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# POLITICAL DEALIGNMENT IN BRITAIN : THE LOCAL EVIDENCE 1959-1979

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**POLITICAL DEALIGNMENT IN BRITAIN : THE LOCAL EVIDENCE**  
**1959-1979**

by

**PAUL JAMES LAMBE**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Department of Politics  
Faculty of Human Sciences

July 2003

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### **Abstract**

This thesis challenges the dominant view that municipal elections tell us practically nothing about the preferences and attitudes of the voter to local issues and events, that municipal elections are no more than national referendums. It suggests that the influence of socio-economic environment and political context and indeed structural factors have hitherto been underestimated. It argues that municipal politics and voting behaviour impact upon parliamentary electoral behaviour and outcomes and thereby the politics of place impinge upon the national electoral level. The thesis employs a multi-disciplinary approach that combines the qualitative research methods of the historian and the quantitative statistical analysis of the political scientist to unravel the interactions between the politics of place and voting behaviour in Britain between 1959 and 1979 at a time of dealignment at the parliamentary level and increased politicisation of elections at the municipal level.

Patterns and trends in party support at parliamentary elections in four constituencies were analysed using quantitative methods and contrasted with patterns and trends in party support at municipal elections in coterminous electoral units. Significant variance between the two levels of electoral activity was evidenced. The research then employed qualitative methods and evidence from four case studies was presented that local contextual factors could account for much of the disparity between municipal and national patterns of party support in these locations.

Quantitative research methods were resumed and the statistical techniques of multivariate regression and logistic regression employed to analyse socio-economic, political and structural variables in relation to party support at municipal and parliamentary elections in the case study areas. The findings of the quantitative analysis corroborated much of the qualitative findings and the conclusion reached

that the influence of contextual factors upon party support at municipal elections has been underestimated. Furthermore, that the interdisciplinary methodology employed is one that others in both political science and history may fruitfully follow to the advantage of both disciplines.

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Paul Lambe

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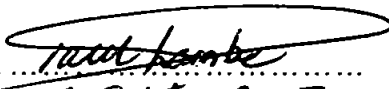
**AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

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Relevant political science and political history seminars/conferences were attended. A paper was presented to the ECPR Conference at Marburg, Germany and a number of papers prepared for publication. Forthcoming publication, 'An Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods in History' Journal of the Association for History and Computing.

Signed .....  .....  
Date ..... 4 October 2003 .....

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **WHY LOOK AT DEALIGNMENT AGAIN?**

#### **1.1:Introduction**

The aim of this thesis is to gain a greater insight into the relationship between local and parliamentary elections in a crucial period of political dealignment in Britain between 1959 and 1979. In this critical period of British electoral history the two-party system, long considered closed to outside penetration, underwent radical change: change marked by the erosion of the foundations of Conservative and Labour party support and the emergence of the Liberal and Nationalist parties, posing a challenge to the major party duopoly. Political scientists have offered macro explanations of the dynamics of this shift in class and party allegiance. However, dealignment has rarely been looked at from the micro level and its local determinants revealed. This thesis will bridge the interdisciplinary terrain between the quantitative approach of the political scientist and the qualitative approach of the historian. The thesis will analyse voting behaviour by use of aggregate borough and ward level electoral data and will examine how contextual and institutional factors impact upon the calculus of voting at local elections.

At the local government level the process of dealignment became entangled with an equally powerful process of increased politicisation as candidates with party labels contested more elections. These two events, political dealignment in patterns of voting behaviour in parliamentary elections and increasing party politicisation at the local government level, reflect a fascinating period in our electoral history. Yet, little or no research has been conducted which systematically examines the relationship, if any, between these two strands. Indeed there is a distinct absence of study of this area by both historians and political scientists. The basic explanation for this apparent

oversight has been the lack of comprehensive and reliable local electoral data for the period in question. The Local Government Chronicle Election Centre, University of Plymouth, has now gathered a sufficient amount of these data to permit a systematic and rigorous analysis of the relationship between national and local patterns of party competition and electoral behaviour between 1959 and 1979.

The erosion of the predominant two party system characterised by class and party dealignment has been the focus of much macro political science study at the parliamentary level. This has combined aggregate voting data with evidence from survey research. However, there are problems that thwart the accepted methods of electoral analysis. For example, there is an anomaly in the relationship between class and voting preference. The influence of class at the individual level has declined and yet 'at the aggregate level class influences and constituency results remain closely matched, or have even become more associated'. Similarly, the problem of adequately analysing 'two-way causation flows between voting behaviour and a wide range of correlated variables', such as that between political alignments and mass media, exemplify these current methodological limitations (Dunleavy 1990: 456 see Appendix C, interpretation of correlation coefficients).

Voting studies needs a broader vision to take account of the process, context and meaning of the determinants of voting behaviour: factors that are intrinsically difficult to measure. The way in which contextual and institutional features impact on the calculus of voting at the local government electoral level; the role of party organisation, competition, finance, political activists and council politics *inter alia*; and their relationship with party fortunes at national level: all need to be examined (Devine 1995; Rallings and Thrasher 1997). This research will attempt to shed new light on the role of local government elections and their relationship, if any, with

national electoral outcomes. It will attempt to unravel some of the determinants of voting in local government elections that remain obscured from the solely quantitative perspective.

Recent political science studies have reinforced the view that as the influences of class and party identification have weakened the electorate has become more open to the blandishments of party and that active constituency level campaigns during a general election exert a significant impact on the local vote ( Seyd and Whiteley 1995). Given the decisiveness of marginal seats throughout the period from 1959 to 1974, constituency campaigns and local party organisation may have proved critical (Butler and Duschinsky 1971; Butler and Kavanagh 1974,1975). Constituency parties, however, have functioned not only at parliamentary level but also, in the main, have organised campaigns for local government elections. Insights into the nature of party competition and fluctuations in the level of electoral support can be gained from the study of local elections. Any sense of the rise and fall in party support over the period of this study would provide a useful additional device for charting the general state of electoral intentions. The study will attempt to explain the process of dealignment and the factors that influenced it, rather than just reveal its existence at the local electoral level. It will also attempt to reveal any interconnection between local government electoral behaviour and parliamentary electoral behaviour, and thereby broaden the explanation of the determinants of dealignment at parliamentary elections in the period 1959-1979.

### **1.2:Political science and electoral change : stability to volatility**

The period from 1950 to 1970 is generally regarded as characterised by aligned voting. Class and partisan alignment were, in David Denver's words, '... the twin pillars ... which supported and sustained stable party support on the part of the

individual voters and a stable two-party system overall' (Denver 1994:32). Survey studies of reported voting behaviour point up the extent and strength of party identification within the electorate (Sarlvik and Crewe 1983: 334-335). Among political scientists such as Butler, Stokes, Sarlvik, Crewe and Berrington, the evidence of a weakening of traditional connections between the electorate and the major political parties, provided by these measures of party identification, is 'usually accepted as incontrovertible' (Farrell, McAllister and Broughton: 1995:110). It is argued that the clear alignment between class and party was such, that, 'of all the possible social characteristics that might have influenced party choice social class was consistently found to be the most important' (Denver 1994: 34). Nevertheless, Butler and Stokes had detected an emerging trend of 'a weakening of the class alignment' (Franklin 1985:5) and subsequently most commentators have agreed that class, both as a social and a political force, has been steadily declining in Britain.

The 1950s and 1960s then, are presented as a period of class and partisan alignment with party choice explained in terms of political socialisation. Electoral change was slow, small and short-term. Electoral change in this period can be accounted for by a small minority of voters who switched party and by non-voting traffic. However, issue voting is considered to be the exception rather than the rule as 'overall, floaters were less concerned and less knowledgeable about politics and less interested in the outcome of elections than were those whose voting pattern was stable' (Denver 1994: 50).

In contrast, from the 1970s onward electoral volatility rather than stability has characterised British party politics. Explanations of partisan dealignment impinge upon explanations of class dealignment. Increased political awareness through education and television; the paucity of achievement that both major parties

experienced in office; and in reference to the Labour party, an ideological disjuncture, are cited (Denver 1994: 55-59). The decline in Labour support up until 1979 has been attributed to 'the reduced appeal of Labour to the groups that had traditionally supported it [and a] ... similar decline in Conservative support among traditional Tory social groups made this a quite general phenomenon of declining class voting' (Franklin 1985: 176). Some political scientists such as Sarlvik and Crewe regard class dealignment as a key determinant of changing electoral behaviour. According to this view, fragmentation of the working class, with former Labour supporters more readily able to identify with Conservative and third party policies and more willing to vote rationally on issues, is regarded as the major determinant of partisan dealignment and the growth of other parties. However, class dealignment is a controversial issue that rests largely upon the definition of class voting. Disagreement exists, both over rival definitions and whether class voting should be measured relatively or absolutely. Advocates of the dealignment hypothesis, 'have argued that absolute measures are the best way to represent class voting and consequently conclude that class voting has declined' (Weakliem 1995: 254).

Others reject class dealignment as a cause of partisan dealignment. Franklin has argued that the electorate remained class aligned but the Labour Party failed to offer class-based policy choices and thus the leakage of the working class vote. The class dealignment hypothesis has been rejected by Anthony Heath and his colleagues who claim that, 'the evidence that class has withered away is very thin [and] has largely been inferred from the political volatility of the last twenty years rather than the other way round' (Heath et al. 1985:8). The relationship between class and voting behaviour is at the nub of explanations for the decline in the Labour party's share of the vote during the period of 1959 to 1979. Party dealignment is not in doubt.

However, Heath et al. argue that there has been no class dealignment and that Labour's difficulties stem from the contraction of the working class and political explanations, rather, than as Crewe argues, a weakening of class loyalties. Heath et al. contend that 'Crewe and others ... have confused the decline of Labour with the decline of class voting' (Kavanagh 1996: 131).

Our point ... is that political explanations ... the number of seats contested by the Liberals, the extension of the franchise, the failure of Labour governments to satisfy their supporters - are in many ways more plausible than those which focus on changes in the character of the social classes (Heath et al. 1991: 81).

Furthermore, Heath et al. have argued that less than half of the fall in Labour's share of the vote between 1964 and 1983 can be accounted for by changing class structure and the remainder was due to Labour's political failings (Heath et al. 1985:37). There is however, a consensus among analysts that the electorate has become unpredictable and volatile and, with the exception of Heath et al., most believe that the level of unpredictability is greater than it was in the era of alignment (Denver 1994:78).

What has prompted voters in their decisions as to which party to support if party identification and class loyalties have weakened, is a question that has been addressed by political scientists. Kavanagh argues that 'there has been greater electoral volatility between and during election campaigns [while] stabilising factors ... have weakened, [giving] more scope for the influence of short-term factors, including events associated with the build-up to the election' (Kavanagh 1996:134). There is, though, disagreement over the measurement of issue voting and the extent to which it is independent of party identification. It is complicated further by the fact that voters' policy preferences can cross party boundaries. Butler and Stokes have shown that voters in the 1960s failed to meet the conditions for issue voting: i.e. that, the issue

should be salient, it should be integrated into the party system with one party opposing the other on the issue and, that opinions should be skewed such that one party gains an electoral advantage from the position it takes (Franklin 1985 b: 40-1, Butler and Stokes 1974). However, researchers in the 1970s began to examine the relationship between party choice and a voter's assessment of the parties' policies and performances. In their study of the 1979 general election Sarlvik and Crewe argued that the electorate in the 1970s 'became more ready to sway in response to short-term factors, especially the issues that were the cause of immediate concern' (Sarlvik and Crewe 1983: 337). Furthermore, they have argued that, 'a comparison of the effect of policy opinions and assessments with the effect of social characteristics on party choice reveals that "voters" opinions on policies and on party performance in office "explain" more than twice as much as all social and economic characteristics put together' (Denver 1994: 97). Franklin has argued that issue voting has increased in step with the decline in class voting and that British voters are more open to rational argument than in the past (Franklin 1985 b:52-3), but, he also found that 'after 1970 there was no clear trend in levels of issue voting' (Denver and Hands 1992: 171).

Heath, Jowell and Curtice have criticised the view that issue voting has increased. They argue that the commonly accepted version of the issue voting model has serious theoretical problems and in its stead have proposed an ideological voting model whereby voters choose a party not on the basis of policy preference 'as a consumer in the market place' but on the basis of their 'general values and their overall perception of what the parties stand for' (Heath et al. 1985:107). Rose and McAllister also reject the view that issues are an important influence on voting behaviour and have argued that peoples' opinions go together in distinctive ways and share common underlying

political principles, that is, 'underlying judgements and preferences about the activities of government [which] are general enough to be durable [and] concern persisting problems of public policy' (Rose and McAllister 1986: 117). However, Denver and Hands have argued that there is 'insufficient grounds for dismissing the issue voting model and replacing it with models based on ideology or principles' (Denver and Hands 1992:173). Indeed, Denver concludes that there is a general consensus 'as the electorate has become more dealigned, voters have become increasingly likely to base their vote upon judgements - whether about current issues, ideologies, leaders or government performance' (Denver 1994:102).

The water is muddied further by Dunleavy who has argued that dealignment is explicable in terms of the growth of new social cleavages, specifically the changes in consumption patterns in housing and transport (Dunleavy 1980:409). Crewe in 1976 argued that 'it is difficult to think of any social cleavages or fundamental changes in the social structure in the last twenty years that could have affected partisan alignments in any way' (Crewe 1976:46). Dunleavy, however, in regard to changes in consumption patterns argues that in the post-war period 'far from being glacially slow the change in consumption patterns could hardly have been more dramatic' (Dunleavy 1980:410). In addition, Dunleavy contends that in the cases of housing and transport 'the large scale organisation and management of these services, the directly politicised context of provision, and their independent effect as bases for social cleavage, create favourable conditions for the emergence of collective consciousness and action' (ibid:418). Indeed, housing in the mid 1960s was one of the few subjects that Butler and Stokes identified as being of such public concern, and which divided both public opinion and party policy to such an extent that it met their criteria of 'issue

voting' (Butler and Stokes 1974). Dunleavy argues that local conflicts influence party differentiation and political alignment and thus 'local conflicts in fact have an important structuring influence on the electorate's alignment towards national politics and on party differentiation at various points in time' (ibid:432).

As will be outlined in the next chapter, political scientists discount the influence of local factors in any explanation of either parliamentary electoral behaviour or local government electoral behaviour. In regard to municipal elections the views of many political scientists are encapsulated in such phrases as Miller's 'Irrelevant Elections' or Newton's 'Annual General Election' (Miller 1988, Newton 1976). Those interested in understanding mass political behaviour are left to decide between competing quantitative models of similar explanatory value. The insights generated by a micro study of local authority electoral behaviour, using a multi-theoretical approach and melding both qualitative and quantitative evidence, could add to one or more of these competing arguments.

### **1.3: Political historians and electoral change**

The historian's approach to the study of elections is, naturally enough, conditioned by the aim to locate them in a historical context. Historians have, generally, studied elections in the wider context of a narrative and descriptive survey of developments in British politics. The rise and decline of party fortunes have in general, been explained from the standpoint of 'high politics' as a product of the rhetoric and manoeuvre of elite groups. Until the late 1960s much of a generalised nature served to account for patterns of parliamentary politics (Pelling 1967:vii). Increasingly, however, from the 1970s, in detailed studies, monographs and general surveys, broader questions were addressed. These changes in the approach to political history were perhaps a

consequence of elections becoming of serious academic interest to social scientists in the 1960s as ecological and sociological approaches were developed. Although historians acknowledged the importance of economic and social factors in politics, there were few books until the 1970s 'about the relationship between social and economic factors and British elections' (Kinnear 1981:9). This indifference to the social background of politics in Britain extended also to any recognition of local and regional variations in electoral behaviour. In contrast the systematic study of elections by social scientists has been carried out in a series of studies covering general elections since 1945, sponsored by Nuffield College, Oxford. The studies have evolved from a 'simple narrative of the election campaign' to include constituency case studies, data from survey analyses of the electorate and statistical analysis of the results (Lawrence and Taylor 1997:4). However, this approach has been criticised by historians. Stuart Ball sums up the ambivalence of historians towards such works. 'The lack of perspective which inevitably follows from writing hard on the heels of events, as well as restricted range of sources, means that such works are valuable and ground breaking, but cannot be definitive' (Ball 1998:6).

Nevertheless, in the history of British electoral behaviour the concepts and methods of electoral sociology of the 1950s and 1960s have predominated. Pioneering work by McKenzie (1955), Hanham (1959), Cornford (1963), Pelling (1967, 1968), Vincent (1967), McKenzie and Silver (1968), Butler and Stokes (1969), Clarke (1971), and Mc Kibbin (1974) *inter alia*, virtually all informed by a sociological perspective, have left an abiding influence. From this perspective historians have interpreted electoral behaviour as a function of underlying social forces and the success of a party measured against the benchmark of its ability to adapt to social change. Social

structural and attitudinal change has been considered the key to understanding the developments of modern British electoral history. Many mainstream histories of modern politics have assimilated the view of the sociological approach 'that electoral behaviour acts as a barometer of social change and that parties are essentially pluralistic institutions capable of channelling and neutralising conflict' (Lawrence and Taylor 1997:2). The influence of the systematic study of voting pioneered by Nuffield College, is apparent in the methods of such historians as Hanham, Morgan, Nossiter, Cook and Ramsden. The methods of the psephological approach were adopted to interpret the corpus of British electoral statistics back to the early nineteenth century.

In terms of these new approaches adopted by historians to the history of British electoral politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, J.Cornford exemplified the influence of the sociological approach in the argument that 'there was a need to distinguish between specific election issues and the more continuous social basis of popular support which rested on changes in the urban class structure' (ibid: 12). Pelling took a more ecological approach and highlighted the persistence of local and regional influences in the period accepted by others as the onset of national class politics. Peter Clarke, however, while adopting a sociological approach took a top-down view of class politics shaped by party political influence.

In general British historians have focused attention on location of the onset of class politics and the response of parties to a class based electoral system in terms of party organisation and appeal. Social structure and its shifts were shown to bring about changes in British politics that parties either adapted to or lost support. The issues of psephology, the pluralist approach, and electoral sociology have endured in the

mainstream of British history, 'the nature of two party politics, the neutral role of the state, the non-ideological nature of party rhetoric, the pragmatic concerns of voters and the national nature of election campaigns' (ibid:16) among the most enduring. Historians have nevertheless, began to reconsider the relationships between party, social change, changes in the franchise, locality, party propaganda and rhetoric. Like the political scientist, the historian is pointed toward the context in which voter and party interact. Indeed, as Davies and Morley argue in the past 'there has been a peculiar hostility to the importance of the local dimension in British political history, especially in relation to the twentieth century'. However, attitudes have changed and a 'degree of consensus exists that local histories should play some part in the wider understanding of British politics and society'(Davies and Morley 1999:1-6). More explicitly Stevens, in a critique of the electoral sociology of modern Britain has argued that if 'partisan alignment and dealignment [were] examined through long-term local studies, a completely different picture may emerge' (Stevens 1999:85).

Criticism of historian's methods by behaviouralists has focused on the historian's claims to explanation. Historical interpretations compete with one another and each interpretation is defended by a subjective prioritisation of one causal factor over others. However, judgements cannot be explicitly justified and behaviouralists question the case for the objectivity and reliability of historical explanation and knowledge. The status of historical findings is a contentious issue that divides historians. Few, however, would defend a 'hard-line concept of historical objectivity' (Evans 1997:3). Fewer would agree with Theodore Zeldin's view that all any historian can offer 'is his personal vision of the past which corresponds to their own aspirations

and sympathies' (Tosh 1994:130). The study of history has both an idealist and positivist tradition that no doubt colours each historian's view of objectivity.

The incorporation of the methods of economics, sociology, geography and statistics into historical approaches in order to make history more objective and scientific has been applied not with the intention to develop 'particular explanations but general hypotheses which could be statistically tested' (Evans 1997:39). In political history, Ian Kershaw's *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich*, was a successful melding of traditional historical approach and quantitative method, in an empirical study of the political mentality of Germans and the extent to which Nazism was able to transform social and political values (Kershaw 1983:2). Work by the Cambridge Group of demographic historians has employed statistical models extensively to revise interpretations in social history. The application of scientific statistical methods has produced 'major advances in knowledge' (Evans 1997:40) in economic history. Although some areas of historical research employ quantitative methods and traditional historians make many qualitative judgements and descriptions that are implicitly quantitative, this of course does not mean that all aspects of human behaviour can be measured.

Nevertheless, quantitative and qualitative evidence are complementary. Furthermore, neither approach 'can pretend to comprehend the whole of historical study' (Floud 1979:3). If it is accepted that the exclusion by the historian of the consideration of quantitative evidence diminishes an already inadequate ability to grasp all available evidence, then it is equally plausible to argue that methodological prescription diminishes the evidence available to the political scientist for the study of the calculus of voting. History, however, has contributed to political science more as a body of

knowledge than as a set of methods and it is evident that nowadays it is 'rarely used except as a dignified background' (Kavanagh 1991:481). The break from history in political science is probably most complete in the study of voting where the historian's impressionistic explanation and refutation of ideas of universal laws seem to oppose the notion of a science of politics. However, some kind of common rationale would be productive both for political historians and behaviouralists in the study of elections. 'Each uses the elections and their statistics in tune with the objectives of their work; both offer analysis that is useful to the other' (Brivati 1991:382). Any synthesis that is not a Procrustean enterprise must first however, overcome epistemological prescription. Indeed, a resort to methodological pluralism behoves acknowledgement of the concerns and consideration of the beliefs about the nature of knowledge, the respective theories of knowledge that underpin the approaches of political science and history.

The nature of the interdisciplinary terrain to be crossed between the study of history and political science is perhaps less daunting than in the past. Political history's centrality to history curricula in higher education, its increasingly modern focus and, indeed the advance of contemporary history, all signal a convergence of history and political science towards an 'area most likely to find commonality' (Ramsden 1992:555). While there is much distance to travel, the relationship between the disciplines of history and political science in the realm of electoral studies can be a more productive one, as this thesis will attempt to show.

The resolution of many of the questions concerning the role of local government elections and their relationship with national parliamentary outcomes requires a qualitative approach. Political science is dominated by quantitative methodology and

consequently fails to address the process, context and meaning of the determinants of voting behaviour. Furthermore, the top-down perspective towards the understanding of mass political behaviour adopted by both political science and political history affords only a partial view. It is at the micro-level that determinants of voting behaviour can be unravelled, in the milieu of local party organisation, local party competition, campaigns and personalities, that both local government and national party politics interact. The determinants of national electoral outcomes may be as prosaic as the cumulative effects of party efficiency or inefficiency at constituency level, or as mundane as the rivalries between constituency association and local council members of the same party. This does not deny the importance of class and party attachments, national issues, the pull of leaders, the modern media, the instrumentalism of the voter or ideology; rather, it is their mediation through the local context that needs to be taken into account and thereby the wider debates concerning political dealignment will be better informed.

The thesis will map voting behaviour at local and parliamentary electoral levels in two locations over a period of twenty years in order to attempt to show how the different kinds of evidence traditionally used by historians and political scientists can actually complement each other and lead to a more nuanced explanation of mass political behaviour. Having introduced the rationale for and the subject matter of this study, the next section will outline its structure chapter by chapter and briefly expound how the thesis will go about achieving its stated aims.

#### **1.4: Thesis structure**

In Chapter 2 a review of the literature surrounding local electoral voting behaviour will identify the gaps in knowledge that the multi-disciplinary approach of this thesis

will endeavour to close. The chapter will begin with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the various sources of data available to the researcher of local elections. This will be followed by a focussed analysis of previous local electoral studies that will reveal the limitations of present approaches. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of the various explanations forwarded to account for voting behaviour in local elections and its relationship with parliamentary electoral behaviour and present an argument that qualitative methods could facilitate a greater understanding of local political behaviour.

Chapter 3 will outline the methodology of the thesis. It will begin with a brief consideration of the methodological implications of the thesis's multi-disciplinary research and then turn more specifically to the generalisability of the case study method and its use in this thesis. The methods, sources of the data, problems of collection and analysis and how these will be overcome will then be expounded, as will the rationale for the choice of case studies, the coextensiveness of electoral units, and the local electoral cycles of London and Birmingham during the 1959-1979 period. The chapter concludes with a summary of the methodology employed.

Chapter 4 will use borough electoral data to examine trends in local government electoral behaviour and contrast them with parliamentary electoral behaviour in selected areas of London and Birmingham. If as political science orthodoxy argues local elections are just national referendums then the expectation would be that trends in local authority voting behaviour would in general approximate the voting trends of parliamentary elections. The hypothesis that there is no difference between the trends and patterns of voting behaviour at the local electoral level, in terms of the rate and the extent that voters deserted the two-party system, than at the parliamentary

electoral level in the period 1959-1979, will be tested. In addition, the general research question: did any changes in local electoral party attachments precede changes in parliamentary electoral party attachments will be posed. Indeed, the expectation would also be that inter- and intra- authority voting trends would approximate one another. Data on local authority level electoral behaviour is, nevertheless, limited by the fact that it is an aggregation of individual ward electoral behaviour and thus what is true of voting behaviour at the local authority level may not be true of voting behaviour in its constituent wards. Thus the focus will narrow to ward level electoral trends at municipal and parliamentary elections in coterminous electoral units of the four case study locations of Islington, Camden, Ladywood and Sutton Coldfield . Thereby, any variations in the trends in electoral behaviour between coterminous municipal and parliamentary electoral units, variance in inter- and intra-authority electoral behaviour can be more accurately scrutinised. How the findings of this quantitative research tie into the theoretical framework of studies of parliamentary electoral dealignment and with existing studies of voting behaviour in Britain will then be addressed, and an argument will be presented that the quantitative evidence points to explanations of variance in electoral behaviour at individual borough and ward level. Furthermore, it will be suggested that the investigation into which factors influence local electoral behaviour and their relationship to parliamentary electoral behaviour in coterminous electoral units can be taken forward by the qualitative approach of the historian. To this end the next four chapters will then turn.

Chapters 5,6,7 and 8 will examine the case study locations of Ladywood, Sutton Coldfield, Islington and Camden, respectively. In each of these chapters qualitative

evidence will be presented to argue that local factors are important determinants of local authority electoral outcomes, and that local factors influenced partisan and class dealignment at both the local electoral and parliamentary electoral level.

In chapter 9 multivariate regression analysis will be employed to determine how far variation in the voter's calculus can be explained by socio-economic factors peculiar to the locality. Aggregate models of constituency level voting behaviour at general elections 1959-1979 in Birmingham and London constituencies, and of ward level voting behaviour at local elections in wards which comprise these constituencies, will seek to test the hypothesis that the probability that support for a particular party in a constituency at general elections, and in a ward at local elections, is partially determined by the socio-economic context of the area. The analysis will also seek to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the effect of ward level socio-economic variables upon voter's electoral calculus at local and national elections. The aim of the analysis is to make some inferences about the relationship between local and national voting behaviour, and between upper- and lower-tier elections in the same authority. In addition, the analysis will facilitate an insight into the effects of social class variables over time at local/national elections and thereby engage with the wider debate concerning class dealignment. Data sources, variables used in the regression analysis, regression techniques, problems concerning multi-collinearity, aggregation bias and ecological fallacy will be explained. Finally, tables of findings and analyses of those findings will be presented and conclusions drawn. Chapter 10 will take the statistical analysis a stage further and employ logistic regression, a statistical technique that permits the analysis of the impact of contextual political and structural variables upon the calculus of the voter at these elections. The

primary goal of this chapter is determine how far local electoral environment influenced the prospects and performance of the Liberal Party at these municipal elections and whether this in turn had any impact upon class/party alignment at the parliamentary level in coterminous electoral units.

Chapter 11 will comprise a comparative analysis of the quantitative evidence from chapters 4, 9 and 10 with the qualitative evidence of chapters 5-8. It is hoped that this analysis will provide more robust explanations for any variations in the ward level of party support that individually the quantitative approach of political science or qualitative approach of the political historian are hitherto unable to provide.

Chapter 12 will conclude the thesis and review its findings and place them in the context of existing literature on the study of local electoral and parliamentary electoral behaviour, the wider debate of dealignment and consideration of future research.

### **1.5: Conclusion**

In this chapter it has been argued that there is a significant gap in knowledge concerning local electoral behaviour that neither political science nor political history has so far been able to close. The questions that need to be answered are; was there dealignment at the local electoral level, if so what shape did it take, when did it happen, what were its determinants, and what effect if any did it have upon mass political behaviour at the parliamentary level? It has been argued that a combination of the quantitative methods of the political scientist and the qualitative methods of the historian can increase our understanding of these issues. The next chapter, in a detailed analysis of the literature surrounding local electoral behaviour will narrow the focus to assess what is known about specific aspects of local electoral behaviour and why this partial view can be broadened by resort to a multi-disciplinary approach.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON LOCAL ELECTIONS**

#### **2.1: Introduction**

The methods employed in the study of local elections include the use of survey samples, statistical analysis of aggregate data from electoral returns and official censuses, and case studies. Each has a legitimate role to play. However, each has specific problems and limitations that must be understood and respected if misrepresentation of findings is to be avoided. Similarly, a complexity of local government structure, electoral cycles and boundaries compound these constraints and we will treat with these issues in chapter 3. This chapter will commence with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the various sources of data available to the researcher of local elections. A review of the literature surrounding local electoral research will then follow paying particular attention to orthodox views of the determinants of local electoral behaviour, and the extent to which it is considered that local politics has been politicised and nationalised. The evidence for contextual voting, and whether the electorate make contradictory local and national choices will be assessed, whilst highlighting the problems of identifying local as opposed to national influences. Turnout bias, and the difficulties in assessing the impact of turnout and its variance over time will be examined. The relative effects of local/national influences upon voting in local elections and how far any variance in local electoral choice can be explained by national issues will be explored. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of the various explanations forwarded to account for differences between voting behaviour in local and national elections and present an argument that qualitative methods could facilitate a greater understanding of local political behaviour. In short, through a focussed literature review of local electoral

studies this chapter will reveal and examine more closely the gaps in our knowledge concerning local electoral behaviour.

## **2.2:Survey research**

Survey research is a source of data largely denied to the study of local politics.

Though used extensively at parliamentary electoral level by political scientists to explore voting behaviour and individual attitudes, in the main opinion polls have rarely been used at the local level. The efficacy of the survey method in providing useful data for the study of local politics was illustrated by the Widdecombe Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business 1986. *Inter alia*, the report found that partisanship, for a sizeable minority of about twenty per cent of respondents, varied between local and national elections (Rallings and Thrasher 1997:4). In such cross-sectional surveys individual people are the unit of analysis, and data, in the form of facts, perceptions, opinions, attitudes and behavioural reports are collected from a representative sample that enables inferences to be made about some wider population. Although 'populations and relationships between variables in those populations can be described at a given time, it does not allow us to say how the characteristics or relationships have developed or will develop over time' (Manheim and Rich 1981: 132). A stronger survey design that escapes the time bound limitation of the cross-sectional survey is the panel survey that looks at the same sample at different times. The panel survey, although usually consisting of a much smaller sample of respondents, can, for instance, be employed 'to ensure that explanations of voting choice are based upon attitudes and opinions measured before the vote' (Miller 1995:167).

However, criticisms of the survey method in general question its reliability, representativeness and validity. Indeed, 'how can we find out what a mass public

really thinks about issues, when we know that people's responses are highly sensitive to different forms of question wording?' (Dunleavy 1990:457). Furthermore, survey respondents can adjust their memory. This is significant considering many surveys carried out some considerable time after particular elections are used to explain the voting behaviour at those elections. As Miller argues, 'attitudes and opinions after the election are used to predict behaviour in it - a causal process that apparently runs backwards in time' (Miller 1995:166). Nevertheless, the survey method, though a useful addition to the armoury of local electoral study, reveals little 'about local election results, the nature and state of party competition, the characteristics of candidates and councillors, the nature of the electoral cycle, the operation of the electoral system and much else' (Rallings and Thrasher 1997:5).

### **2.3: Aggregate data**

Clearly survey methods have limited utility. A more productive approach to electoral studies has been based on the analysis of aggregate data, from electoral returns and census reports. Election returns from the electoral unit under scrutiny are analysed and patterns of voter turnout and preference identified. These patterns are identified 'along the spatial dimension of differences concerning various areas or the temporal dimension of change over time within particular areas or a combination of both' (Ranney 1962: 93). The aggregate electoral data are synthesised with aggregate political, social and economic data peculiar to the electoral unit being studied provided by census reports. Explanations of electoral behaviour are then posited as correlations between ecological factors and the patterns identified in aggregate voting returns. There are many advantages to the use of aggregate data in electoral studies, not least their relative cheapness and availability that facilitate replicative and comparative studies. A major advantage of aggregate data, especially electoral

returns, is that ‘ for finding answers to many questions about electoral behaviour, they are the “hardest” data we can get, in the sense that their meaning and comparability vary less from area to area, from time to time, and from study to study than do most survey data’ (Ranney 1962: 96).

In the context of the study of local elections the use of aggregate data has proved an invaluable tool of analysis. The state of party competition, turnout, ward marginality, swing, and the distortion of votes/seats ratios by the electoral system are opened to the analytic scrutiny of aggregate data research. It has facilitated the detailed analysis of the impact of the various local authority electoral cycles and, the effects of single, multimember and mixed electoral divisions. Aggregate data has allowed detailed analysis of the impact on turnout of dominant electoral issues, candidates, party organisation, local campaigns, ward marginality, ecological characteristics, electoral size and much more.

However, the use of aggregate data, both electoral returns and census reports, has some drawbacks. Secondary analysis of data such as official censuses has to be regarded in the light that ‘ supposedly complete enumeration gives data great authority but does not guarantee accuracy in practice’ (Miller 1995: 156).

Furthermore, the boundaries of census districts do not always coincide with the electoral unit under scrutiny and thus can prove an unreliable source of the characteristics of the particular electoral population. Aggregate electoral data can disguise variations in the lower level electoral units that make up its whole. The extent of party competition for instance can be exaggerated if account is not taken of the mix of single and multimember wards and of whether parties field the full slate of candidates. There are also more general methodological concerns about the use of aggregate data to make inferences about individual voting behaviour. Correlations

between aggregate voting returns and aggregate census data do not necessarily correspond with correlations derived from individual data from the same population. Indeed, researchers using aggregate data ‘ risk committing one of several types of ecological fallacy anytime they attempt to generalise to one level of analysis from data collected at another’ (Manheim and Rich 1981: 228). Wrong conclusions can be obtained from seriously misinterpreted data as ‘ analyses of individuals justify conclusions only about individuals, analyses of places justify conclusions only about places, and analyses of times justify conclusions only about times’ ( Miller 1995:163). Furthermore, the causal complexity of local electoral behaviour cannot be addressed by the sole reliance upon aggregate data. Correlation does not necessarily imply causation. Indeed, much of the explanation of variation in isolated variables hinges on probabilistic argument as only part of the variation can be explained by statistical methods and, researchers into local political behaviour often ask questions that cannot be answered by quantitative methods.

Nevertheless, aggregate data analysis makes a valuable contribution to the study of electoral behaviour. As Ranney argues, ‘ electorates no less than individual voters, are significant units for political analysis’ (Ranney 1962: 99). Aggregate data analysis can identify the ebb and flow of electoral behaviour, point up the relationship with social, economic and political characteristics of the electoral unit under scrutiny, and overcome the time-bound and place-bound limitations of most surveys. For the study of local electoral behaviour where surveys are few, aggregate data analysis is an essential and invaluable tool.

#### **2.4: Local electoral research**

The significance of local factors to the outcome of municipal elections, has been encapsulated by Ken Newton in the much quoted term 'annual general election'.

Newton, in his case study of Birmingham local elections from 1966 to 1972, is unequivocal in his assertion that local factors have very little impact on local elections. The term local election is considered by Newton to be a misnomer because 'there is little that is local about them, and they tell us practically nothing about the preferences and attitudes of citizens to local issues and events. They are determined overwhelmingly by national political considerations'. Indeed, Newton argues that 'neither election turnout nor voting patterns ... are associated with any local factors' (Newton 1976: 13-16). Using aggregate turnout figures for English county borough elections 1945-1970 and aggregate percentage swing to the Conservatives in a sample of cities and towns 1945-1970, Newton made comparison with the equivalent patterns of turnout and swing at the Birmingham municipal elections in the same period. He thereby illustrated how aggregate national trends in voting behaviour at local elections were virtually mirrored at the individual authority level. From these comparisons Newton concluded that at most only 10% of the variance in municipal election results could be ascribed to local factors and as far as turnout is concerned, approximately 4% of variance could be explained by local factors. These conclusions were given added weight when the patterns of party voting and turnout in individual Birmingham wards over the same period were found to correspond closely to their national aggregate counterparts. Furthermore, a major part of the disparity between national patterns and those of the individual case of Birmingham was explained by Newton as the 'big city effect', in that, 'it is well established that turnout is generally lower in large cities than small ones', and that 'any city of this size is likely to have a slightly better Labour vote than the country as a whole'. Thus, Newton diminished further the explanatory role of local factors to the point where, in his words, they 'are too small to be worth considering' (Newton 1976:16-17).

Newton's case study of Birmingham examined the proposition that the electorate at local elections hold local politicians to account. He challenged the theory of electoral accountability and its assumption, that politicians are made accountable by the electorate's consideration of their actions, rather than the actions of others. Newton contends that the close correspondence between national patterns of local electoral data and those of Birmingham undermines the assumption of electoral accountability and points up national considerations as the major factor in determining local electoral outcomes. The electorate is thus apparently giving a verdict on the actions of national politicians rather than those of local politicians. Hence his conclusion that 'whoever is being held accountable on local election day, it is not the local politicians and parties' (Newton 1976:17).

Indeed, a survey by Butler and Stokes of British voters in 1963 found that the strength of attachment to parties was a powerful influence upon voting behaviour at local elections and that the vast majority of the electorate voted in line with their expressed national party self-image. Furthermore, the survey found that eighty per cent of respondents were not motivated by any local issues at the 1963 local elections and that the remainder expressed national political concerns (Butler and Stokes 1975: pp 40-44). Fletcher's 1964 study of local electoral behaviour in eleven boroughs found that the influence of party and national party-politics not only dominated local electoral results, but party fortunes in those elections mirrored closely Gallup Poll trends in parliamentary voting intentions (Fletcher 1967). In contrast, Green's study of local voting in Leeds and Sheffield, whilst attributing a large national component to the variance in electoral swing at local elections, nevertheless ascribed the remaining influence to a small city-wide component and ward-level local factors and concluded

that previous studies had 'over-estimated the relative importance of the national factor' (Green 1972:53). Gyford concluded that in 'modern times there is considerable evidence that local election results – tended to reflect the general standing of the national parties at the time' (Gyford 1984:115). Further research into the question as to whether local elections reflect local or national politics conducted by Miller reinforced the orthodoxy that local electoral choice reflected to a large extent partisanship and contemporaneous national political influences. However, as Green had earlier alluded, Miller did concede that 'overlaid on these national influences and trends will be other, local influences – some reflecting local party outputs, some reflecting the influence of local personalities, local scandals, local organisation' ( Miller 1988:148).

Clearly, contention concerns the extent not the existence of local influences upon local electoral behaviour. Recent studies however, seem to:

support the propositions that a proportion of electors hold contradictory local and national voting preferences at one and the same time; and that there is significant variation in party performance both between and within local authorities (Rallings and Thrasher 1993:366).

The differential between local and national voting behaviour at coterminous parliamentary and municipal elections, held on 3 May 1979, was investigated by Waller in terms of turnout and popular support for the parties. Waller found that 'In borough constituencies... little splitting of the vote took place ... and no differences in turnout ... [were] discovered'. However, Waller did find a divergence in party support between local and parliamentary elections in rural areas, and that:

the Liberals did consistently better in local elections... [and that] it might be suggested that voters actually do perceive a difference between local and national government, and are

prepared to cast their vote in local elections for candidates of parties which have little chance of forming a national government (Waller 1980:445-446).

Although Cox and Laver in their study of the 3 May 1979 parliamentary and local elections found that 'municipal voting in big cities is a product of whatever factors happen at the time to be salient nationally', they nevertheless found 'unequivocal evidence of a tendency of some electors to "split their tickets" and to vote Liberal locally while not supporting the party at the general election (Cox and Laver 1979:382).

Analyses of recent elections, employing a variety of indicators, have examined the orthodoxy that local elections are no more than 'annual general elections'. Survey data have provided an insight into the extent of the disparity between respondents' voting intentions at local and forthcoming general elections. Rallings and Thrasher, using data from the British Election Study 1997 England and Wales cross-section survey have shown that 'perhaps a quarter of all voters did not cast both their available ballots for the same party' at the 1997 British general and local elections. In an examination of national and local opinion polls Rallings and Thrasher have also shown that a disparity exists between a party's national electoral support and its local electoral support expressed by respondents' intentions at an imminent hypothetical general election and an actual imminent local election. They have also evidenced a disparity between local electoral voting intention expressed in opinion polls taken in the run up to local elections 1985-1991, and the actual national equivalent vote at these elections so highlighting the Liberal Democrats'(Alliance) consistent ability in the period to exceed opinion poll data ratings at the ballot box ( Rallings and Thrasher 1993:371-372; 1999:12). Furthermore, survey studies by Miller point to a disparity of as much as 20 per cent between voters' parliamentary and local electoral

choices in the late 1980s (Miller 1988, 1990). Analysis of seat gains and losses has shown that the degree of disparity between local and parliamentary electoral behaviour varies geographically, and that this evidence, which points towards contextual voting at local elections, is compounded by evidence of the variance in changes in the parties shares of the vote over time amongst different types of local authorities (Rallings and Thrasher 1993:373). Clearly recent studies and their evidence of variance in change and the heterogeneity of British local electoral behaviour militates against the annual general election thesis.

The question of what motivates local electoral voting behaviour has been the subject of a variety of studies, many of which throw more light upon the heterogeneity of local electoral behaviour and facilitate further insights into the local and parliamentary electoral relationship. Studies of the relationships between turnout, voting and diverse socio-economic and political variables, employing in some cases survey methods and in others aggregate data analysis, have revealed much about the dynamics of local electoral behaviour. Davies and Newton found that class, housing tenure and age are closely related to voting patterns and that housing tenure, particularly owner-occupation, was more closely related to turnout than class. They also found that owner-occupation is associated positively with turnout and Conservative Party support, and that local authority tenancy had a weaker association with turnout. Their study of local electoral behaviour in Birmingham from 1945-1965 found little evidence that the marginality of a contest was associated with high turnout, but their analysis did suggest a positive relationship between Liberal candidate contestation and increased turnout. Furthermore, their study added weight to the 'annual general election' thesis in that over these local elections in the 1945-1965 period they observed that, ' Liberal candidates are relatively more successful in

Labour wards when Labour is less popular than the Conservative Party and more successful in Conservative wards when the tide of public opinion is running against the Conservatives'. The explanation of the Liberal vote according to their study, 'appears to be something of a protest vote at the expense of one of the two major parties'. However, they also found evidence that 'the particular kind of voter attracted by the Liberal Party seems to differ from one [local] election to another according to the political climate' (Davies and Newton 1974: 213-228).

Indeed, Miller, using survey data, found that 'local turnout varies over time and that the electorate is not divided into regular local election voters and regular local election abstainers'. This points towards a degree of fluidity in local electoral voting behaviour. Evidence of an ebb and flow of voters between engagement with local politics and abstention, which, when added to the evidence of the studies so far outlined of the temporary protest-motivated attachment of former Labour and Conservative voters to the Liberals, reinforces the importance of contextual influences upon local electoral behaviour. Miller also found that housing tenure, residential mobility and age are closely related to local electoral voting behaviour. However, unlike Davies and Newton, Miller found that local authority tenants had a greater propensity to turn out and vote in local elections than owner-occupiers. Adding more weight to the case for contextual influences Miller found that there was a strong association between turnout and an elector's knowledge of, and interest in, politics and the ability to successfully identify his or her local councillors. Nevertheless, Miller observed that local electoral voters 'are almost perfectly representative of the full electorate in terms of partisanship and issue attitudes' (Miller 1986:143, 1988 91-98, see also Miller 1990).

In more recent studies Rallings and Thrasher have found that a number of exogenous political factors affect the level of turnout at local elections. Coincident general elections, the proximity of general elections, voter fatigue caused by a rapid succession of various types of election, and salient national political issues such as the poll-tax, were observed to have affected the level of turnout at local elections. In addition, they argue that comparison of turnout performance between authorities of the same type showed a uniformity in their levels of turnout, and that the level of turnout in an individual authority varied little over time. Thus in an hierarchy of turnout performance there was little change in each individual local authority's position, observations that compounded the evidence for the influence of external factors. Nevertheless, as Rallings and Thrasher contend, there is variance in the turnout performance of local authorities and where these 'changes do take place there is usually a *prima facie* explanation readily available...[which] would appear to be related to specifically local political events in those authorities' (Rallings and Thrasher 1997:55).

Rowley's study of the Greater London Council elections of 1964 and 1967, found that in general, lower turnouts are associated with the inner-Labour controlled boroughs, with a gradual increase in level of turnout through the marginals to the Conservative boroughs (Rowley 1971:126). Further, it was suggested that lower turnout was associated with the safety of a seat and larger turnouts with marginal boroughs. Rowley pointed towards an explanation of spatial variation in patterns of voting support and turnout by greater understanding of the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of an area and its electoral behaviour (ibid 129). Indeed, a study of the factors that might influence turnout at local elections, and an assessment of the relative impact of various structural, political and socio-economic and spatial

factors on turnout in elections at each local government tier between 1978 and 1991, found that for 'every type of authority it appeared that turnout was associated with the social character of the area and that such factors explained more of the variance in turnout than structural/political ones'. Moreover, Rallings and Thrasher claim that in order to understand turnout in habitually atypically performing local authorities 'one is forced back on to qualitative, almost cultural explanations' (Rallings and Thrasher 1994a, 1994b).

Analysis of data at the local authority level of aggregation naturally conceals variance between wards within a local authority and it has been to the ward level that many studies have turned in order to decipher further the determinants of local electoral behaviour. The effects of party organisation, campaign activity, especially Liberal Party intervention and local electoral strategies, and that of marginality, incumbency, council policy and candidate have been examined. At the parliamentary electoral level the effects of marginality, constituency campaigns, party finances, party membership and local activism, upon electoral outcomes are well documented and are generally accepted as significant determinants (see Whiteley and Seyd 1992, Johnson and Pattie 1997, Denver and Hands 1974). Constituency parties, however, have functioned not only at the parliamentary electoral level, but also in the main have organised, financed and manned campaigns for local government elections and thus many of the assumptions accepted about the influence of such factors upon parliamentary electoral behaviour may be true for local electoral behaviour.

Pimlott has argued that 'local [party] organisation can have a major effect in raising a party's vote in the low-turnout situations of a local election and that changes in party organisation may often affect changes in turnout' (Pimlott 1973:254). Fletcher found that marginality increased party activity and thereby the ward electorate's interest and

propensity to vote; further, that turnout was higher in non-marginal wards when contested by the Liberal Party. Dyer and Jordan found that the strength of a voter's party attachment and the level of party activity were significant factors in influencing electors to cast a vote in local elections. Bruce and Lee have found evidence of a relationship between local elector's perceptions of candidates and party campaign activity in wards. Furthermore, Gibson and Stewart argue that local issues such as rate poundage level affect local electoral results (Fletcher 1967, Hill 1967, Gregory 1969, Bochel and Denver 1971, 1972, Bruce and Lee 1982, Dyer and Jordan 1985, Gibson and Stewart 1992). There is then considerable evidence that the behaviour of local government voters can be affected by the activity of local parties.

However, the blandishments of local party activity address a disparate electorate composed of voters living in diverse environments. As outlined in the previous chapter, the decline in the relationship between an individual's occupational class location and voting behaviour is generally accepted as incontrovertible. Survey analysis has shown that at the individual level voters are increasingly inclined to abandon the constraints of occupational class influence. Paradoxically, Miller, using ecological analysis of election results and social data at the constituency aggregate level found no evidence of a decline in the influence of occupational class on voting in the 1960s and 1970s (Miller 1978, 1979 and 1984). To throw light on this contradiction Warde *et al.*, by use of ward level results from the 1980 local elections and social data from the Small Area Census of 1981, examined the variation in spatial patterns in local electoral voting behaviour to assess the effect of class, consumption locations and local political cultures upon local electoral outcomes. Warde *et al.*, found that:

Measures of class provide the best basis for the statistical prediction of local election results', and that 'class variables ... contribute most to the statistical explanation of the share of the two-party vote and least to the Conservative share of the poll ... [but] nothing to the statistical explanation of the Liberal share of the vote (Warde *et al.*, 1988 343-345).

Housing tenure, although much weaker than class, was found to be the second most powerful predictor of local election results and the percentage of council house tenure was a stronger predictor than that of owner-occupation. Thus, according to Warde *et al.*, social class and the socio-economic character of a ward are of primary importance in any explanation of the variance in ward level local electoral behaviour.

However, it has been shown that measures of class cannot adequately explain the Liberal share of the vote at elections. Indeed, Dunleavy asserts that 'the social bases and dynamics of third-party voting remain almost as enigmatic now as they were 20 years ago' and that the Liberals show 'stubborn resistance to interpretation in terms of class/socialisation models' (Dunleavy 1990:461, see also, Johnston and Pattie 1998:315, Laver 1984:243, Dorling *et al.*, 1998:45). Nevertheless, intermittently at the parliamentary level and increasingly at the local government electoral level the Liberal Party, and its prefixed and suffixed progeny have succeeded in reducing the two-party duopoly of electoral support, and are thus at the crux of any explanation of partisan dealignment at both levels of political activity.

A variety of studies have examined how and why the Liberal Party was able to establish a foothold in local politics, its parliamentary electoral revivals, the electoral strategies used at both levels, and in some cases pointed up the relationships between each level of political activity (Wallace 1968, Cyr 1977, Pinkney 1983, 1984, Joyce 1989, Cook 1989, Stevenson 1993). Dorling *et al.*, found that Liberal Democrat success at the 1997 general election was to a certain extent 'built on the pattern of

their successes in local elections since 1992' (Dorling *et al.*, 1998:46). However, any explanation of Liberal Party support in terms of the socio-economic character of a ward, or any identification of the type of ward susceptible to them has remained elusive. Indeed, Dorling *et al.*, found distinct differences in the party's electoral support among wards of very similar socio-economic character, noting that 'Liberal Democrat gains took place in widely different circumstances and often involved a straight move from third to first place' (ibid:64). Tactical campaigning by the Liberals was found to be a significant factor to their local electoral success, a logical strategy when the post-war financial and organisational weaknesses of the party, and an absence of class-based core support, are taken into consideration. In tandem with the Liberal's focus upon local issues at local elections the party has thereby been able at times to cut across traditional partisan lines and attract sufficient local electoral support to provide the organisational structure to launch challenges at the parliamentary electoral level in the same area. Recent work has shown that such 'Local issues and concerns can influence the vote over either the entire area of the council; or in individual wards, [and that] campaigns ... and the personality of the candidates can have a clear impact on the result' (Rallings and Thrasher 1993:380). Nevertheless, little has changed since the geographer Ron Johnson observed that in 'most psephological writings in Britain only scant regard is paid to the role of place as a context in which political attitudes are learned and voting decisions are made'(Johnson 1986:573).

The conventional political science view of revivals in Liberal Party fortunes at the local electoral level affords little explanatory value to the influence of local issues. The orthodoxy, as established by Newton, is one of national political issues dominating the electoral calculus of the municipal voter. Furthermore, political

science gives little credence to the explanation of parliamentary constituency electoral outcomes in terms of the 'politics of place'; the activities of the parties at the local government electoral level and behaviour of the voter at the local electoral level.

There is then, no connection between these two levels of political activity and thus no role for local politics in any political science account of the revival of Liberal electoral fortunes at the parliamentary level. Clearly, parliamentary electoral level partisan dealignment, of which movements in and out of Liberal Party support is a significant element, is - according to political science- divorced from local government electoral activity.

In contrast however, national political issues and the cloistered world of high politics have to some extent loosened their explanatory grip upon accounts for the revivals in Liberal fortunes posited by political historians. This is especially true of the Liberal revival of the 1970s. For example, the historian John Stevenson argues that:

‘ there was a relationship between Liberal involvement in local politics and national politics which was almost unique; areas where Liberals built up support on the basis of community politics were often turned into winnable parliamentary seats. Even if that had not been true, a key feature of the Liberal revival was the re-emergence of the Party at local level, one which could withstand downturns in the Party's national fortunes and provide some kind of ballast to the Parliamentary Party’ (Stevenson 1993:66).

How far the votes of the electorate at the local government level were crucial to the Liberal Party revivals at the Parliamentary level, and to what extent those votes were cast in consideration of local issues, will be explored in the case studies.

## **2.5: Conclusion**

There is a great diversity of idiosyncratic factors that defy systematic analysis but nevertheless need to be identified and examined if a more adequate explanation of

local electoral behaviour is to be found, and its relationship with parliamentary electoral behaviour understood. Indeed, as Rallings and Thrasher have concluded:

Any proposition which now sought to describe local elections purely as a form of national referendum would need to explain away some clearly contrary findings (Rallings and Thrasher 1997:154).

The relationship between local and national electoral behaviour is by no means an obvious one. It is evident that greater methodological pluralism is needed and that as Dunleavy has argued there needs to be a recognition in voting studies that quantitative data capture only part of complex social phenomena (Dunleavy 1990:469). Furthermore, as Devine in response to Dunleavy has argued, 'qualitative methods could facilitate a greater understanding of political behaviour' because of the failure of political science to 'examine how contextual issues influence voting behaviour' (Devine 1995:215-216). It is then to qualitative evidence that the case studies of chapters 5-8 turn. However, firstly the next chapter must expound the methodological underpinning of the thesis and the multi-disciplinary approach to be adopted.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1: Introduction**

An underlying premise of this thesis is that in voting studies of electoral behaviour between 1959 and 1979 the effect of local influences upon local electoral outcomes has been greatly underestimated. Indeed, that local electoral behaviour was connected to national electoral behaviour and has a part to play in any explanation of dealignment, and at times and in places the local elector's voting calculus was influenced to such a degree by local political context at ward and borough level that the expectations assumed by the influence of class and the socio-economic characteristics of a ward were not realised.

In order to examine these contentions voting studies need to take account of those factors 'that are intrinsically difficult to measure' in order to better explain the calculus of voting (Sanders 1995:65). However, to gain purchase on variables that quantitative methods fail to grasp implies the resort to a multi-theoretical research strategy and the introduction of qualitative methods. The barrier to overcome is the 'prejudice against concepts and ideas which are not immediately operationalizable but which can none the less be worked up in stages to achieve empirical application' (Dunleavy 1990:469). Any approximation of adequate explanation of voting behaviour has to take account of many more of the unobservable processes that make up the phenomena, and thereby an election study becomes 'more than a complex incident detached from the evolving political conditions of ... society' (Johnson 1989:75). This, for behaviouralists, seems to point towards a choice between 'exaggerated

empiricism, untestable generalisations or a much less intellectually satisfying middle way where much of the procedure will be based on forms of intuitive inductions of hazardous character' (Blondel 1976:76). Furthermore, any qualification of empiricism by the introduction of a multi-theoretical approach explicitly accepts that there are diverse routes to knowledge and so raises the question of what kind of organised knowledge is attainable by doing so.

The way we perceive the world and how we perceive our relation to that world, ontology, is closely connected to what knowledge we consider valid or invalid, our assumptions about the basis for knowledge: the theory of knowledge, or epistemology. In turn these influence methodology, the research practices, broad principles of research, theoretical analysis defining a research problem and how research should proceed. There is a direct link between ontology and epistemology, through methodology to methods and the way in which data are collected and analysed. In short 'the gathering, analysis and interpretation of data are always carried out within some broader understanding of what constitutes legitimate enquiry and warrantable knowledge' ( Henwood 1996: 28).

Such epistemological prescription is expressed in the view that quantitative and qualitative approaches to research are based upon incommensurable philosophical presuppositions. According to this viewpoint the two approaches are internally coherent and fundamentally different research paradigms. The relationship between theory and research is emergent in the qualitative approach as opposed to confirmatory in the quantitative. Quantitative research is structured and nomothetic, while qualitative is unstructured and ideographic. Social reality is considered static

and external to the actor by the quantitative approach whereas the qualitative view is that social reality is processual and socially constructed. Quantitative research produces 'hard', reliable numerical data. Qualitative produces rich data in words of questionable descriptive precision, and problematic in terms of reactivity for wider generalisation. The quantitative and qualitative paradigms are considered philosophically opposed in terms of 'realism versus idealism, naturalism versus anti-naturalism, and deductivism versus inductivism' (Hammersley 1996:164). Nevertheless, it is true to say that there has been a weakening of the grip of positivism. However, if multi-theoretical approaches, such as combining the interpretive approach of history and behaviouralism to areas of electoral study, are to be employed then a 'methodologically aware eclecticism' (Hammersley 1996: 174) is needed. Clearly, the use of case studies in this thesis necessitates an explanation of what kind of knowledge and how the knowledge they produce is arrived at. In the next section the methodology of case study research used in this thesis will be expounded.

### **3.2:Case studies**

The method adopted in this thesis is a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis of four case study locations. How then, given the above account of positivist prescription can the case study method generate information of general validity rather than information of relevance only to a particular study? Indeed, what at all can be learned from a single case study or for that matter, multiple case studies of a limited number? Critics of the case study method have argued that 'Case studies never "prove" anything, their purpose is to illustrate generalisations which are established otherwise, or to direct attention toward such generalisations' (Eckstein 1960:15). Lijphart went further and argued that the case study 'can constitute neither the basis

for a valid generalisation nor the grounds for disproving an established generalisation' (Lijphart 1971:691). More recently, Sartori has conceded that whilst case studies 'cannot confirm a generalisation ... they can ... disconfirm a regularity to a limited degree' (Sartori 1994:23).

However, it is generally accepted that case studies are able to reveal additional information and variables that can erode the strength of propositions about a political phenomenon. Deviant case studies can challenge established generalisations and lead to the refinement and sharpening of hypotheses. Stakes argues that by use of such instrumental case study the choice of the case is made because it is expected to advance our understanding of the theorising that underpins grand generalisations and thereby lead to refinement of a theory. This instrumental use of case study can of course be extended to several case studies and although a small number of case studies cannot provide a legitimate foundation for generalisation to a wider population they can, nevertheless, refine theories and 'suggest complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalisability' (Stakes 1994:237-245, 1995). The use of multiple case studies does not however deny that the primary interest and objective is to understand the uniqueness of each particular case, for it is through differentiation between what is particular and what is common that the limits of the generalisability of such as the 'Annual General Election' thesis can be established and theories of local electoral behaviour refined.

The above suggests the utility of the case study as a research method of evaluation of contextual influences that can contribute to the refinement of hypotheses, which, when tested by further quantitative methods can result in the generation of alternative explanations. The methodological chasm between the positivist's notion of valid

causal inference and, by this bench-mark, the historian's inability to make inferences that go beyond the particular, nevertheless remains. However, Dunleavy contends that 'the basis of generalisation from a ... case study is not the typicality of the case in any sense, but the logicity of the analysis of the case'. At the heart of this argument is the intended use of the case study to:

penetrate beyond surface correlations to detect the more fundamental and general processes involved...to establish the existence of structural relations which can be taken to operate in other areas in substantially the same form. [Furthermore, that] this view of case studies means that detailed, narrative accounts are necessary' (Dunleavy 1982:199).

Indeed, Rhodes, more recently, has argued that the case study method is 'capable of fostering the link between the historian and the political scientist, it can relate the historian's "what questions" to the political scientist's "why questions" (Rhodes 1994:183). King *et al.* have gone much further and argue that 'comparative case studies can yield valid causal inference' and that historical research can be analytical and thereby seek to 'evaluate alternative explanations' (King *et al.*, 1994:5-45).

King *et al.* argue that quantitative and qualitative research can be synthesised by 'applying a unified logic of inference to both' (ibid:3). Valid inferences about political behaviour can be produced by the incorporation of scientific inference into qualitative research design. There is, according to this view, a fundamental logic that underpins all social scientific research and that the methodological differences between the quantitative and the qualitative traditions are unimportant. There are rules of scientific inference that if followed by qualitative researchers will produce reliable results. King *et al.*, by focusing on empirical research argue that they can circumvent many of the philosophical concerns of the debate. Their guiding assumption is that 'it is possible to have some knowledge of the external world but that such knowledge is always

uncertain' (ibid:6). Consequently, whatever research design is applied to a topic where very little information is available the conclusions will be relatively uncertain. Nevertheless, the reliability of the quantitative approach can be more readily assessed, whereas evaluation of the logic by which conclusions are drawn in qualitative research is more troublesome because principles of selection and the process of observations is hidden. This failure by qualitative research to account for the uncertainty of its inferences is regarded as its most serious weakness. It is argued that these limitations can be overcome by an explicitness that 'addresses the concerns of the community of scholars and uses public methods to arrive at inferences that are consistent with the rules of science and the information at our disposal' (ibid:9). The upshot of their argument is that in order for comparative case studies using qualitative methods to produce valid causal inferences, research must be carried out systematically so that the same information, the same data on the same variables across the units is compiled and analysed in a 'structured-focussed comparison' led by theoretically relevant questions (King 1994 *et al*:45). Indeed, Yin has argued that 'like other research strategies [the case study] is a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedure' (Yin 1994:15).

He argues that theory plays a pivotal role in the design of case studies and in any generalisation from them and is, 'the main vehicle for generalising the results of the case study' (ibid 32). However, for Yin, construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability are the quality benchmarks of any research design. How then, can the research methods of the historian conducting case studies of local electoral behaviour shape up to these benchmarks and thereby allow claims to valid analytical generalisations from one case study to another?

In terms of construct validity the qualitative case study method employed in this thesis could be criticised for its failure 'to develop sufficiently operational sets of measures and that subjective judgements are used to collect data' (ibid 34). Yin suggests tactics to overcome these criticisms. They are the use of 'multiple sources of evidence in a manner encouraging convergent lines of inquiry' and the creation of a 'chain of evidence'. As far as internal validity is concerned, Yin's benchmark requires that 'all rival explanations and possibilities' be considered and that the evidence gathered should be congruent. External validity, that is whether a study's findings are generalisable beyond that particular case, is overcome according to him by the fact that, unlike survey research which 'relies on statistical generalisation', the case study researcher is attempting to 'generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory'. Furthermore, he compares the use of multiple case studies to the use of multiple experiments or multiple surveys and argues that 'under these circumstances, the method of generalisation is "analytical generalisation", in which previously adopted theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study'(ibid 34-36. In this way the criticisms concerning replication and reliability are weakened. Reliability depends upon whether future researchers would arrive at the same conclusions if the same procedures described by a case study researcher were followed. It requires explicit and well documented procedures a clear 'audit trail' of how claims to knowledge have been arrived at. Thus, in each case study of this thesis multiple sources of evidence will be sought through convergent lines of inquiry in an attempt to build a chain of evidence. Wherever possible rival explanations will be considered and 'each case's conclusions [will be] considered to be the information needing replication by other individual cases'. In each case study 'how and why a particular proposition was demonstrated (or not demonstrated) will

be indicated. Across cases ‘why certain cases were predicted to have certain results, whereas other cases... were predicted to have contrary results’ will be indicated (Yin 1994:1-49). The qualitative case study methodology employed in this thesis will be conducted upon the premise that studies ‘at the micro-level ... have their proper and legitimate place, if their specific problems and limitations are well understood and respected’ (Ragin 1996:765). In this next section the sources of data to be used will be outlined as will the methods used to analyse the data, and in the section that follows how specific problems of data collection and manipulation are overcome.

### **3.3:Methods and sources of data**

The thesis uses the machine-readable data base of local election results assembled by Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher at the Local Government Chronicle Election Centre, University of Plymouth. The data used in this thesis relate to local electoral behaviour at : London Metropolitan Borough elections 1959-1962, London Borough elections 1964-1979, London County Council elections 1955-1961, Greater London Council elections 1964-1981 (Willis and Woollard 2000), Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972, Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979, West Midlands County Council elections 1973-1981 (Phillips 2000), Sutton Coldfield County Borough election results 1959-1972 (Sutton News). The sources of parliamentary electoral data will be referenced in the text.

The thesis will also employ statistical analysis of this local electoral data and socio-economic data. The sources of this socio-economic data are outlined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1; Sources of Socio-economic data.**

General Register Office Census 1961 England and Wales (various publications, listed in bibliography), HMSO.
SN 1488 – General Register Office Census 1966, Small Area Statistics: 10% Population, Great Britain. *
SN 1182 - General Register Office Census 1971, Small Area Statistics: 100% Households Aggregated to Ward Level, Great Britain. *
SN 1178 - General Register Office Census 1971, Small Area Statistics: 100% Population Aggregated to Ward Level, Great Britain. *
SN 1191 - General Register Office Census 1971, Small Area Statistics: 100% Households Aggregated to Post-1974 Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Definitions. *
SN 1190 - General Register Office Census 1971, Small Area Statistics: 100% Population Aggregated to Post-1974 Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Definitions. *
SN 1893 - General Register Office Census 1981, Small Area Statistics: 100% Households and Population Aggregated to Ward Level, Great Britain. *
* Supplied by Manchester Information and Associated Services, via UK Data Archive University of Essex.

The combination of local election data, and socio-economic data from the censuses whose small area statistics are formulated by ward, will allow the analysis of the impact of socio-economic and demographic characteristics of a ward upon voting behaviour. A regression equation or model will be generated that assumes that the probability support for a particular party in a given ward is significantly affected by the political and socio-economic context of the ward in which that voter casts his or her vote. This analysis will enable the determination of how much variation in certain variables, such as a party's percentage share of the vote, can be explained by individual variables in a regression equation. This analysis, the rationale for the choice of particular socio-economic variables, and hypotheses to be tested, and problems of ecological fallacy, will be outlined in Chapter 9.

However, in Chapter 4 summary descriptive statistical techniques will be employed to discern the trends and patterns in local electoral behaviour over time at the local authority level and establish any variance in electoral behaviour between authorities

of the same type and within authorities at upper and lower tier elections, and between these and general trends of parliamentary electoral behaviour. Differences in the patterns of electoral behaviour over time will also be examined by a measure of dispersion - the standard deviation- which for instance, can indicate how much on average the scores in a borough's turnout over time, or a particular party's percentage share of the vote at consecutive elections, differ from the mean and thereby indicate atypical, period specific highs or lows. The statistical technique of correlation will be employed to explore possible relationships between variables, such as the relationship between Liberal contestation and turnout generally, and specifically in non-marginal wards.

Correlation is a statistical technique that can be used in a descriptive capacity or as a means of drawing inferences. It is a technique that can establish whether variables are related to each other. If one variable implies a change in another variable and there is information about how the first variable changes, then it can be estimated how much of this change can affect the value of the second variable. If, for instance, two variables are in perfect association there is said to be a perfect positive correlation which corresponds to the number  $+1$ . If, conversely, there is no association between two variables then the correlation coefficient is  $0$ . Dependent upon how strong the association between the two variables is the correlation coefficient will lie between  $0$ , no association, and  $+1$  a perfect positive correlation. Negative correlations, where an increase in one variable results in a decrease in the other, an inverse relationship, is indicated by a minus coefficient between  $0$  and  $-1$ . Correlation, however, does not mean causation, it only describes a relationship between two variables, irrespective of whether one causes the change in the other. All the above applies to the second

section of Chapter 4, when the examination of variance will focus upon ward level variance in voting behaviour.

### **3.4: Problems with the data**

The interpretation of local electoral results can be problematic not least because of how it has originally been collected and recorded. Before the widespread use of computers electoral registration officers updated the electoral register at best annually and at worst in many areas infrequently, thus posing problems for the reliability of measures of turnout. The consequence of infrequent updating of the electoral register was an exaggeration of the magnitude of the electorate, as the deceased or those that had moved out of the electoral unit remained on the register beyond eligibility. The effect of this is that turnout in some areas may have been underestimated.

Further problems are the calculation of turnout and of the party share of the vote in multi-member wards. The elector may or may not cast all of his or her allotted votes and thus an accurate figure for turnout is only calculable if the number of ballot papers is available. Unfortunately the further back in time the less likely their availability. However, it is possible to estimate turnout by use of an algorithm that first calculates the total vote for each party. The algorithm calculates:

turnout as the number of votes cast as a proportion of the total votes available. This assumes, therefore, that every voter used their full quota of votes in a multi-member ward. In some cases, therefore, where voters have not used their full quota the level of turnout will be slightly depressed (Rallings and Thrasher 1993).

The algorithm facilitates the calculation of the average number of votes for a party, *ceteris paribus*, in a multi-member ward contest and when this figure is divided by the sum of the average number of votes per party and multiplied by one hundred each party's percentage share of the vote is arrived at, i.e. an estimate of each party's top vote. The situation arises when party competition is uneven, for example when a three

member ward is contested by three Labour Party candidates, one Conservative and no others. Electors may or may not use their full allocation of votes. The problem affects the London borough elections, pre and post reorganisation as all ward contests were multimember, as were LCC and GLC elections (1973 to 1981 apart when single member seats prevailed). However, this problem only affects the 1973 Birmingham District Council election, which was an all-out post-reorganisation multimember election. At all other Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield elections multi-member elections were a rare occurrence.

Change in each party's share of the vote is believed to emanate from a weakening of a voter's previous stable commitment to a political party. As outlined in Chapter 1, voters are considered to have become more volatile in their electoral behaviour and have developed a seemingly increasing propensity to desert the two major parties in often temporary and erratic changes of support for minor parties. Surveys have provided the evidence of weakening of the strength of party identification and shown that rather than a linear decline in the strength of party identification, there was a dramatic fall in the 1970s before this trend stabilised and levelled out at a lower rate. In Chapter 4 of the thesis trends and patterns in local electoral behaviour at upper and lower-tier authority elections will be examined to see if a similar shift in partisan ties occurred at the local electoral level, and indeed, the timing and trends of any shift compared to those at the parliamentary level.

The parliamentary level of voting behaviour in the 1950s and 1960s is characterised as a period of stable and habitual attachments to the two major parties. The majority of voters expressed partisan identification with one or the other of the two major parties and many electors expressed a strong attachment. Party identification is considered to have anchored voters over a series of contests to the Labour or

Conservative parties. For dealignment theorists any erosion of the strength of partisan identification must result in increasing levels of electoral volatility. Survey data are not available for us to measure gross electoral volatility at these local elections, that is the proportion of voters in successive elections who change their minds. However, it is possible to gauge the declining influence of party identification, to track the trends in partisan dealignment by measuring the level of net volatility at successive comparable local elections.

In order to assess the extent that party attachments at local elections were eroded, or otherwise, changes in the distribution of the vote between successive comparable elections in the 1959-1979 period will be measured. To measure these changes in net volatility the 'Butler Swing' of the vote, and the Pedersen Index of Dissimilarity will be employed. The 'Butler Swing', or two-party swing, is measured by adding the percentage loss for one party to the percentage gains for the other and dividing by two to arrive at an index of net volatility that can be used to chart change over time. The index, however, only considers the Conservative and the Labour parties (Butler 1963). The 'Butler Swing' can be misleading in a multi-party contest and a more suitable measure of net volatility is the Pedersen Index of Dissimilarity which sums the proportion of voters who change their votes for each party between successive comparable elections and divides this figure by two (Pedersen, 1979). Patterns of local electoral net volatility at upper- and lower tier elections within a local authority, and those between local authorities can then be examined for any variance, as can local and national electoral net volatility over time in coterminous electoral units. Thus, in chapter 4 a variety of measures of electoral behaviour will test the hypothesis, that in coterminous electoral units at local and national elections in the period of interest of this study there was no difference in patterns and trends in voting behaviour. Clearly,

the expectation according to orthodox political science views such as Miller's 'Irrelevant Elections', and Newton's 'Annual General Election' theses, will be that there indeed will be little or no difference.

### **3.5: Criteria for selection of case study locations**

The choice of case study locations can have an arbitrary feel to it. However, notwithstanding that this thesis is limited to comparisons between four case studies, their selection has been determined by a number of criteria. The most important determinants of the choice of London and Birmingham were the existence of a complete data set of local electoral results going back to 1900 for these cities and the availability of a range of compatible socio-economic data that was unavailable for many other cities in this period of interest, (e.g. 1966 census 10% samples).

The choice of the two particular London boroughs, Islington and Camden, has been made because despite constituency boundary changes and rewording over the 1959-1979 period, as will be evidenced below, the constituencies that made up these boroughs and their component local electoral units remained remarkably coterminous. Hence, comparison of local electoral data from the pre- and post-1964 reorganisation periods, and comparison between parliamentary and local electoral behaviour is possible.

Another criterion for their selection was the political complexion and past political control of the boroughs. In the case of Islington and its pre-1964 metropolitan boroughs -Islington MB and Finsbury MB- electoral apathy, Labour Party control and absence of Liberal Party intervention characterise its local electoral history. In the case of Camden and its pre-1964 metropolitan boroughs -St Pancras MB, Holborn MB, and Hampstead MB- St Pancras had a history of mixed electoral fortunes for the two major parties and an absence of Liberal Party intervention and a similar degree of

electoral apathy. In contrast local elections in Holborn had been dominated by the Conservative Party in straight fights with the Labour Party. While in Hampstead, though dominated by the Conservatives in contention with Labour Party, the Liberal Party had intervened, albeit intermittently. In general it would be safe to say that, Hampstead apart, these boroughs were derelict as far as the Liberal Party were concerned, and had little or no Liberal intervention or organisational activity prior to 1959. Furthermore, Camden and Islington are contiguous. Their selection then, will facilitate an examination of the spread of Liberal support at the local electoral level and its relation to Liberal electoral strategies, policies, candidate qualities and organisation *inter alia*. Moreover, Camden and Islington, as will be evidenced in the case studies, had very similar socio-economic characteristics, and it will thus be possible to examine why and how across boroughs of similar socio-economic character different political outcomes may arise.

The choice of Ladywood and Sutton Coldfield as the Birmingham case study locations was made in the light of their respective electoral histories. They both fit the criterion of being derelict constituencies as far as Liberal organisation and Liberal intervention in local and parliamentary elections was concerned. The Ladywood Constituency and the local electoral wards that comprised it were an inner-city impoverished Labour heartland whose socio-economic character throughout the period would lead to the expectation of continuous Labour support and success. Yet, in 1969 at a parliamentary by-election the constituency returned a Liberal MP.

In contrast the Sutton Coldfield Constituency was a prosperous and staunchly Conservative seat, and Sutton Coldfield Borough Council was dominated by Conservative councillors. The Liberals after challenging successfully at the local electoral level replaced Labour as the contender for both local and parliamentary

electoral power in the constituency. Sutton Coldfield had no recent history of Liberal Party organisation or intervention at local or parliamentary elections in the constituency. Therefore these locations are ideal electoral units to trace the revival of Liberalism at the local level and its connections, if any, with parliamentary electoral outcomes. The questions of how and why in two locations of very different socio-economic character the Liberals were able to break the two-party duopoly at both the local and parliamentary electoral level can thereby be examined.

Each of the four case study locations provide the opportunity to answer the questions why and how can fixed socio-economic characteristics in individual boroughs lead to different political outcomes at two different types of elections?

### **3.6:Coterminous electoral units.**

The aggregation of local election results into parliamentary constituencies in order to make comparisons with national outcomes, poses problems for researchers.

Parliamentary constituency boundaries as a rule do not dissect ward boundaries, however, a parliamentary constituency can encompass wards from two or more districts and thus, the local elections in those wards need not be coincident.

Furthermore, although district ward boundaries are contained by parliamentary constituency boundaries, the county electoral divisions that make up the electoral units of shire counties (non-metropolitan county councils) in England and Wales can and do cut across parliamentary constituency boundaries. Hence, 'in those years ... when only elections to the non-metropolitan county councils are being held, the set of constituencies to which the local results can be aggregated is curtailed yet further' (Curtice and Payne 1991:11). Cross-time analysis is frustrated by the regular changes of constituency boundaries that have been made in order to obtain a reasonable uniformity in constituency electorates and also by the restructuring of local

government in the 1970s that resulted in the abolition of some rural authorities and the enlargement of the average size of wards. Clearly, when aggregate data analysis is employed in the study of local electoral behaviour the unit of analysis under scrutiny must be clearly defined and thereby the limits of data collection and analysis determined. The integrity of the unit of analysis has implications for any interpretations, not least of which specificity and universality of those explanations.

A prime consideration of case study methodology, no matter how reliable one's method of measurement of an electoral phenomenon, is of course that like has to be compared with like. In order to make legitimate comparison between local and national voting behaviour the relationship over time between each borough's local government electoral units and their respective parliamentary electoral units in the light of boundary changes must be considered. Despite local government reorganisation of boroughs and subsequent rewording, and constituency boundary changes that came into effect at the February 1974 General Election, the local and parliamentary electoral units, as will be evidenced below, have remained remarkably coterminous and thus provide reliable electoral data for analysis of any associations between these levels of voting behaviour.

The Metropolitan Borough of Islington up until and including the 1970 general election was divided into three parliamentary constituencies; Islington East, Islington North, and Islington South West. At general elections from 1945 to 1970 inclusive the ward level electoral units of these constituencies, despite the reorganisation of London's local government by dint of the 1963 Local Government of London Act, continued to be made up of their old metropolitan borough wards (as will be explained in more detail below). Thus, only at the general elections and borough elections in the 1945 to 1962 period inclusive, do the Islington East, Islington North,

and Islington South West constituencies' parliamentary electoral results represent the voting behaviour of the coterminous borough ward electorates that made up these constituencies. Hence, comparison between these two levels of electoral activity can justifiably be made from 1945 to 1962.

Similarly, the revised parliamentary constituencies (Boundary Commission for England : Second Periodical Report 1969, changes enacted for February 1974 general election) of Islington Central, Islington North, and Islington South and Finsbury (see maps 4 and 5 on page 207), are coterminous with their component post 1964 Islington London Borough wards. Hence, parliamentary constituency results and borough election results in Islington are coterminous and comparable in two discrete periods: 1945-1962, and 1974-1979. The same applies to the London Borough of Camden (see map 6 on page 240), in that comparison can be made between parliamentary constituency and local government borough electoral behaviour in coterminous electoral units 1945-1962, and 1974-1979.

There is, however, a problem with such intra-constituency comparison of parliamentary and local government voting behaviour at London elections between 1964 and 1970 inclusive. For instance in the case of the London Borough of Camden the transformation of the Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras, and St Pancras North constituencies in 1974 into Camden Hampstead, Camden Holborn and St Pancras, and Camden St Pancras North did not involve the import or export of wards or their electorates to or from any other boroughs, but merely a direct transfer. However, the Camden London Borough and the Islington London Borough council election results of 1964, 1968 and 1971 are based upon their post 1964 borough wards, but, the 1964, 1966 and 1970 general elections results of Camden, and Islington, are based upon the

pre 1964 wards. In the case of Hampstead Constituency its transition to Camden Hampstead Constituency involved no ward changes. In the case of the transition of St Pancras North Constituency into Camden St Pancras North Constituency the four northern wards of St Pancras MB became the six wards of the Camden St Pancras North Constituency. Furthermore in the case of the transition of Holborn and St Pancras South Constituency into Camden Holborn and St Pancras South Constituency, the four southern wards of St Pancras MB and the nine wards of Holborn MB became the six wards of the Camden Holborn and St Pancras South Constituency. Clearly, wards were resized and renamed and are problematic when parliamentary/local electoral activity is compared in the period 1964-1970. Similarly, comparison of parliamentary/local electoral behaviour in the case of Islington is problematic. The transition from Metropolitan to London Borough involved the incorporation of Finsbury MB and the resizing and renaming of some wards. For example, the borough election results for 1964, 1968 and 1971 of the Highbury, Canonbury and Mildmay wards represent the voting behaviour of the resized Highbury, Canonbury, and Mildmay Islington MB wards which after 1964 have ward electorates some 15 - 34 per cent smaller. Hence the parliamentary constituency electorates of these wards are different in size from the borough ward electorates. Notwithstanding the discrepancies of the 1964-1970 period, (i.e. comparison of the electoral behaviour at the 1964, 1966 and 1970 general elections, with electoral behaviour at the 1964, 1968 and 1971 borough elections), the local and parliamentary electoral data for the two London Borough case studies are in the main coterminous. The boundaries of the Birmingham Borough Constituency of Ladywood underwent minor alterations by virtue of the First Periodical Report of the Boundary Commission for England presented to Parliament in November 1954. However, the total electorate

of its component local electoral units the Ladywood, Duddeston and St Paul's wards of the County Borough of Birmingham was reduced by 5%. The Borough Constituency of Sutton Coldfield, an all purpose authority in its right at the time, which comprised ten local electoral wards and the Erdington ward of the County Borough of Birmingham, also underwent minor boundary change. However, its electorate was only increased by a mere 0.5% (First Periodical Report: Boundary Commission for England, Cmd.,9311,London:HMSO). These constituency boundary changes remained in place up until and including the 1970 general election, but were changed in time for the February 1974 general election by the Boundary Commission's Second Periodical Report presented to Parliament in June 1969. Thus, during the 1959-1974 period the local electoral and parliamentary electoral units of the two Birmingham case study locations are virtually coterminous (see maps 1 and 2 on pages 123 and 124 for Birmingham wards – map 3 on page 163 Sutton Coldfield).

There were nevertheless, minor alterations to the ward boundaries of the Birmingham County Borough during this period. The thirty-eight wards that comprised the Birmingham County Borough at the 1959,1960 and 1961 local elections were increased to thirty-nine wards for the 1962 local elections, but the impact upon the case study locations was negligible. Small boundary changes to wards that comprised the Birmingham County Borough came into effect in January 1966 (West Midlands County Order 1965) but did not affect directly the wards of interest to this study.

The implications of the Second Periodical Report of the Boundary Commission are however, a little more problematic. The Borough Constituency of Ladywood underwent major boundary revision in time for the February 1974 general election. Formerly made up of the Ladywood, Duddeston and St Paul's wards, the new Ladywood Constituency was reconstituted from the Ladywood ward and the All

Saints, Rotton Park and Soho wards. The Duddeston ward and the Newtown ward (formerly St Paul's up until the 1961 elections) were subsumed by the Small Heath Constituency. However, the greater part of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of data relating to the Ladywood case study concerns only the 1959-1974 period and thus problems of reliability are largely avoided.

The impact of the Second Periodical Report upon the Sutton Coldfield case study is minimal and manageable for the whole period. The Erdington ward of the County Borough of Birmingham formerly part of the Sutton Coldfield Constituency, was returned to the Birmingham fold and with other contiguous Birmingham wards formed the Erdington Constituency in time for the February 1974 general election. However, the 1972 Local Government Act amalgamated the ten local electoral wards of Sutton Coldfield into three new wards without dissection or rewarding of existing wards, and the Sutton Coldfield Borough ceased to exist, having been swallowed up by merger into the new Birmingham District Council. These changes however do not present a problem as the local electoral and parliamentary electoral units remain coterminous notwithstanding the loss of the Erdington ward.

### **3.7:Local electoral cycles**

There are features of the local electoral system that further constrain the use of aggregate data analysis. Local election study is far from straight forward, indeed, a complexity of local authority electoral cycles means that, although elections take place in a variety of locations every May, they do not cover all the country. The data used in this thesis are derived from: London borough, LCC and GLC, county borough (Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield), metropolitan borough, and metropolitan district council elections. It is their particular electoral cycles over the 1959-1979 that concern this study.

In London, borough council elections were held once every four years for all the seats on the councils, and in the same year for all the seats on the LCC. Following the reorganisation of local government in London, borough elections were held over a four year cycle as were GLC elections, albeit not in the same years (1964 apart). Before the 1972 Local Government Act, Birmingham County Borough and the County Borough of Sutton Coldfield held annual elections for one-third of the seats on their respective councils. After reorganisation and the merger of Sutton Coldfield with Birmingham, annual elections over a three year period were held to the Birmingham District Council and every fourth year was left fallow for elections to the West Midlands County Council. There is in any one year a comparable pattern of returns from elections held four years previously. Indeed, despite differing electoral cycles, London, the metropolitan districts and the counties 'are internally consistent within each category' (Rallings and Thrasher 1994:16).

### **3.8: Conclusion**

Having outlined the data and its sources, how problems with analysis of that data can be overcome, the theoretical contentions over the case study method and how these can be circumvented, it is now appropriate to summarise how this thesis will conduct its quantitative analysis. In Chapter 4 local electoral data at the local authority aggregate level will be subject to summary statistical and bivariate analysis to examine the extent of any variance in the electoral behaviour between local authorities of the same type, and the extent of any disparities in local electoral behaviour at upper- and lower-tier elections in the same authority. Furthermore, variance in local and national electoral behaviour in coterminous local and parliamentary electoral units will be assessed. The analysis will reveal any authorities that defy the general trends in voting behaviour. Analysis of ward level local electoral

data will then reveal any atypical ward level voting behaviour that is concealed by analysis of electoral data at the local authority aggregate level. Regression analysis of ward level local electoral data and ward level socio-economic data in the four case study locations will examine how far contextual factors influence local electoral behaviour. Comparisons between local and national electoral behaviour in coterminous local and parliamentary electoral units will explore the relationship between local and national voting behaviour.

Thus, descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to consider how the movement of one variable of voting behaviour over time may be related to another variable or a whole series of variables, and thereby identify, isolate and measure the degree of association between two or more variables considered to affect local electoral behaviour.

However, it is perhaps prudent at this point to remember that inferential statistics only indicate the probability of a relationship between one or more variables being present, indicate the weakness or strength of a possible relationship but not that a causal relationship exists between one or more variables. As Hudson has argued:

Identifying and assessing the relationship between variables in a historical context involves historical judgement ... It cannot be accomplished simply by using statistics ... The historian must choose when to apply statistical techniques and how to interpret the significance of the statistical results ... It is important from the outset to form hypotheses about the possible relationship ... on the basis of sound historical judgement ... variables may by chance move or vary in seemingly related fashion ... only if sound reasons why there might be a relationship between two or more variables should we indulge in statistical identification and measurement of that relationship (Hudson 2000:138).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF ELECTORAL DATA**

#### **4.1: Introduction**

In this chapter local electoral data for Inner-London and Birmingham will be analysed to assess the extent of any variance in electoral behaviour between local authorities of the same type, the extent of any disparities in electoral behaviour at upper- and lower-tier elections in the same authority, and the extent of any variance between local and national electoral behaviour in coterminous local and parliamentary electoral units.

The general hypothesis that there is no difference between local and parliamentary electoral behaviour will be tested. In the light of orthodox explanations of local electoral behaviour the expectation would be that there are no significant differences in electoral behaviour at these two types of elections, and therefore no significant differences in trends of partisan dealignment.

There are different ways of measuring the extent of party politicisation of elections. The changing nature of party competition can be indicated by: the percentage contests featuring candidates from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties (3-way contests); the percentage wards contested by the Liberal Party; the level of contestation for seats as measured by candidate to seat ratio; the percentage Independent candidates; percentage two-party share of the total vote; aggregate Liberal Party share of the total vote and Liberal Party share of the vote in contested wards only; and measures of net inter-election volatility. All of these measures will be used in the examination of Inner-London and Birmingham elections.

