidaristic lines" (Esping-Andersen 1985: 265).

In effect, housing policies in Sweden and Norway have been constructed so as to provide universalistic benefits for consumers, whereas the Danish strategy has been to provide selective benefits in the housing market. As a consequence, Esping-Andersen argues, housing status has become a line of social and political fragmentation in Denmark which has undermined the potential for social democratic electoral support. There is an obvious prima facie relevance for Britain. Since 1979, the Conservative governments under Margaret Thatcher have sought to extend private home ownership through a policy of legalising and encouraging the sale of low rent local authority accommodation to tenants. This has produced a situation in which many working class households have entered into home ownership for the first time, and there is much speculation about the consequences of this for political alignment. Might the execution of this policy go some way towards explaining Labour's losses among manual trade unionists? To reiterate, it is an interesting possibility given the singular importance of housing status to voting behaviour in Britain, a feature attested to by the multiple classification analyses we have performed. Two

major points emerge from a consideration of this question, however. Firstly, it should be borne in mind that one of the central phenomena we are investigating is really the variation in the pattern of manual trade unionist support for Labour at the general elections of 1970, 1974 and 1979. These are the elections at which the unions and industrial relations were most salient to voting decisions, and subsequent elections have in many ways simply been consolidations of the 1979 pattern. In this light, the housing policy of the Thatcher governments is an irrelevance, given that it can not have had any electoral effect until the 1983 election at the earliest. But even if housing is unhelpful with regards to the elections of 1970-1979 it may still provide some insight into the general losses the party has suffered since 1964, if it can be shown that manual union members proved more likely to purchase council homes than their non-union counterparts. This is the second point to concentrate upon with respect to the influence of housing. In fact, however, our data does not indicate that members were more likely to purchase than non-members; in 1987, just 1.6% of unionised manual respondents claimed to have bought homes from a local authority, compared to 2.4% of non-union manual employees. It must be concluded, therefore, that housing can not help explain the particular shift away from Labour of the unionised working class.

This leaves us with the second possible political factor - the impact of party-union relations. Such an explanation is clearly suggested by the way that union members' patterns of electoral support seemed to have reflected the political and

industrial history of the period between 1966 and 1979. It may be that our best hope of developing this type of explanation lies in our marrying it with important perspectives from the sociological tradition. Of particular relevance is the classic work conducted by Goldthorpe and his colleagues on working class values in the 1960s, which suggested that "affluent" workers - whom we may take to be increasingly typical of union memberships - bore a limited sense of communal loyalty or solidarity. Interestingly, whilst identifying themselves clearly as working class, most of these workers were discovered to have a more "individualist" or "privatist" outlook. That is, where the "traditional" working class unionist was embedded in a set of mutually reinforcing life situations which predisposed him towards Labour (that is, a socialisation process), a new "affluent" unionist was more inclined to regard both the unions and the Labour Party in instrumental and calculative terms (Goldthorpe et al, 1969). This is not necessarily to declare that class sensitivity and politics is disappearing within these sections of the working class (although we have seen that there was some decline in working class self identification amongst manual unionists between 1964 and 1987), for relative inequality may well remain despite advances in absolute affluence. However, commitment to the Labour Party seems to be more contingent. Working class unionists may well be aware of their relative deprivation, but perhaps they are more inclined to reconsider their voting decision each time that they are called upon to make it. This notion of value change within even the non-mobile working class fits rather neatly with evidence suggesting the increasing emphasis on the short term components of

voting behaviour over the last decade or so. If this is an accurate description of the consciousness of much of the working class in Britain since the 1960s, then some light is shed upon the basis of our political explanation of electoral change; since affective loyalty is far from engrained within the putative "core" of Labour's followers, it is vital that the party succeeds in providing the economic and industrial climate best suited to the realisation of their material aspirations. If it fails to "deliver the goods", then there is no obvious reason why these voters should continue to support the party, given their instrumentalist outlook.

This perspective, in turn, raises further questions. Firstly, why precisely is it that so much of the British working class takes such an instrumentalist outlook? And secondly, how is it that the Labour Party has had so much difficulty in "delivering the goods" in material terms when in office? It is possible that critical aspects of the answers to both these questions lie with the trade unions themselves. Marshall and his colleagues - amongst others - have gone to some length to argue (as was hinted above) that working class consciousness has in some ways been decisively shaped in Britain by the unions; more specifically, they point to the lack of clear class objectives which besets the British working class, and they ascribe this largely to the "failure of class organisations to convert sectional and conventional struggles into solidaristic and legal ones. The decentralized structure of free collective bargaining militates against such a process" (Marshall et al 1988: 268). Furthermore, I have already argued that the failure of

Labour's corporatist strategy in the 1960s and 1970s turns largely upon the decentralised character of the trade union movement. Under such circumstances national planning and incomes policies fall apart amidst a welter of sectional claims and internecine struggles over the suppression or maintenance of pay differentials. And as economic and industrial strategy begin to falter, it encourages further fragmentation of the labour movement. Thus, failure of economic strategy can be of the utmost consequence for party-union relations, as Esping-Andersen has pointed out:

"Sustained full employment is the single most important means of preventing dualism and fundamental cleavages among wage earners; it is the ultimate precondition for trade union strength and labour movement unity"
(Esping-Andersen 1985: 317).

Before concluding this discussion of the causes of class dealignment among manual union members, one final point is worth adding. We have asserted that a combination of political and social factors helps explain the class dealignment of manual union members. However, it would be naive to fail to recognise that there are limits to the precision with which such explanations can be articulated. In particular, it is virtually impossible to be very exact in demarcating the contributions of purely "social" from purely "political" factors. For instance, I am happy to contend that the pattern of estrangement and reconciliation between the Labour Party and the unions must to some extent lie behind the basic pattern of dealignment-realignment-dealignment displayed by union members as a group at the elections of 1970, 1974 and 1979. Nevertheless, certain points might be made which indicate

the difficulty of fully distinguishing political from social influences in all this, regardless of how sophisticated a technical approach we may care to take. In the first place, it should not be forgotten that the initial estrangement of the Labour governments from the unions might well have followed in some measure from the strategic decision of the leadership in the early 1960s to shed its "cloth cap" image and become a catch-all phenomenon that might successfully be transformed into a "natural party of government". And, of course, this "declassiste" strategy was in turn largely a response to the fact of social change. After three successive election defeats there was a widespread - if not monolithic (nor necessarily correct) - perception that Labour was suffering the electoral consequences of not adapting adequately to the circumstances of a newly mobile and affluent society. It is always possible, of course, that Labour might have suffered electorally, though in a different way, had it not adopted the strategy that it did in the 1960s. (Though it might not be impossible to argue that that the party could have adapted its image and still enjoyed a more felicitous relationship with the unions than it did.) The general point is that Labour's estrangement from the unions may have been the result of its attempting to adapt to what was perceived to be a changing social context.

Secondly, and as something of a sequel to this first point, it should be said that social change has probably had the effect of making some new conflict between the party and the unions inevitable. The fact is that - as we have seen - the interests and ethos of the trade unions have become

increasingly heterogeneous, making it ever more difficult for the party to respond in a coherent manner that would satisfy all. Again, political conflict may again be seen to follow, at least in some measure, from prior social change.

To summarise the argument then, we might say that class voting has in general declined since 1964 - though by no means disappeared - and what is more, the importance of trade unions to class voting has weakened considerably. (This notwithstanding, Labour does retain a notable lead over the Conservatives amongst unionised manuals, but not amongst their non-unionised counterparts.) Moreover, whilst a majority of Labour voters continue to regard themselves as working class, this identity on its own is clearly not sufficient to persuade individuals to support the party. In any case, the impact of unionism upon subjective class identity has declined to near insignificance, at least among manuals. In a sense, none of these changes may seem entirely surprising given that union membership is no longer class typical (and neither is union ethos); and yet social change alone does not seem to provide a satisfactory account of the decline of union influence on class voting. The evidence for any sort of "class decomposition" amongst trade unionists is weak; there has been little obvious advance in "cross-class voting", and in any case, the highest rate of dealignment from Labour has occurred amongst those who do maintain the view that they are part of the working class. Neither does the simple fact of occupational shift amongst trade unionists go very far towards accounting for electoral change. Indeed, the most interesting point about the pattern of the shift away from Labour over the period that concerns

us is that it seems to have been most intense within those groups usually considered to lie at the "core" of the party's traditional support - the stationary manual workers, union members and those with working class self-perceptions. Hence, we are obliged to turn to political rather than social explanations of change. Evidence has been gathered which demonstrates that Labour, in fact, recouped some of its original losses in these core groups in the elections of 1974, only to lose them again thereafter (Freyman 1980). This pattern strongly suggests the increasing significance of short term political factors in determining the voting behaviour of unionists as they are shaken loose from strong partisan attachments, rather than the effect of continuing secular social trends. The trade union movement enters into this political process in two significant ways; in the first place, it has played a key role, historically, in influencing the peculiarly instrumental character of working class consciousness in Britain. Secondly, it has contributed crucially to the failure of Labour's corporatist strategy in government by the decentralised nature of its organisational structure and economic aspirations. Central elite level deals have been like a giant house of cards under such circumstances. Within the union movement it has proved impossible for the centre to control its own periphery, or the leadership to count on the adherence of the rank and file.

There remains to be considered, however, one aspect of social change which, it has been argued, may also dilute the strength of class voting, especially amongst trade unionists; this is the production sector effect. What is

more, considering this has the additional merit of providing the context for the following question: If the unions are no longer important in mobilising a class vote, could they then be important for the mobilisation of a new line of socio-political cleavage? And since we are moving on to this question of what might take the place of class mobilisation in the unions' political role, it is also worthwhile considering their impact on voters' attitudinal assessments. It is to these matters that we now turn.

Footnotes.

1. The data sets employed throughout are Political Change in Britain, 1963-1970 (directed by David Butler and Donald Stokes), and the subsequent British Election Studies of 1974 and 1979 (directed by Ivor Crewe, James Alt, Bo Sarlvik and David Robertson) and of 1983 and 1987 (directed by a team led by Anthony Heath). I gratefully acknowledge the ESRC Data Archive based at the University of Essex for making these data sets available to me.

2. The odds ratio is also discussed below, as it is a useful way of measuring "class voting". Table 5.1n gives the odds for unionists and non-unionists respectively, and the final ratio between the two sets of odds which indicates how distinct trade union voting is.

Table 5.1n - Odds and Odds Ratios On Voting For Unionists And Non-unionists, 1964-1987.

		<u>Union Members</u>	<u>Non-members</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
1964	Two party	2.50	0.66	3.79
	Third party	1.40	0.44	3.17
	Anti-Conservative	3.29	1.15	2.86
1966	Two party	3.06	0.83	3.69
	Third party	1.46	0.54	2.70
	Anti-Conservative	4.15	1.39	2.99
1970	Two party	2.21	0.64	3.45
	Third party	1.04	0.41	2.54
	Anti-Conservative	3.33	1.21	2.75
1974	Two party	2.40	0.59	4.07
(Feb)	Third party	0.95	0.34	2.79
	Anti-Conservative	3.93	1.30	3.02
1974	Two Party	3.05	0.67	4.55
(Oct)	Third party	1.09	0.36	3.03
	Anti-Conservative	4.85	1.53	3.17

Table 5.1n (Continued)

1979	Two party	1.58	0.60	2.63
	Third party	0.75	0.38	1.97
	Anti-Conservative	2.69	1.18	2.28
1983	Two party	1.21	0.51	2.37
	Third party	0.49	0.26	1.88
	Anti-Conservative	2.66	1.44	1.85
1987	Two party	1.35	0.56	2.41
	Third party	0.59	0.30	1.97
	Anti-Conservative	2.64	1.41	1.87

