

THE POLITICAL PARTIES¹

THE government of Glossop is in the hands of three distinct though interdependent authorities: the Borough Council, the County Council, and the national government. Each of them is responsible for some of the services in the town; each of them levies taxes on the residents; and each of them has offices and officials in the area. Their day-to-day work is carried on in substantial independence of each other, and each will be discussed in a separate chapter later on.

The political, as distinct from the administrative, life of the town cannot sensibly be divided in this way. Although the elections for these three levels of government are held at different times and the constituency boundaries are not the same, the choice of candidates, the conduct of electoral campaigns, and the direction of political activities between elections are all in the hands of the same local party organizations. An account of the composition and activities of these organizations will be the best starting-point for our analysis of the present political life of the town.

During recent years it has become common to speak of British political parties as highly disciplined and centralized bodies. At the parliamentary level the discipline is apparent, and it may be natural for the observer at Westminster to regard the local branches as no more individual than platoons in a regiment. Seen from the periphery, however, the parties take on quite a different aspect. Wherever one looks in England one finds local party organizations which are self-perpetuating and self-contained, busy with their own affairs, not greatly troubled from day to day by party leaders, party bureaucracy, or even by party policy. Local parties are highly individual, conditioned more by their environment than by directives from central office, and largely independent in managing their own business. It would be unwise to be dogmatic about what their business is: sometimes it is local government, sometimes social life, sometimes personal rivalries and ambitions, often a mixture of all three. The three

¹ The section on the Conservative Party is by H. J. Hanham and that on the Liberal Party by Peter Campbell.

party branches in Glossop provide interesting and perhaps characteristic examples of these general truths.

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

At the end of the First World War the Conservative and Liberal parties in the town were each led and largely financed by leading industrialists, and each therefore suffered from the post-war depression and the subsequent departure or death of their leaders. Of the two, the Conservative Party was probably the worse hit, if only because it had previously been so extremely well off under the patronage and leadership of the Wood family. Sir Samuel Hill-Wood was M.P. for the High Peak from 1910 to 1929 and he dominated the constituency association as well as the Borough party. He was lavish with his contributions to party funds and he sponsored the construction of the imposing Conservative Club, standing three stories high in the centre of the town, which even today recalls something of past glories.

Sir Samuel Hill-Wood's retirement marked the end of the political prosperity of the Glossop Conservatives. The cotton trade had already collapsed and the leading millowners had sold or abandoned their interests. At a stroke the Conservatives were deprived of their leaders and their income, and a decline set in from which there has never been a recovery. An important contributory factor in this decline was that a few years later Glossop lost the headquarters of the High Peak Conservative Association. From the time of its formation in 1885 the division was the scene of a battle for the party headquarters between Buxton and Glossop, the two largest towns in the area. They are fifteen miles apart by road, and are socially dissimilar. The success of one has always meant that the other loses all effective influence in the constituency. After forty-five years of fancied neglect Buxton saw its opportunity: the new member had no ties with Glossop and those who now took the lead in divisional politics were increasingly from the Buxton end of the constituency. Moreover, the Glossop Conservatives were in financial difficulties, and it was ostensibly on financial grounds that the executive of the High Peak Association resolved on 1 December 1934 to transfer the agency to Buxton.

This defeat accelerated the decline of the Glossop Association, the importance of which now derives from the number of electors in the area rather than from its own strength as an organization. The

Glossop Conservatives have never entirely accepted this change. They still speak of the move to Buxton as a recent event, and the older members would still like to regain the agency and all the plums that went with it. They have constantly before their eyes the seldom-used upper stories of their club, still reserved for their original purpose with names on the doors going back to the golden era before 1934. The one issue which arouses Glossop interest in the High Peak Association's annual meeting is the recurrent proposal to restore the party headquarters to Glossop.

Quite apart from this ancient rivalry the High Peak Division is extremely difficult to organize. It has no historical or geographical unity and the transport services are designed to link isolated valleys with Manchester or Buxton rather than with one another. The Conservative organization has grown up as a loosely knit federation of Conservative clubs in the major centres, two in Buxton and one each in Chinley, New Mills, Hayfield, Glossop, Hadfield, and Charlesworth. Another in Padfield expired some years ago. The thirteen polling districts have women's committees but are relatively unimportant from an organizational point of view. The social rather than the political basis of the clubs emphasizes their local preoccupations. The Duke of Devonshire is virtually perpetual president of the Association.

The balance of the constituency is gradually changing as it becomes increasingly a dormitory area for Manchester and industrial Cheshire, but the interests of most of the new-comers lie outside the division and only their wives take an active part in divisional politics. The mass of working-class voters are parochial, apathetic, and distrustful of new-comers: in England, as one of the latter put it, a stranger will be accepted after twenty years but in Derbyshire he will always be a foreigner.

Politically this apathy is in part a result of the remoteness of the pre-war Conservative organization from the mass of the people. Money-raising campaigns, elsewhere important in generating enthusiasm and in bringing polling district associations together, were quite unknown. Both Sir Samuel Hill-Wood (1910-29) and Sir Alfred Law (1929-39) paid the Association's expenses as well as their own election expenses, and in general the divisional agent had only to ask for money for it to be forthcoming. When the present Member (Mr. Hugh Molson) succeeded Sir Alfred Law in 1939 it was anticipated that he would meet election expenses and contribute about

£500 a year towards the cost of the Association. As a consequence the post-war call for the reorganization and democratization of the party demanded something of a revolution in High Peak. The drive for membership has only recently got under way, and the first big rally for fund raising was not held until September 1953, five years after the publication of the Maxwell Fyfe Report. Now that the Member's contribution is limited, the financial position is difficult if the division's obligations to the party are to be fulfilled. The rally raised £800 but the largest individual contribution to constituency funds is now £25 per annum and most of the branches contribute between two and five guineas. The quota due to Central Office is £250, but this has only once been achieved and on one occasion only £25 could be mustered.

The process of reorganization has thrown great responsibility on to the shoulders of the very active party agent, whose personal adaptability has done much to heal past divisions. In a sense he is the only real representative of all the parts of the constituency. The executive committee is composed, in all but name, solely of members from Buxton, Chinley, and New Mills. The attendance of the other representatives is too brief and irregular to give them opportunity to influence decisions. The agent on the other hand is in constant touch with the whole constituency and maintains fairly effective liaison with sub-agents in the various centres. The sub-agents are local party stalwarts who are allowed their expenses and have at their disposal a small fund. They keep the chief agent informed of developments in their area and act as election agents in municipal elections. The chief agent visits them frequently and speaks to them on the telephone every few days, and in the case of Glossop almost daily. Every three months there is a conference of sub-agents attended by the member, who talks about their problems over a glass of beer and exhorts them to further exertions.

Although this organization is good, it cannot overcome all the difficulties raised by the geographical isolation of the various parts of the constituency, and in particular it cannot do more than provide a framework around which a Conservative revival in Glossop could be built. For Glossop is the problem child of the constituency: it is the most isolated, it is politically the most apathetic, and it is divided into two nearly watertight compartments between the separate Conservative organizations in Glossop and Hadfield. But it is also the key to the constituency because it is only in Glossop that the parties

are evenly balanced, and only there that there are enough potential waverers to carry the seat for Labour. Equally it is the only town where a reorganized and revived Conservative Party might hope to make considerable gains. Much therefore depends on the character and activities of the Conservative politicians in the town.