#### **4.2: Inner-London**

Trends in local government voting and party competition at the London Borough elections during the period 1959-1979 will now be examined. Data for this analysis, up until and excluding the 1964 borough elections, refers to the London Borough elections i.e. the 28 boroughs of the L.C.C. area. Post-1964, and including the 1964 borough elections the data pertains to the 12 Inner London boroughs only at the London borough council elections and the greater London Council (GLC) elections.

Table 2 profiles the changing nature of party competition in the London Borough elections from 1956-1978. Electoral contests featuring candidates from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties (3-way contests) show an increasing trend from a mere 9.8% of the wards in 1956 to 41.2% in 1964. From this high point of 3-way contests in 1964 the Liberal Party's ability to fight the London Borough elections steadily declined and in 1971 only 17.2% of the 244 wards had 3-way contests. However, 1974 saw a resurgence of 3-way contests with 64% of wards contested by candidates from the three main parties. This increase in 3-way contestation was however, followed by a decline to 49.7% in the elections of 1978. Over the period 1956-1978 the pattern of party competition for the London Borough elections reveals an increasing trend of 3-way contestation to 1964, followed by a decreasing trend to 1971, a high point in 1974 and a decreasing trend from 1974 to 1978.

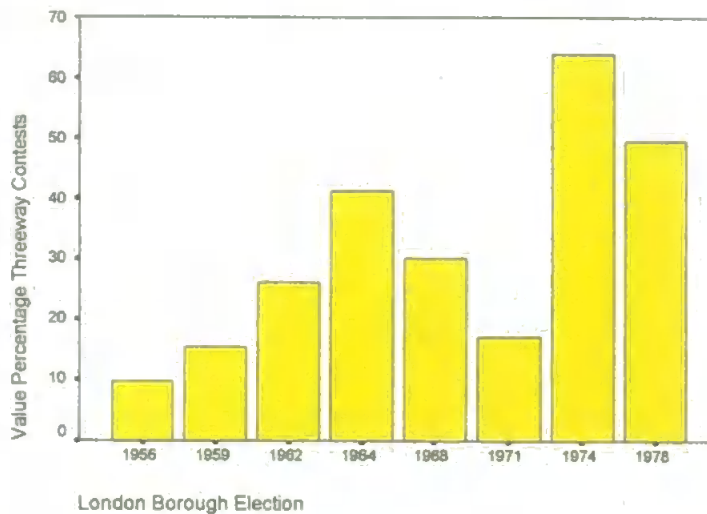
Clearly, the increasing trend of party politicisation of the London Borough elections from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s gives way to a fluctuating pattern in the 1970s rather than a continuing steady linear increase. The high points of party competition in 1964 and 1974 are therefore more period specific than part of any overall trend (see Figure1). The pattern of 2-way competition, that is contests between Conservative and

Labour, reflects the fluctuating ability of the Liberals to fight the London Borough elections in this period.

**Table 2: Structure of party competition,  
Inner-London Borough elections, 1956-1978**

London Borough Election	3 Way	2 Way
1956	9.8	77
1959	15.5	74.6
1962	26.1	66.2
1964	41.2	50.6
1968	30.2	62.0
1971	17.2	79.5
1974	64.0	29.2
1978	49.7	50.3

**Figure 1: Percentage three-way contests  
at Borough elections (Inner-London), 1956-1978.**



Indeed, the percentage of wards contested by the Liberals at the London Borough elections (Table 3) increased from 11.5% in 1956 to a high point of 45.1% in 1964. The total number of wards in the Inner London area had decreased from 355 in 1956 to 257 in 1964 with the reorganisation of local government in London and the Liberals were able to contest 116 wards in 1964, compared to 41 in 1956. However, between 1964 and 1971 there was a marked decline in the percentage of wards contested by the Liberals. By 1971 the Liberals were able to contest only 17.2% of the

244 wards. There was a revival in Liberal contestation in 1974 when 64.0% of 250 wards were Liberal contested, only to be followed by a decline to 49.0% in the 1978 round of elections when 286 seats were available. Over the period the number of wards contested by the Liberals increased. However, the pattern is one of increased Liberal contestation to a high point in 1964, followed by a decline, a revival in 1974 and a further decline. Liberal contestation rather than a steady linear increase is characterised more by fluctuation and period specific high points (see Figure 2).

**Table 3: Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote and contestation, Inner-London Borough elections, 1956-1978.**

London Borough Election	Liberal share of the vote	Liberal share of the vote contested wards only	Number of wards Liberal contested	Percentage wards Liberal contested	Total number of wards
1956	1.9	11.1	41	11.5	355
1959	2.9	12.9	56	15.8	355
1962	10.5	24.8	100	28	356
1964	5.9	11.1	116	45.1	257
1968	4.1	10.5	79	32.2	245
1971	1.6	7.3	42	17.2	244
1974	8.8	11.9	164	64.0	250
1978	4.4	8.6	142	49.0	286

**Figure 2: Percentage wards Liberal contested at Borough elections (Inner-London), 1956-1978.**

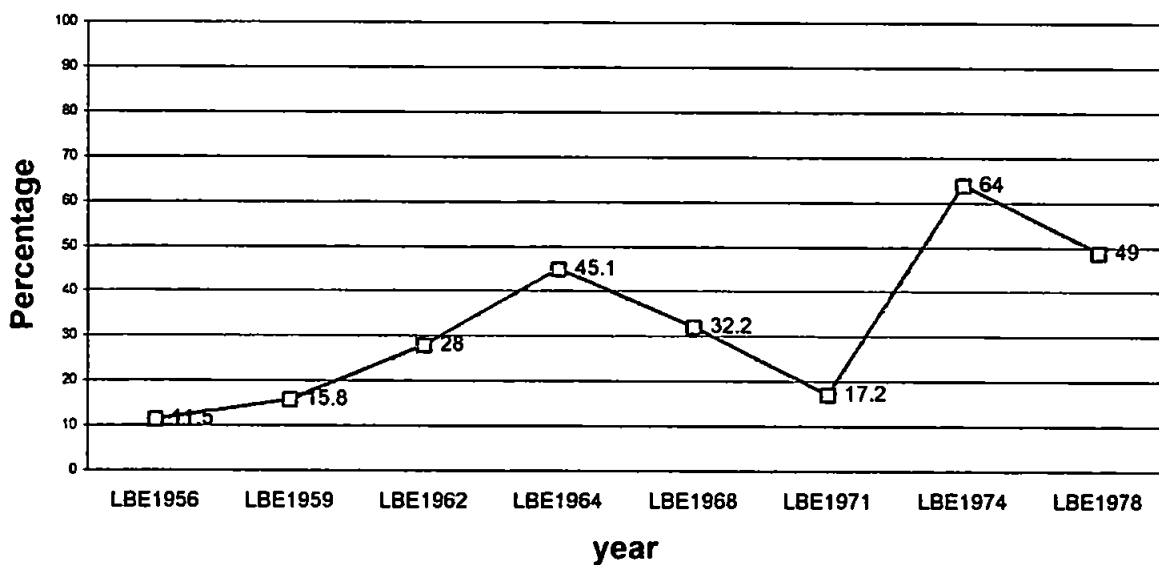


Table 4 reveals an increasing trend in the ratio of candidates to seats in the London Borough elections from 1956 to 1964. The first post-reorganisation election of 1964 had a candidate to seat ratio of 2.6 and was followed by decreasing ratios for 1968 and 1971, and then by an increase in contestation in 1974 and 1978. However, the overall pattern of candidate to seat ratios is characterised by fluctuation rather than any steady linear increase. The elections of 1964, 1974 and 1978 are high points in the extent of party politicisation as measured by ratios of candidate to seat. Changes in the level of contestation for seats when measured by the ratio of Liberal candidates to seats show a similar pattern of increase from 1956 to 1964, decrease between 1964 and 1971, increase in 1974 and decrease in 1978. The elections of 1964 and 1974 are once more high points in an otherwise fluctuating pattern of post-reorganisation Liberal contestation.

The number of Independent candidates contesting these Inner-London elections is also set out in Table 4. The number of Independent candidates declined from 24 in 1956 to 15 in 1964. However, their numbers increased to 21 in 1971. There was nevertheless, a steady decline thereafter through the 1970s indicating that Independents had to take on party labels and therefore to a degree of increased party politicisation of local elections.

London Borough Elections	Ratio candidate to seats	Independent candidates	Liberal candidates	Liberal Seat/Candidate ratio	Total seats	Total candidates
1956	2.0	24	154	0.1	1356	2756
1959	2.0	17	197	0.2	1336	2655
1962	2.2	15	374	0.3	1336	2969
1964	2.6	15	324	0.4	720	1843
1968	2.4	19	215	0.3	720	1747
1971	2.3	21	125	0.2	720	1649
1974	2.8	16	436	0.6	721	2020
1978	3.0	7	353	0.5	703	2123

Table 4: Candidate/seats ratios, Inner-London Borough elections, 1956-1978.

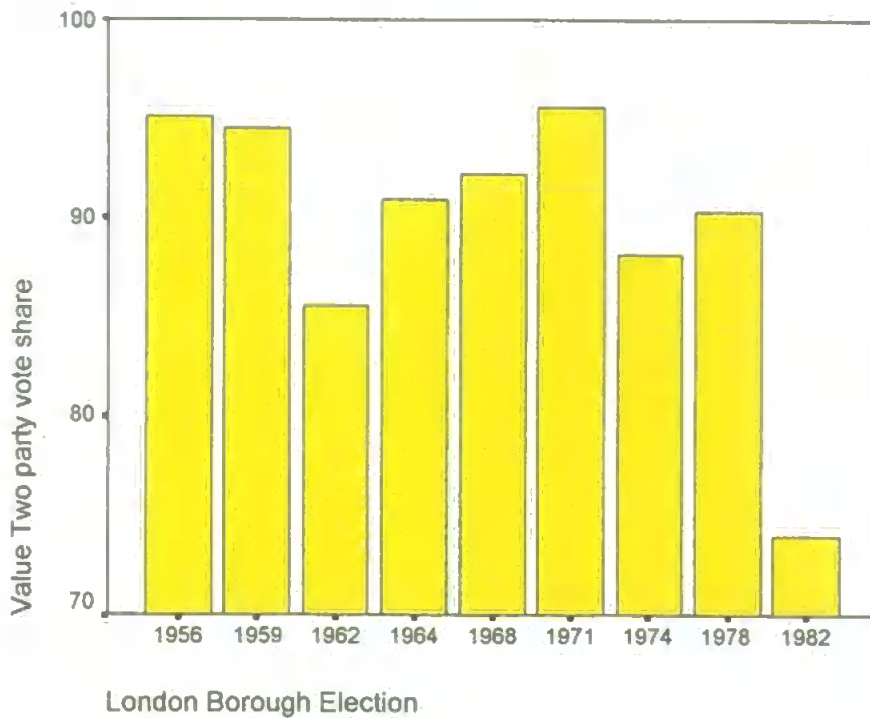
Local elections in this period are reputed to have provided an increasingly volatile electorate with the opportunity to express its newly found freedom from party ties. An indication of any weakening of party ties, partisan dealignment, can be revealed by the pattern of three party contestation (Table 2). The increasing trend in 3-way competition to a high point in 1964, was followed by a decrease in 1968 and 1971, a further high point in 1974, and then decreased.

Any change in party competition and weakening of party ties would of course have impacted upon voting patterns. The extent and rate that voters deserted the two-party system can be gauged from the pattern of any change in the two-party share of the vote over the period (see Table 5). The two-party share of the vote decreased from 95.1% in 1956 to a low point of 85.6% in 1962. However, through the 1960s the two-party share of the vote climbed and by 1971 had risen to 95.6%, falling back in 1974 to 88.2% and finally rising again in 1978 to 90.4%. The two-party share of the vote in the London Borough elections 1956-1978 therefore reveals a pattern of increasing desertion by the voters of the two main parties up to and including the 1962 election. This was followed by a fluctuating pattern from 1964 to 1978. The pattern thus does not reveal an inexorable decline in the 2-party vote share. Rather than a steady decline, the voting pattern points up 1962 and 1974 as election specific nadirs in the two-party share of the vote (see Figure 3).

**Table 5: Party percentage share of the total vote, Inner-London Borough elections 1956-1978.**

London Borough Elections	Conservative share of vote	Labour share of vote	Liberal share of vote	Independent and Other share of vote	Two-party share of vote
1956	42.5	52.6	1.9	3.0	95.1
1959	44.4	50.1	2.9	2.6	94.5
1962	35.7	49.9	10.5	3.9	85.6
1964	36.6	54.4	5.9	3.1	90.1
1968	56.5	35.8	4.1	3.5	92.3
1971	33.8	61.8	1.6	2.7	95.6
1974	34.3	53.9	8.8	3.1	88.2
1978	43.4	47.0	4.4	5.2	90.4

**Figure 3: Percentage two-party share of the total vote at Borough elections (Inner-London)  
1956-1982.**



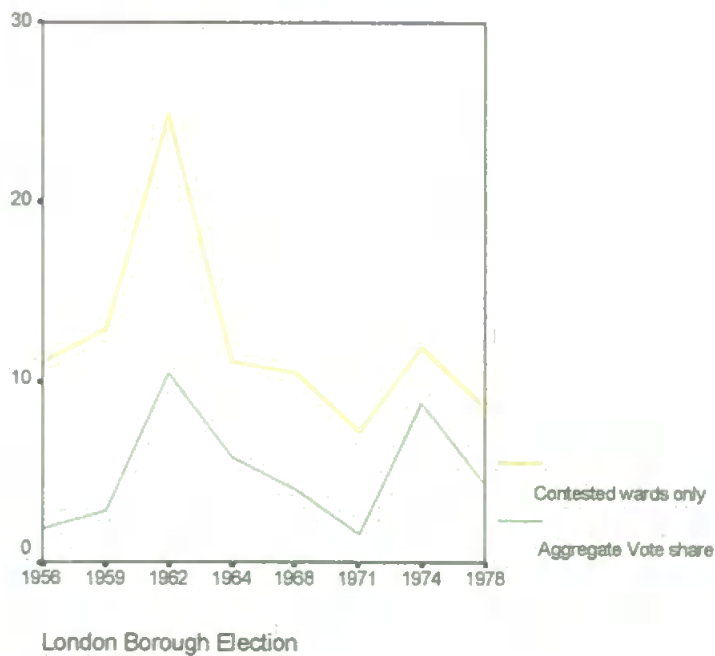
This pattern is reflected in the fortunes of the Liberal party in these elections. From 1956 to 1962 the party's share of the vote increased, only to fall away again, revive in 1974 and fall away again in 1978. Once more a pattern of increase was followed by one of fluctuation with the elections of 1962 and 1974 as period specific high points. However, a much less volatile pattern is revealed if the Liberal vote in contested wards only is considered (Table 6). The 1971 figure of 7.3 increased to 11.9 in 1974 and decreased to 8.6 in 1978. Thus, the percentage share of the Liberal vote calculated over all wards whether contested or not masks not only the extent of actual Liberal share of the vote, but also distorts any notion of the rate and pace voters were entering or exiting the Liberal camp. For example, at the 1962 diet of borough

election in Inner-London the Liberal Party mean percentage share of the total vote over all boroughs was 10.5%. Yet, the mean percentage share of the total vote for contested wards only was 24.8%, almost a quarter of the votes cast in these wards (see Figure 4).

**Table 6: Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote/ Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote contested wards only, Inner-London Borough elections, 1956-1978.**

London Borough Election	Liberal share of the vote	Liberal share of the vote contested wards only.
1956	1.9	11.1
1959	2.9	12.9
1962	10.5	24.8
1964	5.9	11.1
1968	4.1	10.5
1971	1.6	7.3
1974	8.8	11.9
1978	4.4	8.6

**Figure 4: Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote at Borough elections (Inner-London), 1956-1978.**



However, if party attachment was eroded in this period then levels of net volatility should have increased. In Table 7 the change in the distribution of the vote between



successive elections, using the 'Butler Swing' as a measure, has been outlined. There were landslide swings of 19.3% in 1968 and 24.4% in 1971. Furthermore, compared to the modest swings of 2.2% in 1959 and 1.8% in 1964, the swings of 4.2% and 8% in 1974 and 1978 respectively are major swings. The pattern from the 1964 elections to the 1971 election shows a trend towards ever increasing volatility. Although the pattern for the 1970s is one of fluctuation, albeit composed of a landslide swing in 1971 and major swings in 1974 and 1978, the pattern is not one of ever increasing volatility.

**Table 7: 'Butler Swing' index of volatility Inner-London Borough elections, 1959-1982.**

London Borough Elections	'Butler swing'
1959 (1956 and 1959)	+ 2.2
1962 (1959 and 1962)	-4.3
1964 (1962 and 1964)	-1.8
1968 (1964 and 1968)	+ 19.3
1971 (1968 and 1971)	- 24.4
1974 (1971 and 1974)	+ 4.2
1978 (1974 and 1978)	+ 8
1982 (1978 and 1982)	+ 0.2

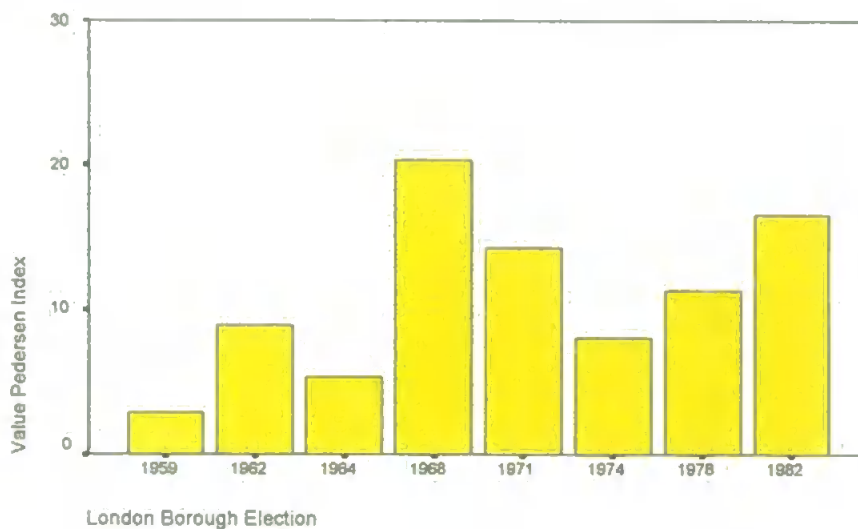
Net inter-election volatility in a multi-party system is perhaps more appropriately measured by use of Pedersen's index of dissimilarity, which takes into account the changes in the Liberal and Other shares of the vote as well as those of the Conservative and Labour shares. Table 8 sets out the trends in net volatility, that is the changes in the parties' shares of the vote in successive comparable London Borough elections. As the table shows, net volatility was low in the mid to late 1950s, a mere 2.9. However, net volatility had increased over three fold by the 1962 London Borough elections and, post-reorganisation, the index increased in 1968 to 20.4. Net volatility, however, fluctuated through the 1970s, firstly, declining to 14.3 for 1971 and then to 8.0 for 1974. This decline was followed by an increase at the 1978 elections to 11.3. Clearly the 1970s in general was not a period of increasing electoral

volatility at the London Borough elections. Electoral volatility in these elections, as measured by the Pedersen index, like that measured by the Butler swing, does not show the 1970s as a period of ever increasing volatility. Furthermore, the Pedersen index, like the Butler swing, points up the period 1964-1971 as characterised by a much more volatile electorate (Figure 5).

**Table 8: Pedersen index of dissimilarity, all boroughs aggregate at successive Inner-London Borough Elections, 1956-1982.**

Elections	Pedersen's Index
1956-1959	2.9
1959-1962	8.9
1962-1964	5.4
1964-1968	20.4
1968-1971	14.3
1971-1974	8
1974-1978	11.3
1978-1982	16.6

**Figure 5: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive Borough elections (Inner-London) 1959-1982.**



The indices of net volatility referred to above are of course derived from aggregate borough voting data. However, in Table 9 a Pedersen index for each individual borough of Inner London at successive borough elections from 1956-1982 is set out.

The Pedersen indices for successive elections before reorganisation have been calculated using electoral data from the component Metropolitan Boroughs that went to make up each of the 12 new London Boroughs of Inner London at the 1964 borough elections. For example, in the case of Camden the pre-1964 electoral data of its components (Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras) have been aggregated. It is clear from Table 9 that in each of the individual boroughs the Pedersen index does not show the 1970s as a period of ever increasing net volatility. From a landslide highpoint at the 1971 elections the indices fall dramatically in each borough at the 1974 elections, then rise again at the 1978 elections. Furthermore, the Pedersen indices for each individual borough also point up the 1964-1971 period as being characterised by a much more volatile electorate.

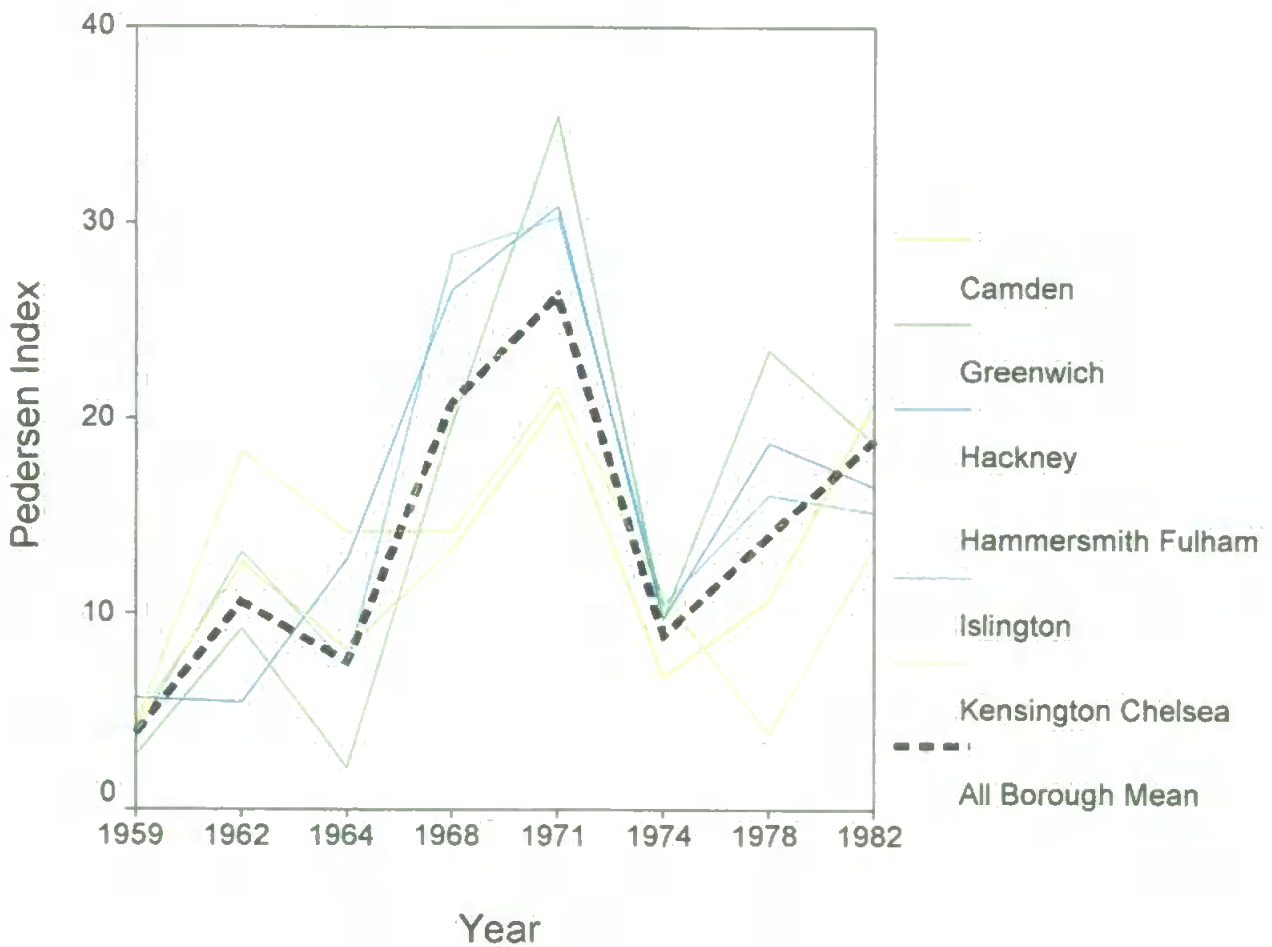
**Table 9: Pedersen index of dissimilarity, individual boroughs at successive Inner-London Borough elections, 1959-1982.**

Borough	1955-59	1959-62	1962-64	1964-68	1968-71	1971-74	1974-78	1978-82
Camden	4.4	12.7	8.2	13.3	20.9	6.8	10.7	20.9
Greenwich	2.8	9.3	2.2	19.8	35.4	9.8	23.5	18.8
Hackney	5.7	5.5	12.8	26.6	30.9	9.8	18.8	16.5
Hammersmith & Fulham	3.7	4.4	2.8	23.3	23.1	6.0	14.4	15.8
Islington	3.9	13.2	7.4	28.4	30.3	10.5	16.1	15.2
Kensington & Chelsea	4.4	18.3	14.2	14.2	21.6	11.0	3.9	13.5
Lambeth	2.2	10.6	7.3	22.8	28.5	7.7	8.5	23.9
Lewisham	2.8	13.6	8.6	24.8	26.9	8.4	11.8	21.9
Southwark	3.0	5.3	5.7	26.5	30.6	10.6	14.6	23.5
Tower Hamlets	8.5	10.0	7.7	11.9	21.1	11.8	19.8	26.8
Wandsworth	1.9	15.6	7.1	21.2	25.4	10.0	15.5	13.5
Westminster	3.4	8.8	6.2	16.5	21.1	4.1	10.0	16.4

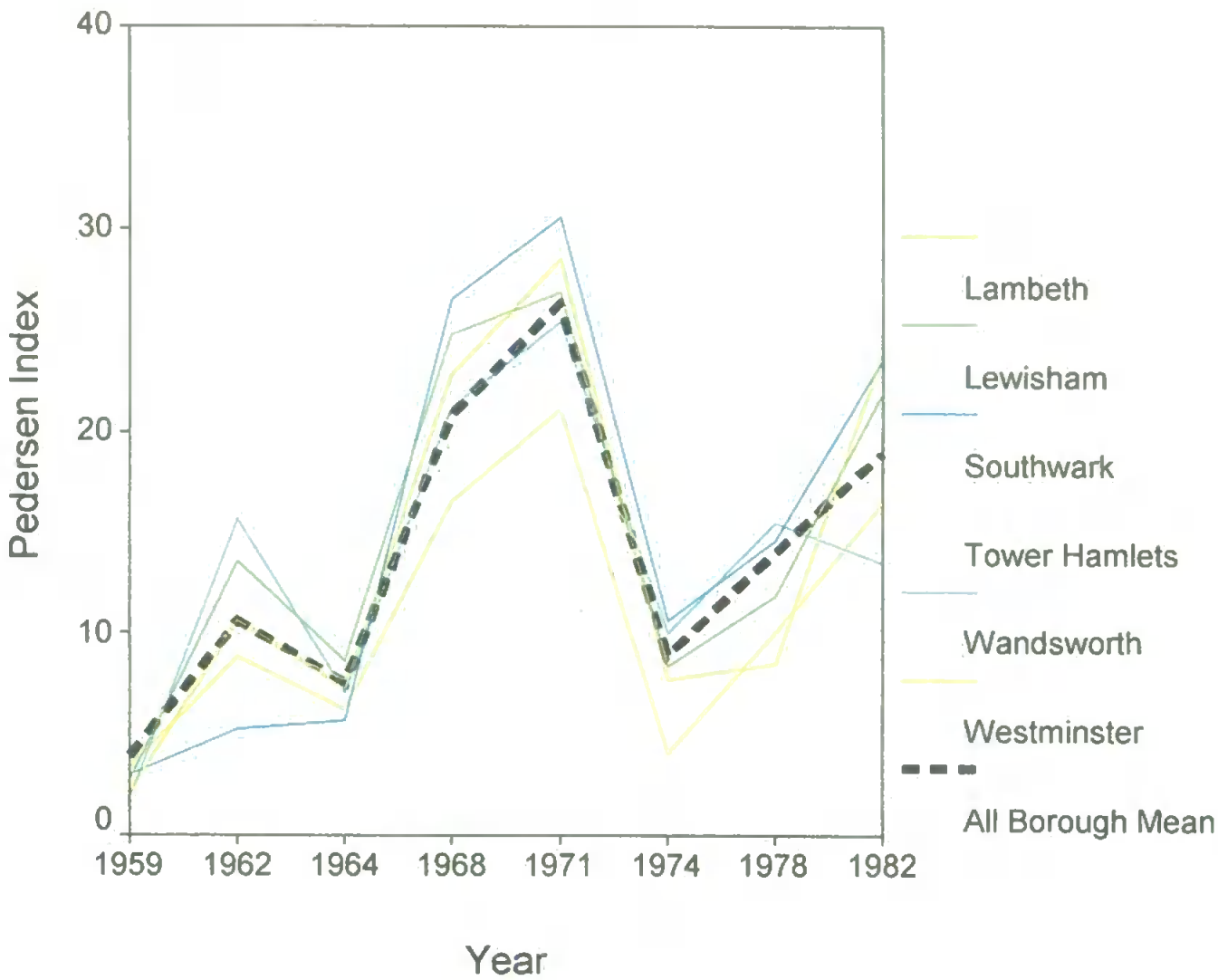
There are general trends in net volatility across the twelve boroughs of Inner-London and the changes in the distribution of the vote between the parties at successive borough elections in individual boroughs ostensibly rise and fall in unison across time. However, on closer inspection it is apparent that there is both variance in the

degree of net volatility at successive elections between boroughs at the same elections, and in the timing of changes in the distribution of the vote. In figures 6 and 7, mean net volatility for all the twelve boroughs over successive borough elections from 1955 to 1982 has been plotted against the trends in net volatility for individual boroughs. Clearly, even at the borough aggregate level of analysis there is evidence of variance in the rate and extent of erosion of party attachments.

**Figure 6: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive Borough elections (Inner-London) 1959-1982, all boroughs mean contrasted with each individual borough's net volatility, Camden to Kensington.**



**Figure 7: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive Borough elections (Inner-London) 1959-1982, all boroughs mean contrasted with each individual borough's net volatility, Lambeth to Westminster.**



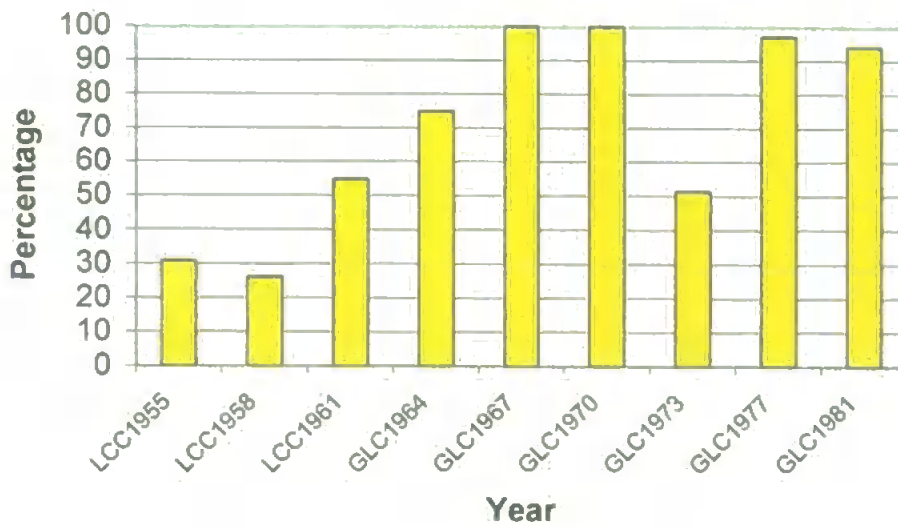
In section 4.2, contrary to orthodox views of electoral behaviour that have characterised the 1960s as a period of electoral stability and the 1970s as one of increasing electoral volatility, voting behaviour at the London Borough elections has been shown to be much more volatile in the 1960s than in the 1970s. Furthermore, it has also been shown that the 1970s cannot be characterised as a period of increasing net electoral volatility.

#### **4.3:LCC and GLC elections (Inner-London only)**

An examination of trends in local government voting and party competition at the LCC and GLC (Inner London only) elections in the period 1959-1979 will be examined and in section 4.4 below the voting trends at borough level and these upper-tier elections will be contrasted with electoral trends at inner-London parliamentary elections.

Table 10 profiles the changing nature of party competition at LCC and GLC (Inner London only) elections. Three-way contests show an increasing trend from 31% of the LCC electoral divisions in 1955 to 54.8% of the electoral divisions in 1961. At the first three post-reorganisation elections for the GLC the trend of increase in 3-way contestation continued, climbing to 75% of the electoral divisions in 1964, and then to 100% at the 1967 and 1970 elections. At the 1973 GLC election 3-way competition fell to 51.4% of the electoral divisions, however, at the 1977 GLC election 3-way contestation increased to 97.0%. This increase was followed by a decline to 94% of the electoral divisions at the 1981 GLC election (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage three-way competition at LCC/GLC (Inner-London) elections 1955-1981.



Over the whole period from 1955 to 1981 there was an increasing trend in the party politicisation of the LCC and GLC elections that reflected the Liberal Party's ability to contest a greater number of the electoral divisions at the upper-tier local elections in London. In 1955 the Liberal Party contested in only 13 of the 42 LCC electoral divisions and fielded 37 candidates. At the 1958 LCC election the number of candidates fielded by the Liberals was reduced to 30 and they contested only 11 of the 42 divisions. At the 1961 LCC election the Liberal Party were able to increase the number of candidates fielded to 69 and contest 23 of the 42 divisions. It was, however, at the first post-reorganisation election to the GLC in 1964 and thereafter that there was a marked increase in the number of electoral divisions contested by the Liberal Party. In 1967 and 1970 the Liberals were able to contest all forty seats of the now 12 electoral divisions in the Inner London area. The number of electoral divisions of the GLC in Inner London, which had been 12 for the first three elections

of 1964, 1967 and 1970, was increased to 35 divisions for the 1973, 1977 and 1981 elections. The original electoral divisions had each corresponded to one London Borough with the City of London included within Westminster, and each division had returned between two and four councillors. From 1973 to 1981 the electoral divisions were coterminous with a Parliamentary constituency and returned one member. There was a decline in the number of Liberal candidates and hence divisions contested at the 1973 GLC election, when the party put forward a candidate in just 18 of the 35 electoral divisions. However, the party was able to contest 34 of the divisions in 1977 and 33 in 1981.

**Table 10: Structure of party competition at LCC and GLC (Inner London) elections, 1955-1981.**

Election	% 3-way contests	% 2-way contests	Electoral divisions	Divisions Liberal Party contested
1955 LCC	31	69	42	13
1958 LCC	26.2	73.8	42	11
1961 LCC	54.8	45.2	42	23
1964 GLC	75.0	25.0	12	9
1967 GLC	100	0.0	12	12
1970 GLC	100	0.0	12	12
1973 GLC	51.4	48.6	35	18
1977 GLC	97.0	3.0	35	34
1981 GLC	94.0	6.0	35	33

Clearly there had been a steady increase in the party politicisation of the upper-tier local authority elections in London between 1955 and 1981. The ratio of candidates to seats at the LCC and GLC (Inner London only) elections is set out in Table 11. There was an increasing trend in the ratio of candidates to seats at these elections over this period. The candidate to seat ratio of 2.4 in 1958 rose more than twofold to 5.9 by 1981, albeit with a decline in 1973 in an otherwise steady increase. Similarly, changes in the level of contestation for seats when measured by the ratio of Liberal Party candidates show a steady increase over the period from a 0.2 Liberal candidate to seat ratio in 1958 to 0.9 ratio in 1981, with a marked decline from the overall trend in 1973. The number of Independent candidates contesting at LCC and GLC level

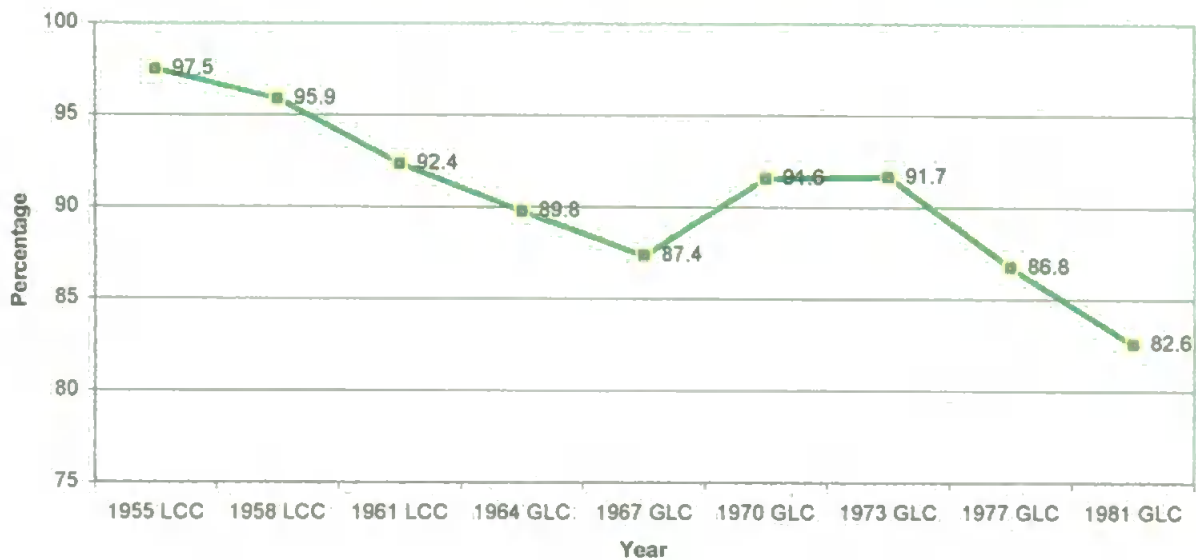
elections though never large nevertheless declined over the period. There was however a steady increase in contestation by candidates from minor parties at these elections through the 1960s

**Table 11 Candidate/seat ratio LCC and GLC (Inner London) elections, 1955-1981.**

Election	Seats	Total number of candidates	Cand/seat ratio	Total Liberal Candidates	Liberal cand/seat ratio	Number Independent candidates	Number Minor Party Candidates
1955 LCC	126	315	2.5	37	0.3	4	21
1958 LCC	126	300	2.4	30	0.2	7	6
1961 LCC	126	340	2.7	69	0.5	2	9
1964 GLC	40	132	3.3	29	0.7	5	16
1967 GLC	40	169	4.2	40	1.0	4	34
1970 GLC	40	205	5.1	40	1.0	3	72
1973 GLC	35	127	3.6	19	0.5	5	35
1977 GLC	35	191	5.5	34	0.9	0	88
1981 GLC	35	208	5.9	33	0.9	2	109

The increasing trend in 3-way competition at the LCC and GLC (Inner London only) elections is an indication of the weakening of party ties, partisan dealignment, throughout the period. However, the extent and rate that voters deserted the two-party system at these upper-tier authority elections can be gauged from the pattern of any change in the two-party share of the vote. The two-party share of the vote at the LCC elections of 1955, 1958 and 1961, and the GLC (Inner London only) elections of 1964 through 1981, is shown in Table 12. The two-party share of the vote at the LCC and GLC (Inner London only) elections shows a decline from 97.5% in 1955 to 87.4% in 1967. This pattern of decline is reversed most notably at the 1970 and 1973 elections when the two-party share of the total vote rose to 91.6% and 91.7% respectively. The two party share of the vote declined to 86.8% in 1977 and down to 81.6% in 1981.

**FIGURE 9: Percentage two-party share of the total vote at Inner-London LCC/GLC elections, 1955-1981.**



Thus the pattern for the 1970s is one of fluctuation rather than a linear trend of decline (Figure 9). This pattern is reflected in the fluctuations in the Liberal share of the vote as ties to the two major parties weaken and strengthen. However, the extent of the actual Liberal share of the vote and its fluctuations can be illustrated best when the Liberal share of the vote in contested divisions only is examined, as in Table 13.

**Table 12: Party percentage share of the total vote, LCC and GLC (Inner London) elections, 1955-1981.**

Election	Conservative % share	Labour % share	Liberal % share	Independent + Other % share	Two-party % share
1955 LCC	47.2	50.3	1.4	1.1	97.5
1958 LCC	37.5	58.4	3.0	1.0	95.9
1961 LCC	42.0	50.4	6.0	1.7	92.4
1964 GLC	36.0	53.8	4.8	5.5	89.8
1967 GLC	46.7	40.7	7.2	5.4	87.4
1970 GLC	41.5	50.1	2.9	5.4	91.6
1973 GLC	32.2	59.5	6.2	2.1	91.7
1977 GLC	45.5	41.3	5.0	8.3	86.8
1981 GLC	33.2	49.4	11.0	6.5	82.6

**Table 13: Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote and Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote in contested only, LCC/GLC (Inner-London) elections, 1955-1981.**

Election	Liberal % share of the total vote all divisions	Liberal % share of the total vote contested divisions only
1955 LCC	1.4	4.7
1958 LCC	3.0	10.9
1961 LCC	6.0	10.1
1964 GLC	4.8	6.7
1967 GLC	7.2	7.2
1970 GLC	2.9	2.9
1973 GLC	6.2	9.0
1977 GLC	5.0	5.1
1981 GLC	11.0	11.5

Theories of partisan dealignment predict that electoral volatility should increase if party attachments have declined. Table 14 sets out the change in the distribution of the vote between successive pairs of comparable elections; that is net volatility as measured by the 'Butler Swing'. The index of net volatility at comparable successive LCC and GLC (Inner London only) elections records major swings throughout the period. These measures indicate that LCC and GLC elections in this period are characterised by high levels of net volatility and that the GLC (Inner London only) elections of the 1970s show an increasing trend in net volatility: 7.3 in 1970, 9.4 in 1973 and 15.8 in 1977. However the index for 1981 shows a decline in this trend.

**Table 14: 'Butler Swing' index of volatility, LCC/GLC (Inner London) elections, 1958-1981.**

Election (elections compared)	'Butler Swing'
1958 (1955 & 1958)	- 8.9
1961 (1958 & 1961)	+ 6.3
1964 (1961 & 1964)	-4.7
1967 (1964 & 1967)	+11.9
1970 (1967 & 1970)	-7.3
1973 (1970 & 1973)	-9.4
1977 (1973 & 1977)	+ 15.8
1981 (1977 & 1981)	- 10.2

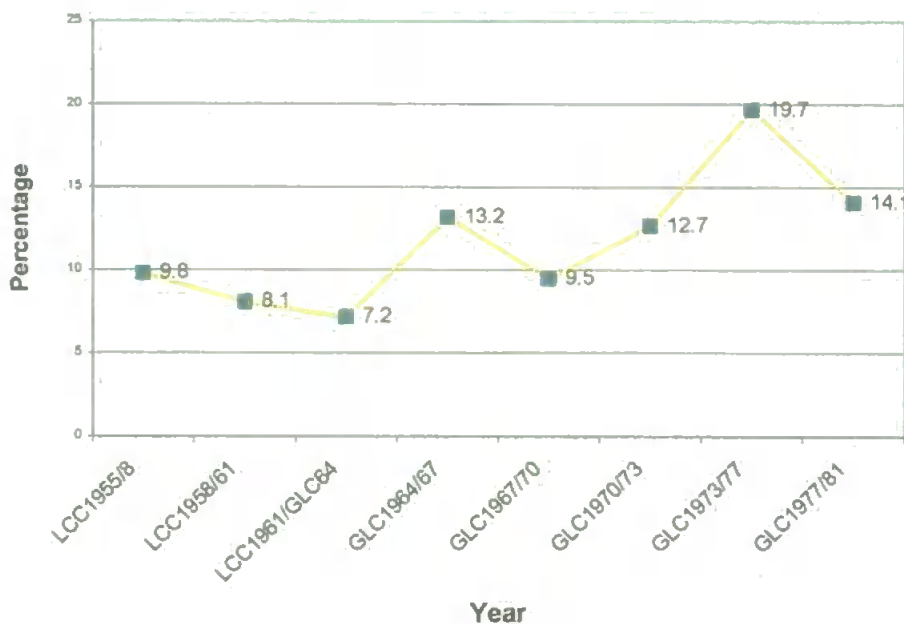
Furthermore, measures of net inter-election volatility by use of the Pedersen index of dissimilarity, as outlined in Table 15, also show the GLC elections in the 1970s as characterised by an increasing volatility and hence partisan dealignment. Although the

elections to the LCC and GLC (Inner London only) throughout the period are characterised by high electoral volatility as measured by the Pedersen index, the elections of 1970, 1973, 1977 record an increasing trend in net volatility through the 1970s (Figure 10). This trend of increasing net volatility through the 1970s is shown clearly at the lower level of aggregation in Table 16 that outlines the Pedersen index of net volatility for individual boroughs at the GLC elections 1964-1981 in Inner London. However, this trend is reversed at the 1981 elections when the index decline.

**Table 15: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive LCC/GLC (Inner London) elections, 1958-1981.**

Elections	Pedersen Index
1955 and 1958 LCC	9.8
1958 and 1961 LCC	8.1
1961 and 1964	7.2
1964 and 1967 GLC	13.2
1967 and 1970 GLC	9.5
1970 and 1973 GLC	12.7
1973 and 1977 GLC	19.7
1977 and 1981 GLC	14.1

**Figure 10: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive LCC/GLC elections (Inner-London) 1958-1981**



**Table 16 Pedersen index of dissimilarity for individual boroughs at successive GLC (Inner-London) elections 1964-1981.**

Borough	1964-67	1967-70	1970-73	1973-77	1977-1981
Camden	8.8	6.7	13.2	16.6	12.7
Greenwich	16.8	8.8	12.0	19.6	16.8
Hackney	16.7	16.3	11.1	24.3	15.6
Hammersmith	15.1	8.6	10.4	21.7	14.0
Islington	22.6	12.6	15.4	25.2	18.2
Kensington& Chelsea	8.5	6.5	11.9	14.3	12.9
Lambeth	12.5	9.4	15.2	19.8	9.5
Lewisham	15.9	7.6	14.5	19.5	18.6
Southwark	16.4	9.4	12.6	19.9	14.7
Tower Hamlets	15.2	12.7	14.0	32.2	22.3
Wandsworth	13.7	10.5	12.1	20.8	14.9
Westminster	10.1	7.0	13.5	15.0	12.7

#### **4.4: Borough, LCC/GLC and parliamentary voting behaviour Inner-London**

Table 17 sets out the distribution of the vote at each parliamentary election 1955-

1979, the two-party share of the vote, the number of constituencies, the number of constituencies contested by Liberal candidates and the percentage share of the vote for the Liberal Party in contested constituencies only.

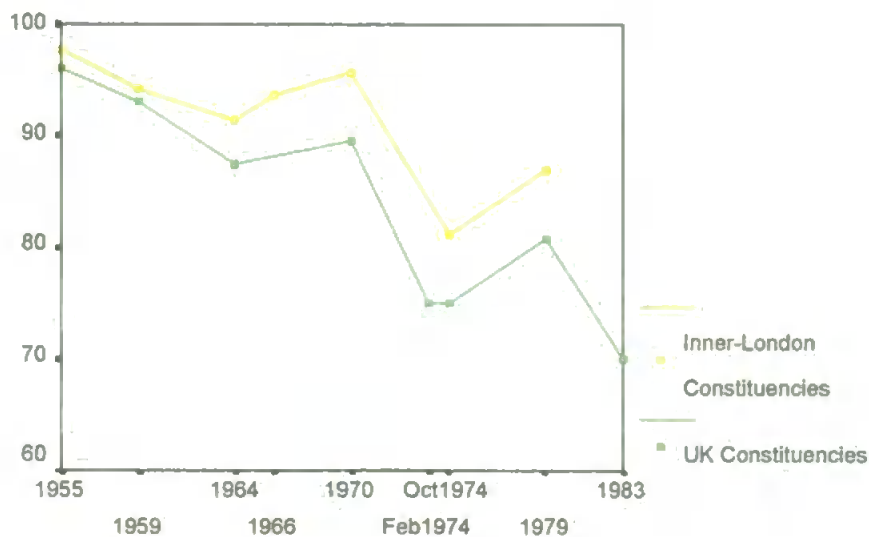
**Table 17: Party percentage share of the total vote and Liberal Party contestation at General Elections, Inner London Constituencies, 1955-1979.**

Election	Con%	Lab%	Lib%	Oth%	2-party%	Seats	Number Liberal contested	Lib% contested only
1955	44.8	53.0	1.5	0.7	97.8	42	8	7.6
1959	45.1	49.2	4.8	0.9	94.3	42	16	11.5
1964	39.3	52.1	7.5	1.1	91.4	42	24	12.3
1966	36.9	56.7	5.2	1.2	93.6	42	20	10.2
1970	42.0	53.7	3.4	1.0	95.7	42	17	7.7
1974	32.9	48.4	18.1	2.3	81.3	35	34	18
1974	31.4	52.9	13.8	1.9	84.3	35	35	13.8
1979	39.8	47.2	9.6	3.3	87.0	35	35	9.6

The weakening of support for the two major parties over the 1959-1979 period at parliamentary elections in the Inner London constituencies is clearly evidenced by the fall in the two-party share of the vote. However, there is no clear linear trend in the weakening of party support, rather a fluctuating pattern. Although the two-party share of the vote fell at the 1964 election to 91.4%, it climbed in 1966 and, at the 1970

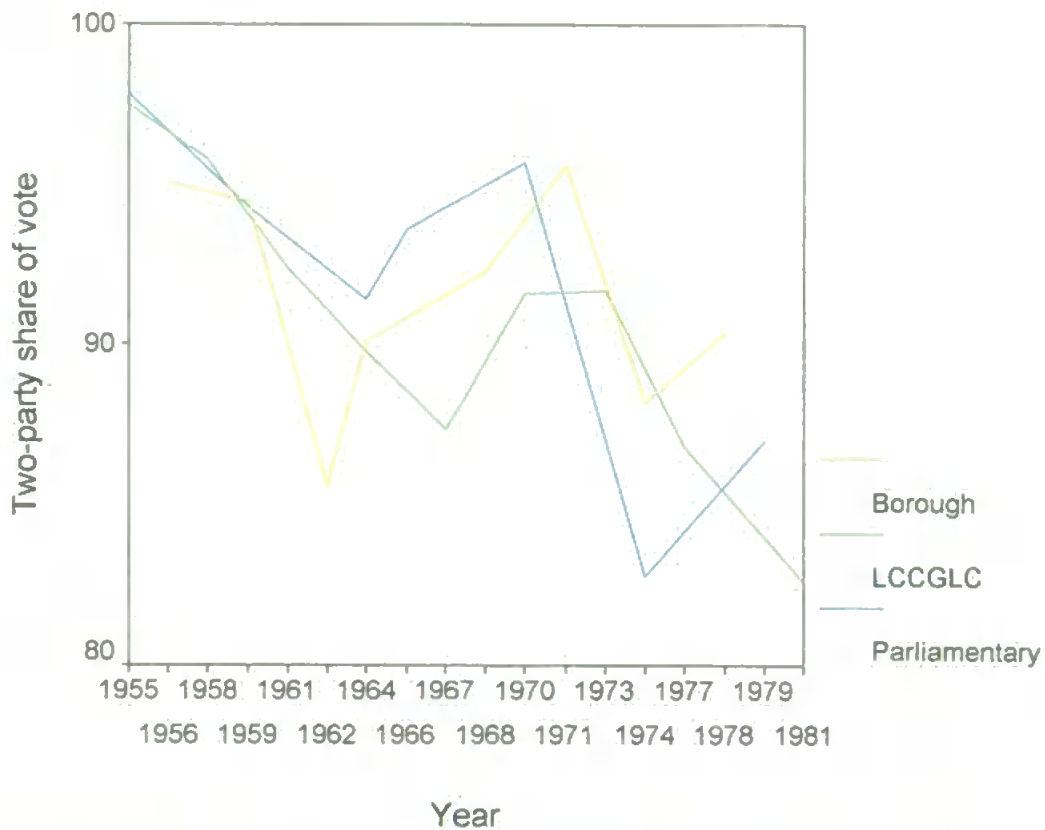
election surpassed its 1959 level. At the February 1974 election the two-party share of the vote plummeted to its lowest for the period, falling to 81.3%. However, at the October 1974 election it rose to 84.3%, and at the 1979 election to 87%. The 1970s then are characterised by a fluctuating pattern in the two-party share of the vote, with period specific lows at the two 1974 elections rather than any inexorable decline. Furthermore, the increase in the two-party share of the vote in 1966 and 1970 reflects the inability of the Liberals to field candidates. Clearly, at the two 1974 elections and at the 1979 election the electorate in virtually all the constituencies of Inner London were given the opportunity to express any new found freedom from party ties by virtue of the presence of a Liberal candidate. However the increase in the two-party share of the vote, from its low at the February 1974 election to its level in 1979, and the decreasing Liberal share of the vote, do not indicate a trend in the weakening party ties. Fluctuation, rather than any linear decline in party attachments as measured by the two-party share of the vote, characterises parliamentary elections in Inner London 1959-1979 (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Two-party share of the total vote UK Parliamentary constituencies and Inner-London constituencies at General Elections, 1955-1983.**



In Figure 12 trends in the two-party share of the vote are contrasted. Clearly, irrespective of differences of timing of elections, there is variance between upper-and lower tier electoral behaviour in terms of the degree of partisan dealignment. Similarly, there is variance in the degree of partisan dealignment between local authority level voting and parliamentary level voting in Inner-London.

**Figure 12: Two-party share of the vote at Borough, LCC/GLC and Parliamentary elections, (Inner-London), 1955-1981.**



Similarly the indices of net volatility for successive elections, as measured by the Pedersen index, do not show the 1970s as a period of increasing volatility at these Inner London parliamentary elections (see Figure 13). In 1970 the index recorded a level of 5.1, then a peak in net volatility occurred at the February 1974 election. However, this peak of 15.2 declined to 5.4 at the October 1974 election and rose again to 9.9 at the 1979 election. Rather than steady increase, net volatility in the 1970s is characterised by periodic shift.

**Figure 13: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at Borough, LCC/GLC and Parliamentary elections (Inner-London) 1958-1982 ( February 1974 general election only).**



Indeed, if the trends in changes in the distribution of the vote between successive elections at borough, upper-tier and parliamentary constituencies in Inner-London over the period are compared it is clear, irrespective of differences in electoral cycles that there were substantial differences in electoral behaviour at different types of elections (Figure 13). Electoral behaviour at the borough level in the 1960s and early 1970s was much more volatile than at upper-tier local elections and both were more volatile than parliamentary electoral volatility. However, there is a marked change from the early 1970s as electoral behaviour at upper-tier local elections and parliamentary level elections become increasingly volatile and that of borough elections diminishes somewhat.

#### **4.5: Summary of Inner-London voting behaviour at local authority aggregate level, and comparison with Inner-London parliamentary constituency voting behaviour.**

We are now in a position to review the findings of this study of electoral trends at local government elections in Inner London 1959-1979. Over the 1959-1979 period local government elections in Inner London at both borough and LCC/GLC level underwent an increase in party politicisation. At both levels 3-way competition increased. However, the increase in 3-way competition was far greater at the upper-tier authority elections to the LCC and GLC than at the lower-tier borough council elections. At the borough council electoral level a steady increase in 3-way competition from the late 1950s through to the mid-1960s gave way to a fluctuating pattern of decline and then resurgence. In contrast, at the upper-tier authority level of elections to the LCC and GLC, 3-way competition in Inner London increased to a much higher level as the Liberals contested virtually all divisions at elections from 1964 onwards. Three-way competition, apart from the 1973 GLC election when it declined to 51.4%, remained high, at 97% and 94% in 1977 and 1981 respectively. Though the pattern of 3-way competition at the upper-tier authority level fluctuated in the 1970s its peaks and troughs were not as extreme as those at the borough council level elections. Clearly this was a function of the fewer number of candidates that the Liberals needed to field at the upper-tier elections.

Over the 1959-1979 period there was an increasing candidate to seat ratio (candidates from all parties) and a decline in Independent candidates at both levels of authority elections that points up the increasing party politicisation of local government elections in Inner London. Although the Liberal candidate to seat ratio increased over the 1959-1979 period at both levels of authority elections, at the 1968

and 1971 borough elections, and the 1973 GLC election the Liberal candidate to seat ratio declined. Perhaps the increased difficulty for the Liberals to field candidates at the borough council electoral level had by 1973 impacted at the upper-tier level. Indeed, at the 1970 parliamentary election the Liberals had only been able to contest 17 of the 42 Inner-London constituencies.

Although the voting patterns at both levels of authority elections show a weakening of party ties over the 1959-1979 period, there was a much steadier decline in the two-party share of the vote at the LCC/GLC level, albeit with slight resurgences in 1973 and 1977. In contrast, at the borough council elections, a much more fluctuating pattern prevailed. At this level the two-party vote does not show an inexorable pattern of decline in the 1970s, rather a pattern of election specific nadirs in the two-party share of the vote. Thus, at both levels of authority elections the two-party share of the vote does not indicate a linear decline in party attachments. However, the variance between upper- and lower tier voting behaviour points towards the significance of context in the calculus of the local electoral voter.

The difference between the patterns of net volatility at the upper and lower tier elections is perhaps explained in part by the greater degree of Liberal contestation at the LCC/GLC elections than at the borough council elections in the 1970s. However, this does indicate a variance in voting behaviour between upper- and lower tier elections that points towards electoral context. Furthermore, the variance between borough council, upper- tier, and parliamentary electoral levels of volatility adds weight to the significance of context in voting behaviour. Moreover, despite general trends there is much variance between the electoral behaviour of individual boroughs.

The findings of this study of local authority voting in Inner London indicate that local elections in the 1959-1979 period can be characterised by increased party politicisation and a weakening of party attachments. However, the loosening of party attachments occurred in period specific phases and not in a smooth and uniform decline. There are marked differences in the rate and extent that the voters deserted the two major parties at the upper and lower tier authority elections as indicated by their respective patterns of net volatility. Nevertheless, all indicators show patterns of trendless fluctuation rather than linear trends. Thus, at the local government elections and parliamentary elections in Inner London 1959-1979 there was not any inexorable decline in party attachments. However, there is evidence of a substantial variance in voting behaviour between different tiers of local authority elections, and between individual boroughs at both levels of local elections. Moreover, there is evidence of substantial variance between local authority voting behaviour and parliamentary constituency voting behaviour in Inner-London.

Clearly, there are patterns of electoral behaviour at the local authority level that complement the view that the 1970s was a period of trendless fluctuation in partisan dealignment. However, even if the disparity in electoral cycles of different levels of local authorities, and between the local electoral and the parliamentary electoral cycles is taken into account, there are significant differences between all levels in the occurrence of periods of partisan dealignment and of the extent and rate at which the voter deserted the two- party system. It is evident that even at this level aggregation of voting data the findings of this study are at variance with accepted views of British politics in the 1960s and 1970s.

#### **4.6: Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972, and Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979.**

Table 18 profiles the changing nature of party competition in the Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972, and the Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979 (Figure 14). Three-way contests show a fluctuating pattern through the 1960s and early 1970s. Three-way competition increased through the early 1960s to reach 56.4% of all contests at the 1963 Birmingham County Borough elections. However, the level of three-way competition steadily declined through the mid-1960s and into the early 1970s. The decline in three-way competition was reversed at the 1972 elections and the 1970s saw a dramatic increase in three-way competition. At the first post-reorganisation elections to the new Birmingham District Council 54.8% of contests featured candidates from the three major parties. At the 1975 Birmingham District Council elections 100% of contests featured candidates from the three main parties, and at the 1976 elections 85.7% of contests were three-way. The 1976 elections however, marked the beginning of a decline in three-way competition. By 1978 only 45.2% of contests were three-way, and at the 1979 Birmingham District Council elections only 40.5% featured candidates from the three major parties contesting together. Clearly the 1970s, from 1972 onwards saw increased party politicisation of these elections. However, rather than a steady linear increase in party competition, the 1970s are characterised by a steady increase to a high point in 1975 followed by a marked decline. The high points of party competition in 1963, 1973, 1975 and 1976 are period specific rather than any overall trend. Indeed, the pattern of two-way competition, that is contests between Labour and Conservative candidates, points up the fluctuating ability of the Liberals to contest the Birmingham County Borough and Birmingham District Council elections.

Table 18: Structure of party competition, Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972, and Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979.

Election	3-way	2-way
1959	42.1	57.9
1960	28.9	71.1
1961	39.5	60.5
1962	51.3	43.6
1963	56.4	43.6
1964	53.8	46.2
1965	51.3	48.7
1966	41.0	59.0
1967	46.2	53.8
1968	51.3	48.7
1969	43.6	56.4
1970	38.5	61.5
1971	30.8	69.2
1972	38.5	61.5
1973 all out election	54.8	45.2
1975	100	
1976	85.7	14.3
1978	45.2	54.8
1979	40.5	59.5

FIGURE 14 : Percentage three-way contests Birmingham County Borough and Birmingham District Council elections 1959-1979.

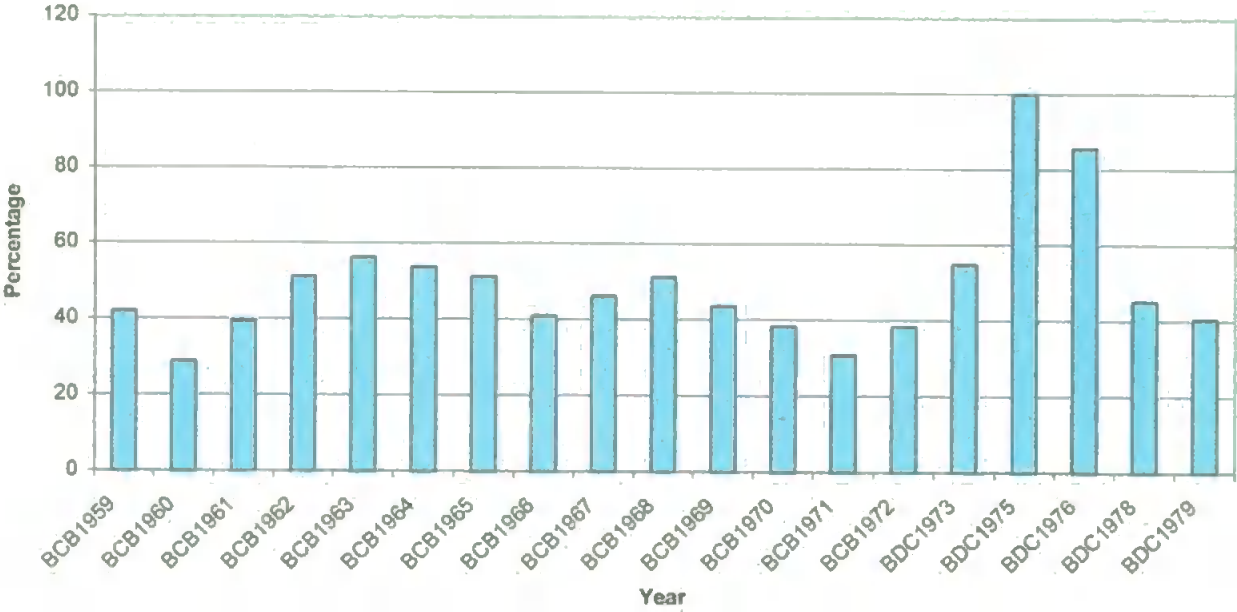
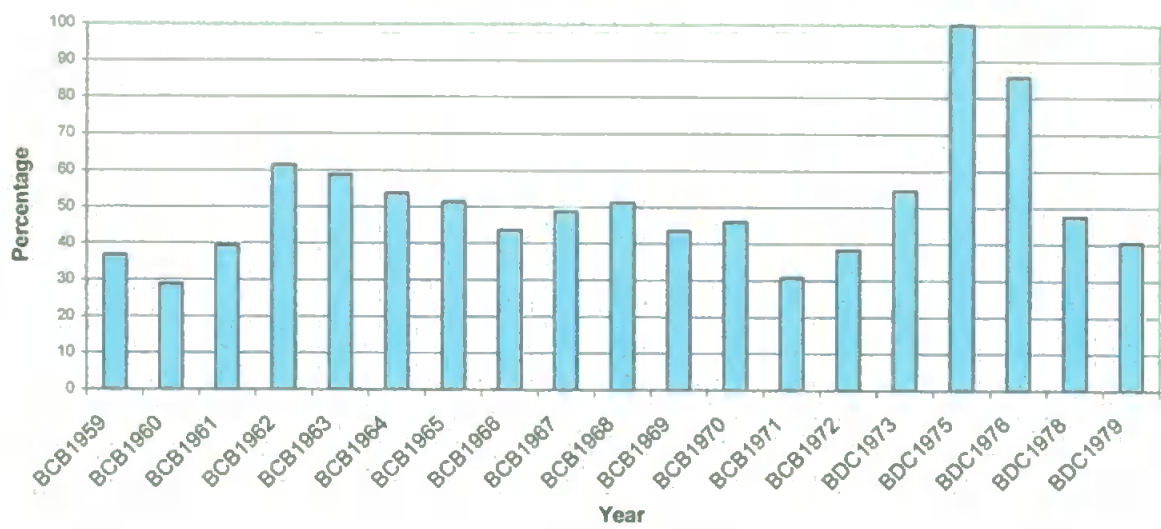


Figure 15 shows the percentage of wards contested by the Liberals at the Birmingham County Borough elections and subsequent Birmingham District Council elections. Overall there are period specific highpoints in the Liberal's ability to contest these

elections rather than any steady linear increase. The highpoint of 1962 when the Liberals were able to contest 24 of the 39 wards was followed by steady decline until a resurgence in the 1970s to a highpoint of contesting all 42 wards in 1975. Thereafter, however, the pattern is one of steady decline. Liberal contestation, rather than a steady linear increase, is characterised by period specific highpoints

**FIGURE 15: Percentage wards Liberal Party contested at Birmingham County Borough and Birmingham District Council elections, 1959-1979.**



The ratio of candidates to seats at these elections is set out in Table 19. The overall pattern of candidate to seat ratios for these elections is characterised by fluctuation and period specific highpoints rather than any steady linear increase. The elections of 1964 and 1975 are highpoints in the extent of party politicisation as measured by ratios of candidates to seats. Changes in the level of contestation for seats when measured by the ratio of Liberal candidates to seats show a similar pattern of fluctuation and period specific highpoints. A fluctuating pattern of Liberal candidate to seat ratios, rather than a steady linear increase characterised the elections in this period. The marked increase in Liberal contestation at the 1975 election, when the

Liberals contested every seat, was however, followed by a sharp decline in the Liberal candidate seat ratios. Thus, party politicisation, as measured by candidate to seat ratios, does not indicate that the Birmingham elections in the 1970s were characterised by a linear increase in party competition.

**Table 19: Candidate /seat ratios at Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972,and Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979.**

Election	Candidate/ seat ratio	Independent Candidates	Liberal candidates	Liberal candidate/ seat ratio	Total No. seats	Total No. candidates
1959	2.8	0	14	0.4	38	105
1960	2.6	0	13	0.3	39	102
1961	2.8	2	16	0.4	38	108
1962	2.9	1	25	0.5	47	135
1963	3.1	3	24	0.6	41	135
1964	3.2	3	21	0.5	39	123
1965	3.0	3	21	0.5	43	129
1966	2.8	1	16	0.4	39	111
1967	3.0	2	18	0.4	41	124
1968	2.9	1	20	0.5	39	113
1969	2.9	1	17	0.4	39	112
1970	3.0	0	18	0.4	39	117
1971	2.6	1	12	0.3	43	112
1972	2.7	0	15	0.4	41	109
1973	2.5	0	59	0.5	126	321
1975	3.6	0	42	1.0	42	153
1976	3.4	1	36	0.9	42	143
1978	3.5	1	22	0.4	49	173
1979	3.2	1	17	0.4	44	142

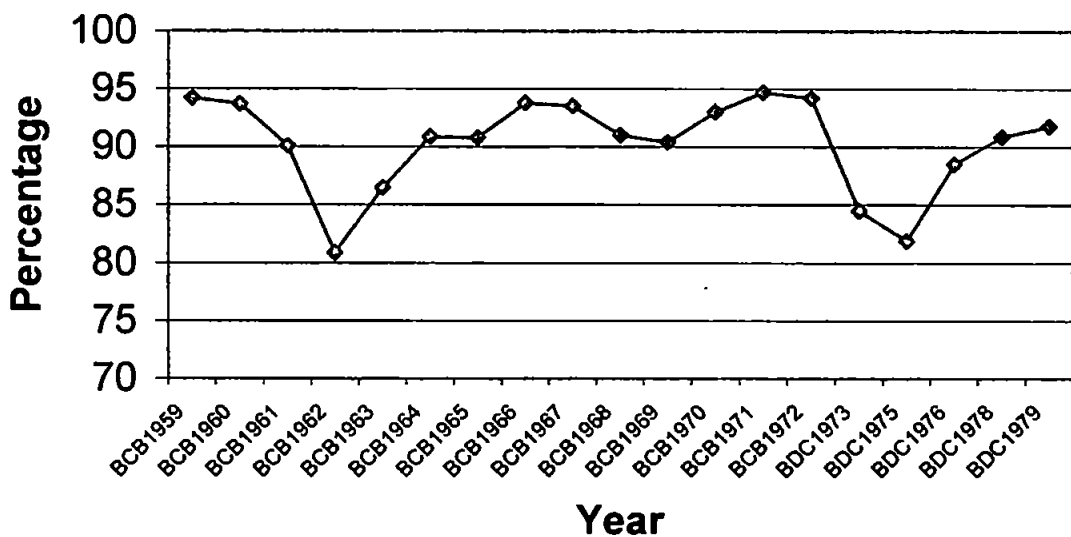
Indeed as Table 19 indicates there were few Independent candidates even in the 1950s and 1960s. At the 1963, 1964 and 1965 elections three Independents stood. However, by the 1970s Independent candidates were a rare feature of these elections. In Table 20 the two-party share of the vote is outlined. Though the two-party share of the vote declined from 94.2% in 1959 to 80.9% in 1962, throughout the 1960s it climbed and reached 94.7% by 1971. The two-party share of the vote declined to 84.5% at the 1973 elections and fell further to 81.9% at the 1975 elections, however, thereafter it climbed in 1976, and 1978 to reach 91.8% by 1979. Desertion of the two main parties by the voters at these elections was period specific and overall the two-

party share of the vote was consistently over 90%. There was then, no inexorable decline in the two-party share of the vote at these elections in the 1970s (Figure 16). This pattern is reflected in the Liberal party's share of the vote, which is characterised by period specific highs and declines.

**Table 20: Party percentage share of the total vote, Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972, and Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979.**

Election	Con % share	Lab % share	Lib % share	Ind& Oth %	Two-party%
1959	47.4	46.8	5.1	0.7	94.2
1960	55.1	38.6	5.2	1.1	93.7
1961	42.7	47.4	7.6	2.3	90.1
1962	40.5	40.4	15.9	3.2	80.9
1963	39.1	47.4	11.6	1.9	86.5
1964	44.7	46.2	7.5	1.6	90.9
1965	55.9	34.9	7.3	1.9	90.8
1966	49.8	44.1	5.0	1.1	93.8
1967	57.9	35.6	5.1	1.4	93.5
1968	64.7	26.3	8.0	1.0	91.0
1969	60.3	30.1	7.5	2.1	90.4
1970	47.7	45.3	5.9	1.1	93.0
1971	37.7	57.0	4.3	1.0	94.7
1972	43.3	50.9	5.1	0.7	94.2
1973	41.7	42.8	13.2	2.3	84.5
1975	49.7	32.2	16.4	1.7	81.9
1976	53.8	34.7	9.6	1.9	88.5
1978	49.9	41.0	5.5	3.6	90.9
1979	48.1	43.7	5.6	2.6	91.8

**FIGURE 16: Two-party share of the total vote at Birmingham County Borough and Birmingham District Council elections 1959-1979.**



In Table 21 the change in the distribution of the vote between successive elections, using the 'Butler Swing' as a measure, has been outlined. Clearly the elections of the 1970s are characterised by a general decline in the level of net volatility. Rather than a pattern of ever increasing volatility the Birmingham elections in the 1970s show a fluctuating but declining trend in net volatility. Furthermore, high levels of net volatility are period specific as in 1961, 1970 and 1971.

**Table 21: 'Butler Swing' index of volatility at successive Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972, and Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979.**

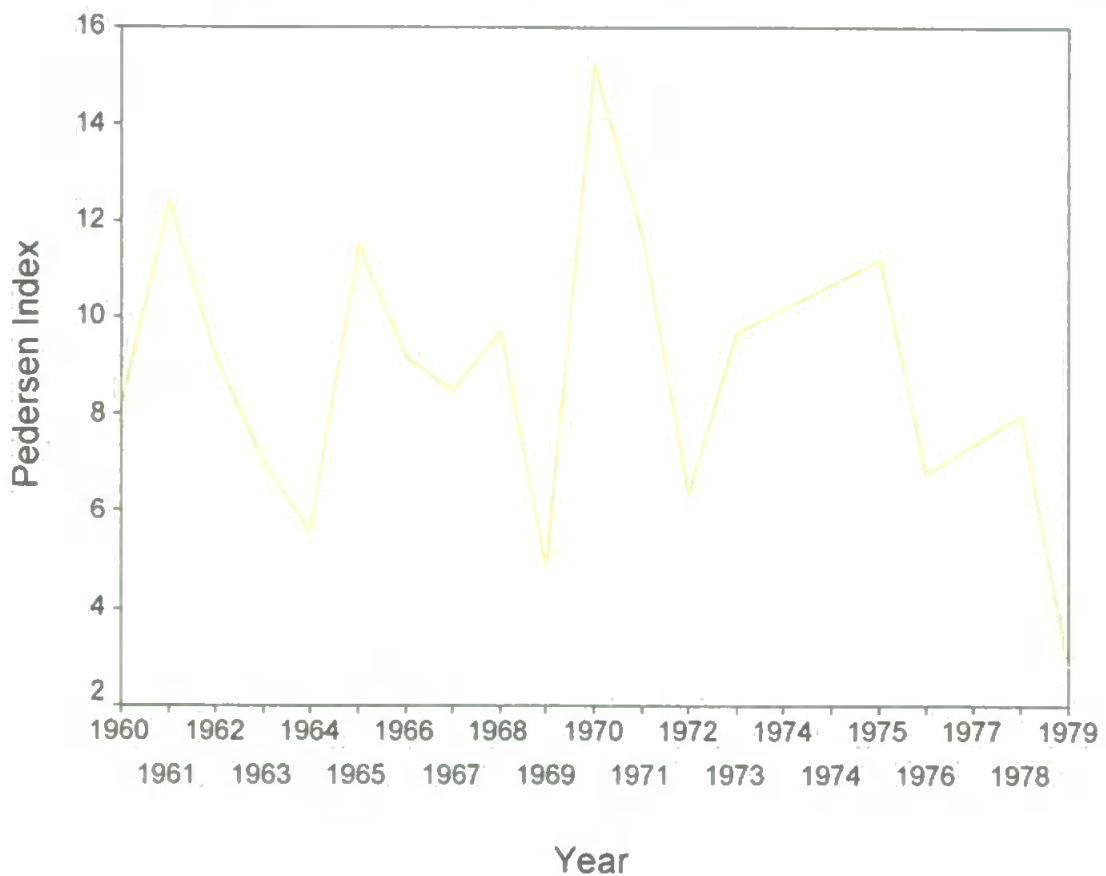
Successive elections	Butler swing
1959-1960	+7.9
1960-1961	-10.6
1961-1962	+2.4
1962-1963	-4.2
1963-1964	+3.4
1964-1965	+11.3
1965-1966	-7.7
1966-1967	+8.3
1967-1968	+8.1
1968-1969	-4.1
1969-1970	-13.9
1970-1971	-10.9
1971-1972	+5.9
1972-1973	+3.3
1973-1975	+6.3
1975-1976	+0.8
1976-1978	-5.1
1978-1979	-2.3

Table 22 sets out net inter-election volatility as measured by use of Pedersen's index of dissimilarity. The Pedersen index, like the Butler swing, points up periodic highs of net volatility; in 1960-1961, 1964-1965, 1969-1970 and 1970-1971. Similarly, the Pedersen index like the Butler swing does not show the 1970s as a period of increasing net volatility, but a fluctuating pattern of decline, (Figure 17).

**Table 22: Pedersen Index of dissimilarity at successive Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972, and Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979.**

Successive elections	Pedersen Index
BCB 1959-1960	8.2
BCB 1960-1961	12.4
BCB 1961-1962	9.2
BCB 1962-1963	7.0
BCB 1963-1964	5.6
BCB 1964-1965	11.5
BCB 1965-1966	9.2
BCB 1966-1967	8.5
BCB 1967-1968	9.7
BCB 1968-1969	4.9
BCB 1969-1970	15.2
BCB 1970-1971	11.7
BCB 1971-1972	6.4
1972-1973	9.7
BDC 1973-1975	11.2
BDC 1975-1976	6.8
BDC 1976-1978	8.0
BDC 1978-1979	2.8

**Figure 17: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive Birmingham County Borough 1959-1972, and Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979.**



Once again the expectation that local voting behaviour would closely resemble the orthodoxy of national voting trends has not been borne out by examination of Birmingham lower tier local government elections. Whether the trends in Birmingham upper-tier local government elections conform to orthodox expectations, to the patterns of their lower-tier counterparts, or are determined by their own peculiar dynamics will be examined next, then both will be contrasted with Birmingham parliamentary constituency voting trends.

#### **4.7: West Midlands County Council elections 1973, 1977 and 1981.**

The extent of party competition at these upper-tier Birmingham elections to the West Midlands County Council can be gauged by the changes in the structure of party competition. Table 23 profiles the changes in the structure of party competition over the three elections of 1973, 1977 and 1981.

**Table 23: Structure of party competition at West Midlands County Council elections 1973, 1977 and 1981.**

Election	3-way	2-way
1973	45.2	44.8
1977	59.5	38.0
1981	66.6	33.4

Three-way contests show a steady increase from 45.2% of wards in 1973, 59.5% of wards in 1977, to 66.6% of wards at the 1981 elections. This increase is in marked contrast to the fluctuating pattern of 3-way competition at the lower-tier Birmingham District Council elections in the 1970s. Indeed, the increasing ability of the Liberals to field candidates at the upper-tier West Midlands County Council elections is in contrast with the decreasing number of candidates that the Liberal Party is able to field at the lower-tier Birmingham District Council elections from 1975 onwards.

Table 24 sets out the number and percentage of the 42 Birmingham wards contested

by the Liberals at these West Midlands County Council elections. Although there was an increase in the Liberal's ability to contest the upper-tier elections of 1973, 1977 and 1981 when the party contested 45.2%, 59.5% and 66.6% of the wards respectively, the level of contestation by the Liberals was still nevertheless much lower than their 100% ward contestation and 85.7% ward contestation at the lower-tier Birmingham District Council elections in 1975 and 1976.

**Table 24: Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote, Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote contested only, and Liberal Party contestation at West Midlands County Council elections 1973, 1977 and 1981.**

Election	Liberal % share of vote	Liberal % contested wards only	No. wards Liberal contested	% wards Liberal contested	Total No. wards
1973	12.3	28.9	19	45.2	42
1977	7.0	11.7	26	59.5	42
1981	12.4	18.4	28	66.6	42

In Table 25 the candidate to seat ratios (all candidates) at these elections show an increasing trend from 2.8 in 1973 to 3.3 at both the 1977 and 1981 elections, nevertheless these ratios are marginally lower than those at the lower-tier Birmingham District Council elections in the same period.

**Table 25: Candidate/seat ratio and Liberal Party candidate/ seat ratio, West Midlands County Council elections 1973, 1977 and 1981.**

Election	Candidate/ seat ratio	Independent candidates	Liberal candidates	Liberal candidate/ seat ratio	Total seats	No. candidates
1973	2.8	0	19	0.4	42	118
1977	3.3	1	26	0.6	42	140
1981	3.3	5	28	0.7	42	141

Similarly, the ratios of Liberal candidates to seats show an increasing trend at the 1973, 1977 and 1981 West Midlands County Council elections, rising from 0.4 in 1973 to 0.6 in 1977 and 0.7 in 1981. However, they are clearly much lower than the Liberal candidate seat ratio of 1.0 at the 1975 Birmingham District Council elections and the 0.9 of 1976 Birmingham District Council elections.

Though increased party competition is a feature of the 1973, 1977 and 1981 West Midlands County Council elections the two party grip on the electorate remained

firm. In Table 26 the two-party vote is outlined and the extent and rate that voters deserted the two-party system can be gauged. Though increasing from 86.8% in 1973 to 89.7% in 1977, the two-party share of the vote declined to 84.8% in 1981.

**Table 26: Party percentage share of the total vote, West Midlands County Council elections, 1973-1977.**

Election	Con% share	Lab% share	Lib% share	Ind & Others% share	Two-party % share
1973	41.6	45.2	12.3	0.9	86.8
1977	58.0	31.7	7.0	3.3	89.7
1981	35.1	49.7	12.4	2.8	84.8

The findings of this study of the 42 Birmingham wards at the 1973, 1977 and 1981 West Midlands County Council elections indicate that despite a pattern of increased party competition the two party grip on the electorate remained firm. In short, the electoral pendulum may have swung to and fro and there was an increase in party competition, however, as these elections demonstrate, the overall two party share of the vote need hardly alter as a result.

#### **4.8: Parliamentary and local electoral voting behaviour contrasted**

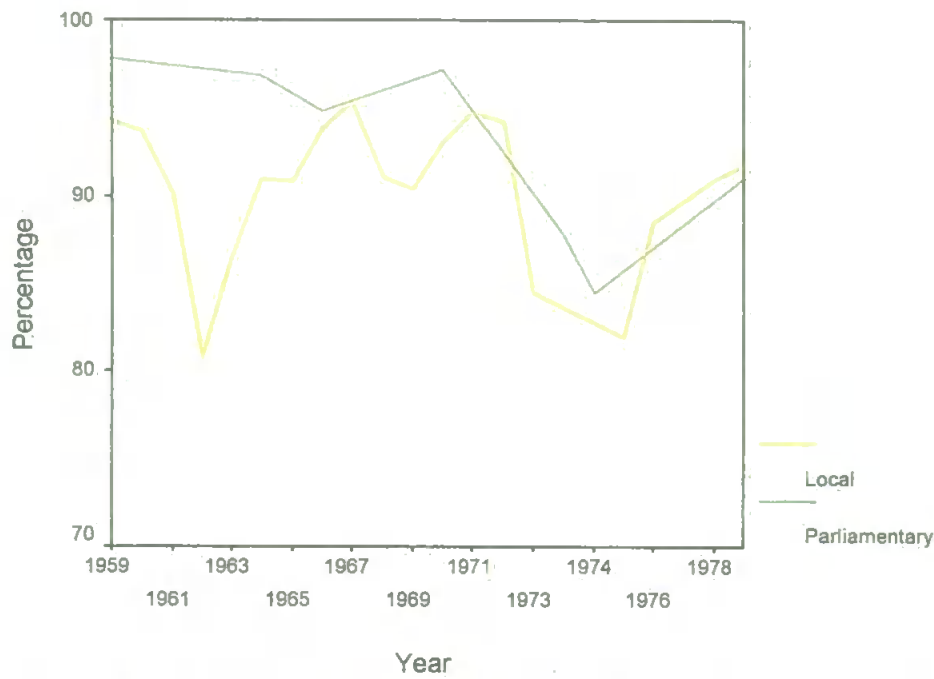
Trends in voting at parliamentary elections in the Birmingham constituencies 1959-1979 will now be examined and contrasted with those at the local electoral level. Table 27 sets out the distribution of the vote at each election, the two-party share of the vote, the number of seats contested by the Liberals, and the percentage share of the vote in Liberal contested constituencies only. Clearly the Liberals were unable to break the grip that the two major parties had over the Birmingham electorate at the parliamentary electoral level. Only at the two 1974 general elections were the Liberals able to challenge this duopoly. However 1974 apart, there was no significant weakening of party support, or increase in net volatility during the 1970s. Period specific fluctuation in the two-party share of the vote and in net volatility characterise

parliamentary electoral voting behaviour in 1970s Birmingham, rather than any linear trends in increasing partisan dealignment or volatility. Furthermore when the trends in two-party share of the vote at local and parliamentary elections are contrasted, as shown in Figure 18, irrespective of the differences of timing of these two types of elections, there is a significant degree of variance. Indeed, from 1959-1970 two-party support at the Birmingham County Borough elections was to a significant degree, and consistently, much lower than its parliamentary counterpart, an indication of a much higher degree of partisan dealignment at the local electoral level than at the parliamentary. Furthermore, as Figure 19 illustrates, if the trend in change in the distribution of the vote between successive local elections, and that at parliamentary elections is compared, it is clear, irrespective of differences in electoral cycles, that there were significant differences in electoral behaviour. Electoral behaviour at the Birmingham County Borough elections and the post-reorganisation Birmingham District Council elections was much more volatile than at the parliamentary electoral level, especially in the 1960s.