3. Throughout, we shall be employing the simple manual/non-manual dichotomy, although it is not intended as a surrogate for a fully theorised class scheme; in this sense it would have to be regarded as an inadequate account of contemporary class structure. For this reason, a more elaborated model of socio-economic class will be introduced at various key points in the analysis, and comparisons drawn. In British voting studies various alternative class schemes have been employed such as the fundamentally Weberian ones favoured by Robertson (Robertson 1984), and Heath et al (Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985), or in a more Marxist vein, the model preferred by Patrick Dunleavy (eg, Dunleavy and Husbands 1985). The most fundamental division is that which remains between Marxists and Weberians, and a very telling critical review of such models has recently been produced by Marshall and his colleagues. They set themselves the specific task of comparing the relative merits of the class schemes proposed by John Goldthorpe (neo-Weberian) and Erik Wright (Neo-Marxist) (Goldthorpe 1980, Wright 1979, Wright 1985). Overall, they concluded that Goldthorpe's approach held considerably greater value. Wright's model was constructed on the assertion that class relations are revealed in matters of ownership of the means of production, on the one hand, and in relationships of

domination (supervision and decision-making) at work, on the other. This was fundamentally criticised on two grounds; firstly, it was claimed that there were major problems in the way that class categories are actually constructed employing these criteria. For instance, on occasion individuals working on "radically different" tasks were categorised similarly because of problems in coding work skills. Conversely, as a result of differences in self-reported autonomy and participation in decision-making at work, other respondents were assigned to different classes even though they followed the same occupations. Consequently, Marshall is apt to question just how many of Wright's "proletarians" really are proletarians, and how many of his "managers" are managers. In the second place, Marshall attacks the "incoherence" of Wright's empirical findings. In particular, he is unconvinced of Wright's view that British society is genuinely "polarised", with large sections of the intermediate social groupings being engulfed either by the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. Goldthorpe more credibly emphasises the existence of the categories which lie both demographically and politically between the working and service classes. (Marshall et al, 1988: passim) I have therefore chosen to incorporate Anthony Heath's variation of the Goldthorpe class scheme into my work (see Haeth, Jowell and Curtice 1985: 14-16 for an explanation of this). However, there is no need to discard the simple manual/non-manual distinction entirely. In the first place, it remains basically informative and, notwithstanding the various embellishments found in sociological theory, it is a central feature of all of these class schemes. Moreover, Ivor Crewe has argued in favour of the manual/non-manual

dichotomy on the grounds that Heath's scheme, though a welcome departure in theory, becomes too restrictive in practice. This reiterates a point already made in the course of the chapter 4. For instance, if we are investigating the question of class voting, we are obliged to concentrate upon the working class and the salariat; together, these constitute just 60% of the entire electorate. By contrast, the straightforward distinction between manual and non-manual is all-embracing and renders the electorate into a rather neat 50:50 split. The manual/non-manual distinction is simple, easily comparable, and avoids the problem of becoming involved in the debate over the nature of class, and the consequent issue of which of the competing class schemes to prefer. It should not be without significance for devotees of any of the major schools (though, admittedly, it risks satisfying none of them). There is a further reason for incorporating the manual/non-manual scheme. Given that the model of social background influences on voting that we adopt below is essentially a model of class influences, we have attempted as far as possible to emulate what is probably the most comprehensive recent model of class voting that has been specifically designed for the period that interests us (comprehensive, that is, in the sense that it does not rely solely upon the criterion of occupation) - that of Franklin (Franklin 1985). And Franklin employs the straightforward manual/non-manual distinction for his version of the occupational class variable. For these reasons I have decided to leave the simple manual/non-manual division at the centre of my approach, although room has been made for

broad comparison with the Goldthorpe-Heath model wherever that seems appropriate. This is most relevant when we touch upon the question of trade unionists and class voting.

4. The odds from which which the odds ratios reported in table 5.2 are derived are as follow:

	Manuals		Non-manuals	
	<u>Members</u>	<u>Non-members</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Non-members</u>
1964				
Two party	3.20	1.06 = 3.02	0.68	0.30 = 2.27
Third party	1.90	0.60 = 3.17	0.38	0.23 = 1.65
Anti-Conservative	3.88	1.81 = 2.14	1.48	0.64 = 2.31
1987				
Two party	1.91	1.11 = 1.72	0.87	0.28 = 3.11
Third party	0.77	0.52 = 1.48	0.41	0.16 = 2.56
Anti-Conservative	3.39	2.23 = 1.52	2.01	1.01 = 1.99

5. Of course, social mobility is not the only sort of social change that could have affected manual workers; infact, there are other ways in which social change might have affected even those who were not mobile. For example, the embourgeoisement theory which was for a while influential during the 1950s and early 1960s was an attempt to account for the impact of social change on the non-mobile manual working class. We shall consider some of these alternative social sources of electoral change below, but it might perhaps be worthwhile observing that social mobility, or the enhanced prospect thereof, is often at least implicitly crucial to the idea of social change; for example, even if we are not interested in the effect of upward mobility on a particular individual, but rather on the changing relative sizes of different classes in society, we have to admit that

this process is dependent upon the existence of social mobility, from one class to another, of individuals or their children. That is, we are still interested in the behaviour of people who do not live their entire lifespan in a single class milieu.

6. Of course, it is not unusual for researchers using social survey data for electoral studies to employ multiple regression techniques. However, this does necessitate the arguably questionable manipulation of what is essentially categorical level data so that it may be entered into a regression equation as interval level data. It has been argued that the ordinary least squares multiple regression approach remains appropriate even with a categorical level dependent variable, so long as this variable's distribution is not heavily skewed and the sample is reasonably large (that is, so long as one of its categories contains at least 25% of the total distribution [Gillespie 1977]). However, I have been inclined to reject the regression technique here since most of the independent variables are also categorical. This is not really the sort of data that regression was designed to analyse. Therefore, I have generally preferred the straightforward multiple classification analysis technique here, because it tells us what we want to know, and it is specifically designed to express a relationship between a set of nominal level independent variables and an interval level dependent variable. It is therefore entirely adequate for our needs. (The dependent variable in this case is simply the proportionate Labour vote; for instance, on an independent variable like trade union membership, we would obtain a

reading for the variable's categories in terms of the proportion voting for Labour - eg, members = 0.37, non-members = 0.23. That is, 39% of trade unionists voted Labour compared to 26% of non-unionists.)

The beta coefficients quoted throughout this chapter are based on the eta statistic; this essentially expresses the explained variance in the dependent variable as a proportion of the total variance. More precisely, the explained variance is taken to be that part accounted for by the categories of the independent variables. We may illustrate this with an example in which we have as our dependent variable vote (with Labour vote coded as "1", and all other votes coded "0"), and one independent variable, union membership, with just two categories, member and non-member. If we had a situation in which all the manual respondents voted Labour and all the non-member respondents voted for other parties, we could say that the two categories of the unionisation variable explain all of the variance in voting behaviour. In other words, total variance could be accounted for entirely by "between group" variance (the "groups" being the categories of the independent variable). Were there also some fluctuation in the voting behaviour of individuals *within* the categories of union status, then we would have a further source of variation in the dependent variable; it could not be explained by variation between the categories alone. The between group variance itself is calculated in terms of the difference between the mean of each category and the overall grand mean for the sample, squared and multiplied by the number in each category; within group variance is calculated in a similar fashion except that we

are now considering the differences between the individual scores and the grand mean. The beta coefficients are standardised partial regression coefficients, and significance levels are quoted throughout. These significance levels are based upon the F-ratio statistic, and it will be noted that most of the main effects for the multiple classification models presented are significant at the 1% level or better; the independent variable most likely to prove statistically insignificant in the voting models presented is that of education, in fact. The multiple R^2 for each overall model and the significance of each overall model is reported, although it should be borne in mind that the construction of models that explain the greatest possible variance in voting behaviour is not a primary concern in this work. Rather, the central focus of interest is the strength and significance of individual effects within each model - above all, that of unionisation, of course. It is the importance of this variable relative to others that lies at the heart of the matter, as far as this study is concerned. Throughout, interaction effects between independent variables are generally ignored in the multiple classification models since very few proved statistically significant. Indeed, it is important to the procedure that this should be so, since the beta coefficients assume additive, rather than interactive, effects. Thus, as a general point, if there are strong interaction effects in a model, the multiple classification scores become meaningless. This implies, of course, that we are dealing throughout with linear models based on additive, rather than multiplicative, effects. (See Nie et al 1975: Chapter 22.)

7. The social background variables were coded as follows:

Occupation	-	manual=1, non-manual=0
Unionisation	-	member=1, non-member=0
Housing	-	council tenant=1, other=0
Education	-	minimum school leaving age=1, other=0
Parental class	-	father manual=1, non-manual=0

As stated above, we follow Franklin in taking these variables to constitute the basis of a model of class voting in Britain since 1964 (though it should be noted that, unlike Franklin, ours is not a multi-stage causal model; this is because in using the multiple classification technique, one can at the most enter the independent variables in two stages, and Franklin's model employs more stages than this. Therefore, we have kept it simple and entered all the independent variables simultaneously). The logic behind the coding of the variables should be fairly clear; we have already discussed the case of occupation of course, which is one of the potentially problematic variables. The division between those who rent their accommodation from a municipal authority and other individuals makes sense on two counts. Firstly, it may work via the socialisation process; to quote Franklin:

'...the natural growth of new housing areas and the decay of older housing areas led to segregation by social class of people's place of residence, with middle class people tending to live in the newer suburban areas, and working class people tending to live in older central city areas... Onto this traditional pattern of social segregation was grafted in more recent years the additional segregating influence of council housing. As central city housing stock declined to the point of requiring demolition and replacement, local authorities increasingly shouldered the responsibility for providing accommodation for those who needed re-housing: generally less well-off people who had occupied the private rental sector of the housing

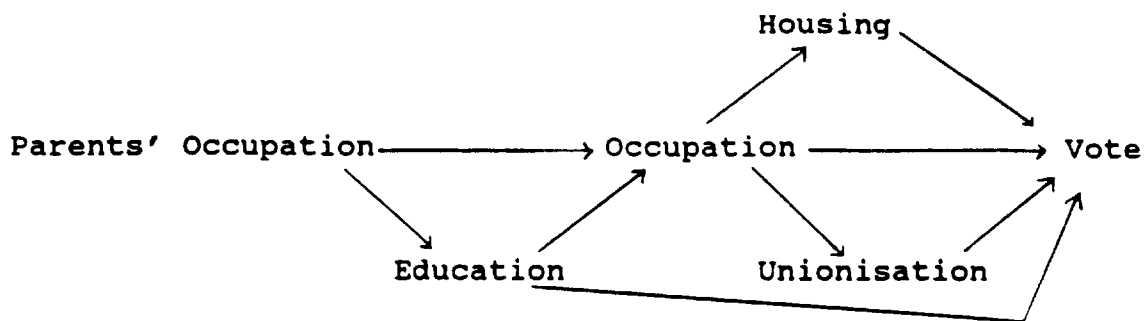
market. The resulting publicly financed "council housing" tended to be built in "schemes" or "estates"...Segregation has political consequences. In so far as class voting exists, it will be reinforced by patterns of residence that limit social contacts between people of different classes. As in the case of educational segregation, we expect social contacts generally to breed consensus...' (Franklin 1985: 18).

The alternative explanation of the impact of housing location on vote is quite simply that it is a matter of collective interest to vote Labour if you live in accomodation rented from a local authority. This is the view ascribed to by "consumption sector" theorists. This is an approach to electoral behaviour that has been adopted from the field of Urban Studies where there had been some dissatisfaction with the straightforward notion that the capital/labour distinction was the sole basis for social and political conflict (See Saunders 1981). In so far as housing location is concerned, it is simply in one's interest to vote Labour if one is a council tenant because Labour is far more likely to support the provision of resources which can be used for the maintenance of council property and for the subsidising of council rents.

The basis for the division of the education variable is the minimum school-leaving age. In 1964 this was 15, but by 1987 it had been increased by one year. At one time it might have been possible to make an interesting distinction between the type of schools that individuals frequented - Grammar, Secondary Modern, Technical or Private. However, with the introduction of the Comprehensive system of education this was no longer a clear basis for the differentiation of socialisation patterns by the 1970s. For children who stay on beyond the minimum leaving age, it is likely that some

sort of segregation will occur, in that they will continue to mix - at least within the school environment - only with other such children.

The variables that we have excluded in comparison with Franklin's are those of partisan identification and parental partisan identification. This is because, though strictly speaking prior to the vote in his model (and originally, of course, in the Michigan model itself), it is difficult to count partisan identification as a "social background" variable. It is a *psychological factor* that is itself moulded, like vote, by other social background factors; it is a result of the social background rather than a part of it. In this sense, it is perhaps a little too close to our dependent variable to be usefully regarded as an authentic social determinant of vote. It must be emphasised that our interest lies only in assessing the impact of unionisation on vote after controlling for the influence of other *demographic social background variables*. The other variables included in the model maintain a relationship to the voting decision similar to unionisation itself, in that they can all have some effect on voting choice other than through partisan identification. Parental partisanship is an exception to this, and can therefore be excluded too. It is not necessary to actually test the Michigan model itself in order to obtain a picture of the relative importance of union membership compared to other social determinants of the vote. We therefore end up with a social background model of vote which might be diagrammatically portrayed in the following way:



Finally, it is worth dealing with the question of how economic class should be properly conceived, a point that we have already touched upon (see footnote 5.3). For the sake of comparison, the social background model of vote can be re-executed substituting the more theoretically rounded definition of economic class suggested by Goldthorpe and Heath for the simple manual/non-manual distinction. For the purposes of multiple classification analysis, this variable is coded:

Salariat = 1, Intermediate = 2, Working class = 3.

This model produces the following results:

Beta Coefficients Significance of effects

	<u>1964</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1987</u>
Economic class	0.21	0.17	0.000	0.000
Unionisation	0.15	0.12	0.000	0.000
Housing	0.11	0.21	0.000	0.000
Parental class	0.15	0.13	0.000	0.000
Education	0.05	0.03	0.000	0.146
Multiple R ²	0.188	0.149	0.000	0.000

It takes but brief comparison with the original social background model of vote to see that this alternative tells essentially the same story; true enough, the impact of class

conceived in the Goldthorpe-Heath sense is slightly greater in both 1964 and 1987, but the internal relationship within the model of the various parameters to one another remains the same. That is, the impact of class, parental class, unionisation and education has declined to some extent or other since 1964, whilst that of housing has been enhanced. The actual sizes of these parameters are similar in both models, moreover.

