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Group Representation in the Plural Society -

The Case of the Poverty Lobby.

by

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Submitted to the Council for National Academic Awards for the Award
of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

July 1981.

Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham.

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Ref.

GROUP REPRESENTATION IN THE PLURAL SOCIETY -
THE CASE OF THE POVERTY LOBBY.

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MICHAEL ANTHONY McCARTHY

Abstract

This thesis presents an account and analysis of the emergence and development of family poverty as a political issue in the period 1965-79. It begins with an examination of the role of social scientists in 'rediscovering' poverty in the late 1950s and details the creation of the Child Poverty Action Group in 1965 as one response to the problem. With the emergence of CPAG the thesis takes as its principal theme the question 'what are the strategies open to a small group wishing to influence events'.

In attempting to examine and assess CPAGs own response to this question the thesis divides into three broad areas covering, respectively, the group's relationships with the Labour Party, Conservative Party and, more recently the Trade Union Movement. These relationships are to some extent assessed against the popular dichotomisation of interest groups as 'insiders' or 'outsiders' in their relationship with Government. In employing this particular framework of analysis close consideration is given to the non-sanction-based activities of CPAG and to the likely effectiveness of similar groups representing 'suppliant' publics.

The latter part of the thesis is almost wholly concerned with CPAGs strategy for liaison with the trade union movement and it examines the efficacy of such liaison both against the backcloth of contemporary political events such as the Social Contract and in relation to the trade unions traditional emphasis on 'wages first, benefits second'. In considering this relationship the thesis develops a broader, 'macro' interest in the implications of trade union-interest group liaison and assesses the possibility for the further incorporation of the trade union movement at the critical centres of power and its future role as a spokesman group on social welfare issues.

The final chapters of this thesis examine this relationship in closer detail through an account and assessment of the Child Benefits Campaign 1975-78 looking, in particular, at the Cabinet 'leak', the role played by the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee. In the conclusion, an attempt is made to draw together the events and the trends of the last fifteen years and to reassess the responses to the question posed at the outset. In particular, a discussion of the failure of the poverty 'lobby' to incorporate their 'clients' into the campaign takes place and some consideration is given to future developments and alternative options for influence.

Declaration of Registration

While registered as a candidate for the degree for which this submission is made, the author has not been a registered candidate for another award of the C. N. A. A. or of any other body or university during the research programme. The material presented in this submission has not been used either in whole or in part by the author in any previous form.

Interviews

The author would like to express his gratitude to the following individuals who kindly granted interviews on the dates below. Where applicable, the title or status of the interviewee at the time of interview has been included.

Nicholas Bosanquet, Member of Labour Party Social Policy Sub-Committee
22.2.79.

Jonathan Bradshaw, CPAG Executive Committee Member - 2.11.78.

Bob Brown MP, Minister of Social Security Feb-Oct 1974 - 20.2.79.

Ken Hickman, Principal Secretary DHSS and Secretary of the Multi-purpose Claim Form Committee - 20.2.79.

Henry Hodge, Deputy Director CPAG 28.7.77. 15.6.77.

Marigold Johnson, Trade Union Liaison Officer CPAG - 27.7.77.

Tony Lynes, Secretary CPAG 1966-69, Policy Adviser on Social Security
DHSS 1974-79 - 14.6.77, 31.5.79.

Ruth Lister, Asst. Director CPAG (Director from April 1979) 28.7.77, 19.2.79

Trevor Mawer, Asst. Secretary Social Insurance Dept. TUC, 31.5.79.

David Piachaud, Policy Adviser Prime Ministers Policy Unit 1974-79
and Member Labour Party Social Policy Sub-Committee 14.6.77.

Mel Read, Chairperson Women's National Advisory Committee ASTMS
14.12.78. and 11.10.79.

Jane Streather, Asst. Director CPAG 1972-75 (Director National Council
for One Parent Families) 25.1.80

Peter Townsend, Chairman CPAG 27.7.77.

Jo Tunnard, Director Citizens Rights Office, CPAG 27.7.77.

Malcolm Wicks, CPAG Executive Committee Member 26.6.77.

Additional background material came from interviews with:

Rose Schapiro, National Organiser - National Abortion Campaign 29.10.76.

Alastair Service, Chairman Family Planning Association and former
Parliamentary Lobbyist for ALRA 29.10.76.

The Author would like to express his gratitude to Frank Field, Director of CPAG from 1969-1979, who kindly granted innumerable lengthy interviews and made available the substantial resources and facilities of CPAG without which much of the research for this study would not have been possible (Main Interviews - 15.6.77, 25.7.77, 25.4.78, 20.2.79. 28.4.79). I am also indebted, generally, to all CPAG Staff, many of whom found time to answer my questions and assist me in the location of information.

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CHAPTER 1

Poverty and the Plural Society - An Introduction

It has been argued that....."the real source of innovations in public policy is new information, new ideas, and new interpretations of old problems....."(1) and that....."Given the high level of uncertainty that characterises governmental decision-making, policy-makers depend heavily on the steady flow of policy-responses. Those who contribute to this flow exercise real influence". (2) This view may be seen as particularly relevant to the field of social policy where the limited availability and use of effective social and economic indicators, the impingement of economic and fiscal policy also, and the complexity of individual and group interests have conspired to produce a tradition of fragmentation and immobilism.

The ability of those who contribute to the 'flow of policy responses' to exercise 'real influence', however, depends upon a range of factors other than the primary ability to communicate ideas and information. The value of those ideas and information is important, as is the willingness of policy-makers to accept external inputs. Also crucial are the climate of public opinion, the relative strengths and weaknesses of the client groups conveying and resisting ideas, the attachment of Government to notions of consensus, the dynamics of departmental pluralism and, of course, the nature of the issues at stake. Where issues are seen to affect or concern relatively small or poorly-defined publics, and where they are regarded as contentious or controversial those contesting them may encounter serious difficulties in effecting policy innovation or change.

This study examines one such issue, that of family poverty, and attempts

1. Banting, K. Poverty, Politics and Policy MacMillan 1979 p. 5
2. ibid

to offer some insight into how the issue progressed in status from relative obscurity to the centre of the political stage during two periods - the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies. The study seeks, in particular, to examine and assess how a small promotional group may influence events and documents both the group's progress and that of the issue against the backcloth of political events and change in the period 1965-1978.

Efforts to win both public and governmental support for a strategy to end family poverty were hindered from the outset, as Chapter 2 shows, by both the general belief that poverty had been largely eliminated by post-war advances in the provision of social welfare and by the absence of a 'pressure-group for the poor'. The campaign to eradicate family poverty, with the statutory provision of some sort of 'family allowance' as its chief aim, had originated with the establishment of the feminist 1917 Committee which took its name from the year of its formation. In the following year, 1918, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, a suffragette body with Eleanor Rathbone as one of its guiding lights, was instrumental in the reconstitution of the 1917 Committee as the Family Endowment Society. (3) The latter also took as its chief target the need to bring about some state provision for families with children.

It is the irony of the modern campaign, with which this study is primarily concerned, that the recent and most entrenched obstacles to reform and change in family policy and provision have largely been either the legacy or oversight of the 1945 Family Allowances Act for which the Family Endowment Society had so energetically campaigned. The Act had, for example, excluded the family's first child from the benefits of state

3. Land, H. The Introduction of Family Allowances. An Act of Historic Justice in Hall, P., Land, H., Parker, R. and Webb, A. A Change, Choice and Conflict in Social Policy. Heinemann 1978 pp 164-66

provision. A further problem for latter day campaigners was the failure of the 1945 Labour Government to provide for any regular or systematic review of family allowance levels with the result that only on two occasions in the period 1945-64 was the issue of benefit 'erosion' raised. (4)

To compound this situation, the provision of family allowances had been popularly and somewhat narrowly associated with the need to reverse Britain's falling birth rate so that when the rate rose once more support for the scheme seriously waned. Indeed, the public opinion survey of 1944, Britain and Her Birth Rate (5) had already revealed that Family Allowances as an 'attack on poverty' had only a secondary or tertiary importance for most people. In addition, the exclusion of the first child from the scheme was interpreted as an indication that family allowances were really designed for large rather than small families.

A major theme of this study is the apparent fragmentation of social policy and its isolation from economic and fiscal policy. This, too, may be seen to have had its origins in the 1945 Act. Family Allowances were introduced in isolation from other social security reforms, an indication of the differing objectives that different groups saw them fulfilling, and were, rather vaguely, to be supplemented at some later, unknown date with free school meals and milk. Neither were measures over which the Minister of National Insurance exercised any control falling, as they did, within the Education budget. (6) Control and accountability were further obscured by a

4. *ibid* pp 227-30

5. Mass Observation, Britain and Her Birth Rate Curwin Press 1945
See also Report of the Royal Commission on the Population
Cmnd 769 5, 1949

6. Land p. 223 - On 28th March 1946 the Minister of Education announced that with the commencement of family allowance payments school milk would be free for all children. School meals were to be free to all from April 1947, though they have never been made free to all children.

lack of discussion and consensus about the future of the scheme. For others, significantly, the primary aim of the scheme was not even to alleviate family poverty but, instead, to curb inflation or maintain work incentives.

Any plans for a post-war campaign to secure regular reviews of the new family allowance scheme were effectively ended with the death of Eleanor Rathbone and the subsequent demise of the Family Endowment Society in 1946. Their passing left a vacuum in welfare politics which was not filled until the emergence of the Child Poverty Action Group, with which this study is concerned, in 1965. Not only did interest in family allowances and the cycle of family poverty itself subside but other issues were forced onto the political agenda, most notably pensions, to occupy the attention of Government to the exclusion of others. The task for any future family allowance campaigner was therefore twofold - to make up for lost ground and time and to dislodge entrenched interests in favour of their own issue. Both tasks are described in the early chapters of this study.

The influence of social scientists in documenting the problems which had either ensued from or which had not been met by the 1945 Act and in defining a new conceptual approach to the understanding of both the nature and extent of poverty in a society which generally believed itself free of the problem, was to become the most crucial force for policy innovation. Their role as 'policy watchers' in filling gaps in the Government's knowledge of family poverty created a climate of debate which sparked the emergence of a plethora of groups, such as CPAG and Shelter, concerned to politicise their findings and promote the policy alternatives they had advanced. The role of the social scientists was not to end there, however. Until 1965 their role had largely remained one of problem definition and the specification of alternatives. Significantly, as it became clear that their own definition of priorities was not matched by Government these 'policy-watchers' were

moved to adopt more political and organised means of communicating their views and the need for change. The principal outcome in the field of family poverty was the formation of the Child Poverty Action Group in 1965.

Finance and Membership

The quasi-academic character of CPAG has been, perhaps, the most persistent and striking feature of its development until the present day. Of the thirteen founder members in October 1965, for example, five were academics - all of them working in the fields of sociology or social administration. The remaining eight reflected both an individual and organisational interest in the subjects of family poverty and child welfare. They included three staff from the Family Service Units (including CPAG's first secretary, Fred Philp), 2 Children's Officers, one welfare rights worker, the Assistant General Secretary of the Social Services Department of the National Association for Mental Health and the Warden of Toynbee Hall where the formative meetings of CPAG were held.

Between them, the founder members were able to contribute both experience and expertise in the field of poverty and were able to provide the impetus for policy initiation and debate which gave the group its enduring educative character. Their shared social democratic background served, further, to set a gradualist, Fabian tone to the group's work. As CPAG has developed and grown much of this work has passed to a full-time staff but the enduring feature of the group is the extent to which its journal Poverty and its Poverty Pamphlets still provide two of the country's leading forums for the expression of informed, generally academic or professorial, opinion about social policy. Some semblance of continuity has thus been maintained.

Continuity has also been achieved through the make-up of the group's Executive, as the accompanying tables show, in that a sizeable caucus of

founder and early members may still be found on the Executive today, some 15 years after the group's inception, and in the general 'carry-over' of members from year to year. As is shown throughout this study, this development has produced both a broad organisational stability and a relatively consistent and consensual policy line. The most striking feature of the Executive is the apparent wealth of expertise. The Committee has long been a coalition of leading academics, politicians, social workers, welfare rights advisers and co-optees from groups which share broadly similar aims or sympathies. Over the years the executive has, for example, included Professors Peter Townsend, Brian Abel-Smith and Tony Atkinson, the sociologist W.G. Runciman (currently the group's Treasurer), Alan Walker of the Disability Alliance, Stuart Weir, Deputy Editor of New Society, Chris Pond Director of the Low Pay Unit and Paul Ormerod of NIESR.

It is interesting to note, further, that membership of the CPAG Executive or full-time employment within the group have also provided useful springboards for individual careers in journalism and what might be called the 'voluntary lobby'. Stuart Weir and Jane Streather, both former Assistant Directors of CPAG, have, for example, moved respectively to positions as Deputy Editor of New Society and to the Directorship of the National Council for One Parent Families after leaving the group.

Tony Lynes, CPAGs first full-time secretary left the group in 1969 to become, some time later, a ministerial policy adviser on social security. Jo Tunnard, formerly Director of the group's Citizens Rights Office left to become Director of the Family Rights Group and Frank Field CPAGs longest serving Director, left the group in 1979 to become Labour MP for Birkenhead.

Although detailed information about rank and file expertise, experience

COMPOSITION OF THE CPAG NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1965-80.

October 1965 (Founders)

B. Abel-Smith (Prof. Social Admin LSE
Birmingham (Warden, Toynee Hall
M. F. Bligh (Children's Officer & Nat.
Council of Women)
B. Drake (Children's Officer)
E. Gittus (Lecturer)
A. Harvey (Welfare Rights Adviser)
F. Philp (Secretary of Family Service
Unit)
G. Rankin (FSU)
M. Smith (Asst. Gen. Sec. at National
Asscn of Mental Health)
P. Townsend (Prof. Sociology -
Essex University)
J. V. Wilson (Lecturer)
H. Wilson (Lecturer)
S. Wyatt (FSU -fieldworker)

Summer 1967

Abel-Smith
Birmingham
Bligh
Harvey
Philp
Rankin
Townsend
J. V. Wilson
H. Wilson

Plus

B. Jones (Children's Officer)
D. Wilson (Director - Shelter)

Summer 1968

Abel-Smith
Birmingham
Bligh
D. Wilson
A. Harvey
P. Townsend
J. V. Wilson
H. Wilson

Plus

I. Jordan (WEA-Edinburgh)

May 1973

Townsend
J. V. Wilson
H. Wilson

Plus

D. Bull (Lecturer-founder
Manchester CPAG)
A. Rees (Lecturer - Editor Poverty
Pamphlets 1973-77)
A. Stanyer (Lecturer)
J. Bradshaw (Lecturer)
W.G. Runciman (Sociologist)
A. Atkinson (Prof. Essex Univ.)
M. Meacher (Lecturer/MP)
M. Wicks (Lecturer - Director 1978
Study of Family Group)
R. Simpson (Community Worker)
D. Vincent.

August 1977

J. Bradshaw
D. Bull
L. Caffney (Welfare Rights Officer)
J. Hursfield (Lecturer & Leicester
CPAG)
A. Rees
A. Walker (Nat. Children's Bureau
& Disability Alliance)
P. Townsend
W. G. Runciman
H. Wilson
A. Sinfield (Lecturer)
J. Streatther (Finer Joint Action Comm.
1978-9 Director Nat. Council
Single Mother & Dependents)
S. Weir (ex Director CRO - Editor
Roof & Director of Housing
Policy at Shelter)
J. V. Wilson

1980

P. Townsend
S. Weir (Dep. Editor - New Society)
H. Wilson
W. G. Runciman
J. Bradshaw
S. Burkeman (Central Birmingham CHC)
G. Finister
J. V. Wilson
M. Barker (Lecturer - Leicester CPAG)
D. Bull
L. Caffrey
N. Clark (Lecturer)
A. Rees
D. Rumble
A. Walker
B. Woodcock
J. Hursfield

PLUS

Tony Lynes
Paul Ormerod (NIESR)
C. Pond (Dir. - Low Pay Unit
L. Whitty (Research Officer
GMWU)

and occupational background is not available, there is no reason to suppose that the membership itself does not provide an equally valuable resource. The limited information that could be culled from membership cards, correspondence and interviews with staff reveals that MPs, social workers, academics, students, journalists and welfare rights activists are all well represented in a total membership that has risen from 454 in December 1966 to approximately 2,800 in 1979. It is important to add that the group has not, until 1980, embarked upon a determined drive to acquire members and boost its subscription income. This appears to stem from a combination of factors. Firstly, the lack of staff to devise and co-ordinate such a membership drive. It could be argued, for example, that the burden of co-ordination and administration would require the employment of extra staff whose remuneration might well outweigh the extra income received. Secondly, CPAG has traditionally viewed itself as a small campaigning group and not as a broadly-based 'cause' like Friends of the Earth, CND or Shelter. Thirdly, and crucially, the group has been quite successful until 1979/80 in acquiring grants and donations from institutions like the City Parochial Trust, the Rowntree Trust and the Government's own Voluntary Services Unit which, between 1973-76, provided CPAG with some £30,000 of grant aid. The Rowntree Trust has been particularly generous to the group, allocating both the monies to set up the group's Citizens Rights Office and its Legal Department and providing £1,000 for it to press the issue of poverty during the 1970 General Election Campaign. More recently, the group has come to depend more heavily on the goodwill of the City Parochial Trust and has had to dip increasingly into the reserves of its own Appeal Fund as Rowntrees have announced their intention to spread their grants more evenly and thinly. The City Parochial grant, however, is scheduled to end in 1982 and its depletion could mark a serious financial watershed for the group which may bring greater urgency to a recruitment campaign. In 1981 alone the City Parochial Trust has committed

£15,000 to the group. Other grant aid, however, will amount only to £5,000 - a rather small figure when set against the group's annual salary bill of £90,000. Donations in 1980 amounted to £7,500 and income from investments, legal aid, and the group's annual raffle brought in a further £6,500. However, the pattern of financing points firmly away from grant aid and investment to a combination of subscription income, fees for the group's services, lectures, articles etc. and sales of its literature. Together, these earned £94,000 for the group in 1980 - £34,000 from subscriptions, £28,000 from the sale of literature and the remaining £30,000 from fees. For a relatively small group such income may appear impressive - total income for 1980 was £128,300 - but looks much less so when set alongside expenditure commitments of £159,950 for the year 1980/81. The deficit of £31,000 has been, and must increasingly be, made up from reserves - a prospect that has brought a good deal of concern and, with it, the possibility of cuts in research and welfare rights staff. Furthermore, as this study shows, the group's activities are now so manifestly 'political' that in future its status as a registered charity, and with it the very valuable tax relief that that status brings, could be placed in jeopardy thereby depriving the group of other monies. Whatever the long term financial prospects for CPAG, in the short term more emphasis will be placed on the need to boost subscription income by expanding the membership.

In reality, CPAG membership is likely to be considerably higher than the official figure of 2,800 quoted by the group. This figure represents membership of 'national' CPAG and does not include those individuals who choose to join the group at branch level only. Although the variation in the figures is not overwhelming it is significant, especially when one considers that there are now 72 local CPAG branches. Of these, 51 are located in the provinces, 11 in Greater London, 4 in Wales, 3 in Scotland and 3 in Northern Ireland.

The most active branches have tended to be those in the larger conurbations - Merseyside, Manchester, York, Hull, Newcastle, Bristol, Haringay, Oxford, Leicester, Sheffield and Nottingham. The first branch was formed on Merseyside in May 1967 by a group of lecturers, social workers, teachers and local businessmen and was promptly followed in the winter of the same year by Oxford, Scotland and Manchester and then by Sheffield, Birmingham, Norwich, Swansea and Northern Ireland.

Many of the branches, as Chapter 8 briefly shows, have been closely involved in welfare rights campaigns, poverty surveys, in the provision of advice and in representation at appeals tribunals. Their contribution to the campaign against poverty remains essentially local, however, if not autonomous, and is perhaps worthy of separate study. For reasons of relevance and conciseness it has not been possible to undertake a closer examination of their activities except in so far as they bear directly upon the work of the parent group. Reference to the branches throughout this study, therefore, serves only to contrast with, substantiate or elaborate upon the work done by 'national' CPAG.

For similar reasons study of the essentially non-political work of the group's Citizens Rights Office (CRO) and its Legal Department have also been set aside with emphasis placed, instead, on an analysis and assessment of the group's 'political' activity. The CRO was established in 1970 with a grant of £15,000 from the Rowntree Trust and largely resulted from the group's disillusionment with the legal aid available to claimants.⁽⁷⁾ In 1972 a further grant of £5,000 per annum was forthcoming for 3 years from the Rowntree Trust to enable the CRO to continue its work. The Office is staffed by both legal and lay staff and has, for ten years, been largely cast in the

7. Report and Application for Funds to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for CPAGs Citizens Rights Office and Legal Department.
November 1972

role of an 'advocate for the poor'. It is interesting to note that the CRO does not take great pains to advertise its existence to the public at large but generally finds itself dealing with cases referred to it by social workers, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Probation Officers and a range of other advisers to whom it effectively acts as a 'consultant'.

In addition, the CRO also runs a week-long course six times a year.....
"attended by social workers, probation officers, housing aid centre and law centre workers, welfare rights officers and others who are often asked to deal with welfare benefit problems, but whose professional training does not equip them to do so". (8)

About seventy-five per cent of all enquiries dealt with by the CRO concern social security benefits and the overwhelming majority of those focus on Supplementary Benefit. (9)

While the CRO has largely been concerned with....."experimenting into ways of encouraging poor families to use the skills of a lawyer"..... the legal department....."has been attempting to call public attention to the lack of legal services for the poor". (10) Together, the CRO and the Legal Department have sought to meet the 'legal needs' of CPAG which were identified in the early seventies as (a) research on issues having a legal element and advising the group on legal matters; (b) preparing briefing documents and specific kinds of legal material for dissemination; (c) the preparation of material for Parliament such as Parliamentary Questions and Backbench briefing notes; (d) Co-ordination, co-operation and liaison with lawyers and other groups active in the welfare rights field; (e) the promotion of a test-case strategy and the representation of

8. CPAGs Advisory Work (not dated) p. 1
9. Interview with Henry Hodge, Deputy Director and Solicitor of CPAG 28. 7. 77.
10. CPAGs Advisory Work p. 2

claimants at appeals tribunals and (f) the propagation of welfare rights ideas. (11)

While the work of the staff in the CRO and Legal Department is as important and considerable as that of CPAG staff the fact remains that the latter are characterised by their 'pressure-group activity' - a concern with propaganda lobbying, consultation, the preparation of policy, liaison with other voluntary groups and the political parties and trade union research departments. If one regards the CRO and Legal Department as integral but independent parts of CPAG, the work of the other staff who make up CPAG 'proper' takes as its target the influencing of policy through interaction with Government, parties and other groups and it is with this branch of activity and interest that this study is primarily concerned.

CPAG and the Pluralist Order

The value in studying a group like CPAG is considerable and this study takes as its overall theme a question which CPAG has wrestled with since its inception - 'what are the strategies open to a small group wishing to influence events'? This question itself poses a further series of questions concerning the nature of the group - is it promotional or defensive, is it a cause-group or a sectional group? How is the group organised, how resourceful is it, does it have a useful network of contacts, is it part of or outside the recognised policy community in its field?

Important questions must also arise in any analysis of the group's 'clients' and of the nature of the issues it confronts. Do the group's 'clients', for example, form part of a recognised and well-defined 'public'; do they possess a useful level of political consciousness; do they or could they exert political influence or latent power?

Are the issues which affect or determine the life-chances of this public recognised as important political issues, calling for effective political action, by policymakers and/or by other 'publics'? To what extent will the resolution of these issues and the tackling of the problems that underpin them threaten other interests in society? Do such interests prosper socially, culturally or politically from the disadvantages experienced by this client group?

Recent trends in the ordering of interest groups politics in Britain indicate that small, impoverished, sometimes poorly-established, groups often articulating interests related to fundamental social issues such as poverty, mental health, homelessness, and unemployment are invariably disadvantaged vis a vis economic, industrial and professional groups in terms of political access. Often, like CPAG, they seek to represent publics whose interests or welfare are difficult to define, let alone secure, and which rarely exert influence upon the stability of government⁽¹²⁾ or the adversary politics of the party system. For the most part they are the type of issues which Schattschneider spoke of as being 'organised out' of politics.⁽¹³⁾ The reasons why this should be so are not always clear or consistent. Generally, they are likely to be a combination of poor organisation and value-laden preferences which are at variance with the prevailing norms and values of the group process.

At least one observer has equated the poor political impact of such interest

12. See Holland, S. The Socialist Challenge Quartet 1978 pp 13-16
 13. He notes....."All legislative procedure is loaded with devices for controlling the flow of explosive materials into the governmental apparatus. All forms of organisation have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because organisation is the mobilisation of bias. Some issues are organised into politics while others are organised out". Schattschneider The Semi Sovereign People: A Realists View of Democracy in America Holt, Rinehart, Winston New York 1960 p. 69

groups with their apparent lack of voting power. Enoch Powell, for instance, has criticised a political system that has produced the welfare state for failing to provide serious and sustained cognisance of issues like mental health, child poverty, prison reform and homelessness. It is Powell's view, and it is one which is closely examined in this thesis, that the importance or relevance of issues is not established through moral or social criteria but through party calculation of precise electoral advantage. His comment on the fortunes of the mentally ill that....."no significant voting power is involved.....(because).....the voting power of mental affliction is in the bottom range",⁽¹⁴⁾ may be judged, as this study shows, to be as relevant to the poor also. The electoral significance of expenditure strategies to alleviate poverty has figured particularly prominently in the sensitivity of Labour Governments to the problem and has culminated in something of a credibility gap, as the later chapters of this study show, between the radical symbolism of Labour in opposition and the policies it adopts within the constraints of office.

As a result of Government or party inertia and as a consequence of their own 'shortcomings', groups of the CPAG type, representing politically weak client publics, may be obliged to articulate their interests through one of the 'group establishment' or, as Wyn Grant terms them, 'Insider groups'.⁽¹⁵⁾ To a large extent the shortcomings of such interests reflects their 'cause-

14. Powell, E. Six Essays on the Welfare State Granada TV 23.1.77.
 15. Grant argues that 'Insiders' are characterised in one of two ways (1) They may be established by Government or with Governmental encouragement or (2) they may have a permanent staff....."who have a vested interest in maintaining and developing their existing network of contacts with the civil service". Grant says that..... "The most important distinguishing characteristic of insider-groups is their tendency to adopt a 'strategy of responsibility".
 Grant, W. Insider Groups, Outsider Groups and Interest Group Strategies in Britain unpublished paper, University of Warwick 1977 p. 5
 See also Peters, B.G. 'Insiders and Outsiders' Administration and Society Vol 9 No. 2 1977

group' status⁽¹⁶⁾ and may be organisational, financial, educational or articulatory. Each may impose a severe constraint upon the group's ability to achieve its goals.⁽¹⁷⁾

The inequality experienced by such groups is essentially twofold. On the one hand non-established or 'outsider' groups may be obliged and encouraged to seek the 'patronage' and resource support of the established or 'Insider' groups, in what Richardson and Jordan have termed the 'policy community', to enhance their chances of goal achievement.⁽¹⁸⁾ As Truman notes....."the weaker the means of direct action available to a..... group, the more ready has it been to work through such mediating institutionsunaided by the wider powers of some more inclusive group, they cannot achieve their objectives".⁽¹⁹⁾ Crucially, Truman asks..... "But why must this institution be the Government?"⁽²⁰⁾ and he suggests, instead, that the church, trade unions, employers organisations and professional associations may readily acquire this role.

The importance of an 'alliance' with the trade union movement for social

16. As Stewart notes....."the cause group represents only a point of view about the way in which government and Parliament should act, in many cases a point of view very far from being generally accepted. But even when its viewpoint is accepted the group cannot expect to be automatically consulted. It is not necessary to the conduct of affairs". Stewart, J.D. British Pressure Groups Clarendon 1958.
17. Truman has argued that the extent to which a group achieves effective access to the institutions of Government is the result of a complex of interdependent factors, which may be simplified into 3 broad categories (1) factors relating to a group's strategic position in the society; (2) factors associated with the internal characteristics of the group and (3) factors peculiar to the governmental institutions themselves.
Truman, D. The Governmental Process Alfred Knopf, New York 1966
18. Richardson, J. and Jordan, G. Governing Under Pressure Martin Robertson 1979 pp 43-44
19. Truman op cit p.105
20. ibid

cause groups like CPAG has been accentuated as other avenues of influence have closed and as the idea of a 'social contract' has gathered support. CPAG's efforts to forge an alliance with the trade unions and to promote an interest in welfare rights among rank and file workers are discussed in the last three chapters of this study. It is important at this point, however, to acknowledge the growing interest of the trade union movement in non-workplace issues and its development of a firm 'societal' role. This role has important implications for conventional pluralist theory.

In offering the view noted above, Truman was, in part, echoing ideas expressed earlier by Durkheim and John R. Commons. The latter had even gone so far as to argue that. "the preservation of the economic system against a totalitarian world and against its own internal disruption, consists mainly in the collective bargaining between organised capital and organised labour, as against Government by the traditional parties. Other organisations, whether farmers, merchants, bankers or the professions, must conform their policies and methods to this major economic issue of capital and labour". (21)

The idea of a neo-corporate i. e. a governmental system organised around representation and administration through industrial-occupational groups rather than through territorial divisions. (22) ties in conveniently with

21. Commons, J. R. The Economics of Collective Action MacMillan New York 1951 p. 262
22. See Middlemass, K. Politics in Industrial Society Andre Deutsch 1980 ed. Ch. 13-15
Schmitter has defined corporatism as. "a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a united number of singular compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically differentiated categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports".
Schmitter, P. C. Corporatism and Public Policy in Authoritarian Portugal. Sage London 1975 p. 9

Durkheim's belief in the sociologically natural causes and the psychologically desirable effects of a network of occupationally organised groups, and both he and Commons envisaged an important and extensive role for groups to play in the adjustment and fulfilment of organised preferences.