Formal Organization

The Glossop Conservative Association is in all but name the Conservative Club: the two titles are used indiscriminately in the rule book, and the Association is affiliated as a club to the Association of Conservative Clubs. Most members pay their subscriptions to the club, which is expected to transfer 90 per cent. of the money so raised to the Divisional Association; others pay the Divisional Association directly, in which case 10 per cent. of their subscription is credited to the Glossop Association. There is nothing unusual about the club itself. Membership is open to anybody over the age of eighteen who 'shall pledge himself to support the Leader of the Conservative Party and to abide by the Rules of the Association'. There is a president, chairman, treasurer, secretary, and a committee of fifteen members—five to form a quorum—and provision is made in the constitution for the election of up to four patrons and as many vice-presidents as are willing to subscribe a guinea. Most of the routine work of the club is delegated to one or other of the standing, finance, or political sub-committees. The political sub-committee is a composite body of committee members and ordinary members, and exercises the committee's political functions in two of the three wards, but not in Hadfield. It seems to be almost indistinguishable from the larger selection committee which adopts candidates for municipal elections. This is composed of the executive of the club, Conservative aldermen and councillors, and about six of the leading party workers who receive personal letters of invitation.

Differentiation between the social and political activities of the club is more obvious in the appointments of a separate club Secretary and a political agent who is also sub-agent for the High Peak Association. The latter organizes the half-dozen political meetings which are held every winter and is in charge of the local electoral organization. But his real importance is derived from the fact that he represents the High Peak Association, and as such is the centre of party activities in Glossop.

The financial position of the Association is complicated by the

need to maintain a large building, very little of which is in everyday use, and by the financial liabilities which its construction imposed. A considerable mortgage was raised at the time, presumably in expectation of a considerable income from letting the hall, and this has still to be paid off. This end is now in sight, but the burden is not yet cast off, and the club subscription of 10s. 6d., although sufficient to cover working costs and the redemption of the debt, leaves very little margin. Local elections are in general financed by the candidates.

The Glossop Association is entitled to six representatives on the executive of the High Peak Association, but it is common for only two or three to be appointed. These positions are usually held by leading party workers, but the peculiarity of the relationship between Buxton and Glossop deprives them of most of their importance.

Organizations of Conservative women and Young Conservatives have had a chequered history. The Young Conservatives flourished before the war, but since 1945 no fewer than three attempts to rebuild the organization have failed. The agent remains hopeful but the ground seems too unfruitful at the moment to offer any prospect of success. The Conservative women once had a vigorous movement and until 1952 held regular meetings and social gatherings. But during 1953 there was a good deal of personal bickering, centring round the charge for tea and cake at whist drives, and members fell off. By the end of the winter only six members remained of a once flourishing organization, and these six were the only women helpers at the municipal elections in 1954.

Hadfield, for organizational purposes, is quite distinct from Glossop, and the Hadfield ward of the borough is contested and organized by the Hadfield club. The members of the two organizations are on friendly terms but they never go beyond this to active co-operation. For a time, Glossop, Hadfield, Padfield, and Charlesworth were linked in a loose federation known as the Glossop Dale Conservative Association, but this body was never popular and speedily expired. An attempt has lately been made to revive it, since it would provide a convenient means of linking the settlements in the valley and might encourage co-operation between them, but the idea appeals to those outside the valley and not to those within. As long as the clubs continue to be the unit of organization there would seem to be little hope for such a development.

Membership

Party membership has different meanings for different parties and it is very difficult to say anything useful about the membership of a party which places so little emphasis on the collective role of members as does the Conservative Party. The Labour Party still clings to the idea that the party should be something like a band of comrades, a crusading movement, but the Conservatives have never adopted this attitude. They tend to look upon party associations simply as a means of bringing like-, and right-, minded people together, and prominent Conservatives not infrequently have the slenderest connexions with local organizations. For these reasons it is difficult to know what interpretation to put on the Conservative claim to some 1,000 members, including club members, in Glossop. Certainly very few of them are active, and many are behindhand with their subscriptions. Many of the leading citizens, particularly business and professional men, have little or no contact with the Conservative Club. They content themselves with voting Conservative at elections and showing which way their sympathies lie in private conversation. But it is from this group that the Conservatives, here as elsewhere, try to draw their councillors: 'We try to get business men every time', was the comment of a leading party worker. The result is that the composition of the executive of the local Association represents only one section of the Conservatives in the town.

The membership figures of the Glossop Club are likewise misleading. There are at the moment some 300 members, but a very large number of these are silent well-wishers rather than active participants. The club is virtually given over to the older members and those who are willing to devote much of their time to politics. The younger members do not find the atmosphere altogether congenial and mostly stay away. All but an insignificant fraction of the members have lived in the town for more than twenty years and a large majority were born there.

A survey of the rank and file party members suggested that they are drawn from all types of occupation so as to form a pretty fair cross-section of the town's workers. The most striking characteristics of the members, as a group, are the paucity of women, not more than one-sixth of the total, and the large number of Anglicans. Only about a third of the members are not either active or nominal churchmen. The small number of women may be attributed partly to internal

feuds, but it is much more obviously accounted for by the predominantly masculine character of the Conservative Club. The Anglican majority is not surprising in view of the history of the party in the town.

Leadership and Influence

The present position of the party cannot be fully understood without taking into account the peculiar difficulties which arise from the social position of its leaders. As shopkeepers and owners of small business concerns in an industrial town, they are apt to feel ill at ease in the company of the professional men, retired army officers, and country gentry who tend to dominate the party in the rest of the constituency. They feel both that the divisional leaders look down on them socially, and that these leaders are out of touch with the realities and problems of life in an industrial town. Certainly the kind of speech which a party organizer has to make in Buxton is necessarily different from the kind which would appeal to Glossopians; and as the divisional leaders live in Buxton and the surrounding countryside they tend to talk in a language to which the Glossop Conservatives cannot respond. This leads to a certain uneasiness in social relations which, combined with resentment at the location of the headquarters and some transport difficulties, discourages the Glossop delegates from attending the divisional meetings as often as they might. Indeed, although the town is entitled to six delegates on the divisional committee, it is very rare for more than one or two to attend. Both the agent and the Member try to bridge this gap, but the Member is only able to visit Glossop five or six times a year and the estrangement persists.

On the other hand, the Glossop leaders are not as respected by their own supporters as an outsider would expect. Many of the rank and file party members, as well as the working-class Conservative voters, still seem to expect the kind of leadership they had from the wealthy families who once patronized the party. They are not willing to give the party the help, financial and otherwise, that it now needs from its supporters, and their attitude seems to be that if the present leaders are not wealthy and powerful enough to run the party in the way that the Woods did, so much the worse for the present leaders.

The result of all this is not that disagreement is rife among the party leaders, but simply that the state of morale is rather low. No one is producing new ideas for activities that would attract

young people to the party. The organization of election campaigns is left almost entirely to the sub-agent, who is efficient, but cannot do everything single-handed. The councillors have abandoned caucus meetings and make no attempt to concert policies that might revive the party's popularity and regain its majority on the Council. Those officers of the club who want to promote dances and extend the party's social activities are given little support by the committee.

The consequence of this state of affairs is that few young people are coming into the party and there seems no obvious reason why there should be any increase in the number of active Conservatives in the town. It is the national prestige of the party and the voter's deep-laid reluctance to change his allegiance which keep the Conservative cause alive.

Party Activities

The political activities of the Glossop Association are restricted to evening meetings in winter and the contesting of elections. Since there is no party caucus and the Conservative councillors and aldermen form a small minority, there is little party, as distinct from individual, activity on the Council.

The winter meetings are the great attraction of the year, and one of them usually outshines all the others. On this occasion the speakers are usually a junior minister and the Member. At other meetings the Member makes a short address and the local leaders are given an opportunity for a formal or informal speech on local issues or about their grievances. About fifty people usually attend these meetings, which are informal and are held near the bar in the Conservative Club. However, apart from providing a home for party functions, it cannot be said that the club itself is noticeably political.