8. It should be pointed out however, that when a term for the production sector variable is added to our social background model of vote in 1987, the strength of the beta coefficient for unionism does not change radically (falling from 0.11 to 0.08). In 1983, there is no change at all in the unionisation beta when a sectoral effect is added (it remaining at 0.09). This tends to indicate that the effect of sectoral location in cross-cutting the alignment of unionists may not be particularly important. That is, controlling for production sector did not appear to weaken the union-vote relationship at all in 1983, although there are signs that by 1987 it might have done so slightly.

9. Table 5.2n presents the odds on partisanship for unionists and non-unionists respectively. One sees quite clearly that for each type of odds, the fluctuation is much greater for union members than for non-members. Thus, whilst the two party odds only fluctuate between a maximum of 0.74 and a minimum of 0.65 for non-members, they drop from a high point of 3.06 down to a 1987 low of 1.52 for union members; for third party partisanship, non-members fluctuate between 0.54 and 0.45

and members between 1.62 and 0.86, whilst for anti-Conservative partisanship the respective fluctuations are between 1.50 and 1.03, compared to 3.95 and 2.29.

Table 5.2n - Odds And Odds Ratios On Partisanship For Unionists And Non-Unionists, 1964 To 1987.

	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>	<u>Odds ratio</u>
1964			
Two party	2.55	0.70	3.64
Third party	1.68	0.52	3.23
Anti-Conservative	3.07	1.03	2.98
1966			
Two party	3.06	0.74	4.14
Third party	1.62	0.54	3.00
Anti-Conservative	3.95	1.11	3.56
1970			
Two party	2.33	0.69	3.38
Third party	1.54	0.51	3.02
Anti-Conservative	2.85	1.05	2.71
1974 (Feb)			
Two party	2.33	0.67	3.48
Third party	1.17	0.46	2.54
Anti-Conservative	3.33	1.12	2.97
1974 (Oct)			
Two party	2.34	0.70	3.34
Third party	1.11	0.45	2.47
Anti-Conservative	3.44	1.50	2.29
1979			
Two party	1.98	0.70	2.83
Third party	0.98	0.47	2.09
Anti-Conservative	3.00	1.20	2.50
1983			
Two party	1.66	0.67	2.48
Third party	0.92	0.45	2.04
Anti-Conservative	2.45	1.17	2.09
1987			
Two party	1.52	0.65	2.34
Third party	0.86	0.45	1.91
Anti-Conservative	2.29	1.08	2.12

It should perhaps be noted that fluctuations in partisanship have been much less accentuated than those found for vote itself. This again suggests that short term factors have played a significant part in the impact that unionism has had upon voting behaviour.

10. The electoral salience of questions central to the party-union relationship is illustrated by table 5.3n. It is quite obvious that labour relations appeared in the top three issues most likely to be nominated as salient by electors during the election campaigns of 1970, 1974 and 1979, but that since the 1970s it has disappeared from the centre of the political agenda.

Table 5.3n - Leading issues nominated as most important facing the country at general elections, 1964-1987.

1964 - 1. The economy (15%) 2. Housing (14%) 3. Pensions(11%)

1966 - 1. The economy (48%) 2. Housing (16%) 3. Commonwealth (14%)

1970 - 1. Prices (35%) 2. Labour relations (13%) 3. Other economic problems (11%)

1974 (Feb.) - 1. Prices (55%) 2. Labour relations (18%) 3. Other economic problems (6%)

1974 (Oct.) - 1. Prices (72%) 2. Other economic problems (6%) 3. Labour relations (5%)

1979 - 1. Prices (29%) 2. Unemployment (22%) 3. Labour relations (14%)

1983 - 1. Unemployment (80%) 2. Prices (4%) 3. Defence (4%)

1987 - 1. Unemployment (66%) 2. Health (8%) 3. Defence (6%)

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages of respondents nominating an issue as the most important currently facing the country.

Source: Gallup Political Index

11. The question of the changing occupational profile of union membership was dealt with to some extent in chapter 2 of course. It is interesting to note how closely our data mirrors the most recently available information on the manual/non-manual breakdown of the trade unions (refer to table 2.4).

12. The calculations for this simulation of the 1987 vote, which assumes a constant class-vote relationship but changing manual/non-manual proportions amongst union members, are as follows:

First, we weight the total frequencies of the manual and non-manual categories in the union sector for 1987 by the proportion of each of these groups voting for the various parties in 1964:

Union members only

	Manual	Non-manual
Conservative	$.205 \times 470 = 96.4$	$.403 \times 370 = 143.1$
Labour	$.655 \times 470 = 307.9$	$.273 \times 370 = 101.0$
Other	$.044 \times 470 = 20.7$	$.206 \times 370 = 76.2$
Abstained	$.097 \times 470 = \underline{45.6}$	$.117 \times 370 = \underline{43.3}$
	470.6	369.6

Next, one simply adds all the sums in the rows to get the new overall simulated frequencies found in each of the categories in our vote variable. These are as follows:

Conservative	$96.4 + 149.1$	$=$	245.5
Labour	$307.9 + 101.0$	$=$	408.9
Other	$20.7 + 76.2$	$=$	96.9
Abstained	$\underline{45.6 + 43.3}$	$=$	$\underline{88.9}$
	$470.6 + 369.6$	$=$	839.8

It is now very simple to calculate the percentages of the entire union sample (= 839.8) that these figures represent:

Conservative	(245.5/839.8) x 100 = 29.2%
Labour	(408.9/839.8) x 100 = 48.7%
Other	(96.9/839.8) x 100 = 11.5%
Abstained	(88.9/839.8) x 100 = 10.6%

13. In fact, it has been pointed out by Heath et al that Housing, whilst important to voting behaviour at any given point in time (ie, in a cross-sectional sense), actually has very little to offer in terms of a useful explanation of electoral change. This is chiefly for two reasons; firstly, the main change in housing status over the period that interests us has been the decline of the private rental sector to the benefit of the private ownership sector. Those in the private rental sector have always been inclined to fall between the other two sectors in terms of their voting preferences, and therefore the extent of the change in voting behaviour following this has been "muted". Secondly, whilst the absolute sizes of housing groups and social classes have been changing, they have not altered much relative to each other. Broadly the same proportion of the working class live in council-rented accommodation as did at the beginning of the period; and the same can be said of the proportion of the middle class that are home-owners. (The relative size of these classes has changed, of course.) Thus, housing is unable to offer any real additional explanation of electoral behaviour that is independent of that already offered by class (Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985: 51). We shall be returning to essentially the same

point below, when considering in more detail the possible impact of Conservative housing policy upon working class trade unionists in the 1980s.

14. This is essentially the point referred to in footnote 4.9, above. Heath et al quote an example of the effect of this, by starting out with the information that in 1945 62% of manuals voted Labour compared with 28% of non-manuals, giving an Alford Index of 34: "Suppose, for example, that Labour support among manual supporters fell to 33% while support among non-manuals fell to zero. On the Alford Index this would give a score of 33 points, less than in 1945, but surely we would want to say that such a situation where Labour drew all its votes from the working class represented a much higher degree of class alignment than in 1945. The crucial point is that a decline in the overall support for Labour may lead to a fall in the Alford Index even if there is no change in relative class support for Labour" (Heath, Jowell and Curtice 1985: 41).

15. The formulas for the four different types of odds ratios quoted in table 5.11 are as follows:

Two party -

(Labour vote/Conservative vote) among manual electors

(Labour vote/Conservative vote) among non-manual electors

Third party -

(Labour vote/Non-Labour vote) among manuals

(Labour vote/Non-Labour vote) among non-manuals

Anti-Conservative -

(Non-Conservative vote/Conservative vote) among manuals

(Non-Conservative vote/Conservative vote) among non-manuals

Scarborough method -

(Labour vote/Non-Labour vote) among manuals

(Conservative vote/Non-Conservative vote) among non-manuals

The actual odds for 1964 and 1987 break down in the following way:

	Union			Non-union		
	Manual	Non-man.	Ratio	Manual	Non-man.	Ratio
<i>1964</i>						
Two party	3.20	0.68	= 4.71	1.06	0.30	= 3.53
Third party	1.90	0.38	= 5.00	0.60	0.23	= 2.61
Anti-Conservative	3.88	1.48	= 2.62	1.81	0.64	= 2.83
Scarborough	1.90	0.68	= 2.79	0.60	1.56	= 0.38
<i>1987</i>						
Two party	1.91	0.87	= 2.20	1.11	0.28	= 3.96
Third party	0.77	0.41	= 1.88	0.53	0.16	= 3.31
Anti-Conservative	3.39	2.01	= 1.69	2.22	1.01	= 2.20
Scarborough	0.77	0.50	= 1.54	0.53	0.99	= 0.54

16. The exact breakdown of party support by subjective class is provided in table 5.4n:

Table 5.4n - Subjective Class By Vote, 1987

	Working Class		Middle Class		
	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaware	
Conservative	18.9	32.5	23.3	25.3	= 100.0%
Labour	50.8	30.8	10.2	8.1	= 99.9%
Other	30.3	33.4	17.0	19.3	= 100.0%
Abstained	33.6	37.3	11.9	17.2	= 100.0%

There is clearly a heavy preponderance of working class identifiers amongst Labour's supporters; in fact, 81.6% of the party's vote comprised those with such an identity.

17. In fact, the odds ratios tend to suggest that subjective class voting has declined generally, not just among union members. The ratios and Alford measures usually indicate that the decline has been heavier among unionists, however. The only group that does not clearly "subjectively class vote" less, is the non-unionised unaware one (that is, the

one amongst which subjective class voting is probably lowest anyway); the two-party and third party odds ratios for this group have not weakened since 1964, whilst they have for the unionised group. The full sets of odds, along with resulting odds ratios are reported in table 5.5n.

Table 5.5n - Odds on subjective class voting, 1964 and 1987.

	Union		Non-union	
1964				
Two party	a. 3.99	0.47 = 8.49	1.46	0.13 = 1.23
	b. 3.51	0.38 = 9.24	0.84	0.35 = 2.40
Third party	a. 2.31	0.35 = 9.24	0.78	0.09 = 8.67
	b. 2.13	0.28 = 7.61	0.58	0.29 = 2.00
Anti-Conservative	a. 4.71	1.35 = 3.49	2.33	0.54 = 4.31
	b. 4.15	0.73 = 5.68	1.30	0.57 = 2.28
Scarbrough	a. 2.31	0.74 = 3.12	0.78	1.84 = 0.42
	b. 2.13	1.37 = 1.55	0.58	1.75 = 0.33
1987				
Two party	a. 2.82	0.66 = 4.27	1.66	0.24 = 6.92
	b. 1.13	0.69 = 1.64	0.55	0.15 = 3.67
Third party	a. 1.03	0.34 = 3.03	0.68	0.16 = 4.25
	b. 0.47	0.36 = 1.32	0.29	0.10 = 2.90
Anti-Conservative	a. 4.89	1.59 = 3.08	3.12	0.76 = 4.11
	b. 2.50	1.60 = 1.56	1.44	0.77 = 1.87
Scarbrough	a. 1.03	0.63 = 1.63	0.68	1.32 = 0.52
	b. 0.47	0.63 = 0.75	0.29	1.30 = 0.22

Note: a - "Aware", b - "Unaware".

18. The increase in the level of class voting within the non-union unaware group occurs despite a swing against Labour amongst those regarding themselves as working class. An increase in class voting nevertheless occurs as a result of the fact that there was an even greater anti-Labour shift amongst those regarding themselves as middle class (after being prompted). Consequently, the relative odds on these two groups voting Labour or otherwise actually widened a little.

19. Hill suggested that trade unions are likely, in principle, to have some impact upon class identity and consciousness given that "the emphasis upon collective solidarity and the orientation towards the collective resolution of common grievances stress normative ideals quite contrary to the individualistic ethic of dominant ideology." (Hill 1979: 270) He acknowledged that the apparent relationship evident within his data might have been spurious due to the confounding effects of various intervening variables. Consequently, he was prepared to control for the impact of sex, occupation, workplace and self-selection. Thus, it was conceivable that the male-bias in his union sample might account for the relationship between membership and class consciousness; however, he discovered that when he isolated the males within his sample, there were clear differences between those who were members and those who were not. (ibid: 274) Similarly, he found a distinct impact within all occupational groups that he isolated (non-manual, foremen, skilled and unskilled manual; ibid: 276). He also pointed out that the relationship might not necessarily indicate anything about the positive influence of unions, since it could be explained by the particular propensity of those with a radical class consciousness to demonstrate their commitment to the labour movement by joining a union. He decided that one way of trying to control for this was by examining separately the consciousness of those who were compulsory union members (ie, through closed-shop arrangements) and those who were genuinely voluntary. He discovered that both compulsory and voluntary members shared similarly high

levels of class consciousness. (ibid: 278-9) Finally, Hill examined the question of how directly the impact of union membership bore upon class consciousness, by examining workers in workplaces with high and low union densities. He discovered that there existed clear differences between members and non-members, whatever the working context, which suggested that union membership influenced people in a fairly direct sort of way. (ibid: 280) Clearly, Hill's work (conducted on data gathered in the early 1970s) supported the orthodox view that unions influenced people's political dispositions through the socio-political medium of class. He summarised his view by concluding that "on the whole then, the data reviewed here suggest that union membership and participation is linked to a higher level of class consciousness amongst British workers, although this consciousness remains within the bounds set by the less than revolutionary role played by the unions themselves." (ibid: 282) It is our contention that even this relationship may have been eroded by the 1980s.