Where Truman, by implication differs is in his belief that this 'insider' network or 'established-group stratum' could also adopt the role of monitor and patron of those 'emerging' interests requiring a helping hand to secure government attention. For Truman, the group process reflected the equilibrate nature of social and economic forces in society at a given point in time. For Commons, the group process constituted a social and occupational 'parliament' with a quasi-messianistic role to play in ensuring the stability and continuance of society. Indeed, Commons found this view so compelling that he could conclude prophetically in 1951 that..... "both political science and economic science are beginning to recognise a transition from territorial governments to economic governments". (23)

In adopting this view Commons was offering an economic refinement of the theory of group equilibrium propounded by Arthur Bentley at the turn of the century and reformulated by Truman in the fifties. In Bentley's work we find a quasi-Darwinism, an emphasis on the pragmatic and an attempt to project a social outlook on to the cosmos. (24) It was Bentley's view that, seen in isolation, groups are in conflict and some will dominate others because of their superior resources or their occupational advantage. However, an overview of the process of group politics reveals that domination and subordination may be less pronounced than at first assumed. Instead, both may be cyclical experiences for most groups, so that at a

23. Commons p. 262

24. Bentley, A. F. The Process of Government (1908) reproduced ed. Odegard, P. Bellknap Press, Harvard 1967

given point in time some groups will be in the ascendancy and some in decline in terms of their influence. As circumstances change and new issues arise the situation of such groups also begins to alter so that groups at the periphery of the critical centres of power move into temporary ascendancy. Bentley's methodology, and the orthodox tradition of pluralism that has followed from him, was based, therefore, upon concepts of symmetry, balance and equilibrium. (25)

Where writers like Commons, Olson, Connolly and Bachrach and Baratz in the USA, and Smith, Middlemass, Miliband and Cawson in the UK have broken with this tradition in varying degree is in their insistence in the existence of a fixed, permanent, 'established' stratum of groups embedded at the core of the so called equilibrate order where all other groups/issues around them remain characterised by Bentley's notion of flux and mutability. These may be viewed as the 'Insider Groups' of which Grant talks or those groups which have come to make up the 'policy communities' and 'policy networks' to which Richardson, Jordan, Gustaffson and Heclo variously refer. (26) Each of these representations of the group process are discussed in detail in this study.

Bentley himself had argued that there is no basic difference between the 'representativeness' of interest groups and the structural organisation of

25. Mackenzie notes of Bentley's analysis that....."he is rhetorically emphatic about the figure of groups tending to establish a balance. They never reach the point of equilibrium, because the environment is never stable: but the idea of equilibrium helps to make more intelligible what is happening in the 'process of politics'.....for Bentley. 'Order is bound to result, because order is now and order has been, where order is needed, though all the prophets be confounded'....." Mackenzie, W. J. H. *Pressure Groups: The Conceptual Framework Political Studies* Vol 3 No. 3 Oct. 1955 p. 251
26. See for example. Richardson, J. J. and Gustafsson, G. *Concepts of Rationality and the Policy Process. European Journal of Political Research* 7 (1979) pp 415-36

the Government. (27) All social phenomena are in some way connected to Government and government can be seen as little more than an organisation of interests combined into a single coherent system. Bentley's functional theory of the state is that all interests and all potential or, as Truman terms them, 'latent' interests are part of the governing process, since each interest is represented in proportion to its pressure. What Bentley did not foresee was the development of a highly complex, technologically, interdependent economy and society in which basic social values might be subordinated to the demands of post-industrialisation and in which certain issues and publics might become increasingly organised out of politics as the powerful, resourceful groups increasingly organised themselves in. (28) This is an important observation and raises a theme which will remain recurrent throughout this study.

Truman touched upon the 'spectre of Thrasymachus' in his own reformulation of Bentley concluding, rather uncomfortably, that his own analysis of the representativeness and fairness of the pluralist system might be flawed by its deference towards the economically strong and well organised and its tendency to overlook the inarticulate, the mal-organised and the impoverished. Perhaps what both Bentley and Truman, unlike Commons and his followers, failed to develop was that the more complex society became on the economic-industrial level the more the state would need to incorporate groups active in these spheres, the more the state would seek to secure new forms of legitimacy like functional representation, the more the so-called

27. Commenting upon Bentley's analysis Mackenzie has concluded that "Government is the resultant and is wholly the resultant of group pressures in this sense and so is 'law in the broadest sense' which is 'one form of statement of the equilibrium of interests, the balancing of groups'. Government 'in the narrowest sense' is defined as 'a differentiated, representative group, or set up of groups (organ or set of of organs) performing specified governing functions for the underlying groups of the population". Mackenzie p. 249
28. See Odegard, P. A. Group Basis of Politics: A Name for an Ancient Myth. Western Political Quarterly Vol II September 1958.

equilibrium of groups could be rationalised and reduced to a form of elite accommodation. (29)

Ultimately they could have foreseen a situation in which government might develop a series of exclusive 'partnerships' with corporate groups dominating various 'issue areas' to create powerful and recognisable policy communities. Those groups wishing to gain influence through entrance to such 'communities' are faced with two primary choices. Either they opt to gain influence through their own independent action, in which case they might contribute directly to the "overcrowding" and "immobilism" that many writers have seen as a feature of the contemporary policymaking process. Alternatively, they may themselves contribute to the process of rationalisation and elite accommodation by working through major groups already entrenched in the policymaking process.

Trevor Smith has attempted to document both these trends - that of elite accommodation and that towards immobilism and takes the creation of the NEDC as the most recent catalyst in this process of incorporation. He notes of the tripartite consultative framework established in the early 60s that....."the new agencies were an authoritative acknowledgement of the erstwhile de facto situation among interest groups that a two-tier system of representation existed. Membership of NEDC indicated the granting of a superior franchise: it was an exercise in elite accommodation". (30)

29. Elizabeth Vallance, for example, argues that it is misleading to view such trends in terms of a conspiracy against certain groups "it is simply the quite practical response to the requirement of support mobilisation".
Vallance, E. Three Languages of Change: Democracy, Technocracy and Direct Action in Benewick, R. and Smith, T. eds. Direct Action and Democratic Politics George Allen & Unwin 1972 p. 95
30. Smith, T. Trends and Tendencies in the Reordering of the Representation of Interests in Britain A paper delivered to the 1976 Political Studies Association Conference at Nottingham.

He also talks of the sixties as witnessing....."a tropical growth in interest groups catering for the under-enfranchised elements in society: these included the Consumer's Association, Shelter, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Claimants and Unemployed Worker's Union, and many others seeking to influence the contents of the public agenda". (31)

Smith suggests, arguably, that the creation of the National Consumer Council in 1975 illustrated the success of this 'consumer movement' of the sixties and concludes that the Council....."goes some way to enfranchising consumers in the court politics of the neo-corporate state "since the Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection has chosen to "indirectly elect" representatives from such organisations as CPAG, Shelter, Age Concern, the National Council for Social Service, Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Claimants Union. Yet it must be said that these 'representatives' do not sit as formal delegates of their respective groups, the council itself has only advisory powers and the early optimism of establishing a powerful and articulate 'consumer movement' has not been justified. (32)

Crucially, of course, many of these groups are in competition for scarce resources and their emergence may only have served to further the trend towards policy 'overcrowding'. Ultimately, if 'consumers' are to influence events it may make greater strategic sense to range themselves with rather than against their more resourceful and powerful producer-counterparts. Indeed, a major section of this study is devoted to a discussion of the Child Poverty Action Group's attempts to do just that, by liaising with and working through the trade union movement.

31. ibid: See also Seyd, P. Shelter: The National Campaign for the Homeless. Political Quarterly No. 46 (4) 1975 pp 418-31
32. Syson, L. & Brooke, R. 'The Voice of the Consumer' in Lapping, B. and Radice, G. More Power to the People. Longmans 1968

Smith argues that such trends show....."the drift of Government thinking towards a corporatist system of interest representation". (33)

He argues that the 'drift' reveals the intention, in the first place, of Governments to....."shore up the legitimacy of central control". (34)

The need to do so may stem from what Volker Ronge sees as the "administrative dilemma" of modern pluralist-capitalist systems, that is, the growing necessity to act qualitatively and concretely without achieving corresponding support. (35) Ronge assumes a specific interdependence between the political and the economic subsystem in the sense that the interdependence is determined economically by the capitalist mode of production and politically by the pluralist ordering of interests. His view is that not only is the political system controlling or trying to control its social environment, but that that environment and especially the economy, in return, is controlling or restricting the political system.

The Government's growing responsibility for managing economic crises, controlling and alleviating the effects of unemployment and for financing and administering a complex welfare system has required the generation of new types of support dependent upon consensus and participation. (36) The need to act qualitatively and confidently may be seen to have obliged the state to enter partnership with an elite strata of private interest groups offering advice, expertise, information and guarantees of support or non-impedance. (37)

33. Smith p. 8

34. ibid

35. Ronge, V. 'The Politicisation of Administration in Advanced Capitalist Societies'

36. See Rokkan, S. 'Numerical Democracy and Corporate Pluralism in Dahl, R. A. Political Oppositions in Western Democracies Yale University Press New Haven 1966

37. Andrain Comments that....."pluralism represents a society of privileged groups; not one where several different groups have relative equality. Consistent with this finding, pluralistic governments often seem controlled not by a balance of diverse groups but rather by a few powerful groups. Not all groups have the resources to participate in the group equilibrium".

Andrain, C. F. Political Life and Social Change Wadsworth Press California 1970 p. 114

The old abstract, general mechanisms of support have thus become obsolete in a post-industrial society; non-elected interest groups have come to occupy the role of 'semi-executive agents'.

It is Ronges' view that the test of a good policy is no longer in its legal-bureaucratic process of conversion but in its functional qualities. Political consent, he asserts, can no longer be presupposed as was the case in the liberal model, policies now depend increasingly on social participation. Inevitably, the issue of who does participate arises. Governments may welcome and facilitate the participation of some publics and seek to discourage or impede the involvement of others, particularly where they represent issues or grievances regarded by the Government as politically 'inconvenient'. (38) As Schattschneider has commented. "In politics as in everything else it makes a great difference whose game we play. The rules of the game determine the requirements for success". (39)

Schattschneider saw politics as the domination and subordination of conflicts. A pluralist democracy will secure its survival by managing conflict through the establishment of priorities among a multiplicity of potential conflicts. Indeed, it was Schattschneider's view that there is no more certain way of destroying the meaning of politics than to treat all issues as if they were free and equal. Politics may only become meaningful when Governments establish priorities. Increasingly, as will be shown in Chapters 2 and 3, post-war British Governments have either chosen, or have been obliged, to place economic growth at the top of the political agenda with the result that welfare reform has been subordinated to the vagaries

38. David Ricci notes. "certain important interests are persistently weak, continually ineffective and repeatedly disregarded in the process of political bargaining. Consumers are in this category, since they lack powerful organisations, as do migrant farm labourers, white collar workers, the poor and the multitudes with an interest in peace". Ricci, D.M. Community Power and Democratic Theory: The Logic of Political Analysis. Random House New York 1971 p. 79
39. Schattschneider p. 47

of increased national productivity. (40)

Schattschneider and, more recently, Wootton and Richardson and Jordan, have raised the problem of immobilism, of too many groups 'getting in on the act'. They each have suggested that the system may only work by being selective....."It gets results by being selective and biased; if everybody got into the act the unique advantages of this form of organisation would be destroyed, for it is possible that if all interests could be mobilised the result would be a stalemate". (41)

Indeed, Wootton has spoken of the accommodation of too many interests as leading to "pluralist stagnation", a situation of impasse. (42) The result, then, is that....."probably about 90% of the people cannot get into the pressure system.....the system is skewed, loaded and unbalanced in favour of a fraction of a minority". (43)

If the view is accepted that it is the Executive, the Bureaucracy and the various 'policy communities' which largely determine the procedural norms and values of the policymaking process (44) and that this is largely dominated by economic factors and economic/occupational associations then it is reasonable to conclude that....."whoever decides what the game is about decides also who can get into the game". (45)

40. Haniff, G.M. Politics, Development and Social Policy: A Cross-National Analysis European Journal of Political Research Number 4 1976. pp. 361-76
Thomas Dye notes, in particular, that....."most comparative cross-national policy studies indicate that wealth and welfare policies, regardless of political systems, are closely associated with levels of economic development".
Dye, T.R. Policy Analysis University of Alabama Press - Alabama 1976 p. 51
41. Schattschneider p. 34
42. See Wootton, G. Pressure Politics in Contemporary Britain. D.G. Heath 1978 Ch. 10
43. Schattschneider p. 35
44. Latham, E. The Group Basis of Politics. Notes for a theory American Political Science Review No. 46 June 1952 pp 376-97
45. Schattschneider p. 102

A major task of groups such as the Child Poverty Action Group, then, is to undermine the exclusivity of the 'game' either by breaking into it themselves, through a reformulation of the 'rules of the game' through the injection of new values or by forging co-operation with established 'players' of the game. It is clear that the existing pluralist order in Britain is already under attack by those excluded from it. (46) The 'attack' may take various forms depending on the goals and the values of the protagonists. Some, such as the Claimants Unions, have chosen to reject the current order altogether and have devoted their energies to its replacement. Others like CPAG, have chosen to remain critical but to largely work from within. Either way, 'outsiders', by choice or by necessity, they share a common cause in their representation of publics organised out of the mainstream of politics. As Ronge notes.....

....."the chief values of pluralist democracy - maintenance of the political and social system in principle, acceptance of the 'rules of the game' in social interactions, use of limited and legal power only, negotiation and compromise as dominant and accepted methods of political action - are increasingly questioned and even violated by social groups because of their discontent with the concrete outcome of those rules and their belief of being structurally underprivileged". (47)

CPAG - Insider or Outsider?

The Child Poverty Action Group seeks to represent one such social group - the poor - whom most observers would see as structurally underprivileged. As part of a strategy to overcome this underprivilege CPAG has, over the last 15 years, employed most of the conventional tactics open to interest groups - Parliamentary lobbying, the raising of Parliamentary Questions and Adjournment Debates, media campaigns, petitions, detailed policy

46. Andrain asks....."why should groups accept 'the rules of the game' when these rules seem biased against their interests? To the powerless, the rules appear to be ways to maintain the privileges of the advantaged groups. If changes do not occur to meet the demands of the relatively powerless, then conflicts over material interests may transform into deeper value conflicts". p. 115
47. Ronge p.

submissions to central government departments. Two strategies employed by the group stand out above the rest, however, and offer further insight into the insider/outsider model of group politics put forward by Grant. The first of those is CPAG's relationship with the Labour Party and the second is that with the trade union movement.

The insider-outsider dichotomy favoured by Grant as an explanation of the influence of the group process upon Government provides a useful framework within which the role play and activity of CPAG may be considered. In exploring the use of Grant's model as an analytical tool it may also be possible to adapt or add to it. Grant speaks of two types of 'outsider' or non-established group - those which are outsiders 'by choice' and those which are outsiders 'by necessity'. While the findings of Bill Jordan make clear that the Claimants Unions have deliberately chosen and upheld their (48) outsider status, the identity of the Child Poverty Action Group is less clear and may well exhibit some hybridity.

Grant says, for example, that....."Those groups which are outsider groups by choice are careful not to become too closely entangled with the politico-administrative system because they wish to challenge accepted authority and institutions. Rather than becoming part of the existing system, they wish to replace it or alter it in some fundamental way". (49) While it will become clear from this study that CPAG has frequently advocated sweeping reform of social and economic policy often, in the process, resorting to highly political attacks upon vested interest, the group has never seriously raised or considered wholesale replacement of the existing order. Instead, it has favoured a strategy of reform which has, to some

48. Jordan, B. Paupers: The Making of the New Claiming Class
Routledge Kegan Paul 1973 pp 20-21
49. Grant p. 9

extent, become interlinked with its own desire to 'enter the game'.

CPAGs apparent 'hybridity' may be explored further if one considers the group's response to what Grant sees as the two principal strategies open to 'outsiders'; those of bringing about fundamental change....."by attempting to change public attitudes towards certain problems" and the adoption of....."more militant strategies such as demonstrations aimed at administrative agencies".⁽⁵⁰⁾ While it will be shown that the educative role implicit in the first strategy has been strongly favoured by CPAG, the conflict-confrontational alternative has been largely eschewed and has, instead, become the hallmark of the Claimants Unions.

This is not the only area in which CPAG may be seen to have a hybrid role. At no point in his typology does Grant suggest that the distinctions between outsider and insider groups are rigid. Indeed, he implies that outsider groups 'by necessity', at least, will view the attainment of insider status as an important strategic goal.⁽⁵¹⁾ Yet Grant withholds some of the more obvious permutations which the social scientist might expect to develop from the original dichotomy. It is here that study of the Child Poverty Action Group becomes especially fruitful. Grant largely confines his classification to the relationship between groups and government and ignores the equally revealing relationships between interest groups themselves and between interest groups and opposition parties.

Taking the latter relationship first, it is important to note that many of those who later came to found and work for or through the Child Poverty Action Group had already long been active in the policymaking structure of the Labour Party, most notably the party's Social Policy Sub-Committee.

50. ibid

51. ibid p. 10

While the representatives of interest groups, other than the TUC, may not be officially co-opted on to such committees it will be shown in Chapter 5 that CPAG staff and members have long constituted an active caucus within the Social Policy Sub-Committee and that the group's ideas have enjoyed a continuing currency. In some sense, then, CPAG has enjoyed a modified insider status within the Labour Party though not, as will be seen, within Labour Governments. Indeed, the group's failure to develop that status when the party came to power or, perhaps, its rather naive belief that it could do so, may have had some influence upon the type of role CPAG developed for itself between 1965-69.

Secondly, we may note CPAG's relationship with the trade union movement which is discussed, in its various stages, throughout chapters 7-10. It is here that the relationship between groups themselves, rather than between groups and government, is explored. Significantly, it is a relationship that could be viewed as that between an outsider group in the shape of CPAG and an insider group in the form of the TUC and, to a lesser extent, individual trade unions. If the earlier view of Goldthorpe that structures social and political inequality are inherently resistant to change is accepted it may be argued that the members of the 'established' or 'insider' strata have the motivation and, in general, the resources to sustain their position and transmit the advantages it brings to others that they favour i. e. those groups obliged or determined to articulate their own preferences via the alimentary systems of the insider groups in the hope of achieving 'back door' access to a government which has otherwise chosen to overlook them. (52)

52. There are considerable dangers here as Ricci has noted. "the danger in such relationships, which become symbiotic between private interest groups and public agencies, is that established groups acquire some of the power of the state and can use it to discipline their own members and prevent the rise of groups with opposing interests and alternative policies". p. 79

Crucially, of course, questions arise as to how and why CPAG found itself having to seek liaison with what it viewed as 'insiders' after 1974 and why it was not able to develop insider status itself. The answer may partly lie in the nature of poverty as an issue and in the ability of groups to force it onto the political agenda and, secondly, in the role played by the poor themselves in contemporary British politics. Ultimately, however, the fate of poverty as a political priority and of the poor as a structurally underprivileged group will be determined by the demands and influence of other publics and issues. It could be argued, for example, that the interests of both the trade union movement and the business community in the sphere of taxation policy may well conflict with that of 'claimant' groups whose material welfare is inextricably bound up with the level of tax revenue flowing into government. A reversal or stemming of the flow may easily develop a justification on the part of Governments for effecting 'cuts' in welfare expenditure that were in evidence between 1970-73 and throughout 1979. Ultimately, the ability of a group to influence policy comes down to its resources, its skills, its representativity and its capacity to apply sanctions against an unsympathetic or intransigent administration. (53)

The leaders of the business/industrial spheres of group politics, in particular, enjoy the benefits that accrue from frequent political access and insider status. Miliband and Guttman in the U. K., Aron, Leruez and Meynaud in France and Galbraith and Wright Mills in the U. S. A. have all demonstrated that business groups enjoy much greater advantages within the state system than any other form of group because of the composition and ideological inclinations of the state elite. These groups also exercise and enjoy a considerable superiority outside the governmental system as well, as a

53. The so called 'prerequisites for success' have been discussed by Kimber, R. and Richardson, J. J. eds. in Campaigning for the Environment Routledge & Kegan Paul 1974 pp 212-225 and by Finer, S. E. in Anonymous Empire Pall Mall 2nd ed. 1966

result of the very powerful pressures they can generate through other groups. The considerable influence traditionally wielded by the Roads Campaign Council and the British Roads Federation within government, as well as within organisations such as trade associations, chambers of commerce, individual firms and transport action groups, in which they have constituent members, is a striking illustration of this manifest superiority. (54)

Curiously, pluralist writers have underplayed the pervasiveness of business pressure which, according to Miliband, is often applied without the overt use of sanctions, campaigns and lobbying⁽⁵⁵⁾ - a style of influence that would be impossible for groups like the poor and unemployed to emulate. It is generated, instead, by the private control of concentrated industrial, commercial and financial resources and may be employed both to influence decisions favouring the interests of such groups or, less perceptibly, it may be used to block or delay decisions which might prove inimical to those interests. Similarly, returning to the growing influence of organised labour, it has been suggested that. "Government by consent has come to mean specifically government with the consent of the TUC". (56) More critically, it has been commented that. "At a time when power of all kinds is increasingly held to social account trade unions continue to regard themselves as accountable to only their own members, according to rules of their own devising". (57)

54. See ROADS (Annual Report of the British Road Federation) 1973-75 for an illustration of the BRFs involvement with and leadership of other groups in the field.
A thorough going analysis of the influence of the 'Roads lobby' is offered by Hamer, M. in Wheels within Wheels Friends of the Earth See also Plowden, W. The Motor Car and Politics in Britain /1974 Pelican 1973 Chapter 18
55. Miliband, R. The State in Capitalist Society Quartet 1973 ed. pp 131-39
56. The Guardian 1. 9. 75.
57. ibid

The dangers of powerful interest groups, often representing, relatively small publics, entrenching themselves at the critical centres of power are considerable. The location of power is increasingly shifted from the legislature to the executive and the bureaucracy; the representative claims and responsiveness of group leaders to their own members may diminish as they become more institutionalised; furthermore, the intensity of group competition and the standards of political morality and social priority may decline as some issues are not given definition or adequate recognition because of the system's prevailing bias towards certain interest groupings.

Indeed, the phenomenon of group institutionalisation has been described as "a remarkable contracting out of general political responsibility. . . . interested groups are becoming less and less inclined to hold a general opinion or attitude and to seek to persuade public opinion to support it as they grow more and more determined (and organised) to secure the best terms for themselves within the framework of a government's (any government) policy". (58)

There is a danger, then, of powerful publics arrogating too much power to themselves and usurping the functions of the legislature. Private interest groups have now largely superseded the Common's former function of supplying information and expertise to both the bureaucracy and the general public. Interests and publics formerly represented by Parliament are now more and more the focus and prerogative of structured group demands with the result that the representative and informative functions of Parliament have been seen as virtually defunct. "The primary function of the politician - the adjustment and reconciliation of different interests and ideas - is abruptly terminated at the point where it is most important: the

adjustment and reconciliation of the industrial and commercial interests - capital, management and labour - on which the prosperity and future of the country depend". (59)

It is against this trend towards what some writers have described as 'corporatism' that the "tropical growth in consumer groups", detailed by Smith, has taken place. Their emergence and subsequent attempts to break into the 'insider' stratum poses the dilemma of increasing immobilism in the policy-making process. However, their general failure to do so so far lends growing support to the belief that British policymaking is, and will continue to be, dominated by a system of elite pluralism.

The emergence of this order has been assisted and consolidated by the emergence of what may be termed 'technocracy' and by the dramatic shift in the location of power to the executive and administration in the post-war period. Inevitably, as was noted earlier, the extent to and way in which political influence may be achieved is largely determined by a group's capacity to adapt its organisation and its values to a bargaining framework constructed by these institutions. It may be argued that the group which does (or can) adapt its style and preferences to suit the rules and values imposed by the policymaking process and which does (or can) reflect prevailing norms and values has a much greater chance of achieving its goals than does a group unwilling or unable to meet these requirements. (60)

59. ibid

60. It is interesting to note, for example, that the BRF deliberately decentralised its structure after 1974 in response to local government reorganisation and what it saw as the emergence of new and effective tiers of decision making within the new Metropolitan County and District Councils.
See ROADS 1974 and 1975

Significantly, many of the publics which resort to direct action do so for one of two key reasons (a) they are unable to gain consultative access to government and direct action remains the only feasible alternative for influence or (b) they are unwilling to compromise their principles/interests by submission to a bargaining process that favours incrementalism and demands acquiescence and 'trade-off'. It may well be that some groups prefer not to involve themselves in the consultative/bargaining process for fear that, once involved, the superior institutional resources of the bureaucracy, the executive and other interest groups will be brought to bear thus adversely affecting the effective placement of their own preferences. As Theodore Lowi has noted....."Administration is a means of routinising coercion; Government is a means of legitimising it". (61)

With these factors in mind, Robert Benewick has concluded that.....
 "although it is a sad commentary, it is often through forms of direct action that the moral basis of politics is kept before the government and the public". (62) Direct action now characterises political activity on such fundamental issues as homelessness, poverty, abortion, environmental degradation, unemployment, apartheid and factory closure. The relationship between effort expended and success achieved in these areas is adversely disproportionate. The inevitable question is why?

Differential Access and the Obstacles to Reform

The structural changes which are thought to have consolidated the 'corporatist' trend and which have partially or wholly excluded the interests of smaller groups have already been noted. (63) It now remains to briefly identify the

61. Lowi, T. Decision-making Versus Policymaking: Towards an Antidote for Technocracy. Public Administration Review 1970 pp 314-25
62. Benewick and Smith p.13
63. See for example McCarthy, M. A. Organising the Independent Centre Political Quarterly June-September 1978 pp 293-303

other reasons why these groups remain largely unsuccessful. Most striking, is the overwhelming differential access to resources enjoyed by various interest groups. The term 'resources' may be seen to cover finance, expertise, contacts, leadership skills and familiarity with the 'rules of the game'. (64)

More fundamental than any of these, however, is the problem of self-identification; the ability or willingness of those with shared interests or values to actually perceive that they constitute a group, potential or otherwise. (65) It is similarly difficult to 'frame' issues for popular or governmental 'consumption' when dealing with those like poverty which can be both vague and specific and absolute and relative at the same time. Overcoming both obstacles are crucial to a group's development and its propensity for success. Both are only superficially acknowledged by modern pluralist writers.

In addition, problems of this sort are further compounded by the nature of many social or moral issues which militate against the mobilisation of support and the building of a permanent, coherent membership. Apart from the clear social barriers to mobilisation caused by the stigma⁽⁶⁶⁾ attached

64. Graeme Moodie and Gerald Studdert-Kennedy include control over or the possession of access to decisionmakers as....."a possible resource", bearing in mind the frequently substantial power of confidants, secretaries, acquaintances etc. Indeed they regard access to decision-makers as so important in the U. K. that "For lack of it, a group may be driven to disaffection from the political system, and if control of significant resources is allied to the denial of access, the situation is ripe for rebellion. Moodie, G. and Studdert-Kennedy, G. Opinions, Publics and Pressure Groups George Allen and Unwin 1970 p. 68
65. Schein notes..... "The size of the group is thus limited by the possibilities of mutual interaction and mutual awareness. These aggregates of people do not perceive themselves to be a group even if they are aware of each other....." Schein, E. Organisational Psychology Prentice Hall New York 1965 p. 67
66. Michael Hill notes of welfare claimants, for example..... "Individuals with such grievances rarely meet each other or they meet in contexts such as the offices of the Supplementary Benefits Commission, where they are inhibited by a sense of shame and degradation from comparing notes with each other". Hill, M. The State, Administration and the Individual Fontana 1976 p 221.

to certain issues, many problems affect individuals for a short time only - unemployment and homelessness may be useful examples - and the rapid turnover in membership that may occur within a group as individual problems are resolved may prove disruptive and demoralising for activists. The Claimants and Unemployed Workers Unions, for example, have found it difficult to sustain their activities and their representative base because of the highly transient or 'intermittent' nature of their memberships. (67)

The Campaign for the Homeless and Roofless (CHAR) has had similar difficulties in maintaining its organisational strength and the sustained involvement of homeless people.

On the other hand, social stigma has been an important constraining factor in the Campaign for Homosexual Equality's efforts to mobilise interest and support among both homosexuals and heterosexuals. Stigma, combined with the media's 'scroungerphobia', has also hindered the mobilisation of the poor in particular and welfare claimants in general. Even allowing for a reasonable degree of expertise, resources and articulation some publics will inevitably regard themselves as the victims of the prevailing biases within the political system and their sense of social deprivation and structural underprivilege may lead them to conclude that they have only two alternative responses open to them - passivity leading to alienation (68) or direct action which may well lead to their denunciation as 'deviants' employing 'illicit' political tactics. (69)

There is a third alternative, of course, - one which may well require little

67. Rose, H. 'Up Against the Welfare State' in Miliband, R. and Saville, J. eds Socialist Register 1973 (London) Merlin 1974
68. Hill notes. "The apathy of the poor and politically weak is, after all, a source of protection against being hurt in an unequal struggle. Perhaps they really know, better than the idealists who seek to politicise them, how difficult it is to achieve change". p. 27
69. Benewick & Smith Ch. 18 and 19.

or no participation from these publics themselves. That is the intervention of middle-class activists on their behalf - activists possessing the skills and organisational requirements for political influence that their 'clients' lack. (70) The Child Poverty Action Group is one such group of activists whose traditional role has been to articulate both the statistics of poverty and the sense of deprivation experienced by the poor. In 1965, when the group was established in response to academic evidence of a startling increase in child poverty, most observers might have been forgiven for expecting the group to have an early influence in social policy matters. After all, a so called 'reformist' Labour government had just come to power, many of the group's leading members and supporters were influential in the party during opposition and the abolition of poverty had figured prominently at the hustings during the 1964 General Election.

Yet the Child Poverty Action Group has encountered a number of serious obstacles to its progress over the last 15 years. Some of these, as was noted earlier, have been the direct shortcomings of the post-war legislation, some have been of its own making and have resulted from its own political misjudgement, from its uneasy and constraining relationship with the Labour Party and from its own lack of representativity and effective sanctions. They include what some have seen as a poorly judged 'election campaign' in 1970 when the group alienated support within the Labour Party and rather fragmented and more recent attempts to secure influence by liaison with bodies such as the TUC.

70. Alinsky notes....."These types of....people, ususally by virtue of education, background and personal manners, have much more in common with the representatives of the formal agencies than do the rank and file....." He notes, furthermore, that officials themselves....."feel much more at home with these people and find them more articulate and more able to talk in terms and values that (they)are comfortable with". Alinsky, S. Reveille for Radicals Random House, New York 1969. p. 66.

Other obstacles have not been of the group's making and have seriously impeded its efforts to bring about an effective strategy to alleviate poverty. Notable among these were the effects of the deflationary package of measures presented by the Labour Government in July 1966, the apparent reversal of Labour's priorities during the Wilson Governments, the failure of Labour's review of social services, the Conservative public expenditure cuts of 1970-73 and the debacle over family allowance increases in 1967-8⁽⁷¹⁾ and the introduction of child benefits 1975-77. Perhaps the most striking Achilles heel of CPAG in its role as a 'pressure group for the poor' is the remarkably low level of regular, formal contact it enjoys with departmental civil servants - a fact which has further required that the emphasis of this study be upon group-party and group-trade union relations. Given the structural underprivilege of the poor, the type of role CPAG claims for itself and the pledges made by successive governments since 1964 in the field of social policy, a study of the activities, aims and the changing political strategy of CPAG would seem to provide a useful opportunity to consider some of the trends in the reordering of groups and interests, briefly discussed earlier, in a more specific context.