There is little canvassing in local elections, and not very much publicity apart from the election addresses of the candidates. These are drawn up by the candidates themselves but betray something like a common source. Separate leaflets are prepared for each ward containing photographs of the two candidates on the front, and their addresses side by side in the middle. The main emphasis of the addresses is generally on controlling the rise in the rate, which had reached 25s. 2d. in the pound by 1954. In that year the Conservative policy was summarized in the exhortation which appeared on the back of each address: '*Your Rates and Rents Keep Rising Vote for Experienced Men to Check Expenditure and Save You From Paying*

More.' One candidate called for a 'diligent examination' which would effect 'far reaching economies'; a second spoke of 'our opponents' lack of concern for public spending and unwise budgeting'; a third of the widespread alarm at the annual increase in the rates. Other headlines emphasized such personal qualities as 'A local man' and 'Twenty years' experience'. In 1954 only one candidate went beyond this to a scheme of his own: the construction of 'Old People's Bungalows', provided these could be built at a reasonable cost.

However, the party policy is thought by Conservative leaders to carry little weight with the electors: nearly everything, they say, depends on the candidate. The Conservatives are very fatalistic about this emphasis on the individual, and regard it as a reasonable excuse for making each candidate responsible for his own campaign. They try hard to find good candidates, but this has become increasingly difficult in recent years and in 1955 they were unable to find a single suitable candidate to nominate for the municipal elections.

Since 1945 Conservative representation on the Borough Council has steadily decreased, and whereas the party held a majority on the Council throughout the inter-war years its representation is now the smallest of the three parties. In national elections it has held its own, but all the evidence suggests that this is more because of the traditional loyalties of the voters and the prestige of the national leaders than because of the efforts of the local party organization and its leaders.

THE LIBERAL PARTY

Like the Borough in general, the Glossop Liberal Party has moved in the past thirty years or so from dependence upon a few leading families to reliance upon the efforts of the rank and file. The Liberals were not quite so badly hit by the loss of the Partingtons as the Conservatives were by the loss of the Woods, largely because they were not so dependent on one family; and the son of one of the leading Liberal families still lives in the town and engages in party activities. This relative advantage is more than offset by the national decline of the party over the past thirty years. The Glossop voters have followed national trends in national elections, and the Liberal candidate for the High Peak is now counted as lucky because he saves his deposit. In view of this it is remarkable that the Liberal

Party in the town has been so successful in remaining an active force in local affairs and in returning candidates to the Borough Council, on which there are now more Liberals than Conservatives. The way in which it has managed to do this is an instructive study in the relations between social life and politics.

Formal Organization

The Liberal Party in Glossop is a congeries of Liberal associations and clubs, kept together mainly by the work of the agent for the High Peak Division, who has lived in the town for twenty years and gives much of his time to the Glossop organizations. There are six associations and three clubs, namely: the Glossop Liberal Association, the Glossop Women's Liberal Association, the Glossop Young Liberals' Association, the Hadfield, Padfield, Brookfield, and Gamesley Liberal Association, the Padfield Women's Liberal Association, and the Padfield Young Liberals' Association, together with the Liberal clubs of Glossop, Hadfield, and Padfield. That there are so many organizations has been criticized by some members of them, particularly by some of the younger members, who have argued that if the minor associations and clubs were amalgamated with the Glossop Association and Club, the concentration of resources and membership would enable better premises, facilities, and programmes to be made available to all. Even their holders, however, admit that these views have little chance of general adoption, for particularism is as strong among the Liberals as among other groups in Glossop. Moreover, it has been argued that people who participate in Liberal organizations catering particularly for them would not all participate in more general organizations, so that amalgamation would cause total membership to decline.

The Liberals have been more fortunate than the Conservatives in that they have managed to retain the divisional headquarters in the town, and in consequence the relations between the borough and divisional organizations are much smoother. The fact that the agent is a resident and has given so much time to the local associations has enabled him to develop within them a loyalty to the division which prevails over the belief of some of the officers that the party should concentrate on local elections and reduce its contributions to the High Peak Association's apparently hopeless parliamentary campaigning. These officers admit an important dilemma: municipal elections are the only ones in which the party has a sure hope of

success, yet if parliamentary elections were not contested there would be no agent to animate and organize the local associations which have gained so much from his permanent full-time services. There is also some rivalry with Buxton, where the party is not an effective contestant in local elections and reserves its major political effort for parliamentary elections; the Glossop party is trying, with some success, to outdo Buxton by maintaining its hold on the local council and at the same time participating generously in the work of the Divisional Party.

As far as the local associations are concerned, relations with the Divisional Party are a matter for their representatives on the committees of its associations—general, women's, and youth. Reporting back is rare. The relations between the Glossop associations and the North-Western Area are even more tenuous.

Membership

Since 1945 considerable efforts have been made to increase the membership of the several associations so that the party can be sustained by a new mass support instead of by the vanished patronage of a few well-to-do families. In recent years the membership of the associations has fluctuated around the following figures: the Liberal Associations, about 280; the Women's Liberal Associations, about 220; and the Young Liberals' Associations, about 100. These figures give a total membership of about 600, but this is a nominal membership only and exceeds the real membership to a considerable but uncertain extent. All the associations, particularly those of the Young Liberals, tend to keep on their rolls any name that has once been entered upon them as long as the person concerned remains a resident or (in the case of a man undergoing national service) connected with the town, and continues to show even a slight interest in the party—an interest which need not extend to the payment of a membership fee.

In its social composition the party represents all sections of the community except the industrial workers, only a few of whom belong. The leadership of the party offers a good cross-section of the party's membership in social terms, and it usually includes both one or two of the party's ordinary working-class members and several of its most well-to-do business-men. The age composition of the leadership is less representative; only a very few of the officers and committee

members of the associations other than the Y.L.A.s are under the age of forty-five.

The main social characteristic which differentiates members of the Liberal Party from members of other parties is that a very high proportion of them belong to one or other of the Free Churches. Interviews with a random sample of rank-and-file members disclosed that no fewer than two-thirds of them were active members of one or other of these churches.

Leadership and Influence

Recruitment to the leadership is through offers of service and invitations to serve made almost casually rather than as the result of competition between individuals and factions to hold office or as the result of the deliberate selection of recruits by the existing leaders. To show even a mild interest in the affairs of the party seems a sure way to be asked to serve, and attendance at an annual general meeting has sometimes brought a member on to the committee. Once recruited, a member can generally remain in office for as long as he chooses, but in practice the average term of office is fairly short. Occasionally someone has held successive offices through many years but usually a few years—six or seven at the most—have seen both the start and the end of a member's career in the hierarchy, and there is a constant need for new members to take the places of those resigning. In the past, particularly during the Second World War, more than one association has languished for lack of members with enough time to organize its activities.

Most of the present leaders of Glossop Liberalism are men who have reached their positions by a readiness to spare time for the various organizations and by considerable activity in the social side of the movement. The story of one prominent member is representative: a very sociable member of the Glossop Liberal Club, he became a member of the executive and was appointed to represent it on the committee of the association; he did not attend his first meeting, but on the next day a deputation of the committee invited him to stand in the forthcoming municipal elections; he agreed to this after some hesitation on account of his previous lack of concern with municipal affairs; he was elected, and during his term on the Borough Council he has been promoted in the hierarchy of the party as well as in the hierarchy of municipal life and voluntary organizations. Other party officers and Liberal Borough Council candidates have been selected

in as casual a way, although a number of them have already been active in sporting and charitable work unconnected either with the party or with the clubs.