Chapter 6 - The Voting Behaviour Of Trade Union Members, 1964-87 (2): Sectoral Effects And Attitudinal Voting.

The idea that production sectors operate in an electoral context has been developed chiefly by Patrick Dunleavy (Dunleavy 1980). His notion is that a potential new socio-political cleavage exists which is based on location in either public or private sector of employment. A further subdivision exists between those working in large scale [corporate sector] and small scale [market sector] private firms. Sectoral groups may be drawn into political conflict as a result of the emergence of a fiscal crisis of the state which forces an increasing burden of taxation on to the private sector in order to bail out the public sector. In particular, the market sector is likely to be vulnerable to the effects of this burden given that it is unable to pass on its extra costs to the consumer in the same way as corporate sector capital which has a significant degree of monopoly power. Sectoral cleavages cross-cut class cleavages and affect unionisation rates considerably; according to Dunleavy and Husbands, in fact, by the mid-1970s, any apparent relationship between class and unionisation was simply "a classic case of spurious correlation" (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985: 130). Instead, unionisation varied according to sector, being high in the public and corporate sectors, and low in the market sector. This is an interesting idea in so far as it provokes the thought that the political role of the trade unions may come to lie increasingly in the mobilisation of sectoral conflicts rather than class-based ones. That is, the majority of union

members are in the public sector, and the unions may become increasingly involved in issues which have a public versus private aspect, rather than a working class versus middle class one. Moreover, it is likely that sectoral effects will cut across class alignments, and may consequently underlie - or at least exacerbate - the phenomenon of class dealignment. When Dunleavy first mooted the possibility of a sectoral effect in British politics, in the wake of the 1979 general election, it must have seemed plausible. Following the breakdown of the Labour government's bitterly contested public sector pay policy, it seemed possible that the Party suffered the defections of erstwhile supporters amongst private sector unionists, who were angered that their public sector counterparts seemed to be able to get away with what they themselves could not - that is, militant industrial action without risking their jobs. So much for the speculation; what is the evidence for the existence of such a cleavage?

In fact, in so far as the 1979 election is concerned, Dunleavy was unable to demonstrate that there was any,

"additional direct effect from sectors to voting,
over and above the indirect effect operating
through trade union membership"
(Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985: 133)

In other words, sectors were only important in that they provided the context for differentiated levels of unionisation - and it was unionisation itself that had the direct impact on vote. By 1983, however, it is claimed that a genuine sectoral effect did occur, expressing itself chiefly in the way that both unionised and non-unionised

non-manuals in the public sector were considerably more likely to vote Labour than their private sector counterparts. Table 6.1 reveals, however, that by 1987 this difference had virtually disappeared as private sector non-manual employees swung to Labour while (the non-unionised) public sector swung away from Labour. Such changes hardly conform to the pattern of a sectoral effect, except in so far as an interaction effect between unionisation and sector might be implied in the maintenance of Labour support by unionised public sector non-manuals. With regard to manual workers we are again left wondering if some sort of an interaction effect between sector and unionisation is the only way of finding a sectoral influence; amongst the non-unionised, both sectors manifest swings to Labour, though amongst the unionised, only the public sector produces such a swing. Overall, it is hard to avoid gaining the impression from table 6.1 that sectoral differences have diminished; this sectoral difference has grown only among manual trade unionists.

However, effects of the type we are contemplating are complex and not easily absorbed through studying a crosstabulation. An appropriate way of confirming the overall importance of sectoral effects for voting behaviour is once again the multiple classification analysis. Thus, when a term for sectoral effect is added to our basic social background model of the vote, the indications are that its

Table 6.1 - Vote By Sector, Class And Unionisation, 1983 and 1987.

	Sector	Unionisation	Labour		Conserv.		Other*		Lab-Cons.	
			83	87	83	87	83	87	83	87
Manual	Public	Union	45	57	20	25	35	22	25	22
		Non-union	35	46	35	32	29	19	0	14
	Private	Union	47	46	29	27	24	27	18	19
		Non-union	37	45	33	35	30	20	4	10
Non-Manual	Public	Union	32	33	30	39	38	28	2	-6
		Non-union	26	18	53	52	21	30	-27	-34
	Private	Union	12	30	52	41	36	29	-40	-11
		Non-union	10	17	62	58	28	25	-52	-41

Source for 1983 figures: *Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985: 133.*

impact is almost negligible in 1983.¹ The modest increase in the overall net impact of sector on vote in 1987 can hardly be regarded as significant. The beta coefficients produced for such a model are:

	Beta coefficient		Significance of effect	
	<u>1983</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1987</u>
Occupation	0.14	0.17	0.000	0.000
Unionisation	0.10	0.08	0.000	0.000
Housing	0.23	0.21	0.000	0.000
Education	0.01	0.01	0.449	0.531
Parental occupation	0.08	0.14	0.000	0.000
Production sector	0.03	0.05	0.073	0.000
Multiple R ²	0.129	0.145	0.000	0.000

The possibility of a sectoral effect is interesting, though it should perhaps be kept in perspective. For a start, it needs to be said that Dunleavy and Husbands themselves offer evidence which seems to show, as much as anything, the relative weakness of the sectoral effect on voting. In a logit model of voting in 1983, they insist, for theoretical reasons, on entering first a term for the sector-vote relationship. Rather as with multiple regression analysis, the order in which independent variables are entered into models of this type will, to some extent at least, determine the amount of the variance which they are able to explain. The earlier they are introduced, the stronger the effects are likely to be. Despite this, the sector-vote relationship explains less than any other term introduced into the model.

2

Furthermore, it must be emphasised that nothing about table 6.1 suggests that the development of the production sectoral cleavage might explain the growing class dealignment of manual workers. In 1983 there was virtually no difference between private and public sector manual employees in terms of the level of support that they offered the Labour Party; and this held equally for both union members and non-members. Neither was there any shift from Labour in 1987 by private sector manual union members (which the theory of sectoral effects would lead one to expect), although it is true that they did not actually swing towards the Party in the way that their public sector counterparts did. Nonetheless, the production sectors argument is an interesting one with potential bearing on the future political role of the unions. It would not be wise to

dismiss its importance entirely, therefore. Even if there is hardly an abundance of convincing evidence confirming the direct impact of sector upon vote yet, it is conceivable that sectoral factors might be starting, in some tangible way, to impinge upon the the political consciousness of voters in Britain. For instance, sectoral interests might affect the way in which people make assessments about certain public issues, even if they they are rarely a direct determinant of the voting choice itself. Indeed, given that unions are less and less class-typical, and that they have clearly lost much of their capacity to mobilise class support for Labour, it is possible that the future for the Party lies as much in attempting to mobilise support based upon the promotion of public sector interests and issues, as in concentrating on class interests and issues. To take one example, the unions are in a uniquely powerful position to run campaigns aimed at drawing the electorate's attention to the nature of the effects of privatisation and public spending cuts on the level and quality of public services in health, education and welfare (see Taylor 1987b). This implies that Labour could win votes on the basis of exploiting and promoting certain issues; although Dunleavy himself is unwilling to countenance the general usefulness of issue-based explanations of voting behaviour ³, it might be interesting to develop this question by considering the question of whether sectoral interests appear in any way to relate to voters' political attitudes. The construction of attitudinal scales can be helpful here. For instance, we could hope to obtain an impression of the relative impact of sector on attitudes by creating a scale from responses to issues which could plausibly be considered to have relevance

for either class or sectoral interests, and then observe the connection between attitude and these social background factors. The attitudes selected from the 1987 data set for the creation of such a scale concerned electors' responses to questions about the trade off between local authority services and taxes, about political and financial support for public or private education and health services, and about the desirability of privatisation and public spending cuts.⁴ In twentieth century Britain the role of the state, and therefore, the extent of state spending involved in the provision of local, health and educational services, have been largely questions of class ideology. That is, debate over public versus private provision of health or education has been central to the classic two-party, two-class model of political conflict. Questions of nationalisation/privatisation and public spending have been relevant to class interests in precisely the same way, of course. For the working class, the state has been crucial in meeting the requirements of its collective interest. However, it might be argued that these are now questions which frequently bypass class interests, and are instead at least as important to sectoral interests. Issues of public spending cuts, of the encouragement of private education and health services, and of privatisation are all of paramount concern to those employed in the public sector. These are the citizens who may stand to lose their jobs, or at least find themselves working under new constraints and pressures as a result of the implementation of such policies. Consequently, it is arguable in a prima facie way that attitudes concerning these questions might be influenced by either class or sectoral interest. Thus, having constructed

an attitudinal scale from people's responses to the relevant questions, a multiple classification analysis was then performed with position on this attitudinal scale as the dependent variable, and with occupational class and sector as the independent variables. In this way, we might gain some notion of the relative importance of sectoral location. The betas produced were 0.13 for class and 0.07 for production sector; what this means in terms of location on the attitudinal scale is easily demonstrated (bearing in mind that -1.00 represents the most right wing position possible, whilst 1.00 represents the most left wing position possible):

Attitudinal location of occupational and sectoral groups

Non-manual	0.35
Manual	0.45
Private sector employees	0.38
Public sector employees	0.43

	<i>Beta coefficient</i>	<i>Significance of effect</i>
Occupation	0.13	0.000
Production sector	0.07	0.000
Multiple R ²	0.019	0.000

It is clear from this analysis, that sectoral differences are only half as great as class differences in locating people's attitudes. This result can be supplemented by a similar analysis of the importance of occupational sector for voters' more general ideological values. These underlying, or "synoptic" values, as they have been called - and of which more below - can be constructed into an attitudinal scale in precisely the same way and with precisely the same properties. On such a scale there is virtually no difference between private and public sector

workers, as confirmed by the beta coefficient of just 0.01 for sectoral location (at a significance level of only 0.724) when a multiple classification analysis is performed. Thus, whilst sectoral interest has virtually no apparent influence upon voters' broad ideological stances, it may have some, albeit rather slight, significance for certain types of directly relevant political question. Whilst not blinding ourselves to its potential significance for union members' political consciousnesses, therefore, it must still be conceded that sectoral location is hardly of profound importance as yet, and is certainly not as clear a basis for attitudinal or electoral variation as occupational class.

Trade Unions And Issue Assessments.

We have seen that unions can no longer be regarded as important class socialisation mechanisms; apparently, their influence on electoral behaviour does not yet work through the sectoral cleavage either. The only remaining alternative is that unions maintain some capacity for influencing voter attitudes. In chapter 4 we saw that there is a distinction between the broad underlying values which voters maintain in the long term and the evaluations they make of certain issues that may be salient in a particular short term context. Both are political attitudes, and their connection with unionisation will be examined in the rest of this chapter. We will start with short term issue assessments. To recap, what has probably been the central dispute in post-war electoral studies has focused on the competing claims of the issue assessment and social-psychological (or

partisan identification) schools of psephology. This is essentially a dispute between those who regard voting as a fundamentally rationalistic act, and those who prefer to emphasise its habitual nature, with its roots in long-standing partisan loyalties and social identities. For the latter, the notion of attitudinally predisposed voters rationally selecting the best partisan alternative on the basis of a careful evaluation of policy options is a fiction; this led to the development of the "Michigan Model", the classic expression of which in the British context was formulated by Butler and Stokes in the late 1960s. This laid stress upon the effect of various factors in the social background of an individual (notably, the political persuasion of his or her parents) in socialising an affectively rooted partisan loyalty, or "identification". Since the middle of the 1970s, however, this social psychological approach has been criticised by those offering evidence that long term affective attachments of voters to parties have been weakening, and that such attachments have been increasingly supplanted by voting decisions founded on evaluations of issues which are important at particular elections. Indeed, the growing primacy of "short term" evaluations seems to be the only convincing way to account for the scale and volatility of electoral change since the early 1970s. To reiterate this briefly is not to imply any need to become embroiled in the debate; in fact, most modern models of electoral behaviour, whatever their precise stance, seem to concur that the act of voting is influenced by both long-term and short-term factors. However, it was suggested earlier that short term political factors may well be increasing in importance for the voting decisions of

British trade unionists. It seems clear that unions are far less able to affect voting choices by providing a broad class-based group cue, or by reinforcing enduring partisan loyalties; so can they have an impact upon the short term issue assessments made by their memberships at the time of an election?

The first way in which we can approach this question is to add variables representing respondents' issue assessments to our basic social background model of vote. We can then see how much impact that trade unionism continues to have independently of issue assessments. The question is, do unions affect voting only via their prior impact on issue assessments? In the course of chapter 4, various issue models were reviewed and it was concluded that one of the most realistic and empirically useful of these was the retrospective performance approach pioneered by Fiorina. It is therefore intended to adopt such an approach in looking at the behaviour of union members. Specifically, a variable has been constructed which is designed to tap evaluations of past performance on a range of salient public issues by the incumbent government. These assessments have been weighted according to the importance that each respondent ascribed to the issue's impact on the voting decision, and according to the respondent's perception of the capacity of any government to take effective action on an issue.⁵ (An interesting account of the significance of retrospective issue assessments for voting choice in Britain can be found in Whiteley, 1983.)