The early chapters of this study show the 'rediscovery' of poverty in the late 1950s and early 1960s and explore the emergence of CPAG as one response to that 'rediscovery'. They show, in particular, the relatively low status of poverty as a political issue in this period and assess the role played by

71. Not the least effective, and often the most imperceptible, of these 'obstacles' is the effort expended by 'counter-interests' to prevent the issue of poverty securing sustained attention or effective action. This phenomenon of 'non-decision-making' has been most fully documented in Bachrach, P. and Baratz, M. S. Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice Oxford University Press. New York 1970. Summing up their hypothesis Charles Andrain has noted that.
 .. "Those exercising effective power use their power in part to prevent certain issues from being raised in the first place. That is, some power wielders mobilise their resources to prevent the formulation of decisions running counter to their interests". p. 115

social scientists in the documentation and, to a certain extent, the politicisation of the issue. Chapter three discusses perhaps the two most significant early campaigns of CPAG - those to abolish the wage-stop and to bring about an increase in family allowances through the operation of a system of tax clawback - and show the limits of the group's influence as these matters became internalised within Cabinet and Cabinet Committee. Chapter three also raises the broader problem of how CPAG policy and strategy developed against the backcloth of political events in the mid to late sixties and, in particular, of how the group responded to the apparent reversal of Labour's priorities after the latter's accession to power.

Chapter four commences with an assessment of CPAG under the leadership of Tony Lynes and a discussion of the implications and outcome of his departure in 1969, a considerable watershed for the group. It also attempts to locate the phased politicisation of poverty as an issue within the model of 'issue-attention cycles' advanced by Anthony Downs.⁽⁷²⁾ The remainder of this chapter is concerned with the organisational changes brought about by the resignation of Tony Lynes and with the origins and rationale of a new strategy for CPAG under the leadership of Frank Field and Peter Townsend.

Chapter five is exclusively concerned with CPAG's relationship with the Labour Party both in opposition and in office and details the group's involvement in the Party's Social Policy Sub-Committee. It concludes with a discussion of a second important watershed for the group, its 1970 'Poor Get Poorer Under Labour' General Election campaign and illustrates the growing independence and aggressiveness of CPAG's viewpoint under its

72. Downs, A. The Political Economy of Improving our Environment. in Downs, Kneese, Ogden and Perloff: The Political Economy of Environmental Control Berkley 1972 and Downs, A. 'Up and Down with Ecology - The Issue Attention Cycle' Public Interest No. 28 pp. 38-50

new leadership. Chapter six is similarly concerned with group-party relations and considers CPAGs response to Conservative social and economic policies in the period 1970-74 focussing, in particular, on its reaction to the introduction of Family Income Supplement. It also examines the rethink on policy taking place within CPAG in the period 1972-74 and discusses the origins of the groups decision to work with the trade union movement and Labour's rank and file in the wake of its failure to influence Conservative policy.

Chapter seven is accordingly concerned with CPAGs efforts to force poverty back on to the political agenda with the aid of what it then viewed as an 'insider group' of growing influence - the trade union movement. Some consideration of the trade union movement's record on and interest in social policy is undertaken here with particular attention devoted to the interrelationship of social welfare and wage bargaining. Chapter seven therefore questions the efficacy of CPAGs new strategy against the trade union movement's historical subscription to the principle of wages first and allowances second.

Chapter eight examines and assesses CPAGs strategy for influencing the trade unions and winning their support on what may have appeared to be non-work issues. It considers the group's efforts to effect a 'benefit-exchange' with the unions and to place social welfare issues at the forefront of TUC-Government dialogue in the period of the social contract.

Chapter nine continues this theme in greater detail and examines, in particular, the role of CPAGs branches and its newly appointed trade union liaison officer in furthering its hopes for the establishment of a 'poverty lobby' through structured liaison with the trade union movement. Chapter ten is an attempt to illustrate the reality of CPAG-trade union liaison in a specific context and takes as its subject the child benefits campaign of

1975-78. Finally, in the conclusion, we return to the themes raised in this introduction examining, in particular, the effectiveness of CPAG as a pressure group for the poor in the context of reform and change in the reordering of interest group politics in the sixties and seventies.

Campaigning for the Poor and the Poorest

It is, however, with the publication of an important new analysis of poverty that this study and the activities of CPAG begin.

In December 1965 Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend wrote that.....

....." Two assumptions have governed much economic thinking in Britain since the war. The first is that we have 'abolished' poverty. The second is that we are a much more equal society; that the differences between the living standards of the rich and poor are much smaller than they used to be. These assumptions are of great practical as well as theoretical importance. They form the background to much of the discussion of social and economic policy. But are they true?"(73)

This was the principal question the authors sought to answer in their comparative study of the nature and extent of poverty in the years 1953 and 1960. The significance of their study lay in its fresh interpretation and rather disturbing analysis of existing data from the Ministry of Labour's Family Expenditure Surveys for 1953-54 and 1960, and it did much to undermine conventional wisdom about the extent of poverty in Britain. As much of their work was devoted to exploding the contemporary myths regarding the incidence of poverty among children it is appropriate that present interest is confined to that section of the population.

Between 1953-60 the proportion of children increased by approximately 0.5% in both the total population and in the samples used in the two Ministry of Labour surveys. The proportion of children in households with "low levels of living" increased by 1%. However, as the authors noted, such

73. Abel-Smith, B. & Townsend, P. The Poor and the Poorest occasional papers on social administration No.17 Bell and Co. December 1965

apparently insignificant changes concealed much larger increases in family size. In the 1953-60 period the total population increased by about 4%. Yet the number of families with four dependent children increased by about 20%, those with five children by about 26% and those with six or more children by 45%

Compounding this increase in family size was their equally important observation that the economic position of such families was in relative decline between 1953 and 1960. Although the general level of incomes of the country rose by just over 50% in money terms, the family allowance for the second child remained at its 1953 level of 40p, while that for a third or subsequent child increased a mere 25% from 40p to 50p. The combined effects of inflation and rising consumer expectations led the authors to comment....."No doubt the failure of family allowances to keep pace with the living standards of the community contributed to the higher proportion of households found to have low levels of living in 1960 than in 1953-54". (74)

In 1960 alone there were nearly one million individuals who received pensions or other state benefits and whose incomes still remained below the assistance rates plus rent.

Their analysis revealed that not only were a substantial minority of the population, in addition to those receiving National Assistance, living at or below National Assistance standards, but also that a substantial minority were not receiving National Assistance yet appeared to qualify for it. For perhaps the first time then, the phenomenon of low or non-take-up of benefits was clearly and coherently exposed. The author's own reaction therefore was hardly surprising....."The legitimacy of the system of

National Assistance is therefore called in question".

The most significant finding made by Abel-Smith and Townsend was the extent of poverty among children. It had been generally assumed by politicians and academics alike that the problem of poverty was largely confined to the aged sections of the population. Abel-Smith and Townsend discovered, however, that there were more people who were not aged than there were aged among the poor households of 1960. They estimated that there were about 2.25 million children in low-income households in 1960.

....."Thus quantitatively the problem of poverty among children is more than two-thirds of the size of poverty among the aged. This fact has not been given due emphasis in the policies of the political parties. It is also worth observing that there were substantially more children in poverty than adults of working age. There is a simple, if relatively expensive, remedy for the problem of poverty among children - to substantially increase family allowances, particularly for the large family". (75)

The Poor and the Poorest concluded with the revelation that some 5-6% of the population were in low income households because wages, even where supplemented by family allowances, were insufficient to raise them above the minimum level. An additional 4% lived in households receiving insufficient social insurance benefits, usually pensions. A further 4-5% of the population were in low income households because of their non-entitlement to full National Assistance grants.

The authors ended their analysis with a challenge to Government.....

"Moreover, the fact that nearly a third of the poor were children suggests the need for a readjustment of priorities in plans for extensions and developments".

There were, then, two inextricably related factors in the Abel-Smith - Townsend strategy for alleviating poverty. Firstly, they had identified the

apparent need for Government action in increasing both the level and the application of family allowances. Secondly, they established a clear causal relationship between poverty and low pay, made all the more evident in a period of general prosperity and rising expectations. The sense of deprivation felt by this stratum of the workforce was, therefore, likely to be that more acute in the "affluent fifties and early sixties than in the forties when the exigencies of both war and post-war reconstruction ensured that most of the population experienced deprivation in some form or another.

The resolution of both these 'problems' were to become axiomatic to CPAGs efforts to eliminate poverty and their continued existence, as this study now goes on to show, has remained a significant factor in sustaining the group's *raison d'etre*.

CHAPTER 2

The Origins and Emergence of Child Poverty Action Group

Abel-Smith's and Townsend's emphasis on the extraction and interpretation of extant government data on poverty is wholly consistent with the development of informed opinion preceding the publication of their 1965 study. (1) Academics and Labour politicians, often meeting under the 'umbrella' of the party's social policy sub-committee, had been slowly converging on the issue of poverty since the late fifties. In its 1950 manifesto the party had claimed to have eliminated destitution and the following year had echoed this self-congratulation in a further manifesto "Now we have a National Health Service scheme which is the admiration of the post-war world. Then, we had the workhouse and the poor law for the old people. Now we have a national insurance system covering the whole population with greatly improved pensions and a humane National Assistance Scheme". (2)

Initially, the Labour Party's claims appeared to have some substance. The third social survey of York, conducted by Rowntree and Lavers, appeared the same year and revealed, certainly in that locality, that the proportion of the working class population living in poverty had fallen from 31.1% in 1936 to 2.77% in 1950. (3) In 1936 the two chief causes of poverty had been

1. Abel-Smith, B. and Townsend, P. The Poor and the Poorest Occasional papers on Social Administration No.17 December 1965. Bell & Company.
2. Quoted in Craig, F. W. British General Election Manifestoes 1918-66. Political Reference Publications 1970 pp. 132 and 149
3. Rowntree, B. S. and Lavers, G. R. Poverty and the Welfare State: A Third Social Survey of York Dealing only with Economic Problems. Longman 1951 Ch. 4. For a short commentary on their work see MacFarlane, L. J. Issues in British Politics Since 1945. Longman 1975. pp 54-55.

unemployment of the chief wage earner (28.6%) and low wages (32.8%), by 1950 the former did not even figure as a cause and the latter accounted for only 1% of those in poverty. The two new chief causes were old age (68.1%) and sickness (21.3%).⁽⁴⁾ However, the York survey did stress that while poverty in absolute terms may have appeared to diminish, poverty as a relative concept had not. There remained an increasing number of families only marginally above the levels used to define the survey poverty line. While giving some support to Labour's claims the York survey did, therefore, make important qualifications of its findings, though politicians and press alike chose to interpret them rather selectively.

It is clear that although a 'new society' had emerged in the post-war period many saw it as the end of an evolutionary process, not the beginning. While many Labour politicians had viewed the creation of the Welfare State as the centre piece of a new social order others saw it as the fulfilment of short term expediency. As Birch notes... "To some extreme Conservatives and Liberals, the Labour legislation had been simply an ad hoc response to a period of short-term difficulty, and they believed that it would not be needed with the return of affluence under normal economic conditions, the crutches discarded when the British people had learned once more how to walk on their own feet".⁽⁵⁾

In 1957 Peter Townsend had been among the first to question the complacency of Labour's manifestoes and to dispute the popular notion that real poverty had been largely eliminated. His study of the aged in Bethnal Green, Family Life of Old People,⁽⁶⁾ revealed that one third of his sample of old

4. See Table 3.1 'Poverty in York 1936 and 1950' in MacFarlane op. cit p. 55
5. Birch, R. The Shaping of the Welfare State. Longman 1974 p. 65
6. Townsend, P. The Family Life of Old People: An Enquiry in East London. Routledge. 1957. pp 163-4

people had a personal income below the National Assistance Board's subsistence minimum and that between a fifth and a quarter of all old people were not receiving the assistance to which they were entitled. By the mid-fifties the realities of post-war poverty had become of increasing concern to labour ideologues. The influence of 'Labour academics' like Richard Titmuss, Peter Townsend and Brian Abel-Smith through the party's social policy-making committees had forced a re-interpretation of the optimistic mood of 1950-51. Labour's 1955 election manifesto, for example, had claimed that the 1945-51 Government had not actually 'abolished' poverty but that it had, instead....."begun to abolish the fear of old age, sickness and disablement which haunted working-class life before the war". (7)

The role of academics in assisting what Stringer and Richardson have termed "problem definition",⁽⁸⁾ and in helping to get the poverty issue onto the political agenda was particularly crucial during this period when both the major parties appeared unclear and ambivalent as to the nature and extent of poverty. Nowhere was this more important than in the publication of The Poor and the Poorest by Abel-Smith and Townsend in 1965. The work of such academics in raising the issue of poverty within the Labour Party and in providing information about the problem, largely generated by their own research, helped initiate an intra-party debate that persuaded Labour to incorporate 'an attack on poverty' onto its own political agenda.

In 1959, influenced by Townsend's survey of Bethnal Green, the party hastened to make the problem of poverty among the aged a key election

7. Craig op. cit p.179
8. Stringer, J. and Richardson, J.J. 'Managing the Political Agenda: Problem Definition and Policy-making in Britain.' Parliamentary Affairs Winter 1980.

issue....."the living standards of more than half of our old-age pensioners are a national disgrace. About a million are driven by poverty to seek National Assistance and another 500,000 would be entitled to receive it but are too proud to do so."⁽⁹⁾

The party's leader, Hugh Gaitskell, raised expectations further when he declared....."the real challenge to us is whether we're going once and for all to abolish poverty in old age. The Labour Party is the only party that can do that".⁽¹⁰⁾

National Assistance and Problem Definition

Events immediately preceding the 1964 General Election raised further hopes that social reform was inevitable. The years 1962-63 witnessed a concerted attempt by some academics to advance the frontiers of research by persuading the National Assistance Board to improve its irregular and meagre statistical output on the nature and extent of poverty. Throughout these years a largely LSE-based 'ginger-group' numbering Titmuss, Townsend, Tony Lynes, David Donnison, Michael Young and Dorothy Wedderburn within its ranks, most of them committed Labour supporters, continuously pressed the NAB Chairman, Lord Ilford, to increase the Board's output of data so that a coherent, national picture of poverty could be drawn up.⁽¹¹⁾

Hugh Heclo has referred to such groups as "policy-watchers" and he notes that it is through their scrutiny of, and interaction with, Government..... "that public policy issues tend to be refined, evidence debated, and alternative options worked out....."⁽¹²⁾

9. MacFarlane p. 56
10. Butler, D. and Rose, R. The British General Election of 1959 Nuffield Election Studies. MacMillan 1960 p. 55
11. Interview with Professor Peter Townsend, Chairman of CPAG 18.12.79.
12. Heclo, H. 'Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment' 10

In essence, their 'campaign' was aimed at making a complete picture of a jigsaw of which each held only a small piece. It was hoped that this sustained lobbying would persuade the Board to release a wealth of data as yet unseen by academics and would, subsequently, enable most academics to test their own suspicions of the Government's failure or reluctance to perceive the full implications of that data. (13)

This lack of freely available information from Government was an important obstacle to problem definition. Until an improved and increased flow of information took place any critique of Government policy on poverty was weakened by resort to generalisation. The limiting of information, a serious blow to the 'policy-watcher', can be a useful tactic in controlling the political debate and keeping the Government's agenda to manageable proportions, Stringer and Richardson note, for example, that.....

"from the point of view of the politicians and Civil Servants yet another issue forcing itself onto the political agenda may appear as an unwelcome intrusion into an already overburdened system which has not the capacity to respond positively. Far better, perhaps, to so arrange things that it is very difficult for anyone to claim that there is a problem in the first place". (14)

13. Indeed Lynes, increasingly cast in the role of the 'group's' Secretary, had complained in a letter to Douglas Houghton, Opposition Spokesman on Social Services, on the 13. 2. 63. that..... "discussion of the Board's work is seriously hampered by a lack of detailed information". Commenting on this type of dilemma, Stringer and Richardson have noted

"when criticising governments for their failure adequately to define a problem or for deliberately attempting to manage its definition, we labour under the difficulty in many instances of lack of knowledge. When knowledge is confined in this way, how much easier it is for Governments to control the emergence of issues, to define or redefine problems out of existence, with a view only to short-term expediency. A more open system, we might hope, would expose just what the Government is up to". Op cit p. 36

14. Stringer and Richardson pp. 23-24

Two leading sociologists, Dorothy Wedderburn and Peter Townsend, had already shown in 1962 that the NAB was gathering and collating information, but was offering rather selective and incomplete conclusions. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Using the findings of the Ministry of Labour's Household Expenditure Surveys, Townsend found that in 1953-54 about 8% of the population, nearly 4 million people, were living at a standard no higher than the average family on National Assistance. His preliminary comparisons for 1960 showed that the numbers had nearly doubled. Some 7½ million people were now to be found in households with incomes at or below the average amount allowed to similar families on National Assistance. "As many as two million had less than the 'basic' National Assistance scale on which, it has been officially stated, nobody is expected to live." ⁽¹⁶⁾

Using the same Expenditure Surveys, Wedderburn found similar anomalies and she concluded that there were twice as many people living at or below National Assistance level than there were receiving assistance. Confirming both the findings of the 1951 York Survey and Townsend's Bethnal Green study, Wedderburn revealed that one third of most old people who appeared eligible for National Assistance in 1959-60 were not receiving it and that one-eighth of all old age pensioners were living on incomes below National Assistance level. ⁽¹⁷⁾

It was left to Tony Lynes, research assistant to Professor Richard Titmuss, to collate these findings and pose the questions Why had the Welfare State's attack on poverty failed? and, most disturbing, why had poverty apparently increased? Superficially, the correlation between non-take-up of

15. Wedderburn and Townsend had presented their findings separately under a common title Poverty in Britain Today (though Wedderburn's was sub-titled 'The Economic Circumstances of Old People) to the 1962 Conference of the British Sociological Association held at Brighton.
16. See Lynes, A. 'Poverty in the Welfare State' Aspect August 1963 p. 8
17. ibid p. 9

assistance and the socio-psychological overtones of stigma provided a ready answer for apologists of the Beveridge plan.

However, this could hardly detract from the failure of institutions to fulfil their prescribed roles in the welfare system. A prime target for Lynes, therefore, was the agency charged with the responsibility of measuring and alleviating poverty - the National Assistance Board. A principal criticism of the Board concerned its ineffectual efforts in the public relations field. Lynes, inter al, felt that it had failed to present itself to the claimant as either sympathetic or helpful. Instead it had become "extremely conscious of its role as guardian of the public purse". (18) Its publicity tended to be so discrete as to be inaudible; its impact upon the press was invariably confined to accusations of it being a paymaster to 'scroungers' and the idle.

Its position of vulnerability and resulting ineffectuality was aptly described by Howard Glennerster..... "It seems afraid to raise its voice too much in case too many people hear". (19) The kind of publicity the Board was likely to attract from a popular press given to sensationalism and exaggeration as pre-requisites of commercial success was unlikely to encourage it to advertise its services too widely or with more enthusiasm. (20) In short, the NAB felt it was, proverbially, 'on a hiding to nothing'.

However, there may have been a more rational, administrative explanation

18. ibid
19. Glennerster, H. National Assistance: Service or Charity? (Young Fabian Pamphlet) Fabian Society 1962.
20. For an analysis of the phenomenon of 'scroungerphobia' see Golding, P. and Middleton, S. 'Why is the Press so Obsessed with Welfare Scroungers'? New Society 26 October 1978. It is interesting that the authors note that David Donnison, Chairman of the SBC..... "has repeatedly claimed that anti-claimant stories in the press contribute to stigma and the low take-up of benefits". (p.195) They further observe that..... "The potency of the myth is discovered by its victims. The rhetoric and ideology of news in the British press about the Welfare State is more often openly hostile to a broad-based welfare and social security system". (p.197)

for the Board's apparent reticence. Michael Hill has argued that NAB officials were obliged to reconcile two conflicting objectives. (21) On the one hand they had a clear duty to meet need and to promote the welfare of claimants. On the other hand, they also had a clear duty, often pointed out to them by the press, to protect public funds from abuse and fraudulent applications. As R. G. S. Brown has commented. "This implied reasonable conscientiousness in verifying the applicant's statements The way of life of some of these cases was not at first sight likely to command a great deal of sympathy from a hard-working white-collar worker. The investigating officer could be under some social pressure from his fellow officers not to be taken for a ride." (22)

The role and attitude of the NAB and its officials was influenced by a further example of conflicting interest. Michael Hill has shown that the alternative to leaving some measure of discretion to officials is to enforce a stricter definition of entitlement, which may result in some needy cases not being met, or to define it so liberally that there is a real danger of over-expenditure and waste. The result, says Brown, was that the NAB was reluctant to publicise the full range of exceptions that could be made to the normal rates because it would then become very difficult to deny extra, discretionary payments to cases that were not exceptional. (23) Inevitably, the NAB may have seen the hybridity of its role as a limiting factor in the development of a more generous, sympathetic and better-advertised approach to the claimant.

Tony Lynes also pointed to another 'handicap' from which the Board suffered. Its officers received very little specialised training for a job

21. Hill, M. 'The Exercise of Discretion in the National Assistance Board' Public Administration 1969 pp. 75-90

22. Brown, R. G. S. The Management of Welfare. Fontana 1975 pp. 94-95

23. ibid p. 96

demanding much tact and patience. Of its staff's capacity to discharge their duties effectively, sympathetically and without undue prejudice Lynes observed....."some have recently attended courses in human relations, but most still rely largely on skills and attitudes passed on by their predecessors, whose apprenticeship was served under the old Poor Law. A person who, on his first application for assistance, happens to meet a tactless officer may be permanently deterred from applying again."(24)

It is useful to consider here a view that will be discussed at some length later. Hilary Rose, a social administrator, has suggested that difficulties of the sort described by Lynes endure because of the conditions of employment experienced by welfare staff and the perceived disparity between their low earned income and the 'unearned assistance dispensed to claimants. She charges that staff are often paid little above, and sometimes considerably below, the benefit levels of some of the claimants with whom they deal. In some cases, then, the victim of the dehumanising ritual of the claiming and dispensing of benefits may not be the claimant but the dispenser. She notes....."The low-paid bureaucrat behind the desk of the Social Security Office or the Housing Department stands at the abyss of poverty he confronts daily, held back only by his respectability". (25)

Perhaps the most serious criticism levelled at the NAB was its highly discriminatory practice of applying the "wage-stop ruling" (26) against

24. Lynes op cit p. 9

25. Rose, H. Rights, Participation and Conflict Poverty Pamphlet No. 5 (CPAG) p. 13.

26. It should be noted that the introduction of the wage-stop actually pre-dates both the Conservative Governments of 1951-64 and what might be termed the modern welfare state which has largely developed since 1945. Laurie Elks has noted that....."the rule has existed since the beginning of Unemployment Assistance in 1935 and can be traced back to the Poor Law Commissioners of 1834 and their rule of 'less eligibility'. At all times, the principle has remained that no man should be able to escape, through resort to the assistance of the state, from the hard facts of poverty at work". Elks, L. The Wage Stop. Poverty Pamphlet 17 CPAG. The Labour Government inherited the ruling 1964 and gave it further life by incorporating it in Schedule 2, paragraph 5, of the 1966 Ministry of Social Security Act.

unemployed claimants so that they would not receive more out of work than they could earn in full-time employment. For many, a disturbing feature of the wage-stop was its tendency to keep a large number of families below the prescribed minimum National Assistance rates laid down in statute by Parliament, because the chief wage-earner had earned less than most rates in full-time employment. (27)

Writing in 1963 Lynes pointed out....."The heavy unemployment of last Winter drew attention to the 'wage-stop' rule under which the allowance paid by the NAB to an unemployed person is not allowed to exceed his normal earnings. The number of cases in which, under this rule, families receiving less than the normal rates of Assistance rose to 25,000 - one in eight of the 200,000 unemployed persons on National Assistance". (28) Most disturbing, he felt, were the effects the ruling had on the most vulnerable sections of the population....."After the recent increase in the Assistance rates, the numbers affected by the wage-stop rose still more. It is the the families with several children that suffer under this rule, and it is little comfort to know that these families and their children, are below the National Assistance level even when the father is in full-time work". (29)

In addition to the shortcomings of the Board itself, Townsend, Lynes and Wedderburn had each demonstrated the need to account for the phenomenon of 'relative poverty' in any future discourse on the incidence of poverty.... "the realisation that what any society understands by poverty must depend on the living standards of the population as a whole..... In retrospect it is surprising that for so many years we were content to

27. See Elks op cit and Lynes, A. 'The Wage Stop' Poverty (Journal of CPAG) No. 2 Spring 1967 pp. 4-6
28. Lynes op cit p. 9
29. ibid see also '20,000 Lost Rebates - The Wage Stop' Poverty No. 6 Spring 1968 pp. 6-7

leave the poorest groups among the aged, the sick and the unemployed at a static level of income while most other people were growing richer". (30)

This emphasis on the 'relative' nature of poverty was important for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the implication that the tendency of post-war governments to view poverty as a once and for all, absolute social problem constituted an inaccurate definition of the problem. Stringer and Richardson suggest that such inaccuracy may derive, unintentionally..... "from the lack of reliable or readily accessible data on what is actually happening in a given policy area". (31) An important object of academic research in this period was to correct that inaccuracy and to emphasise the long-term, dynamic nature of poverty as a social problem - a problem that could not be tackled in the 'mopping-up' fashion popularly prescribed in the early fifties. The corollary of this emphasis on relative poverty, of course, was the possibility that poverty may not have been tackled in the early fifties because academics themselves, whose research is an important source of information for Government, had not properly grasped the real nature of the problem.

Lynes' solution to the problems he and his colleagues had identified was a five-point plan to lift most of the poor above the NAB-defined poverty line. Principally, he advocated a rise in National Assistance rates and, where the NAB was shown to pay less than the rates approved by Parliament, investigation of the maladministration or 'misadministration'. Secondly, he saw improved National Insurance benefits related to individual earnings and an Income Guarantee to supplement the low incomes of pensioners as a right.

30. Lynes, p.10 and Banting, K. Poverty, Politics and Poverty MacMillan 1979 p.70 and Townsend, P. 'The Meaning of Poverty' British Journal of Sociology No.13 1962 p.210-27
31. Stringer & Richardson p.33

To assist families with more than one child he proposed an increase in family allowances to an average of £1.40 per child and the abolition of child tax allowances, which had largely favoured higher income tax payers. This, he estimated, would cost about £290 million a year but would be offset by the abolition of tax allowances which would net £350 million, more than enough to fund his scheme. However, the interests of other groups in society combined with the possible electoral impact such a sweeping change in fiscal policy would have upon party fortunes, ensured that, at this stage at least, this would remain a pipe dream. (32)

Of contemporary significance were his suggestions for periodic adjustments of all social security payments to ensure that they reflect rising living standards, a proposal favoured by both the Labour and Liberal parties. Finally, Lynes called for....."a determined attempt to raise wages in low-paid occupations." (33) This, he felt, would partly help to offset the punitive structure of the wage-stop.

32. Unaware of some of the limitations and influences at work upon Government efforts to establish priorities and formulate policy, the alternatives put forward by academics working in the field may appear one-dimensional, unrealistic and perhaps naive. Conversely, Governments may deliberately obscure the influences at work to keep unwelcome issues off the agenda. R. G. S. Brown notes, for example, that....."Government-sponsored research can never wholly answer the criticism (however undeserved) that it can be steered away from politically inconvenient issues. There is also a fundamental point that internal research cannot, by definition, be expected to cover problems of which those who commission it are themselves unaware. Per Contra, the policy recommendations of academics who carry out independent research on social problems may lack realism or balance..... the outcome of which is in turn influenced by the policy preferences of the researchers." Brown op cit p.197
33. The NAB was set up under the provisions of the 1948 National Assistance Act to provide payments to people over 16 not at school or in work whose income was below the level considered necessary to meet that person's requirements. The Social Security Act of 1966 reformulated National Assistance as Supplementary Benefit and the NAB was reconstituted as the SBC. Baugh, W. E. Introduction to the Social Services 3rd edition MacMillan 1977. p. 29 and pp. 35-56

It is difficult to assess the full impact of this rather short-lived tirade against the NAB. It is tempting to argue that the anomalies and injustice exposed by Lynes and others may have directly contributed to the abolition of the NAB and its replacement by the Supplementary Benefits Commission, which one of these "policy-watchers", David Donnison has later come to chair. Certainly, since its inception, the SBC has attempted to overcome the more obvious shortcomings of its predecessor and has been a much more accessible body to interested groups than the NAB ever was. (33)

However, the most tangible outcome of this period was the shared experience of this academic coterie in translating their professional interest into political objection - an experience that was drawn upon and reapplied shortly afterwards when the need for a more permanent and structured pressure group was acknowledged. (34) It is possible to detect among the activities of these policy-watchers the foundations for the development of a more sophisticated 'policy community' at a later stage. Heclo observes of the policy-watchers that..... "what they all have in common is the detailed understanding of specialised issues that comes from sustained attention to a given policy debate". (35) Ultimately, however, if policy-makers continue to resist or largely ignore information in-puts, or 'feedback', from policy-watchers an alternative course of action open to the latter will be the organisation of themselves or others into a structured

33. The NAB was set up under the provisions of the 1948 National Assistance Act to provide payments to people over 16 not at school or in work whose income was below the level considered necessary to meet that person's requirements. The Social Security Act of 1966 reformulated National Assistance as Supplementary Benefit and the NAB was reconstituted as the SBC. Baugh, W. E. Introduction to the Social Services 3rd edition MacMillan 1977. p. 29 and pp. 35-56
34. Peter Townsend is himself sympathetic to this view and feels that CPAG may have had its roots in this academic 'ginger group' and in the individual research and lobbying work done by Tony Lynes at Skepper House. Interview 19.12.79.
35. Heclo op cit p. 99

interest group determined to enter and compete within the recognised policy community.⁽³⁶⁾ It is to this next stage of development that we now turn.