The extent to which Glossop Liberalism is really a political force can be best indicated by the relations between the party's municipal candidates and councillors on the one hand and the associations on the other. Although the active members of the associations are quite keen to win seats on the Council, they do not seem to look beyond this purely electoral function. The associations help Liberals to fight elections, to the extent of paying all or most of a candidate's expenses of £20 or £30 and providing canvassers and other helpers, but they do not concern themselves with the candidates' policies or with the activities on the Council of any successful candidates. There is no Liberal policy for Glossop: there are only a number of Liberal councillors who have their own individual views and attitudes. They concert their activity in the Council for the nomination of committee members, but they do not report to the associations on the work they do there and they regard themselves as responsible only to their electors. The selection committee of the Glossop Liberal Association therefore does no more than its name implies. Neither it nor the full executive committee exercises any control over the councillors, who have enjoyed complete freedom since the decline of the Partington family, which once influenced—even dominated—them. That its function is so limited does not mean that the committee has an easy task; since the 1930's, certainly since 1945, it has had considerable difficulty in finding enough suitable candidates to contest the available seats, with the result that in the last few years almost anybody of any competence who has been willing to stand has been nominated. The shortage of really suitable candidates has prevented the committee from contesting as many seats as the party might gain by the combination of the party vote with a candidate's personal vote. Only occasionally has it fought two seats in the same ward at the same election.

Party Activities

The Liberal associations, their members, their leaders, and their councillors, thus present a picture of organizations and individuals political in name rather than in nature. Yet although social activities and habit play a large part in keeping them together they avow that the primary purpose of their work is political—the advancement of

Liberalism, a cause which has been described in rather different ways in different parts of the country. In Glossop Liberalism is non-doctrinal and non-sectarian: the notions of Radical Action and the former conflict between the factions of Lady Violet Bonham-Carter and Lady Megan Lloyd George seem to have aroused no response. It is true that in practice the Liberals on the Borough Council have tended to work with the Labour Party rather than with the Conservatives, but this co-operation has been limited and uneasy, if only because of the indiscipline of the Liberals themselves. Moreover, both older and younger Liberals expect that it may end when the older, more 'responsible' Labour councillors are replaced by the new 'wild' men, even though they find it difficult to explain in what ways the younger Labour men are wild. Thus Glossop may follow nearby Dukinfield and Droylsden, where the Liberals co-operate with the Conservatives. The continuing co-operation with Labour has resulted from local issues rather than from the strength of a pro-socialist force in the party. Historically, Glossop Liberals have felt themselves to be anti-Tory; the strength they have retained has helped to perpetuate the attitude, and the policy of the local Conservatives has tended to keep the Liberals on their 'anti-Tory' line. To the Liberals the issues between themselves and the Conservatives are epitomized in the word 'rates': they have been prepared to see rates rise if increases were necessary for the expansion and improvement of the Borough, while the Conservatives, so they hold, have been penny-wise: the issues to which they constantly refer are those of water-supply and sewage.¹

The one national issue which arouses the enthusiasm of the Glossop Liberals is that of co-partnership. This is the theme to which they pay most attention in their private discussions and public statements. Co-partnership schemes, of slightly different kinds, have been introduced in their own firms by both the parliamentary candidate and the local party's chief manufacturer; profit-sharing schemes are in operation in some of the smaller firms run by Liberals; it is stressed by all the party's propagandists.

In view of the casual methods of selecting candidates, the independence enjoyed by councillors, and the lack of a definite policy on local issues, it may be said that from the political point of view the chief purpose of the associations and their municipal candidates and councillors is to hold a body of Liberals together and to keep the

¹ These issues will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Liberal name and cause before the public in readiness for parliamentary elections. However, each month every association has a political talk, either directly related to Liberalism or on a topic of general interest. Speeches on Liberal policy take their place alongside talks on such subjects as the British system of government, racial problems in Africa, or the place of women in public life.

These political meetings are heavily outnumbered by social functions; there is a dance every week, a whist drive almost every week, meetings for indoor games, and so on; garden parties, excursions to holiday resorts, and visits to beauty spots are frequent from Easter until autumn. This prevalence of social functions in the activities of the Glossop associations is one of the chief subjects of controversy within the party: is Liberalism in Glossop to be more of a social movement than of a political one? At present the social view is in the ascendancy, because of the numerical weakness of the members who are really interested in local and national politics. The efforts of the agent and a few politically-minded leaders to get the associations to give more time to politics are to a large extent thwarted by the political indifferences and social keenness of the majority of the members. Moreover, the fact that the politically minded are mainly concerned with politics in a debating-society sense does not help them to arouse interest; if they were concerned with formulating a Liberal policy for Glossop or if the national party had a good chance of returning to office their task might be easier.

The neglect of politics by the associations may even have political advantages. By the number and vigour of its social activities the Liberal Party in Glossop probably keeps more people feeling themselves to be Liberals than it would if it devoted more effort to politics and less to social activities. The people who in this way come to feel themselves Liberals tend to vote Liberal in local and parliamentary elections, and, as one member of the party has put it, 'keep the flag flying higher than in places where Liberals spend more time on politics'.

The influence of the more straightforward political members is countered not only by those individuals who for one reason or another favour social activities, but also by the whole influence of the Liberal clubs. The Glossop Liberal Club, with a fairly steady membership of 200, claims to be the best of the town's political clubs. It is a meeting-ground open to all and not merely to Liberals; occasional moves to purge it of members of the other parties have always failed.

The Club's committee has insisted that any political exclusiveness would ruin the Club.

The Liberal Party in Glossop is thus a body which enjoys an active, even a successful, life despite the serious problems of organization and recruitment which have been mentioned. It provides a good example of how political organizations can perpetuate themselves by habit and social activities rather than by a successful struggle—or at any rate a hopeful struggle—to promote policies and enjoy effective power. Some local Liberals, of all ages, are anxious lest the present activity should prove to be deceptive—the product of a momentum that is already almost spent and is not being maintained or replaced. They regret not only the cumbrousness of the party's organization, the looseness and vagueness of its structure (there is no copy of its constitution in use), and the predominance of social activities, but also the failure of the associations to develop a distinctive policy in local affairs or in the national politics of the Liberal Party. Yet even the most alarmed critics have failed—most have never indeed attempted—to remove the faults they criticize. Hence the readiness of veterans who have long been active in the party to disagree over its prospects: some fear its decay, others believe it will survive, now waxing, now waning, in the same way as it has survived the last twenty-five years, despite the local social changes and the general decline of the Liberal Party in the country.

THE LABOUR PARTY

The story of the Glossop Labour Party in the past thirty years is of course one of growth rather than of decline. Although the Labour Representation Committee was formed in 1900 and became officially known as the Labour Party in 1906, it was not until the adoption of the new constitution in 1918 that provision was made for the organization of local branches and the acceptance of individual members. There were a number of areas in which local Labour parties were formed in advance of this, either through the initiative of individual M.P.s or by the alliance of local trades councils with branches of the I.L.P., but Glossop was not one of them. However, there were a number of I.L.P. supporters in the town as well as some branches of the textile unions, and the Glossop Labour Party was formed from these two groups within a few months of the adoption of the new national constitution.

In the municipal elections of 1919 the new party nominated two candidates, and met with immediate success since one of them was returned at the top of the poll in his ward. This was encouraging, and in the following year six candidates were nominated, enough to fill all the vacancies on the Council. However, none of them succeeded, and in subsequent elections the party was less ambitious, generally nominating one candidate in each of the three wards. By 1922 Labour's representation on the Council had grown to four members, but thereafter its strength waxed and waned within fairly narrow limits, and the Second World War saw the party with the same number of Council members as it had had in 1922. In parliamentary elections in the High Peak division between the wars the Labour Party never came within sight of winning, but its candidate never lost his deposit and in 1922 and 1935 it had the satisfaction of polling more votes than the Liberal Party.

On the outbreak of the war the Glossop Party, which was not in a very lively condition, used the national party truce as an excuse for abandoning all activity. For three years it lay completely dormant and then, in 1942, it was revived by an odd combination of people, none of whom had been active in the party before. The leading figure was a man who had until a year or so earlier been an active Conservative, and he was joined by an ex-Communist of Russian origin, an ex-member of the I.L.P. with pacifist connexions, and a housewife who was interested in social work and had helped to organize the local Women's Institute. This group held several discussion meetings in the Community House and then invited the North-West Regional Organizer of the Labour Party down and, with his approval and guidance, established a new Glossop Labour Party of which the ex-Conservative was the first secretary. This move was resisted by the Labour Club, which was mainly social in its interests and thought that too much politics would disturb the peace, and at first the new party had to pay two shillings a meeting for the hire of a room in the club. However, the party flourished, largely as a result of the energetic efforts of the secretary and his wife, professional people from Manchester who had moved out to Glossop for reasons of health.