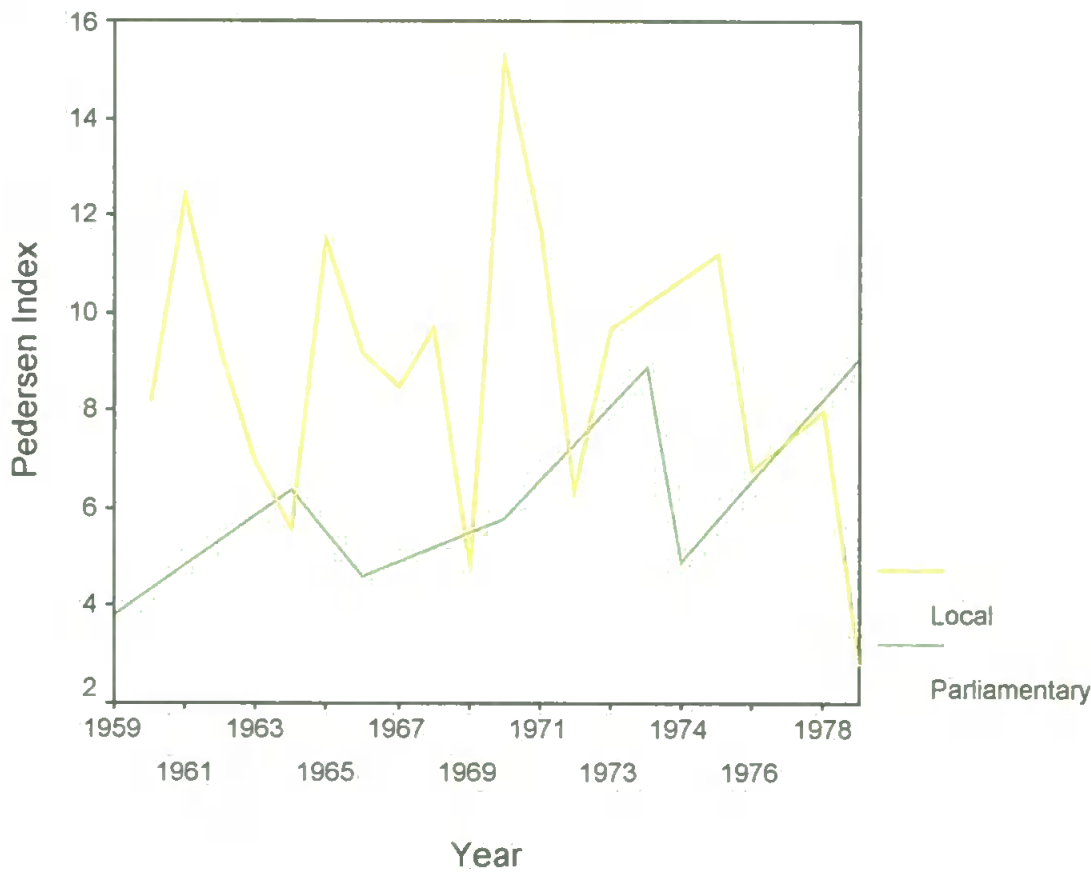
**Table 27: Party percentage share of the total vote all constituency contests, Liberal Party percentage share of the total vote contested constituencies only, and Liberal Party contestation at General Elections, Birmingham 1955-1983.**

Election	Con% Vote	Lab% vote	Lib% vote	Oth% Vote	Two- party% Vote	Seats	Number of seats Liberal contested	Liberal% vote Contested only
1955	49.5	49.9	-	0.6	99.4	13	0	0
1959	52.0	45.9	1.1	1.0	97.8	13	1	14.2
1964	46.7	50.1	4.2	-	96.8	13	3	14.7
1966	41.4	53.4	3.9	1.3	94.8	13	4	14.9
1970	47.4	49.6	2.2	0.8	97.1	13	4	11.7
Feb1974	39.6	48.4	11.0	1.0	87.9	12	9	15.2
Oct1974	34.7	49.8	14.3	1.2	84.5	12	12	14.3
1979	43.7	47.4	7.5	1.4	91.0	12	11	7.5
1983	39.0	43.0	8.5	8.5	81.2	11	4	17.3

**Figure 18: Two-party share of the total vote Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972 and Birmingham District Borough elections 1973-1979, and two-party share of the total vote at general elections 1959-1979, Birmingham constituencies**



**Figure 19: Pedersen Index of dissimilarity at successive Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972 and Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979, and Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive general elections 1959-1979 Birmingham constituencies.**



**4.9: Summary of Birmingham local electoral voting behaviour at local authority aggregate level, and comparison with Birmingham parliamentary constituency voting behaviour.**

At local government elections although party competition expanded during the early 1970s in the wake of local government reorganisation, in general over the 1959-1979 period the level of three-party competition points up the failure of the Liberals to decisively break the dominance of the two main parties. Clearly, any expansion of party competition was period specific and reflected the Liberal's fluctuating ability to field candidates. Indeed, the Liberal candidate to seat ratio at these elections, apart from 1963, 1975 and 1976, shows the Liberals contesting between only a third and a half of the seats available throughout the period. However, where the Liberals did contest, their average share of the vote in contested wards at each election never fell below 11%. The candidate to seat ratio (candidates from all parties) at these elections indicates that even before reorganisation party politicisation was a feature of Birmingham elections. Between 1959 and 1970 the candidate to seat ratio averaged 2.9. Furthermore, there were few Independent candidates contesting these elections in the 1950s and 1960s, and even fewer in the 1970s. Although party politicisation of the Birmingham elections expanded, there was no inexorable increase throughout the 1970s, and changes in the two-party share of the vote over the period do not indicate increasing desertion of the two main parties by the Birmingham electorate. Indeed, from 1975 the grip of the two major parties increased as party ties were reasserted as evidenced by both the Butler and Pedersen indices that show a decline in net volatility at the Birmingham elections in the 1970s.

The findings of this study of local authority voting at the Birmingham County Borough elections 1959-1972, and the Birmingham District Council elections 1973-1979, demonstrate that local elections in the period cannot be characterised by any

linear increase in party politicisation and inexorable decline in party attachments. The loosening of party attachments occurred in period specific phases and overall party attachments, as indicated by the two-party share of the vote, remained strong. Party politicisation of local government elections was already a feature of Birmingham elections well before reorganisation, as comparison between Birmingham's level of 3-way competition at the elections from 1959-1970 and the London boroughs level of 3-way competition illustrates. At the parliamentary electoral level the two-party duopoly was maintained, however there were significant differences between local electoral voting behaviour and parliamentary electoral behaviour.

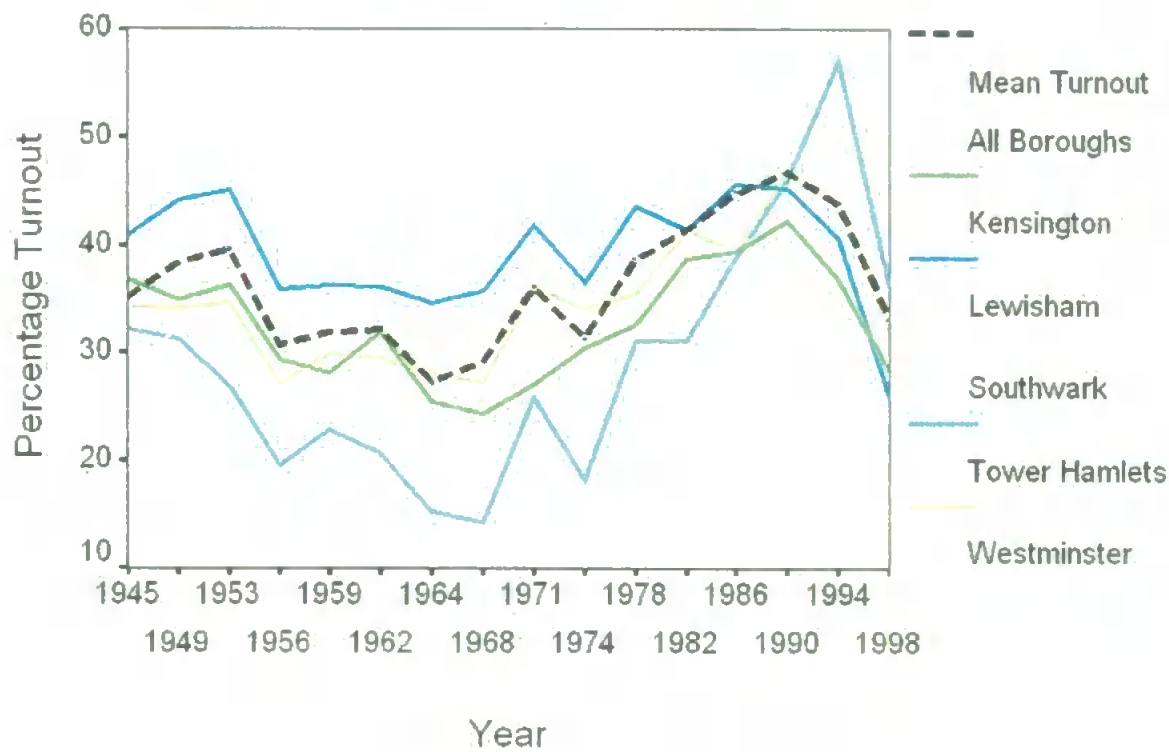
#### **4.10: Electoral trends in coterminous electoral units.**

As evidenced above, at the local authority aggregate level, there are significant variations in voting behaviour; between local authorities of the same type, within local authorities at upper- and lower tier elections, and between a local authority area and voting behaviour at parliamentary elections in the constituencies within that local authority area. However, this level of aggregation can conceal variance in voting behaviour at ward level within boroughs. In order to reveal any such variance we will now examine voting behaviour at a lower level of aggregation in the case study boroughs and their coterminous parliamentary electoral units. Rather than examine a raft of indicators of voting behaviour this section will examine turnout. If local issues, candidate, campaigning, marginality and political control of the council are important in the calculus of the individual elector's decision to turn out and vote it is more likely that it is at the ward level that these factors are influential, as the voter has the opportunity to determine the outcome in his or her ward. In order to 'zoom-in' to the

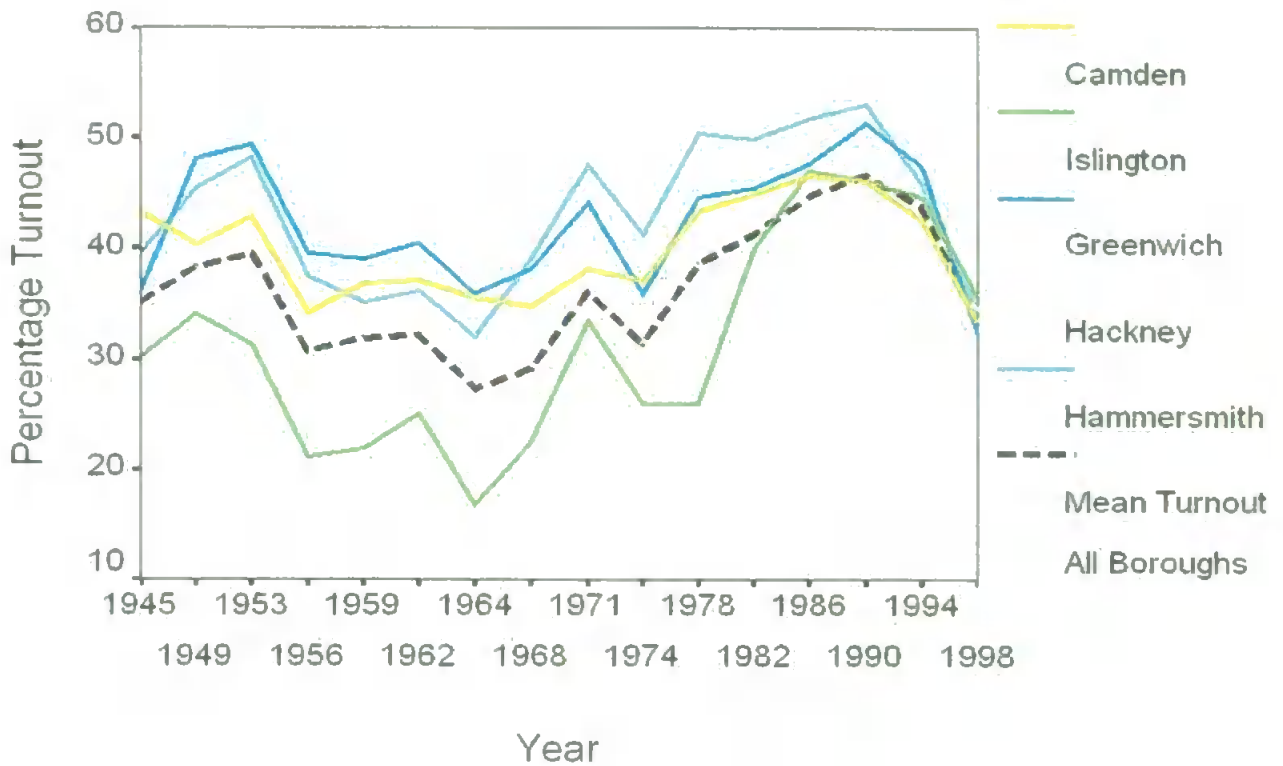
ward level of analysis, it is necessary, however, to begin briefly at the higher aggregate level of borough turnout.

Rallings and Thrasher, in their seminal study of British local elections, found that ‘when turnout rises in a tier of local government it does so across the board and when it falls it does so across all the constituent authorities’. At the borough aggregate level, as Figure 20 and Figure 21 illustrate, the trends in turnout of the inner-London boroughs examined broadly conform to a similar overall trends, and thereby rise and fall almost in unison (Lambeth and Wandsworth have been excluded because they are not made up of whole former electoral units).

Figures 20: Percentage turnout individual boroughs contrasted with mean turnout all Inner-London boroughs, 1945-1998. Source: Willis,A., and Woollard,J., 2000



**Figures 21: Percentage turnout individual boroughs contrasted with mean turnout all Inner-London boroughs, 1945-1998. Source: Willis,A., and Woollard,J., 2000**



Furthermore, as Rallings and Thrasher point up, the level in turnout of individual councils 'tend to occupy a largely unchanging position in any league table of turnout'. Indeed, mean turnout in the London Borough of Camden (pre-1964 turnout figures: Hampstead MB, Holborn MB, and St Pancras MB composite) at the sixteen borough elections from 1945 to 1998 was consistently higher than the average turnout for all inner-London boroughs, and has a standard deviation of 4.47 per cent that reflects a reasonably stable and consistent level of turnout. However, in contrast, although turnout in the London Borough of Islington (pre-1964 turnout figures: Finsbury MB, and Islington MB composite) was consistently lower than the average for all the inner-London boroughs (except after 1982) the standard deviation of 9.45 in turnout in Islington reflects a much more erratic pattern in electoral behaviour than in

Camden. Clearly, Camden, like most of the other inner-London boroughs (see SDs Table 28) conformed much more closely to the findings of Rallings and Thrasher

**Table 28: Turnout in the Inner-London Boroughs, Borough Elections 1945-1998 (excludes Lambeth and Wandsworth which were not composites of whole former MB electoral units). Source: Original turnout figures from Willis, A., and Woollard, J., 2000.**

London Borough	London Metropolitan Borough	Mean Turnout	Standard Deviation	N
Camden	Hampstead, Holborn, St Pancras MBs all wards.	39.8	4.4	16
Islington	Finsbury, Islington MBs all wards	31.4	9.4	16
Greenwich	Greenwich, Woolwich MBs all wards	42.3	5.7	16
Hackney	Hackney, Shoreditch, Stoke Newington MBs all wards	29.4	6.5	16
Kensington and Chelsea	Kensington, Chelsea MBs all wards	32.6	5.3	16
Lewisham	Lewisham, Deptford MBs all wards	39.3	5.2	16
Tower Hamlets	Bethnal Green, Poplar, Stepney MBs all wards	29.2	11.4	16
Westminster	Westminster, Paddington, St Marylebone MBs all wards	34.6	5.8	16
Hammersmith	Hammersmith, Fulham MBs all wards	43.0	6.9	16
Southwark	Southwark, Bermondsey, Camberwell MBs all wards	30.5	5.6	16

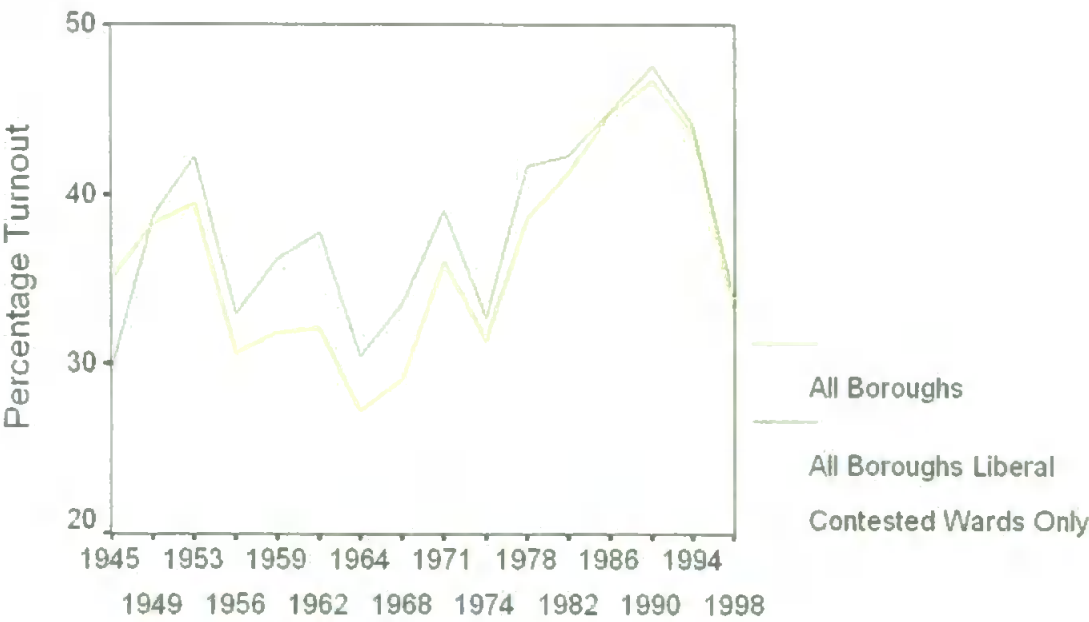
concerning turnout in authorities of the same type. Whereas Islington, as its standard deviation indicates, is atypical and has much more erratic fluctuations in its level of turnout. Islington rather bucks the trend of stability in levels of turnout for individual councils that Rallings and Thrasher have identified. Thus, even at this level of aggregation where differences tend to be smoothed out, these two politically and socio-economically very similar boroughs show a clear variance in their patterns of turnout at borough elections.

However, Rallings and Thrasher also found that 'local authorities may find their position in the league table of turnout rises or falls' as indeed is the case in Islington, and that 'where changes do take place there is usually a *prima facie* explanation readily available ... related to specifically local political events in those authorities'.

Indeed, if the mean turnout in Liberal contested wards at London Borough elections is contrasted with the mean turnout for all contests, turnout in Liberal contested wards in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s in the inner-London boroughs was consistently higher than the mean for all wards and periodically much higher (see Figure 22).

Furthermore, in Liberal contested wards only, that were non-marginal wards at London borough elections, that is wards in which the majority is equal to or greater than 5%, between 1964 and 1998 (1363 cases of 2111) the mean turnout was 44.02%. However, in non-marginal wards which were not contested by the Liberals in the same period (748 cases of 2111), the mean turnout at these inner-London borough elections was 36.6%. Thus, turnout in non-marginal wards contested by the Liberals was almost a quarter higher than turnout in non-marginal wards uncontested by the Liberals. This, as Rallings and Thrasher point out, may just indicate no more than the fact that the local electorate, even in non-marginal wards, 'are marginally more interested when the range of parties to choose from is greater and when a potential voter is not faced with choosing between either voting for an alternative party because their 'own' has not fielded a candidate or staying at home'. Indeed, as Figure 23 illustrates in the London Borough of Camden the mean turnout at borough elections in Liberal contested wards only, from 1959 to 1986 was consistently higher than the mean turnout for all Camden wards. In contrast, as Figure 24 illustrates, in the London Borough of Islington the mean turnout at borough elections in Liberal contested wards only, was only slightly above the mean for all Islington wards from 1962 to 1968, and again to a larger degree in the period 1974 to 1982.

**Figure 22: Mean percentage turnout all Inner-London boroughs contrasted with mean percentage turnout in Liberal contested wards only, at lower-tier elections 1945-1998.** Source: Willis,A., and Woollard,J., 2000



**Figure 23: Mean percentage turnout in all inner-London boroughs contrasted with mean turnout Camden London Borough only, and mean turnout Liberal contested wards only Camden London Borough, at lower-tier elections 1945-1998.** Willis,A., and Woollard,J., 2000

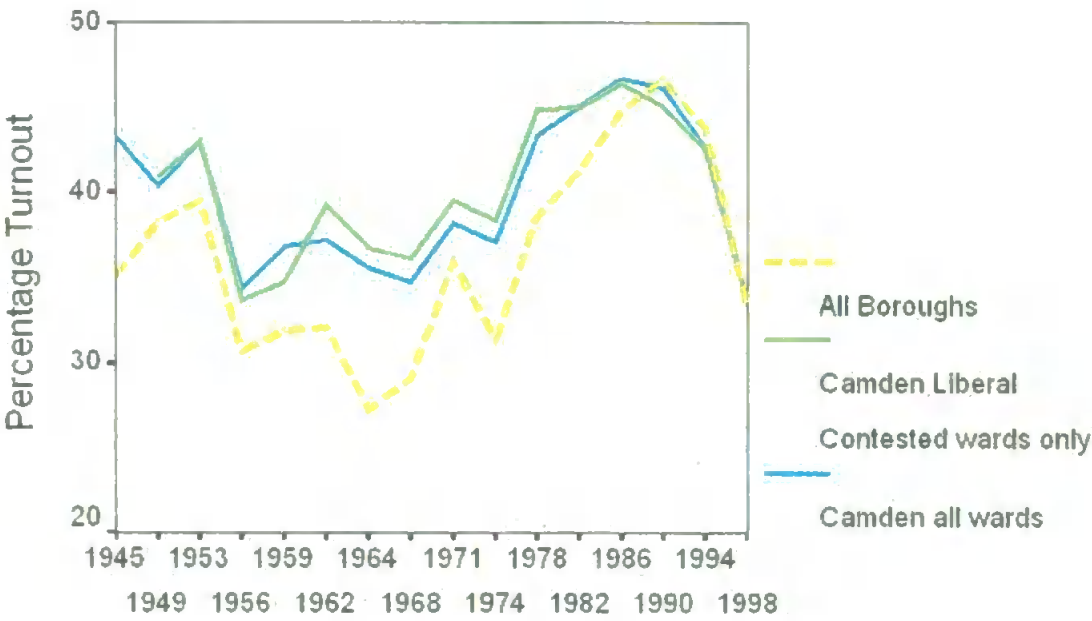
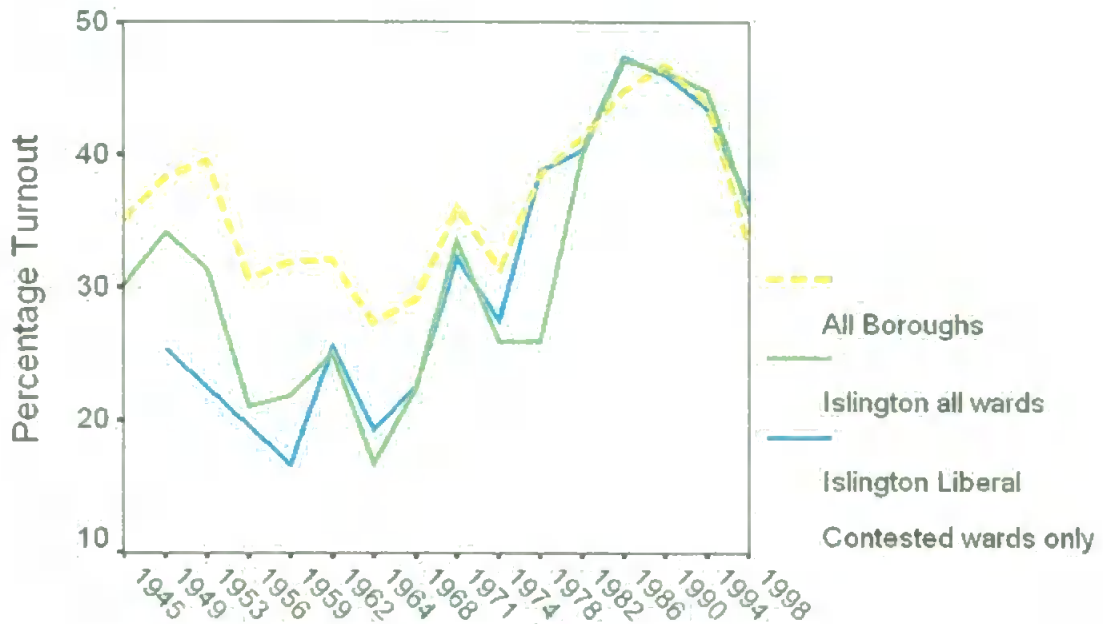


Figure 24: Mean turnout all inner-London boroughs, contrasted with mean turnout Islington London Borough only, and mean turnout Liberal contested wards only Islington London Borough, at lower-tier elections 1945-1998. Source of turnout figures: Willis,A., and Woollard,J., 2000.



Indeed, as Rallings and Thrasher point up, there are:

‘those authorities and wards which either defy the trends or whose turnout differs markedly from that in similar areas. Regardless of the scale of party competition, regardless of the state of the council and ward marginality voters ... appear to turnout in greater numbers than we might expect’ (passim Rallings and Thrasher 1997 pp 46-63).

Clearly, there are factors other than marginality, party competition and socio-economic status influencing turnout at local elections in these two boroughs. Indeed, Newton has argued that the impact of national politics on turnout and voting at local elections has a predominant explanatory role (Newton 1976 : 13-16, 1972: 251-255). Electoral behaviour at local elections would then, be expected to closely resemble parliamentary electoral behaviour, and if Miller’s argument is accepted, that those who vote at local elections are ‘almost perfectly representative of the full electorate

in terms of partisanship and issue attitudes', the case for similarity in trends at both levels of voting behaviour is given more weight ( Miller1986:143).

The expectation then would be that over time turnout and voting trends at borough elections would closely resemble trends in their coterminous parliamentary units.

However, if a comparison between trends in turnout at general elections in the Islington East, Islington North, Islington South West, Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras South, St Pancras North constituencies, with trends in turnout in their coterminous wards at borough elections 1949-1970 is made, this expectation is not realised. There was a clear disparity between national and local electoral turnout trends (see Figures 25-30 below). In the East Islington Constituency, parliamentary electoral turnout was in steady decline from 1955 to 1970, however turnout at borough elections in coterminous wards was increasing steadily from 1962 to 1968. To a lesser degree in the North Islington Constituency turnout was increasing from 1962 and then showed a steady increase after 1964, at a time of steady decline in parliamentary electoral turnout. Similarly, at a time of steady decline in parliamentary electoral turnout in the Islington South West Constituency, there was an increase in turnout at coterminous borough ward elections from 1956 to 1962, and similarly after 1964. The same trends of increasing borough electoral turnout at times of decreasing trends in parliamentary electoral turnout in coterminous wards are apparent in the Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras South, and St Pancras North Constituencies. Indeed, in both the Islington North and the Islington South West constituencies support for the Labour and Conservative parties, as measured by party percentage share of the vote remained remarkably stable throughout the 1949 to 1970 period. The standard deviation of the Labour Party share of the vote at general elections in the Islington North constituency was a mere 1.91 and that of the Conservative Party 4.84.

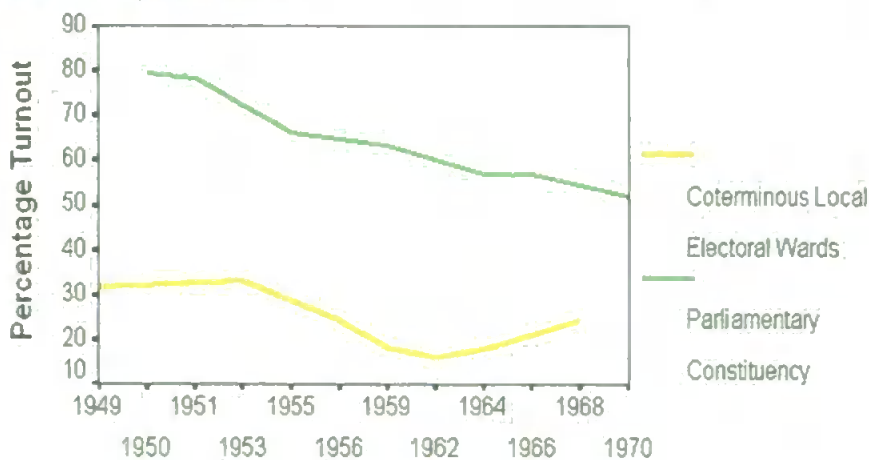
However, at the borough elections in coterminous wards the standard deviation for the Labour Party was 8.64, and that of the Conservative Party 10.77. Similarly in the Islington South West constituency the standard deviation of the Labour Party share of the vote at general elections 1949-1970 was 2.45 and at borough elections in coterminous wards 11.34, and for the Conservative Party 3.57 and 9.21 respectively (see Table 29 below, the standard deviations in the two major parties' share of the vote in coterminous parliamentary and borough electoral units are outlined). Support for the Labour Party in the coterminous wards of the Islington North and Islington South West constituencies at borough elections, though stronger than at parliamentary electoral level is nevertheless characterised by periodic fluctuation. Interestingly, a downturn in both Labour and Conservative party percentage share of the vote at borough elections in the Islington South West wards from 1959 to the mid-1960s is mirrored in the rise of the Other vote. By contrast, a decline in the Conservative party percentage share of the vote in coterminous wards in borough elections in the North Islington constituency is mirrored in the rise of Liberal Party percentage share of the vote 1959-1964. In further contrast, a decline in both the Labour and Conservative percentage share of the vote at borough elections in the East Islington constituency is mirrored in the rise of the Liberal percentage share of the vote 1959-1962.

However, at the parliamentary electoral level in the same wards over the same period the Labour Party maintained a stable level of support, as the Conservative Party's support declined and the Liberal Party's parliamentary level support increased.

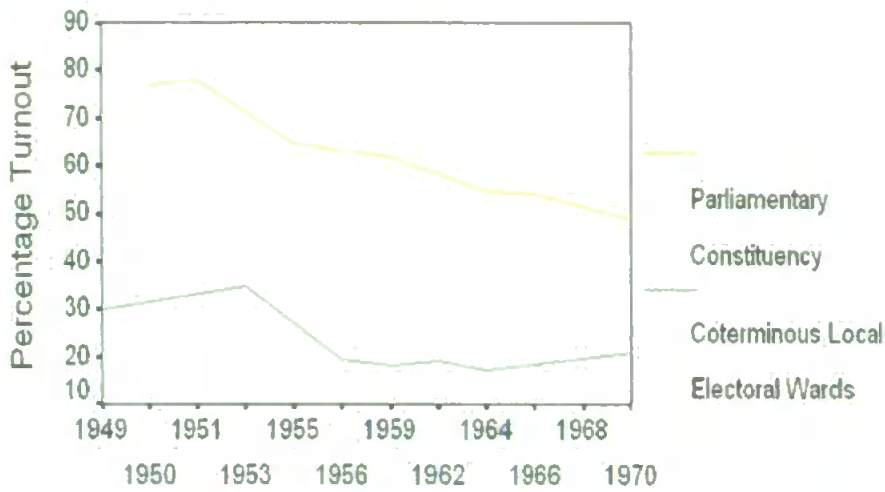
Similarly, the decline in Conservative local electoral support in the St Pancras North Constituency in 1959-1964 was reflected in the steady rise in the Other vote, whereas decline in the Conservative level of local electoral support in the Holborn and St Pancras South Constituency is reflected in Labour Party support at borough elections.

In addition over in the Hampstead Constituency there was a sudden and dramatic decline in Conservative support at borough elections to the benefit of the Liberals, however the Conservative decline at the parliamentary electoral level in the same period in the main benefited the Labour Party. Not only are there differences in net volatility between these coterminous electoral units at the parliamentary and borough levels, but also variance in net volatility between groups of wards within the same borough (see Figures 31 and 32). There are then clear disparities in the trends of both turnout and distribution of the party share of the vote between borough elections and parliamentary elections in these coterminous electoral units. There are also disparities in voting behaviour between constituencies within the same borough, and differences between boroughs of very similar socio-economic and political characteristics.

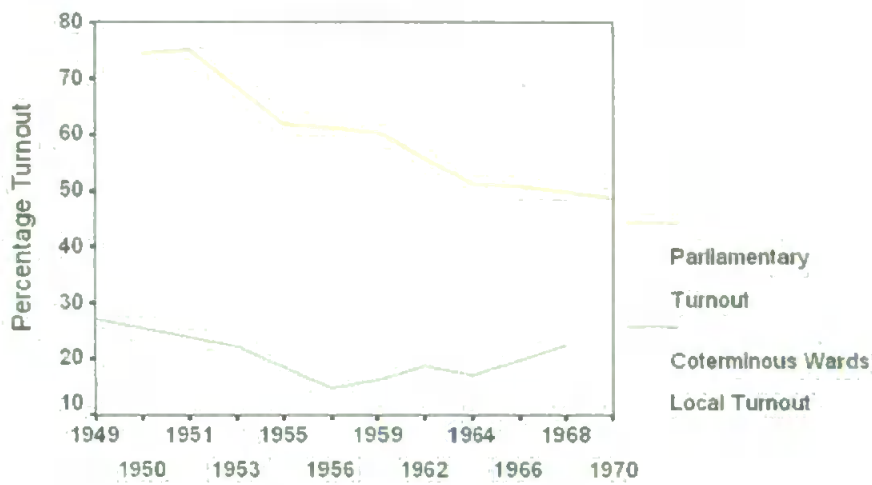
**Figure 25: East Islington Constituency: Parliamentary and Borough electoral turnout in coterminous wards 1949-1970.**



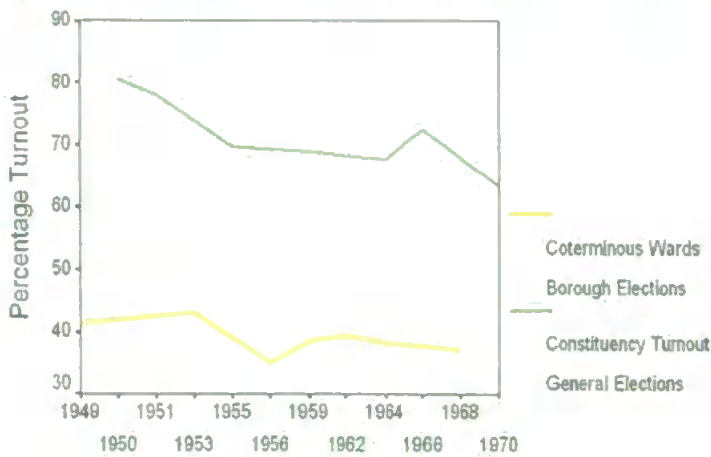
**Figure 26: North Islington Constituency: Parliamentary and Borough electoral turnout in coterminous wards 1949-1970**



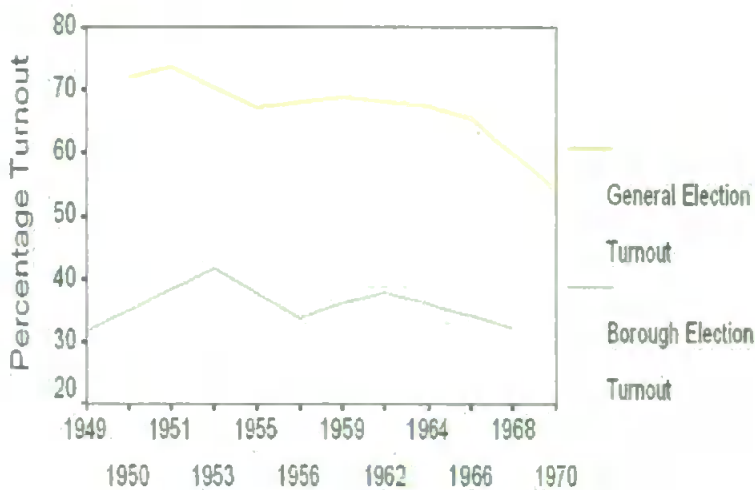
**Figure 27: Islington South West Constituency: Parliamentary and Borough electoral turnout in coterminous wards 1949-1970.**



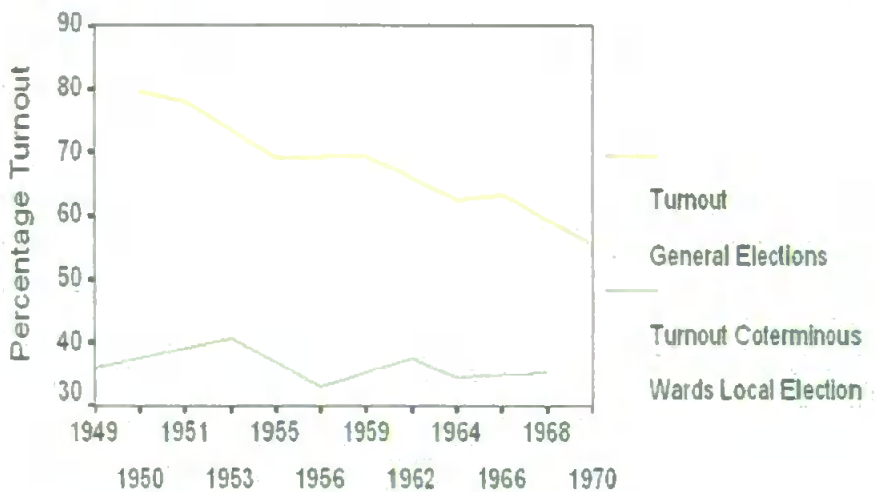
**Figure 28: Hampstead Constituency: Parliamentary and Borough electoral turnout in coterminous wards 1949-1970.**



**Figure 29: Holborn and St Pancras South Constituency :Parliamentary and Borough electoral turnout in coterminous wards 1949-1970.**



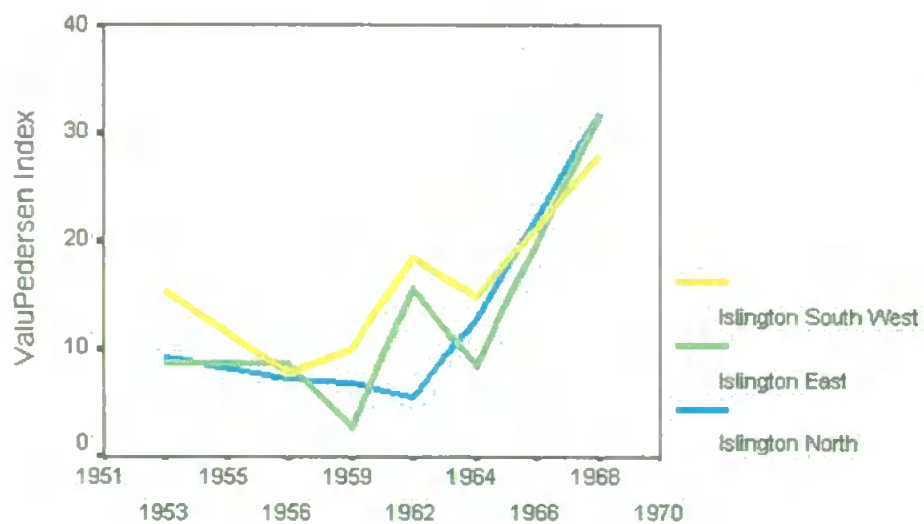
**Figure 30: St Pancras North Constituency:Parliamentary and Borough Electoral Turnout in Coterminous Wards 1949-1970.**



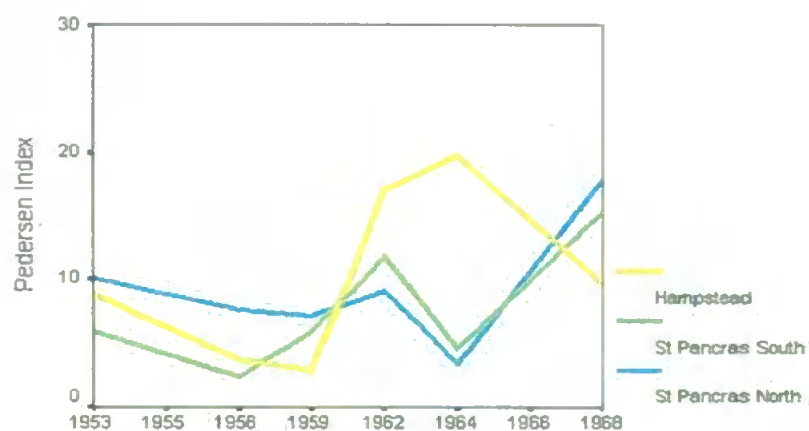
**Table 29: Standard Deviations in Labour and Conservative Party share of the vote at Borough and Parliamentary elections in coterminous wards 1949-1970**

Constituency	SD Labour Parliamentary	SD Labour Borough	SD Conservative Parliamentary	SD Conservative Borough
Islington East	3.08	10.01	5.52	12.05
Islington North	1.91	8.64	4.84	10.76
Islington South West	2.45	11.34	3.57	9.21
Hampstead	7.44	3.94	5.69	7.86
Holborn	4.09	5.89	3.11	6.01
St Pancras South	3.49	5.59	2.87	6.64
St Pancras North				

**Figure 31: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive borough elections wards coterminous with Islington Parliamentary constituency London Borough of Islington, 1951-1970.**



**Figure 32: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive Borough elections in coterminous electoral wards of the Camden constituencies, 1951-1970.**



Comparisons of indicators of electoral behaviour in coterminous local electoral wards and the parliamentary constituency of Sutton Coldfield reveal significant variance between the two types of elections. In Figure 33 it is clear that ward level net volatility, especially in the early 1960s, late 1960s and early 1970s, was at a much higher pitch than its parliamentary counterpart in the same wards. These period specific shifts in the distribution of the vote at successive local elections do not reflect the general pattern of partisan alignment at the parliamentary level. In Figure 34 the variance between local electoral party attachments and parliamentary electoral party attachments is clear. Support for the Labour Party in Sutton Coldfield was much stronger at the parliamentary level than at the municipal electoral level, whereas the reverse was true for the Liberal Party. In contrast the Conservative Party's parliamentary support was reasonably constant whereas its local electoral support was subject to periodic shifts. Indeed, the standard deviation in the Conservative share of the vote at Sutton Coldfield local elections was 9.0, in contrast with a standard deviation of 5.6 at parliamentary elections over the same 1958-1979 period. It would seem that the context of an election was important to the calculus of voters when it came to deciding which party to cast a vote for. Furthermore, as Figure 35 illustrates there was great variance in turnout levels between wards at individual council elections, and great variance in each individual wards turnout over a series of elections. In particular wards at particular times it seems that turnout could fluctuate dramatically from the mean turnout of all wards in the borough. Indeed, in individual wards turnout could fluctuate dramatically as in the case of Boldmere East at the 1958 and 1959 elections when ward turnout was almost two standard deviations above the ward's mean turnout at these elections over the whole period.

Figure 33: Pedersen index of dissimilarity at successive Sutton Coldfield County Borough Council elections 1959-1972 and Sutton Coldfield wards at Birmingham District Council elections 1972 to 1982, contrasted with Pedersen index at successive Sutton Coldfield Constituency at Parliamentary elections 1959-1979

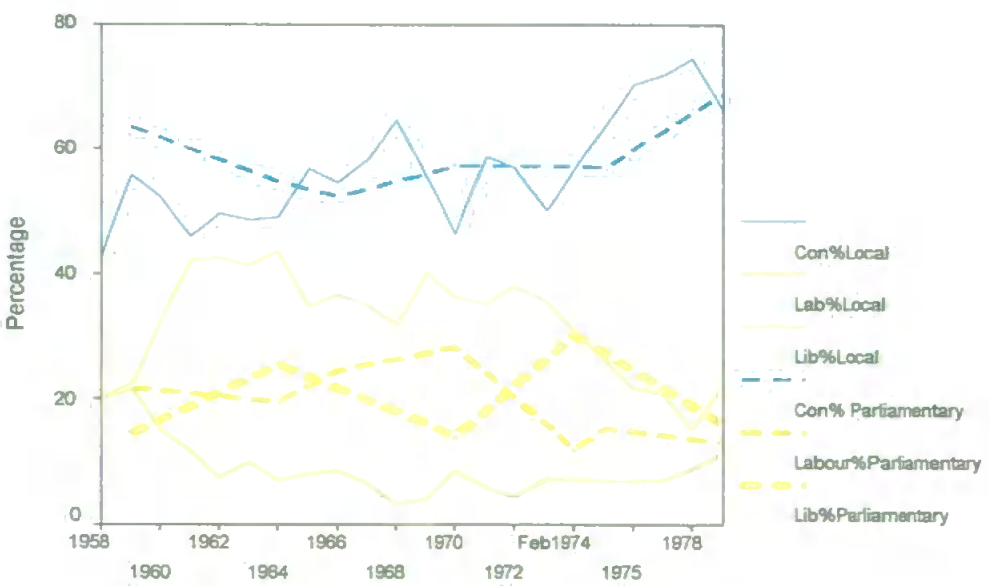
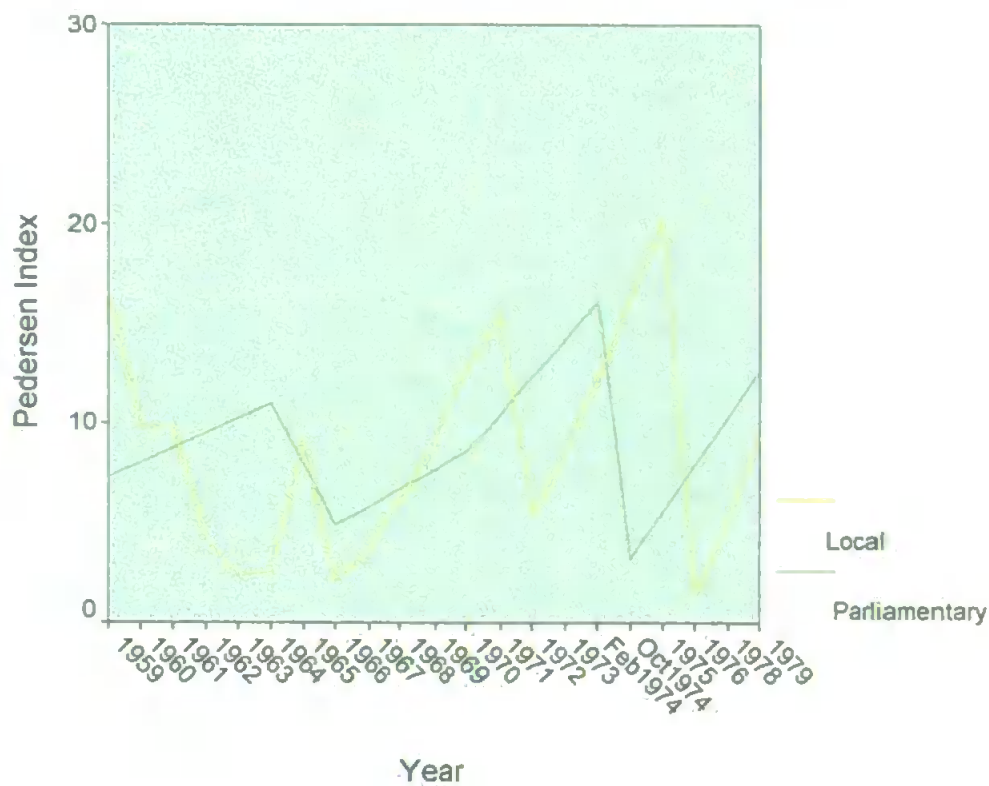
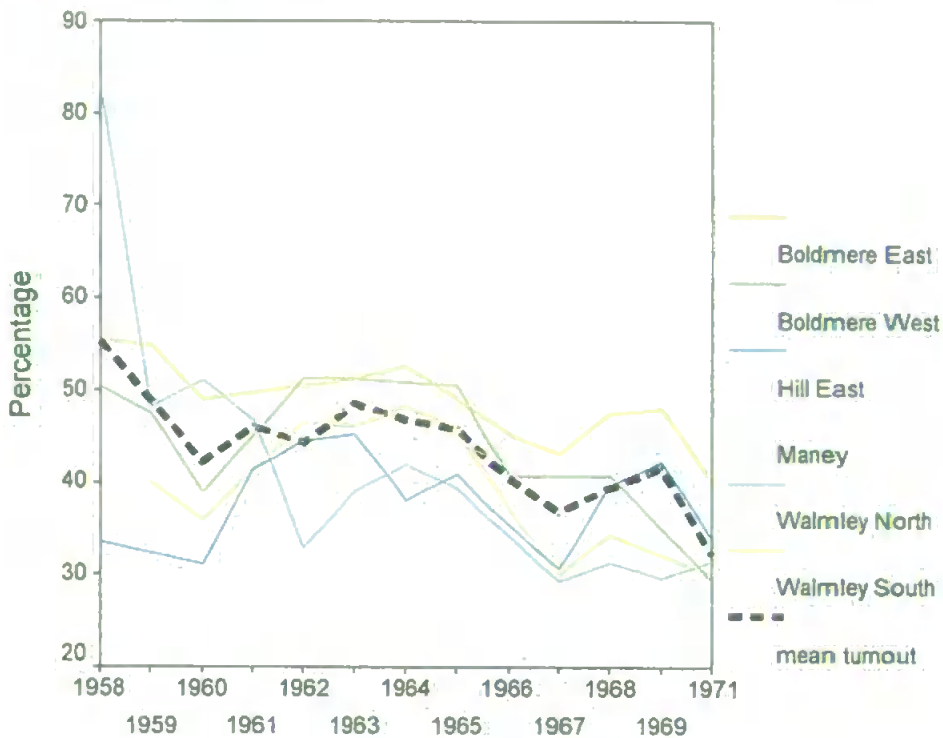


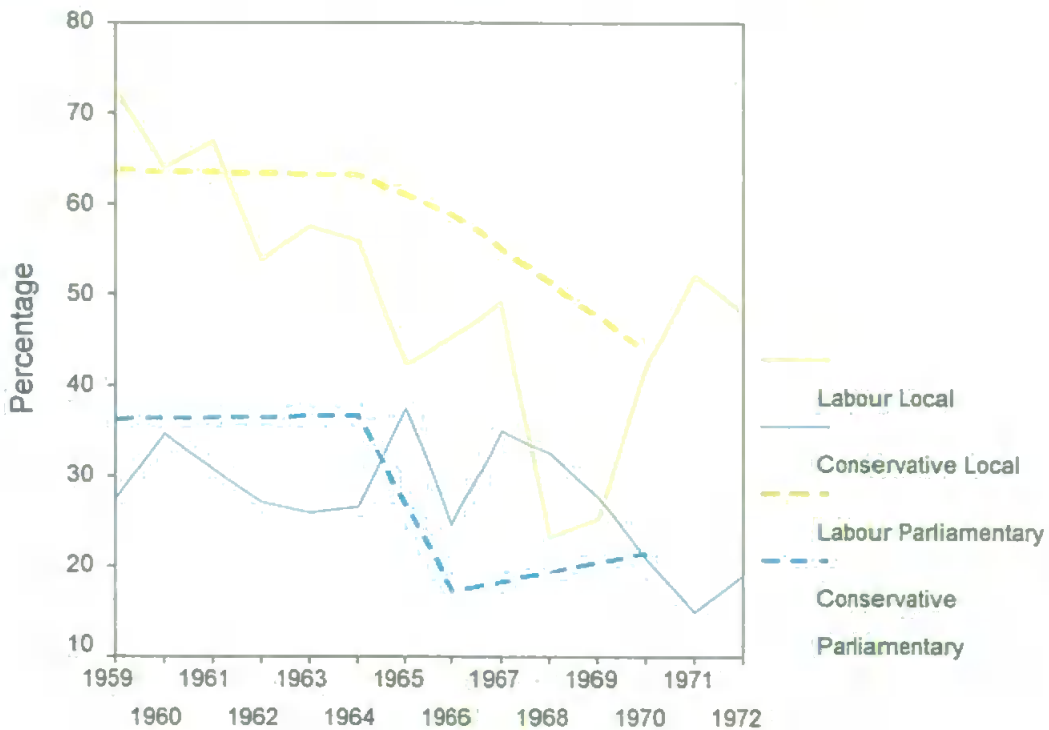
Figure 34 above: Party percentage share of the total vote at Sutton Coldfield County Borough Council elections 1959-1972 and Sutton Coldfield wards at Birmingham District Council elections 1972 to 1982, contrasted with party share of the total vote in Sutton Coldfield Constituency at Parliamentary elections 1959-1979.

Figure 35 below: Mean percentage turnout all Sutton Coldfield wards at council elections 1958-1971, (no figures for 1970 available, wards contested over whole period only) and mean percentage turnout all wards.



Similar variance between national and local voting behaviour is apparent at elections in the Birmingham Ladywood constituency and its coterminous local electoral units (general elections 1959-1970, and Birmingham County Council elections 1959-1972 Duddleston, Ladywood and Newtown [previously St Paul's wards up to 1961 election]). Over the 1959 to 1972 period in coterminous local electoral wards at Birmingham County Council elections the standard deviation in Labour's share of the vote at these elections was 14.1, in contrast to a standard deviation of 9.1 at parliamentary elections. Indeed, the Labour Party's support at the local level declined swiftly from the early 1960s, preceded its parliamentary counterpart, and suffered a much greater rate of attrition.

**Figure 36: Party percentage share of the total vote at Birmingham County Council elections 1959-1972 contrasted with party percentage share of the total vote at Parliamentary elections 1959-1970, for the Ladywood Constituency and its coterminous local electoral wards**



#### **4.11: Conclusion**

In this chapter measures of party politicisation, contestation, partisan dealignment and net volatility at local elections and parliamentary elections in London and Birmingham 1959-1979 have evidenced significant variance in electoral behaviour; at different types of elections within an authority, between authorities of the same type, and between trends in local and parliamentary electoral behaviour in coterminous electoral units. The evidence supports the propositions that a proportion of the electorate in inner-London and Birmingham at elections in the period 1959-1979, at certain times and in particular places concomitantly held contradictory local government and parliamentary voting preferences, and that there was a significant degree of inter- and intra-authority variance in electoral behaviour. Thus, the evidence

adds weight to the case for the influence of contextual factors upon voting behaviour at local elections and erodes the 'annual general election' thesis.

Further support for contextual voting was provided by comparison of trends between local and parliamentary electoral dealignment. Denver has argued that there is a consensus among analysts that the electorate has become more unpredictable and volatile. Indeed, there is no dispute among political scientists that party attachments in Britain declined in the 1970s. However, the evidence of inner-London and Birmingham local electoral data presents a slightly different picture. Except for period specific elections the two-party grip over the electorate at the lower-tier Birmingham elections remained firm and actually increased in the 1970s. In inner-London, 1962 apart, the 1960s was a period of increasing partisan alignment at lower-tier local elections, while at the upper-tier the 1960s was a period of declining party attachments. In contrast the parliamentary elections in coterminous constituencies of inner-London show a general pattern of decline in partisan support over the 1959-1979 period, though, from 1974 this trend was sharply reversed.

The evidence throws up some contradictions to the orthodox view that pre-1970 elections are characterised by partisan alignment. At the 1962 and 1963 lower-tier elections in Birmingham, Denver's 'twin pillars' were seriously undermined in many inner-city wards as voters turned to the Liberals at local elections. Indeed, net volatility at the Birmingham lower-tier elections was as period specific in its extremes and of the same magnitude or more, as that of the 1970s. This weakening of traditional connections between part of the electorate and in this case the Labour Party, albeit short lived, clearly predates the emerging trend of dealignment at the parliamentary electoral level detected by Butler and Stokes.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that in some locations at certain times the electorate at local elections in the 1960s were just as ready sway in response to short term factors as was Sarlvik and Crewe's 1974 parliamentary electorate.

The evidence of this chapter has identified the existence of contextual voting behaviour; the next step is to attempt to explain why the electorate are at times influenced by the context they vote in. Rallings and Thrasher have concluded that :

The identification of such potential sources of variation is important ... the possibility that aggregate national trends are at least in part the product of the smoothing out of contradictory local forces must not be neglected' (Rallings,C., and Thrasher,M., 1997:168).

However, these sources of variation in electoral behaviour remain elusive to quantitative research methods. Nevertheless, the investigation into which factors influence local government electoral behaviour and the relationship between this level of electoral behaviour and parliamentary electoral outcomes in coterminous electoral units can be taken forward by the qualitative approach of the historian, and to this end the next four case study chapters must turn their attention.

The four case studies, in detailed narrative accounts, will try to identify and assess the relationships and processes involved in local electoral behaviour in their historical context. These findings will provide the foundation of hypotheses about the relationships between local electoral behaviour and contextual socio-economic and political variables which can then be tested by inferential statistical techniques in chapters 9 and 10 and thereby corroboration or otherwise established. In this way it intended that convergent lines of evidence from the two disciplines will reveal the existence and significance of influences upon local electoral behaviour and its relationship with parliamentary electoral behaviour that have hitherto been overlooked or underestimated.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **BIRMINGHAM LADYWOOD**

#### **5.1:Introduction**

From 1945, and throughout the period of interest of this study, the Birmingham municipal electoral pendulum oscillated between the Labour and Conservative parties in a two-party duopoly that maintained a vice-like grip upon the city's local politics. The Liberals had not contested in a single ward at the 1952, 1953 and 1954 Birmingham County Borough elections, and the party from 1955 to 1959 had put up candidates in less than a third of the wards. At the 1955 County Borough elections the Birmingham Liberals had taken just 2.2% of the vote. In contrast, at the 1962 municipal elections the Liberals contested in 26 of the 43 wards and took 16% of the Birmingham vote. At the 1962 elections Wallace Lawler became the first Liberal candidate to be elected to the city council since John Fryer had won, unopposed in the King's Norton ward, in 1938. In fact Lawler had won the first Liberal victory in a three-cornered contest since 1919. At the 1975 Birmingham District Council elections the city's Liberals were able to contest in all wards and took 16.4% of the Birmingham vote (Phillips 2000:passim). The elections of 1962 and 1975 are milestones in what are usually considered two distinct phases of Liberal revival at the local electoral level in Birmingham. They are also, respectively, parts of the two national upsurges in Liberal Party support at the municipal level and the parliamentary electoral level, especially by-election, in the late 1950s to early 1960s, and the early 1970s. How far the votes of the electorate at the local government level were crucial to the Liberal Party revivals at the Parliamentary electoral level, and to

what extent those votes were cast in consideration of local issues will now be explored in the Birmingham case study of Ladywood.

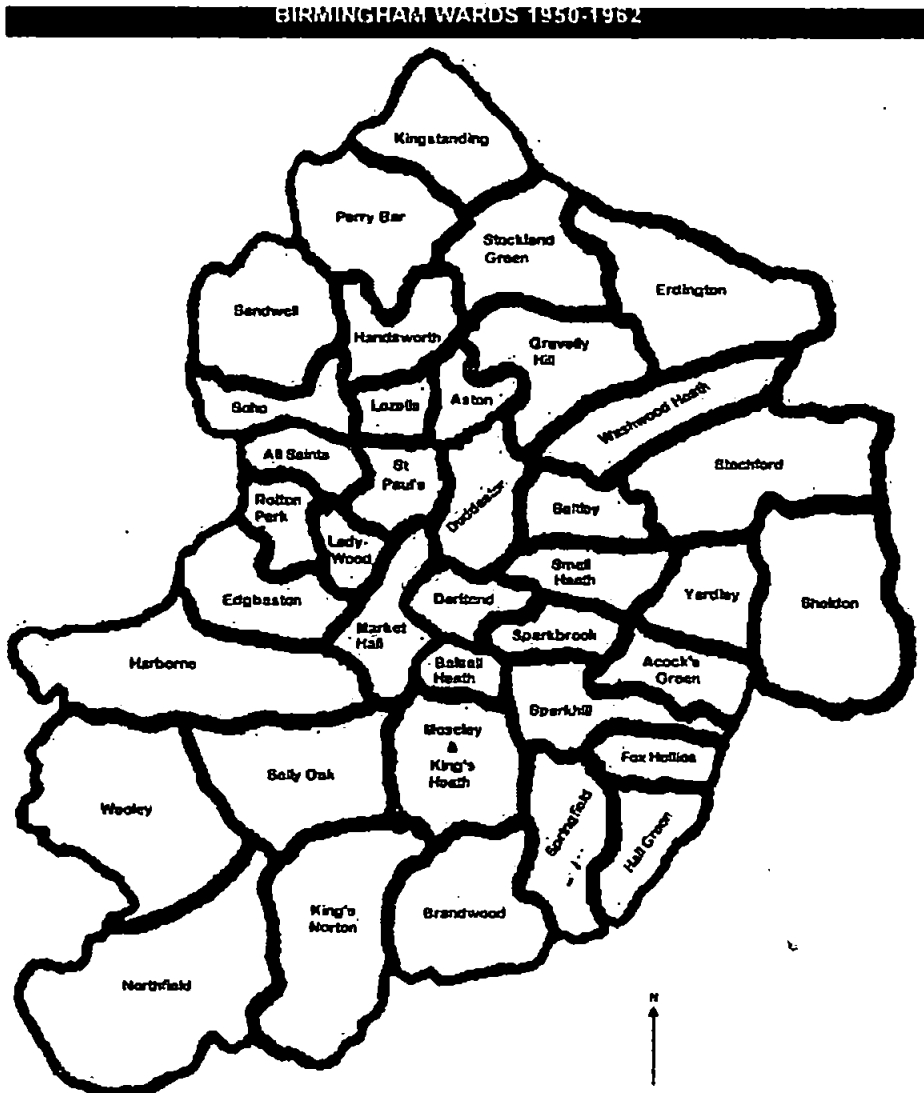
**5.2:Ladywood, its boundaries and electoral history**

The inner-city constituency of Ladywood was comprised of the Duddeston, St Paul’s and Ladywood wards at parliamentary elections up to and excluding the February 1974 general election. In the 1962 ward boundary revisions a part of the St Paul’s ward and a part of the Market Hall ward were subsumed by the Ladywood ward ( see maps 1 and 2 below). A part of the remainder of St Paul’s was included into an expanded Duddeston ward and the rest combined with the Lozells ward to create a new ward called Newtown (see explanatory notes map 1). Thus, the 1962 ward revisions have a minimal impact upon the integrity of a comparison of local and parliamentary electoral behaviour in the Ladywood constituency. The revised parliamentary constituency of Birmingham Ladywood at the February 1974 general election is somewhat more problematic, (see Table 30 below) however the focus of our concern in this case study is primarily upon the Birmingham Ladywood constituency and its component local electoral wards up to1974.

**Table 30: Birmingham Ladywood constituency and component local electoral wards 1959-1979 and contiguous constituencies.**

CONSTITUENCY	1959-1970 wards at general elections
LADYWOOD	Duddeston, St Paul’s, Ladywood
ALL SAINTS	All Saints, Rotten Park, Soho
HANDSWORTH	Handsworth, Lozells,Sandwell
SMALL HEATH	Deritend, Saltley , Small Heath
Revised wards from May 1962	
Ladywood = Ladywood + part St Paul’s + part Market Hall	
Duddeston = Duddeston + part St Paul’s	
Newtown = Lozells + part St Paul’s	
CONSTITUENCY	1974 –1979 wards at general elections
Ladywood	Ladywood, AllSaints, Rotton Park,Soho
Handsworth	Aston ,Handsworth, Sandwell
Small Heath	Duddeston, Newtown, Saltley, Small Heath

**Map1: Birmingham ward boundaries 1950-1962. Source, The Birmingham Post Year Book.**



Ladywood Constituency = Duddeston ward + St Paul's ward + Ladywood ward at General Elections 1959-1970 inclusive.

In May 1962 the Birmingham ward boundaries were changed and the Ladywood ward subsumed part of the St Paul's ward and part of the Market Hall ward. However, the Ladywood Constituency was still defined by its pre-1962 ward boundaries. Therefore, at the 1964, 1966 and 1970 General Elections more than half the local government electorate of the NEWTOWN ward (see map 2 overleaf) voted in the Ladywood Constituency.



**Table 31: Lower-tier municipal election data, 1959-1973, the wards that comprised the Birmingham Ladywood Constituency at General Elections 1959-1970, ( Newtown ward included)**

Year	Ward	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON%	LAB %	LIB %	OTH %
1959	Duddeston	1	14708	24.31	56.58	21.71	78.29	0	0
1959	Ladywood	1	11453	26.85	38.86	30.57	69.43	0	0
1959	St Paul's	1	13115	25.59	27.84	36.08	63.92	0	0
1960	Duddeston	1	13668	19.78	41.4	27.34	68.74	0	3.92
1960	Ladywood	1	10395	21.82	24.58	37.71	62.29	0	0
1960	St Paul's	1	12449	19.76	21.96	39.02	60.98	0	0
1961	Duddeston	1	12847	25.35	47.81	24.1	71.91	0	3.99
1961	Ladywood	1	10395	25.61	39.82	28.55	68.37	0	3.08
1961	St Paul's	1	11733	23.31	20.96	39.52	60.48	0	0
1962	Duddeston	1	17706	20.6	41.14	27.28	68.42	0	4.3
1962	Ladywood	1	14472	21.56	16.31	39.07	55.38	0	5.55
1962	Newtown	1	17341	26.88	9.42	15.32	37.63	47.05	0
1963	Duddeston	1	17144	23.05	49.45	23.29	72.74	0	3.97
1963	Ladywood	1	13473	21.93	14.22	42.01	56.23	0	1.76
1963	Newtown	1	16714	29.68	1.93	12.66	43.92	41.99	1.43
1964	Duddeston	1	16500	22.03	42.48	23.49	65.97	7.54	3
1964	Ladywood	1	12104	25.55	14.32	40.32	54.64	3.49	1.55
1964	Newtown	1	15693	30.06	10.76	16.28	47.24	36.48	0
1965	Duddeston	1	16253	20.29	9.7	43.68	53.38	0	2.94
1965	Ladywood	1	11236	24.8	10.66	55.33	44.67	0	0
1965	Newtown	1	14268	33.97	32.83	13.29	26.94	59.77	0
1966	Duddeston	1	16046	24.78	27.31	23.11	52.1	24.79	0
1966	Ladywood	1	10716	24.59	7.82	40.38	48.2	11.42	0
1966	Newtown	1	12718	31.4	17.93	10.59	35.74	56.67	0
1967	Duddeston	1	14594	25.16	27.83	24.62	52.45	22.09	0.84
1967	Ladywood	1	10666	28.1	7.11	48.28	41.17	10.54	0
1967	Newtown	1	11564	32.02	21.74	13.5	32.38	54.12	0
1968	Duddeston	1	13800	29.02	24.02	26.54	22.9	50.56	0
1968	Ladywood	1	9723	23.93	32.31	62.91	30.6	6.49	0
1968	Newtown	1	9462	33.34	59.53	8.21	16.13	75.66	0
1969	Duddeston	1	12877	31.23	20.57	25.44	22.71	5.84	46.01
1969	Ladywood	1	8373	30.71	18.9	45.39	26.49	24.78	3.35
1969	Newtown	1	7257	32.4	31.35	12.68	27.99	59.34	0
1970	Duddeston	1	12873	25.69	12.83	18.87	46.98	34.15	0
1970	Ladywood	1	7754	36.72	19.88	21.18	42.08	22.2	14.54
1970	Newtown	1	7546	34.35	1.85	22.69	37.73	39.58	0
1971	Duddeston	1	11851	30.54	10.72	13.62	48.55	37.83	0
1971	Ladywood	1	8173	33.79	39.28	20.89	60.17	18.94	0
1971	Newtown	1	7763	42.11	6.27	10.46	47.9	41.63	0
1972	Duddeston	1	10646	32.5	11.19	14.25	37.28	48.47	0
1972	Ladywood	1	9714	30.34	33.15	31.15	64.3	4.55	0
1972	Newtown	1	9341	37.64	2.39	12	42.8	45.19	0
1973	Duddeston	1	10073	29.42	11.15	10.13	39.36	50.51	0
1973	Ladywood	1	9729	33.84	10.52	14.11	46.73	36.21	2.95
1973	Newtown	1	9889	35.61	0.31	9.61	45.04	43.35	0

The Newtown ward was the location for the election of the first post-war Liberal Party candidate, Wallace Lawler, to the city council in 1962 (Table 31), and the Ladywood constituency was the seat Lawler won at a parliamentary by election in 1969. Much of the Newtown ward, before the 1962 ward boundary alterations, had

been the Labour stronghold of the St Paul's ward, thus at parliamentary elections the majority of Newtown ward's local government electorate were part of the Ladywood Constituency electorate. Labour had won a seat in the St Paul's ward at the 1945 municipal elections and made a further gain in 1946 when Dennis Howell, the future Labour Minister, took just over 60 % of the votes cast. Labour, apart from temporarily losing a seat to the Conservatives at the 1947 municipal elections, had won every electoral contest in the ward up until Lawler's triumph. In the inter-war period the ward had been dominated by the Conservatives.

Lawler had, however, first contested in the neighbouring Lozells ward in 1957.

Lozells had been a Labour Party stronghold throughout the 1950s, and a Conservative redoubt in the 1930s and 1940s, and had little history of Liberal intervention.

Similarly, the Ladywood ward last had a Liberal presence in 1914 and the ward had been dominated by the Conservatives from 1929 to 1939. The Duddeston ward (Duddeston and Nechells 1911-1950) had been dominated by the Labour Party since 1911 and had no regular Liberal intervention or presence until 1963. Clearly, the electoral history up until the 1960s, of the wards that made up the Ladywood constituency, evidences a state of virtual dereliction as far as the Liberal Party was concerned.

### **5.3: Inner-city Birmingham and Liberal Party electoral strategy**

In 1956, on television and radio and in the local and national press a Birmingham Liberal had revealed the 'city's festering sore of homelessness', and by 1961 the Liberal News could laud the Birmingham Liberals as having a 'proud and unequalled record in their long fight for the homewaiters' (Liberal News 27 April 1961). On the back of local community discontent over housing issues Wallace Lawler, at his sixth

attempt at office, won the Labour inner-city stronghold of the Newtown ward, and thereby the Liberals had gained a voice in local government for the first time since the 1930s. Lawler's success at the March 1966 general election, when he came second in the contest for the Ladywood Constituency, confirmed the efficacy of his brand of community politics and brought about a complete change in the electoral strategy of the Birmingham Liberals. Despite opposition from some elements of the Birmingham Liberal party, Dennis Minnis, the local party's full-time organiser 'pushed through a plan for high concentration on a few central wards rather than a dissipation of energy fighting a large number of suburban wards as had been the case until then' (Liberal News, April 1970). This revised electoral strategy of 'putting candidates forward in the Inner-Wards of the City where they [considered] the Labour Party most vulnerable' (Birmingham Mail 25 April 1966) quickly paid off (see Table 31). Success followed for the Liberals when their candidate Ken Hardeman took a second seat from Labour in the Newtown ward at the May 1966 Birmingham County Borough Elections. Labour lost their third and final seat at Newtown in 1967 when the Liberal candidate Gordon Herringshaw took 54 % of the vote. At the 1968 local elections the Liberals took seats from Labour in the two adjoining wards of Duddeston and Aston. At Duddeston the Liberal candidate, R.A.Corns took 50.5 % of the vote, which gave him a resounding overall majority of over one thousand votes, a swing from Labour to the Liberals of almost 28% (see Table 31). Similarly, in the Aston ward the Liberal candidate, Paul Tilsley, took 52% of the votes cast, with a swing of 25.4% from Labour to the Liberals. At the May 1969 municipal elections the Liberals made further gains in Duddeston and Aston, with their Aston ward candidate, G.A.Gopsill the regional party treasurer, taking 58.2% of the vote. In the Duddeston ward, Dennis Minnis ran as an Independent Liberal against Roy Hammersley the

official Liberal candidate who was endorsed by the Ladywood Constituency Association and the national leadership, but not by the Duddeston Ward Liberal Association. Despite this party schism between ward and constituency level that exemplifies Liberal Party local autonomy, and fielding two candidates in a four-cornered contest against a Labour and a Conservative candidate, Minnis took 46 % of the vote and with it the seat from Labour (see Table 31).

Thus, in May 1969 the Liberals had seven councillors, five of them from wards within the Ladywood Parliamentary Constituency and thereby a much broader electoral base from which to launch their parliamentary by election campaign that elevated Lawler into the Commons. It prompted The Birmingham Post to speculate that 'An apparent hardening conviction among the working-class voters in the city centre wards of Birmingham that the Liberals are their true allies could make the Liberal Party the main opposition group on Birmingham City Council this time next year' (20 May 1969).

#### **5.4: Inner-city housing and Lawlerism**

The explanation for this partisan dealignment by traditional Labour supporters cannot be found in any sudden conversion of the local electorate to Liberalism. The Birmingham Post observed of the electorate in these wards the fact that 'they are largely ignorant of official Liberal policy' (ibid). Indeed, 'Lawler ... admits that hardly any of the electorate could tell you what the Liberal party policies are, and ... some of them would not even know what party he represented' (The Birmingham Post, 4 May 1968). The newspaper located the reason for the swing from Labour to the Liberals in the much more prosaic and pragmatic, but nevertheless pertinent, issues of 'Damp bedrooms, blocked drains and cracked plaster [as] the hidden

persuaders behind the continuing success of the Liberal Party in Birmingham' (The Birmingham Post, 20 May 1969). The Liberal candidates, mostly younger people, had built up a reputation for being 'dedicated to getting repairs done, for getting results', indeed, the 'electorate obviously believes these men will pursue any complaint - no matter how trivial' (ibid). The Birmingham Post regarded the voting trends in these inner-city wards as a 'refreshing situation of people voting not on national trends but very definitely on local issues - on problems they could see from ...[their]... windows' (ibid). The phenomenon of grass roots Liberalism, from the party's single success in 1962 until their expanded presence on the city council and voice in local politics was termed 'Lawlerism' by the local press. Other prospective Liberal candidates had adopted his 'controversial brand of Liberalism' and the interest of the electorate was maintained by 'advice bureaux and regular newsletters and leaflets' in what was described as 'an all-year round election campaign which had created a loyalty to the established candidates' (ibid).

Indeed, the recognition of housing as a potent electoral issue was not confined to its salience to inner-city municipal elections, or just a concern of the Birmingham Liberals. As Brian Walden, the Labour candidate for the neighbouring inner-city Parliamentary Constituency of All Saints observed, 'housing [is] a problem no politician in Birmingham can ignore' (Birmingham Planet, 9 Jan. 1964). Walden's warning echoed earlier concerns expressed by Dennis Howell MP, at a meeting of the Birmingham Labour Group and Labour MPs in 1962 when Howell observed that the 'long delay between clearance and rebuilding [was] creating serious problems for the Party' (Birmingham City Council Labour Group Minutes: Vol.6, 24 Oct. 1962). The remarks also reflected a concern from a different perspective, expressed by the then

Conservative councillor and future MP of a neighbouring inner-city ward, Anthony Beaumont-Dark, that local councils 'were flagrantly abusing the charity of the ratepayers' (Aston Conservative and Unionist Association Minutes 12 June 1963). Nevertheless, the Labour Party were successful in Birmingham at the 1964 general election and rightly claimed that 'Throughout the City, in practically every Constituency, we have exceeded our expectations in the Owner-Occupier areas' (Report on October 1964 General Election; Birmingham Joint Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Committee).

Paradoxically, however, Labour's 'vote [had] declined in the strong traditional areas' (ibid). As Howell and Walden had intimated, the fall in Labour support could 'be explained in certain areas ... where clearance areas have not been redeveloped, in pre-war Municipal estates where the Rent issue is still with us' (ibid). The potential for political exploitation of housing issues is apparent in a report from the Housing Management Committee of the controlling Labour Group to the Birmingham Borough Labour Party Municipal Policy Conference in March 1962. In 1962 excluding existing council houses the council controlled 14,960 properties in redevelopment areas and 14,162 properties designated for slum clearance. However, in 1961 there were 49,000 families on the Housing Register, and the rate at which the Housing Register was increasing outpaced that of homes available. There were also approximately 30,500 privately owned slum properties in the city's central areas. Although by 1962 some 21,576 of these properties had been 'reconditioned' and 'first-aid repairs' carried out on thousands more, the Borough Labour Party deemed the situation a 'colossal problem facing the Housing Management Committee' (Birmingham Borough Labour Party Minutes: Municipal Policy Conference Report of the City Labour Group

Housing Management Committee March 1962). The pro-Conservative Birmingham Mail, the most popular local daily newspaper, put the waiting list in December 1961 at 50,000 families (Birmingham Mail, 13 April 1962). Wallace Lawler, the Chairman of the city's Liberals, put the figures at 60,000 families on the waiting list and a further 40,000 families living in slum clearance areas, and described the redevelopment of the commercial centre of Birmingham as a 'multi-million facade ...side by side with... indescribable housing conditions... and misery in the back streets' (Liberal News 27 April 1961).

The grievances of the voters in these inner-city wards of the Ladywood Parliamentary Constituency and the responses of prospective Liberal candidates that enabled them to translate that discontent into electoral support, will now be assessed.

#### **5.5: Housing conditions, voter discontent and Liberal responses.**

The houses of the inner-city wards of Birmingham were predominately squalid slums, many designated for eventual clearance. They comprised a mixture of council owned properties, owner-occupiers, private sector rental tenants renting houses, flats or rooms, furnished or unfurnished. Housed within these disparate tenures was a growing population of young married couples, with or without offspring, generally living-in with parents. The relative proportion of each category of tenure in these wards was of course constantly, if very slowly, changing over the period of this study's interest. However, squalid, overcrowded slum conditions persisted to a greater or lesser degree over this period in these wards, as did discontent about the speed of the re-housing programme. Exacerbating this discontent was anger over the levels of rents in both the public and private rental sectors.

This dissatisfaction was compounded by the local authority's housing policy. The tenants of slum properties taken over by the council were subject to rent rises whilst waiting for re-housing, or eventual council financed repair and modernisation, that is installation of an inside toilet, a bathroom, a hot water system and in some cases a kitchen. In the private rental sector 'thousands ... had their rents increased as a result of the 1957 Rent Act'. To counter the potential adverse effect of the Act upon local voters the Conservatives ran a concerted campaign to 'prove that the Rent Act is not the landlord's charter as alleged by the Socialists' (Birmingham Mail, 2 May 1958). Indeed, it was considered that the result in a neighbouring inner-city ward, where seven out of ten voters privately rented, would be 'a measure of reaction' to the Act (The Birmingham Post 3 May 1958).

Added to this disquiet was an alarming threat to security of tenure, in that landlords after the lapse of a three-year lease could evict in order to sell a property. Rent rebates were non-existent in the private rental sector until 1973, and in both the public and the private rental sectors rent-rebate schemes and fair rent schemes in the period excluded all but the very poorest of tenants by dint of an income threshold qualification. In the main the employed tenant on wages much lower than the so-called national average wage did not qualify for rent rebate or assistance. Indeed, in 1960 a survey by The Birmingham Post at the May local elections found that the rent rise affecting 73,000 council tenants in the city and a rate rise of 2s 6d affecting the owner-occupiers of the city to be 'by far the most unpopular measures among the voters' (The Birmingham Post 10 May 1960). Such was the differential between the earnings of many of those in the inner-city wards and the level of rent in the newly constructed council houses

that were available, that 'many tenants ... are having to refuse tenancies because the rents are too high' (Birmingham Mail 29 March 1968).

All of these problems and the discontent that they generated continued to colour local elections in these wards into the 1970s. In the 1970s inflation and unemployment, and increasingly vociferous demands from tower block tenants to be re-housed in homes more suitable for families with young children, added to voter discontent.

Liberal policy in the city was a two-pronged strategy that focused upon housing conditions, and its economic corollary rising rate and rent burdens. A local electoral conundrum that Lawler suggested could only be resolved by reform of the rating system. More practically Lawler set up a Liberal Advice Centre that helped residents with a raft of problems not just solely housing. Lawler, some years later at the party's Eastbourne Assembly of 1970, outlined his brand of community politics and his proposal that the Liberal Party should develop it nationally.

His tried and tested tactics were based upon the establishment of a Liberal Advice Centre, in practice a housing surgery, at ward level in a derelict constituency to attract Liberal sympathisers. Lawler related how a local community centre or hall was booked, a leaflet sent to every house in the ward and the local Citizens Advice Centre and other bodies 'alerted to our activities' (Liberal News Thurs. 15 Oct., 1970). Tea, posters, literature and the prospective Liberal local electoral candidate welcomed the visitors. Set aside was a private room where the Liberal Adviser and a secretary dealt immediately with a visitor's grievance, be it about housing, health, education or whatever. As Lawler related, 'cases are dealt with on the spot... a typist, types the

letter... to the appropriate body or authority and gives the same to the applicant, to read, approve... and post, a copy being kept in the file for future reference' (ibid). As well as being a housing surgery the Advice Centre was also an informal meeting place where visitors discussed local and national political issues and were invited to 'join the party, join the tote, or even if they desire, join in the planning of some militant campaign' (ibid).

The success of these tactics in former derelict wards was commented upon in the local press. The Birmingham Mail observed how 'Some parts of Birmingham had a longstanding Liberal aura about them, others have acquired one [and] Newtown [ward's] has been acquired recently. This is Lawler country and modern Liberalism has really put its back into ... propaganda there' (Birmingham Mail 27 April 1964). The popularity of the housing surgeries reflected the problems of the Newtown ward and explained why 'it had been possible for Lawler to win it at all' (The Birmingham Post, 6 May 1965). Indeed, the explanation for the revival in Liberal Party fortunes in this 'solid Labour ward [where] traditional party allegiances had become blurred' was tenant discontent over the inability of 'the council ... to do repairs quickly or satisfactorily enough... [and] the personality of the candidate' (ibid). The Labour Party candidate, Joe Harvey was in no doubt: 'About the issue in Newtown there is no argument. It is housing. People don't want to talk about economics. They want to talk about bathrooms, running water and good facilities and places where children can play' (ibid). The electorate also wanted to talk about health issues caused by the adverse effects of slum-land living. The extent of the problem can be gauged by Wallace Lawler's comments to the Liberal Party Council in London in 1966: 'In Birmingham last year over 7,000 families asked to be re-housed from unfit houses

because of acute medical conditions, the net number who were found new homes were 23' (Liberal News, 27 May 1966). Indeed, in 1967 the council re-housed 29 families from the inner-city wards because of an outbreak of infective tuberculosis, a further 17 in 1968 and 11 in 1969 before the outbreak was controlled (Birmingham Statistics Vol.,14:119) Clearly, Lawler and his Liberal colleagues had found a niche in the local electoral market.

The Liberal Advice Centres were an integral part of an electoral strategy to win the Birmingham central wards as a springboard for parliamentary electoral success. More than half of the electorate of the Ladywood Constituency up until the February 1974 general election lived in the Duddeston ward, and thus, the capture of its local electorate's support was regarded as a vital stepping-stone in order to win the parliamentary seat. In 1967 the Liberals contested Deritend, a contiguous ward that bordered both the Duddeston and Ladywood wards. Deritend, with equally dire housing conditions, was regarded as 'a link through Ladywood and Duddeston to Newtown where their two councillors [sat]' (Birmingham Mail 2 May 1967). At the May local elections, Gordon Herringshaw the Liberal candidate for Newton ward, was able to crow to the press that, 'our advice bureaux are crowded with people who may not be Liberals but come to us because we get things done for them' (Birmingham Mail, 6 May 1967). The centrality of these Advice Centres was acknowledged in 'Party Platform' an annual local electoral feature in the Birmingham Mail where the major parties expressed their views during the local electoral campaign. In 1972 the Liberal candidate for Duddeston, Dennis Minnis, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Group, explained how 'These families have the sort of problems which are typical of the hundreds I deal with at my Advice Centre each Wednesday

evening' (Birmingham Mail 27 April 1972). Among the problems Minnis alluded to was the discontent of many Duddeston tenants who 'all have lived in flats and maisonettes and each has the same wish – to move to a house' (ibid). Duddeston was a forest of multi-storey tower blocks and 'annually [provided] Birmingham's most extraordinary display of election posters [an] impressive show of orange and black banners and slogans slung from balconies' (Liberal News, 29 April 1970). The problems of housing loomed large in both the local electorate's voting calculus and the tactics adopted by prospective Liberal candidates to benefit from this groundswell of discontent.

Furthermore, inextricably linked with housing conditions and rent levels were the issues of rates and council spending. Although the issue of rates may not have had the same electoral purchase in these inner-city wards where much of the electorate were dependent upon public housing, it was nevertheless important to those owner-occupiers who lived there. The issue of rates and council spending was a substantial plank in the Liberal Party's local electoral appeal throughout the city. For those in public housing in these wards the consequence of the council's decision to keep the level of rates down was an inevitable rise in their rent. For those in the private rental sector and owner-occupiers more directly, increases in the rates meant an increase in household expenditure and resentment towards the city council, which up to the 1972 Housing Finance Act, provided a blanket subsidy from the rates towards council rent irrespective of a tenants level of earnings.

The slum clearance programme, the building of new council estates, the repair and modernisation of slum properties, and the vast reconstruction of Birmingham's

commercial centre, comprised an ambitious and costly scheme. Notwithstanding central government subsidy a great deal of the cost had to be borne by the local electorate. For instance, the cost of repairs to the thousands of inner-city substandard houses was recouped from council rents, rates and the government subsidy meant for council house building. For every £1 spent by the council on these repairs, 12s 3d was recouped in rent, 5s was recouped from the rate fund and only 2s 9d from the central government Exchequer Grant. Birmingham's civic debt had grown from £79 million in 1951 to £180 million by 1962, and the expenditure of rate assisted committees had more than doubled in the same period from £21 million to £45 million (The Birmingham Post, 13 April 1962).

Understandably, without the constraints of office, or its likelihood, the Liberals could make much of the issue of rates, as indeed did both the major party groups when not controlling the council. At the 1965 local elections the Liberals pointed to the fact that 'Birmingham's total rate demand has gone up nearly two-and-a-half times that of comparable cities which have Socialist controlled councils' (Birmingham Mail 27 April 1965). Indeed, by this time, Wallace Lawler, the sole Liberal on the council representing Newtown ward, 'had made a tremendous impact in the ward [and had] paid particular attention to ... demands for cost-cutting methods in municipal departments that would cut the rates' (Birmingham Mail 4 May 1965). At the 1970 Birmingham municipal elections the Liberal leader Jo Grimond led an attack on both council party groups in the city press for having placed an excessive financial burden on the rate and rent payers of the city (Birmingham Mail, 21 April 1970).

The predominant electoral refrain in local election campaigns in 1960s and 1970s Birmingham, expressed in the Liberal, Conservative and Labour manifestos, cited by columnists in the local press, pedalled by prospective candidates and of concern to the local electorate, were the issues of housing, rents, rates and council spending. In addition to these issues, from the mid 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the debate over comprehensive education increasingly became an important local electoral issue, (the impact of which will be discussed in a following section). However, some explanation of how the Birmingham Labour Party came to lose control of these inner-city wards is necessary. How and why a local electoral political vacuum was created in these traditionally Labour voting wards that gave the political space to Liberal candidates needs to be expounded. As the Birmingham Borough Labour Party pondered in the wake of the May 1962 local elections, 'Newtown should be a Labour safe seat ... to have lost by over 400 votes needs some explanation' (Secretary's Report to the Executive Committee On Municipal Elections May 1962: B.B.L.P. Ex.Com Minutes Vol., 12, 1962-1963).

#### **5.6: Birmingham Labour Group and political pragmatism.**

In this section it will be argued that the electoral opportunity that opened up for the Liberals in the inner-city wards was a consequence of the Labour Group's often tenuous grip on council control, and an electorally pragmatic housing policy implemented by the Labour Group in order to remain in contention with their close rivals for the Birmingham vote, the Conservatives. In 1961 the Labour and Conservative groups on the council both had fifty-seven seats. However, the Labour group had twenty-one Aldermen and the Conservatives sixteen, thus, Labour

controlled with a small majority of five. Despite further Labour gains in 1963 and 1964, the Conservative group established a clear majority in 1966 and maintained control until 1972, when the Labour group, in what was a national local electoral phenomenon, were swept back into power with gains of nineteen seats. In 1973, the year the Aldermanic system was discontinued, Labour with seventy-three seats, had an overall majority of twenty, with the Conservatives on forty-four and the Liberals on nine. However, overall control was soon lost when, in 1975, the Labour group were reduced to sixty-three, the Conservatives increased to fifty-five, and the Liberals with eight, thus, having a voice in a hung council.