Unfortunately, the sort of data that would permit one to construct this type of issue variable only exists in our 1987 data set. However, it is probably not essential that we consider issue effects for 1964 given that it is well established that such effects were generally less prevalent at that time. Moreover, we know that union membership was more closely associated with class and partisan identity then. The beta coefficients for all the social background variables in our model of vote are reported in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 - The Impact Of Issue Assessments And Social Background On Vote, 1987.

	Beta coefficient	Significance level
Occupational class	0.15 (.17)	0.000
Unionisation	0.06 (.08)	0.001
Housing	0.19 (.21)	0.000
Education	0.00 (.01)	0.894
Production sector	0.03 (.05)	0.075
Parental occupational class	0.10 (.14)	0.000
Multiple R ²	0.257 (.145)	0.000

Note: Figures in brackets show beta coefficients prior to the addition of retrospective assessment to the model.

The overall model explains 26% of the variance in voting, compared with 15% when the retrospective issue assessment variable is omitted. Interval scales such as the retrospective assessment one do not produce beta coefficients under the multiple classification procedure, but it is certain enough that it is an important variable in the model. Indeed, analysis of sums of squares reveals that over half of all the explained variance in the model is attributable to the impact of retrospective assessment (55% to be precise, at a significance level of 0.000). Clearly, retrospective evaluation of governmental performance on issues is the single variable most strongly related to

voting choice; in addition, three of the social background variables remain of some importance, they being occupational class, housing and parental occupation. In common with most of the other variables in the model, the unionisation parameter is weakened by a couple of points when retrospective assessments are added. To recall, unionisation produced a beta coefficient of 0.08 on the social background model of vote, and this is reduced to 0.06 when the effect of retrospective judgements is added. It must be said that this does not strongly suggest that unionisation can only have had an effect on vote at the 1987 General Election via its influence on people's issue evaluations. Clearly, it retains some independent and direct impact (though not a particularly strong one).

However, this only serves as preliminary evidence regarding the way in which trade unions now influence voting decisions. It is still necessary to seek out direct evidence of trade unionism's influence on the way in which people think about political issues. The first way in which we can consider this is by simply checking if trade union membership affected the retrospective assessment variable itself. Again, the technique that we choose to employ is that of the multiple classification analysis, this time with the issue variable as the dependent variable. As in the case of the sectoral attitude scale, this issue assessment scale has a range of values running from -1 through to +1; the latter extreme indicates that on all the issues comprising the scale the respondent makes an evaluation favourable to the Labour Party, and that (where applicable) the respondent considers the relevant issues both important to his or her

voting choice and areas in which a government has, in principle, the possibility of taking some effective action. The former extreme indicates the same with regards to salience and the capacity for effective government action but, of course, the respondent makes only evaluations that are favourable to the Conservative Party. Given this, we may examine the differences between the average positions of various social groups, including trade unionists and non-unionists, on the scale.

Table 6.3 - Average Positions Of Social Group Members On Retrospective Performance Scale, 1987.

<u>Retrospective issue scale</u>			
Union	0.09	Non-union	0.04
Manual	0.07	Non-manual	0.04
Council tenant	0.09	Non-council tenant	0.04
Minimum schooling	0.06	Further schooling	0.04
Manual father	0.07	Father non-manual	0.02
Public sector	0.08	Private sector	0.04

Whilst non-union members are apparently more likely than members to regard the 1983-87 Conservative government's record favourably, the difference does not appear great at first glance. On the other hand, it is important to regard the impact of union membership in the context of other social background factors which might influence attitudes and judgements. Compared to these other factors, unionisation is not such an insignificant effect. It distinguishes voters in terms of the retrospective assessments they make as strongly as any other social variable, in fact. The difference of five scale points between unionists and non-unionists is equalled only by differences on the housing and parental occupation variables. Five points may not sound a large difference, but

this should probably be understood largely as an artefact of the way the scale is constructed. Moreover, trade unionists prove, on average, to be more anti-Conservative/pro-Labour than any other social group except council tenants in the retrospective evaluations they make. This impression of relative importance is confirmed by the beta coefficients for all social background factors which are reported in table 6.4. Only parental occupation produces a stronger effect.

Table 6.4 - The Impact Of Social Background On Retrospective Issue Assessments Of Voters, 1987.

	<i>Beta coefficients</i>	<i>Significance of effect</i>
Occupational class	0.04	0.047
Unionisation	0.06	0.002
Housing	0.06	0.001
Education	0.03	0.141
Production sector	0.06	0.001
Parental class	0.10	0.000
Multiple R ²	0.027	0.000

So far, we have concentrated on analysing the importance of union membership in influencing the short-term assessments people make of governmental performance. However, it may also be important to understand something of people's underlying values. Thus, we are obliged to move back into the domain of long term predispositions, even though we remain in the area of attitudinal effects. One of the most insightful but straightforward accounts of the role of underlying values has been given by the "How Britain Votes" team, who assert that:

"..voting choices are not made on the basis of a conscious weighing in the balance of alternative policies..electoral choice is based on a much broader, more synoptic evaluation of parties than the consumer theory allows for...Factors such as policies, record in office, putative ability to implement a programme, leadership. unity of purpose may all come into it, but none is paramount..It is the fit between the general character of the party and the voter's own general ideology which, we believe, best accounts for electoral choice" (Heath, Jowell & Curtice 1985: 99).

Is it at all likely that trade unions might have some influence over the development of these synoptic values in their members? Heath and his colleagues echoed David Robertson and others in arguing that general ideological predispositions are best regarded as dividing along two distinct attitudinal dimensions in the case of the British electorate. One of these dimensions reflects class linked attitudes, whilst the other reflects the continuum between social liberalism and authoritarianism. This serves as a useful construction of British electoral reality upon which to base an examination of the ideological profile of trade unionists.

Heath argues that certain issues are particularly sensitive to underlying ideology, and therefore serve as good indicators of synoptic values. In particular, questions about nationalisation or privatisation, and about income redistribution are acute indicators of traditional class values in modern Britain. On the other hand, attitudes towards health and social services, the death penalty or nuclear disarmament are effective indicators of degree of social liberalism (ibid: 117-118). Where have trade

unionists stood on such issues since the 1960s? Table 6.5 indicates the extent to which they have opted for left wing and liberal responses to all these questions.

Table 6.5 - The Synoptic Attitudes Of Trade Unionists, 1964 and 1987.

	Union Members		Non Members	
	1964	1987	1964	1987
<i>Class Values</i>				
Income redistribution	NA	52.2	NA	40.8
Nationalisation	42.0	21.1	21.1	15.8
<i>Liberal Values</i>				
Health & Social service spending	87.4	95.3	74.2	90.2
Death penalty	18.7	19.5	21.5	16.3
Nuclear disarmament	9.4	26.6	8.3	19.2

Note: Figures are percentages opting for left wing responses to questions tapping class values and for liberal responses to questions tapping degree of social liberalism.

We can obtain a rough idea of the connection between unionisation and synoptic values by simply subtracting the non-union percentages from the union percentages in table 6.5. This gives a sort of "index of union distinctiveness" on such values, and it is interesting to note two things about this (see table 6.6). Firstly, on two of the four attitudes which can be measured both in 1964 and 1987 (nationalisation and health and social services) it is obvious that the index has dropped considerably. On one other attitude (the death penalty) there has been little overall change in the size of the gap between union members and non-members, although the direction of the gap has shifted; now it is the non-members who are slightly more in favour of capital punishment. On the final attitude (nuclear

disarmament) the gap between member and non-member has grown a little. However, the proportions of both groups who are in favour of disarmament grew considerably between 1964 and 1987, and the actual gap in the latter year was hardly a great one. The second point to observe is that in 1987 trade unionists are more likely to hold left wing and liberal attitudes than non-unionists for all of the indicators we have checked. However, in no case is the union/non-union gap especially considerable, with the possible exception of the question of the redistribution of income.

Table 6.6 - Index of union distinctiveness

	<u>1964</u>	<u>1987</u>
Nationalisation	20.9	5.3
Income redist	NA	11.4
Health & services	13.4	4.2
Death penalty	-2.8	3.2
Nuclear disarmament	1.1	7.4

Note: Figures are calculated by subtracting the percentage of non-members favouring left wing or liberal options from the percentage of members holding such views.

The picture of how distinct union members' values are, can be further elaborated in a spatial sense. That is, the distribution of attitudinal preferences along the two underlying ideological dimensions can be visually represented on a map of electors' values. This is achieved by a straightforward process of combining crosstabulations. Thus, one of the class values indicators can be constructed in a virtually identical format for both the 1964 and 1987 data sets, as can two of the liberal values indicators. Similar questions about nationalisation, the death penalty and nuclear disarmament were asked in both years, and the

responses can be codified similarly for all these questions for both years. This means that we can make very direct comparisons of these attitudes across time; this cannot necessarily be said of other indicators where, for instance, a question was asked in one year but not the other, or the responses were codified rather differently from one data set to the other. On the two dimensional maps which can be created from these attitudes, in the way originally done by Heath and his colleagues, left wing responses fall to the west of one dimension and liberal responses to the north of the other; consequently, Labour's "heartland" theoretically lies to the north west, the Conservatives' to the south east and, as it happened, the Liberal Democrats forerunners' to the north east. Tables 6.7 and 6.8 show the distribution of trade unionists and non-unionists on these ideological maps.

Table 6.7 - An ideological map of trade union members, 1964 and 1987, 1: Nationalisation by capital punishment.

		More Nationalisation		No Change		More Privatisation	
		1964	1987	1964	1987	1964	1987
Anti-death penalty	union	10.2	5.4	6.9	9.9	2.1	4.5
	non-union	6.3	3.7	12.6	8.7	3.4	4.0
Not sure	union	1.0	1.0	2.2	3.1	0.4	1.2
	Non-union	1.8	0.9	4.8	3.9	1.2	1.6
Pro-death penalty	Union	31.0	14.4	32.9	38.6	13.4	21.8
	Non-union	13.0	11.0	40.2	37.3	16.6	29.1

As an ideological map, table 6.7 is perhaps not what one would expect to be typical, since there is a strong tendency for both unionists and non-unionists to favour the death penalty in both years. Nevertheless, it is can be observed that members are more likely than non-members to be found in

the most north westerly cell, especially in 1964; conversely, non-members are more likely than members to be found in the most south easterly cell, especially in 1987. Differences are not great in the most north easterly segment of the map for either year. Overall, this suggests that members and non-members do differ somewhat, though not greatly, in their basic political values. The other notable feature of the table is the rightward shift of trade unionists over the period under investigation on the question of nationalisation. An essentially similar pattern emerges from the alternative version of the map displayed in table 6.8; here there are only six cells, rather than nine, given the simple dichotomy of preferences available on the question of nuclear disarmament, but the pattern of values is confirmed. This map also indicates a well recognised picture of general value change over the period, with members and non-members alike shifting to favour privatisation and nuclear disarmament in greater numbers, but the gap between them is still there. There are still proportionately more members than non-members in the north west, whilst the latter are more likely to congregate in the south east.

Table 6.8 - An ideological map of trade union members 1964 and 1987, 2: Nationalisation by nuclear disarmament.

	More Nationalisation		No Change		More Privatisation	
	1964	1987	1964	1987	1964	1987
Abolish Union nuclear weapons	5.3	9.2	2.7	14.9	1.6	2.1
Non-union	2.2	6.1	3.6	11.2	1.7	2.1
Keep Union nuclear weapons	36.5	11.5	39.7	36.5	14.2	25.8
Non-union	19.2	9.5	53.4	38.6	19.9	32.5

It can be observed, then, that the underlying values of union members are to some extent distinct from those of non-members, but to what degree precisely? The simplest way of answering this question is to repeat the process of subtracting the non-union percentages from union percentages in each of the cells in tables 6.7 and 6.8. This produces the indices of union distinctiveness reported in tables 6.9 and 6.10, which reveal that the differences between members and non-members were greater in 1964 than in 1987. Indeed, in table 6.9 the union/non-union gap was greater in 1964 in the case of 8 out of the 9 cells; the average cell difference between members and non-members in 1964 was 4.8 percentage points, compared to just 1.9 for 1987. For table 6.10, the 1964 cell difference average was fully 6.8 points, but was only 2.9 in 1987. Clearly, the basic ideological values of trade unionists are no longer so very different from those of non-unionists.

Table 6.9 - Indices of union members' ideological distinctiveness, 1964 and 1987, 1: Nationalisation by capital punishment.

	More Nationalisation		No Change		More Privatisation	
	1964	1987	1964	1987	1964	1987
Anti-death penalty	3.9	1.7	-5.7	1.2	-1.3	0.5
Not sure	-0.8	0.1	-2.6	-0.8	-0.8	-0.4
Pro-death penalty	18.0	3.4	-7.3	1.3	-3.2	-7.3

Note: Figures are differences between unionists and non-unionists (produced by subtracting non-union percentages in each of the cells from union percentages). Average cell difference 1964 = 4.8, average cell difference 1987 = 1.8.

Table 6.10 - Indices of union members' ideological distinctiveness, 1964 and 1987, 2: Nationalisation by nuclear disarmament.