Expectations unfulfilled

The Labour Party's apparent acceptance of the 'rediscovery' of poverty in the late 50s may have given some encouragement to those expecting early and resolute action on the issue when, and if, the party came to power. Yet, it was clear well before the 1964 General Election that the party was moving in other directions and was likely to establish expenditure priorities which might preclude an early solution to the problem. R. Birch has suggested that the Labour initiative had been exhausted even before the outbreak of the Korean War and that the Party's leaders....."would, clearly, be more sympathetic to demands for more freedom both in the economy and in the social services, provided society still met its basic needs, and they would.....be more inclined to rely upon material improvement as the surest way to raise the general standards of the people".⁽³⁷⁾

The assumption of full employment won a policy goal accepted by all parties since the 1944 White Paper and was enhanced by almost complete social security. Resulting from this, there followed in the mid-fifties, alongside the 'rediscovery' of poverty, a debate about....."the wisdom of retaining unmodified a costly barrier against a basic poverty which seemed to be receding."⁽³⁸⁾ The belief in the Conservative party....."that both national and individual enterprise were being sapped by a heavy burden of taxation, and the attack on universality, marked a retreat from the idealistic view of the Welfare State....."⁽³⁹⁾ which some Labour leaders,

36. See Gustafsson, G. and Richardson, J. J. 'Concepts of Rationality and the Policy Process' European Journal of Political Research No. 7 1979 pp. 415-36
 37. Birch op cit p. 66
 38. ibid p. 71
 39. ibid

also, seem to have been prepared to join. (40)

In retrospect, the optimism expressed at the hustings in 1959 for Labour's plans to eradicate poverty seems misplaced. Paul Foot has noted that the radical, reforming tone of Labour in opposition in the mid-to-late fifties may have been rather superficial at leadership level and that by the 1964 Election had been shifted to an emphasis on 'efficiency', 'dynamism' and the ability to produce and compete. (41) One student of the party, David Coates, notes for example, that during the 1964 election..... "The 'problem' which the party placed before the electorate was not that of capitalism against socialism, but one of 'a sluggish and fitful economy' which had fallen behind its international competitors, which was inefficient, whose management was drawn from too socially restricted a background, and which had failed to invest with sufficient vigour in the new scientific and technological industries..... and the 'solution' which they offered, inevitably, was the election of a Labour Government 'to energise and modernise our industries' and 'to make Britain up-to-date, vigorous, and capable of playing her full part in world affairs'". (42)

It is Coates' view that Labour went to the hustings in 1964..... "behind a rhetoric of 'science' and 'modernisation' that served both to unite the party in the wake of Gaitskell's death, and to express in a highly ambiguous fashion the Wilson leadership's overriding priorities of economic growth, a strong currency, and an interventionist state". (43)

Increasingly, Harold Wilson's emphasis on the 'white heat of the technological revolution' came to displace the 1959 theme of closing the gap between rich

40. See Coates, D. The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism. Cambridge University Press 1975 ch. 4 & 5.

41. Foot, P. The Politics of Harold Wilson, Penguin (Harmondsworth) 1968 pp. 146-8

42. Coates op cit p. 97

43. *ibid* pp 97-98

and poor.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Wilson's highly administrative style of politics and his preoccupation with the theme of economic growth as the prerequisite for social action⁽⁴⁵⁾ had convinced many Labour activists that an initiative in the Welfare field must come, perforce, from outside the party leadership.

This preoccupation with growth may well have been a genuine attempt at agenda management. Clearly, Harold Wilson saw a sound logic in using economic growth as a platform for a social transformation of society. If growth was genuinely seen as the panacea for society's ills, it was reasonable for that issue to dominate the political agenda to the exclusion of others provided, of course, that expectations of growth were realistic.⁽⁴⁶⁾ It is clear, however, that Labour had not investigated the problem of achieving growth as thoroughly as may have been assumed.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Accordingly the framework and focus of policy-debate in opposition assumed a wrong emphasis. The party's efforts at problem definition, and its scaling of priorities, may well have been inconsistent with predictions of an economic recession taking place after the post-Korean war boom. The strategy it brought with it into office may therefore have been inappropriate in the economic climate of 1964.⁽⁴⁸⁾

As David Coates has pointed out..... "in the 1950s, as in the 1930s, the

44. Foot op cit pp. 146-48

45. Wilson, H. The New Britain Penguin (Harmondsworth) 1964 p. 23 and Foot pp. 135-39

46. A further advantage of talking in specific terms of achieving growth as the prerequisite for wider action was that a popularly understood 'target' could be held up as a gauge or 'indicator' of the success of Government action. The use of "policy indicators", or manageable target figures, can assist public comprehension of government policy and, if achieved, win important (electoral) kudos. As Stringer and Richardson note..... "When Ministers commit themselves to specific targets..... it is likely that ways will be found of managing indicators in order to show that the policy has "succeeded". op cit p. 32

47. Pryke, R. 'The Predictable Crisis' New Left Review No. 39 Sept-Oct. 1966 p. 3

48. For a discussion of "inaccurate problem definition" see Stringer & Richardson op cit pp. 33-36

Labour Party had spent its period in Opposition discussing the wrong problems i. e. not discussing the problems which an incoming Labour Government would face. They entered office equipped to run a high-growth economy, anticipating that the barriers to growth would be technological and scientific. They in fact inherited a low-growth economy, where the barrier to growth was primarily a financial and a competitive one". (49)

Commenting on Harold Wilson's stage management of party priorities in the eighteen months preceding the 1964 General Election, Christopher Price, a Labour M.P. noted that. "this progress from false teeth to technology, from soft hearts to hard heads, as has been evident from recent Labour Party Conferences, has set up very real tensions among the ordinary party members". (50) The ideological commitment of 1951 had given way to the intense pragmatism of 1964. Social reform, once an exalted icon embedded at the core of the party's socialist doctrines, was now subordinated to the vagaries of Labour's plans for sustained economic growth.

Price went on to note. "the issue has been to an extent softened so far by the fact that the Labour Party is led by a Prime Minister who is firmly respectable on both counts; having resigned office to protect a free Health Service in 1951, he was almost solely responsible for launching and developing the modernising technical stance on which the 1964 election was won. Since then, however, the flood of political technologists into the party, the inevitable constant emphasis on efficiency and productivity in the ministerial and party pronouncements, could endanger the delicate balance between head and heart which is essential to the party if it is to survive." (51)

49. Coates p. 101

50. Price, C. 'The Welfare State: Reform and Development' in Whitaker, B. ed. A. Radical Future. Jonathan Cape 1967 p. 137

51. ibid

The dangers of intra-party split as the party leadership suspended its interest in traditional goals and values in favour of an emphasis on 'scientific socialism' and modernity were quite clear. (52) What was equally clear was that the initiative for social reform had now passed out of the party's hands. "policy statements there have been in plenty - but by and large the job of pointing out the gaps in the Welfare State and planning the future of social policy has been bequeathed to left-wing academics like Professors Titmuss and Townsend". (53)

The tone for academic-inspired change had already been set by Lynes in 1963, effectively demonstrating that the problem of poverty was a dynamic one, endemic to any developed society. He, too, had lamented the inertia which appeared to 'dog' the issue. "The fact that, after 15 years of more or less full employment and social security for all, the poor are still with us has forced us to the realisation that poverty must be continually re-defined, as the standards of the community rise". (54)

The Emergence of a Pressure Group for the Poor

In 1965, in the wake of Labour inaction and growing academic frustration, an attempt was made, somewhat inadvertently, to cohere the disparate contributions to the poverty debate into a programme for action. In March of that year, Brian Abel-Smith was invited to address a meeting of the Social and Economic Affairs Committee of the Society of Friends on "a number of aspects of poverty" at Toynbee Hall. (55) The impact of his talk

52. See Harold Wilson's address to the party conference in 1963 in Labour Party Annual Conference Report 1963 pp.134-40

53. Price p.137

54. Lynes p.15

55. The two earliest meetings of the Group, held respectively on March 5th and March 13th, are noted in an unaddressed memorandum written by Fred Philp of the Family Service Unit. Philp subsequently became Chairman of the Group, which was renamed the Family Poverty Group before becoming the Child Poverty Action Group.

was such that a follow-up was arranged....."to consider what action ought to be taken to increase public awareness of poverty and to draw up a programme of action which would prevent and relieve it."⁽⁵⁶⁾

On the 5th April the 'group' reconvened as the Advisory Council for the Alleviation of Poverty. The first task it set for itself, the appointment of someone....."who would write to the press whenever an occasion arose to bring home to the public the existence of poverty and to correct misapprehensions about the poor"..... set the style of the group as essentially 'Fabian' and educative.⁽⁵⁷⁾ In addition, it was clear that the group was to continue where individual academics had left off. The need for an explanatory leaflet for social workers explaining how the NAB worked and how it often failed to meet the needs of certain families was a major priority. So, too, was the alleviation of poverty through the establishment of higher wages. The group was concerned, therefore, to recognise....."the need to devise a plan for meeting the problem of poverty more generally, bearing in mind that quite possibly the majority of families whose income is less than National Assistance level are not in fact sick or unemployed, but are families where the wage earner has a very low wage and a large family."⁽⁵⁸⁾

A positive outcome of the meeting was the drafting of the Group's first memorandum on poverty which was dispatched in June to Douglas Houghton,

56. Field, F. 'A Pressure Group for the Poor' in Bull, D. ed. Family Poverty 2nd Edition Duckworth 1972 p.146
57. Minutes of the Family Service Unit 5th April 1965. 'Report of the Meeting on Poverty'. The minutes reveal that there had been some discussion of the style and status of the proposed group and it was generally agreed that, having taken on this title, representation might be made to the Government asking for financial help for a body which would investigate the problem of poverty and make recommendations on the subject to Government Departments.
58. ibid

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, ⁽⁵⁹⁾ who had recently been appointed by Harold Wilson as the new 'overlord' of the Social Services. On assuming office, the party's leadership had attempted to meet criticism of the declining priority of social reform by translating a number of its manifesto commitments into legislative action. Old Age Pensions were increased, National Insurance and National Assistance Rates were improved, prescription charges were abolished early in 1965 and a Redundancy Payments Act was passed later the same year.

In addition, the Government had announced in November 1964 that a major review of the Social Security system would be undertaken under the guidance of Douglas Houghton. ⁽⁶⁰⁾ Houghton's task was to examine the problems of the five groups disproportionately represented among the poor. (1) The long-term unemployed; (2) the chronically sick and disabled; (3) Fatherless families; (4) The elderly; (5) Low-paid wage-earners and their families. The review was to last four years, yet it failed to produce any substantive written outcome or to establish guidelines for future social policy. Its announcement also managed to surprise and confuse many observers who were under the impression that Labour's social policies had already been thrashed out and reshaped in the alimentary system of the party's

59 Harold Wilson described Houghton as..... "pensions expert and chairman of all the Cabinet Committees concerned with the Social Services". Wilson, H. The Labour Government 1964-70 - A Personal Record. Pelican 1964 p. 84. A much less enthusiastic assessment of Houghton's 'expertise' may be found in Crossman, R. The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister Vol. I Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape 1975 pp. 410-11

60. Houghton was to have the task..... "of co-ordinating the work of the Social Services to ensure that no longer do we have the scandal of poverty in the midst of great potential abundance or of an unbalanced social service sector". Foot op cit p. 157

committees some years earlier. (61)

The basis of the memorandum submitted in June 1965 to Houghton was Tony Lynes' article "A Policy for Family Incomes" published in the Listener in March 1965. Lynes had documented the inter-relationship between incomes policy and taxation and their effect upon families, the inequities produced by the wage-stop, the effects of perinatal mortality, nutrition and diet and sizes of family related to educational achievement. His principal recommendation for the alleviation of distress was an increase in family allowances.

By the time Douglas Houghton received the memorandum on June 30th 1965, the group had renamed itself the Family Poverty Group, under the Chairmanship of Fred Philp of the Family Service Unit. It proposed two

61. In 1963 the Labour Party's Study Group on Social Security and Old Age, headed by Douglas Houghton and Richard Crossman, produced a working document entitled New Frontiers for Social Security. The Study Group numbered among its ranks Richard Titmuss, Peter Townsend, Brian Abel-Smith and Tony Lynes. Its aims were threefold; (1) to improve and extend National Insurance and provide subsistence benefit as a right without recourse to the NAB; (2) to build a new structure of graded benefits related to individual savings and needs; (3) to finance the improved benefits by replacing flat-rate contributions with wage-related contributions. The report was introduced to the Party's 1963 Conference, amid considerable enthusiasm, by Peggy Herbison who became Minister of Pensions and National Insurance in 1964. See Marsh, D. C. 'The Future of the Welfare State: Whither or Wither?' in Winkler, H. R. ed. Twentieth Century Britain - National Power and Social Welfare. New Viewpoints 1976 pp. 196-215
- The schemes to assist the chronically sick and the widowed, the proposals to increase and extend benefits and the inclusion of a progressive scheme for retirement pensions had created optimism among the party's supporters. It came as some surprise then when, in November 1964, James Callaghan announced plans for the new review. Most observers, Peter Townsend among them, had considered this already achieved before the party took office. Townsend speaks of the announcement as an "outrage" which took the party's policymakers by surprise despite their recognition of the problems that Labour was forced to contend with in the early days of office. Interview with Peter Townsend 19th December 1979.

main reforms - the abolition of child tax allowances and the replacement of the existing family allowance by a tax free family allowance of 50p for the first child and £1.25 for subsequent children. Secondly, the group proposed an alternative system based on the extension of tax allowances to those below the tax threshold by adaptation of the P. A. Y. E. machinery. Tax adjustment payments could be added to the weekly wage packet and recovered from the Inland Revenue by the employer. (62)

Broadly, the aims could be summarised as, firstly, to achieve an increase in the income of poorer families with dependent children both when the head of the household is employed and unemployed; and, secondly, to accomplish this without encouraging increases in family size and without creating a disincentive to work. By mid-July a reply from Houghton was still not forthcoming and the second part of the group's strategy now came into force. At a meeting on the 15th July the Family Poverty Group agreed to write to....."a group of selected influential people sending them a copy of the memorandum, drawing their attention to the problem and asking if they would support an appeal to the Government to take action to alleviate it by signing an endorsed letter to the Prime Minister." (63)

Securing the 'patronage' of well known figures at the inception or during the course of a campaign is a well-tryed, orthodox tactic for interest groups seeking to attract attention to an issue. The association of well-known individuals may attract an aura of prestige and respectability to the group which may serve to give impetus to the group's efforts in both the parliamentary and public relations fields. Apart from the "associational" value of such individuals to a nascent group, they may also possess certain

62. Family Service Units: The Alleviation of Poverty. Memorandum to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from the Family Poverty Group 30th June 1965.
63. Minutes of the Family Poverty Group 15th July 1965.

skills, expertise, knowledge and, perhaps, useful contacts which the group may seek to exploit. (64) In the case of the Family Poverty Group, the letter attracted the signatures, among others, of Baroness Wootton of Abinger, Sir John Maud, Arthur Morton, Director of the NSPCC, leading members of the Family Service Unit and some 24 eminent professors, many in the social policy field.

In the interim a further development had taken place. The members present at a meeting on October 29th decided that the group should remain in existence after the appeal to the Prime Minister had been sent and should be formally constituted to enable it to raise money and acquire a permanent staff. "to give publicity to the problem of family poverty". Change also extended to the name of the group, with the Family Poverty Group receding in favour of the more emotive-sounding Child Poverty Action Group. (65)

The continued existence of the group received strong support for a number of reasons. Douglas Houghton's stance on the issue of family poverty was

64. The value of 'patronage' and the skills and resources acquired by relatively nascent groups through the association or co-option of this type of individual has been documented by Kimber and Richardson in their study of the Wing Airport Resistance Association's Campaign against the siting of a third London airport at Cublington. Kimber, R. and Richardson, J. J. Campaigning for the Environment. Routledge Kegan Paul 1974. Chapter 8. For a more specific discussion of this phenomenon see McCarthy, M. A. The Politics of Influence - An Analysis of the Methodology of an Environmental Pressure Group. unpublished. M. A. Thesis, University of Keele 1976. pp. 83-100
65. The choice of the word 'child' had been influenced by Dr. Harriet Wilson, a founder member of the Group, who had taken the view that. "when considering poverty one must focus on children because they are the most affected. And even the most bigotted person will usually agree that the needs of children should be viewed in a different way from most of the parents". Summary of Oral Evidence by CPAG to Members of the Committee on Voluntary Organisations 9th December 1975.

clearly ambivalent;⁽⁶⁶⁾ Labour's plans to reform social security still appeared to be in a state of flux despite claims in its 1966 manifesto that in 1964....."our plans for a far-reaching reconstruction of social security were well-advanced when we took office."⁽⁶⁷⁾ Harold Wilson's emphasis on sustained economic growth as the pre-requisite of social reform had indicated that the alleviation of poverty had been relegated from the party's list of key priorities. Adoption of the comprehensive national superannuation scheme outlined by Richard Crossman and Peggy Herbison at the 1963 party conference also appeared remote. Piecemeal repair rather than radical change characterised Labour efforts in the field.⁽⁶⁸⁾ For these reasons the protraction of the group's 'watchdog' function and a strengthening of its role as the unofficial 'social conscience' of the party became inevitable. Contact with the prospective signatories to the appeal to the Prime Minister was firmly established in November. Each received a copy of the original memorandum to Houghton and were asked to sign the attached letter of appeal eventually sent to Wilson on December 22nd. Fred Philp, the CPAG Chairman, wrote....."The signatories of this

66. Lena Jeger MP, an active supporter of CPAG in the Commons, wrote....."Douglas Houghton has been working on the new concept of social security for Labour. In some ways it is surprising that this is taking so long because during the locust opposition years a sub-committee of the National Executive (with experts like Professors Titmuss, Peter Townsend and Brian Abel-Smith) worked on the plans and some thought that a blueprint had been produced. Whether it is the Economists or the officials who sent Houghton back to square one remains an unanswered question. But it was certainly with the backing of detailed research that the last Labour Election Manifesto was allowed to say.....'we stress that, with the exception of the early introduction of the income guarantee, the key factor in determining the speed at which new and better levels of benefit can be introduced, will be the rate at which the British economy can advance". 'Labour and the Poor' New Statesman 31st December 1965.

67. Craig op cit pp. 266-86

68. As Jeger notes....."these increases in standard rates of benefit, welcome though they are to the recipients.....do not constitute the massive assault on poverty which socialism is about and which can only come from a deliberate redistribution of wealth". Jeger op cit.

letter would probably not all agree on the precise details of a scheme for reform; we are agreed, however, that action should be taken to achieve a radical improvement in the standard of living of families in poverty and we wish to bring this memorandum to your attention. We ask that the present arrangements for family allowances and the allowances for children be reconsidered and revised, and that bigger direct allowances be paid in respect of children in the poorest families." (69)

Timing was a critical factor. The new emotive name of the group and its connotations with the approaching Christmas season were seen as a powerful combination for attracting sympathetic publicity. To coincide with Wilson's receipt of the memorandum the group called a press conference on the 22nd December to herald the publication of Abel-Smith and Townsend's The Poor and the Poorest. (70) Its emphasis on the rediscovery of child poverty, in particular, ensured that the name Child Poverty Action Group would remain in the public eye over Christmas. (71) The following day a second conference, chaired by Lady Wootton, and coinciding with the screening of two major documentaries on poverty on television, was called to publicise the aims and activities of the group itself and invite support. A week later, Townsend helped maintain interest in CPAG by adding a rejoinder to an article on poverty in the New Statesman by the Labour MP Lena Jeger and asked more interested to subscribe to the group and pledge their support.

The publication of The Poor and the Poorest by two of the leading academics

69. A. F. Philp to Harold Wilson, Prime Minister 22.12.65.
 70. See Banting, K. Poverty, Politics and Policy MacMillan 1979 p. 72.
 71. See for example 'Many British Children Living in Hardship and Poverty' (The Times) 'Wilson told: Aid Poor Children' (Daily Mirror) 'Poverty Plea to Wilson' (Daily Express) and 'Poverty Brings a Christmas Story to Mr. Wilson' (Guardian) All December 24th 1965 - see also the reviews of The Poor and the Poorest in The Economist 1.1.66 and Tribune 31st December 1965.

of the day was perhaps the catalytic factor in focussing attention on the problem of poverty. The combined effect of the group's memorandum and the assessment of poverty offered by Abel-Smith and Townsend was instrumental in bringing the issue back, at least temporarily, into the forefront of political debate. (72) Yet they failed to evoke any positive response from the Labour Government for another 18 months. Wilson replied to CPAG's initiative on January 24th 1966. "I can make no promises. as with so many desirable activities it is, of course, necessary for priorities to be established within the available resources - and one of the purposes of our review of the Social Services is to establish the proper priorities as between one social need and another". (73)

At least one Labour MP was moved to remind his leader of the party's historic socialist commitment to eradicating poverty and inequality.

Christopher Price, MP for Birmingham Perry Bar, warned.

"only a social policy which received a constant high priority beyond the nicely calculated limits of exact electoral advantage will preserve for the party that soul which is. the mainspring of work and effort for the strongest and loyalist of its supporters." (74)

The Appointment of Tony Lynes

Since it was clear that the Labour Government was in no particular hurry to complete its much-vaunted review of the Social Services, CPAG were obliged to accept the fact that any new initiative or impetus on the issue must come from them. A year earlier, Fred Philp, the group's chairman, had spoken of the likelihood of this development. Anticipating a more permanent structure for the group he had argued that. "If it is to

72. See also Abel-Smith, B. 'Below the Affluent Society' Guardian 2nd February 1966 and 'National Insurance and the National Plan' New Society 3rd February 1966

73. Harold Wilson to A. F. Philp 24th January 1966.

74. Price op cit. p.138

be effective, the group needs to be the major concern of one person". His analysis set the tone quite aptly for the appointment of Tony Lynes on August 1st 1966.

At this stage in the group's development, and given the current impasse on the poverty issue, Lynes was a most appropriate choice as secretary. The group required a change of direction, a greater degree of politicisation and it needed the sustained and energetic involvement of someone working full-time. In particular, it required 'inside knowledge' of the workings of Government Departments and guidance as to which access points it should direct its efforts and, given its limited range of resources, how influence might be most effectively achieved.

Lynes' background was ideally suited to these purposes. For some time he had been a leading member of the Titmuss social administration 'group' at the London School of Economics. He had effectively orchestrated academic efforts to elicit a greater statistical output from the NAB and was a member of the Labour Party's social policy sub-committee; as a result he was on close terms with leading party figures like Crossman, Houghton, Peggy Herbison and Kenneth Robinson, the Minister of Health. In 1965 he was among a group of 'experts' seconded to the Civil Service by the party as ministerial policy advisers; in Lynes' case the secondment was to the Ministry of Pensions where the Minister, Peggy Herbison, is said to have seen his role as that of an....."irritant to stimulate ideas". (76)

Lynes had also contributed to Crossman's New Frontiers of Social Security and before arriving at the Ministry of Pensions full-time he had held a part-time advisory post which he combined with his teaching at the LSE.

75. Minutes of the Family Poverty Group 21st May 1965.

76. Guardian 26th July 1966

The role of full-time civil servant was not one that he thoroughly relished and his thoughts had turned to the prospect of resignation when Peter Townsend, a longstanding colleague, informed him that CPAG were looking for a secretary to take charge of the group. The prospect of a post that offered the opportunity to write and research freely and to convey the findings of that research to Government was particularly attractive to Lynes. (77)

Tony Lynes' efforts in achieving an influence for the group were aided by events elsewhere. In the first place the General Election of March 1966 produced an overall majority of 97 for the Labour Government and was notable for its influx of new and generally young Labour members. The prospect of a potentially reformist second Wilson administration seemed further enhanced by the realisation of one of Wilson's election 'ploys' "the announcement by Margaret Herbison, the Minister of Pensions and National Insurance, that National Assistance was to be abolished and replaced by Supplementary Benefit, as of right." (78)

In August 1966, in keeping with his pre-election promise, Harold Wilson created the new Ministry of Social Security with Herbison at the helm, so that Lynes' former chief was now head of a new department which appeared, superficially at least, to have a reforming brief. There was every reason to suppose, from CPAG's viewpoint, that Lynes would continue to enjoy access to the Minister.

However, some members of the group remained sceptical of both Labour's record to date and of its plans for the future. Peter Townsend, for example,

77. Interview with Tony Lynes, policy adviser to the Secretary of State for Social Services 14th June 1977.
78. Wilson op cit p. 281

was concerned that Labour had failed to close the gap between Britain's gross expenditure on social cash benefits and that of other OECD countries. (79)

A recent survey of 62 countries with family allowance systems, by the U. S. Government, had revealed that 50 of them paid some allowance for the first child. Townsend was particularly concerned that Labour had not taken any initiatives to include Britain among them. He contended that Labour had still to measure up to the..... "two big problems of poverty", among the old and among families with children. "(80) Though welcoming Herbison's appointment Townsend remained unconvinced that Labour's new initiatives were anything more than old ideas re-worked. Assessing Herbison's first address to the Commons, he added..... "I do not believe that alternative sources of finance to economic growth are being exploited. The Minister ended her speech this morning by saying that further substantial improvements in social security depended on productivity. She called conference to give her the wherewithal. But quite apart from the relatively poor provision for Social Security made in the National Plan there are two other sources open; aggregate and individual income redistribution. There are ways of redistributing Government expenditure. There are also possibilities of redistributing income by adjusting the tax and social security systems..... economic difficulties provide insufficient excuse for not taking immediate action to improve the living standards of the poorest sections of the population. "(81)

On August 5th 1966 the CPAG Chairman, Fred Philp, took the opportunity to take Herbison to task over the continued abuses suffered by many claimants subject to the 'wage-stop'. Aware that the Minister was taking

79. Poverty No.1 1966 p. 6.

80. ibid

81. ibid p. 9

stock of her new task and was keen to establish early priorities, Philp pressed the group's anxieties home....."The new Ministry will have many urgent tasks to face, but none more urgent than that of bringing relief to the very large number of wage-earners' families now living below the minimum National Assistance level..... This rule condemns thousands of families to 'statutory poverty' during sickness or unemployment..... It is a severe disappointment to find this bitterly resented relic of the Poor Law preserved in the new scheme of supplementary allowances which are to replace National Assistance..... According to the estimates you yourself have quoted, there may be 300,000 of these families, and this could mean over a million children". (82)

By late December it seemed that CPAG had made some progress. Tony Lynes was invited by Richard Hayward, Chairman of the new Supplementary Benefits Commission, to discuss with him CPAG's proposals for a revision of the Supplementary Benefit system. Shortly after, Hayward wrote to the group suggesting that such meetings could in future, take place on a regular basis. One channel of influence, at least, appeared to be open. The day after this meeting, parliamentary interest was enlivened by an adjournment debate on child poverty moved by David Owen, whom Lynes has described as..... "the most skilful and sympathetic parliamentary representative of CPAG in the sixties". (83)

The creation of the SBC and the abolition of the NAB, together with the commissions new insistence upon the payment of benefit as a 'right' (84) was entirely consistent with CPAG demands expressed since its inception as the

82. A. F. Philp to Margaret Herbison, Minister of Social Security
5th August 1966.

83. Interview with Tony Lynes 14th June 1977.

84. For an explanation of an individuals 'right' to benefit see CPAG - Rights Guide I - Unemployed Workers and Strikers Guide to Social Security. CPAG - Rights Guide II - Students Rights - Social Security, Other Benefits and Housing and Lynes, A. Welfare Rights Fabian Tract no. 395

Advisory Council on the Alleviation of Poverty. An additional filip to the group's morale came with the appointment of Richard Titmuss, to whom Lynes had been a Research Officer, to the board of the SBC. Here, it was felt, was the appointment to a position of considerable influence of someone who, both professionally and politically, shared the goals of CPAG.

The Failure of the Review

By early 1967, however, the Government's review of social services had been under way for two years without any apparent progress. Consequently, a third memorandum, this time to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, followed with the group making it clear that it would not shrink from denouncing the inertia of a government with whom it was widely held to have close ties. "One thing must be made clear. If this year's Budget does not give really substantial help to the 200,000 families below the official poverty line, the Government will face a storm of criticism from its supporters as well as its opponents." (85)

Perhaps Labour's apparent inertia lay in the nature of poverty as an electoral issue. As a reformist party with major social priorities Labour has often found itself in a dilemma. Its traditional socialist values suggest that it should look to the poor and the disadvantaged in society and take positive action to improve their lot. In office, however, Labour has too readily succumbed to counter pressures from those sections of the electorate whose interests it perceives as antipathetic to particular forms of public expenditure. Indeed, David Coates suggests that the evidence for this is now so overwhelming that.

"Labour Party policies cannot, and will not, culminate in the creation of a genuinely Socialist society. on the contrary, the Labour Party and its claims are a major blockage in the struggle to create the kind of party and the kind of labour movement that the struggle for Socialism requires.

there is now very little hope that Labour Governments can deliver substantial and sustained packages of social reform..... Far from embodying in its political practice the actual interests of its predominantly working class electorate, the Labour Party when in power seems fated to come ever more into conflict with groups of workers who are forced to defend their living standards job control and even job security against the policies of the very labour politicians that they helped to elect into office." (86)

Douglas Houghton commented upon this dilemma some time later at a CPAG 'teach in'. The emphasis of his explanations of legislative inertia was very much upon the political difficulties involved in mobilising electoral support for welfare action..... "It is most significant that Governments for ten years have been able to neglect family allowances without any political repercussions. Why? Because it is the most unpopular social benefit to a very large number of people". (87)

Yet CPAG, more than most groups, had recognised this fact, partly because middle-class intellectuals may experience a parallel dilemma in choosing to hypothesise rather than to act on issues (88) and partly, of course, because many of the group were themselves Labour Party members. Recognising the problems involved, CPAG's attack upon the Party's record assumed an increasingly critical tone. Labour had not only failed to intervene in aid of the poor, it had allowed the position of the poor to deteriorate.....

"Nothing has yet been done, however, and the situation has become steadily worse. The erosion of Family Allowances by rising prices has continued. The rise in unemployment has added greatly to the numbers in poverty. The Ministry of Social Security Act has not only presented the wage-stop rule, under which many thousands of unemployed and disabled men and their families are deliberately kept in poverty; it has given statutory approval to the practice of applying the wage-stop to the sick. There is, moreover, increasing evidence of a failure to inform families of available sources of aid." (89)

86. Coates, D. The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism Cambridge University Press 1965 pp. v & vi (preface) see also Jordan, W. Freedom and the Welfare State Routledge & Kegan Paul 1976 chapter 10 and 14
87. Poverty No. 2 p. 7 and also Banting op cit pp. 74-82
88. For a discussion of the constraints upon the political activism of 'liberals' and 'middle-class intellectuals' see Alinsky, S. Reveille for Radicals Random House New York 1969 pp. 134-35
89. CPAG Memorandum to the Chancellor of the Exchequer Spring 1967 p. 1

In mid-July the SBC made some minor concessions governing the administration of the wage-stop, but an ensuing intra-Cabinet crisis over the future direction of Social Security policy and the consequent resignation of Peggy Herbison as Minister confirmed that the concessions would only be palliatives.