This alternation in council control by the two major parties, characterised by very brief periods of overall control and longer periods of tenuous control and even minority control, was in part a product of the marginal nature of a number of the Birmingham wards. In 1962 the Birmingham Borough Labour Party had identified fifteen wards as marginal and in need of 'special organising and financial assistance' (Report of a Special Meeting of Ward Secretaries, 19 Feb. 1962, B.B.L.P. Exec. Comm. Minutes, Vol 12). The same committee in 1969 identified sixteen marginal wards, however, the report recommended 'a drive on the Liberal slanted seats ... and a special meeting of [candidates and agents] to consider a special approach to combat the challenge from the Liberals in those wards' (B.B.L.P. Exec. Comm. Minutes 1969-1971). In addition to the threat posed by Conservative candidates the Labour group by the late 1960s were faced with a battle on two fronts: in the marginals, historically fought over by Labour, the Conservatives and occasionally by the Liberals, and by increasing Liberal intervention in wards considered by Labour as strongholds.

Electoral pressure on the Labour Group emanating from owner-occupiers and council house tenants was expressed both in the local press and at the ballot box in the late 1950s and 1960s. The pro-Conservative Birmingham Mail took the part of the rate-payers who, it claimed 'can no longer afford the cost of Socialism ... which... made Birmingham one of the most highly rated County Boroughs' (Birmingham Mail, 6 May 1958). At the 1960 Birmingham municipal elections Labour's share of the total votes cast was its lowest since the Second World War, and the controlling Labour Group lost seven seats, all to Conservative candidates. Surprise was expressed in the press at the loss of the Sheldon ward with its huge municipal housing estates, as was the loss of the Balsall Heath ward with its large number of back-to-back slum properties. In the other five wards lost to the Conservatives, each a mixture of owner-occupiers and council estates, losses were also ascribed to the 'stay at home Labour supporters'. In October 1960 at two by elections, one in Hall Green, a Conservative voting owner-occupier ward where the Liberals took one third of the vote, and the other in Handsworth, an inner-city ward, the Labour candidates were pushed firmly into third place (Evening Despatch 13 May 1960, Birmingham Mail 13 May 1960, Birmingham Post 28 October 1960). At the same time in Lozells the Liberal candidate Wallace Lawler had taken 30% of the vote. The Birmingham Borough Labour Party not only expressed concern 'at the reaction ... to... rent increases and the organised opposition [to the increases] from numerous quarters' but were also aware of the variance in electoral volatility across the city's wards caused by their inability to satisfy the demands of two sectors of the electorate whose economic self-interests were incompatible.

In a report to the B.B.L.P.'s Executive Committee on the 1960 municipal elections in the city, Harold Nash, the Area Organiser, observed how 'Local Policy affects the results in no uncertain manner in varying degrees in different parts of the city'. Nash blamed the 'considerable abstention' of Labour voters upon 'the bad way in which we presented our case for an increase in the rents of Municipal Houses'. Furthermore, Nash concluded that 'rents [and] rates ... made many of our supporters abstain' (B.B.L.P. Exec. Committee Minutes Vol., 11, 1960-1961). In four Birmingham local government by elections in 1961, half-way through the parliamentary term of the boom and bust 1959-1964 Conservative Government, at a time when, 'it might have been expected that the Socialist vote would be higher' (The Birmingham Post 23 June 1961), the Conservatives retained all four seats, with the Liberals taking second place in all four wards and taking over 30 % of the vote in two of the wards. To combat the loss in electoral support among erstwhile Labour voting owner-occupiers, in the preparations for the forthcoming 1962 diet of local elections, the B.B.L.P. Executive Committee 'agreed to allow the officers to spend what they considered necessary in the production of literature concerning the Rate issue, because the [electoral] position at the moment was extremely delicate because of the proposed increase in the rates' (B.B.L.P. Exec. Committee Minutes 31 Jan. 1962).

The controlling Labour Group on Birmingham City Council had, however, pre-empted the concerns expressed by Nash and the B.B.L.P., over the rent/rate electoral conundrum. Indeed, in April 1961 The Birmingham Post reported that the Labour Council had become 'less doctrinaire in its approach [and had] shown greater readiness to respect the feelings of the voters [and] greater independence in relation to the party outside the council' (Birmingham Post 14 April 1961). The article

adumbrated the Labour Group's shift to the right in its policies regarding public housing provision, rents and rates. It had become increasingly apparent to many Labour councillors and prospective Labour councillors campaigning in those wards with a high proportion of council tenants and the inner-city wards, that the burden had shifted in this rent/rate electoral balancing act, towards the council rent payer.

In early 1963 this rightward shift in policy provoked rumblings of discontent within the Birmingham Labour Party. However, it got positive support in the local press. The Birmingham Post asked the Labour Group Leader, Harry Watton, 'if co-operation with the Conservative Group ... increasingly apparent in recent years would continue'. Watton was optimistic that 'both parties could work ... in the interests of the city' although he vehemently denied that this meant 'that the Socialists had moved to the Right' (Birmingham Post 21 May 1963). The denial did not, however, convince every Labour councillor, especially those whose wards were predominately council tenanted. In July 1963 the Labour Group's Working Party on Housing Finances met with the Labour Group to consider housing subsidies from the rates. A large deficit on the Housing Revenue Account was anticipated due to a shortfall in rental revenue from the council's stock of recently built multi-storey flats. On each dwelling there was a loss of £90 per annum. However, Alderman Watton, the Labour Group leader was adamant that he 'was not prepared to put the whole of the deficit from tall flats on the Ratepayer' (Birmingham City Labour Group Minutes, Vol.,6, 1962-1964, Minutes of Meeting with Working Party on Housing Finances, 8 July 1963).

This, of course, threatened further increases in the level of council rents and provoked a revolt by a number of Labour councillors despite the fact that any decision

concerning municipal policy was subject to the party whip. The nine dissident councillors addressed protest meetings on the city's council estates and, in due course, with much ward level and B.B.L.P. member support, voted against increasing rents. The dissidents had the whip withdrawn, nevertheless they had the support of the Birmingham Trades Council which accused the Labour Group of foisting the decision to increase municipal rents on the party and 'urged' a socialist rent policy' (The Journal No.,204, Nov.,1963). The dissidents had the support of many in the wider party at ward level, at constituency party level and at Borough Party level. Indeed, the Handsworth Constituency Labour Party, put forward a motion that the Birmingham Borough Labour Party convene a special Municipal Policy Conference to decide upon the party's policy on the rents and rates issue. Their refusal to convene a meeting sparked a petition from thirty-four members of the Birmingham Borough Labour Party and the behind the scenes dispute between the Labour Group and the B.B.L.P. 'exploded in public' (Birmingham Planet No.2, 12 Sep. 1963), with much in the local and national press and the current affairs television programme 'Panorama'. The dispute resulted in an enquiry by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party led by Reg Gunter M.P. which supported the decision of the Birmingham Labour Group (Birmingham City Labour Group Dispute Over Municipal Rents 1963, B.B.L.P. report to the National Agent, Vol1, Vol.2).

At the 1963 local elections in seven of the eight wards involved in the revolt the Labour majority averaged 23% and the Conservatives were second placed. Clearly, Labour candidates in these wards, whose councillors revolted against the Labour Group decision over rents, were not particularly pressurised at that time by Liberal intervention. However, in the main these councillors represented wards with huge

council estates where they maintained the support of these traditional Labour voters by campaigning against increases in rent, even to the extent of losing the party whip. Central to the dissidents decision to revolt was discontent in their wards over rent levels brought about by the city council's controlling Labour Group's shift to the right in Municipal Policy.

During the 1960s, as the Birmingham Labour Group wrangled with internal division over housing and as the Conservative's eroded their council majority, the Liberal Party had ousted Labour in many of the inner-city wards. Additionally, membership of the Birmingham Borough Labour Party and its finances had plummeted. At the end of the 1960s the B.B.L.P. had an annual deficit of £2,500 and faced a 'critical problem' in that it was unable to finance much needed improvements to party organisation in the constituencies and 'raise money for the General Election' due some time in 1970 (B.B.L.P.Exec.Comm. Minutes, Treasurers Report 23 Oct. 1967).

Additionally, pressure upon the Labour Group was exerted by the local press on behalf of the ratepayers and by the B.B.L.P. on behalf of council tenants and private renters throughout the 1960s. The tone of the press attack is perhaps encapsulated in a question posed to the Birmingham electorate by the Sunday Mercury in an article accompanied by a photograph of a packed car park in the foreground of a council tower block. The headline ran 'Are we subsidising cocktails and cars?' The article, in Birmingham's most popular local Sunday newspaper, explained how 'the taxpayer and the ratepayer through the Exchequer and local rate subsidies are helping to pay the rents of the homes of these people' and alluded to a typical workers earnings of £20- £30 per week ( Sunday Mercury 7 April 1963). In contrast, in the preparations for the 1966 local elections Labour councillors were warned that 'The problems of

housing, rents and rates will be crucial issues [and that] every candidate needs therefore to be familiar with the progress already made by the Labour Government in tackling these problems' (Partnership: A Newsletter for Labour Councillors, Vol. 1, No.2, April 1966, Local Elections Special Supplement No.1).

As evidenced in the newsletter to Labour councillors, by 1966 the importance of the issues surrounding housing had become apparent at the national level of party organisation, however, the advice was rather too late for Birmingham's Labour Group which lost control of Birmingham Council at the 1965 local elections after fourteen years at the helm. The Labour Group's electoral post-mortem determined that the reasons why control was lost was 'not because of anything the Conservatives did, but because we failed to retain the loyalty of many of our supporters'. Indeed, the Birmingham Post lauded Labour's term in office for having 'kept a sharp eye on spending [and having] instituted a basically Conservative cut-your-coat-according to your cloth system of priorities (Birmingham Post 24 April 1966). In regard to the ratepayers the Labour Group acknowledged its own failure to 'counteract successfully the Tory appeal to self interest as opposed to the good of the whole'. In the case of the council tenants, the failure was blamed upon the 'attitude of Municipal tenants who stayed away from the polls because their rents increased'. Furthermore the Labour Group acknowledged the breach between itself and the wider party in Birmingham, 'which as a whole [had] become lukewarm in its support of the Labour Group'. A lack of confidence in the Labour Group brought about by its 'failure to have effective consultation' regarding housing policy (Birmingham City Council Labour Group Minutes, Vol.7, 1965-1967, Document 91, Why Labour Lost Control).

At the 1966 local elections the Conservatives gained control of the council at an election with a record low poll of 31.7%. They pushed up council rents, began to sell off council houses, council land and properties owned by the council. Furthermore, at the 1968 local elections the Birmingham Conservatives could boast that after two years in control 'rates had been held down to a minimum ... Corporation spending given its biggest ever pruning'. At the same time they had produced a 'tremendous increase in the rate of house building', re-housed 22,000 from the slums, moved almost a thousand families with young children from unsuitable flats to houses and enabled 3,600 council tenants to become owner-occupiers by purchasing their council houses (Birmingham Post 19 April 1968).

Although there was much discontent among the council tenants because of rent rises imposed by the Conservative council and equal dismay in the inner-city wards as cut backs in council spending slowed down the rate of repairs and slum clearance, it was far from clear that Labour in Birmingham would, or even could, benefit electorally from the situation. Indeed in 1968 amidst rent protest meetings across the city, the B.B.L.P. held an extraordinary meeting. 'The main purpose of the meeting [was] to associate the Labour Party with Municipal Tenants – to seek to re-establish the relationship which used to exist when tenants automatically looked to us as their champions' (B.B.L.P. Housing Rent Protest Meeting 29 June 1968). It was this void that had been filled by the Liberal candidates in the inner-city wards.

The Birmingham Borough Labour Party and the Labour Group on the council had identified their electoral vulnerability and determined to rectify it. However, local policy in the 1970s would continue to be shaped by calculation of the impact any

change to the rent/rate balance could have upon support. At the 1970 local elections the Birmingham Borough Labour Party were determined to 'halt the Liberal rise in the city's inner-ring wards' which they considered 'as a much more serious threat than [that of] the Conservatives in these areas' (Sunday Mercury 12 April 1970). Indeed, Labour since 1968 had paid more attention to the needs of these areas, distributing leaflets to tenants inviting them to public meetings to protest against the Conservative controlled council's retrenchment that meant tenants 'Get Less Repairs For More Rent' (B.B.L.P. Leaflet). Nevertheless, Labour were also aware that in order to threaten their position as opposition on the council, the Liberals needed to win a substantial number of the outer-wards where housing conditions were not an electoral issue. Labour's electoral calculation would no doubt have been informed by the thirteen gains that Labour made from the Conservatives at the 1970 local elections when the wards dominated by huge council estates, returned to the Labour fold.

Furthermore, just as Labour's electoral stock was rising so that of the Liberal Party appeared to be falling. At the 1970 Birmingham local elections the Liberals had hung on to the seat in the Newtown ward by a margin of 1.8% of the vote, only forty-eight votes more than the Labour candidate (see Table 31) and although they had gained a seat in Aston ward from Labour it had been with a margin of only twenty-three votes. The total Liberal vote at these elections had slumped by around 30 per cent. At the equivalent elections in 1968 the Liberals had a total Birmingham vote of 16,137, in contrast to a total vote of 13,172 in the city at the 1970 elections. It was a development that did not escape the notice of the press that considered the Liberal's 'much trumpeted advance halted' (Birmingham Mail, 7 May 1970). At the June 1970 General Election Wallace Lawler had lost his seat at the Ladywood Constituency to

Labour only a year after he had so spectacularly gained it at a parliamentary by election. Although the Liberals had gained another seat in the Newtown ward at a local government by election in July 1970 the Birmingham Post considered that the Liberal 'glitter may have dulled a little' and explained how Labour 'by emulating some of the Liberal tactics, has been able to regain some ground lost during the decade' (Birmingham Post 6 July 1970).

In 1971 John Hannah, the Labour candidate for the neighbouring All Saints ward encapsulated Labour's change of focus and attitude towards the inner-city wards with the campaign promise that 'Birmingham's vast resources under Labour will be directed towards the eradication of squalor in our neglected inner-city wards' (Birmingham Mail 5 May 1971). At the 1971 local elections in Birmingham there was a massive swing back to Labour and the Conservative majority was cut back from sixty-six to six. Nevertheless, the Liberals were still able to pull off a resounding victory in the inner-city Aston ward where their candidate took the seat with a majority of over one thousand votes, defying any influence from national trends. However, at these elections the Liberal's total vote in the city had slumped again. At the 1972 Birmingham local elections Labour swept back into power after gaining nineteen seats. In contrast, the Liberals just managed to hang on to the Newtown, Duddeston and Aston seats by slender majorities. The Liberal 'glitter' however, had been rekindled in the All Saints ward where the housing issue 'was still dominant' (Birmingham Post 23 June 1972), as their candidate converted a 923 Labour majority into a 192 majority for his party. Success in the All Saints ward was short lived. At the all-out 1973 post-reorganisation election to the new Birmingham District Council, Labour took all three seats that they held right up to the next round of local authority

ward reorganisation in 1982. However, the Liberals took all three seats in the Duddeston ward, and were to lose only one of these seats to a Lib/Lab candidate at the 1978 elections. In the Newtown ward the Liberals had taken two of the three seats in a close contest with Labour. The Liberals took 45.4% of the vote and Labour 45.0%. In the Ladywood ward the Labour candidates swept the board taking all three seats. Labour, in 1973, had increased their majority on the Birmingham District Council to twenty.

However at the next round of District Council Elections in 1975, the party lost overall control of Birmingham City Council. The 1976 local elections were crucial for Labour as a loss of one seat would push them into minority rule. In the event the Conservatives gained nine seats and regained control of the city council with an overall majority. The Liberals managed to maintain their hold upon Duddeston ward in 1975 and in 1976, whilst Labour in the Ladywood ward increased their majority over the Liberals in 1975 and took the seat again in 1976 with the Liberals coming a poor third to the Conservatives.

Clearly, Labour had made some ground in the inner-city wards and in the outer wards with large council estates. The party had kick-started the city's council house building programme when they had regained council control in 1972, and began an extensive programme of inner-city renewal. However, the revitalised housing policy 'had come at a cost. Rates and the number of council employees [had] risen sharply at a time when inflation [had] also pushed up costs' (The Birmingham Post 30 April 1976). The tide of local electoral opinion, dependent upon the private / public balance of tenure, had ebbed away from the Labour Group as it had in the 1960s, when the Liberals had

benefited from a groundswell of housing discontent in the inner-city wards. The cycle had begun again by the 1978 local elections when a minimal rate rise of 3% introduced by the Conservative controlled council, was considered by the press 'to hardly amount to a local issue'. The Birmingham Mail, nevertheless, thought that 'Labour hope to pick up some protest votes on the council estates from the rent increase averaging 80p a week' (Birmingham Mail 27 April 1978).

The Liberals at the 1978 Birmingham local elections were only able to field twenty-three candidates and retained Newtown with only seven votes, came a poor third in Ladywood, but held on to Duddeston with a 49.6% share of the total vote. Their winning candidate in Duddeston, George Minnis, had ran on a Lib/Lab ticket. Minnis had been very active in housing issues, including public/private joint ventures with housing associations and self-build programmes for young married couples of the area, and hence, had a very significant personal following, illustrated when he ran as an Independent Liberal and defeated the official Liberal candidate in Duddeston in 1969. However, Liberalism in Birmingham at the end of this study's interest was back at its electoral position of the late 1950s with 5.8 % of the total Birmingham vote. Indeed, the former organiser of the Young Liberals asked 'is the Liberal Party still around? The Party that many of us joined for its commitment to helping the poor and powerless and its ideal of giving power to the people has almost disappeared' (The Liberal News 30 Jan 1979). The reasons for this precipitous fall in electoral support for the Liberal Party will now be examined below.

### **5.7: Changing salience of the housing issue.**

The rise and decline of the Liberals in the inner-city wards of the Ladywood Parliamentary Constituency appears to have mirrored the rise and decline in the

salience of the issues of housing to its electorate. Liberal electoral decline from the 'golden era' of Lawlerism also appears to have mirrored the decline in the number of each ward's electorate over the same period. In 1963, Ladywood had 13,473 electors, Newtown 16,714, and Duddeston 17,144 (see Table 32). At the 1970 local elections Ladywood ward had 7,754 electors, Newtown 7,546 and Duddeston 12,873. At the 1979 local elections Ladywood had risen marginally to 8,759 electors, Newtown had also risen slightly to 8,124 electors and Duddeston 8,124. The decline in Newtown was almost 50%, in Ladywood over 40% and in Duddeston over 50%. The immediate grievances of these missing electors had been resolved. Throughout the mid 1960s to late 1970s they had been re-housed on council estates throughout the city and most of the homes of those remaining electors had been modernised. Other local issues, such as education and the sale of council houses came to the fore, and the perennial problems of rates and rent levels persisted. However, the electoral niche of housing conditions had for the Liberals lost much of its purchase and the party's grip on the inner-city electorate had thereby loosened.

The transformation in housing conditions in these inner-city wards is shown in the stark contrast between the ratio of residents of old to new properties in 1963 to that of 1972, illustrated by the figures of Table 32. Furthermore, the diminishing number of residents in the three wards over the period is apparent in the figures of Table 34. The severity of the housing problem and indication of its electoral salience is evidenced by the magnitude of the council housing list, the rate of new applications per year and the number of council and private homes available each year to ameliorate the problem (see Table 33). Clearly, the demand far outweighed the supply and for the majority of those resident in the inner-city wards, private housing no matter what its rate of provision, was not an economic option.

**Table 32. Estimated resident populations of central redevelopment areas: persons dwelling in old and new properties mid-year 1963-1969. Source: Birmingham Statistics, Birmingham Abstract of Statistics Number 14, Vols., 14 and 15, 1969-1970, p17; and Vols., 17 and 18, 1972-1975, p29, City of Birmingham Central Statistics Office.**

YEAR	Type of Property	Ladywood Ward	Newtown Ward	All wards
1963	OLD	15,900	19,900	56,400
	NEW	2,500	1,700	14,500
1964	OLD	14,000	17,600	47,500
	NEW	2,500	1,600	16,200
1965	OLD	12,000	14,000	46,000
	NEW	2,800	2,000	17,700
1966	OLD	10,100	11,300	31,500
	NEW	3,600	3,100	20,300
1967	OLD	7,500	7,600	22,000
	NEW	3,900	3,600	22,000
1968	OLD	2,100	1,200	6,500
	NEW	4,300	4,800	24,100
1969	OLD	800	200	3,200
	NEW	4,900	5,900	26,700
1970	OLD	700	200	No figures
	NEW	5,300	6,500	No figures
1971	OLD	500	300	No figures
	NEW	5,500	8,500	No figures
1972	OLD	600	300	No figures
	NEW	5,900	10,100	No figures

**Table 33: Applicants for council accommodation 1963-1969, families re-housed by corporation 1963-1969, new dwellings completed by type 1963-1969, Birmingham Statistics, Birmingham Abstract of Statistics, Number 14, Vol., 14 and 15, pp111-122, 1969-1970, City of Birmingham Central Statistics Office.**

Year	Council Waiting list	New Applicants	Re-housed by Council	New Dwellings Council Built	New Dwellings Private Enterprise built	Housing Association Built
1963	46,574	6,567	6,842	2,160	1,644	38
1964	39,188	4,927	6,986	2,407	1,436	123
1965	37,966	4,781	7,797	4,036	1,254	135
1966	38,828	8,351	9,340	4,717	1,532	101
1967	31,506	8,784	13,020	8,006	1,583	296
1968	27,883	7,774	13,965	4,103	1,843	182
1969	26,140	8,387	11,559	2,520	1,839	466

**Table 34: Estimated annual net migration by ward mid-year 1964-1969, 1971-1973, 1974-1978, Birmingham Statistics, Birmingham Abstract of Statistics, Number 14, Vol., 14,15,17,18,21 and 22, City of Birmingham Central Statistics Office.**

Year	Duddeston	Ladywood	Newtown
1964-1965	-700	-1,300	-3,100
1965-1966	-3,300	-1,000	-3,100
1966-1967	-1,300	-1,500	-3,800
1967-1968	-2,200	-4,300	-5,200
1968-1969	-1,300	-500	-400
1969-1970	*	*	*
1970-1971	*	*	*
1971-1972	-2,400	+400	+1800
1972-1973	-1,500	+100	-300
1973-1974	*	*	*
1974-1975	-700	-700	-200
1975-1976	+200	-100	-700
1976-1977	+200	-600	-1,200
1977-1978	-900	-100	-100

The pattern of housing tenure changed significantly during the period of this study's interest. In 1951 council houses accounted for only 18% of the housing tenure in Great Britain. However, by 1961 this had risen to 27% and reached 32% in 1979, before declining steadily to 18% again in 1996. Clearly, in the 1959-1979 period public rental tenure, the condition of public housing and the level of rent was an important factor in the lives of an increasing proportion of the electorate. In contrast, the percentage of all households privately rented fell dramatically from 53% in 1951 to 31% in 1961 and down to 13% by 1979. A 22% percentage point drop in private rental accommodation between 1951 and 1961, and a further fall of 18 percentage points between 1961 and 1979 indicates the severity of the housing crisis in cities such as Birmingham. Furthermore, the increase in owner-occupation from 29% of all households in 1951 to 55% in 1979 is indicative of the increasing importance of the rate level to the electoral calculus of both this new class of owner-occupier and local authority councils. (Adonis,A., and Pollard,S., 1997:193).

### **5.8: Voting and issues of immigration and education**

It would be remiss to exclude from consideration upon the calculus of the local voter in the inner-city wards of Birmingham during the 1959 to 1979 period the effect, if any, of immigration. Birmingham City Council had a five-year residence qualification that applied to all immigrants into the city seeking social housing, whatever their race. Once on the waiting list a points system came into operation and then an arbitrary and discriminatory selection procedure by Housing Officers determined the suitability of an applicant for new, old or 'patched' council housing. The waiting period before immigrant applicants could go on to the active housing list was reduced from five years to two years in 1977, however the selection procedure ensured the vast majority of immigrant applicants were destined for the inner-city (see Rex and Moore 1967:19-41).

Thus, all immigrants, including Commonwealth immigrants that were arriving in increasing numbers from the late 1950s were left with a choice between owner-occupation and private rental tenure. The concentration of immigrants in the inner-city areas where private rental predominated, such as Aston, was a direct consequence of the Labour controlled city council's decision to introduce the five-year residence rule, this was not a national party political policy, but a locally determined policy. It is no surprise then, that in wards such as those that comprised the Ladywood constituency - those with a large proportion of council owned properties and properties taken over by the council for slum clearance or repair and re-modernisation - that any grievance over competition from immigrants for social housing was electorally insignificant in the early 1960s. Indeed, as Rex and Tomlinson point up, 'before 1965 whites were moving into council built properties as their houses were

demolished, whereas immigrants rarely got council houses at all because of the residential qualifications' (Rex and Tomlinson 1979:143). A British Movement candidate had contested the Ladywood ward at the 1969 municipal elections and took a mere 3.4% of the vote. Furthermore, in Aston a predominately private rental sector ward, a British Movement candidate at the 1970 local elections had taken only 4.6% of the vote. These were, at this time the only two candidates at Birmingham local elections representing overtly racist political parties. An upsurge in National Front candidates at local elections in Birmingham occurred in the mid-to-late 1970s. These National Front candidates contested a small number of wards intermittently over that period and rarely took more than 5% of the vote in any particular ward, and never reached double figures in their percentage of the poll in any ward at any election. A National Front candidate at a parliamentary by election held in the Ladywood constituency in 1972 did however beat the Liberal candidate into fourth place, nevertheless, 7% of the votes cast was hardly an electoral endorsement of racism or evidence of a high level of conflict between whites and immigrants over social housing.

Another locally determined issue that may have influenced electoral events in the period was that of education. Education as an issue at the parliamentary and local government electoral level was neither a priority for the governments nor the electorate in the 1950s and early 1960s. The vote winner was housing. Although criticism of the tripartite system, introduced by the 1944 Education Act, had grown in the 1950s and some Local Education Authorities (LEAs) had by the early 1960s ended selection and introduced comprehensives, 'the process had not gone far' (Jefferys 1999:103).

At the local electoral level in Birmingham the main issues of contention between the parties at the 1962 local elections were 'Rates, city finances and housing' (Birmingham Post 2 May 1962). The Birmingham Liberal's manifesto at the following year's diet of local elections directed at the inner-city wards included 'education, social services, youth clubs, transport, finance and rates', just as the National policy of the Liberal Party had 'singled out for attack ... the Labour attitude to education, housing and pensions' (Liberal News, 4 May 1963; 10 Oct. 1963). The Liberals cited inner-city London as an example of how 'where you live [determined] how good an education your child got' and called for an end to the 11+, for non-selection in secondary education and improvement in primary schools (Liberal News 13 Feb. 1964). Clearly, education as an electoral issue was increasing in significance compared to the 1950s.

So much so that at the May 1965 Birmingham local elections the Conservative manifesto, although giving primacy to housing policy and rates, made a commitment to defend grammar schools. Nevertheless, The Birmingham Post observed of the three main parties' manifestos at these elections that 'housing, rates and traffic problems figure prominently [and] Education [in contrast] is dealt with in a mild manner' (Birmingham Post 28 April 1965). Thus, before the Labour Government's Secretary of State for Education, Anthony Crosland, issued the 10/65 circular requesting all LEAs to 'prepare and submit to him plans for reorganising secondary education in their areas on comprehensive lines' (Jefferys 1999:104) education did not have the electoral salience it arguably assumed at elections after the edict.

The main themes of the Conservative manifesto at the Birmingham local elections of 1968 were 'value for rates ... council spending, slum clearance, sale of council houses and the safeguarding of grammar schools', whilst the Labour opposition, criticised the Conservative controlled council for its 'scandalous ... refusal to end the 11+ examination and reorganise on comprehensive lines' (Birmingham Post 19 April 1968; Birmingham Mail 29 April 1968). At the 1969 and 1970 local elections the campaigns focused upon housing, rates and education.

Education continued to be a contentious local electoral issue. Its economic impact upon the ratepayer added to that of the costly requirements of the 1972 Housing Finance Act. The increasing rate burden imposed by the Labour controlled council from 1972 to 1976 as it revitalised the public housing programme and reorganised much of secondary education on comprehensive lines meant that 'public spending and the need for pruning' favoured the Conservatives at the 1976 Birmingham District Council elections (The Times 4 May 1976). At the 1978 and 1979 local elections in Birmingham the issues of rents, rates, housing and social services had come to the fore, and education seems to have been relegated to the electoral backburner. In the inner-city wards that comprised the Ladywood constituency education, as a local electoral issue, had not figured largely in the revival of Liberalism before the 1965 Labour circular, and there is little evidence that the middle of the road education policy carved by the Liberal candidates was of any electoral benefit to them in these wards post 1965.

### **5.9: Conclusion**

However much weight is attached to the issues of housing it is still recognised that the act of voting at local and national electoral levels in this inner-city area of

Birmingham was influenced by a multiplicity of factors originating both locally and nationally and that no monocausal explanation can or should be posited. It is a matter of prioritising factors and when warranted including factors hitherto overlooked or excluded as inconsequential. The qualitative evidence regarding electoral dealignment in these inner-city wards and their coterminous parliamentary constituency adds weight to the assertion that the influence of locally determined factors in the outcome of elections at both the municipal and parliamentary level has been underestimated by existing political science literature. As the case study of Ladywood shows there was a connection between local electoral activity and issues, and parliamentary electoral outcomes in this particular location during the 1959-1979 period. The revival of the Liberals in these inner-city wards and, however temporarily, at the parliamentary constituency level was based primarily upon housing issues. Housing policy had its origins in the sphere of national party politics and parliamentary legislation. However, housing policy was implemented at the local authority level and thereby mediated through the particular political, social and economic milieu of Birmingham. Local authority housing policy was, in the case of the Birmingham Labour Group shaped by consideration of the marginality of council control and the potential impact upon the owner- occupier electors through rates. National economic and political influences such as the 'stop and go' economic policy of the Macmillan era, the inflationary and counter inflationary measures of the governments of the day in terms of interest rate and bank rate throughout the period all impacted at the coal face of local authority provision. How the burden of these national economic factors impacted upon the council rent payer and the owner-occupier ratepayer, and how they impacted upon municipal house building and slum clearance programmes, thus on the quality of life of the electorate, was largely determined by the controlling council group and its

pragmatic electoral calculation of the impact of housing policy upon its support at the voting booth.

The Labour Group's internal division over housing policy and neglect in addressing electoral discontent over housing conditions resulted in a loss of support in the inner-city wards of the Ladywood constituency. This electoral vacuum was filled by the Liberal's opportunistic and ad hominem policies that addressed the disparate grievances of the inner-city municipal electorate. It has been shown that partisan dealignment in these traditionally Labour voting wards provided a foundation for a revival, albeit temporarily, in Liberal fortunes at the parliamentary electoral level in the coterminous constituency based upon local issues concerning housing. Thus, municipal electoral and local party political activity and local government partisan dealignment in these wards was interconnected with parliamentary electoral level dealignment.

An integral part of the explanation for partisan dealignment at both electoral levels in these Birmingham wards were the factors of candidate personality, following, and electoral strategy and tactics, as exemplified by the Liberal, Wallace Lawler.

Personality and following were also a factor in the electoral strategy of the Birmingham Labour Group, particularly under the leadership of Harry Watton. In both the Birmingham Liberal Party and the Labour Group on Birmingham Council there was a large degree of individualism and autonomy from the influences of their respective national party organisations. The Birmingham Labour Group also successfully resisted forces of change from the wider membership at ward, constituency and borough organisational level and thereby implemented a locally

determined municipal policy. Similarly, the Birmingham Liberals, under the influence of Lawler, developed an electoral strategy to concentrate upon the inner-city wards, and campaign tactics to address specific local problems, all of which, though adopted by many Liberal Constituency Associations in the 1970s as 'community politics' was, at the time, a locally determined variant of Liberal Party policy.

The parameters of this locally determined Liberal electoral appeal to the inner-city ward voters was both facilitated and constrained by the political space afforded to them by the electoral strategies of the two major parties. The Birmingham Conservative's electoral campaign focus upon the marginal wards and the Labour Group's shift to the right to compete with them in these marginals for an ever increasing number of owner-occupier voters, to the detriment of their traditional supporters in the inner-city wards gave the Liberals the opportunity to reap electoral benefit from discontent over housing. However, the strategy produced ever diminishing returns as the electorate of the inner-city wards was re-housed and re-located, or had their homes refurbished and thereby their electoral grievances remedied. Indeed, 'by 1975 it was clear that the slum clearance programme which Birmingham had begun in the immediate post-war period was coming to an end' (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 133).

The evidence of this case study of the inner-city wards of the Birmingham Ladywood Constituency supports the contention that local factors have an explanatory role in both local level and parliamentary level electoral outcomes and in the explanation of partisan dealignment at both levels. The evidence has shown that housing conditions, rent and rate levels, and state subsidies were important factors in the electoral calculus of the municipal voter. It has also been shown that the housing policy implemented by

Birmingham council was conditioned by the marginality of council control and housing policy changed with the changes to the political control of the local authority as each of the major parties implemented its own micro political-economy at the local authority level. The evidence from the Ladywood case study illustrates how over time local authority housing policy impacted differently across its wards in relation to the spatial variations in tenure and the temporal changes in conditions of tenure.

However, categories of tenure were not only changing in proportion to one another over time and space but also within categories of tenure there were vast differences in housing conditions and possibilities for tenants to improve their lot. The tower block council tenant with small children was as different to the tower block tenant without small children, as the owner-occupier in a run down inner-city ward was from his suburban counterpart, or, as a council tenant in a compulsory purchased inner-city slum was from his counterpart in a recently built council estate, or, as different from a tenant in the private sector in receipt of rent assistance post 1973 was from a pre-1973 private rental tenant without state assistance living in a damp, overcrowded room.

Tenure as a category over the period of the study is a rather blunt instrument that fails to capture much of the reality of what it is supposed to measure and imply in terms of voting intentions.

The historian Martin Daunton has questioned the validity of 'housing class' (Daunton 1987: pp70-97), and quotes Rex and Moore in concluding that 'men in the same labour market may come to have differential degrees of access to housing' and that 'in addition to classes defined by economic factors at the level of industry and production, there are housing classes defined by bureaucratic or political factors' (Rex and Moore in Daunton 1987: 71). Daunton argues that a large proportion of the

housing stock of Birmingham was controlled by local government, and that the selection process for re-housing was dependent upon certain criteria, such as length of residence, the number of children in the family. The outcome, Daunton argues, was a 'struggle between members of these housing classes over the use of the scarce housing stock in the city,' (ibid). Thus, in the inner-city wards the alienation of traditional Labour supporters who did not qualify to join the ranks of the selected and had to remain confined to the private rental sector throughout the 1960s and most the 1970s. Instead, they joined the ranks of other dissatisfied residents of the area and became susceptible to the blandishments of the Liberal candidates.

It would seem however that the centrality of housing to local elections in Birmingham is an enduring feature, as this quote from the Astonia, a monthly journal circulating in Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield in the 1890s, exemplifies : 'there is no question that the... increase of the surveyor's salary cost the members their seats... Even a Town Council must have some regard for the strongly expressed convictions of its ratepayers' (Astonia Vol.,1, No.,9. 1895)

## **Chapter 6**

### **SUTTON COLDFIELD**

#### **6.1: Introduction**

There is much about Sutton Coldfield that is different from the previous case study location, not least in terms of its political complexion and socio-economic character. This wealthy, middle-class and staunchly Tory heartland had little in common with the inner-city wards that comprised the Ladywood Constituency. Yet, just as the Labour Party were challenged by the Liberal Party in some of its heartland inner-city wards, so the Conservative Party was challenged in its suburban redoubt of Sutton Coldfield by the Liberal Party during the same period. In two very different local electoral contexts the outcomes were similar, as were some of the issues and the processes involved in the elevation of the Liberal Party's support from dereliction to contender for both municipal and parliamentary political power.

The Parliamentary Constituency of Sutton Coldfield and Erdington was comprised of the ten municipal electoral wards of the Borough of Sutton Coldfield and the Erdington ward of the County Borough of Birmingham (see Table 35 below). Under the 1972 reorganisation of local government, the County Borough of Sutton Coldfield was abolished and its now three municipal electoral wards amalgamated within the city of Birmingham (see Map 3 below). These were, Sutton Four Oaks (comprising Hill West, Hill East and Trinity wards), Sutton Vesey (comprising Banners Gate, Boldmere West, Boldmere East and Wylde Green wards), and Sutton New Hall (comprising Maney, Walmley North and Walmley South wards). Each returned three

councillors, one seat contested in each ward annually over a three-year electoral cycle, to the new Birmingham District Council and quadrennially returned one councillor each to the new West Midlands County Council.

Table 35:Sutton Coldfield wards and constituencies 1945-1979,( tenure in 1981) Sources, Birmingham City Council Economic Information Centre.

Wards 1958-1972	Constituency		Wards 1973-82	Constituency	
Banners Gate	Borough Constituency of Sutton Coldfield  (Includes the Erdington ward of the County Borough of Birmingham)	Hill East	Sutton Four Oaks (Sutton Coldfield 1)	Borough Constituency of Sutton Coldfield	
Boldmere East		Hill West			
Boldmere West		Trinity			
Wylde Green					
Hill East		Banners Gate	Sutton Vesey (Sutton Coldfield 2)		
Hill West		Boldmere East			
Trinity		Boldmere West			
Maney		Wylde Green			
Walmley South					
Walmley North		Maney	Sutton New Hall (Sutton Coldfield 3)		
		Walmley South			
		Walmley North			

Map 3: Birmingham Metropolitan District ward boundaries as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 1974. Source: Sutton Coldfield Local Study Centre, Sutton Coldfield Library.



Sutton Coldfield was a commuter town bordering on the city of Birmingham and the seat had rarely been contested by the Liberals, even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the municipal electoral level the party first contested a single Sutton Coldfield ward in 1956, and in May 1959 contested four of the then ten wards. Astonishingly, the Sutton Coldfield Liberals contested the constituency at the 1959 general election and came a creditable third, taking 7,543 votes, with Labour taking a little over 11,000 votes and the Conservatives a massive 33,000 votes. Remarkably, this was at a time when the Liberals were organised in only two of the eleven wards of the constituency. The Liberals retained their deposit at the 1959 general election and by 1964 there were eleven Liberals on the Borough Council and four on the then upper-tier Warwickshire County Council. At the 1964 general election the Liberal candidate almost doubled the party's 1959 vote in the constituency, and at the 1966 general election, though in third place, virtually tied with the Labour candidate. At the first elections to the new upper-tier West Midland County Council in April 1973, the Liberals took two of the three Sutton Coldfield seats and came second in the other, with Labour in third place in them all. In the May elections to the new lower-tier authority, the Birmingham District Council, the Conservatives swept the board with the Liberals taking over a third of the vote and coming in second place in each ward. In the local elections, of 1975-1979 all three wards at both levels were in the hands of the Conservative Party, however, the Liberals had replaced the Labour Party as the contender for political power in Sutton Coldfield and pushed them into a distant third place. Why and how this electoral dealignment was possible in this constituency and the municipal electoral wards that comprised it will now be examined in detail.

**Table 36: Lower-tier municipal election data, 1958-1972, the wards that comprised the Sutton Coldfield Constituency at General Elections 1959-1970. Asterisk denotes unopposed. Source: Sutton Coldfield Municipal Diary, Sutton Coldfield Library (1970 electorate figures missing).**

Year	Ward	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON	LAB	LIB	IND
1958	Banners Gate	1	4282						*
1958	Boldmere East	1	4065	55.5	13.6	43.7	100	57.3	
1958	Boldmere West	3	4314	50.4	1.3	37.6	100	23.6	38.9
1958	Hill East	2	4360	33.7	40.2	70.1	29.9	100	
1958	Hill West	1	4601						*
1958	Maney	1	4100	54.2	2.3	39.4	23.5	37.1	
1958	Trinity	1	3546						*
1958	Walmley North	2	5380	82.6	2.8	31.6	32.8	35.6	
1958	Walmley South	1	4523						*
1958	Wyde Green	1	4743						*
1959	Banners Gate	1	4343						*
1959	Boldmere East	1	4125	55	16.6	58.3	100	41.7	
1959	Boldmere West	1	4357	47.6	35.2	67.6	100	32.4	
1959	Hill East	1	4988			*			
1959	Hill West	1	5135			*			
1959	Maney	1	4061	53.4	1.1	42.2	16.7	41.1	
1959	Trinity	1	3863			*			
1959	Walmley North	1	5698	48.4	0.6	49.7	50.3	100	
1959	Walmley South	1	4708	40.1	29.6	64.8	100	35.2	
1959	Wyde Green	1	5011			*			
1959	Erdington	1	21343	46.2	15.1	52.5	37.42	10.08	
1960	Banners Gate	1	4417			*			
1960	Boldmere East	1	4156	49.1	13.4	56.7	100	43.3	
1960	Boldmere West	1	4396	39	25.2	62.6	100	37.4	
1960	Hill East	1	5798	31.2	4	52	100	48	
1960	Hill West	2	5609			*			
1960	Maney	1	4081	46.2	5.4	47.5	10.4	42.1	
1960	Trinity	1	4172			*			
1960	Walmley North	1	5853	51.2	5.4	52.7	47.3		
1960	Walmley South	1	4822	36	50	75	100	25	
1960	Wyde Green	1	5271			*			
1960	Erdington	1	21585	36.23	25.81	55.63	29.82	14.55	
1961	Banners Gate	1	4397			*			
1961	Boldmere East	1	4208			*			
1961	Boldmere West	1	4422						*
1961	Hill East	2	6460	41.6	1.6	42.8		47.2	
1961	Hill West	1	6119			*			
1961	Maney	1	4059	49.6	22.2	38.9	100	61.1	
1961	Trinity	1	4395			*			
1961	Walmley North	1	6060	46.8	15.4	57.7	42.3		
1961	Walmley South	1	4805			*			
1961	Wyde Green	1	5562			*			
1961	Erdington	1	22265	44.27	17.52	46.77	29.25	23.98	
1962	Banners Gate	1	4369			*			*
1962	Boldmere East	1	4300			*			
1962	Boldmere West	1	4418	51.4	9.4	54.7		45.3	
1962	Hill East	1	6630	44.6	22.6	38.7		61.3	
1962	Hill West	1	6258	39.2	10.8	55.4		44.6	

Year	Ward	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON	LAB	LIB	IND
1962	Maney	1	4041	46.3	18.2	40.9		59.1	
1962	Trinity	1	4401			*			
1962	Walmley North	1	6175	33.1	13	56.5	43.5		
1962	Walmley South	1	4878	46.6	17.6	33.1	16.2	50.7	
1962	Wyde Green	1	5654	48.8	36.6	68.3		31.7	
1962	Erdington	1	17111	39.96	4.76	38.61	27.54	33.85	
1963	Banners Gate	1	4372	59.7	3.4	46.2	10.8	42.8	
1963	Boldmere East	1	4452	51.4	3.4	51.7		48.3	
1963	Boldmere West	1	4377	51.4	15.2	57.6		42.4	
1963	Hill East	1	6700	45.4	21.2	39.4		60.6	
1963	Hill West	1	6403	45.6	3.6	44.4	7.6	48	
1963	Maney	1	3880	48.2	0.3	45.1	10.1	44.8	
1963	Trinity	1	4506			*			
1963	Walmley North	1	6167	39.2	4.6	52.3	47.7	100	
1963	Walmley South	1	5011	46.3	0.5	41.7	16.1	42.2	
1963	Wyde Green	1	5647	49.4	22.8	61.4		38.6	
1963	Erdington	1	17055	41.82	9.17	39.62	29.93	30.45	
1964	Banners Gate	1	4416	56.4	3.6	48.2		51.8	
1964	Boldmere East	2	4701	52.7	0.4	49.8		50.2	
1964	Boldmere West	1	4411						*
1964	Hill East	1	6755	38.1	30.2	34.9		65.1	
1964	Hill West	1	6663	44.5	3.2	51.6		48.4	
1964	Maney	1	3744	41.8	33.2	33.4		66.6	
1964	Trinity	1	4618	49.7	16.2	58.1		41.9	
1964	Walmley North	1	6255	42.1	7.2	52	44.8	100	
1964	Walmley South	1	5248	48.3	17.7	47.7	22.3	30	
1964	Wyde Green	1	5720	47.4	14.6	57.3		42.7	
1964	Erdington	1	16907	40.13	11.14	45.04	33.9	21.06	
1965	Banners Gate	1	4441						*
1965	Boldmere East	1	4826	49.3	18.6	56	6.6	37.4	
1965	Boldmere West	1	4455	50.6	39.8	66.4	7	26.6	
1965	Hill East	1	6776	41	5	48.6	7.8	43.6	
1965	Hill West	1	6871	49.7	20.9	57.4	6.1	36.5	
1965	Maney	1	3750	44.2	12.1	39.9	8.1	52	
1965	Trinity	1	4697	45.1	28.2	64.1		35.9	
1965	Walmley North	1	6267	39.5	21.3	48.2	26.9	24.9	
1965	Walmley South	1	5550	45.9	10.5	49.5	11.5	39	
1965	Wyde Green	1	5749	46.7	55.2	77.6		22.4	
1965	Erdington	1	17024	37.98	28.78	54.46	25.68	19.86	
1966	Banners Gate	1	4434	45.9	2.8	51.4		48.6	
1966	Boldmere East	1	4931	45.3	18	55.4	7.2	37.4	
1966	Boldmere West	1	4475	40.8	41.1	66.4	8.3	25.3	
1966	Hill East	1	6913	35.4	12.9	37.4	12.3	50.3	
1966	Hill West	1	6820	47.6	19.8	56.9	6	37.1	
1966	Maney	1	3737	42.3	11.9	39.2	9.7	51.1	
1966	Trinity	1	4721	37.9	38.2	69.1		30.9	
1966	Walmley North	1	6489	34.3	17.6	45.2	27.2	27.6	
1966	Walmley South	1	5862	37.3	22.2	50.4	21.4	28.2	
1966	Wyde Green	1	5980	37.7	20.6	65.3		34.7	
1966	Erdington	1	17045	31.4	27.41	55.51	28.1	16.39	
1967	Banners Gate	1	4440	42.5	3.6	51.8		48.2	
1967	Boldmere East	1	5073	43.3	6.6	49.2	8.2	42.6	
1967	Boldmere West	1	4399						*
1967	Hill East	1	7061	30.8	12.5	51.3	9.9	38.8	
1967	Hill West	1	7085	38	42.8	71.4		28.6	
1967	Maney	1	3750	47.3	25.4	37.3		62.7	
1967	Trinity	1	4854	34.1	56.4	78.2		21.8	
1967	Walmley North	1	6520	29.4	27.6	53.9	26.3	19.8	
1967	Walmley South	1	5946	30.2	22.7	54.4	13.9	31.7	
1967	Wyde Green	1	6166	35.7	41.2	70.6		29.4	

Year	Ward	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON	LAB	LIB	IND
1967	Erdington	1	19113	31.29	33.84	59.35	25.51	15.13	
1968	Banners Gate	1	4666						*
1968	Boldmere East	1	5039	47.6	17	58.5		41.5	
1968	Boldmere West	1	4404	40.8	66.8	83.4		16.6	
1968	Hill East	1	7012	39.8	24.4	62.2		37.8	
1968	Hill West	1	7525	40.4	48.4	74.2		25.8	
1968	Maney	1	3674	46.4	0.4	49.8		50.2	
1968	Trinity	1	4983			*			
1968	Walmley North	1	6554	31.4	46	64.8	16.4	18.8	
1968	Walmley South	1	6056	34.4	50.2	70.6	9	20.4	
1968	Wyde Green	1	6100			*			
1968	Erdinton	1	23230	24.94	51.72	69.5	17.78	12.72	
1969	Banners Gate	1	5054	48.1	6.8	46.6		53.4	
1969	Boldmere East	1	5361	48.1	7.4	53.7		46.3	
1969	Boldmere West	1	4642			*			
1969	Hill East	1	7371	42.4	17.6	58.8		41.2	
1969	Hill West	1	7384			*			
1969	Maney	1	3819	39.4	25.8	37.1		62.9	
1969	Trinity	1	5347			*			
1969	Walmley North	1	7154	29.8	54.2	77.1	22.9		
1969	Walmley South	1	6503			*			
1969	Wyde Green	2	6423			*			
1969	Erdington	1	24611	22.48	43.28	71.64	28.36		
1970	Banners Gate	1			2.6	48.7		51.3	
1970	Boldmere East	1			9.8	54.9		45.1	
1970	Boldmere West	1			62	100	19		
1970	Hill East	1			5.2	47.4		52.6	
1970	Hill West	1				*			
1970	Maney	1			24.4	37.8		62.2	
1970	Trinity	1				*			
1970	Walmley North	1			31.8	65.4	34.6		
1970	Walmley South	1				*			
1970	Wyde Green	1							
1970	Erdington	1	27272	27.26	5.56	47.22	52.78	0	
1971	Banners Gate		5287						*
1971	Boldmere East	1	5363	40.2	13.8	56.9		43.1	
1971	Boldmere West	2	4938	29.4	24.6	62.3		37.7	
1971	Hill East	1	7427	33.9	26	63		37	
1971	Hill West	1	8038	33.8	29.4	64.7		35.3	
1971	Maney	1	3830	26.7	36.6	31.7		68.3	
1971	Trinity	1	5498	31.4	30	65		35	
1971	Walmley North	1	7210	31.6	9	54.5	45.5		
1971	Walmley South	1	6723	30	22.4	61.2		38.8	
1971	Wyde Green	2	6296			*			
1971	Erdington	1	27667	34.32	27.28	36.36	63.64	0	
1972	Banners Gate	1	-	-			*		
1972	Boldmere East	1	-	-	21	39.5		60.5	
1972	Boldmere West	2	-	-	15.5	40.9		56.4	
1972	Hill East	1	-	-	11	55.5		44.5	
1972	Hill West	1	-	-		*			
1972	Maney	1	-	-				*	
1972	Trinity	1	-	-	28.2	64.1		35.9	
1972	Walmley North	1	-	-	40.8	69.5	28.7		
1972	Walmley South	1	-	-	17.4	58.7		41.3	
1972	Wyde Green	1	-	-	40.4	70.2		29.8	

## **6.2: Labour's displacement by the Liberals**

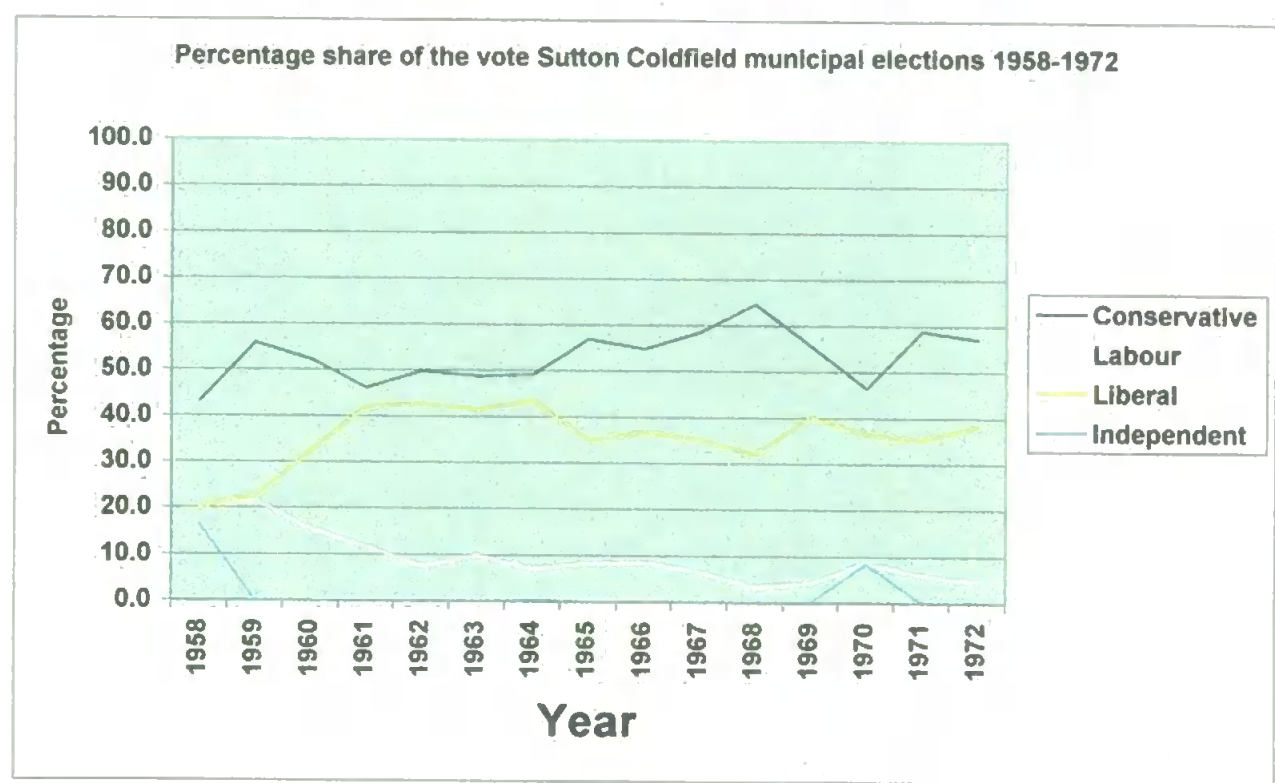
A week after the Conservative Party's victory at the 1959 general election the heavily defeated Labour Party parliamentary candidate for the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Constituency Roy Hattersley, was asked by the local press if Sutton was a safe Conservative seat? Hattersley replied 'yes ... but in time with building development this might change' (Sutton Coldfield News 16 Oct. 1959). Hattersley's prediction was accurate as far as voting behaviour was concerned but highly inaccurate in its implication that Labour might be the beneficiary of any future change. The Sutton Coldfield Labour Party had been formed in 1945 amidst a national sea change in electoral attitudes, however, thereafter, 'faced an uphill struggle against a powerful local Conservative machine' (Roberts 1980:4). Labour's victory in the Walmley ward at the 1957 local elections gave the party, and Sutton, their first Labour councillor.

Indeed, despite the election of a second Labour councillor in the now Walmley North ward in 1959, Labour were unable to break out of Walmley and make any progress in the remaining wards of this solidly Conservative constituency. At the 1960 local elections Labour lost a council seat and later that year their sole representative on the council resigned from the party, though he continued to represent Walmley North as an Independent. Perhaps aware of the changing local political climate, he joined the Liberals and in 1962 contested the Hill West ward. Thus, at the 1962 local elections Labour had no representation on the town council. Nationally Labour had performed very well at the 1962 local elections. However, the Labour Party in Sutton Coldfield was being displaced by the Liberals. Sutton Coldfield Borough Council after the 1962 local elections comprised: ten Aldermen, of whom three were Conservatives and

seven were Independents, twenty-one Conservative councillors, seven Liberal councillors and two Independent councillors.

From the early 1960s any real challenge to the Conservative Party's local electoral hegemony had come from the Liberals (see Table 36 above and Figure 37 below). In the 1970s the Sutton Labour Party went into a virtual terminal decline, indeed, increasingly contesting elections without any campaigning, and at the February 1974 general election the Labour candidate lost his deposit. In fact by the mid-1970s, 'as an electoral force the party was of negligible importance' in Sutton Coldfield (Roberts 1980:36). How and why the Liberals were able to mount this challenge, and reap electoral success where Labour failed miserably, will be assessed below.

Figure 37: Party percentage share of the vote at municipal elections Sutton Coldfield 1958-1972



### **6.3:Sutton's socio-political backdrop**

Rather than a detailed description of each of the ten wards an overview of the three post reorganisation wards is a much more efficient method to convey the barrenness of the ground that Labour's local electoral blandishments fell upon. The Sutton Four Oaks ward was a well-established residential area comprised, in the main, of low density inter-war and post-war owner-occupied housing and upon its incorporation into Birmingham immediately became the city's most prosperous ward. Similarly, Sutton Vesey was made up predominantly of inter-war and post-war owner-occupied housing, (8,832 owner-occupiers, 670 local authority rented in 1981). The Sutton New Hall ward, which encompassed the town centre, had mainly inter-war and recently built private housing, and a high percentage of professional and managerial workers (6,129 were owner occupied, 2,104 were local authority rented and 474 were privately rented in 1981). Sutton New Hall was the only Sutton ward with a council estate of any significant size, the Falcon's Lodge estate. Arguably the Erdington ward had a tenurial mix slightly more favourable towards the Labour party with around 26% of tenure council rented (passim: Birmingham City Council Economic Development Information Centre).

Clearly, issues concerning social housing conditions, re-housing, and council rents would not loom large in the electoral calculus of the majority of the residents of Sutton Coldfield and, where such considerations did, the spatial distribution of this minority of voters in small enclaves within largely owner-occupied wards meant that even if Labour could mobilise all council tenant support it still had an enormous electoral hill to climb. However, this is not to argue that such considerations regarding public housing provision and rents did not have any electoral salience in Sutton Coldfield.

Indeed much of Sutton Coldfield's public housing was by the late 1950s falling into disrepair and its provision unable to satisfy the demands of a rapidly growing town population. Moreover, on Sutton's only significantly sized council estate, the Falcon Lodge Estate in Walmley ward, complaints over defects, the inadequacy of provision, and rent rises due to the impact of the 1957 Rent Act, had provided the foundation of the Labour party's albeit temporary local electoral success in the ward. The town's public housing situation in July 1960 was described as being in a 'tragic state ... [with] 1,031 people requiring housing. Added to this growing waiting list were, by 1963, six hundred people over the age of sixty-five on a waiting list for council built bungalows for the elderly which were being built at a rate of fifty per year (Sutton Coldfield News, 16 Oct. 1959, 8 July 1960, 24 May 1963).

Sutton Coldfield council's response to the town's social housing needs was however, constrained by a number of factors, not least the dearth of council owned building land, a mere twenty acres in 1960, and the spiralling price of land in the borough, from seven to ten thousand pounds per acre. The cost of raising money for housing projects had, furthermore, been increased considerably by the impact of the 1957 Rent Act, in that local authorities could no longer raise comparatively cheap loans from the centrally funded Public Works Commission but had to resort to the free market. A consequence of this was an unpopular hike in the rate poundage from 18s 6d to 20s 6d in 1959. Housing construction costs rose by over 40% during the 1959-1968 period, and more than fourfold in the inflationary economic climate from 1968-1979 (Mitchell 1988: 395). Thus, any proposed social housing programme would be both costly of itself and a further burden on Sutton council's existing housing debt loan that stood at £3.5 million in 1961.

Concomitantly, the costs of the national programme of expansion and improvement in educational provision impacted upon Sutton's electorate as a consequence of the ever-increasing county council precept -contribution demanded from the borough ratepayer. Although central government provided the wherewithal for most of local authority expenditure through the rate support grant, local authorities, nevertheless, differed considerably in 'how fast and how far ... the level of expenditure [was] allowed to rise' and 'Individual local authorities each went through their own particular agonies' over how their contribution would impact upon rates ( Kogan 1975:99-222).

It is perhaps then, unsurprising that Kogan argues that at the local authority association level, interaction with the national decision making process was characterised by a 'dependency on party political majorities' that ' may ... become more responsive to general political movements within their areas' (ibid :78). Clearly, Kogan identifies individual local authority responses to a national policy (education) which were to some extent determined by local electoral considerations. These locally determined responses subsequently had influence in the decision making process of such bodies as the Association of Municipal Councillors, and the Association of County Councils, and thereby impacted upon national policy. Kogan's argument about local authority influence upon educational policy is not the point at issue here. What it does highlight, however, is that the battleground of the education debate was at the local level, in the municipalities and the counties. It substantiates the argument for the salience of the issue of educational provision and the increasing cost of that provision to the local electors of places such as Sutton Coldfield and points towards a variance in one of the manifold determinants of local electoral behaviour dependent upon location.

A further constraint upon the latitude of the Conservative dominated Sutton Coldfield town council was the presence of a phalanx of Independent councillors whose common purpose was the defence of the rate payer interest. In the main throughout the 1960s these Independent councillors were aldermen, however, in the Banners Gate and the Boldmere West wards, they were in the vanguard of local electoral activity and, indeed, elected to council rather than appointed to council. Thus, dissatisfaction with the Tory dominated town council could find an agreeable refuge in support for Independent candidates in a small number of wards for that part of the electorate disinclined to vote Liberal or Labour over such issues as the escalation in rates, the development of both public and private housing within their wards, the costly redevelopment of Sutton town centre, the political merger with Birmingham, and the cost and direction of education policy. Some of these Independents were official representatives of ward Resident Associations and others the self-appointed guardians of the ratepayer interest of their particular ward. In 1962, of the forty members of the Sutton Coldfield council (comprised of thirty councillors and ten aldermen) nine were Independents. At the first post re-organisation elections in 1973 only one Independent, a Resident Association candidate for Sutton New Hall, contested at the Birmingham District Council Elections, and thereafter Independents and Resident Association candidates were noticeable by their absence from the Sutton local electoral scene. The gradual demise of the Independent candidate is perhaps indicative of the increasing politicisation of local government elections in this period, and the impact of merger with Birmingham.

Furthermore, the amalgamation in July 1961 of the many individual ward resident associations under one umbrella organisation, the Sutton Coldfield Federation of

Associations of Residents (S.C.F.A.R.), gave the association the resources to contest, or threaten to contest, as Independents in any ward where its members were dissatisfied with council policy that affected them, and thereby the potential to divide the Conservative vote. In 1964 the membership of the S.C.F.A.R. was 3,000 (Sutton Coldfield News, 8 May 1964). In contrast, in 1965 the total Labour party membership of all thirteen Birmingham constituencies was only 8,830 (Birmingham Borough Labour Party, Report to Executive Committee, 1 Jan. 1965, Document 85). Although the *de jure* influence of the Independent councillors was limited by the large Conservative majority on the council during the period, the local electoral strategies employed on their behalf by the S.C.F.A.R., amplified the *de facto* influence of these Independents in disproportion to their numbers. The threat to put up an Independent candidate against an incumbent Conservative councillor, petitions to and lobbying of the constituency's Conservative MP and of the Minister of Town and Country Planning, public meetings and protests, surveys of electoral opinion and threatened rates rebellions, were among the tactics employed by the S.C.F.A.R. during the 1960s. Although, local politics in Sutton Coldfield was dominated by the Conservatives, their hegemony did not go unchallenged by Independent candidates.

#### **6.4: Liberal strategy**

It was then, in this milieu that Ken Hovers and a couple of friends decided to contest the Maney ward at the 1956 local elections in Sutton Coldfield in what was the first move in an optimistic plan of action to establish a Liberal presence on the Conservative dominated town council. Hovers finished only seventy-two votes behind the successful Conservative candidate. At a municipal by election in the October of the same year, Hovers took the seat for the Boldmere East ward, and in the same ward at the following year's elections a Liberal candidate was returned, and thus the party

had two seats on the town council. Such was the growing support in the Maney ward that the Sutton Coldfield Divisional Liberal Association established a ward branch in Maney. In May 1959 the Liberals contested four Sutton wards, including Boldmere East and Maney, and despite the failure to secure a seat in any of them it was decided to contest the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Parliamentary Constituency at the 1959 general election. In reality the Liberals in Sutton in terms of party organisation had a presence in 'one ward only ... a few friends in two others and one member [the association's treasurer] in a fourth and nothing else' (Liberal News 1, Oct. 1964). The association's coffers held £75, the appointed electoral agent had no experience of municipal elections let alone parliamentary, they 'had no HQ ... no adequate record of their 100 or so members ... [and all activists] were part-timers' (ibid). Hovers and a small number of activists had to underwrite the costs of a public appeal for funds in order to convince the majority of the association's executive to agree to allow him to contest. The cash raised provided the wherewithal to contest and persuaded the executive to approve Hover's candidature. The appeal had also attracted almost three hundred volunteers to help in the electoral campaign and Hovers, although in third place did not lose his deposit. Moreover, the press coverage and campaign activity had elevated the public profile of a hitherto small group of Sutton Liberal activists. Importantly, the election had required that, a working relationship be established with the Erdington ward organisation, and thereby Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Liberal Association was properly formed. Although Erdington at the time had a small organisation and little electoral support, its local electoral fortunes were transformed, when in the early 1960s, albeit temporarily, the Liberals displaced Labour as the challenger in this hitherto Tory stronghold. The significant factor of a particular activist's leadership quality, determination and following, in influencing local

electoral outcomes is exemplified by Ken Hovers who had taken a leading part in the revival of Liberalism in Sutton and Erdington .

The local electoral strategy employed by the Sutton Coldfield Liberals from the late 1950s was a concentration upon a narrow electoral front, 'while widening the front year by year' ( Sutton Coldfield Liberal Party Coordinating Secretary, R Whorwood, Sutton Coldfield News 15 May 1964). At the heart of Liberal campaign was the promise to keep the electorate informed of council decisions, indeed, that 'Residents must be informed how their money is being spent and the developments affecting them' ( Sutton Coldfield News 5 May 1967). A natural campaign corollary of this intention was the demand that the press and public be admitted to council committee meetings or, failing this, that all information regarding such meetings be released as a matter of course rather than as an exceptional event. The Liberals' local electoral appeal was pitched at the dissatisfied of the electorate who regarded the council as remote and unresponsive, and who also viewed the Independent councillor, or Labour councillor, if they had one, as an inadequate conduit for their particular grievances. Symptomatic of this change in electoral attitudes was the rapid decline in the number of Independent candidates, some retiring from local politics and not being replaced, many others being co-opted on to the Conservative dominated council as Aldermen, and others swapping the camouflage of neutrality for the Conservative party colours at local elections. Also in one case a Labour councillor crossed the council floor to the Liberal benches.

The Sutton Liberals, with the help of Erdington ward activists, canvassed the Maney and Boldmere East wards in 1956 and promised the electorate of those wards that once elected they would introduce report-back meetings and produce quarterly letters to keep residents informed of all council decisions that affected their lives. The

methods employed in Sutton Coldfield were very similar to the 'community politics' approach of the Ladywood Liberal Party activists but campaign policy was shaped by and pitched at a very different type of electorate. With the election of Liberal councillors in Boldmere East in 1956 and 1957, the ward electorate was kept informed in an all-year round campaign of council policy decisions or decision making that could affect their lives, and more importantly had a readily accessible representative to listen to and voice their particular grievances. These electoral tactics were employed in contiguous wards and as support grew branch associations were formed in the Maney ward in 1959, Walmley South in 1962 and Banners Gate in 1963. Strong canvassing, constant accessibility and effective channels of communication between elector and elected seem to be the pre-requisites for Liberal party success in these and other wards in the borough during this period. However, the success of Liberal electoral tactics, it will be argued below, was both facilitated and limited by a number of local issues, some of which were of importance to the electors of a particular ward and others of pertinence to all wards but varying in degrees of electoral resonance.

A factor that conditioned the impact of some local issues upon the electorate of each ward was the presence or absence of an Independent candidate. All of the Sutton wards, except Walmley, had a strong tradition of voting Conservative, and in some wards such as Boldmere West and Walmley (1945-1957), the electorate had an equally strong tradition of voting for Independent candidates, who, more often than not were Resident Association representatives. In other wards, such as the Hill ward, Maney, Trinity and Boldmere East there was not a strong history of Independent candidate contestation. It was in this latter group of wards that the Liberals tapped into an electoral discontent that could not find a suitable vehicle for expression.

Nevertheless, the Liberals were able to challenge and to either erode or to usurp completely the electoral support formerly in the hands of the Independent candidates in Boldmere West and Walmley.

### **6.5:Sutton Liberals and local issues**

The catalyst for Liberal success in the Boldmere area was the council plan to build a multi-storey social housing development of six hundred units on church land that the council had compulsorily purchased in the area. A protracted protest campaign against the plan was organised by the Boldmere Residents Association, the Residents Association's councillor, N.Lampert, and the Independent councillor G.Broadhist, both of whom represented the Boldmere West ward throughout the period. The fear of devaluation of their property appeared to be the prime motivation of the Boldmere owner-occupiers (Sutton Coldfield News 11 March, Dec 1960) Moreover, Sutton Coldfield did not have, nor did the majority of its residents want, the type of multi-storey council development that blighted nearby Birmingham's skyline (Sutton Coldfield News 27 May 1960, 25 Aug 1961).. Added to this, and of significance to all owner-occupiers of Sutton Coldfield was the fear of an escalation in their rate demands. Sutton's rates were lower than those paid by the owner-occupiers of nearby Birmingham and Sutton ratepayers were well aware that Birmingham City Council were making a significant loss on multi-storey developments. The Sutton Coldfield electorate had been aware of the multi-storey social housing plan since it was first mooted in the mid 1950s, and in 1960 amid protest and petitions against the plan in terms of situation, size, design and cost, Sutton Coldfield council felt it necessary to assure the electorate that the town's Housing Revenue Account was distinctly separate from the rest of the council's finances and that the flats would be financially

self-supporting (Sutton Coldfield News 11 March 1960). The controversy over the plan to build multi-storey social housing in the Boldmere area was of particular local electoral significance in both the East and West wards, and in the Banners Gate ward which had been created in 1958 by the division of the old Boldmere West ward. The council's final decision and announcement to go ahead with the development came in October 1962 and rather than a development of eleven storey buildings the protests and petitions had resulted in a compromise plan for a number of six storey flats. Nevertheless, the die had been cast in these wards in particular and in Sutton Coldfield in general, that voting Conservative and Independent was no guarantee against property devaluation or increased rate levels. Furthermore, in 1962 the council announced plans for at least a thousand new homes to be built in the town by 1968, and a costly plan for a major redevelopment and modernisation of the town's commercial centre.

In the Conservative stronghold of the Boldmere East ward, which had not been contested by an Independent candidate since 1947, the Liberals, in straight fights with Conservatives at the elections of 1958-1963 had averaged 47% of the vote, had won their first seat on the upper-tier Warwickshire County Council in April 1962 and at the 1964 W.C.C. elections had taken 53.7% of the vote with the ward recording the highest poll of all Sutton wards at these elections. Despite a brief national revival and intervention by Labour candidates 1964-1967, by the mid-1960s the Liberals had established a firm electoral grip in this former Conservative stronghold to a large extent on the back of distinctly local issues.

In contrast any dissatisfaction in the Conservative stronghold of Boldmere West could be vented by support for an Independent candidate representing the Boldmere West Residents Association. The ward had a history of Conservative or Independent

candidates standing unopposed and, 1958 apart, the Liberals never fielded a candidate against an Independent. The only real challenge to Conservative hegemony in the 1960s came at the elections of 1962 and 1963 at the height of the ward electorate's disapproval over the council's decision to build social housing in the area and at a time of protest over rate increase. Turnout in the ward declined through the 1960s and perhaps as many Conservative voters stayed at home to express their disapproval as those that temporarily transferred allegiance to the Liberals.

Similarly, in the Banners Gate ward Conservative or Independent candidates had stood unopposed. However, in 1962 the ward's long-time Independent candidate took up the Conservative party colours and it was not until 1965 that the residents association could field another independent candidate. This candidate, a member of the council's finance committee who had organised an SCFAR petition against the ever-increasing rate burden faced by the town's owner-occupiers, won unopposed in 1965, 1968 and 1971. However, in 1963 in addition to disquiet over social housing and rates the Conservative councillors that represented the borough came under fire for the County Council decision to locate a residential mental health unit in the ward. The ward electorate were angered that their Conservative councillor had neither informed them at the planning stage nor fought hard enough on their behalf to prevent the scheme. It was then in this turbulent electoral climate that the Liberals in 1963 first contested Banners Gate and came a close second. The Liberals had once again established a significant foothold in a new territory on the back of electoral discontent over local issues and had been the beneficiary of a protest vote that had haemorrhaged from the Conservative camp at a time when the alternative of an Independent was unavailable. In subsequent straight fights with Conservative candidates the Liberals

were able to retain this following and come within 3 percentage points of the Conservatives in 1966 and 1967, and finally take seats in 1969 and 1970.

The Liberals first contested the Hill East ward in 1960 and in a straight fight with a Conservative took 48% of the vote. Hitherto the Conservative candidates had been returned virtually unopposed since 1946. In straight fights with the Conservatives at municipal elections of 1961, 1962, and 1963 the Liberals had taken every seat and at the 1964 election had extended their winning majority over the second placed Conservative candidate to 30.2% of the total vote. Intervention by Labour candidates at elections between 1965 and 1967 eroded Liberal support somewhat and the Conservatives regained the seat in 1965 and 1967. However, in straight fights between 1968 and 1972, the 1970 election apart, the Conservatives defeated the Liberals. The Liberal campaigns in the ward, in addition to the rancour concerning rate levels, focused upon two interrelated issues. Overcrowding in the local school, due in part to an increase in the local population, but blamed on the influx of people from the declining suburbs of Birmingham, and the council's decision to grant outline planning permission to build high-density affordable housing on a green-field site in the ward to accommodate this demand. The proposed site straddled both Hill East and Trinity wards. The irate residents of the affluent Moor Hall estate, which overlooked the site, by-passed their Conservative councillors and petitioned directly to the Minister of Town and Country Planning to halt the development which they considered would devalue their properties and exacerbate overcrowding at the school. The controversy dominated local elections in Hill East and Trinity wards from the early 1960s and provided the Liberals with an electoral window to benefit from anti-council feeling in both wards.

In contrast the Liberals, although able to push Labour firmly into third place, were never able to break the Conservative hold over the Hill West electorate. At the fourteen elections between 1959 and 1972 the Conservatives took all but one ward seat, six of them unopposed. The Liberals had first contested the ward in 1962 local election and the issue of contention at this and subsequent local elections was the proposal for a social housing development in the ward made public in March 1962 (Sutton Coldfield News 23 March 1962). At the 1963 elections the Liberal candidate took the seat with a 48% share of the vote in a three-cornered contest that saw turnout in the ward increase to 45.6% of the electorate. The Liberals canvassed and campaigned the ward intensely. In 1965 alone 6,000 report-back letters had been delivered to the electorate of the ward that was also the location of the Hill Ward Ladies Liberal Club (Sutton Coldfield News 2 April 1965).

However, the return to the Conservative fold in this staunchly Conservative ward once a Labour government had come to power in 1964 was quite rapid. It cannot be ignored that Liberal support in Hill West and many of Sutton's wards had increased as dissatisfaction with the 1951-1964 Conservative governments mounted. As the Labour activist and chronicler of Labour party activity in Sutton Coldfield observed: 'The Liberals ... have never been a really serious threat to Conservative stability in the town and their most spectacular successes have always occurred during periods of Conservative government when disillusionment had set in among that party's supporters' (Roberts:4). The explanation for these 'spectacular successes' nevertheless also had a local dimension which should not be ignored.

The Labour Party had a significant following in the Maney ward 1945-1958 when the party averaged a 32.4% share of the vote. Independent candidates had not contested since 1945 and the ward had returned a Conservative at each election until 1961. The Liberals had first contested the seat in 1956 and their candidate had pushed the Labour candidate into third place and had come within four percentage points of the Conservative victor. Indeed, the Conservative share of the Maney ward vote had fallen from 72.8% in 1946 to 38.7% in 1956. In 1961 the Liberals, in a straight contest with the Conservatives, took the seat with a 21.2% majority and, 1963 apart, won all ensuing contests up to and including 1972. Without the alternative of an Independent candidate or a Labour presence on the town council, a significant element of the Conservative and the Labour support in the Maney ward had shifted to the Liberal camp.

Support for the Liberals in the Maney ward was such that in 1959 the party established a ward branch and the Liberal campaign format of all-year round canvassing was put into action. The decline in support for the Labour party in the Maney ward had two clear symptoms. Firstly, in terms of voter apathy as fewer and fewer Labour supporters bothered to vote at all, and secondly, in terms of traditional Labour supporters transferring their allegiance to the Liberal party. The Sutton Labour party had found it increasingly difficult to mobilise former Labour voters in the early 1960s in Maney in particular and in the other wards of the borough in general. Indeed, at a Sutton Coldfield Labour Party meeting held in 1966 the conclusion was reached that 'the disillusioned had turned to the Liberals for comfort' and that the Liberals had become 'the repository of the protest vote' (Sutton Coldfield News 28 Jan. 1966).

Despite being staunch defender of the ratepayer interest and guardians against council profligacy the Liberals had also campaigned against what they regarded as unfair increases in council house rents. Their solution to escalations in both rates and council rents was a proposed change in the rating system whereby local taxation would be replaced by direct taxation of income, a policy that their 1964 prospective parliamentary candidate for the Sutton and Erdington Constituency was to make much of at both the local and parliamentary elections of that year (Sutton Coldfield News 1 May 1964). Under this scheme any social housing development felt necessary would be wholly funded by central government and council rents would become a national rather than locally determined issue. Council house rents had increased considerably in the early 1960s and electoral discontent over the issue mirrored that of the owner-occupiers concerning the ever-increasing cost of the rates. In 1961 council rents increased by 1s to 3s dependent upon type of accommodation, and in 1963 at a time of a government pay-pause another above inflation rent rise was imposed. Liberal candidates in Maney, as in the rest of the borough, campaigned throughout the period for a council rent system that differentiated between the income of tenants and thus their ability to pay.

Furthermore, in an appeal to the socially mobile Labour vote in the ward, and the borough in general, the Liberals campaigned to make the first purchase of a house affordable by the abolition of stamp duty, the availability of 100% mortgages and the reintroduction of government loans for the purchase of pre-1914 properties (Sutton Coldfield News 20 Sept. 1963). Indeed, the Liberals of Maney ward in the early 1960s had carried out an extensive survey of the housing conditions of the central area of Sutton Coldfield of which the Maney ward comprised a major part, and the author of the report, a local journalist and Liberal activist, J. Gallagher, contested and won

the Maney seat at the 1966 municipal elections ( Sutton Coldfield News 15 April 1966). In 1970, when Sutton Council introduced a new housing points scheme that awarded extra points to those on the housing list dependent upon the condition of their present accommodation, the Liberals were quick to argue that the scheme would discriminate against those who had looked after their property and who had been on the housing list for a long time. The Liberal policy was pitched at the large number of older people living either in unsuitable council owned property or private rental sector in the borough, who felt that points should be awarded for the length of time in unsuitable accommodation rather than a scheme that fast-tracked those considered to by the Council Medical Officer to be living in conditions normally considered unfit for human habitation ( Sutton Coldfield News 6 Feb., 1970).

The Liberals with much publicity were also quick to jump to the defence of the private renter, especially those in the town's central area covered by the Maney ward who were faced with eviction. Sutton Coldfield council had a residential qualification that excluded all those not born in the borough from the right to be put on the housing list. In a number of much publicised cases the Liberals took up the cause of those facing eviction who did not qualify for council housing despite having resided in Sutton Coldfield virtually all their working lives ( Sutton Coldfield News 20 December 1961). In the late 1960s as the redevelopment of the town centre progressed and compulsory purchase orders by the town council became more frequent so did the occasions on which the Liberals jumped to the defence of the Maney ward private sector tenants. The electoral appeal of the Liberals to the owner-occupiers of the Maney ward, like that to the borough in general, was pitched at

dissatisfaction with the Conservative controlled council over rates and the Liberals reaped the reward of dealignment.

At elections in the Walmley North ward 1945-1958 Independent candidates representing Walmley Residents Association had, 1957 apart, taken every seat. Labour, who had taken seats in 1957 and 1959, had a significant following in the ward, as did the Conservatives. The ward's long-standing Independent representative retired in 1961 and the SCFAR were unable to field a candidate until the 1964 elections when their Independent received a derisory 78 votes. The 1959-1964 elections were contested by the two major parties with the Conservatives winning five of the six seats but with Labour taking a respectable average of 45.9% of the vote. Falcon's Lodge council estate had provided a consistent level of support for the Labour Party. Nevertheless, over the 1965-1968 municipal elections Labour's average share of the vote plummeted to 24.2% in what were three-cornered contests that included the Liberal Party. Indeed, Labour had taken only 16.4% of the Walmley North vote at the 1968 election. However, the Labour share of the vote rallied in what were straight fights with Conservative candidates at elections between 1969 and 1972 inclusive, when the Liberals were unable to contest the ward.

Clearly, the electoral lacunae created by the abstention of Independent/Resident Association contestation between 1959 and 1963 had been filled by the Conservatives, with Labour support in the ward remaining fairly steady. However, with Liberal intervention, a once reasonably stable level of Labour support declined, and the Conservative share of the vote at Walmley North elections, although enough to take the seat, also declined, from an average of 53.8% at the 1959-1963 ward elections, to an average of 43.8% share of the vote at the 1964 to 1968 elections. In

part, the decline in Labour support can be explained by stay at home Labour supporters. At the 1962 Walmley North ward election a 33.7% turnout was described as 'very slack' and Labour officials bemoaned the fact that 'we know there is more support ... than was shown in the voting'. At the 1963 Walmley North ward election the 'poll [was] very low' and Labour officials observed that 'a high percentage of those that did not vote are people with Labour sympathies who thought we could not win'. At the W.C.C. elections in Walmley North in 1964, the ward recorded the lowest poll at the elections and Labour officials remarked upon 'the worsening of the Labour position in Walmley North'. At the 1964 municipal elections the same Labour officials remarked how 'Labour supporters admitted to voting Liberal in an attempt to keep the Conservatives out' ( Sutton Coldfield News 18 May 1962, 17 May 1963, 17 April 1964, 15 May 1964). Clearly tactical voting is not as modern an electoral phenomenon as some commentators would have us believe (see Johnson *et al* 2001:204). Voters were making rational decisions concerning how to cast their votes in the most effective way. Labour support was declining because of voter apathy, the perception that voting for Labour was a wasted vote, and tactical voting by Labour supporters to keep the Conservatives out was the desired effect. The Sutton Coldfield electorate's perception of the local Labour party in the mid to late 1960s would have been one of a party on the wane, a party without any representation on the council, that contested fewer and fewer wards, whose ward parties had folded up and whose Young Socialist branch had disbanded. The party only had a residual following in the Walmley area, however, this had been eroded by apathy and support for the Liberals. The causes of the erosion in Conservative support in Walmley North will be assessed below in the section on Trinity ward.

The Liberals first contested the Walmley South ward in 1962 and in three-cornered contests against Conservative and Labour candidates, up to and including the 1968 election, had replaced Labour as the credible opposition to the Conservatives in the ward. In 1962 and 1963 the Liberals took the Walmley South seat. The Labour share of the vote, which had been 35.2% and 25.0% in straight fights with Conservative candidates at the 1959 and 1960 elections was much reduced with Liberal intervention and apart from the 1964 and 1966 municipal elections when Labour made a slight recovery, the party only took an average of a 15.8% share of the vote in Walmley South from 1962 to 1968 inclusive.

It would appear that Labour had a small but consistent core vote in the ward and a transient support that either failed to turnout at times or plumped for the Liberals. With many fewer council tenants than Walmley North, Liberal success in Walmley South was more dependent upon the electoral behaviour of the ward's traditional Conservative voter. Conservative support in the ward, which had given the party a 64.8% and 75.0% share of the vote at the 1959 and 1960 elections, fell to 33.1% in 1962 and despite a slight recovery in 1963 was not enough to fend off the Liberal challenge at these elections. Conservative support, however, gradually returned to its former level and by 1968 it was such that the party took a 70% share of the vote in the ward. Nevertheless, in straight fights with Liberal candidates at the 1971 and 1972 municipal elections the Liberals were able to retain the support of 38.8% and 41.3% of those electors that voted.

Clearly, by the early 1970s the Liberals had established a core support in the Walmley South ward. The party had opened a ward branch in Walmley South in 1962 and, as in other wards, implemented their own brand of community politics and electoral tactics

that focused upon anti-council feeling amongst both ratepayer and council tenant. The major determinant of Liberal success in Walmley South was the Conservative protest vote and in the section below on Trinity ward this will be assessed.

The Wylde Green ward, from 1946 to 1961 inclusive, was invariably won by the Conservatives unopposed. The Liberals contested the ward at the 1962 to 1967 municipal elections and on average took a 33.3% share of the vote and contested again in 1972 when their candidate took a 29.8% share of the vote in this staunchly Conservative ward. Why this electoral realignment from the Conservative to the Liberal party came about here and, indeed, throughout Sutton Coldfield will be assessed below.

The Trinity ward was a Conservative Party stronghold which the Liberals contested intermittently from 1964 and at six of nine elections contested by the Liberals, 1964-1972, the party averaged a 33.6% share of the vote. It will be argued below that an explanation of how the Liberals were able to significantly loosen the Conservative's grip on the Trinity ward electorate is located in the widespread dissatisfaction over the ever-increasing rate burden imposed on the owner-occupiers of Sutton Coldfield. This explanation also impinges upon and adds weight to previous explanations of Liberal success in the other wards.

#### **6.6:Sutton Coldfield's Conservative dealignment and realignment**

In 1965 the rates demand that hit the doormat of the vast majority of the borough electorate, was an increase of 51.2% upon that demanded in 1959. The cumulative effect of annual above inflation hikes in the rate poundage of between ten and fifteen per cent, this sharp rise came about as the national economy entered 'the "stop" part

of the “stop-go” cycle which had become a feature of the post-war economy’. In July of 1960 the bank rate had been raised from 5% to 7%. In July of 1961 a nine-months pay-pause, which pinned down wage increases below 5% was introduced, and in 1962 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Selwyn Lloyd announced a ‘2-2.5% guiding light for pay settlements’ (Childs 1997: 100). This gloomy economic climate continued under the 1964-1970 Labour administration, indeed, the crisis budget of November 1964 increased income tax, national insurance contributions, the cost of petrol and private pensions. Furthermore, in the autumn of 1966, with the agreement of management and trade unions alike, statutory controls on prices and incomes were introduced, which pinned down pay increases to 3-3.5% at a time of a bank rate of 7%. Thus, an escalation in rate demands, and rising interest rates that impacted as a sharp increase in mortgage repayments, occurred at a time of wage restraint and increasing prices. Indeed, the initial mortgage payment before tax relief as a percentage of earnings had climbed to 21% by 1963 and gradually increased thereafter to reach 43% by 1974 (Daunton 1987:109). Symptomatic of the electoral disquiet in this period was the Liberal victory in the safe Conservative seat at the 1962 Orpington by-election. Indeed in the 1961 to 1962 period the Liberals came in as runners-up at eight parliamentary by-elections, however, ‘where the Liberals seemed best able to capture new votes was as an alternative middle-class vote in suburban Tory-held seats’ (Stevenson 1993: pp51-53). Nevertheless, as the Ladywood case study has shown this political phenomenon occurred in other types of places as well.

At the local government electoral level the impact of this macro-economic change was determined to some extent by the micro-political economy of individual local authorities. In the case of Sutton Coldfield macro economic change was mediated

through and exacerbated by a number of local issues that were, it will be argued, of influence upon the voting behaviour of the town's electorate.