In the municipal elections held immediately after the end of the war Labour won three new seats and since then it has improved its position to become the largest of the three party groups in the council. The war-time differences between the club and the party have

been forgotten and in its organization the party is considerably more unified than either the Liberals or the Conservatives. As will be seen, however, this formal unity masks important differences of opinion between groups of members.

Formal Organization

The Labour Party, like the other two parties, is handicapped in its organization by the scattered nature of the High Peak Division and the poor communications within it. Because the Division is a difficult and expensive one to organize, the Glossop Party gets little, except during a general election, in return for the sizeable contributions it makes to the revenue of the Divisional Party. However, there is none of the tension between the Borough Party and the Divisional Party that affects the Conservatives: the Glossop Labour Party is the second strongest borough party in the division, and the meetings of the Divisional Management Committee rotate between five centres of which Glossop is one. The part-time agent for the division visits Glossop fairly frequently and is on good terms with the leaders of the Glossop Party.

Within the Borough of Glossop there were formerly two party branches, one at Glossop and one at Hadfield, but in 1934 the national rules of the Labour Party were changed so that it became no longer possible for a single borough within a division to have more than one branch. Under the new rules a Ward Group should be organized in each ward, and the General Committee of the Borough Branch should consist largely of delegates from the Ward Groups. The Hadfield Branch was wound up in consequence of this change, but the Glossop Labour Party has never organized Ward Groups. As the members in the other two wards all live within ten or fifteen minutes' walk of the Labour Club, this is understandable, but Hadfield is too far away for members to get to the club except by bus, and membership in the Hadfield Ward languishes accordingly.

The Labour Club, which is the headquarters of the party, is a small terraced house near the centre of the town. The back parlour has been converted into a bar, with a dart-board and tables at which members sometimes play dominoes, and the front and upstairs rooms are used for meetings. No distinction is drawn between club membership and party membership, and subscriptions are paid by members when they visit the club so that the party has no need to send workers from house to house to collect dues. Enough money is

made by the sale of drinks to pay all the expenses of the club, including the wages of the steward. As party meetings are held free of charge on club premises, and as the club provides a convenient focus for the organization of money-raising activities like jumble sales, the party gains a certain amount of financial benefit from the existence of the club.

Whether the club is helpful to the party politically is, however, a matter of some dispute. Its main disadvantage is simply that it obviates the need for the party to organize the collection of dues. The establishment of a team of dues collectors, who call regularly on members, gain experience in canvassing, and get to know the residents of their street or area, is an important step in the organization of any party branch. For this reason the existence of the club may be almost as great a handicap to the Glossop Labour Party as the dependence of many Conservative Associations on large subscriptions from a handful of members was a handicap to them before the adoption of the recommendations of the Maxwell Fyfe Committee. It is significant that in Buxton, where there is a population of similar size but no Labour Club, the Labour Party has established teams of dues collectors, has organized a Ward Committee in each ward, and now has nearly three times as many members as the Glossop Party. A further disadvantage of the club, it is said, is that it emphasizes the social rather than the political aspects of party membership. Too much should not be made of this, however, as other studies of Labour Party organization have shown that in any case only a small proportion of members are seriously interested in political activity. If the club were closed it would be surprising if many of the members who now congregate in the bar would take to canvassing or discussions of policy as an alternative.

Because ward groups have not been established, the Glossop Party has not adopted the Model Rules put out by the national Labour Party. According to these rules, there should be a General Committee consisting of delegates from ward committees, the Women's Section, the League of Youth and affiliated organizations, and an Executive Committee elected each year by the General Committee. In Glossop there is simply an Executive Committee, which consists of two delegates from affiliated organizations, one representative of the Women's Section, and eight other members and four officers elected by the Annual General Meeting of the Party. This is an unorthodox form of organization, and the party is also out of line in

that it has not adopted the Standing Orders which the national Labour Party prescribes for its branches. According to these Standing Orders, the Labour Group on the Council should hold a meeting before each Council meeting in order to concert the policy of the group; 'members of the Group are expected to abide by Group decisions and not speak or vote in opposition in the Council, unless the Group has decided to leave the matter in question to a free vote'; and it is made clear that a free vote should be an exceptional occurrence, for 'it is a serious source of political weakness and embarrassment to have public conflict between Labour representatives'.¹ Further, it is provided that three representatives of the local Labour Party should attend group meetings in a consultative capacity, without voting power 'for purposes of maintaining contact between the Group and the Party'.² Although it is obligatory for local branches of the party to adopt these Standing Orders, subject to minor variations in detail which may be permitted by Headquarters, the Glossop Party has not done so and its procedure differs considerably from that prescribed. This has become a controversial issue within the party and more will be said about it in a later section.

The finances of the Glossop Labour Party can be simply described. Each member pays an annual subscription of 6s., of which 2s. 9d. goes to the Divisional Party, 6d. to Transport House, and the remaining 2s. 9d. is kept by Glossop. The only other sources of revenue are the donations which municipal candidates and trade-union branches make to the municipal election fund and the grants which the Entertainments Committee of the Labour Club makes to the party. The money for these grants is raised partly by social activities like whist drives and raffles which are organized by the Entertainments Committee, and which, in the absence of a club, would normally be organized by a women's section of the party, and partly by the management of one or two dances each year in the main public hall of the town. This hall is owned by the Borough Council and a dance is held there every Saturday night. As is the case in towns up and down the country, the Council assigns the management and profits of these dances to the various social and political organizations in the Borough, which take turns on a rota drawn up by the

¹ Labour Party Memorandum, *Labour Groups on Local Authorities*, adopted by the National Executive Committee on 27 July 1938.

² *Ibid.* It is provided that the number of representatives should not exceed one-third of the membership of the group.

Public Halls Committee of the Council. The attendance at dances does not vary appreciably according to which society is running them, so that the management of a dance by the Labour Club does not involve the club either in the task of organizing much publicity or in any risk of not making a profit.

More than half the money collected by the Glossop Party is made over to the Divisional Party. The figures in the following table of revenue and expenditure are not those of any one year, but are round figures which may be regarded as typical of the past two or three years.

TABLE 8
Glossop Labour Party Finance

<i>Revenue</i>		£	<i>Expenditure</i>		£	s.
Subscriptions		50	Affiliation fees to Divisional Party		23	
Grants from Entertainments Committee of Labour Club		80	Affiliation fees to National Party		4	
Donations to municipal election fund		25	Contribution to Divisional Management Fund		37	10
			Contribution to Divisional Election Fund		25	
			Glossop municipal elections		65	
Total (approx.)		£155	Total (approx.)		£155	

The affiliation fees paid are strictly related to the subscriptions collected, but the contributions to divisional funds are fixed each year by the High Peak Management Committee on a basis of 'organizable population': Glossop and Buxton, with approximately equal populations, have to pay identical contributions despite a considerable difference in party membership, but the rural areas have to pay proportionately less because they are more difficult to organize.

This account of the organization of the party would not be complete without some discussion of the position of the Divisional Party. As has been said, the geography of the High Peak Division makes it a very difficult one to organize, and this difficulty is increased in the case of the Labour Party by a perennial shortage of money and the knowledge that electoral success is an eventual hope rather than an immediate prospect. However, the divisional agent is a lively and energetic man who does a good deal to overcome these difficulties, even though he has to combine the task with a full-

time job on the railway, the duties of branch secretary of the N.U.R., and membership of an urban district council.