Labour's Social Priorities Reconsidered - The Cabinet Struggle

Peggy Herbison's resignation as Minister of Social Security may be seen as both the culmination of a revisionist process in Labour's thinking on Social Security and as a catalyst for reinforcing that process. It is important, therefore, that the circumstances of her decision be considered in some detail. The change in Labour Party thinking on the issue in the years after 1963 has already been outlined and it was against this new mood that Herbison was obliged to stage a rearguard action. In attempting to assess this mood, James Kincaid has noted that....."tentatively under Gaitskell, then decisively under Wilson, it became Labour policy that extra resources for welfare would be found, not by redistributive taxation, but out of the proceeds of economic growth. Many loyal Labour Party supporters are under the impression that the failure of Mr. Wilson's government to reverse the trend to greater social inequality is to be explained by economic difficulties since 1964. What should be more widely appreciated is the prior and fundamental devaluation of social equality in the political philosophy of the party leadership."⁽⁹⁰⁾

It was from this so called 'devaluation of social equality' that Herbison's difficulties largely stemmed and her non-cabinet rank did little to enhance her situation. Those difficulties were compounded further by the excessive

90. Kincaid, J. 'Social Policy and the Labour Government' International Socialism April-May 1970 pp. 21-32. See also Coates op cit pp. 89-96 and chapter 5.

departmental pluralism that characterised the Wilson Governments, the second in particular, as the threat of devaluation and public expenditure cuts loomed.

The events leading up to her resignation began at the first full meeting of the new Labour Cabinet called together on October 28th 1964 to discuss the Queen's speech. Despite his own commitment at the Ministry of Housing, Richard Crossman made it clear that he, among others, was prepared to sacrifice, or at least defer, his own departmental priorities whilst Labour fulfilled its election pledges to the poor, the old, and the infirm. Yet he made it equally clear that the Chancellor, James Callaghan, was intransigent on the matter and was determined to stage some sort of economic recovery before social priorities could be met. The impasse has been drily summarised by Kincaid. "Welfare reform had become the sugar on the pill of economic rationalisation, the bleeding heart worn prominently on the technocrats' sleeve." (91)

A year later the clash between expenditure and recovery was more marked. Callaghan and Houghton had already, on the advice of the 'Economic Ministries', compelled Herbison to abandon her 'big all-in scheme' of national superannuation and, because of that, she was forced to concede her proposals for the introduction of a new pension scheme and introduce, instead, short-term measures like earnings-related sickness and unemployment benefits. With her priorities already under attack and her plans in disarray, Herbison was invited, to attend a Cabinet meeting, chaired by George Brown - Deputy Prime Minister and head of the Department of Economic Affairs - on October 20th 1965. On this occasion she was, as Crossman puts it, "pleading" to be allowed an extra £7 million

so that she might extend the scheme to widows also. (92) It was, however, to be yet another principled rearguard action against the tide of 'economic necessity'.

Indeed, Herbison's own 'overlord', Douglas Houghton, was the first to attack her calculations and question her political timing. Both Anthony Crosland, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and John Diamond, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, weighed in against her also. Administratively, her position was quite untenable. As Crossman recalls....."In Cabinet Peggy was in a weak position because she was pre-empting money and anybody who does that makes all his other spending colleagues jealous". (93) Barbara Castle encountered similar difficulties during her experiences in Cabinet as a 'spending minister' and has since concluded that the popular image of Cabinet as a rational and strategic policy-making forum obscures the reality of excessive departmental pluralism, of ministerial in-fighting and competition for a larger slice of the 'cake'. (94)

Yet, as Jeremy Richardson and Grant Jordan note, departmental pluralism of this type may be seen as an inevitable outcome of the British policy-making process....."At the very minimum, ministers tend not to be impartial in judging between the claims of departments for resources. Increased allocation for his (or her) Department indicates political power and abilities, establishes a personal reputation and impresses client groups". (95)

Herbison was thus disadvantaged on three counts. Firstly, she was

92. Crossman Vol. I pp. 361-2

93. *ibid* p. 362

94. Castle, B. 'Mandarin Power' Sunday Times 10th June 1973.

95. Richardson, J. J. and Jordan, G. Governing Under Pressure Martin Robertson 1979 p. 27

requesting extra resources which were either seen as not available or, ultimately, as having to be 'transferred' from other departmental budgets. Secondly, her opportunities to sustain and reinforce her arguments were notably hampered by her junior ministerial status; her appearances in Cabinet were thus intermittent. Finally, unlike some of the larger or more prestigious departments dealing with industry, commerce and the professions, Herbison's own 'client-groups'⁽⁹⁶⁾ were largely weak, unorganised and, to some extent, alienated from the mainstream of British politics. This theme will be discussed shortly.

On October 27th, however, much to the irritation of Douglas Houghton, the Social Services Committee of the Cabinet agreed to allow Herbison to spend the £7 million at her own discretion as it was proven that this amount was actually already allocated within her Department's budget.⁽⁹⁷⁾ On the 28th Houghton was obliged to report the decision, against his own view, to the full Cabinet and approval was secured. However, by December 1st Herbison was again under pressure. Her proposals for wage-related benefits had gone before Cabinet on November 25th but Ministers had failed to reach agreement and once more had referred the issue to the Social Services Committee. It was clear on this occasion that Herbison's proposals would not be safeguarded by a budgetary *fait accompli*.

The 'Economic Ministers' had some time earlier forced the Minister for Pensions and National Insurance to agree to a two-stage reform of Social Security. Firstly, the plan for short-term benefits, like those already implemented on sickness and unemployment, would be implemented and this would be followed, as economic recovery got under way, by the

96. For a discussion of 'clientelism' see Richardson and Jordan *op cit* pp. 55-57

97. Crossman p. 365

implementation of the National Superannuation Scheme. The problem now was that the 'Economists' had miscalculated. They had favoured the short-term measures first because they were considered essential to the mobility of labour and as an antidote to mass unemployment. By December, however, their fears of mass unemployment had proven groundless and the priority given to short-term benefits now appeared inept. The commitment, however, could not be reneged upon and Crossman, among others, was seriously worried about the effects of Herbison's proposals for integrating civil servants into the scheme as they would contribute a great deal but receive virtually nothing in return because they rarely suffered redundancy or unemployment. (98)

A week later Crossman, too, felt obliged to desert Herbison's cause commenting that:....."The final discussion and decision on wage-related sickness and unemployment benefits didn't take long. Cabinet accepted the Social Services Committee recommendation and I found myself reluctantly voting against Peggy Herbison. I do hate being on the same side as the Treasury but on this occasion John Diamond was right; and, anyway, Departmentally I needed to do it". (99) This latter justification was clearly the most salient one.

On the 14th December Peggy Herbison was again summoned to a meeting of the full cabinet in order that she might put the case for a reform of Social Security and again, according to Crossman....."Douglas Houghton and James Callaghan got into a sinister combination trying to wreck it". (100) Herbison had done some thorough research, however, and produced by all

98. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that the Government was attempting to introduce this scheme at a time when it was also turning down civil service wage claims in order to preserve its income policy. Crossman p. 397.

99. *ibid* p. 403

100 *ibid* pp. 410-11

accounts a masterful scheme which not only won support but praise also. So at this point she had twice met with entrenched opposition to her plans from Houghton and Callaghan and had, on both occasions, successfully outmanoeuvred them - a fact that failed to stand her in good stead when she required their support in later skirmishes.

Labour went on to increase their parliamentary majority in the General Election of March 1966 and, for a time, Herbison's hand seemed strengthened by the announcement in the Queen's Speech that the party was to introduce a new superannuation scheme to be administered by her in the new role of Minister of Social Security.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ The creation of the new ministry was cosmetic and Herbison's title merely token. By June the 'surgeons' of the Economic Ministries had so carved up Herbison's proposals that Crossman was moved to comment....."Even our big Social Security measures are disappointing. All we have got is Peggy Herbison's little Social Security Bill, by which we change the name of the National Assistance Board and don't do much more. We have had to scrap the incomes guarantee and we have had to postpone national superannuation."⁽¹⁰²⁾

In February 1967, with the economic situation deteriorating rapidly and the clamour for devaluation increasing, any further plans Herbison proposed were weighed directly against Treasury proposals for cutbacks in public expenditure.⁽¹⁰³⁾ Harold Wilson reveals that in the Autumn of 1966 he and

101. Wilson p. 537

102. Crossman p. 533 and Kincaid pp. 27-31

103. Peter Townsend has concluded that, since the 1950s, the most important instrument for planning social policy has been 'public expenditure planning'. Describing this process he notes....."Despite protestations from some government departments, like the DHSS, that their planning is 'needs' conscious, the fact is that the exigencies of the economy, as decided by the Treasury, have led to the adoption of public expenditure control as the dominant form of planning approved by the cabinet and imposed by Whitehall". Social Planning and the Treasury in Bosanquet, N. and Townsend, P. eds. Labour and Equality Heinemann 1980 pp. 8-9

James Callaghan had drawn up and approved the expenditure estimates for the financial year 1967-68. (104) Economic necessity dictated that although an increase in pensions could be approved it would have to be far below the level desired by Peggy Herbison. For the Minister of Social Security this could only be viewed as yet another stage in the steady undermining of her position. On this occasion the Chancellor's intransigence was both politically and administratively unacceptable to her and she tendered her resignation. Wilson, invoking ministerial responsibility, insisted that Herbison should not publicise the event and should continue with her work until the formal announcement on pensions was made in 1967. (105)

On the 23rd February of that year Herbison, rather than acquiescing in Wilson's decision as he hoped she might, was able to outmanoeuvre Callaghan for the last time before her formal resignation took effect. Crossman paints a compelling picture of Cabinet in-fighting on the issue of family allowances that supports the analysis of departmentalism offered

104. Wilson p. 537
Townsend comments....."In recent years, it has come to be realised that most of the key decisions in social policy are taken during the sequence of discussions leading up to the Budget in April of each year.....It is preceded by the review of public expenditure. This takes place in the Summer, is approved in the Autumn, and published the following January. The Public Expenditure Survey Committee is chaired by a Treasury Deputy Secretary and consists of the Finance Officers from different departments and Treasury officials.....The Committee makes estimates of the likely growth of the economy, revenue and departmental spending over the next 5 years.....neither the Committee nor the Cabinet engages in exhaustive discussion of all the major departmental proposals which may be put up. Instead, Treasury intimations of what can be afforded are communicated to the departments which, in turn, attempt to get departmental estimates agreed with the Treasury representatives on the Committee before the estimates are put to Cabinet for broad approval. The system is therefore cost and not needs-oriented and has the effect of maintaining the status quo....."
- Townsend op cit p. 9
105. Wilson p. 537

by Richardson and Jordan. In particular, Crossman reveals the tensions and conflict at the highest levels of the party that even 'well-connected' groups like CPAG could not begin to fully anticipate. He notes.....

"We next turned to Social Security and here there was a great tension and excitement because Peggy Herbison and the Chancellor were presenting their rival proposals. Since January the Chancellor had postponed this week after week in order to ensure that nothing can be done in 1967. Meanwhile, he has been putting tremendous pressure on members of the Cabinet who know that if there is a big increase in family allowances their own Departments will suffer." (106)

The Chancellor had made it clear that Cabinet government was very much to do with the winning and allocation of resources by spending departments. Any attempt to pre-empt the normal course of that process with a scheme of expenditure not costed in current estimates would necessarily require that other departments would have to forfeit some of their resources in order to finance that scheme. His was an appeal to the basic instincts of Cabinet Ministers - the maximisation of rational self, or departmental, interest within the constraints imposed by collective goals. As Barbara Castle has noted of the efforts of Ministers in Cabinet....."The demands of the department must always be paramount....." (107)

Similarly, Bruce Headey has noted that from the point of view of the individual Minister....."the Cabinet is a forum in which he fights for his department's policy proposals, for Treasury money and for Parliamentary time. Since many proposals affect the interests of more than one department a sponsoring Minister is always likely to have to defend his proposals against

106. Crossman Vol II p. 252
107. Sunday Times 10th June 1973

damaging amendments proposed by Cabinet colleagues. Conflict between some departments are almost endemic.....and conflicts between the main spending departments and the Treasury occur every year when the estimates are brought to the Public Expenditure Survey Committee and the Cabinet. "(108)

Yet, if the Chancellor's tactics were astute Herbison's were compelling. The Chancellor's alternative to increases in family allowances which are, after all, a universal right was to propose the introduction of a means-tested benefit, a family income supplement. This represented a clear volte-face, an inversion of all previous promises to eliminate selectivity and discrimination. However, Herbison had already done some sounding out of the type of reception such a scheme would receive from the Labour movement and, almost as a parting gesture, blocked the Chancellor's alternative. Crossman's own reaction was evident....."Our side had had one stroke of luck.....the T. U. C. Delegation had seen Miss Herbison and as a result the General Council had met yesterday and gone on record as opposing means-tested Family Allowances. Peggy was able to end her speech with this Statement. "(109)

From Suppliant to Critic - Reaction to the Cabinet Debate

While it is difficult for a comparatively nascent group to fully acquaint itself with the complexities and vagaries of cabinet politics, familiarity with Herbison's own principled views on social policy and recognition of her political impotence in the face of strong economic forces, had prepared the group for the inevitability of her defeat and resignation. Throughout the early half of 1967, against the backdrop of this cabinet struggle, CPAG

108. Headey, B. British Cabinet Ministers George, Allen and Unwin
1974 pp. 48-49
109. Crossman Vol II pp. 251-3

had continued to press for an increase in Family Allowances but Harold Wilson, in the wake of what Frank Field has since termed 'savage deflation',⁽¹⁰⁾ continued to insist that the problem of poverty would remain unassailed until after the completion of the review of social services in July 1967.

In January and February the group had continued to publicise the facts of poverty to a press eager to adopt a 'pundit role' with the Budget only weeks off.⁽¹¹⁾ In February, the group sent its now customary memorandum to the Chancellor, calling for the abolition of all tax allowances, the making of all cash benefits tax-free and proposing that cash benefits be raised to a level that would compensate the standard-rate taxpayer for the loss of his tax allowance. Throughout the early months of 1967 the Groups anti-wage stop campaign continued to develop also achieving, as New Society pointed out, an important milestone in politicising social workers....."the campaign has had a sizeable influence in the resurgence of social workers belief in social and political action as a vital means of helping their clients. The CPAG has come up with a particularly striking example of how social workers might intervene through a campaign against the wage stop..... By encouraging social workers to bombard officials with letters asking how allowances are computed, to assist with appeals to the tribunals and to urge the widest application of the 'exceptional circumstances'; under which the stop need not be applied, the action group is asking social workers to harry officialdom - legally, but nonetheless awkwardly."⁽¹²⁾

CPAGs growing frustration with what they saw as the Wilson government's

110. Field, F. 'A Pressure Group for the Poor' in Bull, D. ed. Family Poverty 2nd ed. Duckworth, 1972 p.147.....
 111. See Observer 19th February 1967, and The Economist 18th February 1967.....
 112. New Society 6th April 1967

fragmented approach to policy-making and its consequent legislative inertia had passed the threshold of polite rebuke by April 1967. On the 12th of that month, Peter Townsend, Brian Abel-Smith and Tony Lynes commenced a short correspondence with Harold Wilson in which they criticised the Labour Government's "narrow and unimaginative approach to social policy".⁽¹¹³⁾ Their reasoning, they claimed, illustrated a classic failure of government departments to match their traditional fields of responsibility to the corresponding fields of policy. In particular they criticised the failure of the government to recognise that poverty is experienced by a number of quite different groups and could only be eradicated by a coherent and extensive programme of action; a programme that would attack the roots of the inequalities which produced poverty in its many forms - homelessness, low pay, single parenthood, old age, child poverty, unemployment. It was their view that. "the responsibilities of government departments are too narrowly circumscribed. Taxation policy is still isolated from social policy in general and policy for social security in particular."⁽¹¹⁴⁾

In taking this view the writers were not making an isolated criticism of central policy-making, nor could that criticism be confined to the social policy sphere alone. As Richardson and Jordan have noted. "The traditional criticism of the centre of government is. . . . that policy is made through the competition of departments and Ministers rather than through the imposition of consistent priorities by a team of political leaders. The 'rational' allocation of priorities is frustrated because departmental boundaries do not correspond to the problem boundaries and this defective structure produces time-consuming negotiations that prevent rational analysis."⁽¹¹⁵⁾

113. Poverty No. 4 Autumn 1967 p. 10

114. ibid

115. Richardson and Jordan p. 29

Forced on the defensive, Wilson replied two weeks later....."I do not accept your view that Cabinet is not offering prompt and just solutions to these problems because it is not being presented with the right questions. There is abundant evidence that this Government has done more than any to study problems, particularly social problems, without regard to departmental boundaries and where necessary to shape the machinery of Government to the end of policy."⁽¹¹⁶⁾ While the Prime Minister could reasonably argue that Douglas Houghton's 'review of the Social Services' verified his claim that the Labour Government had studied problems there was, as will be shown in the next chapter, only superficial evidence to suggest that fresh cross-departmental approaches had been initiated and that new machinery had been created to implement them.

Kincaid commented at the time....."There has been a certain 'appearance' of dynamic activity since 1964. A great many Acts of Parliament have been passed. Numerous commissions and committees have made inquiries and published reports. The Ministry of This has had its name changed to the Ministry of That and been merged with the Ministry of Something else. But no emphatic break with the lines of policy inherited from the previous period of conservative rule".⁽¹¹⁷⁾ More significantly, the manifesto promise of a 'dramatic redeployment of resources in favour of the underprivileged' had not come about and the reasons for this clearly lay with either the inherent faults of the Government's taxation, welfare and economic policies or, as CPAG were suggesting, an administrative reluctance to co-ordinate these.

It should be noted, however, that in making this sort of criticism CPAG

116. Poverty No. 4 p. 11

117. Kincaid p. 31

were arguing for significant, and perhaps unrealistic, changes in policy style that were largely against the grain of the traditional policy-making process. In particular, they were overlooking the very powerful pressures exerted upon Ministers in Cabinet by the demands of departmental pluralism and those of their 'client-groups'.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ They were also under-estimating the tendency towards policy sectorisation or compartmentalisation that is a clear product of that pluralism. As Richardson and Gustafsson have concluded....."policy-making systems in Western Democracies are essentially broken down into relatively autonomous policy segments. Each policy sector (or policy area) is populated by a policy community and these communities usually operate relatively independently of each other."⁽¹¹⁹⁾ It is Richardson and Gustafssons view that under an administrative regime emphasising sector rationality....."policymakers and implementers would think in terms of objectives and goal attainment for their own areas."⁽¹²⁰⁾ If policy-making is carried out in this 'sectorised/segmented' fashion then the principle feature of the process will be its emphasis upon each policy sector remaining rational in terms of its own objectives. In other words, returning to the poverty debate, social policy, fiscal policy and taxation policy may all be constructed quite rationally in the narrow departmental or sectoral sense but may be viewed overall as potentially in conflict, as

118. Peter Townsend feels, in retrospect, that the group may have been too naive in some of the demands it made upon the Labour Government, especially in the sphere of taxation policy. He concludes also that other 'groups' or interests exerted stronger and more powerful claims to maintain the status quo. In particular, he feels that CPAG failed to fully perceive the power of Treasury mandarins and that 'opposition' to them was muted by a party leadership which came to develop an increasing credibility gap between the interests and the issues raised at conference and the policies which it chose to execute in office.
Interview with Peter Townsend 19th December 1979.
See also Minkin, L. The Labour Party Conference Allen Lane 1978. p. 90 & pp. 300-01 & p. 304.
119. Gustafsson, G. and Richardson, J.J. 'Concepts of Rationality and the Policy Process' European Journal of Political Research No. 7 1979 p. 423.
120. *ibid* p. 424

competitive and, in some areas, as irrational. (121) This tendency to make policy in a vacuum is to a great extent dictated and re-inforced by departmental prestige, aggrandisement and a pervasive process of bureaucratic socialisation that emphasises the paramountcy of the 'departmental interest' above all else. (122)

In June, with little to show for their May 'onslaught', CPAG took the Prime Minister to task again. The theme of 'fragmentation' and policy incoherence was driven hard. "what disturbs us is that the reform of social security and taxation still appears to be seen in terms of piecemeal changes which are neither adequate in themselves nor indicative of a coherent philosophy. . . . In Labour's 1964 manifesto, plans for a complete reconstruction of social security were set out. . . . (but). . . . In place of this comprehensive reform, the Government has introduced a number of separate measures which have inevitably created new anomalies and in many cases have failed to benefit those most in need". (123)

Gone now was the polite dismay with which CPAG had earlier greeted the Government's decision to undertake a social services review when most within or associated with the Group assumed this had already been done in opposition. The necessity of the review, specifically in terms of policy revision and amendment was accepted, the objection now was to its vague and protracted nature. "we fully accept that some of the ideas

121. Gustafsson & Richardson note p "one obvious disadvantage of the sectorisation/segmentation of policy-making is that the policy process could become unco-ordinated. Serious goal / conflict can arise in which one policy community adopts a policy which is in conflict with that of another policy community". p. 427
122. *ibid.*. "generally the existence of departmentalism is likely to make co-ordinated rationality a tough assignment for any political system. Each department will defend its 'territory' supported by its clients and will be unwilling to make sacrifices in its own policy area." p. 427
123. Poverty No. 4 p. 12

worked out by the Labour Party in the years of opposition have had to be adapted and amended. But it is more difficult to understand the delays in implementing the undertaking, which appeared for the first time in the 1966 manifesto, to 'see ways of integrating more fully the two quite different systems of social payment - tax allowances and cash benefits'. The recent Budget was all the more disappointing in the light of this undertaking given a year ago when the labour government has already been in power for 17 months. "(124)

It was CPAGs view that the Government had reneged on this commitment to rationalise the two policy approaches into a single strategy to tackle poverty. The Group's attitude here is most significant because it reveals a growing, and increasingly bitter, rift between it and the Labour Government. Tactically, it also demonstrated the growing willingness of CPAG not only to question the record of a party formerly regarded as something of an 'ideological bedfellow' but it showed a gradual assertion of independence which enabled the group to shed its rather overt partisanship and condemn Labour's ambivalence in a way it would have done if any other party had been in office. It may also show, in retrospect, that the Group's decision during the 1970 General Election campaign to sever overt links once and for all, with the publication of a strong attack upon Labour's record in office 1964-70, ⁽¹²⁵⁾ was not an isolated act of political frustration but the culmination of a long process of disenchantment and disillusionment with the party and a recognition of the group's early and rather naive perception of its own capabilities.

While it is clear that Labour's efforts in the field of social security had been a great disappointment to many of its supporters, it is equally clear

124. ibid

125. Poverty and the Labour Government. CPAG June 1970.

that CPAGs own strategy for helping the poor had its limitations also, not the least of which, as will be shown in Chapter 4, was its over-reliance on the Labour party for change. While the party was a convenient and likely vehicle for the group's early efforts in conveying the 'problem' of poverty CPAG largely failed, as the next chapter shows, to seek out other 'allies' capable of tackling the problem. As Keith Banting points out. "a problem revealed is not a problem solved. CPAG were not rich in conventional political resources. . . . (but). . . . Through astute use of the resources that they did possess - information, the academic status of their leaders, their contacts in the Labour Party - they were able to change political perceptions of social problems. But they could not command a specific response. The fate of the poor depended not only on their data but, more importantly, on the reaction to that data amongst politicians, civil servants and the wider society". (126)

An additional question this raises is whether or not the group was entirely realistic in the demands it made upon the Labour Government in this period. Certainly, expectations were high when Labour took office in 1964 and many observers expected early and far-reaching changes from what was considered to be a potentially reformist administration. (127) However, in making this assumption it is easy to overlook the wider political and economic situation of the time. Labour did, indeed, come to power with a

126. Banting p. 73

127. Coates notes. "The Labour Party returned to power in 1964 on the promise of a 'new Britain' and, after so long in opposition, returned with a renewed faith in their own ability to create it. In such a Society. . . . there would no longer be that incompatibility of interests between conflicting social classes to which labour leaders in the 1930s had alluded in their analysis of capitalism, but rather a common pursuit of a 'national interest' of ever greater material production. . . . under a 'dynamic and purposeful' Labour Government that would control 'the commanding heights of the economy' in such a way as to stimulate investment, efficiency and growth". pp. 97-98.

reformist bent but one, as has been noted, that was already under pressure of change as a result of a revision of priorities that had taken root under Gaitskell and which acquired an even greater impetus under Wilson.

By mid-1964 the balance of payment deficit had reached the alarming figure of £800 million per annum, the highest in history. ⁽¹²⁸⁾ The Government itself was staffed with a large number of unfamiliar and inexperienced faces, most of them untried in any major office of state. ⁽¹²⁹⁾ Thirteen years of unbroken Conservative rule had also provided a climate of government appropriate to incrementalism and policy continuity. ⁽¹³⁰⁾ Labour Ministers thus entered office with massive economic problems to solve, with relatively little shared experience of office to draw upon, with the prospect of having to overcome Civil Service resistance to change and with the burden of a manifesto commitment to wide ranging social reforms, the prospective cost of which was clearly at variance with the type of fiscal strictures the Treasury wished to employ to reduce trading deficits.

It is possible that Labour Ministers were seriously embarrassed by the stringency of the economic situation vis a vis the rather sweeping promises of change made in opposition. It is also possible that CPAGs demands were viewed as sometimes naive and often impracticable. Fabian ideals might

128. Harold Wilson describes the period of office 1964-70 as.....
 "a government all but a year of whose life was dominated by an inherited balance of payments problem which was nearing a crisis at the moment we took office; we lived and governed during a period when that problem made frenetic speculative attack on Britain both easy and profitable. In our last year of power that Balance of payments problem had been seen to be overcome. But the harsh measures which we had to take, and from which we did not shrink, bit deep".
 Wilson op cit foreward and pp. 27-29.
129. Wilson, H. The Governance of Britain Sphere 1977 p. 42
130. For a discussion of Civil Service 'resistance' to change, especially in relation to Labour Governments, see Irving, C. 'Whitehall - The Other Opposition'. New Statesman 22nd March 1974.

not have been as easily transposed into the bargaining-administrative vernacular of mid-sixties 'real politic' as some CPAG figures might have supposed. (131)

Indeed, Harold Wilson's reply to CPAG illustrated the pragmatism that characterised his own leadership and offered some insight into the other constraints and demands placed upon his Government. "It is, of course, true that large increases in benefits of all kinds would help eliminate need. But there are many competing claims and there is a limit to what we can do and the speed with which we can do it. We shall, nevertheless, and of course continue to, pursue our social objectives as fast as the growing strength of the economy will permit." (132) In expressing this view, Wilson was perhaps offering an explanation of the dilemmas faced when politics and administration become synthesised. The dilemma is essentially one of reasonably 'satisficing' the political preferences of organised interests while, at the same time, achieving some degree of administrative rationality. The problem lies of course, as Richardson and Jordan note, in the fact that. "there may be a fundamental conflict between a system that stresses the accommodation of group demands and a system of policy-making that stresses rationality in some objective sense." (133)

There are reasons to support this explanation. Certainly, Harold Wilson would not have wished to alienate a publicity-orientated group like CPAG which was, after all, considered to be 'sympathetic' to the party and which was campaigning on a very emotive issue. Accusations of inertia, moreover, could be very damaging to a new Government ostensibly committed to the retention

131. For a similar and contemporary assessment of the expectations that Labour supporters have of their party in power see Bosanquet and Townsend *op cit.* pp. 3-6
132. Poverty No. 4 p. 13
133. Richardson and Jordan p. 29

and strengthening of the Welfare State. For those reasons, at least, as the following chapter shows, it was not politic for the Wilson Government to delay action beyond July 1967.

CHAPTER 3

Internalising the Issue - The Cabinet and Claw-Back

On the 16th July 1967 Patrick Gordon-Walker, ⁽¹⁾ the new Social Services 'overlord', confidently boasted that the Government would resolve the problem of family poverty by the end of the year. A week later he announced Labour's package of measures for eradicating the problem. The first was an increase in family allowances which CPAG described as....."so ludicrously small that it can only have been intended as a sop to the Minister of Social Security, Margaret Herbison, who had fought the Treasury for so long and with such little effect". ⁽²⁾ A further six month delay was to occur before the full increase of 7s. 0d. would come into effect. Even that would still bring only half of the poorest families up to the basic supplementary benefit level which was regarded by CPAG as insufficient any way to meet long-term family needs. In addition, the Government also sought to offset the cost of these measures by raising the price of school meals and welfare-milk; the assumption being that all families below the means-test limit would obtain meals and milk free of charge.