In many wards the electorate was already somewhat disaffected by the council's proposal for both private and social housing developments. Added to this was a groundswell of antipathy towards the council over the increasing rate burden. Symptomatic of this rancour was the formation of the S.C.F.A.R. in 1961, which thereafter kept the issue of rates on the front burner of local politics. In 1962 the S.C.F.A.R. had appealed in the local press 'to stop the rises' and by 1969 feelings over rates still ran very high as that year's rate increase was 'greeted as a bitter pill ... throughout the town'. In the intervening years the S.C.F.A.R. had petitioned, protested, brought the town to the brink of a rates revolt, and threatened to compete in a safe Conservative ward. Indeed, in 1963 the S.C.F.A.R. threatened to contest the Walmley North ward, a Conservative seat where Labour had a strong following and, in a history of straight fights with the Conservatives, Labour had won the seat in 1959 and had taken over a 40% share of the vote at elections in the ward thereafter. The threat to intervene would not have been taken lightly as the then Whitehouse Common Residents Association in Walmley North had fielded candidates at the 1949, 1952 and 1955 elections, and with other Independent candidates had until 1957 kept the Labour voters of the ward at bay. In the run up to the 1964 local elections the S.C.F.A.R. held protest meetings and threatened a much publicised rates revolt. Furthermore, the Federation demanded that Geoffrey Lloyd, the Conservative M.P for the constituency, take up the issue with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 'such was the bitter feeling over rates'. In March 1965 the S.C.F.A.R. held a Rates Forum to protest at the inadequacy of the Rates (Interim) Relief Act and by 1966 it seems the message had hit home at least at the parliamentary electoral level, when the

encumbent Lloyd focussed his 1966 general election campaign upon reform of the rating system (Sutton Coldfield News 16 Mar., 1962, 25 Jan., 20 Sept., 1963, 28 Feb., 1 May, 8 May, 24 April 1965). However, Lloyd's party was at the time safely out of office.

At the local electoral level however, the window of electoral opportunity had widened for the Liberals. With the Conservative dominated council discredited, the Independents regarded as ineffectual and Labour without any representation on the council, the disaffected of the electorate turned to the Liberals. Indeed, at the 1962 diet of municipal elections in Sutton Coldfield 'never before had the outcome of the ... contests been so uncertain' (Sutton Coldfield News 23 March 1962).

Furthermore, such was the increased politicisation of Sutton Coldfield's local elections that in 1966, for the first time in the borough's history all wards were contested simultaneously. Paradoxically, despite increased contestation and many more marginal results, by 1968 turnout had fallen in what the Chairman of the Borough Labour Party described as a 'shattering blow for the democratic system' with under one third of the borough electorate bothering to vote in 1968 (Sutton Coldfield News 17 May 1968). Clearly, by 1968 in many wards the Sutton Coldfield electorate had become increasingly apathetic and disaffected.

A number of local issues had been the focus of the ratepayer's anti-council sentiments and can in part explain both the decline in turnout and the local electoral realignment that characterised municipal voting behaviour in 1960s Sutton Coldfield. Firstly, there was the controversies over social housing developments in terms of depreciation in house values and the impact on the rate poundage of their cost, and also the pressure on already overcrowded local schools that both private and social housing development imposed. Secondly, there was the escalation in rates incurred through

increases in the County Council precept due to expansion of the education system.

Thirdly, there was the controversy over the planned redevelopment of the commercial area of the town centre, an issue that divided the electorate across party lines into those that wanted modern shopping, entertainment and leisure facilities including a much needed swimming baths, and those against modernisation because of aesthetic and financial reasons, although the potential impact upon the rates seems to have been of some concern to all. Fourthly, there was the increase in rates when Solihull was granted County Borough status in 1963 and the remaining local councils in the Warwickshire County Council had to make up the W.C.C.'s shortfall in revenue by an increase in the county precept. Much criticism was directed at the Sutton Coldfield council's inability to conduct its affairs to the advantage of its ratepayers as Solihull had clearly done. Furthermore, and of major concern to the Sutton Coldfield electorate, their council had failed to avoid the eventual merger with Birmingham as recommended by the Redcliffe-Maud Commission.

The commission had been set up in 1966 to undertake a comprehensive review of local government in England. The local inquiry procedure employed by the commission gave local authorities ample opportunity to present and argue counter proposals. The possibility of major boundary change had been public knowledge since the Conservative government's 1958 Redistribution of Seats Act. The act had set the wheels in motion with local inquiries into parliamentary constituency reorganisation to be finalised and the recommendations presented to parliament by 1969. The electorate of Sutton Coldfield via the local press were thus aware throughout the 1960s of the potential implications of any boundary changes at both local government and constituency level. It was feared that merger with Birmingham at the local

authority level would result in even higher rates, loss of control over planning and hence more high density private estates and more social housing, and the subsumption of the Royal Borough into the anonymous Birmingham conurbation. In 1970 a Government White Paper supported the findings of the Redcliffe-Maud Commission and in 1973 the Conservative controlled council and the Conservative voting majority of the town's electorate 'had the merger forced down their throats by their own government' (Roberts 1980:33). However, to the disappointment and anger of the Sutton Coldfield electorate the battle against merger had been lost by the ineptitude of the Conservative dominated town council, and the recommendations of the commission when published in 1969 had been 'received with contempt by Sutton people' (Sutton Coldfield News 13 June 1969).

In addition to these cross-pressuring local electoral influences upon the Sutton Coldfield electorate was the divisive issue of comprehensive education. In response to the Secretary of State's 10/65 circular the Sutton Coldfield Council Education Committee had submitted a plan endorsed by the Warwickshire County Council Education Committee that set out future educational provision in the borough. The chairman of the borough educational committee was Alderman A. Gunby, the former Independent/Resident Association councillor of Walmley ward. Gunby's 1966 plan had proposed little change to the town's educational status quo. Existing secondary schools would establish their own sixth-forms and the existing grammar schools would continue undisturbed. This 1966 plan had been approved by the Secretary of State for Education, and Sutton Coldfield council had appeared to have resolved a potentially divisive issue with a compromise that appealed to most local electors.

However, the economic climate was not favourable towards such a costly compromise that would involve capital expenditure on each secondary school to provide facilities that could accommodate the requirements of the A-level curriculum. In 1968, without consultation with Sutton Coldfield Council, Warwickshire County Council Education Committee submitted an alternative plan to the Secretary of State for Education. The county plan abolished sixth forms altogether and recommended that a sixth form college be established at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School which would accommodate all pupils wishing to stay on and take A-levels, whether from secondary schools or grammar schools including Bishop Vesey. The county plan, more controversially, proposed the abolishment of the 11-plus examination. The argument forwarded by the county officials was based upon the cost that county ratepayers would have to bear to create sixth forms in every secondary school. However, such pragmatism was the source of a cross-pressuring influence upon the majority of the Sutton Coldfield local electorate, which looked to the borough council to defend the interests of the ratepayer and to keep the rate burden low, and at the same time for their Conservative representatives on the County Council to defend the pre-10/65 educational status quo.

Sutton Coldfield Borough Council Education Committee with the support of the S.C.F.A.R. rejected the county plan. They argued that it would mean an end in the town to existing grammar schools that had a reputation for academic excellence, and would lead to a decline in educational standards. At a public meeting organised by the S.C.F.A.R. and attended by county and borough education officials the large audience voted by an overwhelming majority against the county plan and for Sutton Coldfield to be given special status as an exceptional area (Sutton Coldfield News 29 March 1968).

The Labour party in Sutton Coldfield had continually criticised the council for its prevarication over and 'irrational hostility to comprehensive education'. The Liberals whilst 'very concerned that proper facilities should be made available in all parts of Sutton Coldfield for a child to receive comprehensive education', nevertheless made it very clear that a reform of the rating system - one that shifted the cost of education from the local to the national exchequer - was an essential concomitant of such changes to the educational system, and thereby pursued a middle course (Sutton Coldfield News 1, May 1970). The Conservative dominated council, however, were faced with the dilemma of maintaining local fiscal prudence and maintaining the educational status quo. The inevitable merger with Birmingham, where party political control alternated between the Conservative and Labour groups, compounded the electorate's unease about the future of educational provision in Sutton Coldfield. Furthermore, it added another dimension to anti-council feeling over the Conservative council's mishandling of the local government reorganisation negotiations. It is then unsurprising that 'the dominant issue in the politics of Sutton Coldfield in the early 1970s was the proposed merger with Birmingham as a result of the Local Government Bill of 1972' (Roberts 1980:32).

The Conservative group on Birmingham City Council had maintained a clear majority from 1966 to 1972. But at the 1972 Birmingham County Borough elections Labour had been swept back into power. The now seventy-three Labour, forty-four Conservative and nine Liberal councillors meant that Labour had an overall majority of ten at this last pre-reorganisation election. The amalgamation of the three Sutton wards into the newly formed Birmingham Metropolitan District Council, though

unwelcome by the majority of the Sutton Coldfield electorate, was nevertheless a turning-point in the local electoral fortunes of the Birmingham Conservative group. As Phillips has pointed out, the Liberal party's challenge in Birmingham, 'and the inclusion of new wards from the more Conservative inclined borough of Sutton Coldfield led to an erosion of Labour's overall vote share' (Phillips : xxiv). A key ingredient of this erosion of Labour's council control, it will be argued here, was the change in the electoral calculus of the Sutton Coldfield protest voting Conservative, who had at various elections and for various motives either voted Liberal or abstained. A new dependent variable, control of Birmingham District Council, came to be a crucial consideration of the Sutton voter. Much more sensitive to shifts in support than the big majority that had cushioned Conservative control over the former Sutton Coldfield Council, Conservative fortunes on Birmingham District Council and thus, decisions that would affect the lives of Sutton residents, now depended upon Conservative hegemony over all the nine seats that the three new Sutton wards could deliver.

Symptomatic of the effect on the Sutton electorate's voting behaviour brought about by the structural changes to the electoral system by the 1972 Local Government Act was the rapid return of erstwhile recusants to the Conservative fold. At the Birmingham District Council elections the Sutton Conservatives won all seats in all three wards at all elections between 1973 and 1979 inclusive, generally with large majorities, and at times with landslide majorities over their nearest rivals the Liberals. Indeed, at elections between 1973 and 1979 inclusive, only on two occasions was a Sutton ward not in first place in a hierarchy of Birmingham ward turnout for both upper and lower tier local elections. Although at the 'all out' elections to the upper-tier West Midland County Council in April 1973 the Liberals had taken two of the

three seats, there was a massive swing back to the Conservatives at the 1977 W.M.C.C. elections and the party took all three seats which they held on to at the 1981 diet of Birmingham upper-tier elections. Clearly, the resort to a protest vote or abstention by traditional Conservative supporters in Sutton Coldfield from 1973 had become a much less attractive local electoral strategy, with an increased risk of handing council control over to the Birmingham Labour group than was the case at the pre-1973 local elections when a protest vote was just a signal of dissatisfaction rather than a strategy that risked a palace revolution.

Despite this seismic shift in local government election voter alignment, and despite the dramatic decline in support for the party in the constituency at the 1970 general election, the Liberals in Sutton Coldfield were able to retain a core support of electors in the 1970s. Indeed, the cross-pressures that help explain the protest voting at these local elections in the 1960s were as forceful, if not more forceful in the national economic climate of inflation and industrial unrest that characterised the 1970s. Issues of rate levels, education and housing loomed large in Sutton Coldfield at local elections in the 1970s 'and a bitter rivalry' developed between the Conservative and Liberal parties for control of the now three wards (Sutton Coldfield News 2 Feb. 1973, 18 April 1975). At the February 1974 general election the Liberals had taken their highest percentage share of the vote in the constituency at a parliamentary election and the Labour candidate had lost his deposit. However, at the coal-face of local electoral decision making, the electorate of Sutton Coldfield realigned itself behind the Conservatives in order to end Labour control of the Birmingham District Council. In 1975 the Labour group had maintained control of Birmingham council by the casting vote of the mayor. Furthermore, at the 1976 Birmingham District Council Elections the Labour group had campaigned on electoral promises to build 20,000

new council houses, to purchase more land in Sutton Coldfield for social and private housing developments, and increase spending upon education and social services. In contrast the Conservative group promised its Birmingham supporters, including the much needed Sutton support, a policy of retrenchment, and repair of any damage done to the educational system by the socialists (Sutton Coldfield News 30 April 1976).

Compounding this local electoral compulsion upon former Conservative protest voters was the reaction against the Liberal Party's decision to prop up the ailing Callaghan administration. It is then, somewhat paradoxical that at a time of national political dealignment, characterised by a shift to third party support, the exact opposite was happening in Sutton Coldfield as the electorate, motivated by local issues and considerations, increasingly realigned with the party they had traditionally voted for, the Conservatives. Clearly, this phenomenon undermines the case for local elections to be regarded as no more than annual general or irrelevant elections.

### **6.7: Conclusion**

It is clear that in the late 1950s and early 1960s at the local electoral level in Sutton Coldfield, party alignment changed quite dramatically. The evidence of the individual ward analysis indicates that the alignment between class and party was significantly weakened among former traditional supporters of Independent, Conservative, and Labour candidates by contentious local issues and Liberal intervention.

However, the 1950-1970 period is generally regarded as a period of electoral stability, of party and class alignment at the parliamentary electoral level, and of electoral change that was slow, small and short-term (Denver 1994:32-50, Sarlvik and Crewe 1983: 332-335, Farrell, McAllister and Broughton 1995:110). This clearly was not the case at the local electoral level in Sutton Coldfield. Thus, the evidence

challenges the view that local electoral behaviour mirrors that of parliamentary electoral behaviour and responds solely to national electoral determinants (Newton 1976). There was a significant disparity between the level of local electoral support a party attracted and the level of parliamentary electoral support the same party attracted in these coterminous electoral units of Sutton Coldfield. Furthermore there were distinct differences in the degree and incidence of electoral volatility between municipal and parliamentary electoral behaviour. From 1959 until the late 1970s the Sutton Labour party consistently attracted a higher level of parliamentary electoral support than that at the local electoral level. Conversely, the Sutton Liberal party, from 1959 to 1973 consistently attracted a higher level of local electoral support than parliamentary electoral support. The level of local electoral support for the Conservatives fell sharply after 1959 and did not surpass the level of parliamentary support the party enjoyed in the borough until after the Labour government came to power in 1964. However, Conservative municipal support waned in 1969 and 1970, but recovered somewhat with the election of the Heath government and then slumped 8 percentage points between 1971 and 1973, and finally rose above the parliamentary electoral support from 1975. Clearly, there were local elections when the Conservative party failed to mobilise the full extent of its support in the borough. In all, three distinct periods of local electoral decline for the Conservatives in Sutton are apparent. Two of these declines occur under Conservative governments, and the other during the twilight years of the 1966-1970 Labour administration. These often rapid and significant changes in partisan alignment resulted in the almost complete disappearance of support for Independent candidates as Sutton local elections became increasingly politicised. Furthermore, not all of those voters who had previously

supported the Conservative party at the local elections in the 1950s returned to them in the 1970s indeed, the Liberals were able to maintain a significant core support.

The evidence also contradicts the view that voters in the 1960s failed to meet the conditions for issue voting. That is, for the electoral issue to be salient it should be integrated into the party system with one party opposing the other on the issue, and that opinions should be skewed such that one party gains an electoral advantage from the position it takes (Butler and Stokes 1983, Franklin 1985:37-56). The evidence suggests that the Sutton Coldfield electorate voted on issues that were salient to them, and that these issues exerted cross pressures that did not divide the electorate cleanly along party lines. It also suggests that the issues were integrated into the party system, notwithstanding the fact that the Conservative, Independent and Liberal candidates had only subtle differences of emphasis over many of the issues rather than polarised views. Escalation in rate levels, the prejudice against social and private housing developments, the merger with Birmingham, the redevelopment of the town centre, and educational reforms, focussed the electorate's attention on the Conservative dominated council's inability to adequately defend the interests of the ratepayer who made up the majority of the electorate. Transfer of partisanship to Labour was out of the question for the majority of the borough electorate who traditionally voted Conservative or Independent. Furthermore, in many wards the Independents either did not contest, or were increasingly considered ineffectual conduits of electoral discontent, and in former Labour strongholds support for a party without representation on the council or its likelihood, was increasingly considered a wasted vote. However, it has been shown above that the *ad hominem* electoral appeals of the Liberal candidates addressed many of their grievances in terms of fair rents and re-

housing opportunities. It has also been shown how the spatial distribution of the Labour vote induced not only electoral apathy and abstention, but also tactical voting and is indicative of the complex relationships between voting behaviour and tenure.

Although in accord over many issues, the Conservative and the Liberal parties in Sutton Coldfield differed fundamentally in one respect. The former had political power and a large core support, the latter had little realistic chance of usurping that power and thereby became a temporary safe haven for the protest vote of a significant proportion of the electorate who regarded these largely locally determined issues as electorally salient. The disaffected found either a temporary, or, indeed for some, as voting trends show a permanent home in the Liberal camp.

The evidence of issue voting thus contradicts Franklin's view that the electorate was more open to rational argument in the 1970s than it was in the past (Franklin 1985a :52-53). It has been shown that Sutton Coldfield's electorate were just as open to rational argument in the 1960s. The Liberals in Sutton Coldfield had built up a core support, albeit small, of habitual Liberal voters in the 1960s that sustained them at local and parliamentary elections through the 1970s and into the 1980s. This support had its origins in electoral conflict over local issues. Furthermore, the evidence of tactical voting by Labour supporters for a Liberal candidate in order to keep out a Conservative candidate undermines the implication of Franklin's argument as to the insusceptibility to rational argument of the 1960s British electorate.

The evidence regarding electoral dealignment in Sutton Coldfield in the 1959-1979 period substantiates the assertion that the influence of locally determined factors in the outcomes of elections at both municipal and parliamentary levels has been

underestimated by existing political science literature. The evidence indicates a connection between local electoral issues and activity, and parliamentary outcomes in coterminous electoral units. Indeed, the establishment of a foothold in the local government electorate, based largely upon local issues, was the stepping-stone to the establishment of a core support at the parliamentary level for the Liberal party in Sutton Coldfield. National macro-economic issues such as the bank-rate, mortgage interest rate, the cost of educational reform and the cost of social housing, were all mediated through the particular political, social and economic milieu of Sutton Coldfield. The town's rapid growth in population and increased demand for low-cost low-density private housing developments, more schools. Local electoral dissatisfaction over the Conservative controlled council's handling of these issues resulted in partisan dealignment of the electorate in these traditionally and predominantly Conservative and Independent wards. The policies, tactics and electoral strategies of the Liberals at municipal elections tapped into this dissatisfaction. The resultant 'community politics' were by definition particular and peculiar to that location, and the effectiveness of the Liberal policies were constrained or facilitated by the electoral space afforded to the Liberals by the competition, or lack of competition, from Independent, Conservative and Labour candidates. However, unlike the inner-city wards of Birmingham where 'community politics' focussed particularly upon social housing issues and produced ever-diminishing returns as the electorate's grievances were satisfied, 'community politics' in Sutton Coldfield, that is to say the Liberal's ad hominen appeals, had been based upon the enduring issues of rates, educational reform and threats to property valuation, which were amplified by the merger with Birmingham and thus the Sutton Coldfield Liberals retained a much more stable core support of voters than the inner city

constituency. Notwithstanding the above, the effect of the 1972 Local Government Act upon the voting behaviour of Sutton Coldfield's traditional Conservative supporters, which saw a rapid return from protest voting for the Liberals back to the Conservative fold as merger with Birmingham imposed a new electoral calculus, illustrates the significance of structural change to the electoral system.

The above argument acknowledges the long-term shifts in the electoral climate that have their origins in national political and national socio-economic factors. However, explanation of local electoral dealignment cannot ignore the effects of transient but stormy local electoral weather. Furthermore, explanation of parliamentary level electoral dealignment in the 1959-1979 period cannot ignore the phenomenon's connection with local electoral behaviour and activity.

Indeed, the same hand of cards is dealt to each local authority by central government. How each individual local authority plays its hand is in part determined by the local socio-economic and political environment in which their particular game is played. The prize is the ruling party's ability to keep the majority of the local electorate on side and maintain council control, whilst the consequences of a badly played hand can be loss of municipal and constituency level support, both temporary and permanent.

In the next chapter attention turns to the Islington constituency in inner-London which, like Ladywood and Sutton Coldfield, was a derelict constituency as far as the Liberal Party was concerned. It had many of the problems associated with the inner-city wards of Ladywood but also areas that had more in common with Sutton Coldfield. Nevertheless the flavour of politics and electoral outcomes at both local and parliamentary level were rather different than in our midlands case studies.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **ISLINGTON**

#### **7.1:Introduction**

In his 1959 report the Chief Medical Officer of the London Metropolitan Borough of Islington lamented that ‘by far the greater of the population are still housed in old-type houses in multiple occupation ... with no bathroom [and that]... alternative re-housing ... which can be offered by the Council is extremely limited’. His counterpart for the London Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury reported serious overcrowding in multiple occupancy housing and added that ‘there are still many unfit houses ... owing to the difficulties in relation to re-housing’. In 1966 owner-occupiers made up approximately 13 per cent of Islington residents. Around 20 per cent of Islington residents lived in local authority rented accommodation, and approximately 67 per cent resided in mostly multiple-occupation privately rented accommodation. Indeed, Islington had, second only to Tower Hamlets, the highest ratio of persons to rooms of all the London Metropolitan Boroughs. In Islington in 1962, 60 per cent of households were without piped hot water and 45 per cent without a fixed bath. The same housing conditions prevailed in Finsbury (see Map 5). Within the private rental sector in both boroughs there was also a significant number of lodging houses where ‘single room lettings ... occupied by persons of different nationalities [without] adequate sanitary accommodation [and] water supplies [and where] preparation and cooking of food is most difficult’.

The waiting list for council housing, with over sixteen thousand applicants registered at that time, had been closed by Islington Metropolitan Borough Council in 1956 and only re-opened in 1965 a year after the amalgamation with Finsbury. The product of

the combined housing problems of both boroughs was that in 1971 an estimated 13,000 new dwellings were needed to solve the housing problem in the new borough of Islington, a grim confirmation of the Chief Medical Officer of Health's 1963 forecast that 'the majority of Islington residents must continue for many years to come to live in old houses... which were not built for several families'. Since 1945, Islington council had a particularly poor record for building municipal housing. Islington Borough Council by 1964 had built only 4,062 flats and houses in the borough and carried out repairs on 43 houses, and the LCC had built 3,281 flats and houses whilst private house building in the borough was negligible. In contrast Finsbury Borough Council had a better house building record and in 1960 had provided more units per head of population than 27 out of the 28 metropolitan boroughs, although, this reflected a much higher rate of privately built accommodation rather than any emphasis upon much needed municipal housing (Annual Reports on the Health and Sanitary Conditions of the Metropolitan Borough of Islington 1959-1963, Annual Reports Director of Public Health and Medical Officer of Health London Borough of Islington 1964-1973, Annual Reports on the Public Health of Finsbury, Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury 1932-1964).

It will be argued below that these housing conditions were a determining factor in the outcome of local government and parliamentary elections in the Islington and Finsbury Metropolitan boroughs 1959-1963, in the Islington London Borough 1964-1979, and their coterminous parliamentary constituencies 1959-1979. Furthermore, that Islington Borough Council's housing policy and those of the former Islington and Finsbury Metropolitan Borough Councils were important determinants of the outcomes of both local and parliamentary elections. It has been argued that 'much of

the politics of Islington in general ... [was] concerned with the struggle between housing classes and [was] aimed at getting the council to use its powers to assist one class or another' (Baine 1975:33). It will be further argued that control of the London Borough of Islington Council in the 1970s, and hence its housing policy, was in the hands of an uneasy coalition between an old-guard rightist faction that had its origins in the controlling Labour Groups of both the former Islington and Finsbury Metropolitan Boroughs, and representatives of the Irish Roman Catholic immigrant population of the north of the borough, and that the core support of these two groups was enough to fend off until the late 1970s, the challenge from the left of the local Labour Party which intended to introduce a much more costly and comprehensive municipal housing programme. Also it will be shown, that the particular socio-economic and political environment of Islington, with its own peculiar admix of sectarian political allegiances, limited the success of a revived Liberal Party in Islington during the 1959-1979 period, a local party that was already seriously weakened by internecine fighting between two rival factions, one supported by the London Liberal Party and the other led by an opportunistic but very effective political activist. In short, it will be argued below that the politics of place cannot be excluded from any explanation of both local and national political electoral outcomes in Islington and that national issues provide neither a complete explanation for local election results nor a comprehensive account of the determinants of parliamentary constituency results.

## **7.2 Party political background**

At the six Islington Borough Council elections from 1945 to 1962 inclusive, the Labour Party, almost invariably in straight fights against Conservative candidates, predominated. The Liberals, who had not contested in the borough since 1928,

contested two wards in 1949 and, in 1959 at the start of an upturn in Liberal fortunes nationally, fielded five candidates in the St Mary and the St Peter wards where their candidates came bottom of the poll. However, in 1962 the Liberals contested only one Islington ward; the Highbury ward where they took 31.7 per cent of the vote in a contest that saw a swing of 23.2 per cent from the Conservatives and 8.5 per cent from Labour (see Table 37). Clearly, the 1962 Highbury result apart, Islington from 1928 was a derelict borough as far as the Liberals was concerned. Furthermore, at the six London Borough elections from 1945 to 1962 inclusive, Islington was persistently near the very 'bottom of the league' for turnout among the twenty-eight London boroughs of the LCC. Electoral dominance by the Labour Party, apathy among its electorate and a dearth of Liberal local electoral activity characterised the Borough of Islington at the post-war London Borough elections before the 1964 reorganisation of local government in London.

Similarly, in contention with Conservative candidates the Labour party had dominated local elections in the London Borough of Finsbury since the late 1920s and the Liberal Party had not contested a single seat since 1925. However, at the 1962 diet of borough elections the Liberals made a sudden and dramatic return to contest in all eight of the borough's wards. Clearly Finsbury, which was amalgamated with Islington to form the new London Borough of Islington in 1964, was not a hive of Liberal local electoral activity for at least thirty- five years preceding their 1962 return. Electoral apathy, albeit at a lesser degree than in neighbouring Islington, Labour dominance and Liberal absence, characterised local electoral politics in Finsbury 1945-1962. (see maps 4 and 5 below).

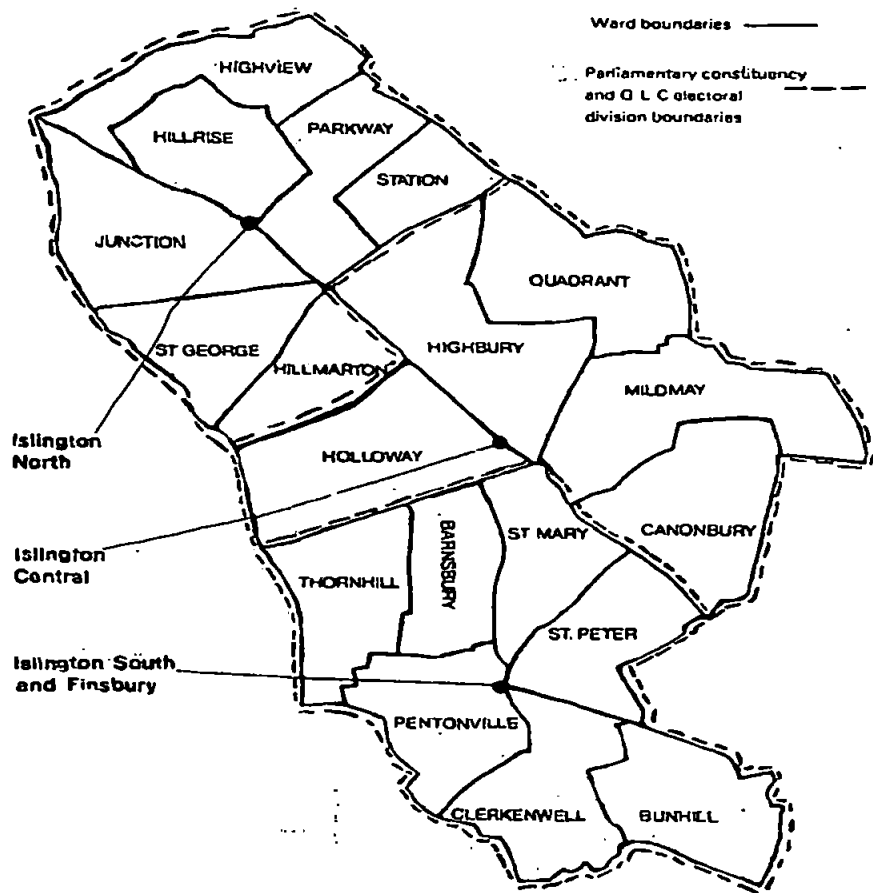
(To avoid unnecessary confusion, Map 4 depicts the wards of the borough of Islington in 1978, the former London Borough of Finsbury was transformed into the Pentonville, Clerkenwell and Bunhill wards)

Table 37: Lower-tier municipal electoral data, Borough of Islington 1964-1982.

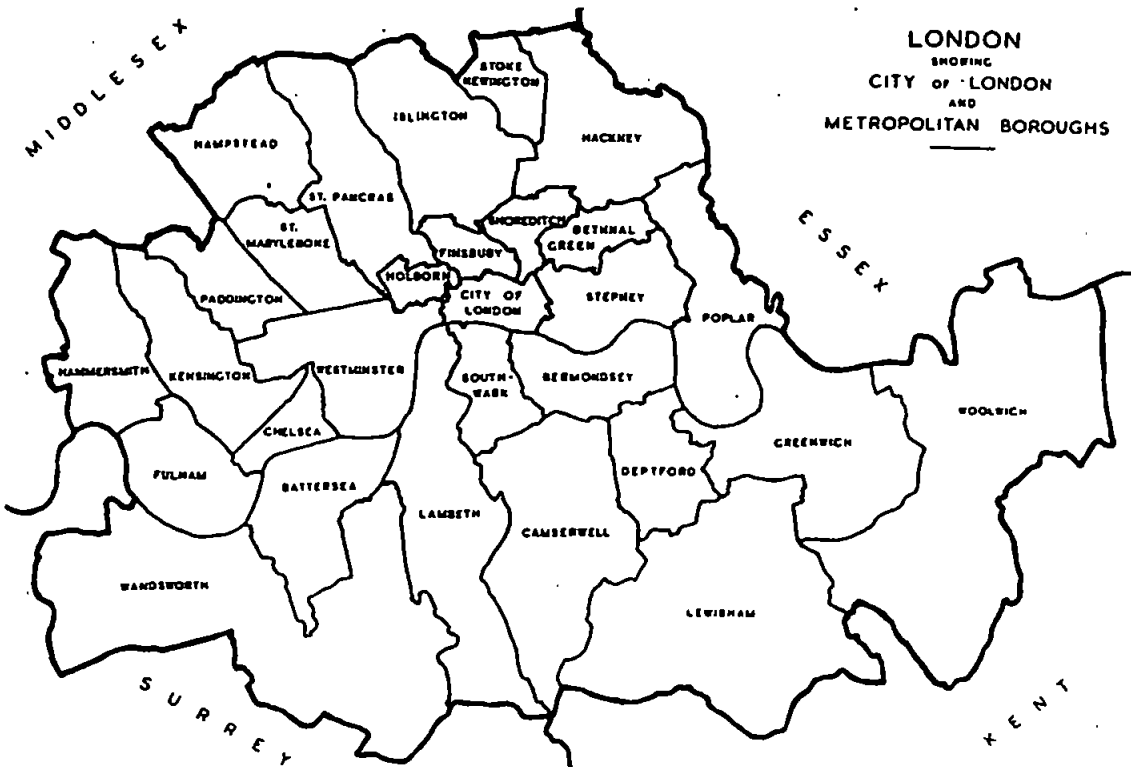
Year	Ward	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH
1964	Barnsbury	3	8081	17.7	65.4	13.0	78.4	0.0	8.7
1964	Bunhill	2	6355	23.3	49.69	17.0	66.7	7.8	8.5
1964	Canonbury	4	11887	18.4	49.5	16.7	66.2	9.8	7.2
1964	Clerkenwell	3	8113	16.2	53.26	18.2	71.4	10.4	0.0
1964	Highbury	4	11003	16.2	39.52	24.3	63.8	0.0	11.9
1964	Highview	3	8576	22.6	17.51	34.4	51.9	9.1	4.6
1964	Hillmarton	2	6498	15.8	32.42	31.2	63.7	0.0	5.1
1964	Hillrise	3	8741	17.6	35.82	28.7	64.5	0.0	6.8
1964	Holloway	4	10256	12.1	59.11	15.1	74.2	0.0	10.7
1964	Junction	4	11306	16.6	35.78	26.9	62.6	0.0	10.5
1964	Mildmay	4	12502	18	27.91	27.5	55.4	10.7	6.5
1964	Parkway	3	8621	12.4	63.58	12.4	76.0	0.0	11.5
1964	Pentonville	3	8925	18.9	45.42	22.2	67.6	10.3	0.0
1964	Quadrant	4	11930	17.8	32.7	26.8	59.5	0.0	13.7
1964	St. George's	3	8321	17.4	37.43	25.5	63.0	11.5	0.0
1964	St. Mary	3	8608	13.7	45.4	22.8	68.2	0.0	9.0
1964	St. Peter	3	9761	16.3	60.62	16.5	77.2	0.0	6.3
1964	Station	2	5738	12	74.86	0.0	87.4	0.0	12.6
1964	Thornhill	3	9373	15.5	43.37	0.0	71.7	0.0	28.3
1968	Barnsbury	3	7013	23.5	7.06	0.0	40.6	0.0	59.4
1968	Bunhill	2	5977	27.5	5.18	48.7	43.5	0.0	7.7
1968	Canonbury	4	11528	25.7	10.9	46.0	35.1	12.5	6.4
1968	Clerkenwell	3	6644	24.3	7.47	46.3	53.7	0.0	0.0
1968	Highbury	4	9519	22.4	18.07	56.6	38.5	0.0	5.0
1968	Highview	3	7899	25.9	26.58	57.2	30.6	6.9	5.4
1968	Hillmarton	2	6309	21.8	22.77	61.4	38.6	0.0	0.0
1968	Hillrise	3	7688	21.1	20.71	60.4	39.6	0.0	0.0
1968	Holloway	4	8921	13.1	0.44	45.8	45.4	0.0	8.8
1968	Junction	4	10417	24.1	16.41	52.5	36.1	8.0	3.4
1968	Mildmay	4	12294	25.6	30.63	63.8	33.2	0.0	3.1
1968	Parkway	3	8299	17.1	16.49	58.3	41.8	0.0	0.0
1968	Pentonville	3	7408	26	9.86	54.9	45.1	0.0	0.0
1968	Quadrant	4	11121	23	19.73	56.6	36.8	0.0	6.6
1968	St. George's	3	8171	23	0.17	50.1	49.9	0.0	0.0
1968	St. Mary	3	8138	22.4	15.07	54.7	39.7	0.0	5.6
1968	St. Peter	3	8236	24.4	10.31	51.1	40.8	0.0	8.1
1968	Station	2	4913	19.1	12.27	40.2	52.5	0.0	7.3
1968	Thornhill	3	7756	14.8	11.19	0.0	36.1	24.9	38.9
1971	Barnsbury	3	6220	43.52	43.52	25.6	69.1	0.0	5.3
1971	Bunhill	2	5635	50.6	50.6	24.7	75.3	0.0	0.0
1971	Canonbury	4	10494	53.11	53.11	21.5	74.6	3.9	0.0
1971	Clerkenwell	3	6114	68.1	68.1	14.2	82.3	0.0	3.6
1971	Highbury	4	9161	45.31	45.31	27.3	72.7	0.0	0.0
1971	Highview	3	7775	38.12	38.12	25.0	63.2	5.7	6.2
1971	Hillmarton	2	4721	30.65	30.65	34.7	65.3	0.0	0.0
1971	Hillrise	3	6574	36.59	36.59	29.8	66.4	0.0	3.7
1971	Holloway	4	8223	61.26	61.26	18.2	79.5	0.0	2.3
1971	Junction	4	8485	23.41	23.41	38.3	61.7	0.0	0.0
1971	Mildmay	4	12089	31.82	31.82	33.3	65.1	0.0	1.6
1971	Parkway	3	7705	44.38	44.38	27.8	72.2	0.0	0.0
1971	Pentonville	3	6663	46.12	46.12	26.9	73.1	0.0	0.0
1971	Quadrant	4	10961	41.27	41.27	29.4	70.6	0.0	0.0
1971	St. George's	3	7562	42.94	42.94	24.1	67.0	6.2	2.8
1971	St. Mary	3	7544	51.34	51.34	21.0	72.4	0.0	6.6
1971	St. Peter	3	7853	34.31	34.31	32.8	67.2	0.0	0.0
1971	Station	2	4030	49.37	49.37	25.3	74.7	0.0	0.0
1971	Thornhill	3	6844	41.5	41.5	23.0	64.5	0.0	12.6

Year	Ward	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH
1974	Barnsbury	3	5322	31.6	24.79	25.2	49.9	19.5	5.4
1974	Bunhill	2	5652	26.3	46.42	26.8	73.2	0.0	0.0
1974	Canonbury	4	9881	28.1	51.13	14.1	68.5	17.4	0.0
1974	Clerkenwell	3	5694	22.2	56.5	21.8	78.3	0.0	0.0
1974	Highbury	4	8582	24.6	44.13	20.4	64.5	15.2	0.0
1974	Highview	3	7313	25.2	35.3	28.9	64.2	0.0	7.0
1974	Hillmarton	2	4257	25.7	33.21	33.4	66.6	0.0	0.0
1974	Hillrise	3	4689	23.1	50.7	24.7	75.4	0.0	0.0
1974	Holloway	4	5590	21.9	36.79	11.8	62.5	25.7	0.0
1974	Junction	4	7598	28.1	25.02	31.6	56.6	11.8	0.0
1974	Mildmay	4	11191	28.7	28.44	25.4	53.8	20.9	0.0
1974	Parkway	3	6803	23.3	56.48	12.7	71.9	0.0	15.4
1974	Pentonville	3	6169	28.4	37.41	19.1	57.7	20.2	3.0
1974	Quadrant	4	10233	23.8	40.51	21.3	61.8	16.9	0.0
1974	St. George's	3	7516	24.6	44.01	28.0	72.0	0.0	0.0
1974	St. Mary	3	6311	30.9	34.74	15.0	54.8	20.0	10.2
1974	St. Peter	3	7525	29.4	27.54	17.3	48.1	14.0	20.6
1974	Station	2	3307	22.9	75.24	12.4	87.6	0.0	0.0
1974	Thornhill	3	5720	19.4	45.49	24.8	70.3	0.0	4.9
1978	Highbury	3	7268	43	12.07	39.7	51.8	4.1	4.4
1978	Hillmarton	2	5212	38.5	11.68	41.0	52.6	0.0	6.4
1978	Holloway	3	6019	33.5	27.44	32.2	59.6	0.0	8.2
1978	Junction	3	6428	44.2	15.47	40.5	55.9	0.0	3.6
1978	St. George's	3	7291	37.5	3.78	43.9	47.7	0.0	8.4
1978	St. Peter	3	7228	36.7	9.35	39.0	48.3	6.5	6.2
1978	Barnsbury	3	6355	42.2	13.45	37.2	50.6	5.3	6.9
1978	Bunhill	3	7135	40.1	8.43	41.0	49.5	0.0	9.5
1978	Canonbury East	2	4249	34.6	23.41	31.9	55.3	5.3	7.5
1978	Canonbury West	2	4689	42.9	0.61	43.3	44.0	7.4	5.3
1978	Clerkenwell	3	7804	35.3	5.26	40.1	45.3	5.8	8.8
1978	Gillespie	2	4562	38.8	14.85	36.9	51.7	7.6	3.8
1978	Highview	2	4212	37.9	11.76	38.7	50.4	3.1	7.8
1978	Hillrise	3	5207	37.4	0.83	46.6	47.4	0.0	6.1
1978	Mildmay	3	8467	38.9	14.6	33.5	48.1	4.9	13.5
1978	Quadrant	2	5764	43	12.25	39.7	51.9	0.0	8.4
1978	St. Mary	3	6017	37.7	9.42	38.0	47.4	5.5	9.1
1978	Sussex	2	3757	38.4	37.82	28.5	66.3	0.0	5.2
1978	Thornhill	2	4289	42.2	14.87	30.3	45.1	0.0	24.6
1978	Tollington	3	5931	31.4	36.16	28.8	64.9	0.0	6.3
1982	Highbury	3	6706	41.5	27.12	24.9	52.0	23.1	0.0
1982	Hillmarton	2	5204	43.5	34.61	20.9	55.5	20.9	2.6
1982	Holloway	3	6862	31.5	33.01	21.8	54.8	20.7	2.7
1982	Junction	3	6341	44.7	26.39	26.6	53.0	20.4	0.0
1982	St. George's	3	7525	37.3	29.31	24.5	53.8	17.0	4.7
1982	St. Peter	3	7137	37.1	14.42	28.3	43.1	28.7	0.0
1982	Barnsbury	3	6745	45.5	31.02	18.7	56.2	25.2	0.0
1982	Bunhill	3	6838	37.3	6.6	32.5	39.1	24.9	3.5
1982	Canonbury East	2	5037	38.6	15.31	19.2	40.2	24.9	15.7
1982	Canonbury West	2	4884	49.5	14.42	29.8	44.2	18.5	7.6
1982	Clerkenwell	3	7068	35.8	2.01	30.7	34.5	32.5	2.4
1982	Gillespie	2	4178	41	31.49	25.1	56.5	18.4	0.0
1982	Highview	2	3889	40.5	38.46	16.7	60.9	22.4	0.0
1982	Hillrise	3	6451	43.5	28.69	25.9	54.6	19.6	0.0
1982	Mildmay	3	8445	38	27.26	25.4	52.6	19.7	2.3
1982	Quadrant	2	5494	44	20.8	25.6	46.5	25.3	2.6
1982	St. Mary	3	5529	37.5	14.65	31.1	45.7	23.2	0.0
1982	Sussex	2	4236	44.3	36.47	16.1	60.2	23.7	0.0
1982	Thornhill	2	4570	35	39.5	19.7	59.2	17.1	4.1
1982	Tollington	3	6937	40.8	46.19	14.6	65.8	19.6	0.0

Map 4 : Islington borough ward boundaries, constituency and GLC boundaries 1978



Map 5 : London Metropolitan Boroughs pre 1964 reorganisation



### **7.3: The Labour group and housing in Islington**

In his 1966 study of Islington Borough Council Butterworth described Islington's Constituency Labour Party associations as being 'dominated by a Borough Council "clique"'. Islington, like all multi-constituency boroughs in the L.C.C. did not have a borough wide party organisation. The Borough Party system had been abolished by Labour in London in 1934 and had been replaced in each Constituency Labour Party by a Liaison Committee. However, the Labour council group by virtue of their predominance over the leadership of the Labour constituency parties, refused any 'critics a forum by failing to convene' these Liaison Committees. A largely autonomous group of multi-office holders thereby consolidated their power and insulated the Labour council group decision making process from the wider party membership and the various units of local party organisation' (Butterworth 1966: 21-31).

Over in the Finsbury and Shoreditch Metropolitan Borough an equally strong grip upon the levers of local political power was exercised by Labour councillors. Indeed, Len Scott, a Labour Party Ward Secretary, in a rancorous resignation statement to the local press explained how, 'the fear of discipline and expulsion for not "toeing the party line" blocked every discussion of local problems' ( Islington Gazette , 5 Oct., 1959). Scott considered his efforts on behalf of party members and local residents in general over housing conditions in the borough to have been met with 'hostility and suspicion' by Labour councillors whose 'right-wing ideas' frustrated attempts to change the borough council's housing policy (ibid). Paradoxically, housing problems had been the main plank of Labour's electoral appeal at the May borough elections and at the October 1959 General Election campaign in Islington.

However, the Islington Labour group's focus had been upon the failings of the Conservative Government's housing policy and how this had constrained any initiative on their part to ameliorate the borough's housing conditions.

Labour had retained full control of Islington council at the 1959 borough elections and electoral apathy reflected in an 18.2 per cent turnout was ascribed by the council leadership as pointing to 'a degree of satisfaction with the Council's work,' rather than an expression of voter dissatisfaction. Islington Labour had issued the same electoral manifesto to all wards and in it listed the achievements of their housing policy, and had emphasised how they had 'kept the rates down and had in fact [that] year reduced them by 4d .... to get the best value for the ratepayer's money'.

Nevertheless, siren voices had expressed concern about voter apathy and its effect upon Labour support as early as the Finsbury Parliamentary by-election in February 1959 when low turnout was explained by the left of the party as the result of the electorate 'having lost their faith in the Labour Party'. At the October 1959 General Election Labour retained all three Islington seats, but with much reduced majorities, reduced turnout in the Islington East and the Islington South West constituencies, and its majority in North Islington halved. However, Dr. Eric Fletcher, Labour MP for Islington East, and Albert Evans the Labour MP for Islington South West, were quick to defend the borough council's housing record and place the blame upon the constraints imposed by the incumbent Conservative Government. 'The housing problem ... could only be dealt with through the local authorities, and they needed more power to deal with the shortage of homes in areas like Islington' Fletcher explained. ( Islington Gazette 20Feb., 17 April, 12 May, 2, 5 Oct., 1959).

The constraints alluded to by Fletcher and Evans concerned the 1957 Rent Act and the House Purchase and Housing Bill that was making its way through Parliament in 1959. The proposed bill would enable purchasers to acquire older properties with government assisted loans, however, local authorities under the 1957 Rent Act had little power to prevent a purchaser subsequently subletting rooms at exorbitant rents and thereby adding to the overcrowding in often substandard accommodation. If a local authority decided to use its statutory powers under the sections of the 1957 Rent Act relating to overcrowding the courts invariably ordered eviction of the tenants and the re-housing of them by the local authority concerned. Indeed, in Islington, as elsewhere in central London 'the dire effects of the Rent Act [was] a big problem'. Evans and Fletcher wanted an amendment in the proposed House Purchase and Housing Bill to prevent what they considered to be the encouragement of further multi-occupancy dwellings, however, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government argued that adequate provision was already in place and a council could make qualification for a mortgage conditional upon an agreement not to sub-let in the future.

Exacerbating this problem for councils such as Islington and Finsbury was Clause 4 of the proposed bill, which allowed improvement grants for separate dwellings. The term dwelling was ill-defined by the 1957 Rent Act and thus local authorities would be obliged to provide grants to landlords to improve the part of a multi-occupancy that they resided in, whilst the sub-let dwellings in the property, often declared unfit for human habitation and overcrowded, could remain untouched. Islington Labour councillors and MPs regarded the bill as an encouragement to landlords to increase multi-occupancy dwellings in the borough. Furthermore, they argued that the bill

would make it look like a Labour council condoned overcrowding. At the third reading of the bill in March 1959 the South West Islington Constituency Labour MP argued:

My own council ... has not sufficient housing accommodation to deal with people living in properties that are the subject of closing or demolition orders let alone those affected by overcrowding notices .... Islington Borough Council just cannot look at overcrowded cases at all

In their post-1959 General Election statements to the press, Evans and Fletcher placed the blame firmly with the Conservative Government for the slow down in council house building in Islington. The removal of the general housing subsidy and of the facility for cheap loans to local authorities had resulted in an increase in the cost of building a council flat in Islington from £3,000 in 1950 to £8,000 in 1959. However, unlike the left of the party membership of their constituencies who regarded the council's inaction over housing as the cause of a decline in both turnout and Labour support at both national and local level, the hierarchy of Labour in Islington regarded the adverse effects of the 1957 Rent Act and the proposed bill as encouraging former Tory voters, both council and private rental sector tenants, to switch allegiance to Labour. Indeed, at the May 1959 borough elections with an above average turnout in the East and West Finsbury ward (32.8 per cent: borough average 25.4 per cent), Labour took all the seats in a decisive victory, which, both Labour and Conservative activists agreed could be accounted for by the notices of rent increases sent to tenants of City Corporation housing. (*Islington Gazette*, 17 March, 12 May, 2 Nov., 1959).

Protests and petitions over rent increases by the tenants of various council estates across the Metropolitan Borough of Islington had occurred since the November 1957

Rent Act, and such was the level of dissatisfaction that rent riots and a three week rent siege had taken place in 1960. However, Islington Labour group were constrained by the deficit in the Housing Account, which stood at £554,861 in November 1959, and their determination to keep rates to a minimum (Islington Metropolitan Borough Council Minutes, Vols., LIX and LX, 1958-1960). The Labour group in Finsbury were also under the same constraints and like Islington had the added problem of spiralling land values in central London. In both boroughs those tenants lucky enough to be rehoused by slum clearance faced hikes in council rents they did not find easy to pay.

Rents in the private rental sector had also vastly increased, indeed, a typical privately rented house costing £3 per week before the act, was in 1960 'now being let at £7 a week plus rates' (Islington Gazette, 4 March, 12 April 1960). In both boroughs the Labour groups were harangued by Conservative, and increasingly by Liberal candidates, to introduce a means tested fair rent scheme to replace the blanket council rent subsidy, which they considered a burden upon the ratepayer. Clearly, with over 60% of the electorate in the private rental sector where rate increases, via landlords impacted as increased rents, or direct payment of increased rates; rates was an electoral consideration that the Labour groups in Islington and in Finsbury could ill-afford to ignore. The Labour group in Islington took all sixty seats at the 1959 borough elections and may, or may not, have been too concerned about electoral apathy in the borough amongst erstwhile Labour voters. However, in Finsbury on an increased poll the Conservatives had made three gains in St Mark's ward. Notwithstanding that this meant that the Conservative 'opposition' on Finsbury Borough Council was only increased to five members, Labour had lost the hitherto marginal St Mark's ward by a resounding 13.4 per cent of the vote.

#### **7.4: Islington Labour Party dissent**

Housing conditions in Islington were brought more directly to the attention of the Labour group by the resignation of the Labour Councillor Raymond Morley. Morley, who had been elected to council in 1956 to represent the Tufnell ward of the North Islington Constituency, had championed the campaign by North Islington Tenants Association against the Labour group's housing policy. Morley was re-elected to represent the Thornhill ward in the Islington South West constituency at the 1959 borough elections. However, Morley resigned as a Labour councillor in protest over the Labour group's housing policy and forced a local by-election in which he ran as an Independent. The election, in which the issues of race and housing predominated, was a landslide for the Labour Party candidate. Nevertheless, housing had been brought to the front burner of local politics in the South West Islington Constituency.

Indeed, at the February 1961 Barnsbury ward by-election thirty years of political supremacy came to an end when the South West Islington Labour Party candidate was defeated by an Independent Labour candidate in an election that centred upon the housing issue. Dr. Michael O'Donaghue became the only member of Islington Borough Council without allegiance to any one of the three constituency Labour parties. On a platform that 'called attention to neighbouring St Pancras where tremendous strides in improving [housing] conditions had been made by a Labour council, O'Donaghue had mobilised the votes of the ward's large Irish immigrant population. At the 1962 borough elections the Independent Labour candidates took two of the three seats in the Barnsbury ward and O'Donaghue was re-elected on a turnout six percentage points higher than the borough average. In the Thornhill ward, Morley, now joined by another Labour rebel councillor, E. Mills, and three other

Independent Labour candidates took 33.7 per cent of the vote, although the Labour Party candidates took all the seats. Clearly, by 1962 in two of the three South West Islington Constituency local electoral wards, housing had become a salient borough election issue (North London Press, 1 Feb. 1961, 30 March 1962, UK News 2 Dec. 1961, Independent Labour Leaflet May 1962, YL280.789 Islington Central Library).

### **7.5: London Liberal Party strategy**

It was against this backdrop that the London Liberal Party launched a recruitment campaign in the late 1950s. A contact card system had been introduced and by 1958 the majority of Liberal Constituency Associations in London were using them to discover 'where Liberal supporters were and a fair return was being achieved in each constituency' (ACC 144/6/6, Minute Book, Executive Committee, London Liberal Party 1958-1966). Progress by 1961, in what had been considered derelict constituencies, was considered to have been extremely good. It is unsurprising that such a revival in the Islington Metropolitan Borough was first attempted in the wards of its South West Constituency. Firstly, in March 1959 a pilot canvass of the area was carried out, then in April 1959 a much more extensive canvass of voter opinion was carried out, and consequently the revived South West Islington Liberal Association decided to contest in the St Peter's and in the St Mary's wards at the 1959 borough elections. On a platform that emphasised local issues, that urged revision of the rating system, the introduction of a fair rent scheme to replace the blanket subsidy of council tenants, the call for a government scheme of 100 per cent mortgages to help first time buyers, and criticism of the 'complacent... all Labour council's snail's pace' regarding the housing problem in the borough, the Liberals attracted 11.8 and 11.9 per

cent of the vote in the St Mary's and the St Peter's wards respectively, taking most of their vote from former Labour supporters (Islington Gazette 5 May 1959, 23 December 1960). However, at the 1961 LCC elections in the Islington South West Constituency, although there was a dramatic -21.5 swing from Labour, the Liberal candidates were only able to attract 5.5 per cent of the vote, as the bulk of Labour's disaffected voters turned to Independent Labour candidates, whose electoral platform criticised the Labour council's housing record and advocated a vast increase in local authority housing provision.

Nevertheless, it was clear that there was some electoral mileage for the Liberals in the issue of voter dissatisfaction with the council's housing policy. The Liberal's first intervention in the Highview ward of the North Islington Constituency at the 1964 borough elections had rewarded the party with 9.4% of the vote. The Liberal electoral appeal in the ward had been based upon a call for a 'full debate on matters which affect you the ratepayer', a very apposite platform considering the Hornsey Rise Residents Association petition to the LCC not to grant outline planning permission to build blocks of council flats in the Highview ward (North London Press 24 April 1964).

In the East Islington Constituency, A.Lomas, a Conservative who had contested in the Highbury ward at the 1959 borough elections, experienced a Damascus style conversion to liberalism and began canvassing the area as a Liberal. Lomas, subsequently with the help of activists from the London Liberal Party established a ward association in Highbury and revived the derelict East Islington Constituency Liberal Association that had been dormant since it last contested a parliamentary election in 1935. Lomas was made Constituency Organiser, but, there was

considerable disagreement between him and the London Liberal Party over electoral strategy and policies. Lomas favoured a wide electoral front and the establishment of a borough wide Liberal Association. Furthermore, Lomas's campaign platform had conflated the issues of commonwealth immigration and the housing problem; views that conflicted with those of the leadership of the East Islington Constituency Association, and those of the London Liberal Party. Furthermore, the East Islington Liberal Association leadership, like the London Liberal Party, favoured an electoral strategy that concentrated efforts and resources on a narrow electoral front in selected wards (Evening Standard 30 Nov. 1962, 2 Aug 1963, North London Press, 27 April, 16 Nov., 1962).

The consequence of this conflict was a damaging feud between the maverick Lomas and the East Islington Liberal Association leadership. The leadership did not wish to contest at the 1962 borough elections in the constituency, only to continue canvassing and recruiting in preparation for the next general election. However, Lomas and his supporters barnstormed the Highbury ward and signed members up to Lomas's New Liberal Party (aka Islington Liberal Party). Lomas, and five other New Liberals contested the Highbury ward at the 1962 borough elections where they pushed the Conservatives into third place and took 31.7 per cent of the vote. Lomas's manifesto had called for the borough council Housing List to be re-opened and made public, thus pandering to the white residents who feared that they were being leapfrogged by immigrant families. Lomas had claimed during the election campaign that seven out of ten ward residents who had promised their vote to him had been disgruntled Labour voters, and indeed, without the presence of Independent Labour intervention to account for the fall in Labour Party support, the East Islington Constituency Labour

Party were becoming increasingly concerned by Liberal success. However, measured against the 1959 Highbury results, the bulk of Lomas's support was comprised of a 23.2 per cent swing against the Conservatives whilst the Labour vote in Highbury was only eroded by 8.5 per cent. The Liberals had emerged as a credible challenger to Labour's local electoral hegemony in a second Islington constituency. Indeed, in the weeks after the election the membership of the East Islington Liberal Association doubled, as did, however, the rancour between the London Liberal Party and Lomas (Islington Gazette, 8 March, 22 June, 7 September, 1962, North London Press, 17 Feb., 1961, 4 May 1962).

Rather than capitalising upon the political gains of the May 1962 borough elections the rejuvenated Liberal Association in East Islington seemed threatened by self-strangulation. In a damaging and protracted public feud Lomas and his supporters battled for control of the East Islington Liberal Association and its funds. Lomas announced his intention to contest the seat at the next general election and in response the London Liberal Party issued a press statement that Lomas held 'no official position ... and [was] not entitled to act or speak on behalf of the East Islington Liberal Association', and promptly had the association's bank account frozen. What followed was over one year of public wrangling and a failed county court action by Lomas to access the funds. Undeterred, Lomas simply rebranded as the New East Islington Liberal Association and put up candidates at both the 1964 borough and the GLC elections against those of the official Liberal Party. Lomas and his party called for controlled immigration and attracted even more adverse publicity to the Liberals when it was revealed by the press that one of his New Liberal Party candidates had formerly contested for the BNP. Lomas may have split the Liberal vote in the

constituency by standing against the official Liberal Party prospective parliamentary candidate at the 1964 and the 1966 general elections, and by association even deterred voters from supporting the Liberals. However, what support he did attract at these local and national elections was based upon electoral campaigns where the problems of housing and immigration featured prominently. Indeed, though recorded as an Independent Liberal, Lomas's electoral support was reflected in the new party name adopted in 1966, the Islington Tenants and Ratepayers Political Association and New Liberal Party, which Butler and King described at the 1966 general election as having fielded an anti-immigration candidate ( Butler and King 1966: , North London Press, 4 May, 18 Sept., 10 Nov., 1962; 11 Jan., 1 Nov., 1963; 24 March, 11 Sept., 1964; 9 March 1965; 7 Oct., 1966. Evening Standard 2 Aug., 1963. Islington Gazette, 8 March, 22 June 1962).

#### **7.6: The Liberal Party's foothold in Islington.**

The electoral achievements of the early 1960s Liberal revival in Islington might at best be considered modest. However by 1964, in the three derelict constituencies of the Metropolitan Borough of Islington and in the eight wards of the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury, the Liberals had established a foothold. This foothold of electoral support, and equally as important party organisation, enabled the Liberals to contest two constituencies of the Islington London Borough at the 1964 and 1966 general elections, field a full-slate in Islington at the first GLC elections in 1964 and continue contesting GLC elections in the borough. Furthermore, this modest revival enabled the Liberals to maintain a presence, albeit precarious at times, especially in North Islington, in the three constituencies of the London Borough of Islington and continue to field candidates at borough elections despite a significant erosion in both

local and parliamentary support. At the 1982 borough elections in Islington the Liberals were able to contest in all twenty wards and take 22.4% of the whole borough vote, only 1.7% behind the Conservatives.

The Liberal revival in the South West Islington Constituency had been limited by the intervention of Independent Labour candidates who took ground from them with a campaign that specifically addressed the housing problems of the local authority tenants and the bulk of the electorate who lived generally in multi-occupancy in the private rental sector neither able to afford to purchase a house nor prospect of obtaining a council house. Both tenures were aggrieved by substandard living conditions and increasing rents. The main feature of the Liberal campaigns in the Islington constituencies was housing, but the focus of the Liberal's electoral appeal was the ratepayer, both owner-occupier and private rental tenant. The Liberals campaigned for an end to the indiscriminate subsidy of all council tenants regardless of need by the ratepayer, reform of the rating system and government led initiatives to make the first purchase of a home more affordable. Liberal intervention in the wards of the East Islington Constituency was however undermined by the adverse effect of competition from the New Liberals rather than any competition from Independent Labour candidates. Lomas's electoral appeal was pitched at the dissatisfied electors in both the private rental sector and the public rental sector and focussed upon an, anti-immigration homes for locals first policy. In the North Islington Constituency neither Independent Labour nor any Independent Liberal intervened. However the Liberals were only able to find support and to contest in the Highview ward of this staunchly Labour constituency from 1964.

Although the Liberals were able to maintain a presence in the electoral life of the London Borough of Islington after 1964, the party only contested with any regularity in the Highview ward of the North Islington Constituency, and the Mildmay and Canonbury wards of the Islington Central Constituency. Indeed, of the 96 ward contests in borough elections 1964-1978 inclusive, the party only intervened in 29. The Liberals never won a seat on the council even at the 1968 borough elections when Labour's hegemony was brought to an end in an electoral rout that saw a whole borough swing of -25.3% away from Labour, and the Conservatives take 47 of the 60 council seats. Indeed the Liberal's share of the whole borough vote was only 2.8%. At GLC elections in the borough, 1964-1981 inclusive, the Liberals were able to maintain a presence. However, at the 1973 GLC elections the party were only able to contest in the Islington Central Constituency where they took a 15.2% share of the vote. Clearly in the Islington Central Constituency the Liberals had a residual support. In somewhat of an upturn in party fortunes the Liberals were able to contest all three constituencies at the 1977 and 1981 GLC elections. Yet the party never won an Islington seat on the GLC, or ever posed any threat to the major parties duopoly, throughout the 1964-1981 period. At the 1986 borough elections the Liberals took 16 seats to Labour's 36 and formed a significant opposition on Islington Borough Council. Nevertheless, at no time were the Liberals ever able to win a seat in the wards of the North Islington Constituency.

### **7.7: The electoral salience of housing in Islington**

Housing remained at the top of the political agenda for all parties contesting in local elections in the London Borough of Islington throughout the period of this study's interest. At the 1967 GLC elections, despite a huge swing to the Conservatives, the

Labour Party held all three Islington seats. The Economist commented that Labour at the 1967 GLC elections had been abandoned by its most loyal supporters and that 'there was widespread evidence that Labour lost because of the wage freeze'. The biggest swing in London, it was noted, had been in the 'predominantly working class borough of Islington'. Indeed, the swing against Labour had been a national one, but unlike when the Conservatives were in power the Liberals were no longer 'the half-way house for voters changing sides'. Furthermore, at the 1968 borough elections thirty-four years of absolute Labour control in Islington came to an end when 47 Conservative, three Independent and only ten Labour candidates were returned. Before the election The Times had ventured that 'the state of the crowded tenements ... will have less to do with the result than the way people feel about Harold Wilson'. However, the local press took the opposite view and predicted that the Labour council would see 'chickens come home to roost' because it had 'taken years for the council to tackle the tenement blocks and then only after the most determined tenant's campaigns'. In contrast, in Birmingham where the Conservatives had controlled the council since 1966 and imposed a regime of retrenchment, from 1968 onwards Labour's stock was in the ascendant as the party focussed its attention on housing issues and the city's vast council estates returned to the Labour fold (see Chapter 5, section 5.6). Clearly, the Wilson government's performance cannot explain the revival of Labour in Birmingham in the late 1960s or for that matter completely account for their defeat in Islington in 1968. Consideration of the local political environment cannot be excluded from either account.

Islington was still one of the worst housing areas in London despite a building programme of new estates announced in 1964, which had 'failed to get off the ground

until 1971'. Indeed, the Labour Government had contemplated putting a Housing Commissioner into Islington 'just to force [the Labour council] to start building some property'. As Keith Veness, a leading Labour militant in the North Islington Labour Party observed, 'it was no surprise that people did not bother to vote in 68'. Indeed, the Islington Gazette reasoned that the Conservative landslide in this predominantly working class and socialist borough was because 'Housing was the number one [issue] ... Residents saw newcomers being re-housed within a few years while people who had been in substandard property for 30 to 40 years were getting nowhere on the housing lists'. Indeed, in the Thornhill ward of the South West Constituency 38.9% of the vote had gone to a variety of Other candidates, three of whom were Independent Labour candidates sponsored by the Islington Rent Protest Association. The Liberals had taken second place with 24.9% of the vote and the three Labour Party candidates had taken all the seats, but over 63% of the votes cast in the ward had gone to candidates espousing criticism of the council's housing policy. In the Barnsbury ward, where it was reputed that only one family in a hundred had a bathroom, three Independent candidates had been elected to council in a swing of -37.8% away from Labour. ( Islington Gazette, 9 April, 13 May, 1968; Islington Gutter Press, Dec. 1975, The Times 3 May 1968, Independent Labour Leaflet, YL280.789, 1962, Economist 22 April, 20 May, 1967).

Clearly, whatever the influence of national issues in this Labour heartland, whatever the alienation of the traditional Labour voter from the party because of the Labour Government's performance, partisan dealignment at these local elections because of discontent over Islington Borough council's housing policy was a factor in much of the borough electorate's voting behaviour. The Economist at the time was of the

opinion that at local elections in London campaigns are fought on local issues 'but decided by national preference', and that the electorate were confused by the division of administrative responsibilities. The article said that 'few people know whether the local issues that they care about are the responsibility of the borough council, GLC, the Government, the Inner-London Education Authority, or the London Transport Executive'. However, it concluded that the 'chief of these [issues] are undoubtedly housing and transport'. This does not stand up to scrutiny if the party campaign leaflets are examined. At a time of mass leafleting and intense canvassing by all parties the borough electorate would have been in little doubt which institution was the immediate author of their housing ills. The predominant theme of campaign literature, (emphasis dependent upon party), was how control of the borough council would affect either local authority rent or rate levels of its electorate, and prospects of re-housing. Indeed, arguably the key feature of the reorganisation of local government in London, exploited by each party at the 1964 borough elections and subsequent elections, was that the responsibility for housing was now in the hands of the lower tier borough councils.

### **7.8: The 1970s Liberal revival constrained by the Labour left**

The Liberal Party's failure to attract significant support in Islington in the late 1960s at the local electoral level can in part be accounted for by the party's internal divisions and the intervention at these elections by candidates from the left of the Labour Party. In Islington the disaffected Labour voter in the 1970s did not turn to the Liberals in the way they had in Liverpool. The hegemony of the moderate centre-right Labour old guard, which dominated Islington, those whose 'mission was to keep the rate low and the majority constant' (Butterworth 1966:31), had come under increasing threat from the left throughout the 1960s. After the 1968 electoral massacre of Labour in

Islington and throughout London (Baston 2000: 463) many of the old-guard who had lost their seats had never returned to local politics and when Labour returned to power in Islington in 1971 had been replaced by left-wing councillors. The battle between the left and the right for control of Islington's three constituency Labour parties had begun in the early 1960s as left wing activists challenged the Labour group's policy stasis over housing. The North Islington Labour Party were accused of 'failing thousands of working class supporters', and a National Executive Committee of inquiry into its affairs launched in 1961 because of the dramatic fall in membership from 9,379 in 1951 to 394 in 1961. The success of the challenge from the left in each of Islington's constituencies was however conditioned by local factors (North London Press 30 June 1961).

The Labour parties in the Central and the South constituencies were, from the mid-1960s, increasingly controlled by middle class, nominally left of party, elements that had recently moved into the area. However, the Islington North Constituency Labour Party was 'dominated by a group that runs its own politics on sectarian lines, mostly on the basis of the Catholic Church'. Control of the Islington North Constituency Labour Party, and thus selection of its local government candidates and its parliamentary candidate, was in the hands of the remnants of the Labour old-guard-right and the representatives of the huge Irish community of the north of Islington borough, especially from the Junction ward. Control of the constituency party was reputed to have been retained by the use of bogus Labour party memberships at critical constituency party office elections that precipitated six Labour Party inquiries.

Indeed, at the election that resulted in the adoption of Mike O'Halloran as parliamentary candidate for the constituency in 1969 it is claimed that '39 delegates suddenly turned up at the meeting, most of whom had never been before'. In an eight year dispute from O'Halloran's adoption in 1969 to 1978 when Transport House sent 'troubleshooters' to oversee all North Islington Constituency Labour Party meetings, O'Halloran and his predominantly Irish Catholic party machine, and the old-guard Labour right were able to resist the challenge from the left. However by 1980 even in North Islington the left had gained the upper-hand. Islington North now fell in line with the other two Islington Labour Constituency parties, which the left had gained control of in the mid-1970s. (Islington Gutter Press Dec. 1975, Feb.1980, Nov., 1981; Islington Gazette, 12 Nov., 1968, 16 March 1979, 27 March 1981; North London Press 30 June 1961, 6Feb., 1970; New Statesman 31 Aug., 1962; Guardian 16 Sept., 1977).

The internecine battle between the left and right of Islington Labour had centred upon the issue of the borough's housing policy. Furthermore, once enough control over Islington Borough Council had been achieved the left had introduced a policy that 'favour[ed] new arrivals in the borough at the expense of long-term residents'. Indeed, in 1975 with 13,000 families on the waiting list, two moderate Labour councillors who opposed the new policy were expelled from the local party. At the 1975 Highbury ward local government by-election both 'rebels' urged the electorate to 'vote for anyone but Labour', because 'the Labour council is not doing enough to re-house long-standing residents' (Islington Gazette 31 Oct., 1975). The euphemism 'long standing residents' referred of course to the white traditionally Labour voting working class electorate of the borough, and 'new arrivals' to the immigrant

population that now benefited from the left's housing policy that had replaced what they considered to be a discriminatory selection policy under the old Labour group.

### **7.9:1970s Liberal campaigns**

It was against this backdrop that the Liberals contested Islington local elections in the 1970s. The main planks of the Liberal electoral platform were criticism of profligate local authority spending, rates and inflation. The party slammed the left controlled council's spending on housing and remodernisation of properties as a flagrant waste of ratepayers money and called for the cut price sale of council houses, and council land to reduce the rate burden. This was an almost complete *volte face* from their 1970 local electoral platform in the borough when they considered the sale of council houses as utterly wrong for Islington because of the housing shortage. However, against a groundswell of electoral dissatisfaction over rent and rate levels, and the effects of seemingly uncontrollable inflation, the Liberals had managed to push the Conservatives into third place in three of Islington's wards at the 1974 borough elections. The Liberals, like the Conservatives, in Islington, focussed upon the waste of ratepayers money by extreme left-wingers masquerading as the Labour Party. Nevertheless, as serious as the wounds inflicted by civil war upon the constituency Labour parties of Islington were, they still retained enough lifeblood of traditional Labour support to survive the additional challenge from the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Clearly, in this traditionally Labour voting borough the local electoral prospects for the Liberals were limited. However, housing policy and concern for rate levels provided a common ground for both Liberal and moderate Labour electoral appeal.

This commonality was given endorsement at the parliamentary electoral level by the Steel/Callaghan electoral pact of 1977. Furthermore, at the 1977 GLC elections in Islington in a -25.2% swing away from Labour the Conservative share of the whole borough vote had increased from 22.9% at the 1973 GLC elections to 40.0%. The three Islington constituencies in 1977 at the GLC electoral level were now most definitely marginal. Alarming for the Liberals their support in the Central Islington Constituency, the party's foothold in the whole borough had plummeted by 50%. The Liberals had seen a +4% swing in the whole borough vote in their favour at the 1973 GLC election reduced to a -0.1 swing against them in 1977. In contrast in 1977 the Other vote, an assortment of independents associated with Independent Labour, the far left, the Liberals and single issue residents association candidates, had benefited from an +8.1% swing in the vote. The Liberal's fragile electoral presence in Islington had taken a body blow at the GLC electoral level in its only foothold of any substance, the Central Islington Constituency. However, at the 1978 borough elections in the eight Islington wards contested by the Liberals the party averaged a 16.8% share of the ward vote, indeed, taking a 27.4% and 28.1% share of the vote in the Canonbury East and the Holloway wards respectively. The 1978 borough elections had, however, seen a revival in Conservative support when their whole borough share of the vote increased from its 22.2% at the equivalent borough elections in 1974 to 38.2%. The Conservatives had also taken two Labour seats on the council. Ominously the swing to the Conservatives in the whole borough vote, though predominantly from Labour support was also comprised of a -2.1 swing against the Liberals and a -1.0 swing against the Other candidates.

At the borough electoral level the Liberals had maintained a significant following in a number of wards. However, this following was under threat. There had also been a significant swing from the Other candidates to the Conservatives. Labour in Islington had experienced a 20% fall in support over the three borough elections of 1971, 1974 and 1978. The inescapable logic was for some form of electoral cooperation between the beleaguered Liberals and the embattled Labour moderates. It will be argued below that the conflict over housing in the borough of Islington was a significant catalyst in the electoral alliance at the local and parliamentary level between the Liberals and the emerging SDP.

#### **7.10: An alliance lifeline**

The first significant moves that precipitated the eventual SDP/Liberal Alliance in Islington were at the 1979 general election when all three incumbent Labour MPs ran as Labour/SPD candidates or Labour/SPD/Independent Labour candidates to differentiate themselves from the left of the party, and were returned albeit with reduced majorities. The next milestone came in March 1981 when the left gained control over North Islington Labour Party Management Committee. Its moderate Labour leader, who was also Chairman of North Islington Residents Association immediately resigned and issued a press statement that 'Labour was not the same party anymore. It is now full of lefties... Last year, even this year they wanted to make higher rates... I'm joining the Social Democrats' (Islington Gazette 27, March 1981). The mass defection of sixteen moderate Labour councillors from the Labour Group on Islington Borough Council and the official defection of North Islington's MP Mike O'Halloran, occurred on 8 September 1981, some six months after the formal establishment of the SPD and its subsequent speedy alliance with the Liberals.

However, the electoral campaign for the local government by-election in the Hillmarton ward that had been held on the 9 September had been a joint campaign by Liberal and SPD activists in which the former Labour Party member Kevin O'Keefe won the seat for the SPD. Earlier defections to the SDP, O'Keefe's victory and the defection of the sixteen shifted the balance of power on Islington Borough Council from a huge Labour majority to 23 SPD, 2 Conservative and 27 Labour councillors. At the 1982 borough elections the now Liberal/Alliance contested every ward in the London Borough of Islington and took a 22.4% share of the whole borough vote, only 0.7% behind the Conservatives, and at the 1986 borough elections the Liberals replaced the Conservatives as the party of opposition in Islington with a 33.3% share of the vote to the Tory's 13.7% and the Other candidate's 6.5%.

At the 1983 general election in the now two Islington constituencies the SDP were defeated by Labour candidates. In the revised Islington South and Finsbury Constituency the left Labour candidate had won by a margin of 1% over their moderate Labour come Liberal/Alliance adversary. In the revised North Islington Constituency the SDP had been pushed into third place by the Conservatives. However, the SPD had nominated J.Grant the incumbent of the now defunct Islington Central Constituency to fight in place of O'Halloran, who promptly declared as an Independent Labour candidate and thereby split the moderate Labour vote.

### **7.11: Conclusion**

It is clear that partisan alignment changed quite dramatically in Islington and that the alignment between class and party was significantly weakened. The 1983 and the 1987 general elections in Islington saw an electoral realignment that contrasted

starkly with the two-party duopoly that had existed up until 1979. However, unlike Ladywood and Sutton Coldfield the SDP/Liberal Alliance have a crucial part to play. Any explanation of the genesis of this parliamentary electoral level dealignment in Islington cannot exclude the connection with local electoral dealignment and the determinants of that local level dealignment. A hegemony by the right of the local party over local party office appointments, local government and parliamentary electoral candidate selection, over the Labour Group on the council and its policies, reinforced and perpetuated by multi-office holding, had resulted in a sclerosis in policy formation and a seeming immunity to criticism or influence from significant sections of the wider party membership and the electorate in the London Borough of Islington. Constrained by electoral consideration of the potential impact that any increased spending on housing would have upon the rates and thus their majority the Labour controlled Islington borough council pursued a parsimonious and minimal housing policy.

Limited modernisation of existing properties by both council and private landlords and only a remote possibility of either allocation of a council house or of purchase of a home, was exacerbated by the effect of the 1957 Rent Act, inflation of council rents, private sector rents, rates and house prices. Added to this electoral discontent was the competition for scarce housing posed by immigrants. This discontent found political expression at the local electoral level and provided the Liberals with a window of electoral opportunity. Much of the Liberal's initial success in Islington had its origins in the conflation of the housing and the immigration issues by the maverick Liberal activist Lomas. However, the party's foothold in the borough was maintained by the electoral purchase of its role as guardian of the ratepayer's interest. In competition for

the disaffected Labour vote were a number of Independent Labour candidates who challenged on a ticket of expansion of council spending on housing. The expectation of an improvement in local authority housing provision in Islington under the Wilson governments had been unfulfilled, as both major parties appealed to an increasing number of owner-occupiers in the inflationary economic climate of the 1970s that pared further any public spending by Islington council.

The issue of housing through the 1960s and 1970s thereby provided the vehicle for the rise of the left in Islington and a periodic boost to Liberal local electoral fortunes. In reaction to the challenge from the left, the moderate and right of Islington Labour Group on the council jumped ship to the SDP and, with the beleaguered Islington Liberals, whose local electoral appeal also gave precedence to rate levels, formed a symbiotic electoral relationship that kept both parties temporarily afloat. The Liberals had built up a small core of support in the 1960s that sustained them at local and parliamentary elections through the 1970s and a foundation to forge an alliance with the SDP into the 1980s. This support had its origins in local electoral conflict over housing.

It is generally regarded that the 1950-1970 period is one of electoral stability in terms of party and class alignment at the parliamentary electoral level, and of electoral change that was slow, small and short term. Certainly, in the Islington constituencies this is the case. However, in their coterminous local electoral units at borough elections this clearly was not the case. Thus the evidence challenges the view that local electoral behaviour mirrors that of parliamentary behaviour and responds solely to national electoral determinants (see Newton 1976). The evidence also contradicts

the view that voters in the 1960s failed to meet the conditions for issue voting (Butler and Stokes 1983; Franklin 1985a 37-56).

However, at the local electoral level, for significant numbers of the Islington electorate the issue of housing was a salient electoral issue that found expression in support for Independent Labour candidates, Independent Liberal candidates, Liberals, Conservatives and a variety of resident and ratepayer association candidates. Clearly, the moderates of Islington Labour and the left of the local party opposed each other over the issue of housing, and indeed the left gained an electoral advantage over the issue because opinions in the electorate were sufficiently skewed. The Liberals also gained an electoral advantage because of their role as guardians of the rate payer, albeit not much electoral advantage, but enough to attract some disaffected Labour voters who could cast a protest vote that was less damaging than voting for the left or the Conservatives, and enough to sustain the Liberals through lean times. A more acceptable home for this protest vote against the left was found in the eventual Liberal/SDP alliance. Thus the issue of housing did become integrated into the party system at the local electoral level in Islington in part because of the ineffectual conduit for electoral discontent at the parliamentary electoral level and in the main because of the policy stasis of Labour at the local electoral level.

The case study contradicts Franklin's view that the electorate was more open to rational argument in the 1970s than it was in the past (Franklin 1985a:52:53). Clearly, even in the staunchly Labour and predominantly working class borough of Islington a significant section of the electorate at local elections in the early 1960s were susceptible to rational arguments about housing. The study also evidences that

the 1960s electorate at the municipal level were as 'ready to swing in response to short term factors, especially the issues that were cause of immediate concern' as were the parliamentary electorate of the 1970s (Sarlvik and Crewe 1983:337).

Clearly, short-term factors of immediate concern evoked electoral swings at the local electoral level in Islington, as evidenced by the electoral reaction to council rent rises and the plan to build multi-storey flats in Hornsey Rise. At the local electoral level it seems that the electorate were open to rational argument and susceptible short-term factors, giving further evidence of the disparity in local and national electoral behaviour and its determinants.

This case study of Islington up to a point is supportive of Davis's conclusion about the housing crisis in London as being an illustration of how conventional politics could fail to provide an outlet for extensive social grievances during the age of affluence (Davis 2001). However, it does so if by conventional politics Davis means exclusively parliamentary level electoral politics and excludes local government electoral behaviour. Social grievances over housing in the London Borough of Islington did find electoral expression at the local level, (and at times conflated with the issue of immigration), and these social grievances did impact at the parliamentary level via the defection of moderate Labour councillors and MPs to the SDP, thus eventually finding an outlet in 'conventional politics'. The evidence also concurs with Dunleavy's explanation of dealignment that centres upon a consumption cleavage around the directly politicised provision of housing (Dunleavy 1979:409-443 and 1982).

The evidence of this chapter shows that the conflict over housing policy did influence the Islington electorate's alignment towards local and national politics in that it created the conditions for the emergence of collective consciousness and action at the local electoral level. Indeed, the emergence of Independent Labour candidates, various residents and ratepayer association candidates, Independent (New) Liberal, Liberal candidates, and Labour left in Islington can be explained in terms of support from those disaffected by the housing policy of the Islington Labour Group. Furthermore, as Dunleavy argues, local conflicts have an important structuring influence on the electorate's alignment towards national politics and on party differentiation at various points in time. Clearly, the rise of the left in Islington local government politics in the 1960s and 1970s was a major determinant in the decisions of the Labour Group on council and the constituency MPs to rebrand as SPD candidates in order to differentiate and distance themselves from the profligacy of the left.

In the next chapter the neighbouring constituency of Camden is examined and, although very similar in socio-economic characteristics and political stripe to Islington, a rather different course of political events and outcomes transpired.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CAMDEN**

#### **8.1: Introduction**

'Another most extraordinary amalgamation is between the respectable Conservative Borough of Hampstead ... and the former red flag Borough of St Pancras. It is an extraordinary marriage. If it does not lead to divorce I will be very surprised' (Lord Morrison quoted by Wistrich 1972:9). The London Borough of Camden, created by the London Government Act 1963, was indeed a merger of three quite diverse metropolitan boroughs; Hampstead, Holborn, and St Pancras (see Map 5, p212). However, the resultant compound was not as volatile as Morrison had feared. Yes, each individual borough did have its own particular configuration of socio-economic and political characteristics, whose synthesis shaped the political environment of Camden. Nevertheless, by 1964 even the 'red flag borough' of St Pancras, was characterised by a strong element of political and electoral pragmatism in respect of problems that were common to each borough, a pragmatism that underpinned a stability that may have surprised the doctrinaire Morrison.

#### **8.2: Party political background**

The Labour Party had replaced the Liberals as the main party of opposition in the metropolitan borough of St Pancras in the early 1920s. Indeed, the Liberals had made their last pre-war appearance in the borough when the party contested the 1925 London borough elections. Thereafter, the party was able only to contest in a single ward in 1953 and two in 1956. The Liberals reappeared on the St Pancras electoral scene at the 1964 post- reorganisation election to the now Camden borough council. Clearly, as far as the Liberals were concerned, St Pancras was a derelict borough.

In contrast support for the Labour Party in the 1930s had increased and at the 1945 borough elections Labour had taken 63.6% of the whole borough vote in St Pancras and 54 out of 60 council seats. In the post war period up until the local government reorganisation of London and the creation of Camden, council control had alternated between the two major parties. The Conservatives had taken council control in 1949 and 1959, and Labour in 1953 and again in 1962. At L.C.C. elections (electoral unit - the four northern wards of St Pancras MB, coterminous with the St Pancras North Constituency) the electorate had returned three Labour councillors at every L.C.C. election 1949-1961, and a Labour MP at each general election 1945-1970. The Liberals were unable to contest any of the post war/pre-reorganisation L.C.C. elections in St Pancras North and had lost their deposit at the 1950 general election, the only general election the party contested in the constituency up until February 1974. Thus, there had been mixed electoral fortunes for the two major parties at post war borough elections in the St Pancras MB. In contrast at the LCC electoral level the four northern wards voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Labour Party as they did at the parliamentary level.

The Conservative Party had dominated Holborn Metropolitan Borough Council elections since 1900. Liberal opposition had collapsed before the First World War and the Labour party had replaced the Liberals as the main party of opposition by 1919, albeit with only two seats on council. Labour contestation was fragmentary and only at the 1945 borough elections and thereafter was the party able to field a full-slate of candidates in Holborn. In contrast the Liberals, apart from 1956 when they fielded one candidate in the Saffron Hill ward, did not contest another ward seat in the borough from 1922 to 1962 inclusive. Labour had won 24 out of the 42 seats with a

48.6% share of the whole borough vote to the Conservative's 47.6% at the 1945 local elections. At all other Holborn MB elections (1962 apart when the Conservative share was 12.9% ahead of Labour's) the Conservative share of the whole borough vote exceeded that of Labour by 20%.

Clearly, Holborn MB was not only a derelict borough as far as the Liberals were concerned, but also one dominated by the Conservatives. Furthermore, at LCC elections when the electoral unit was coterminous with the Holborn and St Pancras South Constituency, and wards 5-8 of southern St Pancras were included with the Holborn MB wards, the electoral results still favoured the Conservatives. At LCC elections from 1949-1961 inclusive the Conservatives took 12 of the 15 seats in 5 contests, of which only three were marginal results. However, at the parliamentary level, at the 1950-1970 general elections inclusive (1959 apart), Labour returned an MP in what were marginal contests up until 1964. Thus, at the metropolitan borough electoral level Holborn's electorate tended to favour the Conservative Party, and even with the addition of the four southern St Pancras wards at LCC elections, the electorate in the main returned Conservative candidates. However at the parliamentary electoral level the same Holborn and St Pancras South / LCC electorate invariably returned a Labour candidate.

In the Hampstead Metropolitan Borough the Conservatives dominated council elections from 1900-1962. The Liberals from 1922 to 1945 inclusive did not contest a single seat. The Labour Party had contested in fourteen of the sixteen borough elections from 1906 to 1962, albeit in five or less wards before 1945 (1931 contested all wards). Labour had taken two seats in 1919 in the Kilburn Ward, four in Kilburn

and one in Priory in 1922, and six in Kilburn in 1937. Indeed, the wards of the west of Hampstead, especially Kilburn, were the bedrock of Labour's support in the borough, and in total returned fourteen Labour councillors at the 1945 borough elections, and thereafter ensured a whole borough average share of the vote of 31.8% at these elections up until 1962.

There was however the beginning of a Liberal Party revival in Hampstead from 1949 onwards. The Liberals contested five wards in 1949 and took 7.9% of the whole borough vote. At subsequent borough elections the Liberals contested in all the Hampstead wards and gained an increasing share of the vote (11.2% in 1953, 12.8% in 1956 and 16.7% in 1959). At the 1962 borough elections the Liberals took 29.6% of the whole borough vote and three seats in the Town Ward. At LCC elections the electoral unit was coterminous with both the Hampstead Metropolitan Borough and the Hampstead Constituency and, as at the borough elections, the Conservatives dominated. Indeed, at the five LCC elections 1949-1961 inclusive the Conservatives took all fifteen seats. Nevertheless, the Labour candidates averaged 34.4% of the vote. The Liberals were only able to contest at the 1955, 1958 and 1961 LCC elections in Hampstead and although increasing their share of the vote from 5.1% in 1955 to 17% in 1961, were unable to repeat their borough electoral success at the upper-tier level. Similarly, at parliamentary elections in the Hampstead Constituency the Conservative Party dominated and returned an MP at each general election 1950-1964 inclusive. The Labour Party candidates at these general elections averaged a 31% share of the vote, and at the 1964 general election the Labour candidate took 39.3% of the vote only 4% behind the Conservative candidate. In contrast, the Liberals were unable to

translate their early 1960s borough level success into parliamentary level success in Hampstead.

Clearly, for the electorate in all three boroughs at both local electoral levels and to some extent at the parliamentary electoral level there were horses for courses. There was a contextual variance in voting behaviour that challenges orthodox assumptions about the relationship between national and local voting behaviour.

Map 6 Camden borough ward boundaries at 1964 London Borough elections



Table 38: Lower-tier municipal electoral data, Borough of Camden 1964-1982.