The agent's main functions are to extract subscriptions from the branches for the divisional campaign fund, to organize meetings in co-operation with the branches, and to take charge of the campaign during a parliamentary election. The budget on which he has to work is fairly small, and in the year 1952-3 he overspent by about £50 which came out of his own pocket but was subsequently repaid. The affiliation fees of the branches provide about £100 a year, and those of trade-union branches about £50; the contributions of the branches to the Divisional Management Fund come to about £150, and those to the Election Fund total about £100; and in addition there are miscellaneous sources of revenue, such as whist drives and an occasional sweepstake, which provide perhaps £25 in an average year. This total revenue of a little over £400 puts the party at a considerable disadvantage compared with the Conservatives, and they are slightly worse off than the much smaller Liberal Party. However, the adoption in 1952 of a candidate sponsored by the Amalgamated Engineering Union has somewhat improved the party's financial position, as the A.E.U. now makes an annual grant towards the agent's expenses which, although not large, is sufficient to relieve the immediate pressure. More important, the A.E.U. has guaranteed to pay the greater part of the cost of the election campaign, and this made a considerable difference in 1955. It may be noted here that the High Peak is listed by the Labour Party as a 'marginal constituency', in consequence of which it is entitled to buy nationally produced publicity material at half the normal price.

Membership

During the past three years the number of members has remained fairly constant at between 160 and 180, and the turnover appears to be small. The members are drawn from all age groups in a way that reflects the age distribution of the electorate, and about one-third of them are women. The Labour Party has thus been considerably more successful in attracting women members than the Conservative Party, less than a fifth of whose members are women, but not as successful as the Liberal Party, in which the sexes are about equally represented.

Most of the members are industrial workers and members of their families, and when we interviewed a sample of the rank-and-file

members we found that they were drawn from the various types of occupation in roughly the same proportions as the whole body of Labour voters: about three-quarters of them are industrial workers or their dependants and the remainder work in shops or offices. The people from the professional and managerial groups who vote Labour tend not to join the party unless they are seriously interested in political work. There are only a handful of them among the rank-and-file members, but they play a prominent part in the leadership of the party. Of the nine Labour councillors in 1953-4, four were engaged in professional and managerial occupations.

Analysis of the religious affiliations of members shows that about half of them are Nonconformists, about a quarter of them are Roman Catholics, and the rest are either inactive Anglicans or not religious: there are very few active Anglicans in the Party.

Leadership and Influence

The leading members of the party are by no means united on questions of policy and organization, and, as is usually the case, the formal organization of the party is a very poor guide to the distribution of influence. The most influential member is not on the Executive Committee, while the chairman, although a popular and energetic man, has very little influence on decisions. Our observations of party activities over a period of twelve months made it clear that there are three distinct groups which compete for influence, to which we shall give the convenient, if not precisely accurate, labels of the 'older' group, the younger 'moderate' group, and the 'left-wing' group. We were interested, although not surprised, to find that the perception of these groupings varies according to the perspective of the person describing them. Thus the Conservatives tend to think of the Labour leaders as falling into two groups, which they designate by some such terms as 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable', and in this division our 'moderate' and 'left-wing' groups are lumped together in the 'unreasonable' category. On the other hand, some of the members of the left-wing group see only the division between themselves and the rest, and one of them gave us a list of the 'progressives' and 'social élite or snobs' among the party leadership in which all the members of our 'moderate' group appeared as 'snobs'.

The difference of attitude between these groups will be described shortly; first it is necessary to establish their membership. As will be seen, there are considerable similarities of social background

within each group, and marked differences between the groups. The first group comprises the four older members of the Labour group on the Council. They are all over sixty; three of them are natives of the town and the other one was born only a few miles away and has lived in the town for forty-eight years; and their periods of service on the Council vary from nineteen years to thirty-one years. None of them has worked in industry: one is a civil servant and the others have retired from the occupations of, respectively, insurance agent, wholesale buyer, and postman. Their influence in the Labour Party derives partly from their established positions and experience, and partly—and this is more important—from the personal leadership and prestige of one of their number. This is Alderman Doyle, who has sat on the Council continuously since 1922, has twice been mayor, and in 1953 was chairman of the Housing Committee and also of the North-West Derbyshire Divisional Executive for Education. He is also chairman of the Glossop Magistrates' Bench, and is the author of half a page of notes on local affairs which appears each week in the local paper. He is clearly the most influential individual in the public life of the town, and it is a remarkable testimony to his personality that, so far as we could see, he is respected and liked by almost everyone, his severest critics being some of the more radical members of his own party. He is, incidentally, a member not only of the Labour Club but also of the Liberal Club, where he goes 'to meet his friends', but he makes a point of not going there during the period immediately preceding an election.

The second group comprises four of the younger Labour councillors, the wife of one of them, and one of the officers of the party. Their ages range from the early thirties to the middle forties; only one of them is a native of the town, the other five having immigrated during the past twenty years; and they have become prominent in the Labour Party only since the war. One of them took the lead in refounding the party in 1942, and the others became active later. They have received rather more formal education than the members of either the older group or the left-wing group, and, of the councillors, two are school-teachers and one is an industrial chemist. The members of this group are good organizers; they value efficiency and rationality more than tradition and local pride; and they have sometimes complained that the Council is not sufficiently 'business-like' in its operations.

The members of the third group are all trade unionists, and two of

them are active in the Trades Council. Their ages and some of their interests vary, but they are all class-conscious working men of the type that have been the backbone of the Labour movement. Although they all left school at fourteen, they value education and tend to read a good many fairly serious, informative books: one of them, who is a member of the *Daily Herald* Book Club, described people of his type as 'thinking men' and clearly believes that if all working men would think they would all support the Labour Party. Only one of this group is a councillor, but another is chairman of the party, a third was until recently the party Secretary, and a fourth succeeded him in that office although during the course of the survey this man resigned and he has since become politically inactive. The first three are all on the party Executive and are the leaders of the group, but they are backed by a number of generally inactive party members and by practically all the members of the Trades Council. In most industrial towns a group of this kind would be able to exert fairly effective control over the Labour Party, and it is the cause of a good deal of frustration that in Glossop they have very little influence on the party's activities. Largely because of this, they use the Trades Council as a platform for their political views, and as they are more interested in national issues than either the other groups in the Labour Party or the leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties, the curious situation arises in which the Trades Council, which in principle is concerned purely with local matters, is the only organization in Glossop which discusses and passes resolutions on the main issues of national and international politics.

The main issues of controversy between these groups relate to the organization and tactics of the party rather than to questions of policy, but there are one or two matters of policy on which they are divided. The most important of these is the problem of whether the Council should continue to build its full quota of houses even though the waiting list is now fairly short and the subsidies and cost of providing services for the new houses can only be met by increasing the rate: the two younger groups feel that the full quota should be built, while the older group is doubtful of the wisdom of this. There are also other policy differences; but they are unimportant compared with the question of party organization, on which the older group and the left-wing group have sharply contrasted views. The older group believe that they have more influence on the Council by collaborating with other councillors, particularly Liberals, than they

could have by adopting a strict party line; they believe that councillors should be free to speak and vote as they please rather than be tied to the decisions of a party caucus; they think that it is usually better to nominate one candidate in each ward, and concentrate all efforts on his campaign, than to nominate two and run the risk of the Labour votes being split so that neither of them is successful. The left-wing group hold the opposite view on each of these matters, and while some of them admit that the personal influence of the older Labour members may owe a good deal to their freedom from strict party rules, they add that this is procured at the cost of failing to build up an active and efficient party organization which might one day secure a majority over both the other parties on the Council.

This disagreement came to a head over the proposal made in 1952 to adopt the Standing Orders which the Labour Party prescribes for its branches, and which would bind Council members to decisions taken at a caucus meeting prior to each Council meeting, with representatives of the local party present. In 1952 a motion that this procedure be adopted was put to the Executive Committee by two members of the 'left-wing' group and accepted by a majority vote. The chairman and one other member of the committee (and of the left-wing group) were accordingly appointed to attend meetings of the Labour Group on the Council as observers, with the right to speak and the duty of reporting back to the committee on the activities of the group.