Not surprisingly, CPAG were highly critical of the measures and sceptical about their effect....."As the Ministry of Social Security's Survey confirms, most families living below supplementary benefit level do not get free school meals and very few get free welfare foods. The reasons are unknown but certainly complex. Ignorance, attitudes to the means-test and the bodies administering it, official apathy and incompetence probably all

1. Describing the background to the appointment of Gordon-Walker, Harold Wilson commented....."Concurrently, we were working on a fresh attack on poverty. All that we had done in successive increases in pensions and National Assistance had been directed towards relieving poverty in the main sectors - retirement pensioners, the sick and disabled and war pensioners. But there was accumulating evidence that once these groups had been helped, the principal area of poverty was to be found in large families, whether or not the head of the household was at work. Patrick Gordon-Walker had been charged with the responsibility for working out means of help". Wilson p. 356
2. Poverty No. 4 Autumn 1967 p. 2

play a part. To overcome all these in 8 months will require determination, ingenuity and willingness to disregard departmental boundaries and override local authority susceptibilities". (3)

In what was their most vociferous attack to date upon Labour's record the group went on at length to challenge the fragmented administrative solutions that had provoked the resignation of Peggy Herbison and which had resulted in the isolation of social policy from taxation policy, the political and administrative interdependence of which the group saw as axiomatic to any solution to poverty..... "Disappointing as all this must have been to Miss Herbison, such a stubborn fighter would hardly have resigned the following day simply because she had not got as much as she had hoped. What forced her hand was the refusal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to accept the 'give and take' approach favoured by Herbison, CPAG, The Times and..... The Economist. This would have involved a simultaneous announcement of the reduction or abolition of income tax allowances for children, so that families with above average incomes would have received no net addition to their incomes. A much bigger increase in family allowances could have been given in this way at a relatively small net cost, and without raising the price of school meals and welfare milk". (4)

Returning to the discussion of policy communities outlined in the previous chapter it is important to acknowledge the existence and greater influence of other organised interests within the same, adjacent or competing communities. (5) In calling for greater public expenditure on family support and unemployment benefit and in asking for significant redistributive changes in the tax structure CPAG would not only be creating a scenario for further

3. ibid

4. ibid

5. See Miliband, R. The State in Capitalist Society Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1970 Chapter 6

'competition' between the relatively weak Ministry of Social Security and the powerful Inland Revenue and Treasury, but for the bringing to bear of the resources and influence of their respective 'client groups'.⁽⁶⁾ Tax changes having a redistributive effect away from the higher tax payer to the low and non-tax paying groups might be expected to produce articulate resistance from a diverse range of groups and organisations ranging from the Inland Revenue Staffs Federation (who would probably oppose the considerable extra work involved in restructuring), the British Institute of Managers, the Building Societies Association, and the CBI to trade unions like ASTMs and the CPSA who tend to represent the better paid worker, to professional associations, ratepayer's action groups and the plethora of groups which constitute the 'middle-class lobby' such as the National Association for Freedom and the National Federation of the Self-Employed. It is only in considering the wider implications of such policy changes that the fact of an 'anti' poverty lobby emerges.⁽⁷⁾ Such groups do not, of course, intentionally or arbitrarily seek to make or keep people poor per se, but their influence and effort in retaining an economic status quo which 'requires' the existence of poverty, low pay and unemployment does represent an

6. Michael Meacher M.P. notes, for example, that 'spending ministers' opposing the "Whitehall consensus" may find themselves the victims of....."the close inter-lock with establishment interests outside, which often means officials are acting in concert with the extra-parliamentary power structure against ministers rather than in support of the political manifesto of the governing party".
'The Men who Block the Corridors of Power' The Guardian 14 June 1979.
7. Miliband notes....."Lincoln was entirely wrong when he said that a society cannot live half-slave and half-free. It depends first and foremost on the respective strength of conflicting forces operating in society. Some making for the persistence of poverty, and others working against its persistence; and the trouble for the poor is that the forces operating against them are very much stronger than those working in their favour.....there are many other claimants upon public funds, with far more powerful and compelling voices, from large enterprises (which are voracious and effective applicants for public assistance) to the struggling middle-classes. The simple fact of the matter is that the poor enter the pressure market, where they enter it at all, from the weakest possible position: that, of course, is one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, why they remain poor".
Miliband, R. 'Politics and Poverty' in Wedderburn, D. ed. Poverty, Inequality and Class Structure. Cambridge University Press 1974 p

interest which may be perceived as antithetical to that of the poor. (8)

The ability of some interests to limit the scope of policymaking and determine which issues shall be politicised, which preferences will be sustained and which publics will be heard is well-documented. (9) It is appropriate to note at this point the observation of Crenson that. "Decision-making is channelled and restricted by the process of non-decision-making (and that) the power reputations of people within a community may deter action on certain sensitive or politically unprofitable issues." (10) This 'restriction' can be enforced by private interests and Government Departments acting both separately or jointly. Whichever alternative obtains the fact remains that the campaigning group which raised the issue initially may well find its control or influence over the destiny of the issue diminished or removed entirely as it goes 'behind closed doors' into the alimentary system of Government. It is here that the interaction and influence of more powerful vested interests, both private and governmental, comes into play. In proposing policies that affected interests within adjacent policy communities CPAG found itself disadvantaged by both its exclusion from the policy-making process and by the subsequent diminution of its influence over the issue. Keith Banting notes that.

. "within Whitehall the battle-lines had formed. The conflict centred, not on fundamentally different definitions of the nature of poverty, but on the specifics of the policy response. The process of designing the choices had been a closed one; social scientists campaigning in public were able to influence the range of options considered, but the final choices were

8. See Kellner, P. and Schott, K. 'The Un-affluent Society' New Statesman 26th October 1979 and Hill, M. The State, Administration and the Individual Fontana 1976 pp 53-54
9. Gustafsson and Richardson note. "policies are agreed within professionalised policy communities. Politics, from the viewpoint of the citizen, has gone underground. It has disappeared into a relatively closed world where governments negotiate with interest groups. The policy community within each segment is in fact a rather restricted community - a policy elite which determines the policy outcomes." op cit p. 32
10. Crenson, M. The Impolitics of Air Pollution. John Hopkins Press Baltimore 1971 p. 178

developed within the secret world of officials and ministers. . . . It was a hidden battle, fought out in the corridors of power, its ebb and flow invisible to all but the most perceptive outside observers. Only in the final stages did conflict radiate outwards and only then as the internal contestants sought to mobilise political support for their cause". (11)

The choice and details of policy were thus to be worked out between the Ministry of Social Security and those departments which saw increased expenditure on family allowances through reduction of child tax allowances as contrary to their own interests. CPAG clearly identified the Inland Revenue and the Treasury as the most powerful and vociferous of these 'counter-interests'. "The Chancellor, prompted by the backwoodsmen of the Inland Revenue, insisted that changes in the tax system must be considered in isolation from all other aspects of social policy. If tax allowances were to be cut, therefore, it was for him to announce it in his Budget, not for Mr. Gordon-Walker in a statement on child poverty. This was more than a procedural quibble. It meant that the tax saving would not be set off against the cost of higher family allowances, the whole of which would count as social security expenditure, reducing the amount of money available for other advances in the social security field." (12)

The influence of the Inland Revenue upon both economic and fiscal policy is perhaps not as widely appreciated as it should be. Writing as the Wilson Government came to power, Samuel Brittan was at pains to stress the importance of the Board of Inland Revenue as a key factor in any analysis of taxation policy, particularly tax reform. A significant outcome has been that even the powerful Treasury has found it difficult to overcome Inland Revenue opposition to change. The Board remains inherently conservative in its approach to policy initiative and, as Brittan noted, the role of the Treasury had been one of. "honest broker between the more hair-

11. Banting, K. Poverty, Politics and Policy MacMillan 1979 pp 98-99
 12. Poverty No. 4 pp 2-3

raising tax ideas put forward by the economists and the hardened conservatism of the Revenue Departments". (13)

Banting has argued that from the beginning of the family allowance debate CPAG were confronted by three powerful forces - the Board of Inland Revenue, the Treasury, and a Chancellor of the Exchequer determined to articulate his party's fears of a possible electoral backlash should family allowances rise. From the outset James Callaghan was implacably opposed to the 'claw-back' proposals favoured by CPAG as a method of 'financing' an increase in family allowances. Banting notes. "Callaghan's position reflected the congruence of two powerful forces: administrative resistance to 'claw-back' from the Inland Revenue and the Treasury, and his own reading of the electoral dangers of income redistribution. The Inland Revenue Board rejected the entire CPAG case. According to tax orthodoxy, the child tax allowance was not a social benefit like family allowances, but simply a mechanism for adjusting tax to the capacity to pay". (14)

The Opposition to 'Claw-Back'

A principal feature of CPAG's proposals to claw-back some of the cost of financing a rise in family allowances by abolishing child tax allowances was its apparent equity. Tony Lynes has explained this reasoning better than most. "As a method of subsidising families with children. tax allowances for children seem remarkably inefficient, since they are worth most to those least in need of such a subsidy, while the poorest families derive little or no benefit from them. Family Allowances, on the other hand, are payable at the same rates to rich and poor alike. In some countries, they are not subject to income tax. In others, of which Britain is one, they are taxed so that only families with very low incomes get the

13. Brittan, S. The Treasury Under the Tories 1951-64 Pelican 1964 p. 118
 14. Banting op cit p. 94

full benefit of them. Their net value falling by stages as the family's income rises. It is understandable, therefore, that most concerned with the abolition of poverty, rather than with equity as between families further up the income scale, should regard family allowances as a more sensible way of redistributing income in favour of families with children than tax allowances". (15)

The Inland Revenue's interpretation of equity, however, was antipathetic to that of CPAG. Its justification for retaining child tax allowances stemmed partly from the nature of the tax system itself. The tax structure has gradually evolved over the last 300 years and its basic form has never been wholly abandoned in favour of an alternative. As a result, new tax codings, measures and instruments have been added on as appendages to the core. The emergence of company tax, surtax, value added tax and capital transfer tax spring readily to mind. So fundamental reform to accommodate new rulings has never really taken place. This in itself has bred a strong sense of conservatism towards change.

Furthermore, the tax system reflects certain beliefs and values held by those who administer it, Brittan noted in the early sixties that....."the root of the Inland Revenue's opposition to many reforms goes deeper still, to a rather limited notion of equity..... behind a great deal of its talk of equity is the unchallenged assumption that the statusquo is 'fair'." (16) When the Treasury, or a department like the Ministry of Social Security (DHSS) suggests, therefore, that this group should have tax allowances or that group should forfeit them the Board, in its assumption of maintaining equity, asks the question whether those affected will regard the changes as 'fair'. If it comes up with an answer in the negative opposition is likely to

15. Lynes, A. 'Clawback' in Bull, D. ed. Family Poverty Duckworth 1972 pp 119-20
 16. Brittan op cit p.120

be entrenched. It is at this point that the 'support' of the client lobby can be mobilised in defence of the status quo.⁽¹⁷⁾ Brittan cited the case of the CBI's predecessor, the Federation of British Industry, whose tax experts.....
 "so far from exercising a reforming influence have been some of the chief obstacles to change - indeed they have occasionally made the Inland Revenue seem radical by comparison."⁽¹⁸⁾

The Board's implacable opposition to the CPAG proposals for claw-back, adopted by the Ministry of Social Security, centered upon what it saw as an unacceptable distribution of tax liability within the more affluent tax-paying categories. In contrast with CPAG's 'redistributive' approach to tax.....
 .. "the Inland Revenue focussed solely on the tax system's internal equity and, from that point of view, a fair distribution of the tax burden between those with and those without family responsibilities was essential at all income levels..... From the Inland Revenue's point of view, claw-back was not a sophisticated use of the tax system to concentrate benefit on real need; it was a universal increase in family allowances primarily financed through an inequitable tax increase on all families".⁽¹⁹⁾

Fundamentally, the Board held to the view that the tax system was simply a means for raising revenue and that any attempt to use it as an instrument for social reform..... "could only disrupt its efficiency and equity, and jeopardise its public acceptability".⁽²⁰⁾ CPAG's proposals, articulated by Herbison in Cabinet, ran directly counter to this view.

There was strong opposition to claw-back from the Treasury also. Treasury Officials saw in claw-back an attempt to pre-empt or undermine a tradition in policy-making that had won for their Department the right to

18. Brittan p. 120

19. Banting p. 95

20. ibid

determine tax changes and general economic strategy in the preparation of Budgets. Banting notes that....."The claw-back violated those prerogatives completely. It would formally link a tax with an expenditure change, thereby reducing the Chancellor's flexibility in the future; in addition, it would involve a collective cabinet decision on a tax issue and its announcement some 8 months before the Budget. From the first cabinet discussion of the issue in November 1966, Callaghan objected that claw-back usurped a budget decision and represented an intolerable fiscal procedure". (21)

Callaghan opposed claw-back on two further counts. It was his view that family allowance increases would be highly unpopular with large sections of the working-class and that this would pose a serious threat to Labour's ability to maintain electoral support in what was seen as its natural 'constituency'. (22) The scheme would be additionally unpopular, he felt, by virtue of its transfer of income from the husband, who paid the higher tax, to the wife, who collected the higher family allowance - an issue that was to reappear, with Callaghan again closely involved, when Labour next came to power in 1974. Finally, Callaghan opposed claw-back on broad economic grounds as he sought to spark an industrial revival and achieve growth by placing restrictions on public expenditure.

It was against this backdrop then, argued CPAG, that Peggy Herbison was told to come up with a solution to child poverty at the expense of the old, the sick and the unemployed, her own department's client groups. Cutbacks were to take place actually within areas of social services expenditure instead of within other expenditure spheres with less immediate or apparent human need. The chief outcome, of course, was that the 'discovery' of a

21. ibid pp 95-96

22. The Guardian 27th July 1967.

financial solution to child poverty from the existing social services budget would mean that the Chancellor would be free to syphon off any revenue from a later cut in tax allowances for other government projects. This was a prospect which the group regarded as anathema. Commenting upon Herbison's resignation they complained. "that she was right to resign in these circumstances is beyond question. The pity of it is that she did not feel free to reveal the whole disgraceful story, thus laying the blame where it belongs - on Mr. Callaghan and the Board of the Inland Revenue." (23)

The Wilson Government was under attack from other quarters also. Most notably from among its own backbenches. (24) In an alternative policy statement, Change Gear, David Marquand, John Mackintosh and David Owen, among the prominent parliamentary supporters of CPAG, called upon the Government to institute, inter al, a coherent and systematic poverty programme. In a critique which quite clearly questioned the leadership's emphasis on economic growth as the pre-condition of welfare expenditure they warned. "it is easier to put socialist principles into practice when the rate of growth is high, but that is no excuse for failing to put them into practice when it is low". (25)

23. Poverty No. 4 p. 3

24. Peter Townsend says that criticism of Labour's record on social policies was "wide-ranging" from 1966 and suggests that the origins of this criticism lay in the publication in 1965 of. . . . "the deplorable White Paper on Immigration which was the U-turn on the Gaitskell policy". Interview December 19th 1979. Writing in June 1966, Richard Crossman spoke of the Government's problems in contending with. . . . "the growing disillusionment of our own backbenchers". He went on to add. . . . "This Government had dramatic successes when it only had a majority of three. Now it has a majority of a hundred it has relaxed its efforts; and as a result it has created a sense of impatience and disillusionment among the new intake of able, vigorous, intelligent but politically naive MPs. Quite legitimately many of them are beginning to feel that this is not a Socialist Government, not even a leftist Government, but just any old government teetering along and carrying out its election programme in a rather uninspired way". Crossman (Diaries) Vol I pp 532-33

25. Marquand, D.; Mackintosh, J.P., and Owen, D. Change Gear Socialist Commentary 1967.

The authors advocated the allocation of a higher proportion of the gross national product to the social services, to be achieved by either increases in taxation or wider use of charges or a combination of both. Their proposals included, significantly, a tax on wealth and a value-added tax of the kind then already in force in the EEC. In keeping with CPAG initiatives, they also advocated a greater tax burden falling on single people so that families would be relatively less penalised, though they appeared to offset some of their bolder proposals by supporting the orthodox Institute of Economic Affairs argument that direct charges should be extended because..... "users may be more willing to pay for the social services if they see a direct connection between the payment they make and the service they receive." (26)

Herbison had also made personal efforts to mobilise backbench support for a rise in family allowances during her final weeks in office. Backbench opinion in favour of the rise figured prominently during sessions of Question Time early in February 1967 and culminated in an early Day Motion on the issue signed by 30 MPs. (27) While the support was vociferous it was, nevertheless, limited and in the same month all but 25 MPs deserted a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party as the agenda turned to Social Security matters. Lewis Minkin, in a study of Labour Party Conferences, has shown that constituency opinion also favoured early and resolute action on this issue and notes that the constituency parties..... "were concerned at the Government's inability to tackle the problem of poverty and opposed the imposition of the wage-stop. They were also overwhelmingly opposed to the re-introduction of prescription charges". (28)

It is clear, however, that while outside forces were influential in setting

26. Poverty No. 5 Winter 1967 p. 3
 27. Early Day Motion No. 142:400 (13th February 1967)
 28. Minkin, L. The Labour Party Conference. Allen Lane 1978 p.90

and adjusting the tone of the poverty debate its outcome was largely determined in Cabinet when Ministers came to play roles assigned to them by their Departmental responsibilities.

The Wage-Stop

Whilst the family allowance/claw-back issue had largely passed out of CPAGs hands by mid-1967, the Group had continued to press for reform or abolition of the wage-stop. By Summer its concern with the ruling had intensified to an extent where, for a while, it became the key issue around which the poverty debate sparked. One of the group's chief concerns was the claimant's ignorance of how his or her entitlement was calculated. While this lack of knowledge, and a reluctance on the part of the Ministry of Social Security to resolve it, persisted the claimant's position remained excessively weak and his economic security stood threatened. (29)

This apparent 'informational breakdown' obscures a much more important and rather cynical belief which, it is claimed, is at the core of administrative thinking on the dispensation of welfare to claimants and their dependants. Party political inertia, the historically strained relationship between official and claimant and the hard facts of non-take-up of entitlement would seem to confirm Hilary Rose's view that, in the field of welfare, administrative caution, perhaps even 'reticence', is not simply expected it is actively encouraged. Both Rose and R. G. S. Brown share the view that there may exist institutional and procedural pressures to minimise discretionary payment and discourage take-up. (30) Those pressures may be further compounded by the view society takes of claimants with large families.

29. Letter from Richard Hayward, Chairman SBC to Tony Lynes
13th July 1967.
30. Rose op cit p. 5

The economist, Harry G. Johnson, has argued that there has been a reluctant and tardy acknowledgement in Britain of people, and children in particular as a 'resource'. This failure to perceive children in this way disadvantages the child and its family in the short run and the economy in the long run. "Refusal to recognise the investment character of a problem because people are involved may result in people receiving worse treatment than machines." (31)

Margaret Wynn also supports the view that a society's industrial and economic future is, to some extent, dependent upon the continuation of the larger family. She points out. "Family policy must always be bounded by traditions and the extent of public support. Family policy like all forward-looking policies will always be threatened by the demands of the immediate future, by the pressures of short term expediency, by the pressures for immediate consumption at the expense of longer-term investment". (32) Her analysis of the family as a resource is particularly pertinent when it is recalled that in the early seventies some 75% of the next generation was being raised in only 22% of the U. K. households (33) with the result that the burden of a social investment that is likely to benefit

31. See Blaug, M. ed The Economics of Education No. 1 Penguin 1968 p. 39

32. Wynn, M. Family Policy Pelican 1972 p. 264

33. Wynn notes. "the infertility of about half the adult population has to be compensated for by the greater fertility of a minority. At any one time less than 9% of all households in the U. K. include 3 or more children dependent upon them; these households are bringing up over 40% of the next generation. Over 40% of all adults alive today (1970) were brought up in the minority households of the last generation which contained three or more dependent children. . . . Most of the time, trouble, and money expended on rearing the next generation fall on the shoulders of a minority of adults in each age group, in each generation, and on quite a small minority of all adults or earners or taxpayers in the community at any one time". Wynn pp 26-27

Wynn's analysis makes all the more contentious the comments made by Douglas Houghton in a speech in July 1968 in which he talked of the. "social irresponsibility of large families". The Guardian 4. 7. 1968.

most of future society was borne by a minority of households. Ultimately Wynn's view points to the mortality of Governments and the attractions of short-term expediency. The politicians' sense of survival is more likely to influence the selection of policies that satisfy the preferences of insider-groups and important vested interests, who have sanctions to employ if ignored, than outsider groups like most with large families who are disproportionately represented among the poor.

Clearly, there is a long way to go before their particular contribution to economic growth and social progress is acknowledged and 'compensated'. Indeed, the paradox emerges that the Wilson Government was denying extra cash assistance to those with families in the mid-60s until economic growth 'took-off' yet was, at the same time, expecting them to make a significant contribution to that growth. As Wynn points out..... "whatever abstract philosophy is preached, government measures that are, in fact, biased against the family undermine a nation's vision of the future subtly, and often imperceptibly and unintentionally". (34)

The 'resource' argument is one that CPAG seems to have largely failed to exploit in this period. Instead of swimming with the tide of government opinion in favour growth and attempting to locate increased family support as an integral factor in the achievement of that growth, the group chose to argue the case for greater cash aid largely in terms of 'need', 'rights' and 'equity' - all admirable reasons in their own right, but perhaps too well-tried at this point in time and therefore of diminishing attraction to party leaders. A more aggressive, less-'Fabian', presentation of the family as a key factor in economic recovery and growth, with greater comparative emphasis on developments in other countries may have given some useful

34. Wynn p. 267 and Moss, P. Why Family Allowances? unpublished CPAG paper August 1970.

variation to the poverty debate and some 'new material' with which CPAG's parliamentary supporters could organise a fresh assault on Government policy.

Other countries, as CPAG has pointed out from time to time, do appear to have prepared for the future by acting to protect and support the family by both political and economic means. At the time of British entry to the EEC all the member nations were considerably ahead of Britain in the development of an 'enlightened' family policy. In France, Germany and Belgium there are Ministries charged with direct responsibility for family affairs. In the latter, since 1951, the Prime Minister himself has presided over a ministerial committee co-ordinating family policy. In each of these countries, unlike Britain, family policy is not viewed in isolation from other considerations and is firmly integrated with taxation policy, social security, education, housing and all other measures designed to achieve child and family security. ⁽³⁵⁾ Furthermore, each year the EEC Commission publishes an 'Expose' on social policy documenting the outcome of the regular and statutory dialogue between 'family ministers' and the representative interests in the field. ⁽³⁶⁾

An obvious obstacle to the radicalisation of family policy in Britain and to its closer integration with policy sectors whose own outcomes have some influence upon it, is the highly incremental style of British central administration. ⁽³⁷⁾ Demands for the application of continental practice to British Social policy-making are strikingly at variance with the procedural

35. For a brief analysis of the 'European' approach to Social Security and family policy, see James, E. and Laurent, A. 'Social Security: The European Experiment'. Social Trends 1974 Central Statistical Office pp 26-34

36. Wynn pp 269-70

37. James and Laurent op cit p 27-28

norms and values of the British incremental model. ⁽³⁸⁾ Richardson and Jordan have commented that....."The process of policy-making is one of selecting between the (comparatively) few alternatives that suggest themselves. In comparing these limited numbers of alternatives one does not dwell overlong on values or goals; instead one starts from the problem and considers a manageable range of alternatives. In choosing which option to adopt, one has reference to values, but....the choice of policy instrument is combined with the ranking of values. In this approach there is a tendency for policy innovations to be small-scale extensions of past efforts with an expectation that there will be a constant return to the problem to make further extensions and to reconsider the problem in the light of new data....."⁽³⁹⁾ Ultimately, where the style of administration dictates that the policy-making process will not simply be a means of producing gradual changes in policy but will also be a means whereby the preferences of a number of often competing groups will be articulated, adjusted and accommodated, the very plurality of the interests with a concern in a policy will militate against radical innovation and, as the cabinet discussion on claw-back shows, against a break with the status quo.

The wage-stop ruling provided a further example of an issue on which there was a clear 'status quo'. In this case the status quo represented an apparently popular belief that an individual should not receive more when unemployed than when in full-time employment, regardless of the fact that

38. Brown notes, for example, that....."There is clearly a risk that a department like the DHSS will see its role as that of integrating the interests of a limited range of powerful groups and minimising conflict among them....(however)....the disadvantages of incrementalism are first that incrementalist decisions are not so much made as emerge from a series of bargains between different participants in the policy process, all attempting to pursue their own goals with adjustments where necessary to avoid serious conflict with other partisan groups. Radical changes are to be avoided, since they would encounter too much resistance. The second disadvantage is that interests which are not central to the discussions tend to be left out. Typically it is the general public that gets overlooked". p. 208
39. Richardson and Jordan op cit p. 22

the wage-earner might have earned less in full-time employment than the official poverty line. (40)

In July 1967 Richard Haywood had already given Tony Lynes an implicit confirmation that instructions were to be issued by the supplementary benefits commission to its local offices to explain to wage-stopped claimants how their benefit was calculated. CPAG pressure on the issue contributed, at least in part, to a situation in the Autumn where both the SBC and the Ministry of Social Security became involved in a detailed review of the wage-stop with the firm intention of softening its impact. (41)

It is appropriate here to note the comments of Richard Titmuss upon the role of the SBC and its relationship with pressure groups in the field. Speaking in an interview, Titmuss described the Commission's task as creating....."dilemmas of choice for public debate". (42) It was his view that the SBC's quasi-independent status enabled it to raise policy issues which had clear political overtones and, in doing so, it could often find itself at variance with its 'parent' department, the DHSS. Nevertheless, its status did enable it to act as something of an internal pressure-group within that department and in this role Titmuss saw it being....."actively

40. It is significant that even by the mid-seventies, in the wake of fifteen years of parliamentary, press and public debate on the causes and injustices of poverty, a study by the EEC Commission discovered that 43% of respondents polled in Britain felt that poverty occurred 'because of laziness and lack of willpower', while only 16% attributed it to the view that 'there is much injustice in our society'. The weighted average across the whole EEC in support of the indolence theory was, by contrast, only 25% (ranging from 11% in Denmark to 31% in Luxembourg); for the injustice theory the EEC average was a broadly similar 26% (ranging from 40% in Italy to a low of 11% in the Netherlands).

Table 29. 'The Perception of Poverty in Europe' 1977. The Commission of the European Community 1977

41. Hansard. House of Commons Debate 23rd October 1967 Cols 1321-2

42. Worsthorne, B. The Child Poverty Action Group 1965-70. unpublished M. Phil thesis (not awarded) University of York 1971 p. 98

helped by external pressure groups when they saw fit to act conjointly with it on selected problems for mutual benefit".⁽⁴³⁾ In the cases of both the wage-stop and child benefits, as will be shown later, CPAG may be judged to have played this supportive role.

One of the difficulties Haywood faced in the introduction of new rulings for his staff to follow, was that his staff were underpaid and undermanned and it was judged that any additional burden would only pressurise them further. Nevertheless, the dialogue between Lynes and Haywood did give some indication that the SBC was prepared to actively respond to the Group's criticisms. For example, after much lobbying by CPAG to secure a full explanation of benefit calculation for wage-stopped claimants, Haywood wrote to Lynes..... "The pressure of work on the staff at the moment is such that we hesitate to issue any new instructions, even by way of reminder. But we did undertake to see whether it would be possible to issue a circular drawing attention to the existing arrangements for telling wage-stopped claimants about rate rebates and about exceptional needs grants in wage-stop cases.....we have since been considering very carefully whether we should put this extra burden upon the staff and the commission have now come to the conclusion that it is of sufficient importance for us to issue an instruction. An instruction to Managers will therefore be sent out very shortly".⁽⁴⁴⁾

The "circular" to which Haywood referred took the form of an SBC report, Administration of the Wage Stop, published in December 1967 and distributed early in 1968. The report brought with it some important reforms including the gauging of a labourer's potential earnings by local authority wage rates and the abolition of the arbitrary deduction from earnings of 7s. 6d. for

43. ibid

44. Richard Hayward to Tony Lynes 26th January 1968.

"intangible" expenses, this made some families up to £2 per week better off. ⁽⁴⁵⁾ However, the disabled, the temporarily sick and short-term prisoner's families remained wage-stopped. CPAG's proposal for abolition of the ruling or at least suspension of it during the winter months of 1967-8 was rejected.

Reluctance to abolish the wage-stop, despite grass-roots support for the measure, was also apparent at Labour party conferences in both 1967 and 1968. At the October 1967 conference at Scarborough, Iain Jordan, a Scottish delegate and a founder member of the Scottish Poverty Action Group, called for the immediate suspension of the wage stop, at least in Scotland and those other regions where the level of unemployment constituted an "exceptional circumstance". ⁽⁴⁶⁾ If this was not done, he warned....."a mighty poverty guerilla war".....against the Supplementary Benefits Commission would follow with the aim of overloading and breaking down the system by encouraging all the wage-stopped to appeal. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ Seconding this resolution delegates from Dewsbury and from Hornsey stressed the need for a "blitz programme" to alleviate family poverty in all its forms including that singled out by Jordan.

However, it is interesting to note that Richard Crossman, replying on behalf of the Government, admitted the punitive and anomalistic nature of the wage stop but attempted to obscure the issue by asserting that the problem of low pay was the more salient one and the one upon which criticism should focus....."we think that a national minimum wage has much more to do with the issue than Social Security. We cannot deal with the fundamental evil of low wages by Social Security regulations". ⁽⁴⁸⁾ For CPAG

45. Poverty No. 5 p.13

46. ibid p.14

47. ibid

48. ibid

this view represented no more than an uncomfortable attempt by the Government to shift the burden of criticism and the source of blame from itself to the vagaries of 'the economic system' - a convenient scapegoat for an embattled government.

The pattern was repeated the following year, 1968, when the issue of the wage-stop was raised once more from the floor. Lewis Minkin concluded from his observations of Labour Party conferences that the prior disposition of both the party's Social Policy Sub-Committee and the Research Department towards a particular issue raised on the floor was crucial in determining how far the issue, or resolution, would progress.....

.... "when the Conference passed a resolution which the Committee and the Department head both regarded as 'impractical' there was no push at all for its implementation. This was shown in response to the Conference decisions on the wage-stop in 1968". (49)

He went on to describe the party's reception to the issue in 1968.....

"A resolution calling for the abolition of the wage-stop was carried on a hand vote against 'the platform' but it had little support, either on the Social Policy Advisory Committee or the Home Policy Sub-Committee. For all practical purposes, the resolution simply disappeared from view. It does not appear to have been seriously advocated by party representatives with Ministers. There was no reference to it in the Research Department's Section of the NEC Report of 1969..... and there was no commitment to it in any of the programmatic documents produced that year by the party". (50)

Essentially, CPAG had fought the wage-stop ruling on two distinct levels. Primarily, they had launched a campaign calling for nothing less than the abolition of the ruling and the acceptance of their view that there should be a

49. Minkin p. 304

50. ibid

minimum official poverty line below which no one, regardless of what they earned in full-time employment, must be allowed to fall. However, it is often useful for a campaigning group to establish an ambitious target for itself, often in the foreknowledge that its achievement is unlikely, so that it creates for itself some 'room to manoeuvre' and the opportunity to accept a lower level target which it may have already perceived beforehand to be its 'real' target. Tactically, it is a matter of demanding A on the prior recognition that you are seeking to achieve preference B. In CPAG's case 'demand A' represented an effort on the primary level to secure the abolition of the wage-stop. 'Preference B' represented secondary level efforts to bring about administrative changes in the ruling, having made the assumption that it was likely to continue to exist. Here the group achieved some degree of success.

Clawback - The Administrative Debâcle

By April 1968 the Group's hopes for a new era in social policy had largely faded. The recent small increases in family allowances proved, as CPAG had warned, to be of only marginal significance. The increased allowances had failed to assist the majority of families receiving supplementary benefit. Their total income was determined by the Supplementary Benefit Scale and unless that scale was raised in line with the increase in family allowances they found that what they had gained was immediately taken away by the SBC. Little effort was made on the part of government to explain this apparently anomalous relationship between family allowances and supplementary benefits with the result that many families felt confused and penalised. (51)

There had been growing indication throughout the latter part of 1967 that clawback might finally prevail as a method of financing the new rise in

family allowances. In May, Harold Wilson resisted opposition calls for a widening of means-testing. In June a bill to increase national insurance benefits carried with it a clause giving the Government a temporary power to raise family allowances in case it decided in favour of increasing the benefits in the Autumn. Furthermore, the clause gave no hint that the Government was still considering a means-tested approach - an indication that the Government was moving in the clawback direction. By mid-July, with Cabinet patience running-out with what had been a bitter dispute, clawback had prevailed. The final details concerned the level and timing of payment and it was here that the Government ran into difficulties.