	More Nationalisation		No Change		More Privatisation	
	1964	1987	1964	1987	1964	1987
Abolish nuclear weapons	3.1	3.1	-0.9	3.7	-0.1	0.0
Keep nuclear weapons	17.3	2.0	-13.7	-2.1	-5.7	-6.7

Note: Average cell difference 1964 = 6.8; average cell difference 1987 = 2.9.

The impression of a diminishing ideological gap between trade unionists and non-unionists can be confirmed by recourse, once more, to the technique of multiple classification analysis. The general synoptic values we have been examining individually or in two dimensional spaces thus far, can be combined into overall ideological scales which are constructed in a similar fashion to the preceding retrospective performance scale. Thus, an additive attitudinal scale can be created from electors' responses to the questions about nationalisation, income redistribution, health and social services, the death penalty and nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, the 1964 survey included no question about income redistribution, which does of course mean that this scale is not strictly comparable to 1987 ideological scale; nonetheless, the scales must be similar enough to be strongly indicative. The scale runs, as before from -1 to 1, with -1 representing the point at which a respondent opts only for right wing alternatives on the

various issues comprising the scale, and +1 that at which he or she opts solely for left wing alternatives. Table 6.11 shows how the various social categories (including unionists and non-unionists) differed on this scale. Given the aforementioned proviso about the lack of strict comparability in the two scales, one has to be careful about accepting at face value the apparent leftward shift of all groups over the period between the two surveys. (If this actually is an accurate reflection of reality, then presumably it owes much to the considerable movement of mass

Table 6.11 - The Average Position Of Various Social Groups On Synoptic Values Scales, 1964 And 1987.

1964			
Union	-0.07	Non-union	-0.15
Manual	-0.12	Non-manual	-0.12
Council tenant	-0.09	Non-council tenant	-0.13
Father manual	-0.12	Father non-manual	-0.12
Minimum schooling	-0.12	Further schooling	-0.11
1987			
Union	0.08	Non-union	0.08
Manual	0.10	Non-manual	0.07
Council tenant	0.12	Non-council tenant	0.07
Father manual	0.08	Father non-manual	0.09
Minimum schooling	0.09	Further schooling	0.06
Public sector	0.08	Private sector	0.09

opinion on the disarmament issue.) What one can be sure of, however, is the evident confirmation of the finding that ideological differences between trade unionists and non-unionists have diminished - or indeed, utterly disappeared according to this analysis of variance. This is best illustrated by an examination of the betas for trade unionism and the other social background variables when this attitudinal scale is treated as dependent upon them. The betas suggest that unionisation is actually the most

important social determinant of ideological position in 1964, whereas it is the least important (and least statistically significant) by 1987.

Table 6.12 - The Impact Of Social Background On General Ideological Values Of Voters, 1964 And 1987.

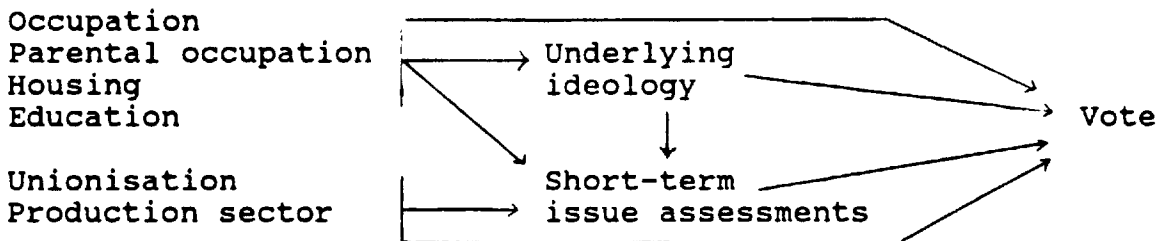
	<u>Beta coefficient</u>		<u>Significance of effect</u>	
	<u>1964</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1987</u>
Occupational class	0.04	0.05	0.000	0.024
Unionisation	0.12	0.00	0.000	0.953
Housing	0.05	0.04	0.000	0.026
Education	0.02	0.04	0.074	0.079
Parental class	0.03	0.04	0.013	0.057
Production sector	-	0.01	-	0.724
Multiple R ²	0.017	0.008	0.000	0.001

Note: Production sector is excluded from the 1964 analysis since it does not exist as a variable in the 1964 data set.⁷

Thus, it would seem that in so far as trade union membership continues to affect voting behaviour it does so only partly through its capacity to influence people's attitudes; it appears to have some influence upon short-term issue assessments, but little or no continuing impact on underlying ideological values. Combined with the knowledge that unions have lost their capacity to affect actual partisan commitment, this latter implies the general inability of unions to inspire any of the long term influences affecting voting behaviour. Rather, unionisation is limited to influencing the short term assessments that go some of the way to making up the voting choice - possibly through interacting with emerging sectoral interests. If any social background factors influence underlying ideology at all, they would seem to be limited to those that remain connected in some way with class in Britain - occupation,

parental occupation, housing and education. These are the only social factors which have statistically significant (though not necessarily strong) effects on ideology, according to the analysis conducted here. These factors may well affect voting decision through one of three paths - the direct one, through influencing long term ideology or through influencing short term performance assessments. Unionisation and sector have little to do with class any more, and their influence upon voting behaviour is probably only either direct or via short term assessments. Thus, we end up with a potential model of the effect that union membership has on vote which looks rather like that portrayed in figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 - A Possible Model Of Vote, Incorporating Ideology, Issue Assessments and Social Background.



This model can be tested using the multiple classification procedure by adding the retrospective assessments and general ideological scales to the basic social background variables, and entering them subsequently to the latter. This model explains 28% of the vote, with occupation and housing emerging as the most important explanatory social variables, as indicated by the information held in table 6.13. All told, the social background factors account for slightly over half of all explained variance in the model

(52%), whilst the combined effect of the attitudinal variables (ideology and retrospective assessment) accounts for the remainder.

Table 6.13 - Beta coefficients of social background influences on vote, after controlling for ideology and retrospective performance evaluations, 1987.

	<u>Beta Coefficient</u>	<u>Significance of effect</u>
Occupation	0.14	0.000
Unionisation	0.06	0.000
Housing	0.18	0.000
Parental occupation	0.10	0.000
Education	0.00	0.531
Sector	0.03	0.002
General ideology	-	0.000
Retrospective assessments	-	0.000
Multiple R ²	0.277	0.000

The upshot of all this is to confirm again that trade unions have little continuing influence on long term predispositions. We have already seen that their effect on partisan and class identity is diminished; now it seems that they exert little or no influence over synoptic values. This implies a weak capacity for any sort of socialisation - not of underlying values, social identities or political loyalties. In short, Butler and Stokes' view of the place of unions in the political behaviour of the British electorate has become obsolete. They may, nevertheless, retain a residual capacity to influence the short term assessments that their members make at election time, especially if the latter are concerned about crisis in the public sector.

Trade Unions And The Electoral Future Of The Labour Party.

It seems that the way in which unions affect voting behaviour is changing then. The received orthodoxy that trade union membership operated as a socialising agent helping to reinforce class identities and loyalties no longer seems appropriate. By 1987, however, it is clear that the importance of the unions for class mobilisation had declined somewhat; this had consisted chiefly in the capacity that unions had maintained to mobilise a class vote amongst those less sure of their own class identity, but this capacity has been considerably eroded. So how do unions influence electoral behaviour now, if at all? There is a suggestion of a potential role that might be played in mobilising a cross-class brand of support based on production sector rather than class (if only through influencing certain issue evaluations). Of greater significance must be the potential that the unions retain for influencing voting by affecting the retrospective performance evaluations that people make. The first hint that this may indeed be the case was provided when we examined the partisan identities of union members during the previous chapter; it became obvious that, notwithstanding the erosion of partisan loyalty for Labour amongst union members - and especially amongst manual unionists - this alone does not provide an adequate account of the the entire electoral decline the Party suffered within this group between 1964 and 1987. Moreover, we have now seen that unions have little continuing influence on long term ideological predispositions. Since the decline of the "long

term" element in members' support for Labour is not on its own a sufficient explanation, it seems logical to suggest, consequently, that short term factors may well have had an (increasingly) significant impact at election times, and therein lies the key to understanding the contemporaray electoral influence of trade unions. This view is supported by evidence suggesting that in 1987, such impact as the unions had upon vote (and this would seem to be a shrinking impact, it should be added) was partially through a prior influence upon people's retrospective perfromance assessments.

That unions should now influence vote partially by way of short term evaluations is hardly surprising given the weakening class and partisan loyalties amongst their memberships. Individuals without strong identities and loyalties are forced to reassess their position at each electoral consultation. Moreover, it is probably worth adding that this conclusion in many ways concurs with the considerable body of evidence in the literature which suggests the growing general influence of short term electoral cues. Precisely how might unions affect these short term evaluations that people make? There is one immediately obvious sense in which unions can affect issue assessments - namely, in so far as they are "an issue" themselves. Despite the problematic relations of the last twenty five years, Labour is still undoubtedly perceived as as being connected with the unions, as somehow being a spokesman for the special interest of the unions. It is therefore inevitable that the Party's popularity suffers in times of newsworthy and (invariably unpopular) industrial

unrest. In this sense, the unions were critically important influences on the outcomes of the elections of 1974 and 1979, and of some significance in 1970.

But it is, of course, also likely that the unions may be increasingly significant in affecting the issue perceptions of voters through their organisation of publicity campaigns which are not directly a question of industrial relations or union affairs. In this respect, we have already mentioned the potential that the unions have on issues relating to the provision of public services. Moreover, in the mid 1980s the unions argued forcibly that the significance of the political fund ballots lay precisely in the need to protect the right to run campaigns of this sort. Indeed, in a recent article co-authored by Labour's first national Trade Union Liaison Officer, it was pointed out that non-partisan political activity by unions has been increasing.

"The return to free collective bargaining after 1980 was an earthquake in the bargaining system. Far from involving less political activity, the demise of incomes policy and the Conservative government's attack on unions and the public sector have stimulated a surge in political campaigning. Battles over anti-union legislation, privatisation, local authority and NHS cuts, compulsory tendering, cuts in nationalised industries' spending and a host of other issues, have all demanded ever-growing political resources."
(Upham and Wilson 1989: 8)

These authors continue to note that these political activities are not necessarily limited to issues which directly affect the interests of members; it is apparent that union affiliations and contributions to bodies like the CND, Amnesty International, the NCCL, War On Want and Anti-Apartheid groups have also burgeoned. This tends to

dovetail with the impression that unions are likely to influence the evaluations that voters make of short-term policy issues such as the past governmental performance. Such performance assessments can be particularly important for electoral outcomes, as we have seen. However, to play an effective role in influencing any of these types of issue assessments in a positive way so far as the Labour Party is concerned, it may be important for the unions to maintain a reasonably positive general public image; their "word" may otherwise be tarnished by a certain lack of credibility. It is clear that, since the 1960s in particular, they have often lost popularity with the British public, especially during periods of industrial unrest (see table 6.14). However, whilst this is widely recognised, it may be easy to exaggerate. Table 6.14 suggests that, even during the dark days of the "winter of discontent", a majority of people continued to regard the unions positively. By the late 1980s union popularity may even have achieved an all-time high in Britain. Perhaps this largely reflects the fact that they appear to have been tamed after a decade of costly disputes, high unemployment and tough legal regulation. Yet Labour and the unions will understand the importance of sustaining union image. It may well be significant in this respect that certain aspects of the Conservative governments' legislation concerning the unions appear to have caught the public imagination, especially those relating to the internal democracy of union procedures. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the present Labour leadership clearly recognises this; certainly, a future Labour government would be unwilling to remove all of the provisions of the Conservative legislation, as we saw in chapter 2. Indeed, for Labour the

Table 6.14 - General Popularity Of Trade Unions In Britain, 1964-1987

	<u>Good Thing</u>	<u>Bad Thing</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
1964	70	12	18
1965	57	25	18
1966	63	20	17
1967	60	23	17
1968	66	18	16
1969	57	26	17
1970	60	24	17
1971	62	21	17
1972	55	30	16
1973	61	25	14
1974	54	27	19
1975	51	34	16
1976	60	25	14
1977	53	33	14
1978	57	31	12
1979	51	36	13
1980	60	29	11
1981	56	28	16
1982	59	30	11
1983	63	25	12
1984	61	30	10
1985	65	24	10
1986	67	22	12
1987	71	17	12

Note: These responses were made to the question "generally speaking, and thinking of Britain as a whole, do you think that trade unions are a good thing or a bad thing?"

Source: *Gallup Political Index*

credibility and general standing of the unions may be vital; the ability of the Party to construct an effective working relationship with the unions when in power will surely be crucial to its chances of enacting a successful economic policy. If Labour still wishes to assert that "unions have a central role to play in a successful economy" (Labour Party 1989: 21), then it will have to convince voters about the democratic and responsible nature of union leaderships, and about the economic consequences of union actions. In this light, Labour and the predominant forces with the TUC at the beginning of the 1990s must be regarded as making positive

moves; the 1990 TUC endorsed Labour's proposed package of positive rights for employees, which promises to maintain strike ballots, the election of union officials and restrictions on secondary action (Harper 1990).