However, when the two observers turned up at the next meeting of the Group they were refused admission. The Labour councillors, it seems, were agreed both on the desirability of their being free to disagree in Council and on the undesirability of their meetings being 'observed' by representatives of the party Executive.

The party chairman was naturally somewhat annoyed by being locked out in this way, and at the next meeting of the Executive he moved that the issue should be referred either to the Divisional Executive or to the North-West Regional organizer of the party. However, one of the 'moderate' group immediately threatened that if this were done he and at least one other councillor would resign, and after a rather heated discussion it was eventually decided to discuss the matter at a full party meeting, at which the divisional agent would be invited to take the chair. At this meeting four members of the 'left-wing' group spoke in favour of keeping to the Standing Orders which had just been adopted and four councillors

opposed this course, including the two most influential members of the 'older' group, neither of whom was on the Executive. The meeting decided to reverse the decision of the Executive and continue as before.

This incident demonstrates very clearly that the distribution of power within the party is determined by the relations between groups of members rather than by the formal organization. The left-wing group included nearly all the officers of the party but they had very little influence over policy; the leading members of the older group were not even on the Executive but, when it came to a showdown, they carried the day. The members of the moderate group often differ from the older group on matters of Council policy, but generally support them on matters of party organization and strategy, as they did on this occasion.

Since the older members are in a minority in the Labour Group, it is clear that their continued leadership on general issues largely depends on an agreement to differ over some matters of Council policy: they could hardly retain their positions, either in the party or on the Council, if they were forced to vote against their own judgement in order to conform to party discipline. The adoption of Standing Orders was therefore much more than a change in the formal organization of the party; it was a real challenge to the structure of power, and its reversal both demonstrated the nature of this structure and preserved it from change.

Party Activities

The activities of the Labour Party may be considered under a number of heads: the discussion of party policy; the propagation of policy; the nomination of candidates for elective office; the conduct of election campaigns; and the activities of Labour members of the Council.

In practice there are hardly any organized discussions of general policy within the party. There are no ward groups, there are no general meetings of members except the Annual General Meeting and the very infrequent special meetings which are called to discuss some particular problem of party organization, and there is no General Management Committee. The Executive Committee meet once a month and discuss local issues which have arisen: for instance at one meeting they considered a complaint made by the Trades Council that unpleasant fumes were being emitted by a

chemical works, and asked a Labour councillor who was chairman of the Health Committee to report on this. The Executive Committee also deal with the choice of candidates and with the organization of election campaigns, but they do not discuss questions of national policy and they only rarely discuss questions of local policy such as the Council's housing programme or the problem of attracting overspill population. Matters like this are normally left for members of the Labour Group on the Council to deal with. Not enough is known about the activities of local Labour parties for it to be possible to say how far Glossop is unusual in its absence of policy discussions. Problems of national policy are clearly discussed in many local parties, for resolutions resulting from them are submitted in large numbers to the regional and national conferences, but our inquiries into the work of Manchester branches have shown that this is by no means the general practice: some parties go in for it and some do not, and a good deal of research would be required to discover what the proportions are and what types of branch come into each category.

The Glossop Party does not propagate Labour policies much more than it discusses them. Public meetings are occasionally held at which well-known Members of Parliament expound the party's programme, but there is rarely more than one of these each year. In addition, the candidate for the High Peak has recently adopted the practice of visiting Glossop every month or two and holding a series of short street-corner meetings with the aid of a loud-speaker van. With these exceptions, public meetings are held only during election campaigns.

The nomination of candidates for Borough Council and County Council elections is in the hands of the Executive Committee. In practice, as with the Liberal and Conservative parties, the problem is to find suitable people willing to stand rather than to choose between a number of potential candidates. Because of this the recurrent controversy over whether the party should nominate candidates for all the vacant seats or confine itself to one in each ward sometimes has an air of unreality. In 1953, for instance, this was brought up by one or two members of the left-wing group, and it was agreed that the committee would nominate a second candidate in the Hadfield ward if a suitable person could be found. When it came to the point, however, not one of the five Hadfield residents who were approached by the chairman proved willing to stand, and while there were one or

two members in Glossop itself who were willing, it was generally agreed that only a Hadfield resident would have any chance of success. One officer of the party expressed the general view on this when he said: 'Well, we wouldn't think much of it in Glossop if a Hadfield man were to put up for one of our seats.'

In the Hadfield ward, where the party has few members, the situation is often like this. In the two Glossop wards the position varies, and occasionally there are two or three potential candidates for one nomination. In these circumstances an informal process of selection takes place, but this is managed very discreetly so that the ambitions of the unsuccessful candidates are not publicly known unless they themselves disclose them. It is important, in such a small party, that feelings should not be hurt more than is necessary.

Being nominated by the party does not take a candidate far towards winning the seat. A good many voters at municipal elections are concerned more about the candidate as a person than about the party label he bears, and it is essential for the candidate to make himself known to his constituents. The general practice is for the candidate himself to canvass most of his ward, introducing himself to electors on the doorstep and asking them for their vote. For a candidate trying to get on to the Council for the first time this is essential, and councillors seeking re-election find it advisable. There is a marked difference, of course, between this kind of canvass and the kind that is usual in cities. There the main object of the canvassers is to mark the party preferences of the electors on the register, so that on election day each party can round up its own supporters and get them to the polls; in most cases all that the canvasser does on the doorstep is to ask the elector which party he supports, mark this on the register, and move on to the next house. In Glossop the party ticket does not mean so much in municipal elections: the results of our survey suggest that only about 30 per cent. of the electors can see any real difference between the attitude of the parties to local affairs, and that about 60 per cent. of them would prefer municipal politics not to be conducted on party lines at all. In Glossop the personal touch is the main thing; candidates get off to a flying start if they are already known to their constituents through their work, as in the case of shopkeepers; and candidates who lack this advantage have to make up for it by going from door to door during the campaign.

The party helps its candidates in municipal elections mainly by putting out publicity, but this is done on a much smaller scale than is

usual in cities. Instead of an election address for each candidate there is normally a simple pamphlet mentioning all the Labour candidates in Glossop. Advertisements are placed in the local paper, a few posters are displayed, supporters are urged to display handbills in the front windows of their houses, and one or two public meetings are held. The campaign does not make much of a stir; the party's efforts probably make little difference to the result; it is the activities and personal qualities of the candidates that decide the issue.

In national elections the circumstances are very different. Most people have a fixed allegiance to one party and most of those who do not have a fixed allegiance make up their minds how to vote in any particular election some time before the campaign begins. Practically everyone sees the election as a contest between the national parties rather than as one between individual candidates, and the personalities of the candidates have very little effect on the way people vote. In these circumstances the local campaign that is waged by the parties has—in the High Peak as in most other constituencies—something of the character of a ritual, which has to be gone through but seldom makes any real difference to the result. It is, however, a ritual to which a great deal of importance is attached. The Labour Party spends between two and three times as much money on a parliamentary election in Glossop as on a municipal election, notwithstanding the fact that the campaign clearly has less influence on the voters in the former case than it has, or might have, in the latter. The techniques adopted are substantially the same as those used in constituencies up and down the country, and need not be described in detail. It cannot be said that the organization is very efficient, however, and the party has never even attempted to make a complete canvass. The main reason for this seems to be the failure of the party to attract young people to its ranks, and in this respect the Liberals and Conservatives in the town are even worse off.