Year	Wards	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH
1964	Adelaide	4	11180	35.5	18.5	52.8	34.3	9.2	3.7
1964	Belsize	4	10885	39.6	8.9	46.2	37.3	13.2	3.3
1964	Bloomsbury	3	7909	32.2	10.9	55.4	44.6	0	0
1964	Camden	4	11451	29.5	41.5	22.4	63.9	7.1	6.7
1964	Chalk Farm	2	6042	32.1	15.6	39.4	55.1	0	5.5
1964	Euston	2	4852	29.5	4.3	47.8	52.2	0	0
1964	Gospel Oak	2	5514	34.5	35.8	28.8	64.6	0	6.7
1964	Grafton	4	12285	28.9	54.3	18.6	72.8	0	8.48
1964	Hampstead Central	3	8159	35.3	22.9	54.9	31.9	13.2	0
1964	Hampstead Town	3	8630	43.8	21.4	51.6	30.2	18.3	0
1964	Highgate	3	7703	47	15.8	54.3	38.5	0	7.25
1964	Holborn	3	9337	42.2	10.3	52.7	42.5	4.8	0
1964	Kilburn	3	8472	31.6	42.8	24.1	66.9	6.3	2.6
1964	Kings Cross	3	9479	36	10.4	44.8	55.2	0	0
1964	Priory	4	10785	37.7	14.1	37.2	51.3	7.7	3.8
1964	Regents Park	3	9291	40.3	25.7	34.7	60.4	0	4.9
1964	St John's	3	7332	31	41.6	25.3	66.9	0	7.9
1964	St. Pancras	4	9626	29.9	55.81	17.1	72.9	0	10.0
1964	West End	3	9637	37.6	4.0	45.3	41.3	10	3.4
1968	Adelaide	4	10450	38.3	32.3	59.1	26.8	9.4	4.7
1968	Belsize	4	11171	37.6	24.6	56.4	31.9	11.7	0
1968	Bloomsbury	3	6810	29.6	46.2	73.1	26.9	0	0
1968	Camden	4	11358	30.1	2.8	42.7	45.4	0	11.8
1968	Chalk Farm	2	5999	32.3	13.6	51.9	38.3	9.7	0
1968	Euston	2	4341	30.2	8.9	49.0	40.0	10.9	0
1968	Gospel Oak	2	5208	36.4	1.4	45.6	44.2	10.2	0
1968	Grafton	4	10902	26.3	12.6	40.4	52.9	0	6.7
1968	Hampstead Central	3	9074	34.2	39.1	63.9	24.9	11.2	0
1968	Hampstead Town	3	9350	40.6	30.2	55.3	24.9	14.8	5.04
1968	Highgate	3	7722	47.9	23.7	56.8	33.1	5.6	4.5
1968	Holborn	3	8325	34.4	48.4	74.2	25.8	0	0
1968	Kilburn	3	8126	36.6	5.9	42.4	48.4	5.7	3.51
1968	Kings Cross	3	8960	32	20.9	60.4	39.6	0	0
1968	Priory	4	10963	40.4	3.7	44.7	40.9	9.3	5.1
1968	Regents Park	3	9061	37.6	5.0	49.2	44.1	0	6.7
1968	St. John's	3	6563	36.5	13.7	43.2	56.8	0	0
1968	St. Pancras	4	9004	26.1	23.6	31.9	55.5	7.5	4.9
1968	West End	3	9821	33	30.9	60.9	30.1	8.9	0
1971	Adelaide	4	11110	39.5	2.4	46.5	44.0	9.5	0
1971	Belsize	4	11203	40.3	5.5	39.8	45.3	7.2	7.7
1971	Bloomsbury	3	9017	27.8	11.2	44.4	55.6	0	0
1971	Camden	4	11337	36.1	46.5	22.5	69.0	0	8.4
1971	Chalk Farm	2	5491	37.8	13.9	43.0	56.9	0	0
1971	Gospel Oak	2	3582	46.5	38.9	27.9	66.8	0	5.3
1971	Grafton	4	10334	35.8	59.8	16.4	76.2	0	7.5
1971	Hampstead Town	4	10236	39	11.7	48.6	36.9	8.4	6.05

Year	Wards	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH
1971	Highgate	3	7631	46.9	0.3	46.6	46.3	0	7.0
1971	Holborn	2	6345	39.9	24.3	37.8	62.2	0	0
1971	Kilburn	3	8343	40.3	41.1	26.3	67.4	3.9	2.4
1971	Kings Cross	4	10026	36	16.4	41.8	58.2	0	0
1971	Priory	3	7520	45.7	34.7	30.7	65.4	0	3.9
1971	Regents Park	4	10284	40.1	35.7	32.2	67.8	0	0
1971	St John's	3	6655	35.8	50.26	24.9	75.1	0	0
1971	St. Pancras	3	8359	32.3	76.8	11.6	88.4	0	0
1971	Swiss Cottage	4	10578	38.8	5.4	43.5	48.9	7.6	0
1971	West End	4	10557	36.8	0.7	50.4	49.7	0	0
1974	Adelaide	4	10980	41.6	5.0	47.8	42.8	9.4	0
1974	Belsize	4	10454	41.4	3.5	39.6	43.1	11.6	5.7
1974	Bloomsbury	3	7793	27.1	13.2	43.4	56.6	0	0
1974	Camden	4	10211	28.9	42.6	20.4	62.9	9.6	7.2
1974	Chalk Farm	2	5116	37.9	20.2	34.9	55.1	9.9	0
1974	Gospel Oak	2	3803	42.3	42.5	22.9	65.5	7.0	4.6
1974	Grafton	4	9483	30.3	52.7	15.6	68.3	5.8	10.4
1974	Hampstead Town	4	9546	40.3	21.9	51.7	29.8	14.5	3.9
1974	Highgate	3	6785	48.4	6.6	37.9	44.5	11.7	5.8
1974	Holborn	2	5887	37	38.5	25.7	64.2	10.1	0
1974	Kilburn	3	7466	33.3	32.7	28.3	60.9	10.7	0
1974	Kings Cross	4	8979	36.9	16.4	35.4	51.8	12.8	0
1974	Priory	3	6646	43.3	31.9	24.7	56.6	11.8	6.9
1974	Regents Park	4	8966	37	30.9	34.6	65.4	0	0
1974	St John's	3	6114	34.6	54.5	18.6	73.2	8.2	0
1974	St. Pancras	3	7451	30.6	71.8	14.1	85.9	0	0
1974	Swiss Cottage	4	9245	38.3	2.8	45.7	42.8	11.5	0
1974	West End	4	9603	41.8	2.3	42.4	44.8	10.8	2.1
1978	Adelaide	3	7071	47.9	18.4	55.8	37.3	6.9	0
1978	Belsize	3	7423	41.7	24.4	57.1	32.7	10.2	0
1978	Bloomsbury	3	8465	35.6	3.3	48.4	51.6	0	0
1978	Brunswick	2	4350	50.1	5.4	52.7	47.3	0	0
1978	Camden	2	4020	36.5	25.3	35.3	60.6	0	4.2
1978	Castlehaven	2	4252	38.4	37.0	28.9	66.0	0	5.0
1978	Caversham	2	5542	41.2	26.7	33.9	60.6	0	5.5
1978	Chalk Farm	2	5585	44.6	10.2	44.9	55.1	0	0
1978	Fitzjohns	2	4303	37.8	30.4	59.5	29.0	11.5	0
1978	Fortune Green	2	4462	48.9	9.5	49.1	39.7	9.5	1.7
1978	Frognaal	2	4912	43.6	41.9	64.8	22.9	12.3	0
1978	Gospel Oak	2	4104	46.1	32.7	30.8	63.5	0	5.8
1978	Grafton	2	4842	37.2	38.1	28.7	66.8	0	4.5
1978	Hampstead Town	2	4791	45.4	27.5	56.9	29.5	13.5	0
1978	Highgate	3	7550	53.6	5.4	50.3	44.9	0	4.8
1978	Holborn	2	5391	45.4	6.7	46.7	53.3	0	0
1978	Kilburn	3	7312	40.2	8.4	34.5	42.9	5.4	17.2
1978	Kings Cross	2	4554	38.9	3.8	46.7	50.5	0	2.9
1978	Priory	2	4845	49.2	13.7	40.03	53.7	4.0	2.3

classification of variables, and areal units of enumeration make comparison of census statistics on a table to table basis over time problematic.

**Table 41: Census data related to particular electoral data.**

CENSUS	SPATIAL UNIT	ELECTIONS		
		Local Govt. Lower-tier	Local Govt. Upper-tier	Parliamentary Constituencies
1961 (various HMSO publications)	Local authority		LCC 1958, 1961.	1959
SN 1488 – 1966 Census Small Area Statistics (Ward Library) 10% Sample	Ward	London Borough Council 1959, 1962. B'Ham Council, 1959-1968 Sutton Coldfield Council 1959-1967	LCC 1964, 1967.	1964, 1966.
SN 1182 – 1971 Census Small Area Statistics (Ward Library) 100% Households Aggregated to Ward Boundary Definitions	Ward	London Borough Council 1964, 1968, 1971 and 1974 B'Ham Council 1969-1972 Sutton Coldfield Council 1968-1972		1970
SN 1181 – 1971 Small Area Statistics (Ward Library) 100% Population Aggregated to Ward Boundary Definitions	Ward	London Borough Council 1964, 1968, 1971 and 1974 B'Ham Council 1969-1975 Sutton Coldfield Council 1968-1972		1970
SN 1180 – 1971 Census Small Area Statistics (Ward Library) 10% Sample	Ward	London Borough Council 1964, 1968, 1971 and 1974 B'Ham Council 1969-1975 Sutton Coldfield Council 1968-1972		1970
SN 1191 – 1971 Census Small Area Statistics (Ward Library) 100% Households Aggregated to Post-1974 Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Definitions	Constituency		LCC 1970 GLC 1973 West Midlands County Council 1973	February 1974 October 1974
SN 1190 – 1971 Census Small Area Statistics (Ward Library) 100% Population Aggregated to Post-1974 Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Definitions.	Constituency		LCC 1970 GLC 1973 West Midlands County Council 1973	February 1974 October 1974
SN 1893 – 1981 Census Small Area Statistics (Ward Library) 100% Population and Households Aggregated to Ward Level	Ward	London Borough Council 1978. B'Ham Council 1976-1979	GLC 1977, 1981 West Midlands County Council 1977, 1981	1979

Compounding these shortcomings is the pitfall of ecological fallacy whereby spurious inferences may arise from the analysis of data derived from groups of people rather

than from individuals. Furthermore, the spatial nature of the census makes standard statistical methods problematic in that the different levels of areal units of a particular census, such as ward level and constituency, can produce different answers in analysis of grouped data. In short, that the aggregation of data can distort findings (Norris and Mounsey:1983).

**Table 42: Socio-economic variables used in the analysis**

<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION (SEG = SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP)</b>
SEEKWORK	% economically active seeking work, 15+ years of age (16+ 1981 census)
OWNOCC	% households owner-occupied
COUNCIL	% households local authority rented
UNFURN	% households rented unfurnished
FURN	% households rented furnished
BXUK	% residents born outside the UK(includes Eire)
NONMAN	SEGs 1,2,3,4,5 and 13 (up to 1971 Census). SEGs 1,2,,34,5.1,5.2 and 13 (1981 Census)
JNONMAN	SEG 6 (up to 1971 Census). SEG 6 (1981 Census)
MANUAL	SEGs 7,8,9,10,11,12,14 and 15 (up to 1971). SEGs 7,8,9,10,11,12,14,and 15 (1981 Census)
AFID =Armed forces and Inadequately described	SEGs 16 and 17 (up to 1971 Census). SEGs 16 and 17 (1981 Census)
FAGW =Farmers, (employers and managers) farmers (own-account), Agricultural workers	SEGs 13,14,and 15 (up to 1971 Census). SEGs 13,14,15 (1981 Census)
SCI = Social Class I	SEGs 1,2,3,4, and 13 (up to 1971) . Professional occupations etc.(1981 Census)
SCII = Social Class II	SEGs 5,6,12,and 14 (up to 1971). Intermediate occupations+ Skilled occupations non-manual ( 1981 Census)
SCIII=Social Class III	SEGs 7,8 and 9 (up to 1971 Census). Skilled occupations manual (1981 Census).
SCIV=Social Class IV	SEG 10 (up to 1971 Census). Partly skilled occupations (1981 Census).
SCV+Social Class V	SEG 11 (up to 1971 Census). Unskilled occupations (1981 Census).
SCVI= Social Class VI	SEGs 16 and 17 (up to 1971 Census). Armed forces inadequately described (1981 Census)
RD1>1.5	% households room density >1.5 per room
RD 1-1.5	% households room density >1-1.5 per room
SHDWELL	% households defined as shared dwellings
SLHOTWAT	%households share or lack hot water ( no values 1981 Census)
SLBATH	% households share or lack bath
SHINWC	% households share inside toilet
NOINWC	% households no inside toilet

There are two initial dilemmas that face the researcher who wants to compare change over time in the 1959-1979 period using census data; whether the statistics measure

**Table 56: Logits of significant predictors categorical dependent variable CONWIN/CONLOSE at Inner-London lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections 1959-1979 and by decade. First column of each is Block 1 = socio-economic variables, second column Block 2= socio-economic + political variables, asterisk denotes coefficient not significant at  $p < 0.05$  level. Exp.B in brackets.**

VARIABLE	London lower-tier 1959-1979		London lower-tier 1959-1970		London lower-tier 1970-79		London upper-tier 1959-1979		London Parliamentary 1959-1979	
DEPENDENT	CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0		CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0		CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0		CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0		CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0	
N	1211	1211	462	462	749	749	144	144	238	238
% Predicted	77	77	72.9	75.3	82.9	90.0	83.3	91.7	81.5	91.2
CONSTANT	.51	5.2	4.4	3.4	4.1	8.8	-10.5	-10.4	-.19	-2.8
COUN-RENT	-.03 (.97)	-.03 (.98)	-.04 (.95)	-.06 (.94)	-.03 (.97)	-.03 (.97)	*	*	*	*
NON-MAN	.07 (1.1)	.05 (1.1)	*	*	*	*			.21 (1.2)	*
J NON-MAN							.4 (1.5)	.4 (1.5)		
MANUAL	*	*	*	*	-.08 (.93)	*			*	*
SOC 1	-.06 (.94)	-.06 (.95)	*	*	*	*	.51 (1.7)	.5 (1.7)	*	*
SOC 2	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	-.08 (.92)	*
SOC 4	-.09 (.91)	-.09 (.93)	-.14 (.87)	-.19 (.83)	*	*	*	*	*	*
SOC 6	*	*	*	*	*	*	-.41 (.67)	*-.41 (.67)	*	*
S/L BATH	*	*	*	*	-.06 (.94)	*	*	*	*	*
PPC CON	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	-4.31 (.01)
CON COUNC	*	*	*	2.00 (7.3)	*	*	*	*	*	*
TURNOUT	*	*	-.06 (.94)	-.04 (.96)	*	*	*	*	*	*
MARGINAL 1	*	.8 (2.2)	*	*	*	1.77 (5.9)	*	*	*	*
MARGINAL 2	*	1.0 (2.6)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
MARGINAL 3	*	.7 (1.9)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

The results of the logistic regression analysis of the Sutton Coldfield data in respect of the odds of a Conservative Party victory at lower-tier elections 1959-1972 are set out in Table 57 (analyses of Labour and Liberal not possible, nor parliamentary level, because of small sample size). Once more the significance of electoral context for Conservative Party fortunes is evidenced. At these lower-tier elections the odds of the Conservative Party winning a ward contest were reduced in relation to the predictor JUNIOR NON-MANUAL, and those odds could be multiplied by .72 for every unit increase in JUNIOR NON-MANUAL.

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Year	Wards	Seats	Electorate	Turnout	Majority	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH
1978	Regents Park	3	7679	47.3	4.8	45.5	50.3	0	4.3
1978	St John's	2	4719	39.9	36.9	31.5	68.5	0	0
1978	St. Pancras	2	4129	39.1	42.9	25.9	68.8	0	5.3
1978	Somers Town	2	4970	35.2	40.5	27.5	67.9	0	4.5
1978	South End	2	5025	48.4	4.1	45.6	41.5	8.9	4.0
1978	Swiss Cottage	3	7768	45.1	9.3	50.1	40.9	9.0	0
1978	West End	2	4738	46.4	0.7	45.3	44.5	10.2	0
1982	Adelaide	3	6469	47.3	23.3	51.7	28.3	20.0	0
1982	Belsize	3	6467	46.6	21.8	47.4	23.6	25.5	0
1982	Bloomsbury	3	7315	39.1	3.4	40.3	36.9	22.8	0
1982	Brunswick	2	4727	43.9	14.8	46.2	31.4	22.5	0
1982	Camden	2	4077	45	23.3	21.4	50.9	27.7	0
1982	Castlehaven	2	4090	44.6	34.5	14.3	55.6	21.1	8.9
1982	Caversham	2	5206	46.1	18.6	17.5	50.6	31.9	0
1982	Chalk Farm	2	5017	48.7	11.9	27.5	42.3	30.3	0
1982	Fitzjohns	2	4370	40.6	20.9	51.1	18.7	30.2	0
1982	Fortune Green	2	4084	49	6.5	39.1	28.3	32.6	0
1982	Frognaal	2	4705	45.5	26.8	55.2	16.3	28.5	0
1982	Gospel Oak	2	4913	47.4	27.9	17.4	52.2	24.3	6.2
1982	Grafton	2	4546	41.8	33.4	15.2	59.1	25.7	0
1982	Hampstead Town	2	4788	45.4	14.8	46.6	21.7	31.7	0
1982	Highgate	3	7970	53	1.0	36.5	35.5	27.9	0
1982	Holborn	2	5011	45.3	19.6	28.2	47.8	17.7	6.3
1982	Kilburn	3	6980	43.4	23.4	20.3	51.6	28.2	0
1982	Kings Cross	2	4932	36.7	15.9	30.3	46.3	23.4	0
1982	Priory	2	5521	51.6	23.8	29.4	53.2	17.4	0
1982	Regents Park	3	7876	39.3	5.5	36.2	41.7	22.2	0
1982	St John's	2	4719	41.6	32.0	14.7	58.6	26.6	0
1982	St. Pancras	2	3712	42.8	34.8	17.9	58.5	23.6	0
1982	Somers Town	2	4567	41.8	46.3	16.8	64.8	18.5	0
1982	South End	2	4673	49.9	3.7	40.2	36.5	23.4	0
1982	Swiss Cottage	3	7313	46.1	7.6	41.1	33.5	22.8	2.8
1982	West End	2	4672	48.5	1.9	36.6	38.5	24.8	0

### **8.3: Labour's tenuous control**

The new London Borough of Camden at the first post reorganisation borough election of 1964 was considered marginal (see Wistrich 1976:8, London Labour Party: Jim Raisin Papers ACC 24/7/B/47). At the 1962 borough elections Labour had regained control of St Pancras, with fifty of the sixty seats now in the party's hands. In Holborn, the Labour Party had taken eight seats and the remaining thirty-four had gone to the Conservatives, albeit with reduced majorities. However, of Labour's eight

Holborn seats, three were in the St George the Martyr ward which they had dominated since 1953, four were in the St Giles Central ward where Labour had averaged 48% of the ward vote at post-war elections, and one seat was won in Bloomsbury North where Labour had averaged 44% of the ward vote over the same period. All three wards were areas of the worst housing conditions and all three had a history of close straight fights between the two major parties.

Furthermore, in Hampstead, the Labour Party's vote declined significantly; in the Belsize ward by -7.2%, in the West End ward by -8.6%, in the Priory ward by -2.3% and by -0.2% in the Adelaide ward. Thus, in four of the west Hampstead wards, some of the areas of the worst housing conditions in Hampstead, the wards that had been the bedrock of Labour support in the borough, the party was losing support. Labour support had fallen in the majority of Hampstead wards and alarmingly the Liberals had pushed Labour into third place in four wards, and significantly reduced Labour support in many of the areas of worst housing. In contrast the Liberals had benefited from huge swings in most of the Hampstead wards from the Conservatives, and only in Labour's heartland ward of Kilburn had Labour been the beneficiary of a swing from the Conservatives. The Liberals had contested in neither Holborn nor St Pancras at the 1962 borough elections. However, in Holborn even though every ward had swung towards Labour to produce a whole borough swing in the vote of 9.4%, Labour were still almost 13 percentage points behind the Conservatives and only able to take eight of the forty-two seats. On closer inspection of the post-war electoral history of the three pre-reorganisation metropolitan boroughs, amalgamation for the Labour Party did not auger well, as Table 39 illustrates.

**Table 39: Seats won by party at metropolitan borough elections 1945-1962, St Pancras MB, Holborn MB, and Hampstead MB.**

Metropolitan Borough Elections 1945-1962	Labour Party Seats Won	Conservative Party Seats Won	Total Seats
St Pancras wards 1-4	149	31	180
St Pancras wards 5-8	83	97	180
Holborn	43	209	252
Hampstead	44	208	252
Total Seats Won	319	545	864
Percentage Won	36.9%	63.1%	100%

(Source Willis and Woollard:2000)

Labour had a core support in wards 1-4 of St Pancras MB, nevertheless, the remaining wards 5-8 were marginal. Furthermore, at LCC elections and parliamentary elections it was these 5-8 St Pancras wards that made up the Holborn and St Pancras South electoral unit. However, at borough elections 1945-1962, out of 252 contested seats the Holborn MB wards had returned 209 Conservative candidates. In the Hampstead MB the Labour Party's borough electoral fortunes were as dire as in Holborn. It is then, far from clear how the London Labour Party at the 1964 London Borough elections considered Camden to be a marginal borough, or indeed how later commentators have come to this conclusion. At the 1964 London Borough elections the recent history of its constituent metropolitan boroughs would suggest that Labour had an uphill struggle to take control of the new borough council of Camden. It will be argued below that in the wake of the 1959 borough election defeat in St Pancras there was a significant moderation of the Labour Group's housing policy driven by pragmatic electoral calculations concerning Labour's prospects upon amalgamation into the new London borough of Camden.

#### **8.4:Housing conditions and voter discontent**

Upon merger, tenure in the London Borough of Camden comprised 17% owner-occupiers, 16% council tenants and 62% private sector. The St Pancras Metropolitan Borough had contributed by far the largest number of council dwellings, some 9,000, and had by far the largest Housing Revenue Account deficit. In contrast, at the time of the amalgamation Holborn Metropolitan Borough had only 1,000 council dwellings, but had a very healthy commercial rate income by virtue of its central London location. Hampstead Metropolitan Borough had 3,000 council dwellings, however, in relation to the size of its population this was a much smaller proportion than the St Pancras level of provision. Hampstead had the highest proportion of middle class residents but the lowest income from rates and the lowest debt of the three boroughs. Holborn's post-war provision of council housing in relation to its population size was superior to that of Hampstead but inferior to the St Pancras council house building record.

The inadequacy of social housing provision by all three metropolitan boroughs is however put into perspective by the combined council housing waiting list for Camden that numbered 11,441 applicants in 1965 (Wistrich 1972:202). Indeed, almost half the households in the London Borough of Camden lacked essential facilities and were seriously overcrowded. Moreover, one in four households were under multi-occupancy, and by 1968 it was estimated that the borough needed '22,000 new houses just to solve its present problem' (The Camden and St Pancras Chronicle

26 April 1968). The areas of worst housing conditions were in the central and north-eastern wards of St Pancras, and the wards of west Hampstead.

Housing provision and council rents had been at the forefront of the political battle for control of St Pancras Metropolitan Council at post-war borough elections. The explanation for this was because 'housing development was one of the few real powers held by the old Metropolitan Boroughs and certainly bad housing was the greatest social evil in St Pancras' (Duff 1971:89). In all three metropolitan boroughs, to varying degrees, in both the uncontrolled private rental sector and the local authority rented sector, soaring rents added to existing electoral discontent over housing conditions and the rate and extent of local authority provision. Faced with escalating land prices and construction costs, and the increased cost of council borrowing, formerly at 2% from the centrally funded Public Works Loan Board and thence, after the 1957 Rent Act, from free-market sources at much higher interest rates, council rent levels could only be suppressed by ever-increasing subsidy from the local rates. The refusal by the then Labour controlled St Pancras council to increase rents had resulted in legal action and a number of Labour councillors had been surcharged in 1958 and 1959.

Labour had controlled St Pancras council since the 1953 borough elections and had rescinded a Conservative scheme of differential rents in favour of a standard council rent subsidy. This, and the suppression of rent levels in general was naturally opposed by the Conservatives, but also by the councillors on the right of the local Labour party. However, in the months before the 1959 borough elections fourteen Labour

councillors had been expelled from the local party because of their support for increased rents and a curtailed housing programme.

In power again in 1959 the Conservatives immediately reintroduced a differential rents scheme and thereby precipitated a concerted and organised campaign against rent increases that involved widespread rent strikes and a riot in 1960. Labour's borough election landslide of 1962 was on the back of this groundswell of general discontent among the St Pancras electorate over housing conditions and rents in the private and public sector and the party's electoral promise to repeal the differential rent scheme. However, once in control, 'it was not possible to carry out ... [the] promise'. As Peggy Duff the Labour Group's Chairman of the Housing Committee later recorded 'It could not be abandoned... without further surcharge on the councillors responsible'. More important, a return to the standard rent subsidy system would have increased the Housing Revenue Account deficit and produced a politically damaging imbalance between rent and rate contributions to the account. The deficit stood at £300,000 in 1961/1962 and was increasing at a rate of £50,000 a year ( St Pancras Chronicle 12 Oct. 1962, Duff : 96).

Such an electoral consideration had not been of paramount importance in the Conservative dominated Holborn borough where rate income from valuable central London office properties financed services and its council house building programme without a negative impact upon its Housing Revenue Account and thus, any adverse burden on domestic ratepayers. Similarly, in the predominantly middle class Hampstead Metropolitan Borough a low level of council house provision, minimal rates and a small Housing Revenue Account debt was the prevailing local political

economy. Labour councillors were well aware that upon merger of the three metropolitan boroughs a significant proportion of Camden's electorate would be averse to high council expenditure, especially on housing, that impacted upon the rates. Indeed, as Peggy Duff lamented, ' St Pancras changed into Camden...

Inevitably the question of rents ceased to be the hub and centre of our socialist faith' (Duff 1971:96, St Pancras Chronicle 8 May , 28 August 1959, 18 May, 12 October 1962).

Clearly, in the interim between their 1959 borough electoral defeat and the initial election to the newly formed Camden in 1964, Labour's policies had moderated somewhat. Indeed, a motion to return to a standard rent subsidy had been defeated within the St Pancras Labour Group in 1962, as it was again in 1965 within the now Camden Labour Group. New electoral calculations had come into play with the 1959 borough electoral defeat and the onset of amalgamation that necessitated a shift in policy towards the rent/rate issue. Furthermore, as will be evidenced below, just as Labour in St Pancras had 'come to terms with the realities of limited power' (Wistrich 1971:8), or rather transient council control by cutting their rent policy cloth according to electoral considerations, so the Labour Group on Camden Council became much 'more conscious of the rising rate burden and the movement of public opinion towards the Conservatives' and reluctantly tailored their housing policy accordingly.

Wistrich has argued that this 'did not influence the broad policy line of the [Labour] Council', i.e. that the Labour Group were 'determined to....increase the amount of local authority housing'. Indeed, this intention was made explicit in Labour's local electoral appeals to the Camden electorate and goes some way to explain why the

Labour Party in Camden, unlike the neighbouring borough of Islington, did not fracture into two factions of candidates running as Labour Independents on a socialist housing policy in a damaging competition for the Labour vote with moderate official Labour candidates. There was, nevertheless, a chasm between the Labour Group's electoral rhetoric over housing and the actuality of provision and thus the amelioration of the grievances of a significant section of the Camden electorate concerning housing. Indeed, the average number of new buildings completed by Camden Council in the period 1964-1968 was 587 per annum, and although this was an improvement upon the annual average of its three constituent former metropolitan boroughs, it was nevertheless not enough to turn the tide of the ever-increasing housing waiting list (Wistrich:1971:213-214). However, other than abstention or a protest vote for a Conservative candidate (Liberals in Hampstead and a few Communist candidates apart) there was no alternative party or independent candidate to champion the cause of a significant section of Camden's electorate disaffected by housing conditions.

### **8.5: Liberal revival**

An attempt had been made by the Liberals to establish a foothold in the derelict constituencies of St Pancras North and Holborn and St Pancras South in the 1950s. During this period the general aim of the national party leadership had been to replace Labour as the main party of the left in British politics, as a non-socialist but nevertheless radical party. The strategy was never universally popular within the party because of the implication of possible cooperation with the Labour Party and the desire of many in the party to cultivate a distinct party image as an independent force in the eyes of the electorate. Furthermore, the autonomous nature of the various organisational units and constituency associations that made up the Liberal Party

meant that there was little formal contact between national leadership and local level activism, or control over electoral strategy and policy. A disadvantage on the one hand if a national party wants to employ a coherent electoral strategy but on the other hand a distinct advantage if a party wants to play to the local electoral gallery as these case studies have shown. Even after the appointment of a Local Government Officer in 1959, there were few sanctions to influence matters of electoral policy or strategy at local and parliamentary elections. (see Wallace 1968:243, Cyr 1977:40, Butler and King 1966:81, Pinkney 1983:347 Joyce 1989:264).

Indeed, at the 1953 and 1956 borough elections in the St Pancras MB, and the Holborn MB, the Liberal candidates' electoral appeals had been pitched at the ratepayer. The candidates had acknowledged the dire housing conditions and criticised the rate of council house provision, but any resolution of the problem involved a revision of the rating system to reduce the burden upon the ratepayer and the introduction of a fair rent scheme assessed by need that threatened increased rents for most council tenants. It is unsurprising that these Liberal candidates failed to detach Labour support but succeeded in benefiting from a small swing from the Conservatives. Clearly, there was a certain incongruity between national Liberal party image and local electoral reality in these cases.

However, the fortunes of the London Liberal Party were in the ascendant after a concerted recruitment campaign in the late 1950s in the London region. At a finance meeting of the London Liberal Party in May 1960 it was revealed that £1,050 had been raised, a vast improvement upon 1958 when they had faced bankruptcy

(ACC144/6/6). Furthermore, membership in London had increased from 5,700 in 1959 to 23,000 by January 1962 (Liberal News January 1962). It was in these more propitious circumstances that the London Liberal Party Executive Committee reported that party activists had agreed to launch a membership campaign in the St Pancras North area (ACC1446/11). However, by this time the focus of the Liberal electoral appeal at the national level had shifted much more explicitly to the upwardly mobile section of the working class, the younger voters in newer industries who did not have strong attachments to the Labour Party.

The Liberal appeal for support in the 1960s was also pitched at the disillusioned voters of both parties in that it tapped into the national mood of dissatisfaction of the electorate over the post-war performance of both the major parties when in government. The focus of Liberal blandishments towards the discontented Conservative voter and the so-called 'new man', the upwardly mobile technically skilled young worker, was the impact of interest rates upon mortgage repayments, the local authority rating system and waste of taxpayer's money through inefficient government at national and local level. The general tack of the Liberal Party policy was the pursuit of the lower middle class voter and the better off more skilled working class section of the electorate. Thus, in the predominantly working class constituencies, where housing conditions were decisive at elections the Liberal solutions were hardly distinguishable from those proposed by the Conservatives, and the Liberals were unable to fracture Labour partisanship and establish a foothold.

### **8.6: Liberals limited by local Labour Party organisation**

Opportunity for Liberal candidates in these areas was also dependent upon the electoral latitude allowed by its rivals. A rebel candidate running as an independent against an official Conservative candidate and thereby splitting the right vote was a rare occurrence. However, this was not the case with the Labour Party. Perhaps the reasons why rebel Labour candidates did not contest at borough elections on the single-issue of housing, as they had in Birmingham and Islington, can in part be explained in terms of the organisational structure of constituency Labour parties in the borough, the influence of the local party upon the Labour Group on council, and the democratic nature of control and policy making within the Labour Group.

The constituency boundaries of the former metropolitan boroughs meant that St Pancras and Holborn CLPs were engaged in common constituency party activities. Upon merger into Camden, unlike Islington and Birmingham where their respective Coordinating Committees and Borough Labour Party were either not convened or ignored, an active Liaison Committee made up of twenty representatives from each CLP was established and affiliated associations such as Trades Unions were represented. The Liaison Committee, was represented at the ward level selection of prospective local electoral candidates, coordinated electoral activity and formulated policy. Camden also had an active Local Government Committee made up from members of each CLP, a number of whom attended Labour Group meetings in an advisory capacity. There was much multi-office holding as in Islington and Birmingham, however, the influence of the wider party and affiliated associations meant that the Labour Group on council were more aware of, and responsive to, wider party dissention and criticism.

There were also a number of checks and balances upon the exercise of power by the leadership of the group and ample opportunity for the expression of dissent. Unlike the Birmingham Labour Group, the leader of Camden Labour Group was not able to dominate the chairmen of the various council committees or the proceedings of Labour Group meetings. An elected chairman presided over Labour Group meetings and the Leader of the Labour Group like all other members was subject to his ruling and thus all members had the opportunity to voice their opinions during the policy making process. Equally as important, the Policy Committee that generated the provisional policy proposals that went before meetings of the Labour Group, was much more broadly based than those of Birmingham and Islington. It included the chairmen of the Standing Committees and two elected officers, whose inclusion had the effect of further eroding the power of the Leader of the Labour Group and any leadership clique.

The most significant departure from Labour Party Standing Orders in Camden compared with Islington and Birmingham, was the replacement of the conscience clause that virtually compelled Labour councillors to conform to Group decisions and only allowed a councillor to abstain on matters of conscience such as religious issues. The Standing Orders of Camden extended matters of conscience to any policy issue that was considered to be of importance by an individual member albeit contrary to the Group opinion. As Wistrich points up 'The effect of this was to free members from the psychological burden that they must conform to Group decisions'. Indeed, unlike Birmingham and Islington dissident Labour councillors who were often also representatives of council tenant associations, dissident Camden Labour councillors did not feel stymied or denied a voice, just democratically outvoted. Unlike

Birmingham and Islington dissent over housing policy could be demonstrated to one's ward electorate without recourse to competing as an Independent Labour candidate and splitting the Labour vote. Indeed, 'party discipline and organisation in Council were more important for the way they determined the style of local politics than their effects upon individual councillors or the decision making process' (Wistrich 1972:61-82). Thus, damaging splits in the Labour Group on Camden Council were less likely and any electoral opportunity for Liberal candidates to gain advantage or a foothold in the area through the protest vote of disaffected Labour voters was diminished.

### **8.7: Housing and the 1964 election for control of Camden**

Housing policy remained a key electoral consideration for all parties in Camden. At the first GLC elections in Camden in April 1964 and the first London Borough elections in Camden in May 1964, Labour's past record of council house building, modernisation of properties and policy of affordable rents was extolled. In leaflets, letters and circulars to all local authority tenants in Camden, Labour outlined its intention to pursue the same policy if elected to represent Camden on the GLC. Furthermore, the literature highlighted how council rents in the Holborn Metropolitan Borough were much higher; £5.2s.3d. for a two-bedroom flat, whereas in council dwellings controlled by the LCC or St Pancras MB, two-bedroom flats were £3.1s.2d. The difference, they argued, was that Holborn MB council was Conservative controlled. Labour had also promised to calculate rents in the same way 'subject to the requirements of the law'. This electoral promise was contrasted with the Conservative manifesto that had announced the intention to replace differential rents with a rent-rebate scheme based upon need, and thus the introduction of means

testing. Furthermore the Conservatives had emphasised redevelopment through cooperation with private developers and the intention to keep rates to a minimum. Labour made no direct reference to rates at these elections but promised to 'ease the burden upon the hardest hit' of Camden's electorate. (Jim Raisin Papers GLC Election Borough of Camden: ACC/2783, ACC 2417/C/120, Wistrich 1972: 64).

The Liberal electoral appeal at the 1964 GLC and London Borough elections focussed upon defence of the ratepayer and the private rental sector. The party's interest in the private rental elector was not however in terms of council provision. Indeed the Hampstead Liberals were totally against council compulsory orders, both for redevelopment or modernisation of properties, especially in the Hampstead area. The Liberals wanted to create parity between the costs of private renting and those of house purchase, a policy that would particularly appeal to the more socially mobile of the electorate, especially in Hampstead where the costs of renting in the increasing number of prestigious apartment developments was rapidly escalating.

However, the three Liberal candidates at the GLC elections polled only 6.4% of the Camden vote, the bulk of which reflected their Hampstead support ( The Camden and St Pancras Chronicle 17 April 1964). At the May 1964 borough elections the Liberals in Camden polled a mere 5.5% of the whole borough vote, a figure that belied the party's level of support in Hampstead. The Liberals had contested all twenty-four of the Hampstead seats, but only contested in one ward of each of the former St Pancras and Holborn metropolitan council areas. If Liberal support in the Hampstead wards only is considered then the party took 11.8% of the vote. Nevertheless, compared to 1962 the Liberal electoral bubble had burst in Hampstead. The party's transient

protest vote had returned to its former Conservative and Labour camps. The Liberals at the 1962 London Metropolitan Borough Council elections had taken, on average, a 29.5% share of the vote in each of the Hampstead wards.

In contrast the Labour Party at post-war metropolitan borough elections had averaged a 31.8% share of the Hampstead vote, and in 1962 they experienced a -2.1% swing, whilst the Conservatives experienced a -15.2% swing against them. However, at the 1964 election in the same Hampstead wards Labour had increased their vote by 11.3% over its 1962 share, whilst the Conservatives had only increased their share by 8.8% over 1962. Labour in 1964 had taken 41.7% of the votes cast in the seven Hampstead wards of Camden and outperformed their post-war mean in Hampstead by 10.1%.

Clearly, the concerted electoral campaign by the Conservatives in Hampstead to paint the prospective Labour candidates as profligate socialists intent on the municipalisation of Camden at the expense of the ratepayer was not of comprehensive appeal to the electorate even in this most Conservative of the three former metropolitan boroughs. Furthermore, Liberal's electoral message to the ratepayers and the more well off in the rental sector of Hampstead had not differentiated them enough from the Conservatives and at the same time alienated them from those electors in the worst housing conditions who had little prospect of either purchasing a home or re-housing by the council. The shift in support towards the Labour Party at the 1964 GLC and borough electoral levels was reflected in the results of Camden's three constituencies at the 1964 General Election. In St Pancras North the party increased its majority. Labour took the historically marginal Holborn and St Pancras South seat, and turned the safe Conservative seat of Hampstead into a marginal with an increase of 11% in its share of the vote over 1959.

### **8.8:Camden Labour Group 1964-1968**

Labour took control of Camden Council with 34 seats to the Conservative's 26 and consolidated their position with the appointment of eight Labour Aldermen out of the ten vacancies available. Thus Labour's small majority was extended to fourteen and thereby tolerance to withstand a degree of dissent within the Labour Group was extended. Wistrich has argued that the Labour Government of October 1964 was 'anxious to push ahead with increased programmes of municipal housing and Camden Council was keen to meet the challenge' (Wistrich 1972:161). This intention was expressed at the first council meeting and indeed, housing was considered to be the main election issue at the 1964 general election in Camden's constituencies 'due to the huge housing list in the area' (The Camden and St Pancras Chronicle 17 April , 25 Sept. 1964).

However, the Labour Group's housing policy was almost immediately out of step with the Labour Government's policy which shifted decisively in favour of the stimulation of owner-occupation and the revitalisation of the private rental sector by the introduction of a means-tested Fair Rent Scheme, and economic rents for council tenants. Furthermore, Camden's housing policy under the Labour Group 1964-1968 failed to satisfy the borough's electorate across the range of tenures.

For the electors in the worst housing conditions there was no significant improvement in housing conditions or prospect of being re-housed throughout this period. Indeed, despite the Labour Group's much-trumpeted redevelopment and modernisation programme Camden's housing waiting list lengthened and, paradoxically,

overcrowding in the private rental sector worsened (Wistrich 201-219, The Camden and St Pancras Chronicle 26 April 1968). Furthermore, by 1968 'Camden Borough Council's loan debt stood at more than £41 million the largest proportion of which was ascribed to housing. In consequence Camden's domestic rate was the 'highest of all the London boroughs except Westminster and Kensington'

( The Camden and St Pancras Chronicle 5 Jan. 1968). In 1966 the Labour Group had increased council rents in the face of threatened surcharges by the District Auditor. Twelve Labour councillors had opposed the rise on behalf of the tenants organisations as an unfair burden upon council tenants and one that should be met by the community as a whole. For their part the Labour Group had argued that increased costs to solve the borough's dire housing problems should be met by a greater contribution from the rate fund and an increased government subsidy to improve and modernise compulsory purchased properties, and that the refusal by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to agree to these proposals meant that they had been faced with a choice between surcharge or a cut back in their housing programme. Indeed, the Minister of Housing had rescinded a Compulsory Purchase Order made by the Labour Group concerning properties in the Oak Village area and found in favour of the owner-occupiers who opposed the plan.

The Camden Labour Group had by the 1968 borough elections managed to alienate council tenants through an unpopular rent increase, alienate the most hard-pressed private rental sector tenants by way of means tested rent assessment, made no impression upon the size of the housing waiting list, and concomitantly imposed one of the highest rate burdens in London upon its rate paying electorate. Furthermore, they had exposed to the local electorate the ambivalence of the Labour Government's

housing policy. This electoral dissatisfaction over housing was addressed by the Conservatives who criticised the Labour council's administration in an attack that linked high spending, low council rents and high rates. The Conservative campaign particularly criticised the Labour Group's costly strategy of compulsory purchase and modernisation of properties, which were then let at uneconomic rents subsidised by the ratepayer.

Attitudes towards council rents and rate levels had been changing in favour of the Conservatives, and some indication of this can be gained from a survey commissioned by the Labour Party. A local attitude survey was conducted among the electors of five London boroughs in November 1966 at the behest of Transport House. The survey, conducted by Roger Jowell and John Cole, was undertaken in order to plan Labour's campaign for the May 1967 GLC elections. The survey used personal interviews, structured questionnaires, and selected five GLC marginal boroughs, four of which were not formerly in the LCC and Camden Borough. One Conservative and one Labour controlled ward were randomly selected from each of the five boroughs in the sample and seventy-five electors randomly selected from the Electoral Registers of each ward. A key finding on specific electoral issues was that the Conservative Party's policy towards council housing was gaining ground among the electorate. Almost half of the respondents in the sample complained that council rents were too low, and two-thirds of the respondents cited the ratepayer, rather than the Council or the Government, as the subsidiser of council rents. Asked the amount of importance attached to party politics in local affairs 'half the informants thought it made a great deal of difference which party controlled the borough council and the GLC'.

In terms of party affiliation the survey found that of those informants that did not always vote for the same party, half cited policies and a third cited record in office as the reason for change, with only one informant citing candidate. Interestingly, of the fourteen Liberals in the sample asked how they would vote if a Liberal candidate did not stand at the GLC elections, 'they split on this exactly evenly between Tory and Labour'. Furthermore, when the informants were asked to choose from a list of ten, the two most important issues of relevance to the area that they lived in, no one issue predominated and borough comparisons revealed considerable variation.

( Local Attitude Survey, Jowell,R., and Cole,J., 1966, ACC2783/JWR/STA/25).

The massive defeat of Labour in London at the May 1968 borough elections, which left the Conservatives in control of 28 of the 32 London boroughs, included what was by then considered the Labour stronghold of Camden. The Conservatives gained fifteen seats in the borough and took control of the council with forty-two seats to Labour's eighteen.

### **8.9:Labour's declining support**

The failures of the Labour Party in government in the 1960s no doubt have a major explanatory role in this dramatic change in local electoral allegiances. Indeed,1964-1970, was a period of severe, and unpopular, economic restraint which had impacted in Camden by January 1968 as 'shock unemployment figures' ( The Camden and St Pancras Chronicle 5 Jan., 1968). However, a commitment to the resolution of Britain's housing problems had been a central plank of Labour's 1964 electoral campaign. Such was its importance that Wilson considered that upon the issue of housing 'we win or lose' (Timmins 1995:233).

Labour had been confronted with political realities that created a chasm between electoral rhetoric and actual performance. On the one hand the Labour governments were committed to the extension of local authority rented housing provision as exemplified by the 1967 Housing Subsidy Act which enabled local authorities to borrow at much lower interest rates and financed a surge in council house completions by industrialised building methods. On the other hand there had been two significant changes in the party's thinking regarding the economics of housing. Firstly, the party's traditional commitment to the municipalisation of the private rental sector had been abandoned in the early 1960s, a move that proved extremely unpopular with the London Labour Party whose inner-London constituencies comprised vast areas of private rental housing. The government had repealed the 1957 Rent Act and introduced a 'Fair Rents Scheme' and Rent Tribunals to ease the circumstances of this sector which made up over 60% of the electorate in Camden, however, the means tested assessment of rents had meant for many tenants, an unpopular increase in rents for substandard properties, and a seemingly diminished likelihood of obtaining a council house. Secondly, the Labour government's policy had shifted towards a mixed economy resolution of the housing problem by a much bigger private sector contribution. Furthermore, at a time of rising affluence and home ownership for many of the party's traditional supporters, and the electoral necessity to broaden the party's base of support, Labour had to accommodate the needs of the home owner and facilitate the aspirations of those clamouring to join their ranks by making house purchase more affordable. There was then, a shift in Labour government policy from its association exclusively as the champion of the council tenant to a much wider appeal.

Symptomatic of this change, and expedited by economic crises, was a cut back in large-scale redevelopment and an emphasis upon General Improvement Areas, that is conversion and modernisation. Although this change of emphasis brought great savings to the Treasury in terms of the costs of subsidising local authority loans by virtue of the short-lived Housing Subsidy Act, it imposed increasing burden upon the ratepayer via expensive compulsory purchase, and modernisation of properties subsequently let at uneconomic subsidised rents in boroughs like Camden.

Labour's defeat in Camden had been presaged by the dramatic fall in party membership in the London region from the mid 1950s to the late 1960s. The constituency Labour parties of Camden were affiliated to the London Labour Party (post 1965 Greater London Labour Party) which coordinated all electoral activity. The party published electoral campaign material and party literature, organised conferences and training courses, directed campaigns on issues such as housing and rents, and sponsored Labour Group local electoral campaigns throughout its region. The London region covered the London County Council and the Middlesex County Council areas. However, the efficiency of the London Labour Party and its affiliated CLPs was undermined by its failure to recruit an adequate number of full-time party agents. This was a national problem for the Labour Party. However, in the whole London region there were just 23 full-time party agents in 1963 and, even after two general election victories, only 24 in 1966 (ACC 2783/JWR/STA/22/23/24). There were however, 42 constituencies in the LCC area alone and a further 23 in the Middlesex County Council area, in total 65 constituencies. Clearly the role of party agents in organising, coordinating and mobilising party effort at parliamentary and

local elections was an inefficient cog in the London Labour Party's electoral machinery. At a time when only candidate names and not party labels appeared upon polling cards it was essential that campaign literature was widely distributed and areas efficiently canvassed. Furthermore, some areas of Camden posed particular 'problems for canvassing...[as the] majority of residents in St Pancras North, and Holborn and St Pancras South [lived] in blocks of flats or in houses in multiple occupation' (The Camden and St Pancras Chronicle 25 Sept., 1964). An added problem for Camden was that party membership was not very strong, particularly in some residential areas, and this required party workers to be transferred from safe Labour seats like Hackney to help electoral campaigns in areas such as Holborn and St Pancras South (ACC2417/C/47).

Nevertheless, whatever strategies were adopted to overcome these deficiencies, a determining factor, not only in terms of manpower but also finance, in the electoral efficiency of both the London Labour Party and the Camden CLPs was the level of party membership. Although membership figures need to be considered with caution and are only approximate because as membership declined many constituency parties affiliated on the basis of a standard minimum figure rather than actual membership, (a practice that would exaggerate membership numbers), a clear trend of declining membership at the national and the London region level can be observed in Table 40. The membership of the London region, which stood at 157,629 in 1953 had fallen to 76,288 in 1964, the year of the first London borough elections under the new structure established by the Local Government of London Act 1963. Over the whole period, 1953-1967, the membership of the Labour Party in the London region had fallen by a staggering 58%. This fall in membership of the London Labour Party is somewhat

paradoxical. There was a 20% fall in membership between 1957, the year that the Rent Act was introduced by the Conservative Government, and 1962, by which time the full impact upon rents, especially on the private rental sector, was felt (see Davis 2001:76). In contrast Labour's dominance of LCC elections in the post-war era was

'unequivocal and electoral landslides were commonplace. In six elections held between 1946-1961 the party captured two-thirds or more of the seats on four occasions. In 1958 eight out of every ten LCC members was Labour. During the long period of Conservative dominance of national government, therefore, it was the Opposition party that occupied County Hall (Rallings and Thrasher in Willis and Woolard 2000:vi).

Furthermore, Labour's grip upon local politics in the capital was reinforced at the borough level with the party's seat share at the London Borough elections between 1953 and 1962 never below 64%.

It is the contention here that electoral dissatisfaction over housing was a significant contributory factor to the decline in Labour Party membership in London.

Furthermore, that between 1964 and 1967 the ineffectual housing policies followed by boroughs such as Camden added to Labour party members' disaffection engendered by national economic issues. The single most enduring divisive issue within the Camden Labour Group, and the Labour groups of its three constituent former metropolitan boroughs, was council rents. Council rents however, were inextricably linked with the resolution of the housing problem and electoral considerations of rate levels. Expression of dissatisfaction over rents and council house provision could find its way from the individual members of CLPs to the Labour Group, and as shown above was not stymied by the organisational structure of Camden Labour. Indeed, it was the avowed intent of the group to expand council house provision at affordable rents. Nevertheless, for the wider membership of Camden CLPs, the more politically

aware and active of the borough's Labour voting section of the electorate, disillusionment with the actual performance and record of the party at local level and ambivalent policy at national level cannot be ruled out as a contributory factor in the decline of party membership. As a case study in Southwark of the relationships between socio-economic change and the borough's constituency Labour parties points up, not only must explanations of changing political allegiances take account of the social and economic context but also, so the context in terms of political events and how voters make sense of them be included (Goss 1988:85-143).

YEAR	NATIONAL	LONDON REGION
1953	1,004,685	157,629
1954	927,947	154,314
1955	843,356	142,439
1956	845,129	[NO FIGURES]
1957	912,987	95,554
1958	888,955	93,311
1959	847,526	99,076
1960	790,192	80,437
1961	750,565	77,396
1962	767,459	76,984
1963	830,162	78,978
1964	830,116	76,288
1965	816,765	74,245
1966	775,693	71,245
1967	734,795	65,920

**Table 40: Membership of the Labour Party 1953-1967. Sources: Reports of the Conference of Regional Organisers, Reports of Staff Conference (ACC2783/JWR/STA 8, 17,19,20,21,22,23,24,25).**

### **8.10: The Labour Group in the 1970s**

The first priority of the 1968 Conservative council was the reduction of the borough's immense loan debt of which the housing budget was by far the greatest component. Camden, however, had the highest domestic rate in London and in order to balance the books a housing report concluded that an average standard rent of £4 10s a week an increase of just over £2 was required. In July 1968 council rents were increased by a third and an unpopular means tested rent rebate scheme proposed. Nevertheless,

despite economies that included the withdrawal of school meals, the Conservatives had to increase rates by 15p in the pound in March 1971. It was the biggest increase of all the London boroughs. A Conservative government, high unemployment in the borough, increased council rents, welfare cuts, increased rates, and an ever-increasing housing waiting list were the backdrop to a Labour Party landslide at the 1971 Camden council elections ( The Camden and St Pancras Chronicle, 5 Jan., 26 April, 17 May, 12 July 1968, 12 March, 21 May, 6 Aug., 24 Sept., 1971).

The Labour Group maintained control of Camden council throughout the 1970s and in an economic climate of roaring inflation made little impact towards ameliorating the housing needs of the borough, indeed, the housing list stood at 9,645 in 1978. Labour however, shifted the burden on to the rate payer in March 1974 with a 25% increase in rates and in the run up to the 1978 local elections promised a 12 month freeze on council rents if returned to power, a reflection of the increasing influence of the left of the local party within the Labour Group. Labour's majority was reduced from 36 to 7 at the 1978 election on an above average turnout in an election that centred upon the conflicting issues of rates versus council rent levels, and retrenchment versus borrowing to finance the housing programme.

Camden council and its housing policy had come under the influence of the left so much so that the Shadow Housing Minister Hugh Rossi described as 'lunacy of the greatest magnitude' the council's housing development in west Hampstead where 'the lucky occupiers ... will be subsidised by the ratepayers to the tune of £120 per week' (Camden and St Pancras Chronicle 4 Aug. 1978). In November 1981 a

moderate Labour councillor resigned and was re-elected in a council by-election as an SDP candidate and in January 1982 the Camden SDP and the Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras Liberal parties signed an agreement to contest the forthcoming May elections as Alliance candidates.

### **8.11: Liberal lifeline**

In cahoots with Labour moderates the Liberals under the banner of the Alliance were able to contest in all Camden's wards at the 1982 borough election and take a 25% share of the total borough vote albeit without taking a seat. The Liberals had never in Camden's brief electoral history reached double figures in total borough share of the vote or for that matter taken a seat. However, a local government electoral revival on the back of voter discontent over housing conditions, council rents and rate levels had enabled the party to gain a foothold in hitherto derelict constituencies, to build a local party organisational structure, to establish a core support, and thereby contest the Holborn and St Pancras South, and the St Pancras North seats at the February and October 1974, and the 1979 general elections. Furthermore, for the first time since 1934 the Liberal Party were able to field a candidate at the LCC elections in St Pancras in 1964.

### **8.11: Conclusion**

In this chapter it has been shown that the three boroughs under scrutiny were derelict as far as Liberal contestation and organisation was concerned. It has been evidenced that in all three metropolitan boroughs before their merger into the new London borough of Camden there was variance in the voting behaviour of electors within local authorities between lower and upper-tier elections and, in the cases of the St Pancras MB and the Holborn MB, variance between local and parliamentary levels of

elections. This evidence of the significance of electoral context in the calculus of the electorates of these three boroughs at pre-1964 elections contradicts the accepted view that local electoral choice in this period reflected to a large extent parliamentary level partisanship ( Fletcher 1967, Green 1972, Butler and Stokes 1975, Newton 1976, Gyford 1984, Miller 1988). Indeed, the evidence contradicts the accepted view of the 1950-1970 period as one of aligned voting as far as local elections are concerned in the three metropolitan boroughs examined ( Denver 1994 32-50, Sarlvik and Crewe 1983 332-335)

The evidence has also shown that support for the Labour Party had fallen in the areas of worst housing conditions such as in west Hampstead where Liberal intervention pushed Labour candidates into third place in 1962. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that membership of Labour's constituency parties was rapidly declining and given the recent electoral histories of the three metropolitan boroughs it has been shown that Labour faced an uphill electoral battle for control of Camden. It has been argued that an explanation for the fall in Labour's share of the vote and dramatic decline in membership cannot exclude the political failings of Camden Labour group in relation to the core local electoral issue of housing. Thus, along with changing class structure part of any explanation of the Labour Party's decline at parliamentary elections 1964-1983 should include erosion of support due to Labour's political failings at the municipal level. These findings accord with Heath's thesis regarding the importance of Labour's political failings in the explanation of their loss of electoral support in that period (Heath *et al* 1985:37).

Social housing provision, council rents, private rental sector rents and rates have been evidenced by this chapter to have been at the forefront of council elections in these three metropolitan boroughs and for the two major parties a key electoral consideration in each borough was the relationship between the level of the Housing Revenue Account deficit and the level of rates imposed. Indeed, even before the new political landscape of Camden came into being, pressure to return to a standard rent subsidy for council tenants had been resisted by the moderate majority of St Pancras council Labour group in 1962. It is indicative of the group's changing electoral calculations when contrasted with the expulsion of Labour councillors in 1959 for having supported increased council rents and cut backs in the housing programme.

Although the 1964-1968 Labour group's broad policy line endorsed an increase in local authority housing and the amelioration of the borough's dire housing conditions by compulsory purchase and slum clearance or modernisation of the private sector, it has been shown that there was a yawning gap between electoral rhetoric and reality. Clearly, the London Government Act of 1963 that brought about the merger of three quite different boroughs also brought into being a very different electoral context that the Labour Party in Camden adapted its policies to in order to successfully compete. This was a development confirmed by the findings of the Labour Party's local attitude survey of 1967 that evidenced a shift in local electoral opinion in favour of the Conservative's policy towards council housing and rents.

The Liberal Party's electoral appeal in Camden has been shown to have been pitched at the ratepayer and the better off in the private rental sector. However, the party's housing policy was against social housing provision and compulsory purchase of properties for redevelopment or modernisation. Thus, for a substantial number of Camden's electorate, those living in the poorest of housing conditions in the private

rental sector, not only was there not any immediate prospect of a council house but also no credible alternative candidate to champion their interests. For them the Labour controlled council of 1964-1968 delivered platitudes not houses and the Conservative controlled council 1968-1971 delivered retrenchment.

The evidence of this case study also highlights the role of contextual institutional factors in shaping the political environment, which in turn has an impact upon the calculus of the voter at the local electoral level. It has been shown that unlike Birmingham or Islington the organisational structure of constituency Labour parties in Camden was much more democratic and that the Labour group on council was not cushioned from the influence of the wider local party and was much more aware and responsive to dissent and criticism. Moreover, dissenters were free from Labour party Standing Orders and thereby able to register their ward electorate's disapproval without recourse to standing as rebel candidates. A locally determined style of party discipline and organisational structure can thus be seen to have shaped the climate of politics in Camden and illustrates the need for a broader vision in local electoral studies to take account of the process, context and meaning of the many determinants of voting behaviour.

However, it has been shown that in the 1970s this consensus among Labour councillors broke down as the left gradually gained control over Camden Labour. It was under these circumstances that the Liberals who had established a minimal core support and organisational structure in Camden upon the back of electoral dissatisfaction over rates, rents and housing conditions were well placed to collude with moderate Labour councillors and reap a modicum of electoral success under the Alliance party colours. At the 1983 general election the SDP candidate in the Camden

Hampstead and Highgate constituency took 25.4% of the total vote and a counterpart in the Camden Holborn and St Pancras constituency 21.4%. Thereafter, in both constituencies Liberal and Liberal Democrat candidates have contested the seats.

Indeed at the 2001 general election a Liberal Democrat pushed the Conservative candidate into third place at the Camden Holborn and St Pancras constituency.

Clearly, electoral dealignment at the parliamentary level is not entirely divorced from local electoral activity. Partisan alignment at general elections was very different in the constituencies of Camden in last two decades of the last century from what it was in the 1959-1979 period and part of the explanation for this phenomenon lies in local electoral activity.

The evidence of this study of Camden is supportive of Davis's conclusion about the housing crisis in London, which he said illustrates how conventional politics could fail to provide an outlet for extensive social grievances (Davis 2001). It also supports Dunleavy's explanation of dealignment that centres upon a consumption cleavage around the directly politicised provision of housing (Dunleavy 1979:409-443 and 1982). In short, the evidence presented here supports the contention that local socio-economic and political factors have an explanatory role in both local and parliamentary electoral outcomes and partisan dealignment at both electoral levels.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **MULTIVARIATE REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

It has been established in Chapter 4 by use of descriptive statistical techniques that there were disparities between the patterns of voting behaviour at local and general elections in the 1959-1979 period in both Birmingham and London. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that there was, at particular times and in particular areas considerable variance in the voting behaviour of electors between local authorities of the same type, within individual local authorities at upper- and lower-tier levels of local elections, and between local government electoral behaviour and that at the parliamentary level in coterminous electoral units. In Chapter 2 it has been shown that these disparities cannot solely be explained by the 'Annual General Election' thesis. Further, it has been argued in Chapters 5-8 that such variations in voting patterns can in part be explained by the characteristics of the environment in which the act of voting takes place, that there was a relationship between the socio-economic and political characteristics of the electoral units under scrutiny and voting behaviour therein.

The aims of this chapter and the next are to establish corroborative evidence of the relationships between contextual influences and electoral behaviour revealed by the case study research. Many of the contextual influences upon local electoral voting behaviour identified by the qualitative research may be discernable to inferential statistical techniques of data analysis. Analysis of data that captures the electoral, socio-economic and political context in which these acts of voting took place would

be expected to reveal significant associations between variables that measure these influences and support for a particular party. For instance, quantitative analysis should substantiate the findings of the qualitative research that has evidenced underlying general processes common to all case study locations in varying degrees, such as the impact of housing conditions and diverse local issues upon party support at municipal elections and indirectly upon alignment at parliamentary election. It would also be expected that change over time in the influence of these local factors and, indeed, the changes in class and party alignment evidenced by the case studies would be captured by the quantitative analysis. The case studies have evidenced cross-cutting cleavages in terms of class and party support and in terms of tenure and party support. Further statistical analysis is needed to substantiate and quantify these findings and with particular regard to the determinants of support for the Liberal Party.

It is desirable to establish convergent evidence not only to substantiate these findings, but also to exemplify how the methods of two supposedly incommensurable epistemological perspectives can be employed to produce mutually reinforcing warrantable evidence concerning political phenomena of interest to both disciplines. With these intentions inferential statistical techniques will be used to try to corroborate the findings of the case studies. It is intended that the variables selected and the hypotheses formulated to assess the link between party support and contextual factors have a sound evidential and theoretical base in the above case studies and previous political science studies.

## **9.2 The Variables in the Data-Base**

In order to analyse the effects of contextual factors upon party support at local government elections a database that has combined ward level local electoral data and census data aggregated to ward level has been employed. To analyse these effects at parliamentary elections, constituency level electoral data and census data aggregated to constituency level has been combined. Three general categories of variables have been used - socio-economic, political and structural - and these same variables are used at ward, local authority and constituency levels of analysis in order to facilitate comparison of the extent of contextual effects on party support at different types of elections.

The socio-economic variables have been derived from the 1961, 1966, 1971 and 1981 censuses and have been combined with political data-sets that include local government elections in Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield, and inner-London 1959-1979, and the parliamentary elections in Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and inner-London constituencies 1959-1979. Table 41 below outlines how each individual census has been matched with each particular election and is followed by Table 42 in which the socio-economic/demographic variables used are defined. An index of the cells used from each census in relation to each variable is outlined in Table A1 in Appendix A. The use of census data to analyse change through time is however not without problems of comparability. There is of course concern over how effectively inter-censal change can be captured on a decennial 'snapshot' in time basis. The use of the 1966 census ameliorates this problem somewhat in regard to change in the 1960s. More critical is the fact that changes in the questions asked, definitions and

the same thing and whether the statistics cover the same physical area. The geographical base of the census changed between the 1971 and the 1981 surveys to correspond with the local government reorganisation introduced in 1974 and subsequent ward boundary revisions. Consequently the geographical bases of enumeration districts and wards used for calculation of the Small Area Statistics at these respective censuses are not the same. However, the effect of this has been ameliorated in relation to upper-tier local elections and parliamentary elections by use of Small Area Statistics for 1971 aggregated to post-1974 boundaries and hence, comparability exists at county, local government area and constituency levels. To overcome this problem at ward level the Office of Population Census and Survey User Guide 84: Guide to Comparability 1971-81, England and Wales has been used. Although the guide does not cover the total output of these censuses 'many factors affecting ... Small Area Statistics comparability ... can be generalised to other forms of output' and researchers can 'identify comparable variables from their own SAS files', (User Guide 84: 1-2, Norris and Mousey 1983; 265-286). Hence, comparable cells and compounds of cells identified by the guide and by this researcher have been employed.

A further issue of comparison of change over time concerns change in the definitions of occupations and thereby comparability of socio-economic groups (SEGs) between censuses, and also therefore comparability between social class categories. The classification of occupations was changed for the 1981 census. Prior to 1981 persons in employment were classified to one of 17 categories based upon their occupation and the unemployed and retired classified on the basis of their most recent job. To overcome this problem and obtain reliable comparisons, combinations of SEGs have

been used (OPCS Census User's Guide 84: 56-57). Indeed, as Champion has advised 'only a relatively broad grouping of SEGs can be compared with any confidence between 1971 and 1981' (Champion 1995:323). The six social class categories used in this study and the SEGs that comprise them are outlined in Table 42 above. The counts of the cells used to calculate these variables measure economically active or retired persons and are measures of individuals rather than heads of households as these have been shown to give the best predictions regarding socio-economic groupings (see Warde *et al.* 1983:343).

The categories of social class used at the 1981 census are defined by assigning occupations of persons who are economically active and working or previous occupations for persons out of employment, permanently sick, or retired when stated, into the following groups: I = Professional occupations, II = Intermediate occupations, III N= Skilled occupations non-manual, III M= Skilled occupations manual, IV= Partly skilled occupations, V= Unskilled occupations, VI= Armed Forces and Inadequately Described (no equivalent table exists for the 1971 census). Thus, the 1971 SEGs have been assigned to these 1981 categories. However, the 1981 categories II and III N have been conflated to approximate a closer correspondence with the 1971 SEGs.

Aggregation bias and ecological fallacy are somewhat more problematic. Aggregation bias is the phenomenon whereby the strength of a relationship between variables observed at one level of aggregate data can be exaggerated when the same variables are observed at a higher level of aggregation of the same data. For example the strength of the association at ward level may be inflated purely as result of aggregation of the data to a much larger unit of aggregation such as local authority or

constituency. Clearly the integrity of comparisons between upper and lower tier local electoral behaviour and their respective socio-economic/political/structural variables may be compromised, as would comparisons between local and parliamentary electoral behaviour. However, the expectation would be that at ward level in council elections, where the voter can register dissatisfaction concerning local issues and where decisions that affect the electorate directly are contested, the influence of contextual factors and thus the association between socio-economic/ political/ structural variables and voting behaviour would be stronger than at upper-tier local or constituency level parliamentary voting levels.

Ecological fallacy is the mistaken assumption that relationships observed for groups necessarily apply to individuals in the group. An ecological fallacy is committed when one assumes that relationships observed at an aggregate level imply that the same relationships exist at the individual level. Ecological inference, that is, a conclusion about associations or causal relationships among individuals drawn on the basis of variables measured at an aggregated level can be misleading ( Robinson 1950, Goodman 1953 and 1959, Alker 1969, Miller 1995). Since Robinson's conclusion that ecological correlations cannot validly be used as substitutes for individual correlations (Robinson 1950: 357) studies across the ensuing decades have attempted to tackle the problem encountered by social researchers who use regression techniques on aggregated data and thereby commit an ecological fallacy when making inferences about individual level behaviour. Most famously King published a solution to the problem of ecological inference (King 1997). Nevertheless, critiques by Anselin (2000), McCue (2001), Anselin and Cho (2002) have pointed to flaws with

King's solution. Anselin has concluded that 'there is no solution to the ecological inference problem' (Anselin 2000: 589).

This thesis has no recourse to individual level data and will make inferences from ward level aggregate voting behaviour and constituency level aggregate voting behaviour. However, as Jargowsky has concluded 'In the absence of data about individuals, one can derive estimates about individual relations only by carefully specifying models, and these assumptions must be guided by theory, experience and consistency with observable relations' (Jargowsky 2003: 16). It is hoped that the literature review, methodology and case studies approximate Jargowsky's criterion and thereby the inferences drawn from the regression analysis make the best possible use of the aggregate data. It is the belief of this author that analysis of aggregate level data can offer valuable evidence about and insights into individual electoral behaviour and, when corroborated by case study evidence or, deemed as counterintuitive by case study evidence, a closer approximation of individual level behaviour can be achieved by use of aggregated data.

The political and structural variables used in this analysis are as follows:-

**CONVOTE** = % share of the vote for the Conservative Party

**LABVOTE** = % share of the vote for the Labour Party

**LIBVOTE** = % share of the vote for the Liberal Party

**OTHVOTE** = % share of the vote for the Other parties

**MGNLY** = marginality scale [% lead of the winning party over the second placed party at the previous election calculated as :- majority < 5% = very marginal (coded 1), > 5-10% = marginal (coded 2), > 10-25% = reasonably safe (coded 3), > 25-35% = safe (coded 4), > 35% = very safe (coded 5) ].

**PPC** = past political control (ward level and constituency level incumbency effect), dummy variable for each party model of support.

**COUNMAJ** = party in control of council prior to election ( at constituency level, party of government at election) dummy variable for each party model of support.

**TURNOUT** = % electorate vote

**MAJORITY** = percentage vote lead of winning candidate over second placed candidate at previous comparable election.

### **9.3 Outline of the core Model**

The aim of the analysis is to make inferences about party support at local government and parliamentary elections by measurement of aggregate level relationships between the level of party support and ward/constituency level socio-economic and political conditions. The analysis is based upon the assumption that the probability that support for a particular party in a given ward at local elections and in a given constituency at parliamentary elections is in part determined by the socio-economic and political environment of the ward or constituency that the election is held. It is intended that the analysis will not only add weight to the argument for the varying effect of socio-economic context and local political environment at different types of elections but also impinge upon the class dealignment debate by indicating the effects of social class on party support at local government and parliamentary elections.

### **9.4 Determination of Relevant and Irrelevant Variables**

Preliminary bivariate analysis investigated the strength and nature of the relationship between each individual independent variable and party support, using techniques of correlation and simple regression and identified the general trends in each

independent variable's relationship with the dependent variable. It was shown that there was much disparity in the influence of many of the variables in the data set upon each party's level of support at different levels of political activity. However, coefficients produced by bivariate regression analysis can only give an indication of possible relationships because 'they give no indication of the direction of causality... they say nothing about which variable causes the other to change', and indeed, 'there may be other measured or unmeasured variables affecting the result' (Field 2002:89-90). In order to obtain a clearer idea of the relative influence of these variables at local and national elections, and to test whether support for a particular party in a particular area, was affected by the local socio-economic environment, the data was subject to multivariate regression analysis. A best fitting model for each party's support at each level of voting will allow comparison of the relative impact of our socio-economic indicators.

Thus, in the next stage, multivariate analysis will examine the nature and strength of the relationships between the socio-economic independent variables and the dependent variable and assess the effect of each when controlling for the influence of the other independent variables. Multivariate regression analysis tries to predict a single dependent variable (e.g. percentage total party support) from a range of predictor variables ( in this instance our socio-economic variables). An indication of each predictor variable's relative importance can be achieved by relating the dependent variable to each predictor variable in turn, always controlling for the remaining predictor variables. Only those variables with a statistically significant contribution to make to the explanation of our outcome variable, party support, are included in the final equation, or model of party support.

The measure of the overall strength of the model, is given by the multiple correlation coefficient  $R$ , this shows the explanatory power of all the predictors that have been included in the model taken together. The R-squared statistic ( $R^2$ ) is the square of the multiple correlation coefficient ( $R$ ) and when multiplied by 100 is converted to a percentage which explains the amount of variance in party support accounted for by the model. The tables in section 9.6 below present the best fitting models of party support for each party at municipal and parliamentary elections. The  $R^2$  value for each model is reported as are a number of relevant statistics relating to each of the significant predictors that make up that model. Multiple regression analysis provides a range of statistics that assess the relationship between predictors in the model and the outcome variable, (see Appendix C: Technical appendix, for explanation of regression).

The beta values indicate the individual contribution of each predictor in the model and tell us about the relationship between each predictor and the outcome variable. Beta values represent the change in the outcome variable resulting from a unit change in a predictor variable. The beta values, if positive, indicate a positive relationship between the predictor and the outcome variable (party support) and if negative the converse. They also tell us to what degree each predictor effects the outcome (party support) if the effects of all other predictors are held constant. The unstandardised beta value of a predictor can be used to calculate the degree to which that predictor effects the level of party support, if the effects of the other predictors in the model are held constant. Thus, the unstandardised beta value of each significant predictor variable is reported in our tables which outline the best fitting models of each party's support at municipal and parliamentary elections. The unstandardised beta value

provides us with a comparable measure of the influence of a particular predictor at different types of elections and at the same elections in different periods.

The unstandardised beta value has an associated standard error statistic which will also be reported. A t-test statistic, which when significant at  $p < 0.05$ , indicates that the predictor is making a significant contribution to the model, is reported. The magnitude of the t-test statistic is an additional indication of the relative impact of each predictor upon the outcome variable party support for a particular model.

The final statistic to be reported in the cells of each significant predictor variable is perhaps the most useful: the standardised beta value. As its name suggests it is not dependent upon the units of measurement of a predictor. All standardised beta values are measured in standard deviations and not only inform us of the number of standard deviations the outcome variable will change as a result of one standard deviation change in the predictor, but also, make all predictors in a model comparable as they are expressed in the same unit of measurement. Thus, comparison can legitimately be made between the relative impact of different predictors within a model, and between the same predictor's relative impact at different elections. Of course the SPSS programme carries out all of this computation.

Using stepwise regression the independent variables are entered one at a time into the regression equation according to their explanatory importance. At each step the variable that accounts for the largest proportion of variance not explained by the variables already in the equation is entered. This iterative process continues until the significance of any remaining variables precludes them from the equation. Identical regression analyses, using each party's percentage share of the vote as the dependent variable and the socio-economic as the independent variables, will be employed at

both local and parliamentary levels of voting and provide an indication of the relative importance of the independent variables in explaining the variation in party support at different levels of electoral behaviour. Comparative analysis of the influence of these independent variables at different types of elections will reveal any cross-level voting disparities. If the beta coefficient of a particular independent predictor is greater at the lower-tier electoral level than at either the upper-tier or the parliamentary level then we could conclude that even with the exaggerating effect of aggregation bias that the indicator shows cross-level electoral disparity and evidence of voting on different criteria at local and parliamentary elections. An even stronger indication of the effects, if any, of socio-economic environment would be provided by the inversion of a particular coefficient from a negative to a positive relationship, or *vice versa* at different types of elections.

In further analyses, in chapter 10, the role of political/structural variables will be examined by use of logistic regression. An explanation of why we are prevented from using the same statistical techniques as employed above will be outlined in section 10.1.

### **9.5 Hypotheses**

The premise of each model is that the probability of support for a particular party in a given ward at local elections and in a given constituency at parliamentary elections is significantly affected by the socio-economic and political environment of the ward or constituency that the election is held. Percentage share of the total vote i.e. party support will be used as the dependent variable, measures of the socio-economic/political characteristics of the electoral unit the votes were cast in will be used as independent variables, and identical regression analyses will be used at municipal and parliamentary electoral level.

The formal statement of the models to be used in regression analyses of the effects of socio-economic/demographic conditions upon support for each party at ward level and at local authority level in relation to lower- and upper-tier local government elections and at constituency level in relation to parliamentary elections are as follows:-

Probability that the percentage support in a given ward at time  $t$  for the Conservative (or Labour, or Liberal) Party at a lower-tier municipal election =  $f$  [ ward level characteristics (socio-economic)]

Probability that the percentage support in a given ward at time  $t$  for the Conservative (or Labour, or Liberal) Party at an upper-tier municipal election =  $f$  [local authority level characteristics (socio-economic)]

Probability that the percentage support in a given ward at time  $t$  for the Conservative (or Labour, or Liberal) Party at a parliamentary election =  $f$  [constituency characteristics (socio-economic)]

The specific hypotheses to be tested are :-

**H1:** There is no difference between the effects upon party support of individual socio-economic characteristics of an electoral unit at different types of elections.

**H2 :** There is no significant difference between the effects upon party support of individual political/structural variables of an electoral unit at different types of elections.

**H3:** There is no variance in the effects upon party support of individual socio-economic indicators over time between the decades of the 1960s and 1970s at the same or at different types of election.

**H4** There is no significant association between the odds of a party winning a municipal ward election and past party political control of a ward at the previous election.

**H5** There is no significant association between the odds of a party winning a municipal ward election and party political control of the council at the time of that election.

**H6** There is no significant association between party support and household amenity variables

**H7:** There was no significant weakening of class alignment behind the two major parties at municipal elections in Birmingham and Inner-London elections from its level in the 1960s to that in the 1970s.

Having outlined how the data has been collected, the characteristics of the data, the hypotheses to be tested and how the data will be analysed, the findings of the analysis will now be reported below.

### **9.6 Multivariate regression analysis Birmingham and Inner London elections**

A best-fitting regression model of support for each party at each level of electoral activity is presented in the tables below, the table includes the number of cases and the R-squared coefficient for each model. In the cells of each significant predictor, the unstandardised beta value (UB coefficient hereafter), its standard error, the t-test statistic, and the standardised beta value (SB coefficient hereafter) can be found. A report on how the data met the assumptions of the regression analysis presented in Table 43 can be found in Appendix B, as can a report of the best fitting model for Conservative Party support at lower-tier Birmingham elections. For those unfamiliar with statistics a technical appendix that describes the methods used in the thesis is included as Appendix C. The technical appendix is also intended to serve as a glossary of terms. Hereafter only the parameters of the best fitting model for each party at each level of electoral activity will be presented in the tables below.

#### **Birmingham**

Table 43 below outlines the best fitting models of each party's level of support at Birmingham municipal and parliamentary elections, 1959-1979. The best fitting model for Labour Party support at lower-tier municipal elections has an R-square of .52 and thus the model can account for 52% of the variation in Labour Party support at these elections. The regression models of the upper-tier Birmingham elections and Birmingham

parliamentary elections could respectively account for 61% and 76% of the variation in support for the Labour party at these elections. The regression model of support for the Labour Party at lower-tier municipal 1959 to 1979 evidences the significance of both class and socio-economic group predictors; UB coefficients -0.9 NON-MANUAL and +0.6 SOCIAL CLASS 4, and also highlights the importance of household amenity indicators to the explanation of Labour Party support. With a positive UB coefficient of +0.84 the predictor SHARE INSIDE WC evidences the significance of housing conditions upon the calculus of the voter at these elections. Revealingly, with a UB coefficient of +1.8, room density, RD>1-1.5, is strongly and positively associated with support for the Labour Party at the lower-tier, although the most overcrowded households indicated by RD>1.5 are clearly and strongly negatively associated with support for the party at this level, UB -1.2. Indeed, for every percentage increase in RD>1.5, support for the Labour Party diminished by 1.2%. Clearly, the greater the number of overcrowded dwellings in a ward the greater the erosion of Labour support in that ward, indeed the variable SHARE DWELLING is also negatively associated with support for the Labour Party at these lower-tier elections. The standardised beta coefficients of SHARE DWELLING, RD> 1-1.5, SHARE INWC, -.36, -.31 and .31 are almost of the magnitude of the SB coefficient for NON-MANUAL of -.4, and confirm the relative importance of housing conditions in regard to explanation of the variance in support for the Labour Party at these elections.

It was, as evidenced in the Ladywood case study, in such inner-city wards of Birmingham with their dire housing conditions that Labour's support was eroded and an electoral opportunity for the Liberals opened up. The models of Labour support in Table 43 also evidence the variability of the effect of turnout at different types of elections upon support for the Labour Party. Mobilisation of support was much more

difficult at the upper-tier level than the lower-tier level, UB coefficient  $-.99$  and  $+1.4$  respectively, and although to a lesser degree at the parliamentary level the UB coefficient of  $-.49$  indicates that for every percentage decrease in TURNOUT at parliamentary elections in Birmingham 1959-1979, Labour support diminished by 0.5%.

In contrast at the lower-tier and even more so at the upper-tier elections support for the Liberal Party was positively related to TURNOUT, increasing by 0.83% at the lower-tier and 1.37% at the upper-tier, for every percentage increase in the indicator. As far as household amenities were concerned Liberal Party support at the lower-tier was positively associated with the indicator SHARE/LACK HOT WATER, a UB coefficient of  $+0.26$  indicating that support increased by 0.3% for every percentage increase in the number of dwellings that shared or lacked a hot water supply. Clearly, the Liberal's campaign focus upon housing conditions in Birmingham's inner-city wards reaped some reward at lower-tier elections as already evidenced in the Ladywood case study. Cross level variability in the influence of indicators was apparent when SOCIAL CLASS 4 was considered. At the lower-tier elections SOCIAL CLASS 4 is negatively related to Liberal Party support, UB  $-1.0$ , yet at the parliamentary level the bonds of class and party alignment were somewhat loosened and a positive UB coefficient  $+0.8$  indicates that support for the Liberal Party increased by 0.8% for every percentage increase in SOCIAL CLASS 4. The regression models of Liberal Party support, reflect the difficulty of assessing its determinants and could only account for 33%, 40% and 53% of the variation in support for the party at lower-tier, upper-tier and parliamentary elections respectively (R-square figures Liberal support Table 43). Nevertheless, at the lower-tier level the SB coefficient  $+ .4$  for SHARELACKHOTWATER was of the same magnitude as

TURNOUT, +.44, a variable generally recognised as having a clear association with Liberal Party support.

**Table 43** A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of party support and socio-economic variables (turnout included), at Birmingham, lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections 1959-1979. Statistics in each significant variable cell: unstandardised beta coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets.  $P < 0.05$

Party	Conservative			Labour			Liberal		
Electoral level	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL
N =	752	126	88	753	123	88	345	71	42
R square =	.64	.58	.67	.52	.61	.76	.33	.40	.53
CONSTANT	47.8	58.4	56.7	28.4	91.3	20.4	-15.6	-33.6	43.7
Owner-Occupiers		.24 [.07] t=3.4 (.24)						-.4 [.09] t=-4.1 (-.5)	-.35 [.05] t=-6.5 (-.8)
Council Rented	-.24 [.03] t=-9.4 (.32)		-.27 [.05] t=-5.39 (.4)				.36 [.04] t=10.3 (.69)		
J Non-Manual	1.03 [.15] t=6.75 (.29)	2.44 [.3] t=8.15 (.59)							
Non-Manual	.57 [.08] t=6.99 (.26)			-0.9 [.11] t=-8.0 (-.4)	-.96 [.13] t=-7.2 (-.51)				
Manual						.62 [.08] t=7.5 (.76)			
AFID	.28 [.17] t=1.7 (.09)								
Social class 1			1.53 [.22] t=6.87 (.52)						
Social class 2/3N									
Social class 4				0.6 [.14] t=4.3 (.19)		1.37 [.19] t=7.16 (.60)	-1.0 [.15] t=-6.5 (-.42)		.80 [.19] t=4.1 (.51)
Social class 5						-1.62 [.27] t=-6.04 (.63)			
Social class 6	-.62 [.17] t=-3.6 (.18)		-.17 [.17] t=-9.95 (.71)			1.23 [.16] t=8.2 (.63)		1.1 [.4] t=2.7 (.3)	
Share Dwelling	.53 [.07] t=7.42 (.25)			-.61 [.2] t=-3.8 (-.31)					
Share/Lack Hot Water							.26 [.04] t=6.3 (.4)		
BornXUK	-.47 [.08] t=-5.7 (.27)				.31 [.10] t=3.1 (.2)		0.5 [.09] t=5.4 (.38)		
Share inside WC				0.8 [.23] t=3.5 (.31)					
RD > 1-1.5				1.8 [.31] t=5.8 (.36)					
RD > 1.5				-1.2 [.32] t=-3.7 (-.24)					
Turnout	-.29 [.05] t=-6.2 (-.2)			.14 [.05] t=2.8 (.09)	-.98 [.25] t=-4.03 (-.27)	-.5 [.13] t=-3.94 (-.33)	.83 [.12] t=7.9 (.44)	1.7 [.4] t=4.9 (.50)	

Further evidence of variability in the influence of socio-economic indicators dependent upon electoral context is provided in Table 43 when the models of support for the Conservative Party are examined. The models accounted for 64%, 58% and 67% of the variation in support for the Conservative Party at lower-, upper-tier and parliamentary electoral levels respectively. The indicator JUNIOR NON-MANUAL had a much stronger relationship with Conservative support at the upper-tier than the lower-tier municipal elections, which accords with the Birmingham case studies' evidence of partisan dealignment at lower-tier council elections in the Conservative suburban strongholds and increased support for Liberal candidates, and illustrates the significance of contextuality in the calculus of the Conservative Party supporter. In addition the magnitude of the SB coefficient for SHARE DWELLING was almost as strong as the SB coefficients for NON-MANUAL, a generally recognised socio-economic variable associated with support for the party. Clearly, as much of the variance in support for the Conservative Party at lower-tier elections can be accounted for this measure and illustrates the importance that housing conditions had in relation to Conservative Party support at council elections in Birmingham.

In Tables 44, 45 and 46 below, the regression coefficients for the best fitting models of each party's support at Birmingham elections, contrasting the decades of the 1960s and 1970s is outlined. All socio-economic indicators and the variable TURNOUT were analysed. Table 44, outlines the models of Conservative Party support. There are unfortunately, few points of comparison between models, although one could interpret this as evidence of variability in cross-level electoral influence and variability between the decades. What is evidenced, however, is that OWNER-OCCUPIER had a much stronger relationship with support for the Conservatives at the parliamentary

level than at the municipal electoral levels in the 1970s. Indicating the importance of electoral context in relation to Conservative support and corroborating the findings of the case study evidence of class-party dealignment at the lower-tier council elections, especially in the 1970s. Indeed, for every standard deviation unit increase in OWNER-OCCUPIER in a ward at lower-tier elections Conservative party support increased by 0.3 standard deviations, if the effects of the other variables are held constant, whereas, at the upper-tier elections in the same wards the SB coefficient evidences a 0.24 increase in support for every standard deviation increase in OWNER-OCCUPIER.

**Table 44: A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of Conservative Party support and socio-economic variables (turnout included), controlling for decade at Birmingham, lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections 1959-1979. Statistics in each significant variable cell: unstandardised beta coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets.  $P < 0.05$**

Party	Conservative 1959-1972		Conservative 1973-1979		
Electoral level	Lower-Tier	PARL	Lower-Tier	Upper-Tier	PARL
N =	542	52	126	126	36
R square =	.60	.67	.83	.59	.80
CONSTANT	121.6	48.0	37.4	58.4	61.2
Owner-Occupiers	.28 [.04] t=7.9 (.3)		.29 [.05] t=5.7 (.31)	.24 [.07] t=3.4 (.24)	.48 [.09] t=5.5 (.47)
Council Rented		-.30 [.06] t=-4.3 (-.4)			
Junior Non-Manual				2.44 [.3] t=8.2 (.6)	
Non-Manual		1.1 [.19] t= 5.9 (.56)	.48 [.11] t=4.5 (.26)		
Manual	-.90 [.06] t=-15.7 (-.6)				-.78 [.11] t=-6.9 (-.6)
AFID	-.15 [.12] t=-12.1 (-.4)	-.70 [.22] t=-3.3 (-2.8)			
Social class 5			-1.26 [.38] t=-3.3 (-.29)		
Share inside WC	.63 [.07] t=8.6 (.24)				
Share/Lack Hot Water			-.35 [.08] t=-4.6 (-.26)		
Turnout	-.56 [.08] t=-6.7 (-.22)				

The beta coefficients for OWNER-OCCUPATION at the lower-tier elections in the 60s and 70s are remarkably stable, as are the beta coefficients at the upper-tier level in

the 70s and for the whole period (1959-1979 in Table 43). Similar stability is evidenced, albeit in a much stronger association, by the indicator JUNIOR NON-MANUAL, when its coefficients for 1970s at upper-tier and for the whole period are compared (1959-1979 in Table 43). It would seem with a UB coefficient of 2.44 that this socio-economic group were solidly aligned with support for the Conservatives at the upper-tier West Midland County Council electoral level. The significance of tenure and socio-economic class are evidenced by the R-square statistics in the regression models of support for the Conservatives at lower-tier and parliamentary elections from 1973 to 1979 that show the models account for 83% and 80% respectively of the variation in support for the party at these elections. Furthermore, the significance of measures of housing conditions in relation to Conservative Party support at lower-tier elections in both decades is evidenced, notwithstanding the fact that SHAREINWC was positively associated in the 1960s and SHARE/LACKHOT WATER negatively associated in the 1970s.