The confusion following the 1967 and 1968 announcements on family allowances increases, and the government's acceptance of the clawback proposal only after part of the first increase had been paid to families did much to alienate public support for the Labour government.⁽⁵²⁾ For those families with 4 or more children 5 shillings of the 7 shillings increase for the fourth and subsequent children came into operation in October 1967. The total increase was planned for April 1968 and, in the Budget of that year, the new Chancellor, Roy Jenkins, was to study the method by which the necessary revenue could be raised. By the end of the year, however, devaluation had taken place and in January Harold Wilson announced a further increase of 3 shillings as a 'protective' measure.⁽⁵³⁾

At the same time, Wilson committed the government to simultaneous adjustments in tax allowances so that much of the 1967 and 1968 increases would be funded by a clawback of tax from the better-off families. However, a serious anomaly occurred because some families drew part of the increase from October 1967 and those who paid the standard rate of tax had their

52. Banting pp 106-08 and Talking Points No. 9 Labour Party July 1968
 53. Wilson pp 613-14 and Bull ed. Chapter 10

codes adjusted in such a way that from April 1968 to October 1968 they were losing more than the weekly family allowance increase. As Tony Lynes has since noted, the difficulties of explaining what had taken place to irate taxpayers were considerable. (54)

Banting has concluded that no single factor can explain the crucial division in favour of clawback at the Cabinet meeting of February 23rd 1967 which, paradoxically, saw Peggy Herbison outmanoeuvre James Callaghan for the last time before her resignation and which gave the proposal an impetus that gathered strength in the latter part of the year. He concludes instead that those favouring clawback were influenced by a range of factors, the most prominent of which were party tradition, by feedback from those in the social administration and academic professions and by the efforts and arguments of CPAG. Those opposed to clawback, he contends, were more influenced by administrative factors, by possible electoral consequences and by what they saw as the need for expenditure restraint. (55)

Ultimately, he concludes....."The final decision turned on the attitudes and perceptions of policy-makers: their party traditions, their administrative concerns, their electoral fears. Outside social constraints were real and potent. But they were present as estimates in the minds of policy-makers rather than demonstrations on the steps of Parliament". (56)

Growth and Welfare Expenditure

The marginal increases failed to satisfy critical opinion. Comparison with European developments was inevitable. The British system of social insurance and welfare assistance has long been distinctive in its method of funding, its financial structure and its level of provision. Unlike the income-based

54. Bull pp 122-8

55. Banting p. 104

56. ibid p. 105

contributions common in the EEC, the British system, like that of the U. S. A., is based mainly on flat-rate contributions and, as William Shepherd has noted. "Apart from the regressivity this entails, it has prevented growth in revenues and consequently restrained the rise in benefits. Despite a rapid increase in the last decade, benefits are accordingly a smaller share of GNP in Britain than in comparable countries". (57)

Shepherd also attempted an historical explanation of the failure of British Governments in the sixties to significantly advance the level of social welfare provision, which may serve to place CPAG efforts in their proper and wider context. He commented. "At the outset any diagnosis of Britain's economic difficulties must include the prolonged lapse from 1914 to 1945 of investment and adjustment in many sectors of economic and social infrastructure". (58) He argued that the massive redirection of funds in the early sixties away from other priorities in order to create the long overdue motorway network, to bolster the NHS and to capitalise the re-organisation of the coal and railway industries resulted in deprivation in sectors like the social services where the relationship between investment and a return on capital was less clear.

Furthermore, it is important to note that any reduction in Social Services expenditure would be further exacerbated in the sixties by the projected increases in the number of young children and aged persons in the population announced in 1960 by the Central Statistical Office. For the period 1960-75 the 'probable increase' forecast in the under-9 age group, for example, was

57. Shepherd, W. G. 'Alternatives for Public Expenditure' in Caves, R. E. ed. Britains' Economic Prospects George Allen and Unwin 1970 p. 441 For an alternative assessment of public expenditure in the area of Social Service provision see Abel-Smith, B. 'Public Expenditure on the Social Services' Social Trends 1970 Central Statistical Office.
58. Shepherd p. 384

a startling 33%; in the 10-19 age group an increase of 13% was forecast
(59)
and in the pensionable age group 26%.

Yet Shepherd felt that such projections, despite their apparently significant implications for consumption, would have had little effect on what he termed the Treasury's 'sectoral bias'. Procedural improvements in forecasting the return on investment in the nationalised industries section, for example, meant that a bias would occur in the Treasury's decisions among economic and social programmes in favour of the former because economic indicators of success or failure had now been formulated. (60) The fact that the application of economic forecasting to social service programmes was still rudimentary and generally piecemeal served merely to strengthen this bias. (61)

By the mid-sixties the Treasury was approving virtually all investment in the nationalised industries which promised at least the 8% test rate of return. However, Shepherd noted that....."No such economic case is made for social programmes, most of which is current expenditure. Instead a variety of technical standards, rules of thumb and political factors - 'needs' and 'requirements' - appears to prevail". (62)

Shepherd's independent analysis offers much support for the CPAG view that not only was planning and expenditure in the Social Services piecemeal and fragmented, but that there was a clear Treasury bias against that expenditure beyond certain levels. He added, for example....."Even in housing, education and, to some extent, health services, where economic

59. Annual Abstract of Statistics 1966 Central Statistical Office pp 12-13

60. See, for example, a discussion of the role of the Public Expenditure Survey Committee in Clarke, R. Public Expenditure, Management and Control: The Development of PESC. MacMillan 1979. and Richardson and Jordan pp. 31-35

61. Glennerster, H. Social Service Budgets and Social Policy. Allen and Unwin 1975

62. Shepherd p. 386

appraisal is possible, little research has been done, either in Whitehall or independently, and what has been done does not always influence Treasury decisions. This may cause random imbalance among these programmes...
more important, it may systematically favour the programmes of the nationalised industries in the competition with social services for public funds."(63)

The result is that the Treasury may too easily succumb to the facility of existing economic indicators in making decisions which may subsequently pre-empt resources which would have more immediate social uses. (64) It is beyond the scope of this study to comment further upon the possible economic rationale for Treasury responses to increased family support in this period but the influences and factors outlined above are likely to have contributed significantly to that rationale. Ultimately, as Brittan has noted, 'reality' may lie in the amount a country can afford to give claimants in a harsh economic climate....

....."If the country were to grow richer more quickly, it would be easier to raise the real value of pensions, even if prices rose faster as a result. A policy of rapid growth is in fact more in the interest of those who are dependent on the Welfare State than a policy of price stability at all costs". (65)

In adopting this 'growth as a prerequisite of expenditure' approach the Labour Government and the Treasury were following what some writers have considered to be a universal trend in social policy-making. In 1965, for example, Philips Cutright demonstrated that the variance in Social Security coverage and the level of benefits dispensed by Governments could be directly linked with their country's economic development and that this

63. *ibid*

64. Self. P. Econocrats and The Policy Process MacMillan 1975 pp 120-24

65. Brittan pp. 148-9

economic factor was far more influential in the formulation of social security programmes than, for example, the degree of political representativeness. (66)

More recently, in 1976, G. M. Haniff has also shown that economic factors, especially the level of economic development, outweigh political ones in determining social policy. (67) This, in turn, has led Thomas Dye to conclude that....."most comparative cross-national policy studies indicate that health and welfare policies, regardless of political systems, are closely associated with levels of economic development". (68)

British political scientists have taken a 'less economic view' of the public welfare commitment and have stressed the importance of political factors also, not the least of which is the type of system, i. e. federal or unitary, prevalent in a particular state. Frank Castles and Robert McKinlay have concluded, for example, that.....

....."it is clear that differences in political organisation, defined in terms of political structure and ideology, play a critical role in explaining differentials in commitment to public welfare in advanced democratic states". (69)

However, having made this useful qualification they, too, recognise the importance of economic development.....

....."once we have taken account of such (political) differences, economic development also contributes to public welfare. Since in the short term the political factors do not vary, we can suggest that economic development provides the dynamic for public welfare.....It must be emphasised, however, that the dynamic role of economic development only becomes apparent once we have taken political factors into consideration". (70)

66. Cutright, P. 'Political Structure, Economic Development and National Security Programmes' American Journal of Sociology No. 70 1965 pp 537-50
67. Haniff, G. M. 'Politics, Development and Social Policy: A Cross-National Analysis' European Journal of Political Research No. 6 pp 361-76
68. Dye, T. R. Policy Analysis University of Alabama Press (Alabama) 1976 p. 51
69. Castles, F. and Mckinlay, R. D. 'Does Politics Matter: An Analysis of the Public Welfare Commitment in Advanced Democratic States'. European Journal of Political Research No. 7 1979 p. 181
70. ibid

The Lancaster House Conference

In Britain, while the demands for economic growth may have been popularly viewed as pre-eminent in Labour's rhetoric, the whole question of the timing and size of a rise in family allowances was ultimately influenced by the response the Government expected from other interests affected by the increase. Richard Crossman had already warned in November 1966 that. . . .

. . . ."in peace-time the gap between private affluence and public squalor cannot be corrected without a fairly rapid rate of economic growth". (71)

James Callaghan, sensing the tide of public opinion turning against further expenditure on Social Security warned that middle-income groups and skilled manual workers were unwilling to sacrifice any further erosion in their standard of living for this purpose. (72) The general fears of Ministers about interfering with the tax allowances of middle-income groups were such that by February 1967 one major newspaper was moved to comment.

"Government opinion is now moving in favour of a straight increase in family allowances. One major reason for this is the fear of political repercussions among middle class and professional families who have been expressing strong resentment at the prospect of losing tax reliefs to benefit a minority of large families". (73)

This view was endorsed by the Institute of Economic Affairs in March. The IEA produced its own sample survey on the issue of family allowances which revealed that 57% of those surveyed approved of selective family allowances and 53% preferred means-tested rather than free prescriptions. (74) This lent further support to a Labour government already teetering on the brink of non-decision. Findings of this sort simply served to nudge it over the edge in favour of those with the 'loudest' voice, though some sections of the

71. Crossman, R. Socialism and Planning Fabian Tract No. 375 1967 pp. 21-2
 72. The Guardian 27th July 1967
 73. Sunday Times 5th February 1967. See also The Times 3rd February 1967
Observer 15th January 1967
 74. Seldon, A. and Gray, H. Universal or Selective Social Benefits
 IEA March 1967

press were concerned to articulate the grievances of the 'inaudible'. (75)

Replying to a speech by the Prime Minister at the Labour Party's Annual Conference of 1967 in which he had talked of the 'great social advance' which had taken place under the Labour Government and in which he had produced figures to show the apparent increases in social services expenditure, Peter Townsend wrote.....

....."much of the increased expenditure is going to middle-income groups, the new managers, the children of the middle-classes, who largely account for the growing cost of higher education, and the educated consumers who expect high standards in medical care. The real test of social advance is how far a substantial proportionate shift of resources to the lowest income groups has occurred. There is little evidence that this has yet happened in Britain". (76)

If CPAG's influence seemed tenuous in terms of countervailing that of other interests, it appeared even weaker in terms of its broader impact upon some Government instructions. In December 1967, for example, in the wake of the government's failure to reform housing and alleviate the plight of the homeless, the new 'overlord' for social services, Michael Stewart, announced that he was to convene a conference of academic experts and departmental civil servants at Lancaster House to exchange ideas on and projected solutions to, the problems faced by the social services. Principally, the conference was designed to offer some constructive alternative to the fragmented and generally negative co-operation between the Home Office and the Health and Housing Departments, which was seen as a major factor contributing to government inertia.

75. The Guardian, for example, said of the April Budget....."Once again the Government has done nothing to mitigate the scandalous poverty of low wage families. Higher family allowances across the board would have cost more than the Chancellor could afford this year. But it should be possible to give help selectively to those in need without upsetting the balance of the economy. For the Government to say that it is still looking for the best way to relieve this hardship is not good enough".
12th April 1967.
76. Townsend, P. Sociology and Social Policy Allen Lane 1975 pp 304-5

Stewart did not, however, choose to invite representatives of the main pressure groups active in the fields presided over by these departments. Replying to what they saw as a deliberate snub, the leaders of four of those groups, Margaret Bramall (General Secretary of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child), Megan Du Boisson (Director of the Disablement Income Group), Des Wilson (Director of Shelter) and Tony Lynes of CPAG, wrote that they hoped the conference would be.....

....."followed by further meetings at which not only academics and administrators will be present but also those with some claim to represent the users of the Social Services - and, still more important, those whose needs the Social Services are failing to meet". (77)

Indeed, their letter sought to indicate....."only a few of the existing anomalies which might have been avoided or remedied had the views of those directly concerned been sought and taken into account". (78)

Those views were those of the main representative groups in the key issue areas administered by Social Services Departments. The Minister appeared to be ignoring the contribution of a proven expertise concerning the felt effect of policy. Stewart was thus establishing a firm precedent for future reliance upon academic observation and proposition rather than political feedback. The authors put this point clearly....."we believe that organisations such as ours have an indispensable contribution to make to the planning of future developments in the social services. We are ready at any time to place our knowledge acquired from direct contact with the poor, the disabled, the fatherless, the homeless, at the disposal of government and local authorities. (79)

This provided a clear opportunity for the type of improved public participation

77. 11th December 1967 - Letter to Michael Stewart, Secretary of State for Social Services.

78. ibid

79. ibid

the party had so often talked about in opposition. Why then was the suggestion ignored? Stewart's own view of the meeting was that it was designed to examine and establish priorities within the social services against the backdrop of economic stringency. Clearly, he felt that academics, politicians and civil servants, rather than pressure group activists (whom one might suppose could be regarded as 'emotionally involved' and too partisan in their arguments) would provide the type of knowledge and objectivity the conference required.

He commented in his introductory speech....."the task of operating the social services was limitless, but the nation's economic resources were limited, this Government inevitably faced a problem of priorities. The solution to this problem lay partly in the expansion of the Country's economic resources, but it was even more important to have the right political choices.among the social services themselves. It had therefore been decided that the conference should concentrate on how problems - the demographic and economic factors affecting policy, and the manner in which, in the light of those factors, priorities should be chosen and resources deployed". (80)

The Government line was again supported by an independent economic forecaster, on this occasion the Director of the NIESR, who backed the view of the 'Economic Ministries' that growth of public expenditure programmes could only be maintained by restricting the growth of personal consumption - his view being the politically emotive one that stasis had set in in the economy while public expenditure and services continued to expand.

80. Minutes of the Introduction to the Lancaster House Conference on Social Services December 2nd 1967. It is interesting to note that the Minutes reveal that Peter Townsend, attending as an academic 'expert', was the only participant to raise the issue of poverty. pp 17-18

Consultation and Consultative Status

CPAG's non-attendance at the Lancaster House conference raises further consideration of Grant's 'outsider-insider' dichotomy. It may have been the case that the Labour Government felt it already had a fairly accurate idea of the extent of the social problems raised at the conference without resorting to 'practical feedback' from what were comparatively nascent groups anyway. Furthermore, it may have considered it politic to 'defuse' the issues in question by confining discussion of them to academic and administrative observers. In doing so, the prospect of non-incrementalist solutions being offered would be largely obviated.

The debate on social policy thus became, once more, internalised, confined to Government policy-makers and those that they identified as part of what Hugh Heclo has termed the "issue-network".⁽⁸¹⁾ For Heclo an issue-network may be defined as....."a shared-knowledge group having to do with some aspect (or, as defined by the network, some problem) of public policy".⁽⁸²⁾ Two points are important here. First of all, Heclo suggests that the network may be distinguished from conventional pressure-groups by its overriding, and non-emotive concern with the technical and informational aspects of an issue or problem. Secondly, it may be added that the network, by its very exclusivity and 'control' over an issue, appears to retain the right to define that problem.

He goes on to note....."Increasingly, it is through networks of people who regard each other as knowledgeable, or at least as needing to be answered, that public policy issues tend to be refined, evidence debated, and alternative options worked out....."⁽⁸³⁾

81 Heclo, H. 'Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment' in King, A. ed. The New American Politics. American Enterprise Institute 1978 pp 87-124

82. *ibid* p.103

83. *ibid* p.104

It is clear that the Labour Government either felt it did not need to answer groups like CPAG and DIG or perhaps that the timing and style of the conference was not appropriate to such an answer. (84)

It is likely that the Government did not see itself as having to consult or confer with a group like CPAG for three key reasons. CPAG was not representative of the poor in the membership sense; much of the information it generated could possibly have been supplied by civil servants anyway and a decision to 'overlook' the group in consultations was unlikely to have the sort of repercussions that could result if an economic or industrial group was 'overlooked'. CPAG was clearly not regarded as the sort of 'insider group' to which Grant has referred. Indeed, as he notes....

....."a useful distinction can be made between those interest groups which are accepted by central government departments as legitimate spokesmen which have to be consulted on a continuous basis and those groups which are not consulted on a regular basis". (85)

This does not necessarily imply, of course, that the Government will cease consultation with the group, it may simply regulate it in such a way that both sides gain some benefit from their occasional meetings without a hard and fast relationship developing. It seems clear, for example, that the Labour Government was still willing to maintain a dialogue of sorts with CPAG on specific issues. The SBC's willingness to consider CPAG initiatives has already been noted, though even here Grant suggests that semi-autonomous government agencies have as a function, the creation of

....."a kind of phoney 'insider' status for some groups in order to

84. The fact remains, however, that if we accept Heclo's view that"Instead of power commensurate with responsibility, issue networks seek influence commensurate with their understanding of the various, complex social choices being made"... (p.103) then groups like CPAG and DIG, which had acquired hybrid roles as promotional pressure groups and repositories of expertise and knowledge, would seem to have been appropriate candidates for membership of any such issue-network and, therefore, worthy of participation at the Lancaster House Conference.

85. Grant op cit p. 3

reassure them that they have a sympathetic point of access within the government machine". (86)

Early in February 1968 Stewart, himself, met with Tony Lynes and undertook to investigate anomalous practises in the refunding of rate rebates which the group had uncovered, although he did rule out other CPAG requests for extending the provision of free school meals and free welfare foods on the grounds of cost. Two weeks later, representatives of the group were invited to discuss their proposals for a reform of the tax structure with the Chancellor, Roy Jenkins, (87) in advance of his April Budget. Lynes urged him not to reduce tax reliefs without correspondingly increasing family allowances and pressed for the abolition of the government's option mortgage scheme and tax relief on mortgage interest and asked that they be replaced by subsidised mortgages for everyone. (88)

The Group's qualified success in helping to influence cabinet discussion and acceptance of the clawback proposal has already been discussed. Acceptance of clawback meant that future increases in family allowances were to be concentrated on low income families by reducing the tax allowances for the better-off and this was included in Jenkin's April Budget, though the scheme remained a temporary 'one-off' measure and was not carried through to 1969-70. Jenkins also promised to keep the group informed about Treasury progress on negative income tax schemes. (89) Indeed, the Treasury envisaged a more active role for the group in the study of negative income tax proposals.....

86. *ibid* p. 4

87. Banting suggests that Jenkins view of himself as....."a liberal reformer and policy innovator" and his intellectual attraction to the 'neat solution' offered by clawback were important influences in the eventual acceptance of the scheme. pp 102-03

88. 21st February 1968.

89. For a discussion of Negative Income Tax see Barker, D. 'Negative Income Tax' in Bull, D. ed. *op cit* Chapter 5.

....."Treasury Ministers would.....be glad to have a considered statement of your group's views on those aspects of the problem of low incomes with which your group is primarily concerned. When they and the officials concerned have had an opportunity to examine this, the Chief Secretary, who is in charge of the study, will probably want to discuss it with some members of your group". (90)

In March Lynes had written to the Minister of Housing, Anthony Greenwood, to suggest that his Department consider sponsoring a joint CPAG-Departmental Study Group on the take-up of rate rebates among low wage-earners with families, though nothing appears to have come of this. (91) On the fourth of that month, he also had a further meeting with Judith Hart, Minister of Social Security, on the vexed issue of prescription charges though, again, he was unsuccessful.

Juxtaposed, this series of meetings and incidents may have created an impression that the group was acquiring a growing influence upon Government. Yet, if CPAG's important but temporary success on clawback is isolated, we are left with Grant's assessment of interest groups that....."The crucial distinction is between those groups which are invited by Central Government Departments to submit their views on topics relevant to their concerns and those which are at best tolerated to the extent that they are allowed to send occasional deputations to the relevant departments". (92)

The Review of Public Expenditure 1968

Against the backdrop of other events taking place in 1968 much of this consultation can be viewed as cosmetic - a palliative to distract from the coming storm. If the origins of the 1970 rupture in CPAG-Labour Party relations lie other than in the debacle which surrounded the resignation of

90. D. E. J. Dowler, Principal Secretary at the Treasury to Tony Lynes 18th April 1968. This reply concluded a short correspondence on the subject of NIT between Lynes and R. T. Armstrong, Private Secretary to the Chancellor (18th March 1968) and with Roy Jenkins, Chancellor of the Exchequer (9th April 1968)
91. Tony Lynes to Anthony Greenwood, Minister of Housing and Local Government 4th March 1968.
92. Grant p. 3

Peggy Herbison then Spring 1968 is the period in question. Paul Foot has written that Harold Wilson knew, beforehand, in the wake of devaluation and pressure from employers, workers and foreign governments alike that 1968 would be the year of harsh economic cutbacks.

He notes....."By January 1968 he was sufficiently cleansed of reformist sentiment to agree with Jenkins, unequivocally, that what was good for the balance of payments was good for Labour". (93) It is interesting to add, by contrast, that only three years later Anthony Crosland was arguing that the party's preoccupation with economic growth and stabilising the balance of payments as prerequisites of increased social services expenditure had stultified party 'thinking' throughout the period 1964 to 1970. (94)

In December 1967 Wilson and Jenkins had reached agreement that major reductions would be required in Defence and overseas expenditure and, more significantly, in the....."planned growth of social expenditure". (95) This meant that as pressure on social services accelerated in accordance with projected demographic changes the provision of resources and facilities would remain relatively static and, in some areas, would be actually reduced. At a cabinet meeting on the 4th January the Chancellor and Prime Minister introduced their package of cuts and, as Wilson noted, the political implications were far reaching.....

....."It was a major exercise in restraining the growth of public expenditure. The task of getting it through cabinet without sensational resignations was the most formidable task I had attempted in over 3 years of Government. My greatest asset was the firmness and determination of the Chancellor in the presentation of his balanced package."(96)

93. Foot op cit p.194
 94. Crosland, A. A Social Democratic Britain Fabian Tract no. 404
 95. Wilson p. 608
 96. ibid

In the event, only one minister did resign, Lord Longford over deferment of the raising of the school leaving age. By Monday 15th January the package had gone through. In an extraordinary statement to the Commons on the Tuesday Wilson, taking over responsibility from his Chancellor, announced reductions in the existing expenditure programme of £325 millions in 1968-9 and £441 millions in 1969-70. (97)

Turning his attention to Social Security the Prime Minister stated that in the year 1967-8 total expenditure was £2,909 millions (48% above 1963-4) and by 1968-9 it would be £3,106 millions and then £3,216 millions in 1969-70. He asserted. "There were no cuts. Indeed, our pledge to shelter the least well-off families against the effect of post-devaluation price increases was to be honoured by a second increase in family allowances, and a further increase in the next reconsideration of supplementary benefits". (98)

However, there are two important points to consider here. The first is that, given inflation and the highly marginal nature of the family allowance increases the position of the poor with large families hardly altered. Secondly, even a scheme as limited as this in its provision of cash aid could not have been achieved had not CPAG, Peggy Herbison and a small group of parliamentary supporters waged a long campaign to win the Chancellor's support for the 'clawback' principle. Consequently Mr. Wilson was able to announce that.

. "to match the higher family allowances the Chancellor would recover the value of the increase from the better-off by corresponding reductions in child allowances under income tax - the so-called 'clawback' principle which had been advocated by many concerned with child poverty". (99)

97. ibid pp 612-13

98. ibid p. 613 and Abel-Smith, 'Public Expenditure on the Social Services' op cit pp 12-20 and pp 47-8

99. Wilson p. 614 and Poverty No. 6 Spring 1968 pp 13-14

Additionally, Labour's package of cuts must have raised questions regarding the future pattern of public expenditure and income in Britain - Taking Defence cuts as an example, Wilson announced that by 1972 the Defence Budget, in real terms, would be £350 millions less than originally planned. The key question CPAG now sought to raise, of course, was just how the "savings" would be spent.....

....."Will it be used to reduce the so-called 'burden' of taxation? or will it be to increase the amount spent on Social Services and Welfare benefits? The question is a long-term one, but an important one. To use the money saved on defence to reduce taxation will inevitably increase income differences and widen the gap between the poorest and the remainder of the community". (100)

What was now needed, argued CPAG, was a long-term economic plan in which the new opportunities created by the defence cuts would be used for the pursuit of social justice. This would be the....."real test of the Government's system of priorities". (101) It was Labour's failure to respond satisfactorily to this challenge that marked a rethink in CPAG's relationship with the party. By Spring 1968, the Labour Government had re-introduced prescription charges (and where free prescriptions could be obtained CPAG claimed publicity was poor); (102) it had introduced the lowest possible increase in family allowances politically 'acceptable'; public expenditure had been savagely cut and, despite Harold Wilson's promises to the contrary, Michael Stewart had warned Lynes in February that the cabinet could not give any assurance that the poor could be shielded from the effects of devaluation by the 'special measures' Wilson had talked of. (103)

100. Poverty No. 6 p. 2

101. Ibid

102. Lynes had written to Kenneth Robinson, Minister of Health, in January 1968 when the re-introduction of charges was announced, complaining about the lack of publicity. The Minister replied on the 6th February 1968 admitting the situation but he pledged to notify all health authorities, doctors, dentists, opticians, hospitals and some 850 voluntary organisations of the new measures.

103. Poverty No. 6 pp 13-15

The group's emphasis on the importance of taxation as an instrument for achieving greater social equality was particularly crucial. Kincaid has noted that the proportion of national resources directly controlled by public authorities is now so great that even apparently minor changes in the taxation structure, especially if they are made at the higher income levels, can have considerable effects upon the social distribution of income and wealth. The Labour Government had clear opportunities to do this since it had been raising the overall rate of taxation with quite remarkable speed since coming to office. In the period 1964-67, central and local government taxation rose from 36.2% of GNP to 41.5%. Thus, argued Kincaid, the state had been drawing in extra spending power of approximately £600 millions per year.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ The implications of this to groups like CPAG were clear.....

....."Had tax increases of this magnitude been made primarily at the expense of wealthier groups in society, their impact upon the pattern of social class inequality would have been substantial. Yet nothing of the sort had occurred. Rather, it has been those social groups, mainly manual workers, with incomes at or below, the average national wage level, who have borne the brunt of Labour's fiscal attack on living standards".⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

This was the situation brought about by labour policies by mid-1968. By November, Tony Lynes had become sufficiently disillusioned both with the Government's record and the Group's impact to tender his resignation. It is to this event, a considerable watershed in CPAG's development that we now turn in the next chapter.

104. Kincaid op cit p.21

105. ibid - see also Economic Trends HMSO February 1969 p. xxx

CHAPTER 4

Transition

The departure of Tony Lynes from CPAG was to have important consequences for the Group's future lobbying style and its role as a pressure-group for the poor. His view that it was now....."time
(1)
for the Group to move in new directions"..... confirms that Lynes himself recognised the need for these changes. The necessity for change derived principally from the growing credibility gap between Lynes style of direction and pressures for CPAG to develop its role and activities further. The Group's Vice-Chairman, Walter Birmingham, wrote to Lynes....."My first reaction was to think that we might as well fold up CPAG. It has taken so much of its form and activity from your genius and I can't imagine anyone else being able to do what you are doing". (2)

Birmingham confirms that Lynes' approach to politics and administration was highly individualistic. Lynes was perhaps fortunate, initially, in the relatively free access he enjoyed to a number of ministers and officials, many of them former friends or colleagues, who had come to occupy influential positions in the Social Services. (3) Certainly in the early years of the Group their sympathy with its aims gave impetus to Lynes' attempts to enliven the 'poverty debate'. What they did not do, or could not do, and perhaps Lynes understood this more clearly than most, was to sustain the issue at department or Cabinet level. (4)

1. Tony Lynes to Walter Birmingham 5th November 1968.
2. Birmingham to Lynes 11th November 1968.
3. For example, Kenneth Robinson, Minister of Health, Peggy Herbison, Minister of Pensions and then Social Security, where Lynes worked for a year; Douglas Houghton, who had introduced him to Government. Richard Titmuss, his mentor, became Deputy at the Supplementary Benefits Commission.
4. See Banting op cit. p. 74-76 and p. 106

At no point either, from the Group's inception to Lynes departure, had poverty, and the alleviation of it through increased family allowances, become a major party political issue. Certainly, a number of sympathetic MPs and journalists and one or two ministers had championed the increases from time to time, but CPAG failed to develop child poverty as an issue which would attract strong public support and provoke coherent and sustained administrative action. ⁽⁵⁾ This might seem all the more depressing in the context of Butler and Stokes 1964 findings that 77% of their electoral sample favoured more Government expenditure on pensions and the Social Services. ⁽⁶⁾ Superficially, such findings may have suggested that the public mood would be responsive to the educative campaigns of 'public interest' groups like CPAG and that it would be unwise of such groups to overlook this avenue of political influence. Ultimately, however, groups with limited resources are more likely to be guided in their approach to the general public by MacFarlane's view that....."For many people an issue is an issue because it deeply and immediately affects them."⁽⁷⁾

Additionally, CPAG may have been constrained at this time by the close relations between senior figures in the Group and members of the Labour Government and party. Unlike his successor, Frank Field, Tony Lynes largely eschewed a dramatic, mass-publicity-oriented approach to poverty, preferring, instead, to remain low key and selective. This style may well have been influenced by group-party relations. As Heckscher notes.....
 "If a given pressure group is acting through a political party, public relations activities will be moderate since, otherwise, the group would get little sympathy from an opposing political party."⁽⁸⁾ Similarly, one of the

5. Banting notes....."The relative importance of the issue was settled on strictly political criteria; sensitivity among political elites ensured some action, but the lack of broad electoral support foreclosed the chance of major reform". p.106
6. Butler, D. and Stokes, D. Political Change in Britain: Forces Shaping Electoral Choice Penguin 1971 Table 15.5 p. 417
7. MacFarlane op cit p. 4
8. See Ehrmann, H. Interest Groups on Four Continents University of Pittsburgh Press 1967 p. 247

reasons why Field resorted to a 'dramatisation' of poverty after the Group's 1970 critique of Labour's record in office may be that....."if the pressure group is operating outside of a party, it will give increased attention to its public relations". (9)

Field, himself, has said that the two principal tactics in CPAG's strategy have been regular attempts to raise issues through the use of questions and debate on the floor of the Commons and keeping the press constantly interested in the poverty issue....."By operating both these options..... it is possible to create an impression of a groundswell in favour of a particular reform. With civil servants groomed, and politicians forced, to be conciliatory and to move in line with public opinion, both tactics play an essential part in a reformist group's campaign". (10)

However, Field's use of the term "public opinion" is rather misleading and is equated wrongly with 'CPAG opinion'. Clearly, during Lynes' period of office, CPAG had undertaken an important and valuable educative role in the dissemination of information on poverty, but it had not directed its campaign towards the general public nor had it really attempted to translate its findings into a form and vernacular easily understood by the general reader. (11) Instead, it was upon the 'informed public' - MPs, academics and civil servants - that CPAG's efforts were concentrated. (12) While this

9. ibid
10. Bull op cit p.150
11. See Moodie, G. C. and Studdert-Kennedy, G. Opinions, Publics and Pressure Groups George Allen & Unwin 1970 p.110
12. Tony Lynes has made it clear, however, that his small-scale operation was not designed or equipped to engage in this sort of grandiose approach. CPAG was very much a one-man research operation whose key tactic was to disseminate information to and make demands upon a selective group of decision-makers and opinion leaders. In many ways this was the outcome of Lynes own personal style and expertise and CPAG's collective belief in the willingness and ability of their colleagues in the Government to take seriously their stated socialist commitment.
Interview with Tony Lynes 31st May 1979

group may well have been receptive to the 'rediscovery of poverty' in the late fifties it was rather optimistic to expect a similar attentiveness in the mid-sixties when economic issues and prices and incomes policy hogged the political stage. (13)

Any "groundswell" that had been achieved then was exaggerated, perhaps impressionistic, and confined to a body of opinion leaders whose sympathies and interests lay in policy-areas which now appear to have been antipathetic to increased expenditure on the social services. It could be argued, therefore, that CPAG had too narrowly committed itself to sections of the Government and party for whom poverty was a peripheral issue of diminishing interest. Furthermore, in confining the debate in this way, the Group largely set aside the prospect of rank and file involvement in the issue from both the trade union movement and the poor themselves. (14)

It should be noted, however, that the range of issues on which CPAG fought in this period and the selective style adopted by Tony Lynes to politicise them are consistent with the limited resources possessed by the Group. Both Lynes and Peter Townsend consider that a mass-educational/political campaign directed at the general public was neither logistically or financially possible at this time. Townsend described Lynes as a person "who felt he should concentrate his energies and resources on those issues where change was likeliest" (15) and cites Lynes' success

13. For a discussion of 'crowded' political agendas, and how Governments may resolve the immobilism that can arise from them see Gustaffson and Richardson 'Concepts of Rationality and the Policy Process'. European Journal of Political Research No. 7 1979 p. 415-36 and Richardson and Jordan op cit Chapter 4
14. Lynes commented. . . . "CPAG has tended to concentrate its influence on a small section of the community which is knowledgeable, socially conscious and influential. Convincing this group can produce rapid action but the gains are small and precarious without a much broader body of public pressure". Memorandum to the Executive Committee
15. Interview with Peter Townsend 18th December 1979.

in persuading the SBC to rethink its 'wage-stop' ruling as an example of this.