The main discussions of the party policy take place, it has been said, in the meetings of the Labour Group on the Council. As the Standing Orders of the party have not been adopted, however, these discussions are not observed by representatives of the Executive Committee and they do not result in decisions which are binding upon members. In consequence, there is no clear chain of decisions connecting the Executive Committee, the Group, and the behaviour of Council members, and the latter sometimes disagree publicly on important issues. In 1953, for instance, there was a controversy over

the financial plan for the forthcoming year: the Finance Committee, whose chairman was one of the older Labour members, proposed that additional expenditure should be met by dipping into reserves rather than by raising the rate; one of the other Labour members moved the reference back of this plan on the ground that it would be better to make a small increase in the rate than to dip into reserves and have to make a bigger increase in a subsequent year; and in the ensuing division five of the Labour members supported the Finance Committee while four voted for the reference back.

If the Labour members sometimes reduce their collective influence by disagreeing, at other times they increase it by making an informal alliance with the Liberals. Since 1950 the two parties have jointly commanded a majority on the Council, and each year they arrange the distribution of committee chairmanships by agreement among themselves. The Labour Party get the most important committees, normally those dealing with Finance, Housing, and Health; the Liberals get the next choice; and the Conservatives have to take what they are given. On occasion, too, the Liberal councillors are invited to attend meetings of the Labour Group with the idea of concerting a common policy, but both parties contain too many individualists for it to be possible to say how much effect these infrequent meetings have on Council decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

In England the Conservative Party has generally had a basic advantage over other parties in that its social structure has corresponded more nearly than theirs to that of society as a whole. Nationally, a section of the country's social *élite* has formed what could reasonably be called 'the ruling class', and this ruling class has been overwhelmingly Conservative. In the constituencies the party's leaders have tended to be the leaders of local society, the chief landowners and business men of the area, and their followers to be people who accepted equally their social and their political leadership. The decline of the Liberal Party at the end of the First World War consolidated this relationship, and the interwar period was one in which England was basically a Conservative country. The failure of the General Strike and of the two short-lived Labour governments seemed to confirm the position of the Conservative leadership in politics and society.

The social changes of recent years have undermined this position. The great increase in the number of university scholarships has made education the main avenue of social advancement. Persons drawn from all levels of society have become scientists, journalists, administrators, and industrial managers. These professional and managerial groups have increased in numbers and in influence at the same time as they have become more diverse in social origin. They have not necessarily been attracted by the Conservative Party, the social structure of which has until recently had no clear place for them. The fact that large numbers of them supported the Labour Party was one of the main influences in shaping that party's success between 1945 and 1950.

One of the purposes of the changes in party organization made under the guidance of Sir David Maxwell Fyfe and Lord Woolton was to bring Conservative Associations into line with the changing structure of society. Membership drives were launched and more emphasis was placed on the regular collection of many small subscriptions than on the few large donations of the past. There was more reliance on whist drives and dances organized by the associations and less on garden parties given by wealthy supporters. Local associations were encouraged to discuss questions of policy and to submit resolutions to higher authorities within the party, so that the products of the secondary schools and the civic universities should feel that the party had an interest in their ideas and not only in their votes. The purchase of seats by wealthy aspirants to Parliament was forbidden, and associations were encouraged to select candidates from all levels of society. In all these ways the local associations have been made both more efficient and more attractive to the new middle classes. In general, this strategy has worked very well. It has been most successful in suburban areas and moderately successful in large industrial cities. In small industrial towns the success of the strategy has varied widely: in Glossop it has not succeeded at all.

This does not mean that the Conservative vote in the town has withered away. In national, though not in local, elections the Conservative Party still gets more support than any other party. But this support is largely habitual, is heaviest among older people, and to a considerable extent reflects the social structure of the town as it was a generation ago. This was very clearly expressed in the following remark made by a Conservative industrial worker.

I'm all for the working man, but the way I look at it, the best thing for

the working man is that he should be governed by aristocrats, like the Woods and the Rhodes that used to own the mills round here. They were gentlemen.

The present leaders of the party would not claim to be aristocrats, and they do not get so much support in local elections as is forthcoming for the party in national elections, when the party is all-important. At the same time the party has done nothing to capture the active support of the new middle classes in the town, who are mainly engaged in managerial, professional, and office work. The 'whist drive set', who have become so influential in Conservative Associations elsewhere, mainly attend Liberal functions in Glossop. Largely in consequence of these factors, the Conservative organization in the town is almost moribund.

The Labour Party might well have benefited from this state of affairs by building a strong branch based upon working-class organizations. Because industrial relations in the town have generally been good, however, the union branches have not been militant and the lead in Labour politics between the wars was largely taken by non-manual workers. These leaders have deliberately chosen to seek personal influence in the Council rather than to build up a strong and well-disciplined party. Their own influence, with their party in a minority, has been exceptionally wide. Now that Labour might well have a majority, however, the personal nature of the party's leadership and its organizational weaknesses are a great handicap to it. A further handicap is that Labour members tend to lack the necessary social skills for the successful organization of whist drives, dances, and similar functions. The industrial workers and their wives who constitute the bulk of the membership are simply not as good at organizing social events as middle-class people are, while middle-class Labour supporters tend not to join the party at all unless they have political ambitions, and to engage only in political work when they do join. This is a problem for the party in nearly all constituencies.

The Liberal Party has been able to survive in the town largely because of these weaknesses in the other parties, and partly because of the influence of a few outstanding individuals. Its social functions are well organized, and it has been more successful than the other parties in attracting the support of managerial, professional, and white-collar workers and their wives. These groups provide about 60 per cent. of both the members and the leaders of the party, compared

with 40 per cent. of the Conservative members and 30 per cent. of the Conservative leaders. It has thus adjusted itself to the present social situation better than the Conservative Party, and it has retained its position on the Borough Council. In national elections its support is naturally much smaller, but at least it has managed to keep the High Peak as one of the constituencies where a Liberal candidate can still save his deposit.

This rather detailed survey of the party branches has demonstrated the importance of social factors in political organization. It is impossible to understand the local basis of British politics unless this is appreciated, and it is difficult to isolate the social factors involved except by making surveys of this kind. At the same time the study of political organizations goes only part of the way towards explaining the political behaviour of the mass of electors. The social and personal characteristics of the electors themselves are at least equally important in determining this, and these factors will be examined in Chapter 6.

5

THE PARTY MEMBERS¹

It is only very recently that inquiries have been made into the characteristics and attitudes of the rank-and-file members of political parties. Such inquiries are valuable, for these members play an important role in the British political system. Even though their subscriptions are small and their activities are often more social than political, the fact that large numbers of people are willing to subscribe to the party of their choice and, on occasion, to work for it, is the foundation of the British party system in the twentieth century. If it were not so, the parties would have to depend for their electoral organizations either on the distribution of favours or on donations from wealthy individuals and corporations on a much larger scale than is known today.

As the inquiries that have previously been published deal with party branches in either London² or Manchester,³ it was thought that interesting contrasts might emerge from a study of party members in a town as small as Glossop.

An initial difficulty was that in the Conservative and Liberal parties in the town the concept of membership is rather vague, and it was not easy to draw random samples of members for interview. However, by drawing larger samples than were required, so as to allow for the inclusion in the lists of people who were no longer members, we were able to secure interviews with thirty-three rank-and-file members of each party. At each interview the general questionnaire was used together with a supplementary questionnaire dealing with political activities, information, and opinions.

These samples are too small to yield reliable information regarding

¹ This chapter, written in collaboration with D. E. G. Plowman, is based in part on material first published in *Political Studies*, vol. iii, no. 3 (1955), which is reproduced here by permission of the Editor and the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

² M. Benney and P. Geiss, 'Social Class and Politics in Greenwich', in *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. i (1950), and Julius Gould, 'Riverside: a Labour Constituency', in *Fabian Journal*, Nov. 1954.

³ Manchester Fabian Society, 'Put Policy on the Agenda', in *Fabian Journal*, Feb. 1952, and D. V. Donnison and D. E. G. Plowman, 'The Functions of Local Labour Parties', in *Political Studies*, vol. ii (1954).