Table 45 contains the regression coefficients for the best fitting models of Labour Party support at these Birmingham elections, controlling for decade. The variable SOC 2/3N, made up of skilled non-manual workers, was, as expected, strongly negatively associated with support for the Labour Party at lower-tier elections in both decades, albeit to a lesser degree in the 1970s and thus there is little evidence of class-party dealignment among SOC 2/3N between the decades. In contrast, it is clear that manual workers had a much stronger relationship with support for the Labour Party at the lower-tier electoral level in the 1960s than in the 1970s, evidencing a degree of class-party dealignment, as has been shown in the Ladywood case study. The UB coefficient for the 1960s indicates that for every percentage increase in the indicator

MANUAL WORKER, Labour Party support had increased by 1.7% at lower-tier elections in the 1960s, but during the 1970s this had slumped to 0.45%, a fall reflected also in the decline in the relative contribution of the predictor MANUAL to the model of Labour support, as evidenced by an SB coefficient of 1.3 in the 1960s and 0.33 in the 1970s.

Clues to an explanation of the dealignment evidenced by the variable MANUAL lie perhaps with other indicators. The category SHARED DWELLING had a negative relationship with support for Labour at the parliamentary electoral level in the 1960s shown by a UB coefficient of  $-1.87$ . The expectation would be that in the main Labour's natural constituency would encompass much of the electorate categorised as living in shared dwellings in that period. Once again the evidence corroborates that of the Birmingham case study of the Ladywood constituency with its high percentage of multi-occupancy dwellings and Labour's support declining in the 1960s.

Furthermore, SOCIAL CLASS 5, the unskilled workers, no doubt a large component of those that lived in shared dwellings, registered a UB coefficient of  $-1.9$  at the lower-tier in the 1960s, and a  $-1.62$  coefficient at the parliamentary level throughout the whole 1959-1979 period (see Table 43). Thus, for every percentage increase in SOCIAL CLASS 5, Labour Party parliamentary support in Birmingham from 1959 to 1979 diminished by 1.62%, however at the lower-tier level in the 1960s by 1.9%.

**Table 45: A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of Labour Party support and socio-economic variables (turnout included), controlling for decade at Birmingham lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections 1959-1979. Statistics in each significant variable cell: unstandardised beta coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets.  $P < 0.05$**

Party	Labour 1959-1972		Labour 1972-1979		
	Lower-Tier	PARL	Lower-Tier	Upper-Tier	PARL
N =	542	52	249	126	36
R square =	.51	.65	.58	.60	.84
CONSTANT	-18.8	-17.1	38.2	91.3	100.5
Council Rented	0.01 [.02] t=3.6 (.13)				
Rented Furnished		2.1 [.51] t=4.1 (1.2)			
Non-Manual				-.96 [.13] t= -7.2 (-.51)	-1.00 [.11] t= -9.5 (-.7)
Manual	1.70 [.12] t=15.6 (1.3)	.99 [.13] t=7.8 (1.05)	.45 [.09] t= 4.8 (.33)		
Social class 2/3N	-.90 [.08] t=-11.6 (-.7)		-.72 [.12] t= -6.8 (-.47)		
Social class 5	-1.9 [.21] t=-8.8 (-.54)				
Share Dwelling		-1.87 [.35] t=-5.4 (1.6)			
BornXUK				.31 [.11] t=3.1 (.2)	
Turnout				-.99 [.25] t= -4 (-.27)	-.54 [.1] t= -5.5 (-.41)

The sources of class dealignment in Labour Party support in the 1970s are indicated by the best fitting models of Liberal Party support at these Birmingham elections shown in Table 46 below. Social class 5 was positively related with support for the Liberal Party at upper-tier elections, with a UB coefficient of +1.04, and SOCIAL CLASS 4 negatively associated, UB coefficient -1.0 at the lower-tier level in the 1970s but positively associated, +0.8, at the parliamentary level throughout the period 1959-1979. Clearly, there was much volatility in the patterns of party support amongst these classes dependent upon type of election. In addition there was also a positive relationship, UB coefficient +0.67, between the household amenity variable SHARE/LACK HOT WATER at the lower-tier elections in the 1960s, +0.42 in the 1970s, and a stronger positive association of +1.72 at the upper-tier in the 1970s. Again the evidence corroborates that found by the case study of Ladywood of the

importance of housing conditions in any explanation of the revival of Liberal Party support at municipal elections in these inner-city wards.

The percentage of variation in Liberal Party support accounted for by each of the regression models in Table 46, as revealed by the R-square statistics, is not as large as the preceding models of support for the two major parties. Nevertheless, they account for a remarkable amount of that variation.

**Table 46: A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of Liberal Party support and socio-economic variables (turnout included), controlling for decade at Birmingham, lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections 1959-1979. Liberal Party contested only. Statistics in each significant variable cell: regression coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets. P<0.05**

Party	Liberal 1959-1972		Liberal 1973-1979		
	Lower-Tier	PARL	Lower-Tier	Upper-Tier	PARL
N =	245	12	100	71	30
R square =	.32	.66	.52	.40	.54
CONSTANT	-10.0	3.2	18.7	-33.6	30.5
Owner-Occupiers			-.51 [.07] t = -7.7 (-.8)	-.37 [.09] t = -4.1 (-.49)	
Council Rented		.29 [.07] t = 4.4 (.81)			
AFID	.55 [.16] t = 3.4 (.22)				
Social class 2/3N					-.55 [0.1] t = -5.7 (-.74)
Social class 4			-.78 [.19] t = -4.1 (-.37)		
Social class 5				1.04 [.38] t = 2.7 (.29)	
Share/Lack Hot Water	.67 [.1] t = 6.9 (1.1)		.42 [.08] t = 5.5 (.43)	1.71 [.35] t = 4.9 (.53)	
BornXUK	1.15 [.23] t = 4.9 (.83)				
Turnout	.78 [.13] t = 6.2 (.43)				
RD = >1.5	-3.15 [.8] t = -3.9 (-.8)				

The investigation of the effects of socio-economic environment upon electoral behaviour will now consider lower-tier elections in the case study location of Sutton Coldfield from 1959 to 1972. Problems of small sample size preclude analysis of Sutton Coldfield's parliamentary electoral data in isolation, as it has precluded that of Labour Party support at its lower-tier elections. However, multivariate analysis of Conservative and Liberal support is set out in Table 47 below. The best fitting model of Conservative Party support accounts for 57% of the variation in support at lower-

tier elections and has shown both OWNER-OCCUPATION and COUNCIL-RENTED to be positively associated with support for the party. Indeed, that support increased by 0.4% for every percentage increase of either of the two indicators and reflects the findings of the Sutton Coldfield case study of class-party dealignment among ostensibly Labour supporting council tenants. Conservative Party support was positively associated with the majority held by the winning candidate at the previous election and rose by 0.5% for every percentage increase in the predictor MAJORITY. Indeed, the magnitude of the SB coefficient for the predictor MAJORITY is equal to that of the predictor OWNER-OCCUPIER, both +0.59. The only dark cloud on the lower-tier electoral horizon in this overwhelmingly Conservative borough appeared to be located in the manual working class. The coefficient for MANUAL was negatively related and for every percentage increase reduced Conservative support by 0.3%. However, this was not the only source of potential threat to the Conservative hegemony over council elections in Sutton Coldfield.

As the best fitting model of Liberal Party support evidences (43% of variation accounted for), there was considerable class-party dealignment among the socio-economic group JUNIOR NON-MANUAL. The coefficient for this predictor was positively associated with Liberal Party support and for every percentage increase, Liberal Party support increased by 1.2% and corroborates the findings of the Sutton Coldfield case study of a significant protest vote among erstwhile Conservative supporters in respect of the level rates and local issues at these lower-tier council elections. These findings accord with those of municipal elections in Birmingham wards outlined above, where JUNIOR NON-MANUAL's support for the Conservative Party has been shown to vary across different types of elections. Furthermore, the evidence that housing conditions were a factor in the voting calculus

of a part of the Sutton Coldfield electorate when it came to Liberal Party support was provided by the predictor S/LBATH which registered a UB coefficient of +.96, an increase of .96% in Liberal support for every percentage increase in S/LBATH. This substantiates the findings of the case study of a shift in support away from Labour to the Liberals in the wards or parts of Sutton wards with poor housing conditions. Nevertheless, Liberal Party support at these council elections was it seems conditional upon the size of the majority held by the winning candidate over the second placed candidate at the previous ward election. As Table 47 shows, the predictor MAJORITY had a UB coefficient of -.32, a negative association with support for the Liberal Party, thus for every percentage increase in the majority of the winning candidate at the previous election Liberal support diminished by 0.3% at Sutton Coldfield council elections. These findings reflect the Sutton Coldfield Liberal Party's campaign strategy of contesting on a narrow electoral front and targeting marginal wards where some local issue was fulminating and electoral discontent high (see Chapter 6, section 6.4).

Like the inner-city wards of Birmingham, support for the Liberal Party, even in a borough that epitomised suburban Conservatism, was in part associated with housing conditions. Additionally, and of much more significance, one of the mainstays of Conservative Party support, the socio-economic group JUNIOR NON-MANUAL, at these lower-tier municipal elections, displayed a large degree of class-party dealignment. However, the source of this dissatisfaction was perhaps located in other aspects of housing, those of levels of rates/council rents, unwelcome housing developments and interest rates in general. Whether such electoral phenomena, as outlined above, were peculiar to Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield, or more general, will now be assessed by multi-regression analysis of the inner-London data.

**Table 47: A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of Conservative Party and Liberal Party support and socio-economic variables, (turnout and majority included, all wards Conservative, Liberal Party, contested wards only) at Sutton Coldfield lower-tier municipal elections, 1959-1972. Statistics in each significant variable cell: regression coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets.  $P < 0.05$**

Party	Conservative 1959-1972				Liberal 1959-1972			
Electoral level	Lower -Tier				Lower- Tier			
N =	104				93			
R square =	.57				.43			
CONSTANT	18.4				13.7			
Owner-Occupiers	.42	[.12]	t= 3.6	(.59)	*			
Council Rented	.42	[.09]	t= 4.5	(.65)	*			
Manual	-.25	[.11]	t= -2.3	(-.23)	*			
Majority	.47	[.05]	t= 8.4	(.59)	-.32	[.06]	t= -4.9	(-.4)
Share/Lack Bath	*				.95	[.19]	t= 5.2	(.43)
Junior Non-Manual	*				1.2	[1.2]	t= 3.4	(.28)

### Inner-London

In Table 48 below, a best fitting regression model of support for each party at each level of electoral activity in Inner-London 1959-1979 is presented. The models of Conservative Party support evidence cross level variability in the electoral influence of the predictor NON-MANUAL. At the upper-tier municipal elections support for the Conservative Party by this socio-economic group was much more strongly related than at the lower-tier level and the parliamentary level. This pattern was mirrored in the negative relationships between NON-MANUAL and support for the Labour Party which was much more intense at the upper-tier, UB coefficient -1.23, than at the lower-tier, -.21. Clearly, electoral context may have had some influence upon the relationship between support for the Conservative Party and the NON-MANUAL sector. In contrast, the relationship between SOCIAL CLASS 4 and support for the Conservative Party was stable across different types of elections and registered UB coefficients of -.92 at the lower-tier and -.97 at the parliamentary levels. It is perhaps unsurprising that the room density indicator  $RD > 1-1.5$  was negatively associated with

support for the Conservative Party, nevertheless, there was a large disparity in the influence of this variable between the lower-tier municipal and the parliamentary electoral levels. As evidenced in the Islington case study the electorate was in no doubt that the institution responsible for its housing ills was the borough council and could show its dissatisfaction at lower-tier elections. Indeed, as the best fitting model for Labour Party support at these London elections 1959-1979 reveals, both the NON MANUAL and the JUNIOR NON MANUAL coefficients in relation to Labour Party support show that these socio-economic groups were much less disinclined towards Labour support at the lower-tier than the upper-tier council elections. Indeed, the SB coefficient at lower-tier evidences that for every standard deviation increase in NON-MANUAL support for the Labour Party decreased by 0.13 standard deviations, whereas at the upper-tier decreased by 0.64 standard deviations.

In Table 48 the UB coefficients of + .93 and +.92 respectively for social classes 4 and 5 reveal a solid level of support among these classes for the Labour Party at the parliamentary electoral level, as does the coefficient for the socio-economic group MANUAL at the lower-tier level. Furthermore, the predictor TURNOUT was positively associated with Labour support at the lower-tier borough electoral level as was the household amenity predictor NO INSIDE WC. Nevertheless, as the best model of Liberal Party support at the lower-tier evidences there was a positive association between social class 4 and support for the Liberals at London borough elections 1959-1979, indeed, as shown in Table 50 below, in the 1970s there was a negative association, UB coefficient -.38 between social class 4 and support for Labour at lower-tier elections.

**Table 48: A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of party support and socio-economic variables (turnout included) at Inner-London lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections, 1959-1979. Statistics in each significant variable cell: unstandardised beta coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets. P<0.05**

Party	Conservative			Labour			Liberal		
Electoral level	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL
N =	966	132	236	935	156	236	692	77	148
R square =	.48	.83	.63	.51	.82	.62	.13	.41	.69
CONSTANT	54.6	-17.2	41.4	24.9	105.0	58.1	17.1	17.9	113.5
Council Rented	-.28 [.02] t=-11.6 (-.3)								
Junior Non-Manual		1.6 [.19] t= 8.1 (.43)	.97 [.19] t= 5.1 (.34)	-.37 [.10] t= -3.7 (-.14)	-1.39 [.17] t= -7.9 (-.35)		-.22 [.07] t= 5.9 (.23)		
Non-Manual	.46 [.05] t=9.1 (.27)	1.0 [.1] t= 9.9 (.53)	.62 [.12] t=5.4 (.44)	-.21 [.07] t= -3.1 (-.13)	-1.23 [.08] t= -14.8 (-.64)	-.74 [.12] t= -6.4 (-.46)			-1.53 [.01] t= -15.5 (-1.1)
Manual				.63 [.05] t= 12.1 (.5)					
FAGW		1.7 [.32] t= 5.2 (.19)							
AFID								-.63 [.08] t= -7.2 (-.78)	-1.25 [.38] t= -3.3 (-.48)
Social class 2/3N			-.69 [.14] t=5.1 (-.67)			-.47 [.09] t= -5.2 (-.46)			-.81 [.15] t= -5.6 (-.89)
Social class 4	-.92 [.10] t= -9.5 (-.26)		-.97 [.28] t= -3.5 (-.44)			.93 [.27] t= 3.5 (.38)	.39 [.07] t= -3.5 (-.13)		
Social class 5						.92 [.25] t= 3.7 (.28)			
Share Dwelling							-.13 [.04] t= -3.2 (-.12)		
Share/Lack Bath			.10 [.03] t= 3.6 (.18)						
Share/Lack Hot Water								-.20 [.05] t= -4.1 (-.44)	
No Inside WC				.29 [.05] t= 5.7 (.14)					
RD > 1-1.5	-6.8 [.13] t= -5.2 (-.13)		-1.2 [.42] t= -2.9 (-.2)						
Turnout				.23 [.06] t= 3.8 (.11)					

It is clear from Table 48 that social-class, socio-economic group and housing conditions were important factors in any explanation of support for the two major parties at these elections and that there was variance in voting behaviour at different

levels of electoral activity within what are considered the natural constituents of the two major parties. These findings accord especially with those of the Camden case study of the mixed electoral fortunes of the two major parties at different levels of voting behaviour in the three former metropolitan boroughs that made up Camden after 1964 (see Chapter 8, section 8.2).

In Table 49 below, the best fitting regression models of Conservative Party support at these Inner-London elections contrasted by decade are presented. Once more the socio-economic groups, NON-MANUAL and JUNIOR NON-MANUAL play a significant role in the explanation of Conservative Party support. It is, however, apparent that the relationships between these socio-economic groups and support for the Conservatives differed over the decades. Support was in both decades much stronger at the upper-tier level than at the lower-tier and parliamentary levels in the 1960s. At lower-tier elections in the 1960s for every standard deviation increase in JUNIOR NON-MANUAL in a ward support for the Conservative Party increased by 0.23 standard deviations, whereas at the lower-tier in the 1970s by 0.1 standard deviations.

In contrast the coefficients for NON-MANUAL at the parliamentary level are much strengthened in the 1970s and evidence a realignment rather than a dealignment of support for the Conservatives in this socio-economic group at the parliamentary electoral level. At the parliamentary level in the 1960s for every standard deviation increase in NON-MANUAL in a constituency Conservative Party support increased by 0.42 standard deviations, whereas at the parliamentary level in the 1970s it increased by 1.3 standard deviations. It is also apparent that the negative relationship between  $RD > 1-1.5$  and Conservative Party support at the lower-tier level was much more pronounced in the 1970s than in the 1960s, a trend reflected in SOCIAL CLASS

**Table 49: A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of Conservative Party support and socio-economic variables (turnout included), controlling for decade at Inner-London lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections, 1959-1979. Statistics in each significant variable cell: unstandardised beta coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets. P< 0.05**

Party	Conservative 1959-1970			Conservative 1971-1979		
Electoral level	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL
N =	497	120	168	469	48	103
R square =	.65	.84	.54	.72	.78	.64
CONSTANT	68.9	-12.0	20.6	64.6	-28.0	-21.7
Council Rented	-.19 [.03] t=-5.7 (-.18)			-.25 [.03] t=-8.5 (-.3)		
J Non-Manual	.69 [.13] t=5.4 (.23)	1.53 [.2] t=7.9 (.43)		.24 [.06] t=3.9 (.11)	1.62 [.34] t=4.8 (.34)	1.75 [.28] t=6.3 (.52)
Non-Manual	.20 [.08] t=2.5 (.11)	1.07 [.10] t=10.3 (.56)	.57 [.13] t=4.6 (.42)		1.34 [.13] t=10.4 (.74)	1.82 [.17] t=11.0 (1.3)
AFID	-.43 [.16] t=-2.7 (-.11)					
Social class 2/3N	-.47 [.08] t=-5.8 (-.29)					-1.16 [.22] t=-5.4 (-.73)
Social class 3						.85 [.2] t=4.3 (.37)
Social class 4	-.18 [.16] t=-7.2 (-.32)			-.73 [.11] t=-6.5 (-.2)		
Social class 5			-.81 [.26] t=-3.1 (-.29)			
Share/Lack Bath				-.17 [.04] t=-4.2 (-.14)		
Share inside WC	.21 [.05] t=4.6 (.18)					
RD>1-1.5	-.79 [.18] t=-4.5 (-.18)			-2.57 [.23] t=11.2 (-.4)		
Turnout			.31 [.08] t=3.8 (.2)			

4 whose negative association with support for the Conservatives also increased in intensity in the 1970s, thereby adding weight to the evidence in both London case studies of the continued electoral salience of housing at 1970s London borough elections (see Chapter 7, section 7.8 and Chapter 8, section 8.10).

The models of party support in Table 50 make comparisons between the decades in relation to Labour Party support. The variable MANUAL indicates that the 1970s was

a period of realignment at the upper-tier municipal and parliamentary electoral level of Labour's traditional core vote rather than one of dealignment. At upper-tier elections in the 1960s the UB coefficient for MANUAL was +1.05, and in the 1970s this had almost doubled to +1.88. Yet, at municipal elections in the 1970s SOCIAL CLASS 4 and Labour Party support had a strong negative relationship, UB coefficient -1.49 at the upper-tier, -.38 at the lower-tier and SOCIAL CLASS 6 a negative association of -1.1 at the parliamentary level. The general socio-economic category MANUAL clearly masks subtle differences in the strength of the individual relationships between its component categories of class. For a part of the Labour Party's traditional core vote among the working class of London the 1970s was a period of dealignment. Interestingly, as with Birmingham, the indicator  $RD > 1.5$  was a strong positive indicator of Labour support at the lower-tier in the 1970s..

Room density, it would appear, was an important issue in favour of Labour support in the 1970s and reflects the findings of both London case studies as to the continued salience of housing as a borough electoral issue. Indeed, at the lower-tier elections in the 1960s for every standard deviation increase in COUNCIL RENTED, that is the percentage council tenants living in a ward, Labour Party support increased by a mere 0.03 standard deviations, whereas in the 1970s at lower-tier elections it increased by 0.3 standard deviations. This seems to contradict the evidence of class dealignment with the Labour Party shown for instance by the negative UB coefficients for SOCIAL CLASS 4 at upper-tier elections in the 1970s. However, it serves to illustrate the subtlety of the relationship between variables that measure class and those that measure conditions of tenure such as room density.

The variable of room density  $RD > 1.5$ , that is more than 1.5 persons per room the measure of dire overcrowding, does not register any significant relationship with

Labour Party support and perhaps this reflects the party's negative relationship with  
SOCIAL CLASS 4.

**Table 50: A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of Labour Party support and socio-economic variables (turnout included), controlling for decade at Inner-London lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections, 1959-1979. Statistics in each significant variable cell: regression coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets.  $P < 0.05$ .**

Party	Labour 1959-1970			Labour 1971-1979		
Electoral level	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL	Lower Tier	Upper Tier	PARL
N =	482	120	168	459	35	103
R square =	.71	.87	.56	.73	.82	.72
CONSTANT	23.8	-10.4	46.1	18.3	-7.8	51.9
Owner-Occupiers						-.26 [.07] t= -3.5 (-.3)
Council Rented	.10 [.03] t= 4.0 (.03)		.24 [.07] t= 3.6 (.27)	.19 [.02] t= 8.2 (.3)		-.46 [.05] t= -8.9 (-.7)
Junior Non-Manual	-.69 [.07] t= -10.1 (.07)					
Manual	.61 [.04] t= 14.0 (.04)	1.05 [.06] t= 17.5 (.84)			1.88 [.16] t= 11.9 (1.2)	.96 [.07] t= 13.8 (.8)
Social class 1				-.22 [.07] t= -3.2 (-.10)		
Social class 3	.28 [.05] t= 5.9 (.05)					
Social class 4				-.38 [.12] t= 3.2 (.1)	-1.49 [.24] t= -6.3 (-.62)	
Social class 5			1.2 [.25] t= 4.5 (.36)			
Social class 6						-1.11 [.21] t= -5.3 (-.4)
No Inside WC			.65 [.15] t= 4.5 (.26)	-.48 [.05] t= 9.2 (.3)		
Share Lack Bath		-.21 [.06] t= -3.4 (-.14)				
RD > 1-1.5		2.0 [.41] t= 4.8 (.22)		3.32 [.23] t= 13.9 (.5)		
BornXUK	-.17 [.05] t= -3.4 (.05)					-.50 [.10] t= -5.3 (-.34)
Turnout			-.28 [.09] t= -3.1 (-.17)	1.9 [.6] t= 3.4 (.1)		

It is clear from an examination of Table 51 below that little was revealed about the determinants of Liberal Party support at these Inner-London elections by the regression analysis.

**Table 51: A comparison of the regression coefficients for best fitting models of Liberal Party support and socio-economic variables (turnout included), controlling for decade at Inner-London lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections, 1959-1979. Liberal Party contested only. Statistics in each significant variable cell: unstandardised beta coefficient, standard error in square brackets, t- statistic, and standard beta in round brackets.  $P < 0.05$**

Party	Liberal 1959-1970			Liberal 1971-1979		
	Lower-Tier	Upper-Tier	PARL	Lower-Tier	Upper-Tier	PARL
N =	78	65	80	614	129	119
R square =	.15	.46	.57	.13	.19	.29
CONSTANT	21.9	16.4	15.7	21.5	12.7	4.6
Council Rented			.12 [.02] t= 5.1 (.52)			.07 [.02] t= 3.1 (.27)
Rented furnished				-.1 [.02] t=3.1 (.12)		
Rented unfurnished				-.14 [.04] t= -3.8 (-.17)		
Junior Non-Manual				-.29 [.08] t= -3.5 (-.14)		
Non-Manual			.21 [.04] t= 5.8 (.64)			
Manual					.15 [.03] t= - 5.5 (-.44)	
AFID		-.57 [.09] t= -6.7 (-.64)				
Social class 4				.23 [.08] t= 2.9 (.14)		
Social class 5		-.47 [.11] t= -4.3 (-.41)				
Social class 6			-.63 [.07] t= -.93 (-.8)			
Turnout	-.32 [.1] t= -3.6 (-.38)		-.12 [.04] t= -3.5 (-.3)			.15 [.05] t= 3.0 (.24)
Seek Work						-.71 [.11] t= -6.5 (-.58)

Nonetheless, what was evidenced was a positive relationship between SOCIAL CLASS 4 and Liberal Party support in the 1970s at lower-tier elections and positive relationships between COUNCIL RENTED and Liberal support at the parliamentary level in both decades. Interestingly, the indicators of the private rental sector, which made up a large component of the electorates in the London case study constituencies, were both negatively associated with support for the Liberal Party. Rented furnished had a UB coefficient  $-.1$  and rented unfurnished a  $-.14$  coefficient at lower-tier borough elections in the 1970s and did not register any significant association for the 1960s. As evidenced in the London case studies, unlike the worst areas of housing in Birmingham, the Liberals had pitched their campaign rhetoric at the ratepayers and had been constrained by competition from the Labour left candidates. Nevertheless at the lower-tier elections, unlike in Birmingham, support for the Liberals was negatively associated with the socio-economic group JUNIOR NON-MANUAL. However, at the parliamentary electoral level in the 1960s for every standard deviation increase in NON-MANUAL in a constituency, Liberal Party support increased by 0.64 standard deviations. The predictor NON-MANUAL was not a significant influence upon Liberal Party support in the 1970s, as evidenced by its absence from the model, and perhaps reflects the general trend in realignment with the Conservative Party in the 1970s already evidenced in Table 49.

### **9.7 Conclusion**

The findings so far allow us to discount the following hypotheses in regard to voting behaviour at elections in Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and inner-London from 1959-1979. The evidence rejects the null-hypothesis H1, that there is no difference between the effects upon party support of the individual socio-economic characteristics of an electoral unit at different types of elections. Indeed, it has been shown that there was

variance in the strength of the association between many of our socio-economic indicators and support for a party at different levels of voting activity.

The evidence also allows us to reject H2, that there is no significant difference between the effects upon party support of individual political/structural variables of an electoral unit at different types of elections as the relationship between TURNOUT and support for both the Liberal and the Labour parties has shown.

The evidence also allows us to discount the hypothesis H3, that there is no variance in the effects upon party support of individual social class indicators over time between the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. We can also reject the hypothesis H6, that there is no significant association between party support and household amenity variables.

The evidence does not allow us to reject Hypothesis 7, and thus supports the proposition that there was no significant weakening of class alignment behind the two major parties in Birmingham and inner-London elections at municipal elections over and between the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Clearly the evidence suggests that the issue of class alignment is more complex than a stark polarisation between trends of alignment or dealignment. The patterns in trends of class-party alignment were more heterogeneous. In the case of the Labour Party at Birmingham municipal lower-tier elections the indicator MANUAL evidences significant dealignment, however SOCIAL CLASS 5, indicates significant realignment. At council elections in Sutton Coldfield the indicator JUNIOR NON-MANUAL evidences a significant class-party dealignment in Conservative support in the 1960s and early 1970s. At municipal elections in Inner-London, the evidence points towards a realignment with Labour Party support at the upper-tier in terms of the indicator MANUAL, nevertheless evidence of significant

dealignment in support from SOCIAL CLASS 4. Unfortunately the regression analysis of Conservative Party support at Birmingham municipal elections gave few points of comparison, although it is evident that the indicator JUNIOR NON-MANUAL reveals a strong positive association with Conservative Party support in the 1970s but no significant relationship for the 1960s. At the inner-London municipal elections JUNIOR NON-MANUAL indicates a dealignment in class-party support for the Conservative Party at lower-tier elections, and a tendency towards realignment at the upper-tier.

Studies of the relationship between the electorate and support for the two major parties in the 1959 to 1979 period at the parliamentary level have evidenced the importance of key socio-economic variables. High levels of economic deprivation, high levels of housing density and the non-salariat have been shown to have a strong positive relationship with support for the Labour Party and the converse in regard to Conservative Party support. The class and economic bases of the Labour and Conservative parties' support at the parliamentary level were at their strongest in the 1960s and weakening in the 1970s. These trends according to orthodox views were mirrored at the municipal electoral level. However, what is clear from the evidence so far is that the relationship of class and party, and indeed, many socio-economic factors, with municipal elections was much more nuanced and heterogeneous than previous studies of local electoral behaviour of this period would allow.

Measures of the relationship between socio-economic variables of the context in which votes have been cast and party support at municipal elections in Birmingham and inner-London have evidenced variance in the trends of these relationships at different levels of voting activity. The regression models have evidenced the relative importance of contextual socio-economic indicators, such as measures of housing conditions in their accounts of party support and their changing influence over time and at different levels of

electoral activity. Thus, the regression analysis of this chapter adds much weight to the case study evidence of the significance of contextual factors in relation to party support at local elections for the two major parties and the Liberal Party.

**Table 52: Birmingham and Inner-London lower-tier municipal elections 1959-1979 : comparison of the standardised betacoefficients for best fitting models of Liberal Party support, socio-economic variables and turnout, controlling for past party political control of ward at time of election, all contests.**

P<0.05.

Party	B'ham	London	B'ham	London
	Liberal 1959-1979	Liberal 1959-1979	Liberal 1959-1979	Liberal 1959-1979
PPC ward	CON	CON	LAB	LAB
Electoral level	Lower-tier	Lower-tier	Lower-tier	Lower-tier
N =	394	193	134	810
R square =	.53	.12	.36	.12
CONSTANT	.37	15.8	-.49	-1.6
Owner-Occupiers			-.24	
Rented Furnished				.05
Non-Manual	.77			
AFID		-.87	.56	
Social class 1	-.78			
Social class 2/3N	-.28			
Social class 4				.20
Social class 6		.64		-.3
Share inside WC	.11		-.79	
Share/Lack Hot Water			.21	
Share/Lack Bath	-.14			
Turnout	.24		.55	.23

Electoral context looms large in any explanation of support for the Liberal Party and, indeed, as Table 52 above illustrates, when past political control of a ward is taken into account there is some disparity in the influence of our indicators. There is also however, some disparity between local authorities. It would appear that indicators of class and turnout are common determinants of Liberal Party support at both Birmingham and Inner-London elections and their relative influence at different types of elections shaped by electoral context. In contrast the household amenity variables were influential at lower-tier elections in Birmingham irrespective of past party

political control of a ward, however, they appear to have had no influence at the lower-tier inner-London elections. The regression models of Table 52, as their  $R^2$  statistics testify, are poor predictors of support for the Liberal Party. In order to gain a greater insight into the effects of political context and to test the hypotheses related to political variables we must by necessity turn to a more appropriate method of analysis, that of logistic regression.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

#### **10.1: Introduction**

One of the key assumptions of linear regression is that the relationship between variables is linear (see Appendix C). However the political/structural variables in the analysis are dichotomous and thus violate the assumption of linearity the data must meet in order for the statistical test to be accurate. What logistic regression permits us to do is to fit a model to the data that estimates values of the outcome variable (in this case the probability a party will win an electoral context, e.g. categorical dichotomous variable = CONWIN or CONLOSE) from known values of the predictor variables, including our categorical variables (also dichotomous e.g. a party is either in control of council or it is not) such as past party political control of a ward, or party control of council. The aim of the logistic regression is to consider what factors predict whether or not a party win an election – our outcome variable is a dichotomy i.e. an electoral contest is either won or lost. The logistic regression analysis is a two stage process termed, block entry regression. In the first stage, block 1, the socio-economic predictors will be entered into the model, and in the second stage, block 2, the political structural variables will be added thereby enabling us to discern the effect, if any, upon our socio-economic model of political context.

Thus logistic regression is multiple regression, as used in chapter 9, but with an outcome variable that is a categorical dichotomy. The method permits the prediction of which of two categories a case is likely to belong to given the information we know about the case, i.e. our predictor variables. A model is created that establishes which variables are influential in predicting a particular outcome. In this instance whether a

party wins a ward or a constituency contest or not, (e.g. dichotomous variable: CONWIN=1, CONLOST=0).

The formal statement of the models to be used in the logistic regression analyses of the effects of socio-economic/demographic, political structural conditions upon support for the Conservative and Labour parties at ward level and at local authority level in relation to lower- and upper-tier local government elections and at constituency level in relation to parliamentary elections are as follows:-

(Conservative Party example)

Probability that the Conservative Party will WIN/LOSE in a given ward at time  $t$  at a lower-tier municipal election =  $f$  [ ward characteristics (socio-economic) + political/ structural characteristics ].

Probability that the Conservative Party will WIN/LOSE in a given local authority at time  $t$  at an upper-tier municipal election =  $f$  [local authority level characteristics (socio-economic) + political/ structural characteristics].

Probability that the Conservative Party will WIN/LOSE in a given constituency at time  $t$ , at a parliamentary election =  $f$  [constituency level characteristics (socio-economic) + political/ structural characteristics].

The logistic regression model for the Liberal Party by necessity employs a model that assesses the probability of the Liberal Party achieving an above the mean share of the vote (see section 10.4 below). The formal statement of the models to be used in the logistic regression analyses of the effects of socio-economic/demographic, political structural conditions upon the probability that the Liberal Party will achieve an above the mean share of the vote at ward level and at local authority level in relation to

lower- and upper-tier local government elections and at constituency level in relation to parliamentary elections are as follows:-

Probability that the Liberal Party will achieve a >MEAN SHARE OF THE VOTE in a given ward at time  $t$  at a lower –tier municipal election =  $f$  [ ward characteristics (socio-economic) + political/ structural characteristics ].

Probability that the Liberal Party will achieve a >MEAN SHARE OF THE VOTE in a given local authority at time  $t$  at a upper–tier municipal election =  $f$  [ local authority characteristics (socio-economic) + political/ structural characteristics ].

Probability that the Liberal Party will achieve a >MEAN SHARE OF THE VOTE in a given constituency at time  $t$  at a parliamentary election =  $f$  [ constituency level characteristics (socio-economic) + political/ structural characteristics ].

The analysis measures the probability that a case belongs in a certain category and is expressed as a probability value that varies between 0 and 1. The odds (the ratio of the probability that something is true divided by the probability it is not) is converted into a Logit (the natural logarithm of the odds) which can take a positive or negative value. Logits measure the strength and direction of an association. A positive Logit coefficient means that the predictor variable has an effect of increasing the odds that the dependent variable (eg CONWIN) equals 1. An odds ratio above 1 indicates an increase, that is to say, a unit change in the predictor variable is associated with an increase in the odds that the outcome variable equals 1. A negative Logit means that the predictor variable has the effect of decreasing the odds that the dependent variable equals 1, and an odds ratio of below 1 indicates a decrease, that is, a unit change in the predictor variable is associated with a decrease in the odds of the outcome being 1.

Further, the value of the coefficient  $\exp(B)$  is an indication of the change in the odds resulting from a unit change in the predictor. If the value of  $\exp(B)$  is greater than 1 then it indicates that as the predictor increases, the odds of the outcome occurring increase. A value less than 1 indicates that as the predictor increases the odds of the outcome decrease. For example in Table 53 below, Birmingham lower-tier municipal elections 1959-1979, categorical dependent variable CONWIN/CONLOSE, the odds of the Conservative Party winning a ward are 1.4 times higher for every unit increase in the predictor JUNIOR NON-MANUAL when controlling for socio-economic indicators of block 1 analysis, and 1.4 times higher for every unit of increase when controlling for both socio-economic and political predictors together in block 2. As the table indicates the political variables had no significant impact upon the probability of the Conservative Party winning a ward at these elections over the whole period.

A table of comparison can be constructed to evidence any cross-level disparity in the influence of particular predictor variables at different types of elections and, indeed, any difference in the effects of all our variables between the decades. We can then gauge the relative strength and direction of any relationships between influential independent variables, including categorical dichotomous predictors, and support for a party (Field 2002:pp163-204). Tables 53 and 54 below contrast the Logits and  $\exp(B)$  coefficients (in brackets) for significant predictors of LABWIN and CONWIN, our categorical dichotomous outcome variables at Birmingham elections 1959-1979. In Tables 55 and 56 those for inner-London elections are outlined. The method of Logistic Analysis used was block entry of our socio-economic variables and a second block entry of both our socio-economic variables and our categorical

political/structural variables, PPCCON, PPCLAB, CONCOUN, LABCOUN and MARJ.

Logistic regression as well as producing a predicted probability of Y occurring given the values of each predictor for a given case, also produces a predicted group membership.

Thus, the analysis predicts which of our two groups, (e.g. CONWIN or CONLOSE, LABWIN or LABLOSE) a case is most likely to belong to based on the model.

Exceptional cases that do not concur with the model are listed as residuals. All cases for which the standardised residual is greater than 2 standard deviations will be listed. It is expected that the cases listed at each logistic regression analysis of levels of elections in Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and London, will include those wards identified in the case studies of Chapters 4-8 and thereby add further weight to the evidence for the effects of local socio-economic environment and political context upon the voting behaviour at municipal elections. Indeed, such atypical and exceptional values can point toward atypical behaviour and, 'in a geographical sense ... identification of unusual cases is essentially the identification of exceptional places' (Brundson 1995:272).

In the reports below, the focus will be the effect, if any, upon the odds of a particular party winning an electoral contest of our socio-economic indicators, and secondly the effect with the addition of our political/structural variables. Thus, each model will predict the odds that a party are likely to win a contest at a particular type of election and how these odds are favourably or adversely affected by the predictors in the best fitting models. It is felt that most readers will have a more intuitive feel for statements about odds and that reporting the Exp.B coefficient is a more intelligible medium to convey the direction and magnitude of any effects of our predictors.

### **10.2: Report of Birmingham logistic regression analysis**

The odds that the Labour Party would win a ward contest at lower-tier elections in Birmingham, or a parliamentary constituency contest, remained very stable across the 1959-1979 period in relation to the percentage manual workers who resided in a particular ward or constituency (see Table 53 below). The odds that the Labour Party was likely to win a ward contest at the lower-tier were multiplied by 1.2 in the 1960s and the 1970s for each unit increase in manual workers who resided in a ward. These odds were only slightly reduced, by 0.1, when the effects of political context were considered by the introduction of our political/structural variables in to the logistic regression model. Thus, the stability of class-party alignment irrespective of council control, past-party political control of a ward, or constituency is evidenced.

The findings do not however support those of the multiple-regression analysis that evidenced a degree of dealignment among Labour supporters in the 1970s when measured in terms of the indicator MANUAL. Nevertheless, like the findings from the multiple regression analysis, logistic regression analysis reveals the nuances of class-party alignment. The indicator SOCIAL CLASS 6 evidences that the odds that the Labour Party were likely to win a lower-tier ward contest in the 1960s were multiplied by 1.2 for every unit change in the percentage of SOCIAL CLASS 6 residents in a ward, yet at the parliamentary electoral level, 1959-1979, the odds were multiplied by 1.6 for every unit change in the percentage of SOCIAL CLASS 6 residents in a constituency. Arguably this could be a function of turnout differential between levels of voting activity. Nevertheless, class-party loyalty with the Labour Party was less robust at the Birmingham lower-tier municipal level than at the parliamentary level, among the voters in SOCIAL CLASS 6, who no doubt made up much of the electorate in the inner-city wards that comprised the case study constituency of Ladywood.

An indication of the origins of Labour's relative loss of support may lie with the household amenity indicator SHARE/LACK HOT WATER. During the 1960s at the lower-tier, irrespective of party control of council, or past political control of a ward, the odds that the Labour Party were likely to win a ward contest were multiplied by 0.96, for every unit increase in the indicator S/LHWATER, a reduction of around 4% in the odds, evidencing the significance of housing conditions to Labour's level of support at the lower-tier Birmingham elections, and substantiating the case study findings of the importance of housing conditions to the Liberal revival in Ladywood's inner-city wards of Birmingham with its high percentage of multi-occupancy dwellings with substandard housing conditions. At first glance it may seem that the exp.B coefficient for the room density indicator  $RD > 1.5$ , militates against the above assertion of support for the Labour Party being adversely affected by housing conditions. The indicator of overcrowding  $RD > 1.5$ , as can be seen in Table 53, evidences a strong positive relationship with support for the party in the 1970s. Indeed, the odds of a Labour victory at a lower-tier contest can be multiplied by 1.9 for every unit change in percentage  $RD > 1.5$ , and by 2.1 when past political control of ward and council control are considered. This, I would argue, reflected the dramatic change in the Birmingham Labour group's public housing policy, a platform that arguably reduced the Conservative group's majority on council from 66 to 6 at the 1971 elections and resulted in a Labour group majority of 20 at the 1973 elections (see Ladywood case study pp 144-148).

The differential in influence of political context is perhaps illustrated firstly by consideration of the relationship between council control and the likelihood of a party winning a lower-tier ward contest, and secondly by consideration of the likelihood in terms of past party political control of a ward. If it is accepted that the group of cases that

contribute to the likelihood of Conservative Party victory in our lower-tier model are predominantly consistent Conservative supporting wards, and those that make up the group of cases that underpin the likelihood of Labour Party victory, predominantly consistent Labour supporting wards ( see Ladywood case study, pp 137-139, for marginality of council control and control dependent throughout much of the period on a small number of volatile wards) then a unit change in council control would not be expected to register a significant effect upon the odds of a party's victory in what are overwhelmingly heartland wards

**Table 53 : Logits of significant predictors categorical dependent variable LABWIN/LABLOSE at Birmingham lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections 1959-1979 and by decade. First column of each is Block 1 = socio-economic variables, second column Block 2= socio-economic + political variables, asterisk denotes coefficient not significant at p<0.05 level. Exp.B in brackets.**

VARIABLE	B'ham lower-tier 1959-1979		B'ham lower-tier 1959-72		B'ham Lower-tier 1973- 1979		B'ham Upper-tier 1973- 1979		B'ham Parliamentary 1959-1979	
DEPENDENT	LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0		LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0		LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0		LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0		LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0	
N	740	740	539	539	201	201	84	84	87	87
% Predicted	77.0	82.8	77.9	81.3	83.6	89.1	69.0	90.5	85.1	86.2
CONSTANT	-5.9	-8.1	-13	-14.4	-11.1	-14.3	2.2	*	-14.7	-16.5
NON-MANUAL	*	*	*	*	*	*	-.15 (.86)	-.57 (.57)	*	*
MANUAL	.05 (1.0)	*	.16 (1.2)	.10 (1.1)	.19 (1.2)	.15 (1.2)	*	*	.19 (1.2)	.18 (1.2)
SOC 6	*	*	.16 (1.2)	.21 (1.2)	*	*	*	*	.45 (1.6)	.42 (1.5)
RD>1.5	*	*	*	*	.64 (1.9)	.74 (2.1)	*	*	*	*
RD 1-1.5	.41 (1.5)	.26 (1.3)	.30 (1.3)	.23 (1.3)	*	*	*	*	*	*
S/LHOTWAT	*	*	-.04 (.96)	-.03 (.97)	*	*	*	*	*	*
PPC CON	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
CON COUNC	*	*	*	*	*	-2.9 (.1)	*	*	*	*

This is certainly the case as far as the Labour Party are concerned. The odds in the 1970s of a Labour candidate being returned under the political context of a Conservative council could be multiplied by a coefficient of a mere 0.1 as shown in Table 53. The implication is that at times of nadirs in Labour support in the city and the ascendancy of Conservative support, Conservative council control had little deleterious effect upon Labour's heartland

wards. There is little evidence of political context in terms of council control or past political control of award having any impact upon the odds of a Conservative or Labour party win at these elections as evidenced by the minimal change in the odds between block 1 and block 2 models. This, no doubt, reflects Birmingham's long held reputation of electoral marginality.

The predictor NON-MANUAL was a significant factor in all logistic regression models of the probability of the Conservative Party winning a contest at Birmingham elections 1959-1979, albeit one that varied in its impact at different types of elections and between the decades (see Table 54 below). Over the whole period at the lower-tier elections the odds of a Conservative win could be multiplied by 1.3 for every unit increase in the percentage non-manual residents in a ward. These odds were increased from an exp.B coefficient of 1.1 to 1.5 in the 1970s at lower-tier elections an indication of a trend of class-party realignment in Conservative support and reached parity with the coefficient in relation to parliamentary elections 1959-1979, a trend clearly evidenced in the Sutton Coldfield case study as former Conservative voters returned to the fold upon amalgamation of the borough with Birmingham. There is clear evidence of a disparity in the influence of the predictor NON-MANUAL at different types of elections and between the decades, and also an indication of class-party realignment rather than dealignment at the municipal level in the 1970s. Furthermore, the block 2 logistic regression of upper-tier elections in the 1970s, which included political/structural variables, revealed that the odds of a Conservative victory could be multiplied by 2.0 for every unit increase in NON-MANUAL. It would seem that for non-manual residents the propensity to vote for the Conservative candidate at the upper-tier was increased and that this increase was in some way related to political control of ward and/or council. The more likely explanation is turnout differential with the Labour Party finding it harder to mobilise support at upper-tier elections.

As expected, the odds of a Conservative win were adversely affected by the percentage of manual workers in a ward. At lower-tier elections the odds could be multiplied by 0.8 in relation to MANUAL, by 0.87 in relation to SOCIAL CLASS 6, and by 0.97 in relation to the tenure category COUNCIL RENTED. It is revealing that the index of overcrowding  $RD > 1.5/\text{room}$  was positively associated with the likelihood of Conservative Party victory at lower-tier elections throughout the whole 1959-1979 period

**Table 54 : Logits of significant predictors categorical dependent variable CONWIN/CONLOSE at Birmingham lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections 1959-1979 and by decade.. First column of each is Block 1 = socio-economic variables, second column Block 2= socio-economic + political variables, asterisk denotes coefficient not significant at  $p < 0.05$  level. Exp.B in brackets.**

VARIABLE	B'ham lower-tier 1959-1979		B'ham lower-tier 1959-1972		B'ham lower-tier 1973-79		B'ham Upper-tier 1973- 1979		B'ham Parliamentary 1959-1979	
DEPENDENT	CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0		CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0		CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0		CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0		CONWIN=1 CONLOSE=0	
N	740	740	539	539	324	324	84	84	87	87
% Predicted	81.8	84.1	79.0	82.0	88.3	90.1	76.2	92.9	87.4	87.4
CONSTANT	-5.33	-3.6	12.7	13.8	-13.1	-8.6	-3.2	*	-6.3	-7.8
OWNER-OCC	*	*	*	*	.12 (1.1)	.12 (1.1)	*	*	*	*
COUNCIL RENT	-.03 (.97)	-.02 (.98)	-.04 (.96)	-.03 (.97)	*	*	*	*	*	*
NON-MANUAL	.26 (1.3)	.21 (1.2)	*	*	.4 (1.5)	.4 (1.5)	.21 (1.2)	.70 (2.0)	.4 (1.5)	.4 (1.4)
Jr. NON-MAN	.35 (1.4)	.3 (1.4)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
MANUAL	*	*	-.14 (.87)	-.09 (.92)	*	*	*	*	*	*
SOC 3	-.12 (.88)	-.13 (.88)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
SOC 6		*	-.21 (.8)	-.26 (.8)	*	*	*	*	*	*
RD>1.5	.16 (1.2)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
SHAREDWELL	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	.17 (1.2)	*

The odds of the Conservative candidate winning a ward could be multiplied by 1.2 for every unit increase in the percentage households classified as overcrowded at the  $RD > 1.5/\text{room}$  level. An exp.B coefficient of 1.2 also prevailed at the parliamentary electoral level in relation to  $RD > 1.5$ . Clearly, overcrowding was a factor in the calculus of some of the voters that comprised Conservative Party support at both municipal and parliamentary elections in Birmingham 1959-1979. Whether such considerations were

characteristic of the Birmingham electorate or more general will perhaps be answered in the next section that reports upon the logistic regression of the inner-London data.

### **10.3: Report of inner-London logistic regression analysis**

In Table 55 below the influence of the indicator COUN-RENT, the percentage council rented households in a ward can be seen to be quite stable at different levels of municipal voting and between the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, the tenure category council rented, generally recognised as a significant predictor of Labour Party support, does not indicate any significant dealignment at the lower –tier level. However, at lower-tier elections in the 1970s the indicator TURNOUT had become negatively associated with the probability of a Labour win, a trend clearly evidenced in the Islington case study from the 1968 borough election and after. The danger of broad brush generalisations concerning class-party alignment are apparent if the relationship between SOCIAL CLASS 5 and the odds of a Labour win at upper-tier and those at the parliamentary level are contrasted for the 1959-1979 period. The odds of Labour victory at LCC/GLC elections could be multiplied by 1.8 for every unit increase in SOCIAL CLASS 5 in a division, and 2.1 when political context variables are introduced in the block 2 model. These coefficients are of a much higher magnitude than at the parliamentary electoral level in the same period, when SOCIAL CLASS 5 increased the odds by 1.2. There is evidence of the impact of electoral context and of variant trends in class-party alignment dependent upon political context that reflect the findings of the Camden and the Islington case studies. The significance of household amenity variables is apparent at all levels of electoral activity in relation to the likelihood of a Labour Party victory. At lower-tier elections 1959-79 the indicator RD>1-1.5, increased the odds of Labour victory in a ward election by 1.3 for every unit increase in RD.1-1.5, and the indicator RD>1.5, the most overcrowded of households, increased the odds of a Labour victory in the 1960s by 1.3

for every unit rise. Similarly an exp.B coefficient of 1.9 for RD>1-1.5 at the parliamentary electoral level illustrates the significance of housing conditions to the likelihood of Labour Party victory at all types of elections and accords with the two London case studies.

**Table 55: Logits of significant predictors categorical dependent variable LABWIN/LABLOSE at Inner-London lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal and parliamentary constituency elections 1959-1979 and by decade. First column of each is Block 1 = socio-economic variables, second column Block 2= socio-economic + political variables, asterisk denotes coefficient not significant at  $p<0.05$  level. Exp.B in brackets.**

VARIABLE	London lower-tier 1959-1979		London lower-tier 1959-1970		London Lower-tier 1970-79		London Upper-tier 1959-1979		London Parliamentary 1959-1979	
DEPENDENT	LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0		LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0		LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0		LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0		LABWIN=1 LABLOSE=0	
N	680	680	462	462	220	220	144	144	238	238
% Predicted	74.9	72.8	74.9	80.5	85.5	93.2	86.8	89.6	81.1	91.2
CONSTANT	-4.5	-4.5	-8.7	-7.9	5.1	1.8	-10.5	-12.5	-.35	-4.2
COUN-RENT	.04 (1.0)	.04 (1.0)	.06 (1.1)	.08 (1.1)	*	*	.14 (1.2)	.16 (1.2)	*	*
FURNISHED	*	*	-.02 (.97)	-.06 (.94)	*	*	*	*	*	*
UNFURNISHED	*	*	.05 (1.1)	.06 (1.1)	*	*	*	*	*	*
NON-MAN	*	*	*	*	-.07 (.93)	*	*	*		
SOC 4	*	*	.10 (1.1)	.15 (1.2)	*	*	*	*	*	*
SOC 5	*	*	*	*	*	*	.6 (1.8)	.7 (2.1)	.21 (1.2)	*
RD>1.5	*	*	.26 (1.3)	.41 (1.5)	*	*	*	*	*	*
RD 1-1.5	.3 (1.3)	.28 (1.3)	*	*	*	*	*	*	.62 (1.9)	*
S/LHOTWAT	.04 (1.0)	.05 (1.1)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
S/L BATH	*	*	*	*	*	*	.08 (1.1)	.09 (1.1)	*	*
NO IN WC	*	*	*	*	.15 (1.2)	*	*	*	*	*
SHARE IN WC	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	-.05 (.95)	*
PPC CON	*	*	*	-2.63 (.07)	*	*	*	*	*	3.69 (38.8)
TURNOUT	.05 (1.0)	.06 (1.1)	.12 (1.1)	.09 (1.1)	-.09 (.92)	*	*	*	*	*
MARGINAL 1	*	-1.2 (.3)	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
MARGINAL 2	*	-1.6 (.2)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
MARGINAL 3	*	-1.1 (.3)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Nonetheless, the impact of housing amenity conditions upon the probability of a Labour win could be as nuanced as the impact of social class indicators. At the parliamentary level 1959-1979 the indicator SHAREINWC, which measured the percentage households

in a ward/division/constituency which shared use of an inside toilet, was negatively associated with the likelihood of a Labour Party win. The odds were reduced by around 5% for every unit increase in SHAREINWC. In contrast the indicator SHARE/LACKBATH, was positively associated with the likelihood of a Labour victory at upper-tier municipal elections, as was the indicator SHARE/ LACK HOT WATER, at the lower-tier in the 1960s.

The impact of housing amenity variables can be examined from another perspective. Across a range of measures of marginality (1= <5-%, 2= <5-10%, and 3=<10-20%, the percentage lead over the second placed candidate at the previous election) the impact of marginality upon the odds of a Labour victory at lower-tier elections was remarkably stable, albeit adverse. The expectation would be that in wards where the proportion of council tenancies and privately rented households far outweighed owner-occupation that the Labour majority would be large. Conversely, in wards where owner-occupation predominated the reverse could be expected to be true. Given this, it could be expected that the odds of a Labour party victory would vary in relation to degree of marginality, and that the exp.B coefficient would rise and fall in relation to marginality. The fact that the coefficient was so stable across measures of marginality, and that marginality is closely associated with relative proportions in categories of tenure, may indicate that the impact of household amenity variables upon Labour Party odds of winning a ward are more significant than at first appear. It is intriguing that in wards where Labour's majority had been large at the previous election and presumably the balance of tenure favourable to the party, that the odds of a Labour victory were not far greater than in marginal wards where the balance of tenure was more likely to be in equilibrium.

In stark contrast, the indicator marginality was favourably associated with the probability of a Conservative Party victory at lower-tier elections, and the odds could be multiplied by 2.6 in wards where the margin of victory at the previous election over the second placed party was between 5-10%. Indeed, the indicator NON-MANUAL reveals little variance in its impact upon the probability of a Conservative Party win at different types of elections (Table 56 below). There was nevertheless some loss of support from SOCIAL CLASS 2 at the parliamentary level. The odds of the Conservative Party winning an inner-London constituency at general elections 1959-1979 were reduced by around 0.8% for every unit increase in SOCIAL CLASS 2, a clear indication of class-party dealignment. Similarly, the indicator SOCIAL CLASS 1 reveals an erosion in the likelihood of a Conservative Party victory at lower-tier ward elections 1959-1979 of around 5%. However, at the upper-tier municipal electoral level in the same period, the JUNIOR NON-MANUAL socio-economic group and SOCIAL CLASS 1 were solidly aligned with Conservative Party support, as evidenced by odds that could be multiplied by 1.5 per unit rise and 1.7 respectively. Support for the Conservative Party in Inner-London was, for part of their natural constituency, clearly contingent upon type of election. Just as with analysis of Labour Party support the blunt instrument of the manual/non-manual dichotomy conceals a more variegated pattern of support for the Conservative Party, and accords with the evidence of the electoral behaviour in Camden's three former metropolitan boroughs (see Chapter 8, section 8.2).

**Table 57: Logits of significant predictors categorical dependent variable CONWIN/CONLOSE, Sutton Coldfield lower-tier municipal elections 1959-1972. First column of figures block 1 analysis of socio-economic variables, next column of figures block 2 analysis of socio-economic and political variables, asterisk denotes not significant at  $p < 0.05$  level, Exp.B in brackets.**

DEPENDENT	CONWIN/CONLOSE	
N=	105	105
PREDICTED	75.2	*
CONSTANT	-4.9	*
COUN-RENT	.11 (1.1)	*
NON-MAN	.19 (1.2)	*
Jr NON-MANUAL	-.33 (.72)	*

However, there was no evidence of such class-party dealignment among the NON-MANUAL, which multiplied the odds of a Conservative Party win by 1.2 for every unit increase. The Conservative domination of this borough is reflected in the significant positive relationship between the odds of the Conservative Party winning and COUN-RENT, which multiplied those odds by 1.1, and the absence of a significant coefficients for OWNER-OCC, or any of the political variables.

#### **10.4: Liberal Party support and odds of winning in Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and inner-London**

It has been asserted in the case studies that support for the Liberal Party was also contingent upon socio-economic environment and political context at municipal elections in Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and London 1959-1979. It is however, not possible to explore Liberal Party support at these elections using logistic regression in terms of a dependent categorical dichotomy WIN/LOSE as there are so few cases of win. What is possible is a logistic regression analysis of the probability that a Liberal candidate would outperform the mean Liberal share of the vote at these elections in Liberal contested wards only. At the lower-tier Birmingham elections 1959-1979 the mean Liberal Party share of the vote (contested wards only) was 17.2%, at lower-tier Sutton Coldfield

elections it was 41.6% and at the lower tier inner-London elections 16%. The categorical dependent variable used in the logistic regression will provide a best fitting model of the likelihood of those cases belonging to the group that scored  $> \text{MEANLIB}$  share of the vote at these elections. Our categorical dependent variable was coded :  $\text{LIB} > \text{MEAN} = 1$ , and  $\text{LIB} < \text{MEAN} = 0$ . In this way it was intended to discern whether any particular socio-economic predictors were associated with the probability that a Liberal candidate would outperform the mean share of the vote at these elections and whether political context had any bearing upon that probability. The analyses have also been restricted to lower-tier elections only, because of problems of small N.

**Table 58: Logistic regression Liberal contested wards only ,Birmingham lower-tier municipal elections 1959-1979, asterisk denotes not significant at  $p < 0.05$  level, block 1 socio-economic variables, block 2 socio-economic and political variables.**

DEPENDENT	LIB>MEAN=1	LIB<MEAN=0
N=	338	338
% PREDICTED	76.0	76.0
CONSTANT	-2.04	-10.9
TURNOUT	.08 (1.08)	*
OWN-OCC	-.04 (.96)	-.03 (.97)
S/LHOTWATER	.03 (1.03)	*
CONPPC	*	3.07 (21.4)
LABPPC	*	3.52 (33.7)

**Table 59: Logistic regression Liberal contested wards only ,Birmingham lower-tier municipal elections 1959-1972, asterisk denotes not significant at  $p < 0.05$  level, block 1 socio-economic variables, block 2 socio-economic and political variables.**

DEPENDENT	LIB>MEAN=1	LIB<MEAN=0
N=	241	241
% PREDICTED	74.3	76.0
CONSTANT	-5.4	-13.1
TURNOUT	.08 (1.08)	*
S/LHOTWATER	.03 (1.03)	.03 (103)
COUN-RENT	.03 (1.03)	.03 (1.03)
LABPPC	*	3.43 (30.7)

**Table 60: Logistic regression Liberal contested wards only ,Birmingham lower-tier municipal elections 1972-1979,asterisk denotes not significant at  $p<0.05$  level, block 1 socio-economic variables, block 2 socio-economic and political variables.**

DEPENDENT	LIB>MEAN=1	LIB<MEAN=0
N=	144	144
% PREDICTED	80.6	80.6
CONSTANT	.10	-10.5
OWN-OCC	-.04 (1.2)	*
RD>1.5	.18 (1.2)	*

In Table 58 above, it can be seen that the odds of a Liberal Party candidate achieving an above the mean share of the vote at Birmingham lower-tier elections, 1959-1979, could be multiplied by 1.03 for every unit increase in the household amenity predictor, S/LHOTWATER, and 1.08 for every unit increase in the predictor TURNOUT. The probability of a Liberal candidate achieving >MEAN share of the Liberal vote was, however, reduced by 4% for every unit increase in the predictor OWNER-OCCUPIER. Liberal support at these elections can be seen to be dependent upon the adverse housing conditions in a ward and reaffirms the findings of the Ladywood case study. When our political/structural variables were introduced in to the analysis it was found that neither turnout nor S/LHOTWATER were significant factors in prediction. However, PPC, past political control of a ward at the previous election, registered a significant influence upon the odds of a Liberal Party candidate achieving an above the mean share of the vote. OWNER-OCCUPATION maintained its deleterious effect upon Liberal fortunes, eroding the Liberal odds by 3% for every unit increase in owner-occupation. Conservative Party past political control of a ward increased the odds of a Liberal candidate achieving an above the mean share of the vote by 21.4 times for the unit change in PPC, and Labour Party past political control of a ward by 33.7 for the unit change in PPC. What is apparent is that the Liberal Party were more likely to achieve an above the mean share of the vote at ward competitions where the Labour Party had past political control of the ward, where owner-occupation was low, and where the percentage households with substandard

amenities was high, confirming the findings of the Ladywood case study as to the importance of housing conditions to any explanation of Liberal support and dealignment in Labour Party support in the traditionally Labour voting inner-city wards.

The analysis of lower-tier Birmingham elections 1959-1972 outlined in Table 59 above, shows that TURNOUT and the household amenity variable S/LHOTWATER were positive influences upon the odds of a Liberal candidate achieving an above the mean share of the vote. What has changed in the model of the 1960s is that OWNER-OCCUPATION was not a significant influence on Liberal odds but COUN-RENT was influential. Indeed, COUN-RENT can be seen to have increased the odds of a Liberal candidate achieving an above the mean share of the vote by 1.03 for every unit change in the predictor COUN-RENT. Furthermore, in the 1959-1972 period it appears that the likelihood of an above the mean share of the vote was positively associated with Labour Party past political control of a ward, and Conservative Party past political control had no significant influence upon these odds. As with the 1959-1979 model the influence of turnout has been supplanted by the influence of past party political control of a ward, however, only in the case of the Labour Party is PPC a significant influence upon Liberal fortunes.

It can be observed in Table 60 above that at these lower-tier Birmingham elections 1972-1979, OWN-OCC supplanted COUN-RENT, and RD>1.5 had supplanted S/LHOTWATER, as influences upon the odds of an above the mean share of the vote for a Liberal Party candidate. Further, that neither any socio-economic nor any political variables made a significant impact upon Liberal odds. The predictor OWN-OCC is seen to have had a negative association with Liberal prospects in the 1970s, however, the household amenity variable RD>1.5 continued to assert a positive influence. These findings accord with those of both Birmingham case studies which evidence a

realignment in Conservative support, in Birmingham wards in general and in the newly merged Sutton Coldfield wards in particular, and the continued importance of housing issues in the 1970s.

The logistic regression analyses of inner-London lower-tier elections in respect of the categorical dependent variable,  $LIB > MEAN = 1$  and  $LIB < MEAN = 0$  are outlined in Tables 61, 62 and 63, below. Like that of Birmingham the analysis of lower-tier inner-London elections 1959-1979 in Table 61, reveals the significance of housing conditions to the likelihood of a Liberal Party candidate/candidates achieving an above the mean share of the vote and corroborates the evidence from the London case studies that evidences the importance of housing conditions to the establishment of a Liberal foothold in some Islington and Camden wards. The odds of this occurrence could be multiplied by 1.2 for every unit increase in the predictor  $S/LHOTWATER$ , and multiplied by 1.2 for every unit increase in  $SOCIAL CLASS 4$ , and accord with the London case study findings of Liberal Party intervention and support in the areas of worst housing conditions such as in west Hampstead and St Pancras North.

At the same elections in the 1960s (see Table 62) the significance of  $SOCIAL CLASS 4$  to Liberal Party fortunes is evidenced. The odds of the Liberal Party achieving an above the mean share of the vote could be multiplied by 1.1 for every unit rise of  $SOCIAL CLASS 4$  in a ward. Turnout and social class four became positive assets to Liberal fortunes in the 1970s. Although, as Table 63 shows, the predictor  $UNFURN$ , which measures the percentage households in a ward rented unfurnished, was adversely related to Liberal odds of achieving an above the mean share of the vote, and reduced those odds by some 4% for every unit increase in  $UNFURN$ . In neither decade, nor across the whole period, did our political/structural variables register any impact upon Liberal fortunes at these inner-London lower-tier elections.

**Table 61: Logistic regression Liberal contested wards only ,Inner-London lower-tier municipal elections 1959-1979,asterisk denotes not significant at  $p<0.05$  level, block 1 socio-economic variables, block 2 socio-economic and political variables.**

DEPENDENT	LIB>MEAN=1	LIB<MEAN=0
N=	263	263
% PREDICTED	86.3	86.3
CONSTANT	-5.2	-6.5
S/LHOTWATER	.10 (1.2)	0.9 (1.1)
MAJORITY	-.03 (.97)	*
SOC 4	.21 (1.2)	.18 (1.2)

**Table 62: Logistic regression Liberal contested wards only ,Inner-London lower-tier municipal elections 1959-1970,asterisk denotes not significant at  $p<0.05$  level, block 1 socio-economic variables, block 2 socio-economic and political variables.**

DEPENDENT	LIB>MEAN=1	LIB<MEAN=0
N=	192	192
% PREDICTED	85.0	85.0
CONSTANT	-3.5	-3.1
SOC 4	.11 (1.1)	.12 (1.1)

**Table 63: Logistic regression Liberal contested wards only ,Inner-London lower-tier municipal elections 1970-1979,asterisk denotes not significant at  $p<0.05$  level, block 1 socio-economic variables, block 2 socio-economic and political variables.**

DEPENDENT	LIB>MEAN=1	LIB<MEAN=0
N=	192	192
% PREDICTED	85.0	85.0
CONSTANT	-1.5	-.5
SOC 4	.09 (1.1)	.09 (1.1)
TURNOUT	.04 (1.0)	.03 (1.0)
UNFURNISHED	-.04 (.96)	-.04 (.96)

In Table 64 the best fitting model of the logistic regression analysis of the categorical variable >LIBMEAN/<LIBMEAN at Sutton Coldfield lower-tier elections evidences the importance of tenure to the outcomes of these elections. The predictors OWNER-OCCUPATION and COUNCIL-RENTED were both negatively associated with the odds of a Liberal candidate achieving an above the mean share of the Liberal vote, the odds being multiplied by .86 and .87 respectively, for every unit increase in the predictor. Liberal chances of achieving an above the mean score were also constrained by the majority held by the winning candidate at the previous election, every unit increase of

which multiplied those odds by .81. Thus it appears that Liberal fortunes in Sutton Coldfield, as in Islington and Camden, were conditional upon marginality, the closer the contest at the last election the more likely a Liberal candidate would score above the mean at that contest. Unfortunately, as Table 64 shows, our political structural variables were not significant in our block 2 analysis, so it is not possible to get a more precise idea of the degree of marginality that favoured Liberal candidates the most.

**Table 64: Logistic regression Liberal contested wards only ,Sutton Coldfield lower-tier municipal elections 1959-72, asterisk denotes not significant at  $p < 0.05$  level, block 1 socio-economic variables, block 2 socio-economic and political variables.**

<b>DEPENDENT</b>	<b>LIB&gt;MEAN/LIB&lt;MEAN</b>	
	<b>N=</b>	
	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>% PREDICTED</b>	<b>84.1</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>CONSTANT</b>	<b>17.34</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>OWNER-OCC</b>	<b>-.15</b> <b>(.86)</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>COUN-RENT</b>	<b>-.16</b> <b>(.87)</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>MAJORITY</b>	<b>-.22</b> <b>(.81)</b>	<b>*</b>

### **10.5: Summary of Logistic Regression of Birmingham and London Elections**

In regard to Birmingham elections the logistic regression analysis has shown that class-party alignment was somewhat heterogeneous and that generalisations can hide subtle intra-class differences in electoral behaviour. Analysis of the Labour Party odds of winning at lower-tier elections has not indicated class-party dealignment between the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, when measured by the indicator MANUAL. This would appear to support hypothesis H3, that there is no variance in the effects upon party support of individual social-class indicators over time at the same or different types of elections. In contrast the indicator SOCIAL CLASS 6 contradicts this assumption, as it has shown that class-party alignment with the Labour Party was clearly less robust at the lower-tier municipal electoral level than at the parliamentary. Nevertheless, as far as the Conservative Party are concerned we can reject hypothesis

H3, as the indicator NON-MANUAL clearly evidenced electoral cross-level variability and differences between the two decades at Birmingham elections. Similarly, the evidence from the regression analyses of inner-London rejected hypothesis H3, as the predictor SOCIAL CLASS 3 was shown to have impacted upon the odds of a Labour Party win at different types of election with variability, as did the predictors SOCIAL CLASS 1 and SOCIAL CLASS 2.

The evidence so far allows us to reject hypothesis H6, that there is no significant association between party support and household amenity variables. At Birmingham lower-tier elections in the 1960s this was clearly not the case, as the odds of Labour winning a ward contest were reduced by 4% for every unit increase in the indicator S/LHOTWATER. Similarly, at lower-tier inner-London elections 1959-1979, the household amenity variables RD>1.5 and SHAREINWC had a significant impact upon the odds of a Labour Party win, as did the indicator SHARE/LACK HOT WATER in relation to Liberal Party support, and thus add weight to the rejection of H6.

Our evidence allows us to reject the following hypotheses: H2 – that there is no significant difference between the effects upon party support of individual political/structural variables of an electoral unit at different types of elections, H4 that there is no significant association between the odds of a party winning a municipal ward election and past political control of a ward at the previous election, and H5 that there is no significant association between the odds of a party winning a municipal ward election and party political control of the council at the time of that election. In respect of hypothesis H7, that there was no significant weakening of class-alignment behind the two major parties at municipal elections in Birmingham and inner-London from its level in the 1960s to that in the 1970s, the evidence would suggest that this

was the case. We cannot therefore reject H7, although with the caveat that there is evidence of both intra-class category dealignment and realignment.

The logistic regression analysis of the Liberal Party odds of achieving an above the mean share of the vote at lower-tier elections in Birmingham and inner-London have revealed the significance of the following independent variables -: SOCIAL CLASS 4, RD>1.5, S/LHOTWATER, OWNER-OCCUPATION, COUNCIL RENTED, UNFURNISHED, LABPPC, TURNOUT and MAJORITY. What is clear is that the odds of the Liberal Party achieving an above the mean share of the vote, i.e. their level of electoral support was dependent upon: the level of turnout at the election, the housing conditions prevailing in the ward, the past political control of that ward at the previous election, and in the case of inner-London the percentage residents of social class 4 in the ward. We can then, reject hypothesis H6 that there is no significant association between party support and household amenity variables. We can also reject H4, that there is no significant association between the odds of a party winning a municipal ward election and past party political control of a ward at the previous election.

The logistic regression analyses, as can be seen in the tables, predicted a percentage of all cases that best fitted each particular model, and also listed those cases that were deemed atypical as residuals, i.e. those cases that did not conform to the best fitting models. It is to those cases and to what makes them different, that our attention turns in the section to follow.

### **10.6: Interpretation of the Residuals**

The standardised residual coefficient, ZRE1, in 95% of cases in an average normally distributed sample should have values that lie within + or – 2, and 99% should have values that lie within + or – 2.5. This was certainly the case with our logistic regression analysis of the odds of our categorical dependent variables, CONWIN/CONLOSE and LABWIN/LABLOSE. However, our concern here is not so much to identify cases that have had undue influence on the models as to identify cases for which the models fit poorly. SPSS output has listed those cases that do not conform to the above parameters. The next step is to identify which of the Birmingham and inner-London wards were atypical in their voting behaviour, why these wards do not fit these models, and to identify what is different, if anything about these wards in terms of their socio-economic and political characteristics, whether these atypical wards correspond to those identified in the case studies, and whether they comprise the constituencies where the Liberal Party achieved above the mean success at subsequent parliamentary elections.

The logistic regression analysis of the Birmingham electoral data revealed 25 atypically performing wards in relation to our categorical dependent variable LABWIN/LABLOSE. Eleven of these residual cases were inner-city wards that, in the early 1960s to the early 1970s, broke the mould at one or more lower-tier elections in terms of expected support for the Labour Party. The wards were: All Saints, Aston, Deritend, Duddeston, Ladywood, Handsworth, Newtown, Rotton Park, Saltley, Small Heath and Sparkbrook.

The wards that made up the Ladywood constituency, except the Soho ward (see Table 30, p131, Chapter 5) were all identified as residual cases at one or more elections, and thus accord with the case study findings as having exhibited unusual voting

behaviour. Indeed, at 17 elections to Birmingham City Council between 1945 and 1962 inclusive there were 105 seats available and contested by the two major parties in the wards that comprised the Ladywood constituency. At these lower-tier elections the Labour Party returned 85 councillors, some 81% of the seats. A Labour MP, Victor Yates, had represented the constituency since 1945. Clearly, the constituency and its local electoral wards were a Labour heartland yet as has been evidenced the electorates of these wards at lower-tier elections in the early 1960s to the early 1970s behaved atypically at the polls. These were the Ladywood, Duddeston, All Saints (previously St Paul's), Rotton Park and Soho wards. The remainder of the eleven residuals were wards contiguous to the Ladywood constituency and had featured in the revival of Liberalism in inner-city Birmingham.

Thus far we have identified which of the Birmingham wards were atypical in their voting behaviour and found that all but one of the wards that comprised the Ladywood constituency, where the Liberal municipal electoral revival and subsequent parliamentary success occurred have been identified as exceptional cases that do not concur with our Labour Party model. In order to add further weight to our argument for the effect of local determinants on voting behaviour at municipal elections we must firstly, identify what is different about these erstwhile Labour heartland wards in terms of their socio-economic and political characteristics from the characteristics of those wards identified as typifying LABWIN wards by the logistic regression model. We can do this by comparing the value of a predictor in a residual ward to the all ward mean value of the same predictor in the model for LABWIN. Secondly, the predictors that are shown to be different must also correspond to those predictors

proven to be associated with enhanced odds of the Liberal Party gaining an above the mean share of the vote at Birmingham lower-tier elections.

If, as the case study evidence of the Ladywood constituency has argued, the socio-economic environment and political context of its wards shaped the outcomes of these lower-tier elections and these determinants were favourable towards the Liberal Party, then it should follow that those predictors shown to have been significant in enhancing the odds of an above the mean share of the vote for the Liberals (see Tables 58,59,60) TURNOUT, OWNER-OCCUPATION, COUNCIL RENTED, RD>1.5 and SHARE/LACK HOT WATER, should have exceptional values when compared to the all-ward mean of the same predictors of our LABWIN wards.

The eleven residual inner-city Birmingham wards have been listed in Tables 65 below. Included are the predictors that were found to be significant in enhancing the odds of an above the mean share of the vote for the Liberal Party at Birmingham elections. The table also includes; the mean value of the variables TURNOUT, OWN-OCC, COUN-RENT, RD>1.5 and S/LHOTWATER, and their standard deviation for all LABWIN lower-tier contests 1959-1979. These all wards mean values are contrasted with the values of these predictors for our individual residual wards and in brackets the unit standard deviation increase or decrease peculiar to a ward.

In Table 65 the ward level mean value of the predictors, TURNOUT, OWNER-OCCUPIER, COUNCIL RENTED, RD.1.5 and S/LHOTWATER, and their standard deviations have been listed in the first three rows. In the lower half of the table the individual ward value for each of the above predictors in relation to our atypically performing wards is listed. In the same cell as the individual mean is a measure (in

brackets) of the variance of that figure from the all ward mean of that particular predictor. This variance has been calculated by subtraction of each individual residual ward score from the all ward mean and the result divided by the standard deviation of that all ward mean to provide an index of dissimilarity.

In the wards of the Ladywood constituency the indices for the predictors  $RD > 1.5$  and  $S/LHOTWATER$  at lower-tier Birmingham elections range from +1.8 to + 4.4 SDs above the all ward mean values for these predictors. Furthermore,  $TURNOUT$  was below the all ward mean, -.2 to -.8, and  $COUNCIL RENTED$  well above the all ward mean, +.7 to +2.4. In the All Saints ward the index of overcrowding  $RD > 1.5$  was almost 2 standard deviations above the mean for those wards predicted by our LABWIN logistic regression model, and the index  $SHARE/LACK HOT WATER$  2.5 standard deviations above the mean. In the Ladywood ward the indices  $RD > 1.5$  and  $SHARE/LACK HOT WATER$  were respectively, 4.4 and 1.8 standard deviations above the mean. In the Duddeston and Rotton Park wards the  $RD > 1.5$  was respectively 3.1 and 2.1 standard deviations above our LABWIN mean.

Thus, there were great differences between a number of socio-economic predictors of these erstwhile Labour heartland wards and their counterparts that predicted a Labour win and, more importantly they are predictors shown to be associated with above the mean support for Liberal candidates. Clearly, the socio-economic environment and political context of these wards at those particular elections had some impact upon Liberal Party local electoral fortunes, and if only in the sense of providing a base of party support for contesting parliamentary elections in the Ladywood Constituency some influence at the national level.

**Table 65: Birmingham lower-tier elections 1959-1979, wards of the Birmingham Ladywood Constituency classed as residuals, and contiguous wards classed as residuals.**

	TURNOUT	OWN-OCC	COUN-RENT	RD>1.5	S/LHOTWATER
<b>N=</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>669</b>
<b>All ward mean</b>	<b>34.92</b>	<b>39.81</b>	<b>34.49</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>19.18</b>
<b>All ward S D</b>	<b>10.44</b>	<b>19.24</b>	<b>23.17</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>20.37</b>
<b>RESIDUAL LADYWOOD WARDS</b>					
	TURNOUT	OWN-OCC	COUN-RENT	RD>1.5	S/LHOTWATER
<b>Duddeston</b>	<b>31.23</b>	<b>4.67</b>	<b>82.68</b>	<b>12.73</b>	<b>28.61</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-.35)</b>	<b>(-1.83)</b>	<b>(+2.08)</b>	<b>(+3.03)</b>	<b>(+.46)</b>
<b>Ladywood</b>	<b>26.45</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>90.69</b>	<b>16.86</b>	<b>55.52</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-.81)</b>	<b>(-2.03)</b>	<b>(+2.43)</b>	<b>(+4.35)</b>	<b>(+1.78)</b>
<b>Newtown</b>	<b>35.61</b>	<b>12.11</b>	<b>74.72</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>15.5</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>(-1.45)</b>	<b>(+1.74)</b>	<b>(+.17)</b>	<b>(-.18)</b>
<b>All Saints</b>	<b>28.59</b>	<b>16.86</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>9.40</b>	<b>69.40</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-.2)</b>	<b>(-.58)</b>	<b>(+.74)</b>	<b>(+1.97)</b>	<b>(+2.46)</b>
<b>Rotton Park</b>	<b>31.97</b>	<b>22.01</b>	<b>36.56</b>	<b>9.96</b>	<b>62.39</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-.28)</b>	<b>(-.93)</b>	<b>(+.09)</b>	<b>(+2.15)</b>	<b>(+2.48)</b>
<b>RESIDUAL CONTIGUOUS WARDS</b>					
<b>Deritend</b>	<b>17.25</b>	<b>13.54</b>	<b>53.64</b>	<b>11.85</b>	<b>61.46</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-.57)</b>	<b>(-1.4)</b>	<b>(+.83)</b>	<b>(+2.75)</b>	<b>(+2.08)</b>
<b>Handsworth</b>	<b>51.2</b>	<b>46.1</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>3.86</b>	<b>23.5</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(+1.6)</b>	<b>(+.33)</b>	<b>(-.53)</b>	<b>(+.20)</b>	<b>(+.21)</b>
<b>Aston</b>	<b>20.07</b>	<b>19.61</b>	<b>52.32</b>	<b>9.68</b>	<b>66.78</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-.43)</b>	<b>(-.51)</b>	<b>(+.77)</b>	<b>(+2.06)</b>	<b>(+2.34)</b>
<b>Saltley</b>	<b>25.17</b>	<b>37.99</b>	<b>40.25</b>	<b>9.21</b>	<b>19.00</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-.93)</b>	<b>(-.09)</b>	<b>(+.24)</b>	<b>(+1.9)</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>Small Heath</b>	<b>27.23</b>	<b>43.77</b>	<b>29.69</b>	<b>10.74</b>	<b>25.6</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-0.74)</b>	<b>(+.20)</b>	<b>(-.21)</b>	<b>(+2.40)</b>	<b>(+.32)</b>
<b>Sparkbrook</b>	<b>26.62</b>	<b>35.73</b>	<b>22.89</b>	<b>10.56</b>	<b>37.56</b>
<b>+/- SD</b>	<b>(-.82)</b>	<b>(-.21)</b>	<b>(-.50)</b>	<b>(+2.34)</b>	<b>(+.90)</b>

A total of 52 atypically performing wards were identified as residuals by logistic regression analysis in relation to our categorical dependent variables LABWIN/LABLOSE, and CONWIN/CONLOSE at the lower-tier inner-London elections 1959-1979. Those wards that are relevant to the London case study locations are listed in Table 66 below. The table lists those residuals relevant to the case studies of Camden and Islington. The wards of Highgate, Holborn, Regent's Park, and West End were identified as atypically performing in relation to the categorical dependent variable LABWIN/LABLOSE, and the remainder in relation to the categorical dependent variable CONWIN/CONLOSE. To avoid unnecessary complexity the post-1964 ward names and the post-1970 constituencies are cited. Camden LB was

made up of 19 wards and of these 8 were classified as residuals by the best fitting models of logistic regression analyses. Islington LB was also made up of 19 wards and 3 of these were also identified as atypical in their voting behaviour at lower-tier elections. At parliamentary elections these 11 local government electoral units were distributed over a number of constituencies. The 8 Camden wards in the following constituencies; Camden Hampstead, Camden Holborn and St Pancras South, and Camden St Pancras North. In the Camden Holborn and St Pancras South Constituency, made up of 6 local electoral ward units, three wards, Holborn, Regent's Park and Bloomsbury were atypically performing at lower-tier elections. Thus, the electorates of 50% of the wards that made up this constituency were atypical in their municipal voting behaviour. Two were atypical in relation to the odds of victory for the Labour Party and the other in relation to the odds of the Conservative Party. The Camden Hampstead Constituency also had three of its wards where the electorate voted atypically at lower-tier elections; the Belsize, West End and Swiss Cottage wards. Belsize in relation to the odds of a Labour Party victory and the other two in relation to the Conservative Party's prospects. In Camden St Pancras North Constituency, two of its component local government electoral units were atypical in their municipal voting behaviour. Although the measures of the variance from the all ward mean of the predictors conducive to a Liberal above the mean share of the vote, are not as extreme as the inner-city wards of Birmingham, they nevertheless, are informative. The level of turnout in these Camden wards was above the mean and in the Bloomsbury, Belsize, Chalk Farm and Regent's Park wards the percentage households rented unfurnished was also above the mean for inner-London wards. Thus two of the predictors associated with an above the mean share of the vote for Liberal candidates were at force in these wards. The incidence of atypical lower-tier

voting behaviour was less prevalent in the Islington LB. Nevertheless, the wards of, Bunhill, Pentonville and Highview were identified as residuals, and were components of the following constituencies; Bunhill and Pentonville were two of the six wards that comprised the Islington South and Finsbury Constituency, and the Highview ward was one of seven that made up the Islington North Constituency. Once more the measures of dissimilarity are not as extreme as those for the wards of inner-city Birmingham, although turnout was below the mean and the percentage residents of social class four above the all ward mean.

**Table 66: Inner-London lower-tier elections 1959-1979, (Camden LB and Islington LB) residuals.**

	MAJORITY	TURNOUT	SOC CLASS 4	UNFURN
N=	221.	2209	1544	1538
All ward mean	33.69	33.83	14.42	25.43
All ward S D	22.61	10.48	6.59	16.25
<b>LONDON RESIDUALS</b>				
CAMDEN LB WARDS	MAJORITY	TURNOUT	SOC CLASS 4	UNFURN
BELSIZE +/- SD	5.49 (-1.23)	40.30 (+.62)	4.09 (-1.57)	27.37 (+.12)
BLOOMSBURY +/- SD	13.23 (-.90)	27.1 (-.64)	4.38 (-1.52)	68.50 (+2.65)
CHALK FARM +/- SD	13.97 (-.87)	37.80 (+.38)	2.08 (-1.87)	40.81 (+.95)
HIGHGATE +/- SD	6.59 (-1.19)	48.40 (+1.39)	5.81 (-1.31)	27.42 (+.12)
HOLBORN +/- SD	48.44 (.065)	34.4 *	6.77 (-1.16)	46.35 (+1.29)
SWISS COTTAGE +/- SD	2.82 (-1.37)	38.30 (+0.43)	4.43 (-1.52)	28.65 (+.19)
REGT'S PARK +/- SD	25.29 (-.37)	36.7 (+.27)	2.19 (-1.86)	56.01 (+1.88)
WEST END +/- SD	2.12 (-1.39)	45.15 (+1.08)	6.08 (-1.27)	18.56 (-.42)
<b>ISLINGTON LB WARDS</b>				
BUNHILL +/- SD	5.18 (-1.26)	27.50 (-.6)	15.85 (+.22)	28.42 (+.18)
PENTONVILLE +/- SD	9.86 (1.05)	26.00 (-.75)	24.48 (1.53)	46.44 (+1.3)
HIGHVIEW +/- SD	25.58 (-.36)	25.9 (-.76)	18.53 (+.62)	19.94 (-.34)

The logistic regression analysis of Sutton Coldfield classified only two wards as residuals, the Hill West ward in 1963 and the Boldmere West ward in 1970, both wards were, however, significant in the resurgence of Liberalism in the borough. Using the predictors from the best fitting model of the logistic regression of > LIBMEAN share of the vote, it was found that the Hill West ward had an above the mean percentage of both non-manual and junior non-manual residents, and Boldmere West an above the mean presence of junior non-manual residents. It remains to be seen if any of the constituencies to which these atypically performing local government electoral units belonged, also performed atypically at parliamentary elections.

At inner-London parliamentary elections 1959-1979, in constituencies contested by the Liberals the mean Liberal share of the vote was 12.3% and standard deviation 4.2. In the constituencies of interest to this study the Liberal share of the vote at the February 1974 General Election was 18.4 in Camden Hampstead, 18.3 in Holborn and St Pancras, 22.1 in Islington Central, and 19.5 in Islington South and Finsbury, all >1.5 standard deviations above the mean for the 1959-1979 period and >.9 standard deviation above the Liberal Party contested constituencies mean for February 1974.

At parliamentary elections in Birmingham constituencies 1959-1979 the Liberal mean share of the vote, in constituencies contested by the Liberals was 13.6% and a standard deviation 5.5. However, in the Ladywood Constituency the Liberal share of the vote was 23.7%, at the parliamentary by-election of 1969 the Liberals polled 54.3% and at the 1970 general election 35%, all well above the mean for the Liberal share of the vote in other Birmingham constituencies at the same elections.

### **10.7: Conclusion**

In this chapter census data and electoral data have been analysed in order to explore the relationships between the socio-economic/political/structural characteristics of a

municipal electoral unit and the voting behaviour therein. The aim has been to gain insights into the process, meaning and determinants of municipal voting behaviour and its relationship, if any, with party fortunes at the parliamentary level. A main plank of the analysis has been the issue of whether local electoral environment and context in any way influenced the prospects and performance of the Liberal Party at municipal elections and whether this in turn influenced class-party alignment at the parliamentary level in the same locations. In order to assess this, municipal electoral class-party alignment has been examined. Its trends, and the causes of these trends have been evidenced by use of inferential statistical techniques that have tested a battery of hypotheses.

These analyses of Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and inner-London have evidenced variability in the influence of individual socio-economic indicators upon party support at different types of elections. The influence of social class on party support has been shown to have varied between the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, between types of elections and between different authorities. It has been evidenced that the relationship between class and party at the municipal electoral level was complex and much more nuanced than a dichotomy between a pattern of alignment or one of dealignment would allow, and that class-party alignment was dependent to some extent upon electoral context, i.e. past party political control of a ward, and or, party political control of a council at the time of the election. Although the evidence is somewhat ambivalent in regard to trends in class-party alignment and support for the two-major parties at municipal elections it does not however support a clear cut case for class-party dealignment in the 1970s.