Finally, the fact that more votes than ever may be "up for grabs" at forthcoming elections (given the erosion of strong partisan loyalty) may well mean that the role of organisational input and campaigning at election time becomes more important than ever. Skilfully managed campaigns which concentrate on issues important at elections have a greater potential than ever for swaying votes. Again, Labour seems ready to recognise this now (Webb forthcoming). If so, then the significance of the unions for Labour's future electoral performance may become increasingly acute for another reason that we have yet to consider; for as we have seen, it is not really too great an exaggeration to say that Labour's organisation is the unions, or rather, is provided by the unions. Since the crushing defeat of 1983, of course, the unions have shown signs of their willingness to help in, indeed, even press for, a complete renewal of the party's overstretched organisational resources (particularly via TUFL). To reiterate once more then, the capacity of unions to influence voting behaviour directly seems to have declined since 1964, but it would be unwise to assume that they are destined never to have any impact on electors in the future. In various ways it remains probable that unions will be able to affect the way in which voters make assessments about

Footnotes:

1. i) Admittedly, it is perhaps unusual to mix all these variables into the same model on theoretical grounds. Certainly, Dunleavy would not welcome the idea of entering variables such as parental class and education, which essentially reflect socialisation effects in the social background of an individual, along with the other variables which, for him, reflect the direct impact of group interests. But it should be noted that the eta coefficient for production sector - that is, the uncontrolled beta for vote and sector - is no higher than 0.03 in 1983 and 0.04 in 1987. Thus, the statistic which summarises the simple bivariate relationship between vote and sector under the multiple classification technique, without taking into account the impact of any other variable, is still low. In any case, we might make a broad defence of introducing all of these effects into the same model by following the position of Heath, Jowell and Curtice, who argue that the voting decision surely comprises both "instrumental" and "expressive" elements (see discussion and summary section of text).

ii. Note that production sector was coded "1" if the respondent was employed in the public sector, and "0" if in the private sector.

2. The results that Dunleavy and Husbands obtain from their preferred logit model of the influence of production sector upon vote at the 1983 general election are as follow:

Model	For overall model			For new term		
	G ²	DF	Signif.	Conditional G ²	DF	Signif
(Vote)	192.86	94	0.1%	-	-	-
<u>(Vote), (Sector/Vote)</u>	184.48	92	0.1%	8.38	2	2.0%
<u>(Vote), (Sector/Vote), (Gender/Class/Vote)</u>	169.72	86	0.1%	14.76	6	2.5%
<u>(Vote), (Sector/Vote), (Gender/Class/Vote), (Class/Vote)</u>	76.89	80	58%	92.83	4	0.1%
<u>(Vote), (Sector/Vote), (Gender/Class, Vote), (Class/Vote), (Unionisation/Vote)</u>	67.86	76	74%	9.03	4	7.0%

Note: Each term in parenthesis is an effect. Each new term is underlined, and it is for this new term that the conditional G², degrees of freedom (df) and significance on each line is given. The G² statistic is the counterpart of the familiar R² in regression - ie, it is the proportion of variance explained.

Source: Dunleavy and Husbands 1985: 136

One sees very clearly that, despite being the first association term introduced into the model, sector/vote only contributes an independent conditional G² of 8.38%; even the term for the association between union membership and vote explains more of the variance than this, despite being the final effect introduced into the model, sequentially speaking. Equally obviously, the most important single effect in the entire model appears to be that for the relationship between class and vote.

3. Nevertheless, as was pointed out in chapter 4, he has somewhat confusingly attributed Labour's poor performance at the 1983 General Election in part to a failure to mobilise all its potential support on issues where it actually took a stance that was popular with the public.

4. The questions from which this particular attitudinal scale was constructed were the following:

- i. Are you in favour of more nationalisation/privatisation of companies by government?
- ii. Should the government reduce public spending generally?
- iii. Should local authorities generally choose to increase services and rates or reduce spending?
- iv. Should the government encourage private medicine?
- v. Should the government get rid of private education?
- vi. Should the government put more money into the NHS?
- vii. Should the government spend more on education?

To all these questions except number i., there were six alternative replies from which the respondent could choose:

- i. Definitely should.
- ii. Probably should.
- iii. Definitely shouldn't.
- iv. Probably shouldn't.
- v. Doesn't matter.
- iv. Don't know.

To the question on nationalisation, the possible answers were:

- i. More nationalisation
- ii. More privatisation.
- iii. Things should be left as they are.
- iv. Don't know.

When the sense of these replies was such that they represented the left wing alternative they were given a value of +1; right wing replies were coded -1, and "Don't Knows" 0. The values of these coded responses were simply added together, and then divided by the number of valid responses so that the range of the scale ran from -1(only right wing attitudes preferred) through to +1(only left wing attitudes). A reliability test was performed on this scale which produced a "Cronbach's Alpha" coefficient of 0.5039.

5. Again, the retrospective assessment scale was constructed in a similar fashion to the scale described in the preceding footnote. These scales ran from -1 (indicating 100% pro-Conservative assessments, and that all relevant issues were considered very important to vote, and that the government was perceived as capable of taking some effective action on relevant issues) to +1 (indicating a similarly extreme position in favour of Labour). The questions on which the scale was based were the following:

On the whole, do you think the Conservative government over the last four years has handled:

- i. ...unemployment
- ii. ...prices
- iii. ...taxes
- iv. ...health and social services
- v. ...crime
- vi. ...education
- vii. ...defence

...very well, fairly well, not very well, or not well at all?

There were four possible different positions, then, two more or less favourable to the Conservatives, and two more or less favourable to Labour. These positions were coded from +1 (favourable to Labour, or unfavourable to Conservative) through to -1 (favourable to the Conservatives). Following this, these initial "scores" were weighted by two if the respondent perceived that governments in general had the potential to "do a lot" about the issue, and/or by two if the issue was seen as having been "quite important" to the respondent's vote; if the issue was seen as having been "very important" to vote, it was weighted by three, but if governments in general were not viewed as especially competent to deal with a problem, the score was weighted by half. A Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.7430 was recorded for this retrospective evaluation scale.

When the issue variable was added to the basic social background model of vote the following picture of the distribution of variation emerged, in terms of the sum of squares:

	<i>Sum of squares</i>
Explained by retrospective assessment	79.704
Explained by social background	53.527
Explained by interactions of independent variables	12.923
Total explained variation	146.154
Residual	372.231
Total variation	518.385

6. Again, the method of synoptic value scale construction was such that it ran from -1 (completely right wing preferences) to +1 (completely left wing preferences). The questions from which the scales were constructed were the following:

1964.

There's a lot of talk about nationalising industry. Which of these statements comes closest to what you yourself feel should be done?

- a. A lot more industries should be nationalised.
- b. Only a few more industries should be nationalised.
- c. No more industries are nationalised, but the industries that are nationalised now should stay nationalised.
- d. Some of the industries that are now nationalised should be denationalised.
- e. No opinion/Don't know.

Do you feel that the government should spend more on pensions and social services, or do you feel that the spending for social services should stay about as it is now?

Would you like to see the death penalty kept or abolished?

Which of these three statements comes closest to what you yourself feel should be done?:

- a. Britain should keep her own nuclear weapons independent of other countries.

b. Britain should have nuclear weapons only as part of a western defence system.

c. Britain should have nothing to do with nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

1987:

Essentially the same questions were included with regard to nationalisation, the death penalty and nuclear disarmament, whilst the following questions were added:

Should income be redistributed towards ordinary working people or not?

Should the government put more money into the NHS?

Cronbach's Alphas of 0.259 for 1964 and 0.552 for 1987 were recorded.

7. It must be acknowledged that the general ideological scale employed here risks giving a misleading impression in one sense, since it attempts to collapse two distinct value dimensions into one. As an alternative, therefore, two separate synoptic values scales tapping liberal and class attitudes respectively, were also created. This yielded some interesting results. It seemed reasonable to suppose that combining both sets of values into a one dimensional scale might weaken its reliability. However, when separate scales, constructed solely from the liberal attitude indicators on the one hand, and only from the class attitude indicators on the other, were created, it was discovered that reliability was not in fact enhanced. Thus, the Alpha coefficients for

the liberal values scales were 0.1571 for 1964 and 0.3439 for 1987. An additive class scale could not be constructed for 1964 since there was only one indicator (attitude towards nationalisation), but for 1987 it was 0.5333. Thus, in all cases, reliability tests indicated that there was little advantage in disaggregating general ideological scales in this way. Nonetheless, multiple classification analyses of the alternative ideological scales revealed patterns which the overall one dimensional scale might have obscured. On the one dimensional scale for 1987, no social variable appeared to have much of an effect on underlying values; the alternatives suggest that housing, occupation, parental class, and to a lesser extent, unionisation and sector all have some influence on class values, however. Liberal values seem to be notably affected by educational background, on the other hand. Nothing appears to have influenced liberal values greatly in 1964, but we may assume that the above-mentioned class linked factors all had at least as much impact in 1964 as in 1987. Given the discovery in chapter 5 that class voting and identity have weakened among union members, it is a little surprising to find that they do retain some distinctly class related attitudes after all. Though interesting, two observations need to be made about these findings, however. Firstly, it should be borne in mind that these alternative scales may not be such reliable indicators, especially in the case of the liberal values variable. Secondly, they do not necessarily alter greatly the central argument about the position of unions. Relative to other social background factors, union membership still has little influence on fundamental values in 1987. It is the equal weakest influence on liberal values, and only

education has less impact on class values. Nonetheless, it should be said that the matter of class related synoptic attitudes may represent something of a revision to the general argument that unions have little influence on underlying ideology. The details of the attitudinal models are reported below:

	<i>Betas</i>		<i>Significance of effects</i>	
	<u>Liberal values</u>	<u>Class values</u>	<u>Liberal values</u>	<u>Class values</u>
<i>1964</i>				
Occupation	0.04	-	0.000	-
Unionisation	0.06	-	0.000	-
Housing	0.05	-	0.000	-
Parental class	0.04	-	0.795	-
Education	0.02	-	0.096	-
Sector	-	-	-	-
Multiple R ²	0.012	-	0.000	-
<i>1987</i>				
Occupation	0.03	0.13	0.104	0.000
Unionisation	0.03	0.07	0.085	0.000
Housing	0.04	0.15	0.071	0.000
Parental class	0.03	0.11	0.106	0.000
Education	0.12	0.01	0.000	0.795
Sector	0.05	0.07	0.015	0.000
Multiple R ²	0.017	0.088	0.000	0.000

Note also that, for the sake of completeness, a version of the final model of vote for 1987 was run with disaggregated ideological variables. The overall explanatory value of this model did increase notably (from 28% to 37%); the details of this model are as follows:

	<i>Betas</i>	<i>Significance of effect</i>
Occupation	0.11	0.000
Unionisation	0.03	0.000
Housing	0.14	0.000
Parental occupation	0.07	0.000
Education	0.02	0.585
Sector	0.01	0.001
Retrospective assessments	-	0.000
Liberal values	-	0.000
Class values	-	0.000
Multiple R ²	0.365	0.000

61.2% of the explained variance within this model is accounted for by the attitudinal variables, and the remainder by the social background factors. It is interesting also to observe that union membership now has very little remaining independent impact upon vote; really only class and housing location continue to.

Chapter Seven - Summary And Conclusion.

Since the early 1960s the electoral behaviour of British trade union members has given the lie to the notion that they can generally be assumed to sustain a political commitment to the Labour Party. Although the pattern of their support has fluctuated somewhat, an underlying trend is apparent, and it is not a trend that Labour can draw comfort from. Considerably fewer unionists have voted for the party in the general elections subsequent to October 1974, and fewer have been inclined to express a strong partisan identity with it. In the opening chapter it was noted that previous analysis of this phenomenon was either too brief or too vague, or both. Hopefully, our understanding of what has happened over the past quarter of a century is a little better now.

It was suggested initially that there could be, broadly speaking, three possible types of explanation of the changing voting behaviour manifested by union members - social, political and organisational. To start with the latter first, we confronted the possibility that the reduced organisational input of the unions into the Labour Party might have somehow influenced the political affinities of their memberships. A review of the organisational links between the party and the unions quickly dispelled this notion. It is quite clear that this organisational relationship cannot meaningfully be considered to have weakened since the early 1960s; affiliated membership is a greater proportion of total party membership than ever and,

consequently, so is the financial dependence of the national party organisation upon the unions. (There is no way of knowing very precisely how the financial link between the party and the unions has altered at the local level, although it is clear that it is, and most probably always has been, generally weaker than at national level.) The role that the unions play in the Labour Party's policy making activity remains as significant as it did at the beginning of the period, despite the possibility of the reform of the block vote. As many unions remain wedded to the idea of sponsoring members of parliament as in 1964, and the development of bodies like TULV, the TUCC and TUFL all demonstrate that the unions are prepared to seek new ways of making their organisational relationship with the party more effective (as, indeed, does the growing commitment to political education). The success of the campaigns over the retention of political funds in 1985-86 summed up the value the unions continue to place on the link with the party - whilst rendering its electoral decline among their members more of a paradox, perhaps. Whatever, organisational factors cannot convincingly be paraded as reasons underlying this decline - though they are likely to remain most important for the future performance of the Labour Party at the polls. We must perforce turn to social and political factors for an understanding of the electoral changes that have occurred.