Class-party dealignment in relation to support for the Labour Party has been evidenced as emanating from indicators of household amenity, level of turnout and conditioned by the political context of type of election, past party political control of a ward and or control of the council. In the case of class-party dealignment and support for the Conservative Party

it has been evidenced to have been contingent upon the type of municipal election, political control of a ward and, or, council. Indeed, political context at municipal elections looms large in any explanation of Conservative Party class-party dealignment.

Political context has also been evidenced as setting the parameters of Liberal Party fortunes at the municipal level. Nevertheless, support for the Liberal Party has been clearly associated with housing amenity variables. Socio-economic environment and political context have been evidenced as having had significant influence upon the fortunes of the Liberal Party at these municipal elections. Indeed, at Birmingham municipal elections it has been shown that the Liberal Party were most likely to be relatively more successful in wards where past political control had been in the hands of the Labour Party, where turnout was low, where owner-occupation was low and where the percentage of households with substandard amenities was high.

Examination of the residuals, those cases that did not conform to the best fitting models of party support, has confirmed the significance of particular socio-economic/ political/ structural characteristics of a ward and support for the Liberal Party at municipal elections. It can be concluded that the evidence of this chapter has identified the existence of variability in voting behaviour at different types of municipal elections and that the sources of these variations lie in the prevailing socio-economic environment and political context that the act of voting at these municipal elections took place in.

Furthermore it has been shown that those wards found to be atypical in their municipal voting behaviour had above the mean measures of the socio-economic indicators found to be associated with enhanced Liberal Party electoral performance. These atypically performing wards were major components of the constituencies that made up Camden, were a major component of the Birmingham Ladywood Constituency, and were integral

parts of the constituencies of Islington, and the constituency of Sutton Coldfield.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that in all of these constituencies the Liberals, at a subsequent parliamentary election, achieved an above the mean share of the vote.

The inference of this evidence is that municipal electoral success, in part determined by local socio-economic environment and political context, provided the base for the establishment of core support for the Liberal party that provided the stepping-stone to above the mean success at parliamentary elections. What, unfortunately, has been prohibited by small sample size and inadequate models, has been a regression analysis of the determinants of Liberal Party support and the odds of an above the mean Liberal share of the vote in a constituency over the 1959-1979 period and subsequent comparison with the determinants of support in that constituency's coterminous local electoral units over the same period.

In the next chapter the quantitative evidence of chapters 4, 9 and 10, and the qualitative evidence of chapters 5-8 will be compared and contrasted and the substantive issues of this thesis, such as the nature, sources and causes of electoral dealignment at municipal and parliamentary election addressed.

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

#### **11.1 Introduction**

The aim of the thesis has been to examine the relationship between local government electoral behaviour and that at the parliamentary level in a period of political dealignment in Britain. In chapter 4 quantitative methods were used to assess the extent of any variation in local electoral behaviour within authorities, between authorities of the same type, and in contrast with parliamentary electoral behaviour in coterminous electoral units. The general hypothesis that there is no difference between local and parliamentary electoral behaviour was tested and orthodox explanations of the relationship between the two levels of electoral activity challenged. Indeed, it was evidenced that there was considerable variance in intra- and inter-authority voting behaviour and disparity between local and parliamentary voting behaviour in coterminous electoral units.

In chapters 5 to 8 qualitative methods were employed and it has been argued that disparities in electoral behaviour can, in part, be explained by the local social and political environment in which the act of voting takes place. It was also argued that local government electoral activity can shape subsequent parliamentary electoral activity and outcomes.

In chapters 9 and 10 we returned to the quantitative methods of analysis to test a number of hypotheses concerning the influence of a range of socio-economic and

political variables upon a party's level of support and the odds of a party winning a lower-tier electoral contest. Furthermore, we assessed whether local socio-economic environment and political context influenced the prospects and performance of the Liberal Party at municipal elections and if this in turn presaged success for the Liberal Party at subsequent parliamentary elections in these locations, thereby impacting on party alignment at the national level.

This chapter will comprise a comparative analysis of the quantitative and qualitative evidence of the thesis. In section 11.2 a review of the findings from chapters 4, 9 and 10 will be outlined. A synthesis of each case study's qualitative and quantitative evidence will follow and in a final section conclusions about the nature, sources, and causes of dealignment at these municipal elections and interconnection with parliamentary electoral dealignment will be presented.

### **11.2 Summary of quantitative evidence**

The expectation that local government voting behaviour would closely resemble parliamentary electoral behaviour was not borne out by the findings of chapter 4. The politicisation of municipal elections in both Birmingham and Inner-London over the 1959-1979 period has been evidenced. It has also been shown that irrespective of the differences in the timing of elections there was variance in the degree and incidence of partisan dealignment between municipal and parliamentary levels of voting. Desertion of the two major parties by the electorate has been shown to be period specific and no strong evidence of a trend in dealignment in the 1970s found. Trends in municipal and parliamentary electoral behaviour differed considerably.

The level of contestation by the Liberal Party at municipal elections in both inner-London and Birmingham 1959-1979 was characterised by a fluctuating ability to field candidates. It was also evidenced that the percentage Liberal share of the vote calculated over all wards, contested or not, masked not only the real extent of Liberal support in contested wards but also distorted any notion of the rate and pace voters in particular wards were entering or exiting the Liberal camp. At the borough level of aggregation, where differences tend to be smoothed out, it was shown that turnout in Liberal contested wards was consistently higher than the mean for all wards and, at Inner-London borough elections, and the mean turnout in non-marginal wards contested by the Liberals was almost a quarter higher than in non-marginal wards uncontested by the Liberals. Furthermore, it became evident that the patterns of turnout in the socio-economically very similar boroughs of Camden and Islington were considerably different.

The proposition that over time voting behaviour at local elections would closely resemble that in their coterminous parliamentary electoral units was not realised. Examination of the case study locations revealed clear disparities in trends of turnout, party support and net volatility between municipal and parliamentary electoral behaviour in coterminous electoral units. The evidence has shown that the electorate in inner-London and Birmingham at certain times and in particular wards concomitantly held contradictory municipal and parliamentary voting preferences. The context of an election was shown to be important to the calculus of voters when it came to deciding which party to vote for and thereby partisan dealignment was shown to have varied according to local electoral context.

In chapters 9 and 10 inferential statistical techniques were used to assess how far variation in party support could be explained by socio-economic / political/ structural factors peculiar to an electoral unit. When contrasted, the best fitting regression models of party support at different types of elections evidenced that the effect upon party support of individual socio-economic indicators varied. Furthermore, the effects of indicators of political context upon party support varied at different types of elections, as did the influence of social class and household amenity indicators. The regression analysis rejected the hypothesis that there was a significant weakening of class alignment with the two major parties at municipal elections in Birmingham and inner-London between the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, class-party alignment was shown to be much more nuanced at municipal elections and these differences in class- party alignment were shown to be in part determined by electoral context.

Logistic regression analysis demonstrated that support for the three parties at these municipal elections was conditioned by local political context. It has been shown that variance in voting behaviour at different types of municipal election can be explained by the prevailing socio-economic environment and political context in which the act of voting took place. An examination of the residuals from our best fitting models confirmed the presence of particular socio-economic/political structural characteristics that had been shown to be significant in predicting an above the mean share of the vote for the Liberal Party. These atypically performing wards were shown to be components of the case study constituencies and in these constituencies the Liberal Party subsequently achieved an above the mean share of the vote.

### **11.3: Birmingham qualitative and quantitative evidence**

It has been argued in chapter 5 that the revival of the Liberal Party at municipal elections and subsequent success at the parliamentary level in the Birmingham Ladywood Constituency can in part be explained by electoral discontent over housing issues, such as the conditions of housing and the levels of both rents and rates. The qualitative evidence has demonstrated that the housing policy implemented by the Labour Group resulted in a loss of support in these hitherto heartland wards and that the electoral vacuum was filled by the Liberal Party whose candidates campaigned upon a platform that specifically addressed the housing grievances of this inner-city electorate. Thus, the local socio-economic environment and political context of these wards has been revealed to have influenced municipal and parliamentary electoral outcomes. It has also been shown that at municipal elections across the wards of the Birmingham borough as a whole, the level of council rents and rates was a significant factor in the calculus of the voter. The qualitative evidence has proposed explanations for partisan and class dealignment at the municipal electoral level in terms of the electoral context in which the voter has cast his or her vote. We will now assess to what extent the quantitative findings from chapters 4, 9 and 10 substantiate the qualitative findings of the case study regarding electoral behaviour in the wards of Ladywood and in Birmingham in general.

The quantitative evidence of chapter 4 has illustrated the variance between voting behaviour at different types of elections. Measures of net volatility and partisan dealignment have substantiated the findings of the Ladywood case study of variance in the voting behaviour of traditional Labour supporters between lower-tier municipal and the parliamentary electoral levels. The 1960s decline in Labour Party support at Birmingham lower-tier municipal elections in its inner-city wards has been evidenced in the case study to have been recognised and explained by a variety of sources as the

product of discontent over housing conditions, housing policy and the level of rents and rates. The multivariate analysis of these Birmingham elections has evidenced the significance of class, socio-economic group and household amenities to the explanation of the level of Labour Party support and accords with existing orthodoxy that high levels of housing density and non-salariat variables have a strong positive effect upon Labour Party support. Indeed, in Birmingham, indicators of MANUAL, SOCIAL CLASS 4 and SOCIAL CLASS 6 had positive associations with Labour support at the parliamentary electoral level, and SOCIAL CLASS 4, MANUAL, SHARE INSIDE WC and the room density indicator RD.1-1.5 had positive associations with Labour support at the lower-tier elections (see Tables 43 and 45).

However, the multivariate regression analysis revealed that the indicator of the higher density of overcrowding of more than 1.5 persons per room,  $RD > 1.5$ , was clearly and strongly negatively associated with support for the Labour party at lower-tier Birmingham elections throughout the 1959-1979 period. Thus, for every percentage increase in  $RD > 1.5$  households in a ward, support for Labour diminished by 1.2% at lower-tier elections. In addition, the indicator SHARED DWELLING revealed an erosion of almost 1.9% in Labour support at Birmingham parliamentary elections for every percentage increase in households categorised as shared dwellings in the 1960s. Similarly, the indicator SOCIAL CLASS 5 evidenced a fall of 1.6% in Labour Party support at Birmingham parliamentary elections 1959-1979 for every percentage increase in social class 5 in a constituency, and a fall of 1.9% at lower-tier elections for every percentage increase of social class 5 in a ward in the 1960s. Clearly, the quantitative evidence from the regression analysis of the Birmingham data substantiates the qualitative evidence of the Ladywood case study in terms of the

effect of socio-economic environment upon voting behaviour. The quantitative analysis evidences an erosion of Labour Party support associated with that part of the city's working-class electorate who lived in the most overcrowded households, and or, multi-occupancy dwellings, all predominant characteristics of the wards of the Ladywood constituency.

The logistic regression analysis in chapter 10 evidenced cross-electoral level disparity in the influence of predictors upon the likelihood of a Labour Party win that accords with the case study evidence that has shown Labour to have maintained its parliamentary level support but lost it in heartland wards at the municipal level. As with the evidence from the multivariate regression analysis, the logistic regression analysis evidenced the nuances of Labour Party and class-party dealignment, and has shown SOCIAL CLASS 6 to be less robust in its association with Labour support at lower-tier Birmingham elections. Similarly, the logistic regression evidenced the importance of the household amenity indicator SHARE/LACK HOT WATER to the likelihood of a Labour Party victory and how those odds were reduced by 0.96 for every unit increase in this indicator, a reduction of around 4% in the odds and evidence of the importance of housing conditions to Labour's level of support at the lower-tier Birmingham elections. It was also evidenced by the logistic regression analysis that control of the council (either Labour or Conservative) had little or no effect upon the odds of a Labour win.

Labour's loss of support at the lower-tier electoral level has been shown by both the quantitative and qualitative evidence to be strongly associated with issues of housing. The case study evidence has argued that the Liberal revival in the inner-city wards

was on the back of electoral discontent over these issues and a product of a focussed campaign to address these electoral grievances. In hitherto derelict wards the Liberals displaced Labour as the champions of the housing cause and, in these heartland Labour wards, established a core support that, albeit temporarily, provided them with parliamentary electoral success. The regression analysis has shown that there was cross-electoral variability in the impact of socio-economic indicators and support for the Liberal Party in relation to what would be considered traditional Labour voters. Social class 4 at the parliamentary level throughout the 1959-1979 period, social classes 5 and 6 at upper-tier elections in the 1970s and council house tenants at the lower-tier throughout the 1959-1979 period have shown a positive association with support for the Liberal Party. Furthermore, the household amenity predictor SHARE/LACK HOT WATER has been shown to be positively associated with support for the Liberal Party at both tiers of municipal voting in Birmingham throughout the whole period.

In addition our logistic regression analysis has shown that the odds of a Liberal candidate achieving an above the mean share of the vote could be multiplied by 1.03 for every unit increase in the household amenity predictor SHARE/LACK HOT WATER and reduced by 4% for every unit increase in the predictor OWNER-OCCUPIER throughout the 1959-1979 period. Logistic regression has shown that a Liberal Party candidate was more likely to achieve an above the mean share of the vote at lower-tier ward competitions where owner-occupation was low, where the percentage of households with substandard amenities was high and where past political control of the ward had been in the hands of the Labour Party. The quantitative evidence clearly chimes with the qualitative evidence of the Ladywood

case study as far as the determinants of municipal electoral dealignment are concerned in relation to the Labour Party loss of support and the Liberal Party revival in the Ladywood constituency.

In the Ladywood case study it has been evidenced that the rise and decline in lower-tier electoral support for the Liberal Party in the inner-city wards appeared to mirror the rise and decline in the salience of housing issues to its electorate. The housing grievances of the electorate were gradually being remedied and the Labour Group had changed the focus of its housing policy and had 'kick-started' the city's municipal house building programme when it had regained council control in 1972. The number of grossly overcrowded and substandard dwellings had diminished over the 1960s as the electorate of these inner-city wards were re-housed or their properties modernised (see Tables 32,33 and 34). The electoral niche of the Liberals had lost its purchase and the party's grip on the inner-city electorate had thereby loosened. Clearly, the strong relationship between the indicator of gross overcrowding  $RD > 1.5$  was no longer acting in favour of Liberal Party support. Regression analysis has also evidenced a reduction in the strength of the positive relationship between the predictor SHARE/LACK HOT WATER and Liberal Party support at these lower-tier elections over the two decades. Furthermore, the positive association of 0.7 between SHARE/LACK HOT WATER and Liberal support at the lower-tier in the 1960s had fallen to 0.4 for the 1970s.

There is much congruence between the qualitative and quantitative evidence, thereby providing substantiation of the importance of socio-economic environment and political context to the revival of the Liberal Party at municipal elections in the wards

of the Ladywood constituency in the 1960s. In the case study it has been asserted that municipal electoral success was the foundation of a core Liberal support built upon local issues and translated into parliamentary success in 1969 for a Liberal Party candidate in the Ladywood constituency. To what extent these votes were cast in consideration of local issues was unclear but our quantitative evidence has added weight to the argument that local context had an influence upon national level electoral behaviour in the constituency.

Multivariate regression analysis of parliamentary elections in the constituencies of Birmingham 1959-1979 has evidenced a strong negative relationship between SOCIAL CLASS 5 and support for the Labour Party and has shown that for every percentage increase in this indicator Labour support at parliamentary election fell by 1.6% (see Table 43). The analysis also evidenced an erosion of Labour's parliamentary support of 1.9% for every unit increase in SHARED DWELLING, and a negative relationship with TURNOUT. It has also been shown that there was a strong positive relationship between SOCIAL CLASS 4 and support for the Liberal Party at these parliamentary elections (Table 43) and a positive association between COUNCIL RENTED and parliamentary level Liberal support (Table 46). All of these indicators have been shown in the case study to characterise the working-class electorate of the wards that made up the Ladywood constituency. However, more weight was added to the argument for the influence of electoral contextuality upon parliamentary voting behaviour by the examination of the residuals from the logistic regression analysis.

All but one of the wards that comprised the Ladywood constituency 1959-1973 were identified as atypical in their voting behaviour at lower-tier elections in relation to the odds of a Labour Party win. More importantly, it was shown that, not only were measures of a number of indicators very different in these cases (erstwhile Labour heartland wards of Ladywood) from their counterpart indicators in cases that had conformed to the Labour win logistic regression model, but they were also measures of predictors that had been shown to be associated with an above the mean share of the vote for Liberal Party candidates (Table 65). However indirectly, the convergence of these strands of quantitative and qualitative evidence reinforces the argument for the influence of contextuality upon parliamentary voting behaviour in the Ladywood constituency.

The focus of chapter 5 was predominantly upon the Labour and Liberal parties, nonetheless the importance of electoral context in relation to Conservative Party support in terms of the rate level and protest votes for Liberal candidates in suburban wards was signalled. For example, at four lower-tier by-elections in 1961 the Liberals pushed Labour into third place in suburban wards, however, Liberal intervention had little or no effect upon the historic level of Labour support in these wards but in every case seriously eroded the Conservative majority. Multivariate regression analysis has corroborated this dealignment in Conservative support in suburban wards and evidenced cross-electoral level variability in the association between Conservative Party support and the indicator JUNIOR NON-MANUAL. It has been shown to be much more strongly positively associated with support for the party at the upper-tier than at the lower-tier elections, where a vote could register dissatisfaction with decisions over rate and rent levels and costly social housing projects (Table 43). The

indicator OWNER-OCCUPIER also had a much stronger association with support for Conservative candidates at the parliamentary level than at the municipal level in the 1970s (Table 44). The results of our logistic regression analysis gave support to the qualitative evidence of chapter 5 concerning a class-party realignment in municipal Conservative support in the 1970s. The odds of a Conservative candidate winning were shown to have improved at both lower and upper-tier Birmingham elections in the 1970s.

The relationship between local and national elections was explored further in chapter 6, the case study that looked at the revival of the Liberals in the Conservative dominated borough of Sutton Coldfield. The qualitative evidence has described a dramatic change in party alignment among the electorate at borough council elections in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A major shift in electoral support away from Independent candidates, significant shifts from the Conservative and Labour parties to positions of temporary support for the Liberals, permanent support for the Liberals and, or, abstention, have been evidenced. It has been argued that alignment between class and party was significantly weakened by contentious local issues and by Liberal intervention and campaign policies pitched at the disparate grievances of the Sutton electorate. The electorate have been shown to have held contradictory voting preferences at local and parliamentary level elections and it has been argued that at council elections the disaffected found either a temporary safe-haven for a protest vote, or indeed, a permanent home in the Liberal camp, so translating into the Liberal Party displacing Labour and contending for political power with the Conservatives at the parliamentary as well as the municipal level. It was also argued in the case study that there was a realignment with the Conservative party at the local elections in the

aftermath of the merger of Sutton Coldfield with Birmingham, as a new variable, the possibility of Labour control of Birmingham council, entered the electoral calculus of the former protest voting Conservative.

The quantitative evidence of chapter 4 has supported the above findings. Indicators of electoral behaviour in the coterminous local electoral wards and parliamentary constituency of Sutton Coldfield revealed significant variance between the two types of elections (see Figures 33-36). Net volatility was shown to be at a much higher level at council elections than at parliamentary elections with periodic shifts in the distribution of party support at the municipal level that did not reflect the general pattern of partisan alignment at the parliamentary level. Support for the Labour Party was shown to be much stronger at the parliamentary level than the municipal, whereas the reverse was true for the Liberals. In contrast, support for the Conservative Party was reasonably constant at the parliamentary level, whereas its municipal electoral support subject to periodic shifts, as comparison of the standard deviation in Conservative support at the two levels evidenced. Variance in turnout levels were also shown between the borough's wards at individual council elections, as was great variance in each individual ward's level of turnout over a series of elections.

Particular wards at particular times were shown to fluctuate dramatically from the all ward mean turnout. The quantitative evidence substantiated that of the case study, and added weight to the case for contextual voting at local elections in Sutton Coldfield in contradistinction to the constituency's parliamentary voting behaviour.

Multivariate regression analysis of the Sutton Coldfield data excluded the Labour Party and was restricted to council elections because of problems with sample size.

Nevertheless, the results were congruent with those of the case study. The best fitting regression model of Conservative Party support evidenced a positive association with both main variables of tenure, OWNER-OCCUPIER and COUNCIL RENTED, and with the variable MAJORITY, reflecting the dominance of the party at these council elections and the meagre support for the Labour Party evidenced in the case study.

The best fitting model of Liberal Party support at these council elections confirmed the case study findings of class-party dealignment among what would be considered the natural constituency of the Conservative Party. There was considerable class-party dealignment among the socio-economic group JUNIOR NON-MANUAL evidenced by the variable's positive relationship with support for the Liberal Party at council elections. Indeed, for every percentage increase in JUNIOR NON-MANUAL in the wards of this prosperous middle-class borough, Liberal Party support was shown to have increased by 1.2%. The case study evidence of a significant protest vote among Conservative voters at council elections in respect of dissatisfaction over rates, social housing, redevelopment and a variety of local issues in favour of the Liberals was also substantiated by the logistic regression analysis of the categorical variable CONWIN/CONLOSE which showed that the odds of the Conservative Party winning a ward council election were reduced by 0.72 for every unit increase in JUNIOR NON-MANUAL in a ward (see Figure 55).

However, as the case study evidence has shown the Liberal electoral appeal was not only pitched at the dissatisfied rate-paying owner-occupier but also towards the council tenant and those in the private rental sector. Our multivariate regression analysis has evidenced a negative association between the socio-economic group MANUAL and support for the Conservative Party, and a positive association between

the household amenity indicator SHARE/LACK BATH and the Liberal Party. Furthermore, the case study has evidenced tactical voting for Liberal candidates, voter-apathy, low-turnout and general disaffection among Labour supporters over rents and housing conditions. Clearly, as shown in the case study, despite the positive association between council house tenancy and Conservative Party support shown by our regression analyses (Figures 45 and 55) there was significant class-party dealignment among Labour supporters at these lower-tier elections that favoured the Liberal Party.

The assertions in the case study of an electoral realignment by the Sutton Coldfield electorate in the wake of local government reorganisation and the merger of the borough within Birmingham has been substantiated by the quantitative evidence. The coefficient for the variable NON-MANUAL in our logistic regression analysis of CONWIN/CONLOSE at the Birmingham District Council elections (includes Sutton Coldfield) 1973-1979, evidenced a class-party realignment in Conservative Party support (Table 54). Furthermore, the coefficient for the tenure category OWNER-OCCUPIER at these same elections registered a negative association with support for the Liberal Party (Table 60).

Clearly, there is much concordance between the qualitative and quantitative evidences in both case study locations of Birmingham. In the section below we will now examine if corroboration exists between the qualitative and quantitative approaches in each of the London case studies.

#### **11.4: Inner-London qualitative and quantitative evidence**

The case study of Islington argued that in this predominantly working class and staunchly Labour borough, class and partisan alignment were significantly weakened

at the municipal electoral level by contentious local issues of housing. The quantitative analysis of chapter 4 has evidenced marked differences in the trends of the share of the vote for the Labour Party between parliamentary elections in the constituencies of Islington and lower-tier municipal elections in coterminous electoral units. Indeed, the stability of Labour's parliamentary level support and its instability at the lower-tier level were evidenced by comparison of the standard deviation in vote share over the period between each electoral level (Table 29). This disparity in electoral behaviour was also shown to characterise Conservative Party support at the same elections over the same period. Similarly, comparisons between trends in turnout in the Islington East, Islington North and the Islington South West constituencies with trends in turnout at their coterminous ward borough elections revealed disparities in electoral behaviour.

It is clear that class and partisan alignment changed in Islington at the lower-tier level. Furthermore, at the parliamentary level by the early 1980s an electoral realignment had occurred that contrasted starkly with the solid two-party duopoly of the post-war decades and in the case study this transformation has been ascribed in part to local electoral issues and behaviour. Electoral discontent in Islington over housing issues, it was argued, gave rise to the Labour left in the 1970s, provided the Liberals a foothold in the borough, and created the circumstances for an alliance between moderate Labour and the Liberals that transformed the parliamentary level electoral alignment in the constituencies of the borough.

Multivariate regression analysis has evidenced solid support between social classes 4 and 5 for the Labour Party at the parliamentary level 1959-1979 (Table 48), but negative associations between social class 4 at lower-tier and GLC elections in the

1970s (Table 50). Logistic regression analysis of the odds of a Labour candidate winning a municipal election seemed to contradict this evidence of dealignment at the municipal level as it showed the indicator COUN-RENT to be quite stable at different levels of municipal voting and between the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. However, the qualitative evidence of the case study has shown that the vast majority of residents in the borough, some 67%, had lived in multi-occupancy private rental dwellings, 60% without piped hot water and 45% without a fixed bath. In contrast, only around 20% of residents lived in local authority rented accommodation. As the case study has shown there was much electoral discontent over high rents in the private rental sector and the dearth of social housing provision, there was low turnout at borough elections, and loss of Labour support in the areas of worst housing conditions. Indeed, Labour rebels had contested as Independent Labour candidates, campaigned on a platform that criticised the Labour Group's housing policy and by 1962 had a significant following in a number of wards. The quantitative analysis has given support to the significance of the private rental sector in Labour's loss of support with the logistic regression evidencing a negative relationship between the tenure category FURNISHED and the odds of Labour winning a ward contest in the 1960s (Table 55).

Multivariate regression analysis and logistic regression analysis of these lower-tier London borough elections has evidenced strong negative associations between support for the Conservative Party, or the odds of a Conservative candidate winning a ward contest, and the predictors, SOCIAL CLASS 4, SOCIAL CLASS 6, RD>1-1.5, COUNCIL-RENTED, SHARE/LACK BATH, and MANUAL (Tables 47,48 and 55). Labour's loss of support among those living in the worst of housing conditions was clearly not in the direction of the Conservative camp and, thereby, this quantitative

evidence lends support to the case study evidence of loss of Labour support to independent Labour left and Liberal candidates in Islington. Indeed, the positive association between TURNOUT and the odds of a Labour Party candidate winning a ward contest in the 1960s was transformed into a negative association in the 1970s as the left's grip on the borough increased (Table 55).

The significance of household amenity variables in relation to Labour Party support at all levels of electoral activity in Islington has been established by the quantitative analysis and adds support to the case study finding of the centrality of housing issues to electoral outcomes in the borough. At lower-tier and parliamentary elections 1959-1979 the odds of a Labour candidate win could be multiplied by 1.3 and 1.9 respectively for every unit increase in the overcrowded category  $RD > 1-1.5$ , and in the 1960s by 1.3 for  $RD > 1.5$ . The household amenity predictors SHARE/LACK HOT WATER, NO INSIDE WC, and SHARE/LACK BATH were positively associated with the odds of a Labour candidate victory. Therein, however, lay Labour's vulnerability. As has been evidenced in the case study the cost of the Islington Labour group's failure to address these significant issues was an eventual erosion of support to Labour left candidates and in some wards to the Liberals.

Indeed, the indicators RENTED FURNISHED and TURNOUT were both positively associated with Liberal Party support at these lower-tier elections when past political control of a ward was in the hands of the Labour party (Table 52). The odds of a Liberal candidate achieving an above the mean share of the vote at these lower-tier elections was negatively associated with the predictor MAJORITY, evidence that the level of Liberal support was generally increased the more marginal the ward contest

between the two major parties. The logistic regression analysis also evidenced the odds of an above the mean share for a Liberal Party candidate could be multiplied by 1.2 for every unit increase in the household amenity predictor SHARE/LACK HOT WATER, and multiplied by 1.2 for every unit increase in SOCIAL CLASS 4. The quantitative evidence corroborates the findings of the case study of support for the Liberals in the areas of worst housing, where Labour support was declining and majorities much reduced.

The case study evidence has shown that the sources of Liberal Party support in Islington were among those traditionally linked to both of the major parties. It has been shown that in the main the disaffected Labour supporter turned to the Independent Labour candidate whose electoral platform criticised the Labour Group's housing record and advocated a vast increase in social housing provision. Although the Liberals especially in the wards where the issues of housing and race were conflated by the maverick Liberal candidate Lomas gained some support from the disaffected Labour voters, the party had also pitched their electoral appeal in the borough at the ratepayer. The Liberal's had campaigned on reform of the rating system and the end to the blanket subsidy of council rents. As shown in the case study the rewards for the Liberals were a foothold in two of the borough's three constituencies and at the 1974 borough elections second place in three wards with the Conservative candidates pushed into third place. Corroborative evidence of this leakage of Conservative support has been provided by the quantitative analysis. The variability between parliamentary electoral support and that at the municipal level has been outlined above. Evidence of class-party dealignment at lower-tier elections was provided by the multivariate regression analysis that has shown a much weaker

association between the socio-economic group indicators NON-MANUAL and JUNIOR NON-MANUAL and support for the Conservative Party at the lower-tier electoral level than at the upper-tier electoral level. Indeed, the logistic regression analysis of the odds of a Conservative win at these lower-tier elections 1959-1979 show a very small negative coefficient evidencing an erosion in the odds in relation to SOCIAL CLASS1. Yet at the upper-tier elections over the same period the odds could be multiplied by 1.7 for every unit increase in SOCIAL CLASS 1, (Table 56), and at the parliamentary level both NON-MANUAL and JUNIOR NON-MANUAL were solidly aligned with support for the Conservative Party (Table 49). The quantitative evidence accords with that of the case study of the Liberals in the 1970s attracting some former Conservative voters and moderate Labour voters through an electoral campaign that criticised the profligate spending on housing of the Labour left controlled council, called for the end of subsidised rents and for the sale of council houses at a time of rampant inflation.

The revival of the Liberals in Islington has been shown to be quite modest and the incidence of atypical voting behaviour less prevalent than in the wards of the Birmingham Ladywood Constituency. Nevertheless, the logistic regression analysis of the odds of a Labour candidate, or a Conservative candidate, winning a lower-tier ward contest revealed three atypically performing wards as residuals. The Highview, Bunhill, and Pentonville wards identified as atypical in their voting behaviour in respect of the major parties were the footholds gained by the Liberals in two of the three constituencies of the borough. Logistic regression analysis has shown that each had characteristics associated with an above the mean share in a Liberal vote. The quantitative evidence is convergent with that of the case study that this foothold of

core support, built upon local issues, in an alliance with the moderate Labour councillors was the basis of much enhanced subsequent local and parliamentary success in Islington for the Liberals. Indeed at the 1982 borough election the Liberals had taken 22.4% of the whole borough vote, and at the 1983 general election in the Islington North Constituency the SDP had taken 22.4% of the vote, and in the Islington South and Finsbury Constituency 35.3% of the vote.

The case study of Camden has evidenced a more widespread Liberal revival than that in Islington where the malcontent Labour voter had the alternative from the early 1960s of Independent Labour candidates to express disapproval over much the same housing problems as in Camden. A difference that was reflected in the quantitative analysis that evidenced an above the borough mean turnout in Liberal contested Camden wards, whereas in contrast, very little difference between Islington's mean turnout and turnout in Islington wards contested by Liberal candidates.

It was shown in the case study that even before their reorganisation into the new London Borough of Camden, the electorates of the three metropolitan boroughs of Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras had voted quite differently at municipal elections from how they had at the parliamentary level. Declining support for the Labour Party in its heartland wards of these metropolitan boroughs and the impending amalgamation, it was argued, did not auger well for the party's electoral prospects. Control of St Pancras council had alternated between the two major parties whilst Hampstead and Holborn councils had been dominated by the Conservatives. In the areas of worst housing conditions of Hampstead and Holborn, Labour were losing support and the case study has argued that such pragmatic electoral considerations had

shaped Labour's housing policy for fear of any adverse impact upon the level of rates. The dire housing conditions of the three metropolitan boroughs and their councils' inadequate social housing provision has been evidenced in the case study, as has the continuation of this policy by the Labour Group that controlled the new Camden borough. Housing issues, it has been argued, were central to the explanation of the loss of Labour control of the council in 1968 and its recapture in a Labour landslide at the 1971 borough elections after three years of Conservative council retrenchment. Housing issues have been shown to be central to the 1970s rise of the left in Camden and the subsequent migration of moderate Labour councillors to contest for power in alliance with the Liberals of Camden. In short it has been argued that the local socio-economic and political milieu shaped municipal electoral outcomes and impacted upon electoral alignment at the parliamentary level in coterminous electoral units.

The quantitative analysis of chapter 4 has evidenced the disparity between municipal and parliamentary electoral behaviour in Camden and its former metropolitan boroughs. Multivariate regression analysis has evidenced the solid support of social classes 4 and 5 for the Labour Party at the parliamentary level and the contrasting negative association between social class 4 and the party at lower-tier and GLC elections in the 1970s. Furthermore, the logistic regression analysis has shown a negative relationship between the tenure category FURNISHED and the odds of a Labour Party candidate winning a ward contest in the 1960s (Tables 48 and 55). The multivariate and logistic regression analyses have evidenced strong negative associations between support for the Conservative Party, or the odds that a Conservative candidate would win a ward contest, and the predictors, SOCIAL

CLASS 4, SOCIAL CLASS 6, RD>1-1.5, COUNCIL RENTED, SHARE/LACK BATH and MANUAL (Tables 48,49 and 56). Labour's loss of electoral support among those living in the worst of housing conditions is not indicated as being towards the Conservative Party. However, unlike Islington and Birmingham there was no organised and consistent challenge from rebel or Independent Labour candidates at lower-tier elections in Camden or its pre-1964 metropolitan borough constituents. Support for the Labour Party had been declining in the Hampstead Metropolitan Borough at lower-tier elections from the mid-1950s, and as the quantitative evidence shows there was increased volatility in the distribution of the vote at successive borough elections in Hampstead's wards from 1959 (Figure 32). Over the 1950s the Liberals had gained an increasing share of the borough vote and at the 1962 borough election had taken 29.6% of the whole borough vote along with three seats in the Town ward that had been in the hands of the Conservatives since 1922. Labour had been pushed into third place by the Liberals in three wards, where the Liberals had benefited from a swing to them from the Conservative. Critically for Labour its support had fallen in four of Hampstead's wards and ominously, support had fallen quite dramatically in the West End ward, one the areas of worst housing conditions in west Hampstead. The quantitative evidence supports the case study evidence of partisan dealignment, of an erosion of Labour support, and indeed Conservative support in the wards of Hampstead. Nevertheless, the case study has argued that the catalyst of this class-party dealignment in Hampstead and Camden in general had its origins in electoral discontent over housing issues and needs to be supported by the quantitative evidence.

The quantitative analysis has evidenced cross-electoral level disparity in the strength of association between the socio-economic group NON-MANUAL and support for the Conservative Party at inner-London elections (Table 48). This variance in electoral behaviour was also revealed when the standard deviations of Conservative Party share of the vote at lower-tier and parliamentary elections in coterminous electoral units of Camden were contrasted (Table 29). Conservative support at lower-tier elections was much more volatile in the Holborn St Pancras South, and the St Pancras North constituencies than at the parliamentary level and when contrasted with the Hampstead constituency it appears that through the 1960s Conservative lower-tier support was much more prone to attrition in these two constituencies than the latter. The case study has shown that the Conservatives dominated both municipal and parliamentary elections in Hampstead and that the two major parties had mixed electoral fortunes in St Pancras MB and Holborn MB. In St Pancras MB council control had alternated between the Labour and Conservative groups but the St Pancras North constituency had returned a Labour candidate at general elections 1945-1970, and the Holborn MB council was dominated by the Conservatives but the Holborn and St Pancras South constituency had returned a Labour MP until 1964. In the early 1960s the electorates, a proportion of which were already quite fluid in their party attachments, were given an alternative conduit to express dissatisfaction at the local electoral level with the intervention of Liberal candidates.

The case study has shown that the Liberal Party's electoral appeal in the London Borough of Camden was pitched at the disillusioned voter from both major parties. The rate payer in general and, in particular what was then termed the 'new man', the upwardly mobile technically skilled young worker. Liberal campaign rhetoric

criticised housing conditions but saw the solution in reform of the rating system and a fair rent scheme rather than a blanket subsidy of council tenants. Defence of the ratepayer's interests was at the heart of the Liberal electoral message. Compulsory purchase of property for modernisation or redevelopment and increased social housing provision were considered profligate policies that increased the burden upon the home owning ratepayer and tenants in the private rental sector via increased rate levy upon landlords. The housing policy of the Liberal Party was hardly distinguishable from that of the Conservatives, other than the Liberals' aim to achieve parity between costs of private renting and mortgage repayment in order to make homes more affordable.

The quantitative analysis lends support to the qualitative and evidences a much weaker association between support for the Conservative Party and the socio-economic groups NON-MANUAL and Junior NON-MANUAL at lower-tier elections (Table 49). In the same table it is also evidenced that there was a negative association between SOCIAL CLASS 2/3N, made up of skilled non-manual workers, and support for the Conservative Party at lower-tier elections in the 1960s, and an even stronger negative association at the parliamentary level in the 1970s. Thus for every percentage increase in SOCIAL CLASS 2/3N in a ward Conservative Party support was diminished by 0.5% at lower-tier elections in the 1960s, and by 1.7% at the parliamentary level for every percentage increase in a constituency. The direction of this leakage in Conservative Party support at the parliamentary level in the 1960s was evidenced by a positive relationship between the variable NON-MANUAL and support for the Liberal Party (Table 51). Logistic regression analysis of the odds of a Conservative candidate winning a lower-tier election 1959-1979 revealed a small

negative coefficient and erosion of support among SOCILA CLASS 1. Yet at the upper-tier the odds of a Conservative winning could be multiplied by 1.7 for every unit increase in SOCIAL CLASS 1 in a division (Table 56), and at the parliamentary level NON-MANUAL and JUNIOR NON-MANUAL were solidly aligned with the party (Table 49). However, the water was rather muddied by the negative associations between JUNIOR-NON MANUAL and Liberal Party support at lower-tier elections in Tables 48 and 51. Nevertheless, the weight of the qualitative and quantitative evidence points towards class-party dealignment among Conservative Party supporters at lower-tier elections and the significance in electoral context in the calculus of these voters. When considered in the light of the qualitative evidence, the quantitative evidence adds weight to the argument that much of this support went to Liberal candidates, and was motivated by discontent over local issues of rates, rents and housing policy.

The significance of housing amenity variables in relation to Labour Party support at all levels of electoral activity in inner-London has been established above and Labour's loss of support in Camden, as in Islington, can in part be explained by the failure of the Labour Group to adequately address housing issues. The revival of the Liberals in Camden at the lower-tier level was based upon a small core of support built upon and bolstered by intermittently significant levels of class-party dealignment from the two major parties. Nevertheless, this transient support built upon local issues and contingent upon local political context was sufficient even at its nadirs to carry the party through to the more conducive electoral environment of the late 1970s and early 1980s and an alliance with Labour moderates. Indeed, at the 1982 borough elections the Liberal Party had contested every Camden seat and had taken 25% of the

whole borough vote, and at the 1983 general election Liberal candidates in the Holborn and St Pancras Constituency, and the Hampstead and Highgate Constituency had taken 21.4% and 24.8% of the vote respectively.

The logistic regression analysis of the categorical variables CONWIN/CONLOSE and LABWIN/LABLOSE at lower-tier inner-London elections identified eight Camden wards as residuals. The electoral behaviour in four of these was atypical in relation to the Conservative Party and four in relation to the Labour Party thereby adding to the evidence of dealignment at these elections affecting both major parties. All eight wards exhibited characteristics associated with an above the mean share of the vote for a Liberal candidate at a lower-tier inner-London election (Table 66). The quantitative evidence is convergent with the qualitative of the case study that has argued that the foothold of core support built upon local electoral issues at municipal elections was the basis of much enhance subsequent local and parliamentary success for the Liberals in Camden.

### **11.5 :Conclusion**

The melding of the qualitative and quantitative evidence of the thesis has strengthened the case against the proposition that municipal elections are purely a form of national referendum. Corroborative evidence has confirmed that the dynamics of municipal electoral behaviour in the four case study locations were conditioned by the socio-economic and political milieu in which the act of voting took place. Furthermore, the impact of municipal politics and voting behaviour upon subsequent parliamentary level politics and electoral behaviour in all four case study locations has been attested by convergent qualitative and quantitative evidence. Indeed, congruent quantitative and qualitative evidence has shown how local socio-economic environment and

political context influenced the prospects and performance of the Liberal Party at municipal elections and provided a stepping-stone to parliamentary level electoral success in these case study locations and thereby impacted upon class-party alignment and partisan alignment at the national electoral level.

Trends in class-party/partisan alignment at the local electoral level in these case study locations have been shown to differ considerably from trends in alignment at parliamentary elections in coterminous electoral units over the same period. These trends have also been shown to differ between local authorities and within local authorities. The evidence has attested that at certain times a proportion of the electorates of our case study locations held contradictory municipal and parliamentary electoral preferences and that electoral context influenced the calculus of the voter. In all four case studies the significance of class, socio-economic group, tenure and household amenities to the explanation of the level of Labour Party support at both municipal and parliamentary elections has been attested. The Labour Party's loss of electoral support at lower-tier elections in these locations, as that of the Conservative Party, has been strongly associated with housing issues. However, the extent, rate and direction of Labour's loss of support was also shown to have been conditioned by idiosyncratic factors that defy quantitative analysis. Electoral considerations were shown to have shaped the housing policies of the council Labour groups in Birmingham, Islington and Camden. Local party organisational structure and the decision making process of each Labour council group, the level of influence of wider party units, and the influence and following of particular activists and personalities have been shown to have determined the parameters of the electoral opportunity for the Liberal Party at these municipal elections. In turn the autonomous nature of

Liberal Party constituency organisations in each of our four case study locations, the role of particular activists and personalities in shaping electoral strategy and campaign policy emphasis, rational decisions by parts of the electorate to lodge protest votes and to vote tactically have all played a part in the impact of Liberal intervention in these locations.

The combined evidence has rejected the view that lower-tier Birmingham and inner-London elections can be characterised by a linear trend in class-party dealignment in the 1970s. Changes in class-party alignment have been shown to be fluctuating and much more nuanced than a simple dichotomy between manual and non-manual can reveal. These changes in class-alignment have been clearly associated with local conflict over levels of council rents, rates and social housing provision.

Local electoral behaviour in the case study locations was influenced by a multiplicity of factors originating both locally and nationally. However, the most significant national political issue that affected the most elemental need of the voter, that of housing, was mediated through the prism of local electoral context and its impact shaped municipal electoral alignment which in turn made a contribution to the shape of parliamentary electoral alignment in these locations. In the final chapter the findings of the thesis will be considered in the light of existing explanations for municipal electoral behaviour and its relationship with electoral behaviour at the parliamentary level.

## **CHAPTER 12**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **12.1:Introduction**

At the heart of this thesis is the conviction that the study of voting needs a broader vision. The aim has been to gain a greater insight into local electoral behaviour in a period of political dealignment at the parliamentary level. In order to achieve this it was necessary to use a multi-disciplinary approach to the research. It was, however, undertaken on the premise that the methods of political science and those of political history each only offer a partial view of complex social behaviour and that their melding would widen the research scope and bring into view factors which otherwise remained obscured. The prescriptive positivist and the implacable idealist may consider the multi-theoretical as a Procrustean enterprise that forces the incommensurable into some congruence. It is the hope of the author that this thesis and its conclusions outlined below will go some way to counter these views and illustrate the utility of the multi-disciplinary approach in producing convergent lines of evidence that increase the scope of our knowledge. The integration of evidence from the different modes of analysis used in the thesis has enabled us not only to cross-check for convergent evidence of the influence of a variety of contextual factors from both quantitative and qualitative sources but also to synthesise more nuanced explanations of local electoral behaviour.

In the sections that follow, the findings of the thesis will be reviewed in the context of existing literature on the study of local elections, the connection between such

elections and parliamentary electoral behaviour, the wider debate of dealignment, the generalisability of the findings, and future research.

### **12.2: Not so irrelevant elections**

The prevailing orthodoxy is that national considerations are the major, if not sole, contributory factor to the calculus of the voter at municipal elections and hence arbiter of party fortunes at the local electoral level (see Butler and Stokes 1975, Fletcher 1967, Green 1972, Gyford 1984, Miller 1988). These 'annual general elections' in Newton's view 'tell us practically nothing about the preferences and attitudes of citizens to local issues and events ... [and] neither turnout nor voting patterns ... are associated with any local factors' (Newton 1976: 13-17). There is then, according to this view, no explanatory role for local factors in municipal and parliamentary electoral behaviour and thereby no contextual influence upon partisan alignment or class-party alignment at the local and the parliamentary electoral levels in the 1959-1979 period.

Studies of more recent electoral behaviour have nevertheless shown that a proportion of the electorate hold contradictory local and national voting preferences at one and the same time and that there is significant variation in party performance both between and within local authorities (see Rallings and Thrasher 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1997, 1999; Miller 1988, 1990, Waller 1979, Widdecombe Report 1986). The findings of this study accord with these most recent studies. Measures of partisan dealignment, net volatility, and turnout at local and parliamentary elections in Birmingham and inner-London have evidenced significant variance in electoral behaviour at different types of elections within an authority, between authorities of

the same type, and between trends in municipal and parliamentary voting behaviour in coterminous electoral units in the 1959-1979 period. The evidence has supported the proposition that a proportion of the electorate in Birmingham and inner-London in the 1959-1979 period at certain times and in particular places concomitantly held contradictory voting preferences at local and national elections.

Nevertheless, the sources of these variations in municipal voting behaviour needed to be identified and evidenced as emanating from the context in which the act of voting took place. Newton has argued that, turnout and voting behaviour at municipal elections have no connection with local issues and events, and do not reflect attitudes and preferences conditioned by contextuality. In contrast there is considerable evidence that the behaviour of local government voters is affected by the activity of local parties (Fletcher 1967, Hill 1967, Gregory 1969, Bochel and Denver 1971, 1972, Bruce and Lee 1972, Pimlott 1973, Dyer and Jordan 1985, Gibson and Stewart 1992). Furthermore, studies employing, survey data, aggregate voting data, and census data have revealed much about the dynamics of local electoral behaviour and its associations with diverse socio-economic and political variables. Indeed, social class and the socio-economic character of a ward have been shown to be of primary importance in any explanation of the variance in ward level local electoral behaviour (Rowley 1971, Davies and Newton 1974, Miller 1978, 1979, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, Warde 1988). Local electoral studies have established significant associations between contextual factors and voting behaviour in relation to the two major parties at municipal elections. Nevertheless, the dynamics of Liberal Party support at these elections have remained enigmatic (Dunleavy 1990, Johnson and Pattie 1998, Laver 1984, Dorling *et al* 1998), as have wider explanations of the statistical associations

between municipal voting in general and a raft of socio-economic and political variables. The how and why of these associations has remained largely unanswered.

The qualitative evidence of the case studies has aspired to give account of the process, meaning and context of some of the determinants of local electoral behaviour. It has evidenced how institutional features, such as the decision making process of council policy by a Labour Party group and that group's relationship with wider party influences can differ from one location to another and thereby shape the climate of local politics and the possibilities for third party intervention. The evidence has also shown how the autonomous organisational structure of the Liberal Party also shaped the local electoral climate. The free-booting political style, candidate personality, personal following, electoral strategies and tactics of Wallace Lawler in Ladywood, of Ken Hovers in Sutton Coldfield and of Ken Lomas in Islington are all contributory factors to the political context in which these elections took place. So too was the iron-grip of Harry Watton over the Birmingham Labour group's housing policy and the consequent electoral vacuum it created in the inner-city wards for fruitful Liberal intervention. The qualitative evidence has shown in all case study locations that the parameters of locally determined Liberal electoral appeals were facilitated and constrained by the political space afforded to them by the major parties, and in the case of Sutton Coldfield in some wards firmly established independent candidates. In addition, structural change such as the reorganisation of London local government and the merger of Sutton Coldfield into the city of Birmingham have exemplified the impact of municipal reform upon patterns of party support. The reorganisation of London's local government has been shown to have impacted upon the policy calculus of the Camden Labour group. The reorganisation of Birmingham to have

impacted upon the electoral calculus of the Sutton Coldfield Conservative voter in relation to protest votes for the Liberals as the possibility of coming under Labour council control increased. Again in respect of Sutton Coldfield the spatial distribution of Labour support has been shown to have induced not only voter apathy and abstention among its traditional supporters but also tactical voting. Clearly, the thesis has evidenced contextual influences that are not conducive to quantitative analysis but nevertheless impact upon voting behaviour.

The synthesis of the results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses has substantially strengthened the case against the proposition that municipal elections are purely a form of national referendum and evidence that the dynamics of municipal electoral behaviour are conditioned by the socio-economic and political and structural context in which the act of voting takes place. Furthermore, that municipal politics and voting behaviour impact upon parliamentary electoral behaviour and outcomes. Indeed, it became clear that the local socio-economic, political and structural context influenced the prospects and performance of the Liberal Party at municipal elections. Indeed, it has been evidenced that it was on the back of local issues that the Liberal Party established a core support in formerly derelict constituencies that subsequently provided the springboard for parliamentary level electoral success, either in its own right or as part of the SDP, and thereby impacted upon class-party and partisan alignment at the national electoral level.

### **12.3: Partisan and class- party alignment**

Comparison of trends in partisan alignment at Birmingham and inner-London municipal elections with the orthodox view of partisan alignment at British parliamentary elections in the 1959-1979 period reveal a distinct disparity with

accepted views of electoral behaviour. There is no dispute among political scientists that at parliamentary elections party attachments declined in the 1970s and that the 1960s was a period of partisan alignment (Sarlvik and Crewe 1983, Heath et al 1985, Denver 1994, Farrell *et al.*, 1995). However, the analysis of Birmingham and inner-London local electoral data presented a rather different picture. Except for period specific elections the two-party grip over the electorate at the lower-tier Birmingham elections remained firm and actually increased in the 1970s. In inner-London electoral behaviour was much more volatile at the borough electoral level in the 1960s than at the parliamentary level, and in the 1970s the reverse was true (see Chapter 4). Clearly, the electoral behaviour of a significant proportion of the electorate in these locations was much more variegated than orthodoxy allows and militates against the argument for the 'annual general election thesis'.

The Birmingham and inner-London local electoral evidence has also contradicted the generally accepted view that the pre-1970 electorate was predictable, less volatile, and its partisan attachment stronger in the 1960s than the 1970s, and has further weakened the top-down deterministic link between parliamentary and municipal electoral behaviour. It has shown that traditional connections between part of the electorate and the two-major parties in particular areas at particular times in the early 1960s significantly weakened, a phenomenon that predates the emerging trend of dealignment at the parliamentary level of the late 1960s identified by Butler and Stokes. Furthermore, contrary to accepted views, the evidence has shown that in some locations the electorate at municipal elections in the early 1960s was as 'ready to sway in response to short-term factors and issues that were the cause of immediate concern' as was the parliamentary electorate of the 1970s (see Butler and Stokes

1974, Sarlvik and Crewe 1983, Franklin 1985b, Denver and Hands 1992, Denver 1994).

The evidence from all four case studies contradicts the notion that any electoral change in the 1960s driven by issues was exceptional. Voters may have failed to meet conditions for issue voting prescribed by Butler and Stokes. As far as the inner-city wards of Birmingham and many wards of Islington and Camden are concerned the importance of issues of housing conditions, council rents, renovation and housing policy have been evidenced. The importance of rate-level, council-rent subsidy, expensive social housing programmes and unwanted development to the calculus of the Sutton Coldfield voter and the municipal voter in many parts of Camden and Islington have been evidenced. The fact that these issues were not definitively integrated into the party system with one major party clearly opposing the other on the issue because of pragmatic electoral considerations meant that for part of the electorate voter opinion was not skewed to the advantage of one over the other, was not cut cleanly along party lines, but fragmented. Nonetheless, this policy stasis made the issues around housing salient for Liberal candidates, and in some places independent Labour candidates, and of such salience to parts of the electorate that housing issues could erode the partisan attachment and class-party links between municipal voters and the two-major parties. Indeed, as Curtice points out 'volatility is often regarded as an attribute of voters... yet in truth ... may be an attribute of elections. Voters might ... be more likely to change their preferences ... if the policy positions of the parties are close to each other rather than if they are apart' (Curtice 2002:165). Curtice was referring to parliamentary elections however, the local

electoral evidence of the thesis concurs with the view that political context has such a role to play in electoral alignment.

At the parliamentary electoral level British voting behaviour in the 1970s has been characterised by the decline in traditional class-party attachments that has affected the level of support of both the major parties. Central to the dealignment debate has been the relationship between class and voting behaviour and explanations for the decline in Labour Party support during the 1959-1979 period. Some political scientists regard class-dealignment as a key determinant of changing electoral behaviour and the decline in support for the Labour Party. Others reject class-dealignment as a major determinant of changing patterns of party support and argue that the electorate remained class-aligned but the Labour Party failed to offer class-based policy choices and hence the leakage of the working class vote, and in the case of the Conservatives a less marked but similar decline because of its reduced appeal to its traditional supporters ( Sarlvik and Crewe 1983, Heath et al. 1985 and 1991, Kavanagh 1996).

The evidence of this thesis has shown class-party dealignment in respect of the Labour Party at council elections to be much more nuanced and fragmentary than a simple dichotomy of manual and non-manual reveals, to be associated with particular socio-economic/political contexts and clearly connected to the perceived political failings of Labour councils. Similarly, class-party dealignment in respect of Conservative Party support at council elections has been evidenced to be as fragmentary and conditioned by political context and the perceived failings of Conservative councils. The trends in class-party alignment at local elections in Birmingham and inner-London, evidenced by the strength of associations between

class variables and party support do not indicate a linear decline in party attachments in the 1970s. The findings of this thesis, in respect of dealignment at the municipal electoral level in the 1959-1979 period, accord with Heath's thesis regarding the importance of Labour's political failings in any explanation of their loss of support at the parliamentary level (Heath *et al* 1985, 1987 pp 256-77).

Local political context and housing issues have been shown to be important factors in municipal electoral level dealignment. Indeed, the case studies have clearly illustrated that the Birmingham and London housing markets in the late 1950s and early 1960s were in crisis. In regard to London, John Davis has argued that the 'potential was clear for some sort of political eruption over housing in the years from the mid-1950s'. However, this potential was stymied because the problems over housing and the race issue became conflated, and thereby 'threatened to intensify a potentially explosive issue'. Davis suggests that the failure of the political system 'to provide an outlet for this pressure' can be explained by a 'tacit consensus between the major parties not to play the race card in such a way as to exacerbate racial tension and ... on the broader questions of rent and landlordism, where the situation was far from consensual, the [Labour] opposition proved unable to exploit an apparently promising issue' (Davis 2001).

Added to this reluctance to address the issue of housing was the fact that the Labour Party's housing policy of 1945-1951, which had prioritised council housing to the virtual exclusion of the private sector, had subsequently been wrong footed by the Conservative Party's drive towards home ownership and the impact of rising affluence. Furthermore, rampant inflation of rents, house prices and land costs had scuppered Labour's plans to municipalise the rented sector because of the prohibitive compensation costs that local authorities would face, especially in the central areas of London and the major cities.

Upon Labour's return to power in 1964 the focus of the party's housing policy had shifted towards legislative protection of the rights of those in the private rental sector and an emphasis upon the growth of home ownership. Davis remarks how this crisis in housing in London during the late 1950s and early 1960s illustrates 'the way in which conventional politics could fail to provide an outlet for extensive social grievances during the "age of affluence"' (Davis 2001:69). Implicit in the argument here is the recognition of a social cleavage focussed around housing, albeit one whose potential to impact upon parliamentary electoral behaviour was, according to Davis suppressed.

The evidence of this thesis has shown that the crisis in housing did 'find an outlet' at the municipal electoral level in both Birmingham and London and subsequently did impact upon so called 'conventional politics' at the parliamentary level in the constituencies of our case study locations. The impact of municipal politics and voting behaviour upon parliamentary level politics and electoral behaviour in all four case study locations has been attested by convergent qualitative and quantitative evidence.

According to Dunleavy parliamentary electoral level dealignment is partly explicable in terms of the growth of a new social cleavage in post-war Britain caused by far reaching changes in the consumption pattern in housing. He argues that local conflicts influence party differentiation and political alignment and thus, 'local conflicts have an important structuring influence on the electorate's alignment towards national politics and on party differentiation at various points in time'. Moreover, that the 'apparent convergence of Conservative and Labour housing policies at the national level in the period up to 1970 has in fact disguised the continued politicisation of housing issues at the local level, and the maintenance and development of the sectoral character of party differentiation'. In terms of class, his argument asserts that the

housing consumption cleavage cut across occupational class lines, especially in the manual categories where consumption locations were much more diverse and thus the links between the manual working voter and the Labour Party were weakened. (Dunleavy 1979:409-443 and 1982, see also Daunton 1987). The evidence of the thesis accords with Dunleavy's theory of dealignment being in part explicable in terms of a consumption cleavage over housing (Dunleavy 1979:409-443 and 1982). Clearly in London and Birmingham, local council housing policies of the competing Labour and Conservative groups had converged at the beginning of the 1960s, and local conflicts over housing influenced municipal level alignment in many wards and had an important structuring influence on the electorate's alignment towards national politics in their coterminous constituencies. The thesis has evidenced the fragmentary, nuanced impact of housing issues upon class-party alignment in respect of both the Labour and Conservative parties and accords with Dunleavy and with Daunton's views that housing issues cut across occupational class lines, especially in the manual categories where consumption locations were much more diverse and thus the links between the manual working voter and the Labour Party were weakened. There are then subtle intra-class differences in local electoral behaviour that not only reflect the particular socio-economic and political context of the ward in which a vote is cast but also the peculiar consumption location of the individual voter. These points highlight the dangers of broad-brush generalisations concerning class-party alignment and testify to the variegated nature of British political culture and the utility of local studies of voting behaviour.

#### **12.4:Future research**

There has been a growing consensus among political scientists as to the importance of local context for the understanding of individual electoral behaviour. However, little has changed since Books and Prysby summed up the status quo in 1991 that ‘ On the one hand, there is general agreement that one can be influenced by the area in which one lives. On the other hand there is a good less consensus on how and why such influences occur’ (Books and Prysby 1991: 17). The dilemma is how election studies can take such influences into account, what should be looked at and how. Wlezien and Franklin argue that ‘election studies ... are facing ... fundamental methodological problems’ (Wlezien and Franklin 2002; 157). What is needed is some acceptable method to measure the ‘conditions under which relationships exist, or become stronger, rather than just establishing the general valididty or otherwise of a particular individual level association’ (Curtice 2002:165). The goal is a causal connection between an individual’s environment and that individual’s opinions and voting actions. Johnson *et al.* argue that the emphasis of such research is ‘placed upon the aggregate or the sociological aspect of the linkage [and that] measures used in models [are] indirect [and] explanatory mechanisms left unspecified and untested’ ( Johnson et al., 2002: 224). Knight and Marsh conclude that ‘Half a century of academic study has certainly not produced agreement on any parsimonious set of variables necessary for understanding electoral behaviour’ ( Knight and Marsh 2002: 179). Nonetheless, perhaps Franklin and Wlezien point the way out of the woods, ‘in our view, election studies ... should focus on ... providing the best possible characterisation of the nature and concomitants of the voting act’ (Franklin and Wlezien 2002: 337). The resolution of these problems lies in the methodology

adopted in this thesis, in the fusion of the strengths of political science with those of the discipline of history.

A step in that direction has been the use of local case studies in this thesis that have put the individual voter back into the socio-economic environment and political context in which the act of voting took place. Franklin and Wlezien advocate 'indirect tracers for the presence of contextual effects ... [and argue that] if contextual effects are present, we should expect those for whom the context is most relevant and important to exhibit the effects most strongly' (ibid). The multiple windows onto the determinants of local electoral behaviour used in this thesis and the corroboration between its disparate sources of evidence have, it is hoped, fulfilled this criteria. Nevertheless, there remains the thorny issue of generalisability.

Although it is generally accepted that a case study, or a small number of case studies, cannot provide the legitimate foundation for generalisation to a wider population, it is nevertheless accepted that the method can refine theories, reveal new areas worthy of analysis, and help to define the parameters of generalisability. At the very least this thesis has done much to establish the limits of generalisability of the 'annual general election' thesis and has revealed complexities in local electoral behaviour that warrant further investigation. At most, the thesis challenges views about dealignment. Indeed, as Dunleavy argues, the intended use of the case study is 'to detect the more fundamental processes which can be taken to operate in other areas in substantially the same form' and that this by necessity means the use of qualitative methods, detailed, narrative accounts of the processes involved (Dunleavy 1982:199). Therein lies the dilemma of generalisability for the positivist.

There are some political scientists who argue that theory plays a pivotal role in any generalisation from case studies and that the researcher is attempting to generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory and the method of generalisation is analytical rather than statistical ( King 1994, Yin 1994, Dunleavy 1982). In this thesis a previously adopted theory, i.e. the 'annual general election' thesis, has been used as a template to compare the results from one case to another. Yin argues that the use of multiple sources of evidence in a manner encouraging convergent lines of inquiry and the creation of a chain of evidence ameliorates criticism that subjective judgements have been made to collect data. Further, Yin claims that the reliability of the methods depends upon the explicitness of the researcher concerning the procedures used and an audit trail of how claims to knowledge have been arrived at (Yin 1994:34-50). It is the hope of the author that these criterion have been met and an acceptable level of generalisability approximated. Indeed, that by use of such methods in future research the determinants of the variegated nature of British electoral culture can be unravelled.

### **12.5: Conclusion**

Understanding the matrix of determinants that influence municipal electoral choice requires a multi-theoretical approach and cross-checks of evidence from one methodological perspective with that of others. Franklin and Wlezien advocate two critical tests to counter the claim that a contextual effect is an artifact of selection. Firstly, if 'contextual effects are present, we would expect those for whom the context is most relevant and important to exhibit the effects most strongly'. Clearly this was evidenced by the qualitative evidence of all case studies. Secondly, 'to be able to

show that the researcher would have no reason to expect this interaction as an outcome of selection'. Clearly there was no reason to expect the outcome of the evidence from the quantitative analyses.

A final quote encapsulates the sentiment behind the choice of methodological approach adopted in this thesis and perhaps its significance as a mutually beneficial way forward for both political science and political history:

'A knowledge of history provides opportunities for deepening our understanding of contemporary politics by acquiring a greater awareness of the context in which individual and group political behaviour occurs; helping us to perceive the immediate and medium-term consequences of actions and events; and providing a salutary warning against gross generalisations' (Kavanagh 1991: 486).

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## Appendix C: Technical Appendix

The following is designed to assist the reader and contains a description of the statistical methods used in the thesis. The appendix also serves as a glossary of terms, albeit one that is not necessarily in alphabetic order.

**Net volatility:** refers to the changes in the proportion of votes won by parties, usually from one comparable election to the next.

**Gross volatility:** refers to individual level change in voting and is normally based upon estimates from sample surveys.

**Distribution :** a group of numbers, a set of numbers, a set of observed values.

**Linear model :** a model based upon a straight line, i.e. an attempt to summarise a distribution, in terms of a straight line. However, when statistical models are used it is essential to assess how well the model fits the data.

**Mean :** a simple statistical linear model that summarises the data. A hypothetical value of average found by summing all the numbers in the distribution and dividing the total by the number of numbers in the distribution.

**Standard deviation :** A statistic that summarises an average distance of all scores in a distribution from the mean of those scores. Calculated by subtracting each number in the distribution from the mean: these differences are termed 'deviations'. Each deviation value is squared and these squared deviations summed. The sum of the squared differences (deviations) is divided by the number of observations (numbers) in the distribution minus one and the resultant statistic is called the **Variance** (the mean of the sum of the squares). The standard deviation is the square root of the variance and is a measure of how well the mean represents the data. A small standard deviation indicates that the data points are close to the mean and thus the mean is an accurate representation of the data. A large standard deviation indicates that the data points are distant from the mean and thus the mean is not an accurate representation of the data.

**Variance :** is the standard deviation squared and can be used as a measure of spread of the values in a distribution. The variance ratio (or F-test) compares the spreads of different distributions by looking at their variances. There are a number of useful statistical tests that are encompassed by the term ANOVA , 'Analysis of Variance' which will be explained as and when appropriate.

**Standard error:** samples are used to estimate behaviour in a population, e.g. Birmingham and inner-London municipal electoral data, socio-economic, and political data. If we want to infer things about a population by use of a sample then it is essential to know how well that sample represents the population in question. It is possible that occasionally a sample will have a mean that is very different from that of the population. The standard error is the measure of how representative a sample is likely to be of the population. Statisticians have a reliable method that can ascertain the standard error from the sample's standard deviation. A large standard error statistic relative to the sample mean indicates a lot of variability between the means of different samples and that the sample may not be representative of the population and a small standard error the converse, i.e. the sample is likely to be an accurate reflection of the population.

**Descriptive statistics :** statistics that summarise and describe typical patterns and variation in large sets of numbers in a convenient and efficient manner, e.g. measures of central tendency and dispersion.

**Inferential statistics:** statistics used for arriving at conclusions.

**Normal distribution:** a normal distribution is a bell-shaped curve. It is symmetrical, its mean, median and mode fall in the same place on the curve and the two tails of the curve never actually touch the horizontal axis of the graph. Many variables have distributions that closely approximate the normal curve. In addition many statistical tests assume that the distribution is normal. In a normal distribution there is a mathematical relationship between the mean and the standard deviation with regard to the area under the curve. When a set of scores are normally distributed, 34.13% of the area under the curve is contained between the mean and a score that is equal to the mean + one standard deviation, 13.59% of the area is contained between a score equal to the mean + one standard deviation and the mean + two standard deviations. Hence, the area under the curve between one standard deviation above the mean and one standard deviation below the mean contains 68.2% of the data.

**Z-Scores :** or standard scores is a useful measure that allows variables to be expressed in terms of a standard deviation score rather than original units of measurement and thus enables comparison of variables measured in different units.

**Parametric tests:** work on the basis that the data are normally distributed and can therefore use the mathematical properties of this distribution to differentiate sets of data.

**Parametric data :** data that meets certain assumptions in order that parametric tests can be used to analyse that data.

**Assumptions of parametric data:**(i) normally distributed data, (ii) homogeneity of variance, (iii) interval data, (iv) independence.

**Homogeneity of variance:** Two sets of scores have similar variances, i.e. similarity of spread of scores between samples. The scores of two variables must be scattered by a roughly equal amount (tested by F-test, variance ratio). In correlational designs this assumption means that the variance of one variable should be stable at all levels of the other variable.

**Interval data:** data should be measured at least at the interval level i.e. the distance between points on its scale of measurement should be equal at all parts along that scale.

**Independence:** assumes that the data from different subjects are independent – the behaviour of one participant does not influence the behaviour of another.

**Tests for normal distribution:** Summary statistical procedures to test whether data are normally distributed. Using SPSS the data is analysed using descriptive statistics and frequencies which produce measures of **skewness** and **kurtosis** whose values should be zero in a normal distribution (the further from zero the more likely the data are not normally distributed). SPSS produces standardised scores, z-scores of skewness and kurtosis which can be compared against values that could be expected by chance alone- a value above 1.6 being considered as significantly different from chance to cause concern.

**Histograms:** of each variable with a normal distribution curve overlaid provide a subjective eyeball test, which with the skewness and kurtosis values provide an immediate notion of the normality of the distribution.

**Kolmogorov-Smirnov test :** A more objective test of whether a distribution is normal which compares the set of scores in the sample to a normally distributed set of scores with the same mean and standard deviation. If the statistic is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) it means that the distribution of the sample is not significantly different from a normal distribution, i.e. the sample is probably normally distributed. If the test statistic is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) then the distribution is significantly different from a normal distribution and thus parametric tests cannot be employed to analyse the data.

**Q-Q Plot:** SPSS produces a Q-Q plot for any variable. It plots the values expected if the distribution were normal (expected values) against the values actually in the data set (observed values). If the data are normally distributed the observed values should fall along the straight line that plots the expected values.

**Non-Parametric data:** a data set not normally distributed cannot use parametric tests therefore non-parametric tests used, such as the Mann-Whitney test and the Wilcoxon test. These tests make little or no assumptions about the data but are much less powerful than parametric tests and therefore increase the chance of a Type II Error i.e. accept that there is no difference between groups, when in reality, a difference exists.

**Categorical data:** a categorical variable with only two categories, dichotomous, e.g. dead or alive, is a discrete and therefore truly dichotomous variable, gender or voting in an election.

**Crosstabulation:** SPSS crosstabs examines the relationship between two or more categorical variables and also carries out a Chi-square test which detects whether there is a significant association between categorical variables. The statistic does not however, tell us anything about how strong that relationship might be. The Pearson Chi-square statistic tests whether the two variables of interest are independent. Conventionally Chi-square must be  $<0.05$  in order to reject the hypothesis that the variables are independent and accept that the variables are in some way related e.g. a Chi-square statistic of  $p < 0.001$  evidences a significant effect. Chi-square is a non-parametric test.

**Correlations:** Correlation is a measure of the linear relationship between two variables and helps us to determine what relationship, if any, exists between two variables. It measures variance of each variable (the average amount its scores vary from the mean) and determines covariance, that is whether the two variables covary. Whether changes in one variable are met with similar changes in the other variable. When one variable deviates from its mean then it would be expected that the other variable to deviate from its mean in a similar way. A positive covariance indicates that as one variable deviates from its mean, the other deviates in the same direction. A negative covariance indicates that as one variable deviates from its mean, for example increases in value, the other deviates from the mean in the opposite direction. However, it is not possible to make comparisons between covariances in any objective way. It cannot meaningfully be said that one covariance is particularly large

or small relative to another data set, unless both data sets are measured in the same units of measurement.

**Correlation coefficient:** is a standardised covariance value that permits this comparison. Standardisation of different units of measurement is accomplished by dividing the standard deviation (if any distance from the mean is divided by the standard deviation it gives that distance in standard deviation units). The standardised covariance value or correlation coefficient 'r', has a value that lies between  $-1$  and  $+1$ , the Pearson product moment correlation. A coefficient of  $+1$  indicates that two variables are perfectly positively correlated, so as one variable increases, the other increases by a proportionate amount. Conversely, a coefficient of  $-1$  indicates a perfect negative relationship, if one variable increases the other decreases by a proportionate amount. A coefficient of zero indicates no linear relationship at all and so if a variable changes the other stays the same.

**Correlation analysis:** scatter plot, bivariate correlation and partial correlation.

**Scatter plot:** plot that looks at general trends in the data. The graph plots each subject's score on one variable against their score on another and illustrates whether there seems to be a relationship between variables, what kind of relationship exists and whether any cases are markedly different. A case that differs substantially from the general trend of the data is known as an outlier.

**Bivariate correlation:** is a correlation between two variables and measures the linear relationship between two variables, and **partial correlation**, examines the relationship between two variables while controlling for the effect of one or more variables. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and Spearman's rho correlation coefficient are examples of bivariate correlation coefficients. SPSS allows the analyst to specify whether these tests relate to **one-tailed** or **two tailed hypotheses**. A one tailed hypothesis is a directional hypothesis that predicts the direction of the relationship between two variables, whereas a two-tailed hypothesis does not predict the nature of the relationship.

Pearson's product moment requires parametric data and SPSS calculates the significance of the statistic, i.e. the probability that a correlation coefficient occurred by chance. A probability value  $p < 0.05$  is regarded as indicative of a genuine effect. Thus the probability of this correlation occurring by chance is very low and close to zero. Caveat: correlation coefficients give no indication of the direction of causality and thus care must be taken when interpreting their meaning.

**Third variable problem:** causality cannot be assumed because there may be other measured or unmeasured variables affecting the results.

**Direction of causality:** correlation coefficients say nothing about the direction of causality, they say nothing about which variable causes the other to change.

E.g. It may be intuitively appealing to conclude that a particular variable causes party support to change, there is no statistical reason why this particular variable cannot cause party support to change: the correlation does not tell us that it is not true. Thus qualitative evidence that indicates the direction of causality takes on added importance in electoral research.

**Interpretation of the R<sup>2</sup> statistic:** Correlation coefficients can nevertheless be more informative. The correlation coefficient R<sup>2</sup> is the measure of the amount of variability in one variable that is explained by the other, (e.g. the tenure category council rented has a correlation coefficient  $r = 0.44$  with support for the Liberal Party, therefore R<sup>2</sup> or R squared = 0.194, when converted to a percentage evidences that the variable council rented accounts for 19.4% of the variability in the other variable, party support for the Liberal Party). However, 80.6% of the variability in this hypothetical example is unaccounted for. The R<sup>2</sup> statistic cannot be used to infer causal relationships it can only tell us about the variance in variable Y accounted for by X but nothing of which way the causality runs (see page 2 chapter 1).

**Spearman's rho :** non-parametric statistic which can be used with data that does not met the assumptions required for parametric tests.

**Part and partial correlation:** allows examination of the relationship between two variables when the effects of a third are held constant. Variations can and do overlap and have shared variance, e.g. the amount of variance in party support accounted for by class might contain at least some of the variance explained by tenure. Partial correlation finds out the size of the unique portion of variance and measures the unique relationship between one variable and another. Partial correlation measures the relationship between two variables controlling for the effects of a third variable. Semi-partial correlation controls for the effect of a third variable on only one of the variables in the correlation.

**Regression:** Correlations are useful but tell us nothing about the predictive power of variables.

In regression analysis a predictive model is fitted to the data and used to predict values of the dependent variable from one or more independent variables.

**Simple regression:** predicts an outcome from a single predictor and **Multiple regression:** predicts an outcome from several predictors. A linear model is fitted to the data and summarises the data in the form of a straight line. However, with any data there are a number of lines that could represent the general trend of the data – regression analysis finds the model that best fits the data by a mathematical technique called the **Method of Least Squares**.

Any straight line can be drawn if two things are known, (i) the slope or gradient of the line, (ii) the point at which the line crosses the vertical axis of the graph (the intercept of the line). In the equation for a straight line  $Y$  is the outcome variable (e.g. party support) that we wish to predict,  $X$  is the subject's score on the predictor variable (e.g. a value of percentage social class I in a ward),  $B_1$  is the gradient of the straight line fitted to the data,  $B_0$  is the intercept of that line. There is a residual term  $E_i$ , which represents the difference between the score predicted by the line for the  $i$ th subject and the score that is actually obtained.

$$Y = B_0 + B_1 X + E_i$$

The gradient of the line informs us about the nature of the relationship being described. Regression strives to find the line that best fits the data collected then estimate the gradient and intercept of that line. Having defined these values we can insert different values of our predictor variable into the model to estimate the value of the outcome variable.

The method of least squares finds a line that goes through, or as close to, as many of the data points as possible, the **Line of Best Fit**. That is, the line that represents the least amount of difference between the observed data points and the line.

There will be small differences between the values predicted by the line and the values of the data actually observed because we are using the line to predict the values of  $Y$  from the values of the variable  $X$ . Some of these differences lie above the line and are positive values (the model underestimates their values). Some of the values lie below the line and are negative values (the model underestimates their values). These differences in value are termed **Residuals**. If we square the value of each difference (eliminates negative values) and sum these values we are provided with a gauge as to how well a particular line fits the data.

A large **Sum of the Squared Differences** indicates a line that is not representative of the data.

A small **Sum of the Squared Differences** indicates a line that is a good representation of the data.

Thus, the method of least squares works by selecting the line that has the lowest sum of the squared differences. However, we must assess the goodness of fit of a model.

### **Assessing the Goodness of Fit: Sums of Squares, R and R<sup>2</sup>.**

Using the mean we can calculate (SPSS)- the difference between the observed values and the values predicted by the mean, i.e. square all the differences and sum them to arrive at the **Total Sum Of the Squared Differences (SST)**. This value represents the how good the mean is as a predictor.

We then fit our more sophisticated model to the data, our Line of Best Fit, and work out the differences between the model and the observed data, i.e. square these differences, sum them and arrive at the **Sum of the Squared Residuals (SSR)**.

We can use these two values, SST and SSR to calculate how much better the regression line (line of best fit) is than just using the mean as a model.

The improvement is measured by calculating the difference between SST and SSR.

This difference shows the reduction in the inaccuracy of the model achieved by fitting the regression line to the data. This improvement is captured by the statistic, **Model Sum of Squares (SSM)**.

If the value of SSM is large the regression model has made a big improvement to how well the outcome variable can be predicted.

If the value of SSM is small the regression model is little better than taking a best guess.

A very useful measure resulting from the above is the proportion of improvement due to the model.

We divide the sum of the squares (SSM) for the model by the total sum of squares (SST) and the resultant value is **R<sup>2</sup>**, and to express this value as a percentage multiply by 100.

**R<sup>2</sup>** represents the amount of variance in the outcome explained by the model (SSM) relative to how much variation there was to explain in the first place (SST). Therefore as a percentage it represents the percentage of variation in the outcome that can be explained by the model.  $R^2 = \frac{SSM}{SST}$  in simple regression we can take the square root

### SST

Of this value to obtain the **Pearson Correlation Coefficient** which provides a good estimate of the overall fit of the regression model, and **R<sup>2</sup>** provides a good gauge of the substantial size of the relationship.

**F-TEST** : a second test that measures how much the model has improved the prediction outcome compared to the level of inaccuracy of the model. The test is based upon the ratio of improvement due to the model (SSM) and the difference between the model and the observed data (SSR). The resultant statistic, the F-ratio should be greater than 1 (at least). This **analysis of variance (ANOVA)** tells us whether the model overall results in a significantly good degree of prediction of the outcome variable. The F-ratio has an associated significance value. ( e.g a significance value of  $p < 0.001$ , [acceptable by social scientist  $p < 0.05$ ], tells us that there is a less than 0.1% chance of an F-ratio this large would happen by chance alone. We can thus conclude that our regression model results in a significantly better prediction of the outcome variable(e.g. party support) than the mean value of party support.

**ANOVA:** tells us whether the model overall results in a significantly good degree of prediction of the outcome variable. It DOES NOT tell us anything about the individual contribution of variables in the model.

**Parameters of the model:** Equation for straight line,  $Y = B_0 + B_i X_i + E_i$

SPSS provides the details of the model parameters, i.e. the **BETA** values and the significance of these values.  $B_0$  is the Y intercept and  $B_0$  can be interpreted as meaning that when  $X=0$  (zero of a predictor variable e.g. percentage council houses in a ward) the model predicts  $B_0$  value of outcome variable (e.g. party support).

$B_i$  is the gradient of the regression line and its value represents the change in outcome associated with a unit change in the predictor variable. For example, if a predictor (independent variable) percentage council houses in a ward is increased by 1 unit of change then our model predicts a ( $B_i$ ) increase in unit change in the outcome variable (e.g. percentage of the total vote support for Labour).

The value of B represents the change in the outcome resulting from a unit change in the predictor.

A bad model will have a regression coefficient of zero for the predictors i.e. a unit change in the predictor variable results in no change in the value of the outcome.

If a variable significantly predicts an outcome then it should have a B value significantly different from zero.

This hypothesis is tested by a t-test.

**t-test:** is calculated by taking account of standard error, it tests the null hypothesis that the value of B is zero, therefore if it is significant we accept the hypothesis that the B value is significantly different from zero and that the predictor contributes significantly to our ability to estimate values of the outcome variable.

The standard error tells us how different B values would look if we took lots of samples of data and calculated the B values for each sample. If the standard error produced in our regression analysis of the effect of a predictor on the outcome variable is small then it means that most samples are likely to have a B value similar to the one in the sample. The t-test statistic has an associated significance value that provides an exact probability that the observed value of t is a chance result, and if the observed significance of t is  $p < 0.05$  then the result reflects a genuine effect.

**Multiple regression :** same as simple but with several predictor variables.

Predicts outcome using the straight line equation:  $Y = B_0 + B_i X_i + E_i$ , logical extension of this equation is :  $Y = B_0 + B_1 X_1 + B_2 X_2 + \dots + B_n X_n + E_1$

The method seeks to find the linear combination of predictors that correlate maximally with the outcome variable. Thus, if we calculate the B values then predictions can be made about the outcome variable (e.g. party support) based upon a number of variables.

**Sums of Squares, R and R<sup>2</sup>:**

**SS<sub>T</sub>** represents the difference between the observed values and the mean value.

**SS<sub>R</sub>** represents the differences between the values of Y predicted by the model and the mean value.

**SS<sub>M</sub>** represents the differences between the values of Y predicted by the model and the mean value.

With multiple regression it does not make any sense to look at the simple correlation coefficient. SPSS produces a **multiple correlation coefficient (Multiple R)**

**Multiple R:** is the correlation between the observed values of Y and the values of Y predicted by the multiple regression model. Therefore large values of multiple R

represent a large correlation between the predicted and observed values of the outcome variable. A multiple R of 1 represents a situation in which the model perfectly predicts the observed data. As such multiple R is a gauge of how well the model predicts the observed data. It follows that the resulting  $R^2$  can be interpreted in the same way as in simple regression as the amount of variation in the outcome variable that is accounted for by the model.

**Assessment of a multiple regression model:** (i) does the model fit the observed data well or is it influenced by a small number of cases?

(ii) Can the model be generalised to other samples?

Thus it needs to be established if the model is an accurate representation of the data and if the model can be used to make inferences beyond the sample data that has been collected.

(i)

**Outlier:** a case that differs substantially from the main trend of the data ( how and why they differ, what they may have in common often of interest to the historian).

**Residual:** the difference between the values of the outcome predicted by the model and the values observed in the sample.

Residuals effectively represent the error present in the model. If the model fits the sample data well then all residuals will be small. If the model is a poor fit of the sample data then the residuals will be large. If any case stands out as having a large residual value then this case could be an outlier.

**Standardised residuals:** residuals divided by their standard deviation. In a normally distributed sample, 95% of standardised residual values should lie between  $-2$  and  $+2$ , 99% should lie between  $-2.5$  and  $+2.5$ , any with a value greater than 3 are cause for concern as they are unlikely to have happened by chance. If more than 15 of standardised residuals have an absolute value of more than 2.5 then there is an unacceptable level of error in the model i.e. it is a poor fit. If more than 5% of cases  $>2$  then indication of poor fit and model deemed a poor representation of the data.

**Studentised residuals:** provide a more accurate estimate of the error variance of a model.

(ii)

**Generalisation:** Regression analysis produces an equation that is correct only for the sample of observed values.

Researchers want to generalise their findings to a wider population. Therefore must test whether the underlying assumption of regression analysis have been met and test whether the model generalises. To draw conclusions about a population based upon regression analysis the following assumptions must be true:

**Variable types:** all predictor variables must be quantitative or categorical and the outcome variable must be quantitative, continuous and unbounded (quantitative in this instance refers to interval level measurement, unbounded means no constraints on the variability of the outcome).

**Non-zero variance:** the predictors should have some variation in value i.e. they do not have variances of zero.

**No perfect multicollinearity:** there should be no perfect linear relationship between two or more predictors, thus, predictor variables ( independent variables) should not correlate highly.

**Predictors uncorrelated with external variables:** External variables are those that have not been included in the regression model which influence the outcome variable.

**Homoscedascity:** At each level of predictor variable(s) the variance of the residual terms should be constant. This means that the residuals at each level of the predictors should have the same variance (homoscedascity). When variances unequal-heteroscedascity.

**Independent errors:** for any two observations the residual terms should be uncorrelated (independent), lack of autocorrelation.

**Normally distributed errors:** it is assumed that the residuals in the model are random, normally distributed variables with a mean of zero. This assumption means that the differences between the model and the observed data are most frequently zero, or very close to zero, and that differences much greater than zero only happen occasionally.

If the above assumptions are met then the model from the sample can be accurately applied to the population of interest. What the model tells us is that on average the regression model from the sample is the same as the population model. However it is possible that a sample may not be the same as the population model.

Assessment of the model across different samples is called cross validation.

**Cross validation:** If a model is applied to a different sample and there is a serious fall in its predictive powers, then it is clear the model does not generalise. If a model can be generalised then it must be capable of accurately predicting the same outcome variable from the same set of predictors in a different group of people.

We cannot be confident that the model derived from a sample accurately represents the entire population- but can assess how well the model can predict the outcome in a different sample.

**Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> :** this value indicates the loss of predictive power or shrinkage.

Whereas R<sup>2</sup> informs us how much of the variance in Y is accounted for by the regression model from the sample, the **Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>** informs us how much variance in Y would be accounted for if the model had been derived from the population the sample was taken from.

**Multicollinearity:** is a strong collinearity between two or more predictors (independent variables) in a regression model. This makes it difficult to assess the individual importance of a predictor. If each accounts for similar variance in outcome how can a researcher know which of the variables is important. Identify multicollinearity by scanning a correlation matrix to find any variables which correlate highly (e.g. 0.8 or 0.9). However, SPSS also produces **Variance of inflation factor (VIF)** indicates whether a predictor has a strong linear relationship with the other predictors. SPSS also produces **Eigenvalues** which also indicate predictors that are correlated.

### **The Statistics in the Regression Model**

Descriptive statistics in the form of a correlation matrix provide the values of the Paerson correlation coefficient between every pair of variables. A one-tailed significance of each of these correlations and the number of cases contributing to each correlation. This provides a preliminary idea of the relationships that exist between predictors and outcome and a preliminary look at multicollinearity.

**Summary of model statistics:** a table that outlines statistics that assess whether the model is successfully predicting the outcome, R, R<sup>2</sup>, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>, Rsquared change, Durbin-Watson.

**R:** the value of the multiple correlation coefficient between predictors and outcome.

**R<sup>2</sup>:** measure of how much variability in the outcome is accounted for by the predictors.

**Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>:** provides some idea of how the model generalises and ideally the value of the Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> will be very close to the value of R<sup>2</sup> i.e. generalise well.

**Change statistics:** inform us how much change in the amount of variance accounted for with each block entry of predictors. F-ratio tells us the difference made by adding new predictors to the model.

**Durban-Watson:** informs us if the assumption of independent errors is tenable (values less than 1 or greater than 3 cause for alarm).

**ANOVA Table:** the analysis of variance tells us if the model is significantly better at predicting the outcome than using the mean as a best guess. **F-ratio** in table represents the ratio of improvement in prediction as a result of fitting best model relative to the inaccuracy that still exists in the model. If the improvement due to fitting the best model is much greater than the inaccuracy within the model then the value of F-ratio will be greater than 1, and the significance ( e.g.  $p < 0.001$ ) tells us the exact probability of obtaining the value of F by chance. If the F-ratio is significant then the results can be interpreted as meaning that the model significantly improved the ability to predict the outcome variable.

**All the above are summary statistics that tell us whether or not the model has improved our ability to predict the outcome variable.**

**Coefficient Table:** provides the statistics for the equation that evidences the model's parameters, confidence intervals B values, collinearity diagnostics.

The B values indicate the individual contribution of each predictor.

The B values tell us about the relationship between each predictor and the outcome variable.

The beta values are positive or negative and thus inform us about the **direction of their relationship with the outcome variable** (positive relationship – as predictor increases so does outcome variable).

The beta values also tell us to what **degree each predictor effects the outcome if the effects of all other predictors are held constant** (passim Field : 2002)