The much weakened impact of the unions upon class voting and identity is more likely to be explained by the continuing erosion of the distinctive class character of unions than by their increasing relevance for the mobilisation of the production sector cleavage. As yet there is little or no

hard evidence that persuades one of the importance of this line of socio-political conflict as a basis of voting behaviour in Britain, although its potential cannot be ignored. The most notable feature of union members' voting behaviour between 1964 and 1987 is the degree to which Labour's core voters were inclined to turn themselves away from the party. An interaction between social and political factors seems to be the most plausible way of explaining this antipathy on the part of manual trade unionists who identify with the working class. In the first place, pioneering sociological work in the 1960s demonstrated that certain sections of the working class were becoming increasingly instrumental in outlook; in the second place, political relationships between the party and the unions have passed through several phases of great tension, periods which coincide closely with shifts in manual union members' voting behaviour. It seems logical to contend that the disappointment arising from these tensions is likely to have affected the electoral alignment of trade unionists, given their increasing instrumentality. This may be regarded in terms of the working model of political mobilisation that was established in the opening chapter. In the context of what we referred to as the *motivational* dimension of mobilisation, it seems clear that various processes of social change have conspired to weaken the affective loyalty - such as it was - that the Labour Party formerly inspired in working class unionists. This has been replaced by an even more instrumental orientation than existed hitherto. It is arguable whether a left wing party which had historically invested more in a conscious strategy of encapsulation and the political education of its target community would have

been less vulnerable to the problems the Labour Party has faced since the 1960s. As it is, the party could not draw upon a rich fund of affective loyalty and expressive commitment to its values. Simultaneously, the likelihood of satisfying the instrumental aspirations of all trade unionists probably diminished with the growing diversity of union interests. With regard to the *directional* dimension of mobilisation, it is worth emphasising that one of the factors underlying the growing capacity for strain in union-party relations has been the increased interactiveness of the mass-elite linkage within the unions; that is, the weakening control some union leaderships have been able to exert over their memberships has exacerbated party-union tensions at certain times, notably in the late 1960s and 1970s.

This, I believe, goes a long way towards providing a satisfactory explanation of the decline of unions' impact on voting behaviour and the change in members' electoral alignment. But what explains the remaining influence that unions have? Accordingly, in view of our finding that the direct impact of unionisation on the long term factors underlying voting choice has weakened, it would seem that such importance as unionisation does retain flows partly via the channel of short term factors like issue and performance assessments. The potential for future union influence may even be quite considerable in this regard - but it is likely to fluctuate according to the salience of issues in some way relevant to trade unions. In 1964 unionisation had a fairly distinct impact even though industrial relations and union affairs were of little direct importance for the election

campaign. It is not inconceivable that unions may have as much influence again on the outcome of an election, but only when they have a direct bearing on salient campaign issues. Without this, the residual impact of unionisation is likely to be distinctly limited, as in 1983 and 1987.¹ This weakened residual effect is a consequence of the lost social and ideological distinctiveness of trade unions. It should be added that if the sectoral cleavage is to develop in British politics, moreover, it is likely to be through its importance for certain issues which will become salient from time to time. Indeed, the potential for influencing issue perceptions does not seem to have been lost upon the unions, as some have launched campaigns on key political issues; moreover, it is possible that the growing awareness of the need to engage in political education may further enhance the influence that unions can bring to bear on the issue evaluations made by their members. This, in turn, means that the organisational variable may yet become electorally significant as far as the role of the unions is concerned. It should be observed that this general line of argument allows for the possibility of a revival of Labour's fortunes among the ranks of trade unionists; however, one would expect it to be based upon the net effect of short term influences, and it would, therefore, not be accompanied by a marked increase in the number of strong Labour identifiers. Indeed, one opinion poll taken in the summer of 1990 suggested a dramatic Labour resurgence among union members, as Conservative and minor party support collapsed (see table 7.1). However, this is almost certainly a result of the balance of short term effects, which were running strongly against the Conservatives, and somewhat against the Liberal

Democrats, at the time. The key point to note is that Labour's apparent revival affected non-unionists as well, and the difference between members and non-members is therefore very similar to that reported in 1983 and 1987 (see table 5.1). Union *distinctiveness* has not increased.

Table 7.1 - Political Preference By Unionisation, 1990.

	<u>Union Members</u>	<u>Non-members</u>	<u>Union-Non/union</u>
Conservative	25	36	-11
Labour	61	48	13
Other	10	12	- 2
None	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	0
	100	100	

Source: *British Political Opinion (MORI), August 1990.*

This summarises the major findings and arguments encountered and directs attention to the implications for the future role of the unions. We have just touched on the most interesting such implication, which concerns the importance of the unions' organisational input. It is true that their resources could be important to issue campaigns, and that the active pursuit of political education amongst their members could enhance this process to some extent. However, there are likely to be limits to how far this can go. Two things in particular should be borne in mind. In the first place, a caveat needs to be reiterated regarding the drive for party membership among trade unionists. The party's aim is to supplement its affiliated membership with a million individual members; many of these, it is hoped, will be current levy-paying union members who will instead pay a comparatively modest individual membership fee in the future. As we saw in chapter 3, this is regarded as

essential to the success of the party's policy review since an active mass membership will dilute the influence of the small group of current, and frequently radical, constituency activists. When allied to the reform of the block vote at conference this might imply "a dramatic alteration of the unions' role in the Labour Party" (Taylor 1989: 36). That is, unions will become primarily significant as organisational agents rather than as policy makers. However, the Labour Party and the trade unions should be wary of setting themselves unattainable targets. The present individual membership figure lies at around 200,000, which makes the stated goal of 1,000,000 members extremely ambitious. The mass membership social democratic party in European politics is by now something of an anachronism; Kirchheimer pointed this out clearly enough over twenty years ago. Although Labour is obviously looking forward in many ways - being ever more conscious of its image, and professionalising its approach in various ways (see Webb, forthcoming) - the expectation of suddenly transforming itself into that which it has never really been seems optimistic, to say the least. Moreover, it is important to recognise that there may well be other disincentives to participation. The move to modify the block vote is in itself a recognition of this; the party cannot credibly invite new members in if their influence is to be negligible in the business of policy making. On the other hand, it is far from clear that the reform of the block vote will go far enough to radically alter this situation. The unions may well remain the major force at conference. Moreover,

Fatchett has argued that organisational reform is required if the unions are to inspire their members to become active in industrial, let alone political affairs:

"The archetypal branch meeting, held in the evening in a city centre public house, often seems designed for those days when male manual work dominated the economy. In order to attract more women members, part time workers and those from the new technology and service industries, it is essential to question deeply the organisation of trade union affairs" (Fatchett 1987: 110).

And this is not all; Fatchett goes on to further question the representativeness and accountability of many of the union delegations attached to local Labour parties. Thus, there is absolutely no reason why Labour should not seek to renew its recruitment procedures, and invigorate its individual activists, but it should remain realistic about its goals.

The second caveat regarding the future of the unions' organisational role within the party relates to the example provided by the campaigns over political funds. On the face of it, of course, this must be a source of inspiration for all those concerned to transform the unions into genuine agents of mass political mobilisation. Against all the odds, apparently, the unions rekindled their glimmering mobilisational potential and successfully awoke the political consciousness of their members. This achievement should not be underestimated, and yet neither should one leap to over-simplistic conclusions. The very specific nature of the political funds question itself needs to be acknowledged. As we have seen, the best evidence available to the party and the unions prior to the ballots hardly

indicated an impressive groundswell of support for the link between the two. What did stir ordinary members was the apparent attempt by the government to deny the unions any sort of a voice in the political arena. This, it seems, affronted their basic sense of political fairness. In many ways, it could be regarded as a matter of fundamental democratic rights, and it was up to the rank and file to preserve the right of unions to express themselves in the political arena on matters of direct concern to them. Even those refusing to pay the political levy, or those in unions not affiliated to the Labour Party, could be prevailed upon to protect this right. It does not, it seems to me, of necessity follow that the majority of union members are closet Labour activists just waiting to be energised. According to Fatchett, it should not even be taken for granted that future political fund ballots (presuming that the present legislation remains in place) will be inevitably won. Should they next take place in the context of an unpopular Labour government, for example, it is his contention that the results could be very different (Fatchett 1987: 105). The effectiveness of the unions in stimulating political interest and the response from their members is likely to be simply a matter of the particular issue and the particular political circumstances under which campaigning is conducted. Members' ^are~~x~~ctions will thus be quite unpredictable and varied. Nonetheless, this is to reassert the view that, one way or another, union impact on voting behaviour will be through issue effects. This is where they will have to concentrate their efforts.

Moving away from the question of the unions' organisational role within the party, it is important to reiterate that the unions are in many ways no longer highly significant as part of a class milieu (with certain individual exceptions). As a whole, the profile of the union movement is not greatly distinguishable from that of the wider public. It follows from this that there is little likelihood of, or point in, the unions attempting to re-mobilise on the basis of appeals to class interests and identities, of course. The days of this are essentially over for the union movement. Consequently, the appeals that the Labour Party must make to trade unionists are going to have to be those that they make to the wider electorate, as a general point. There may be certain appeals to particular sections of the union membership, of course - especially the public sector, perhaps. However, one suspects that it will be hard to construct appeals that will effectively unify the entire union movement as such; class-specific appeals to unionists are even less likely. The unions are too heterogeneous, and they are not working class enough. This again serves to underline the point about issue appeals, for this is the only way they can realistically mobilise support now. The vast majority of union members are no longer loyal working class Labour partisans, so consequently it is incumbent upon the party to get its issue appeal, credibility and image right. This is as important in attracting the support of members as it is in attracting that of non-members.

Finally, something of an old chestnut. Are there any implications which follow from this work for the question of the separation of the party from the unions? There are those

who would prefer to see political parties funded largely by the state, so that they may be comparatively independent of the influence of major vested interests. Leaving aside the normative justifications of such an argument, what of the likely benefit to the Labour Party? One should take care to steer clear of easy assumptions. Whilst it is true that the party might enjoy a new freedom in constructing policy and arguing through its values, and would no longer be associated with the perennially unpopular unions, the long term consequences are far from predictable. For one thing, it should be borne in mind that the unions have, historically speaking, mostly played a stabilising role within the party. For long periods the major unions have deployed their considerable power within the party's councils to shore up the position of the usually moderate leadership. Were this to be foregone, it is not inconceivable that constituency activists would be the new numerically dominant force in the party. Since they have traditionally been radical, it follows that such a party might soon develop a militant socialist profile. It would be naive to suggest that this is likely to enhance the Labour Party's attractiveness for most of the British electorate. To remain in the mainstream of party political competition in Britain, it would seem obvious that Labour has to maintain a status on the centre left. There is much in the history of the past decade to confirm such a view. Whatever, this hypothetical point is for all practical current purposes superfluous, for an imminent split is inconceivable in the wake of the political fund ballots. The unions and the party fought hard to maintain - amongst other things - their financial link. Whilst a concern for this might not

have been uppermost in the minds of all who voted, few members would surely have been so unaware as to overlook the implications that their decision would have for the Labour Party. Yet equally few were worried enough to vote against political funds. Thus, the party-union link has received some sort of a popular sanction, and unless there is a radical shift towards state funding of political parties, it will remain as the basis upon which Labour will hope to progress for the foreseeable future. The task for Labour is how to build a sustainable relationship with the unions which will not repel large sections of the electorate, including union members themselves. This almost certainly requires avoiding a return to anything that smacks of the "tired" old corporatism of the 1970s (Taylor R, 1987: 432), and it most definitely involves the development of an approach to incomes which will not alienate public sector trade unionists. Without actually seeming to draw the unions too closely into the process of developing industrial and social policy, the party must be able to count upon them as reliable supporters of its financial and industrial strategies. Internally, the party is attempting both its own organisational and political renewal, and the popularisation of the link with the unions, by seeking to give the impression that unions will no longer be in a position to dominate the relationship. The extent to which it achieves electoral success in the 1990s will depend in no small measure upon the effectiveness of these initiatives and the impact of what has been a singularly trying decade upon the attitudes of union leaders and activists.

Footnotes

1. It might be added that the most recent indications do not suggest that labour affairs and industrial relations are set for an imminent return to the heart of the political agenda. For instance, a poll of electors conducted by MORI in the summer of 1990 did not record a single respondent who regarded unions and strikes as the most important issue facing the country.

Table 7.1n - Electors' Views Of The Most Important Issues Facing The Country, 1990.

	<u>Most Important Issue</u>	<u>One Of Two Most Important Issues</u>
Prices	13%	32%
Defence	21%	31%
NHS	5%	28%
Unemployment	8%	26%
Economy	12%	25%
Poll Tax	8%	24%
Unions/Strikes	0%	1%

Source: *British Political Opinion (MORI), September 1990.*

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Apart from the following, I have drawn upon various unpublished sources of information provided by the Labour Party - mainly TULV, TUFL and TUCC documents. I am particularly indebted to Jenny Pardington of the TGWU and to the staff of the Labour Party Library at Walworth Road for the provision of these.

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