Of Lynes' broader impact, Townsend comments....."I think he did achieve quite a lot and he gained, certainly, a respect among his adversaries within the departments. But I think it is also true that he could distil the essence of a case, a broad case.....he was able to summarise very well some of the major documents of information that came out at the time, such as the Ministry of Social Security's Report on The Circumstances of Families. So that quite apart from operating on specific events or policy announcements that the Government was making he also provided a large amount of public ammunition in the form of political education..... ways in which Government reports were transformed into short-hand accounts of what was wrong with the social structure". (16)

While Townsend accepts that Lynes' approach to 'education' was selective he makes it clear that the Group was, after all, filling a vacuum left by the inertia of both the Government and the trade union movement and gives some explanation for the Group's lack of liaison with the unions....."I think the purpose, as I see it, of the Group was all along, fundamentally, to change the climate of political education and do the job which the Labour Party and the trade union movement was not doing on behalf of this rising number and proportion in the population of the dependent poor". (17) Ultimately, Lynes and his colleagues saw the selective employment of their resources upon a small group of opinion leaders as, potentially, the most effective short-term means of raising poverty to the status of a major political issue on which

16. ibid

17. ibid

action would then be forthcoming. (18)

Politicising an Issue

It is useful to draw some broader comparison between poverty and other 'social' issues against this backdrop of politicisation. Anthony Downs has suggested that issues invariably progress through a series of stages which takes them from relative obscurity to banner headlines and thence to obscurity again. This he refers to as an issue-attention cycle. (19) It begins in the 'pre-problem stage', that is, when some highly undesirable social condition exists but has not, as yet, captured significant public attention.

His analysis has a striking application to the issue of child poverty and its progress in the period discussed above. He notes....."Many specialised experts or interest groups may already be alarmed about the issue. But somehow they have not succeeded in dramatising it or otherwise bringing it to the centre of the stage of public attention". (20)

From this initial, "pre-problem stage" an issue might progress, as child poverty appears to have done in 1965-66 to stage two; that of "Alarmed

18. Many small promotional groups find the costs of mass propaganda prohibitive. An obvious and infinitely cheaper alternative, therefore, is to concentrate educational/informational output upon small groups of opinionleaders and hope that ideas, opinion and discussion will gradually percolate downwards to the general public. CPAG was thus following a path worn by many other groups before it. Smokeless Air, the journal of the National Smoke Abatement Society, noted in 1957 that to get something effective done about pollution....."may well require the constant pressure of informed public opinion which can be secured not by costly mass propaganda, but rather by continued education and stimulation of the leaders of public opinion and those who will develop and administer the measures to be taken". Sanderson, J. B. 'The National Smoke Abatement Society and the Clean Air Act (1956)' in Kimber, R. and Richardson, J. J. Campaigning for the Environment Routledge & Kegan Paul 1974 p. 29
19. Downs, A. 'The Political Economy of Improving our Environment' in Downs, Kneese, Ogden and Perloff The Political Economy of Environmental Control Berkely 1972
20. ibid p. 64

Discovery and Euphoric Enthusiasm". At this point, usually as a result of a dramatic series of events, the public suddenly becomes aware of and alarmed about the evils of a particular problem. In the case of child poverty it could be argued that the publication of The Poor and the Poorest, the subsequent media campaign and the formation of CPAG were the catalytic factors in the activation of public awareness. This alarmed discovery on the part of the public (evidently not those affected by the problem) is accompanied Downs claims, by a "euphoric enthusiasm about society's ability to 'solve this problem' or 'do something effective' within a relatively short time period". (21)

It was perhaps more appropriate in the case of child poverty in the mid-sixties not to feel enthusiastic about society's ability to solve the problem but, rather to feel optimistic that the new, 'reformist' Labour Government might be able to 'do something effective'. Drawing broadly on Downs analysis of American expectations of their own propensity for reform the belief emerges that. "every such obstacle can be eliminated and every problem solved without any fundamental reordering of society itself, if only we devote sufficient effort to it". (22)

Of course where such a belief, or example of blind optimism, is at fault is in its serious failure to recognise that society as such, or those who have come to dominate it, may well lack the will to eliminate such 'problems' for a variety of reasons not the least of which is that in doing so they may well weaken their own social and economic advantage and undermine a process of socialisation that accords them considerable status and deference.

What Downs loosely terms the "democratisation of privilege and opportunity"

21. ibid
22. ibid

will invariably jeopardise the social, economic and, ultimately, the political status of those who have historically presided over, or prospered in, a system of social and economic injustice. Some groups may thus have a vested interest in ensuring that others remain deprived in one sense or another, and they may be expected to either oppose or refrain from supporting the 'economic liberation' of the poor. (23)

Peter Self notes that the "ultimate rationale" of a democracy lies in the equity of its rules and norms for reaching public decisions, rather than in the actual content of those decisions. In practice, however, he says, the acceptability of rules and norms will depend upon concrete results and the individual may find it difficult to accept the degree of satisfaction he receives. (24) What Self seems to be supporting then is that even if privilege and opportunity were 'democratised' in the Downsian sense there is no guarantee that the 'newly enfranchised' will be any better off. This introduces a classic dilemma of pluralism; i. e. that the individual or the group may acquire the opportunity to 'enter the system' (which in itself may justify pluralism) but they may lack the skills and resources to fully exploit that opportunity (which may not justify it).

23. A useful example of this 'give and take' approach is illustrated in comments made in The Sunday Times 5th February 1967 regarding the political repercussions which would ensue by democratising privilege. "Government opinion is now moving in favour of a straight increase in Family Allowances. One major reason for this is the fear of political repercussions among middle-class and professional families who have been expressing strong resentment at the prospect of losing tax reliefs to benefit a minority of large families".
24. He notes. "when most people had relatively low political-economic expectations, and accepted a considerable degree of hierarchy and inequality to be inevitable, political institutions attracted less criticism. With rising individual expectations, claims and assertions, the same institutions have come under increasing attack - even if, as is possibly the case, the system has become more democratic in a procedural sense". Self, P. Econocrats and the Policy Process MacMillan 1975 p.120

Self makes this dilemma abundantly clear....."It is not clear that an increase of political pluralism, for example, of the number of organised groups or agencies that can influence decisions, will of itself improve the 'transmission belt' function of democracy. This is not only because the groups in question may be relatively wealthy or privileged.....but also because more specialised 'wants' may be achieved in this way at the expense of more generalised wants.....so that while the whole system may be gaining in terms of the number and variety of shared wants that are effectively articulated, and also in terms of the total quantum of political participation, the net effect could still be adverse upon the total sum of want-satisfactions....."(25)

The basic tenet of a pluralist society in a state of economic stagnation, as in the mid-sixties, is that the cake from which we all expect a slice is not growing and, in relative terms, given rising expectations, may well be shrinking. If deprived publics are to be allocated 'extra' resources in the form of increased public expenditure then the resources allocated to the more prosperous sections of the community must be reduced to finance that redistribution. The remaining alternatives are that 'redistribution' takes place between deprived groups.⁽²⁶⁾ or, the option favoured by the incrementalist and those with a 'social conscience', resources are 'held back' temporarily with the promise of an increased bounty when the economic miracle, for which that restraint is vital, is finally worked.

The situation outlined above bears strong resemblance to events between

25. *ibid* p. 121

26. Ralph Miliband has commented that....."An often-quoted remark of Harold Wilson's was that 'the Labour Movement is a crusade or it is nothing'. But the crusade which the Prime Minister was about to launch was directed (1966) at the men and women who had given him his electoral victory". Miliband, R. Parliamentary Socialism - Merlin 2nd Edition 1973 p. 360

1964-69. When Tony Lynes and, later, Frank Field went cap in hand to Government asking respectively that middle-class tax incentives and child tax allowances be reduced and that tax relief on mortgages be abolished so that extra resources would be won back to finance increased cash aid to large families they were also making a strong political attack upon middle-class privilege. (27) It is the supreme paradox of politics that vested interest and privilege can only be abolished by those among the privileged and powerful with the will to do so. Rarely does that will manifest itself beyond the concession of short-term palliatives. (28)

Downs takes up this point in stage three of his own model, that of "Realising the Cost of Significant Progress". A realisation gradually dawns first upon the interest groups in the field and then later upon the general public that the cost of eliminating the problem in question is extremely high indeed. In an analysis that has relevance far beyond his own limited case-study of American environmental politics he notes....."Really moving

27. Wilson himself noted the intense pressure upon government to resist this sort of demand and proceed with tax concessions promised in the early days of his administration. He comments thus on Callaghan's pre-Budget speech of March 1st 1966....."Although in July 1965 we had had to announce, amid jibes and accusations of broken pledges, that we should have to defer our promised help to owner-occupiers, he said that in the Budget proper he would introduce the mortgage option scheme..... The calculations were such that any householder paying less than the standard rate of income tax would benefit by taking the option". Wilson p. 281 and pp. 170-72
28. Miliband has charged that it has been the nature of the Labour Party leadership in the post-war era to be neither socialist or even 'reformist' socialist'....."such reforms as these leaders may support do not form part of any kind of coherent strategy designed, in however long a perspective, to achieve the socialist transformation of British society..... The 'revisionism' which dominates their thinking does not represent an alternative but an adaptation to capitalism..... They are bourgeois politicians with, at best, a certain bias towards social reform. They have no intention whatsoever of adopting, let alone carrying out, policies which would begin in earnest the process of socialist transformation in Britain. On the contrary, they must be expected to resist with the utmost determination all attempts to foist such policies upon them". Miliband op cit p. 373

toward a solution of the problem would not only take a great deal of money but would also require major sacrifices of power, energy and institutional advantage by large groups in the population who now enjoy these benefits. The public thus begins to realise that the evil itself results in part from arrangements that are providing significant benefits to someone - often to a great many people". (29)

The result is that effective improvements in the welfare of groups like the poor, the homeless and the unemployed can often only come about by an unpopular 'transfer' of resources or by rapid economic growth. Successive governments since the late 1950s have failed to achieve the latter and other groups have been generally too well organised to submit to a transfer of resources that would leave them relatively worse off against those like the poor and unemployed. Ultimately, as Goldthorpe notes, the 'cost of significant progress' must be measured against the power and advantage of those who must bear it. (30)

By the time an issue has reached stage four of the Downs model it is subject to a "gradual decline of intense public interest" largely resulting from the growing realisation of the size of the problem and the likely cost and energy required to alleviate or eliminate it. Three broad categories of reaction are evident at this point. Some people are likely to become

29. Downs pp 64-65

30. Goldthorpe, T. 'Political Consensus, Social Inequality and Pay Policy' New Society 10th January 1974. He notes....."Social inequality in all its manifestations can be thought of as involving differences in social power and advantage; power being defined as the capacity to mobilise resources (human and non-human) to bring about a desired state of affairs and advantage as the possession of or control over, whatever in society is valued and scarce. Power and advantage are thus closely related. Power can be used to secure advantage, while certain advantages constitute the resources that are used in the exercise of power".

thoroughly discouraged by the immensity of the problem and will experience a feeling of political debilitation. Here, we may assume that two types of response are possible. On the one hand the indigenous poor, usually unorganised and unstructured in the political sense, will experience resignation, despair and reinforced alienation as yet another periodic attempt to liberate them fails. On the other hand, the optimism, faith and deference of the organised poor and middle-class client groups in and towards procedural norms and values are likely to be put to a severe test which may result in a subsequent rejection of the legitimacy and inclusiveness of those norms and values and which may force them towards extremes of apathy or direct action.

A second broad response may be that of those who actually feel threatened by the dramatisation of the issue. The possible reactions of better-off and better-organised sections of the community have already been noted. A more vociferous and entrenched reaction, however, may come from that stratum of society immediately above the popularly defined poverty line. (31) To a significant extent their own limited social status and dignity is assured only so long as others are confined to a socio-economic position perceived by them as inferior.

When "democratisation of privilege and opportunity" does take place its most significant effects will be confined to the two lowest strata -those below, and those on or immediately above the poverty line. The latter is therefore predisposed to oppose change that will make it relatively worse off vis a vis its economic (and social) subordinates. Indeed this opposition to change may be actively encouraged by a value-laden media and political system which feeds its ignorance and prejudice and which serves to deflect

and distort the reality of resource allocation, fiscal policy and public expenditure. (32)

Instead of perceiving and questioning the very real social and economic gaps between itself and those publics which benefit from the status quo this poverty-line stratum is systemically encouraged, socialised, to view its 'subordinates' (and they it) as its principal, unreal, economic reference point. The outcome, as Goldthorpe points out, is that....."The disruptive potential that social inequality might be thought to hold remains in fact suppressed. (33) Social conflict, criticism of the prevailing economic order and active challenge of the political process are thus conveniently confined to intra-working class manifestations of disillusionment and alienation such as ethnic discrimination and 'scroungerphobia'.

The final group in this stage of the model are those who simply become bored and disenchanted by the constant attention given to the issue and who passively await the arrival of a new issue at stage two. It is likely that this group will include ministers, MPs, civil servants and those among the ranks of the academic and journalism fraternities, together with what could be termed the middle-class 'do-gooder', who hop in dilettante manner between 'fashionable' issues as the attraction takes them and just as flippantly desert them, largely unresolved.

The ultimate stage into which an issue passes, and comes finally to rest, is the "post-problem stage"....."A prolonged limbo - a twilight world of lesser attention or spasmodic recurrences of interest". (34) By this time the issue has largely faded from political view and public memory and is

32. See Golding, P. and Middleton, S. 'Why is the Press so Obsessed with Welfare Scroungers'? New Society 26th October 1978.
33. Goldthorpe op cit and Runciman, W.G. Relative Deprivation and Social Justice Routledge and Kegan Paul 1966 pp 285-95
34. Downs p. 65

unlikely to resurface unless an important event, what has been referred to as a "homeostatic mechanism",⁽³⁵⁾ abruptly adjusts or upsets the issue status quo. It is contended here that the issue of child poverty was firmly suspended in this 'post-problem limbo' when the CPAG leadership changed and that a scheme for adjusting its political status was an urgent priority for the new Director. This notion of the homeostatic mechanism will be considered shortly.

Before doing so it is important to comment upon other developments which may or may not have been a direct product of the 'phased' attention child poverty received in these early years. Downs suggests that a common outcome of the political response to issues in the crucial attention stages is the appointment of working parties, study commissions or the creation of specific institutions to investigate and administer means of relief.

Clearly, this stems from a combination of public clamour for something to be done and the acumen of political parties which recognise that electoral kudos may be accrued if they produce a 'solution' or palliative, albeit temporary, that is substantive and easily perceived. Action must be seen to be taken.

In the USA, for example, during the early stages of the 'War on Poverty', the Government set up an Office of Economic Opportunity to initiate a number of new poverty programmes.⁽³⁶⁾ It was essentially an administrative solution to an intensely political problem and it has had only limited impact despite outliving the demise of the issue in the post-problem stage. Nevertheless, this sort of action does create a superficial impression of Government concern and activity and, most significantly, its interim nature helps buy

35. Salisbury, R. Interest Group Politics in America Harper and Row pp 35-36

36. James, E. America Against Poverty Routledge and Kegan Paul 1970 Chapters 7 and 8

time for an embattled administration. Resort to this technique may be particularly useful when Governments suffer mid-term unpopularity or when they are beset by economic difficulties which may only be of a temporary nature. In the latter situation governments might not even have to significantly increase public expenditure to capitalise a 'new' administrative agency they might simply choose to reshuffle existing portfolios and finalise this cosmetic exercise by awarding new, dynamic sounding titles to existing units.

The appointment of commissions, study groups and the calling of conferences on what are seen as urgent social problems can serve two useful purposes. It both creates the impression that Government is actively pursuing solutions to the problem and enables it to remove a thorny issue from the glare of the political spotlight into the 'wings' where the protracted investigations of working parties effectively 'kill' or depoliticise the issue. As Richardson and Jordan note....."The setting up of a committee can thus effectively remove an item from the political agenda for several years - by which time other, seemingly important, issues will be under consideration, thus preventing the 'old item' from returning".⁽³⁷⁾ It is interesting to note, for example, that by late 1967 the prospect for a substantial increase in family support may well have receded because issues like devaluation, reductions in public expenditure, the introduction of prescription charges and industrial relations 'reform' had come to the fore. Furthermore, the calling of conferences and the establishment of an apparent dialogue between government and interest groups affords the impression of public participation in the early stages of decision-making.⁽³⁸⁾

37. Richardson and Jordan p. 87.

38. See Arnstein, S. 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation' AIP Journal July 1969.

and the reshuffling of the Ministries of Health and Social Security into the superstructure of the new DHSS in 1968, together with the convocation at Lancaster House may have combined to create an impression of renewed Government concern with failing social policy. However, together with Douglas Houghtons' grandiose but ill-fated review of the Social Services, these ventures provided little in the way of new initiative. (39) In the absence of such initiatives or in an effort to provoke them, interest groups may be obliged to set up their own 'commissions', 'working-parties' and 'reports' in an effort to raise the status of an issue or to persuade Government that a similar but official line of action may be necessary. Indeed, in some cases interest groups may have, as their primary short-term aim, the setting up of such inquiries and the publication of investigative reports. (40)

39. Speaking at a 1968 Labour Party Conference 'fringe meeting', Peter Townsend had vocalised the growing disillusionment and dissatisfaction felt by many concerned with social reform, as a result of Labour's 'cosmetic' measures. "the really big questions which the Government has failed to answer satisfactorily involve the exposition of social objectives and their controlled realisation. The evidence raises doubts about whether the Government has the right objectives - or any clear sense of long term objectives at all. And the evidence shows it certainly has no consistent strategy The elimination of poverty among children demands planning of a kind which transcends the capacities of existing political machinery. What is required is a social planning department of Government that can begin to build on the faltering basis of the National Plan of 1965, the hospital plan of 1962 and the Community Care plans of 1963 and later years. This is a time above all for popular education and the Government must play a far bigger part than it has. Not only do we need to proclaim social objectives unambiguously but show we are fulfilling them by concerted planning. Even at this late hour some semblance of planning can take the place of pragmatic drift". Poverty No. 9 Winter 1968
40. Sanderson notes that. "Securing the establishment of a committee of inquiry of some kind at a crucial juncture is a fundamental part of attitude group tactics. Such groups are consulted much less frequently by Governments contemplating legislation than are sectional-spokesman groups; and the setting up of a committee of inquiry at the right time can well be the most important factor in the achievement of their aims". p. 43 op cit.

Use of the Downs model implies, of course, a subscription to the view that issues rise and fall in a cyclical manner, in much the same way that the pluralists have suggested that the apparent equilibrate nature of society obscures the phenomenon of groups periodically undergoing phases of ascendance and debilitation. ⁽⁴¹⁾ Accepting this premise then, it should be noted that the job of CPAG in keeping alive an issue is markedly different from that of the ephemeral 'ginger-group' formed simply to promote or oppose an issue and which folds once resolution or failure is imminent. ⁽⁴²⁾

Either way, the path of the 'ginger-group' is easier since it rides on the back of the issue until the fate of the issue is determined, then it disappears from view. ⁽⁴³⁾ It does not experience the morale and resource-sapping process of repeating issue-attention cycles so familiar to an 'ongoing' group like CPAG. The task of the permanent pressure-group in sustaining public and governmental interest in its issue is therefore that much more demanding and variable.

Ultimately, the nature of the issue itself must be considered. Poverty is, of course, a relative problem and therefore ongoing. The poor will always be with us in one form or another and the phenomenon of poverty will be experienced by a variety of groups in different ways - the distinctive experiences of the old aged, the unemployed, and the single parent with dependants are obvious examples here. 'Success' can thus never be total; indeed never more than ephemeral, for groups like CPAG. Theirs must be a strategy of erosion. The truly debilitating aspect of poverty, however, is that as one manifestation of it is removed or temporarily alleviated a new

41. Mackenzie, W. J. M. 'Pressure Groups: The Conceptual Framework' Political Studies. Vol. 3 No. 3 October 1955.
42. The brief trade union campaign, inspired by Jack Jones 1975-76 to bring about a rise in old age pensions is a case in point.
43. See, for example, Barr, J. 'The Amenity Protesters' New Society 1st August 1968.

manifestation is likely to develop or existing cases deteriorate as resources, energy and attention are shifted to aid the solution. Recognition of this fact was evident in Lynes' determination that CPAG should campaign around one key issue, the raising of family allowances. This was, and still is, the central, enduring issue on which CPAG has campaigned. However, it is not simply the nature of the issue itself which determines the propensity for success on the part of a campaigning group. Of considerable importance also is the manner and effectiveness with which the group itself campaigns.

Representativity and the Consultation Process.

Ordinarily, the type of 'behind closed doors' bargaining and exchange or dissemination of information advocated by Tony Lynes in this period, is characteristic of the style favoured by most interest groups seeking access to policymakers. Furthermore, it is the style clearly approved of by the policymakers themselves. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ To enjoy regular, and meaningful, consultation with Government Departments an interest group must usually be capable of fulfilling three requirements.

Primarily, it must exhibit representativeness of the 'public' it claims to lead; secondly, it is usually required to produce and exchange information and knowledge of issues/subjects in which the department concerned will expect it to have an expertise; finally, in the event of legislation, the group must be considered representative and responsible enough to guarantee the support, co-operation or non-interference of its members. ⁽⁴⁵⁾

44. Mackintosh, J. P. (PEP) 'Parliament and the Pressure Groups' in Stankiewicz, W. J. British Government in an Era of Reform. Collier MacMillan 1976 pp 154-77.
45. Failure to fulfil these 'requirements' may well injure the Group's chances of regular and meaningful consultation with Departments. See, for example, McCarthy, M. A. 'Organising the Independent Centre' Political Quarterly July-September 1978. pp. 293-303

From the Department's viewpoint there are also sound reasons for encouraging consultation. These include, as Richardson and Jordan note, a lack of confidence by civil servants in their own legitimacy to enforce a decision; a realisation that policy implementation is affected by the degree of co-operation forthcoming from interested groups; a recognition that such groups can provide valuable support and assistance in the formulation and execution of a policy; and, finally, a desire to maintain professional relations with the officers of relevant groups. (46)

While CPAG certainly demonstrated an impressive expertise in the field of poverty and was able to offer well-researched information on the subject that perhaps even the DHSS's own officials would have found difficult to produce, it was not a representative group of the poor nor was it in a position of authority or influence to control or guide the responses of the poor to government policy. This is a subject to which we will return later but it is appropriate to comment at this point that it is much easier for a government to ignore the claims of a group campaigning on behalf of a client public which is disadvantaged, inarticulate and politically illiterate and whose rationale is severely undermined by the perceived stigma of being poor, than to ignore those of a group representing the professions or an economic interest which have both social and economic influence and recourse to political sanctions! (47)

46. Richardson and Jordan p. 98

47. Mackintosh emphasises the significance of the growing and excessive interdependence of groups in the economy as a case in point. . . . "There is no need usually to break the law, all the group need do is make a refusal to perform certain taken-for-granted acts". p. 160

In a 'leader' on September 1st 1975 The Guardian commented specifically on the growing power of one of the two major economic interest groups, the TUC. . . . "In the past 18 months, the Government has deferred to the TUC to an unprecedented degree. Government by consent has come to mean specifically government with the consent of the TUC. . . . The TUC has never been more powerful as a lobby. What are essentially its bills have taken priority in the legislative programme of the Government. Impediments to collective bargaining are being swept from the statute book and the legal position of the unions has never been more favourable. . . . The power of the unions has increased ostensibly also in a longer term sense. Society as a whole in its technological interdependence becomes ever more vulnerable to the pressure of small groups".

This is hardly the sort of position of influence, however, that a cause group demanding increased public expenditure is ever likely to find itself in.

Walter Birmingham's letter to Lynes clearly indicates the monopoly of the group's work by one man. Perhaps, then, by the summer of 1968 the burden had become too great for a single, even highly dynamic, individual to carry. Lynes suggests that the key reason for his departure was that he himself was becoming increasingly out of step with the way CPAG was developing. The rapid growth of and demands made by local CPAG branches were not the sort of developments Lynes had envisaged, and he admits that he had no clear idea of what the role of a CPAG branch should be. (48)

He had taken on the CPAG post initially because it was essentially created for a single individual aided only by a typewriter and telephone. In its day to day role CPAG was essentially Tony Lynes; a one-man research and lobbying outfit with little or no anticipation of events arising that would radically alter that situation. Indeed, some CPAG members had initially viewed the group as a purely ephemeral 'ginger group' of the type mentioned earlier, set up simply to bring child poverty into the forefront of political debate and then, task achieved, to disband.

However, the scale of the administrative and political problems encountered, the absence of a broader and more powerful poverty lobby, the vagaries of party priorities and the awareness that CPAG could not continue in its early and familiar form, combined to persuade Lynes that the time was right for his departure. (49) The group's limited impact to date dictated the

48. Interview with Tony Lynes 31st May 1979.

49. Peter Townsend has given some insight into the scale and range of activities and related issues that CPAG, perhaps unexpectedly, found itself confronted with as a result of its campaign on Family Allowances. . . . "Increasingly it has been forced to deal with the whole complex of related issues - not just the scale of allowances as such but rent and rate rebates, prescription charges, maintenance allowances for divorced and separated wives, the quality and cost of school meals and so on. In particular we have become deeply immersed in the representation of human rights through Appeal Tribunals and in public discussion and the inability of bureaucracy to communicate to the people. We have tried to explain the practical reasons why the much discussed policies of selectivity are unlikely to work". Poverty No. 9 Winter 1968 p. 11

need for a new style and a more 'political' assault on child poverty than Tony Lynes felt able to give. Inevitably, if an individual assumes the greater responsibility for a group's work he is equally likely to assume the greater part of the praise or blame for the results. By the Summer of 1968 it was apparent that CPAG's influence upon the Labour Government had not been as great as the executive committee had hoped for. (50)

A thorough going and apparently irreversible revision of social priorities had taken place; the poor were now relatively worse off than in 1964. The Group's main 'ally', Peggy Herbison, had felt compelled to resign her office and a stringently 'economic' regime of ministers had come to dominate the Cabinet. Prescription charges had been reintroduced and cuts in social services expenditure had been effected; the group itself was acutely short of funds to finance future activities and the position was now aggravated by the need to extend rather than limit those activities. Ultimately, there was the sense of disillusionment and betrayal resulting from the Labour Government's rejection of its socialist commitment.

It is significant that, at an Executive Committee meeting called to discuss Lynes' resignation, Fred Philp remarked....."Although considerable success could be claimed at Government level, the initial interest in and awareness of the problem of poverty has now somewhat waned and little progress has been made in securing the sympathy and understanding of the

50. Miliband noted....."The years of the Labour Government might have been thought to provide an exceptionally favourable climate for pressure by reasoned persuasion, or even to require very little pressure at all; after all, some of the leading figures of CPAG had ready access to entirely sympathetic ministers. That they should not have been able to achieve more than they did suggests clearly enough that such endeavours are most unlikely, by themselves, to have more than a marginal impact". Miliband in Wedderburn op cit p.190.

public". (50)

In the light of this he asked the committee to consider the future programme of the group and the question of finding a successor to Lynes, commenting that....."The group should also explore the possibility of expanding its activities into the public relations field, in order to secure wider support from the general public". (52) A more appropriate job description for the appointment of Lynes' successor and a more accurate synopsis of Frank Field's role as Director could not have been made.

Before considering Field's appointment and the manner in which his style was to differ from that of Lynes, it is important to consider an issue which established an element of continuity between these events.

The Shelter 'Take-over'

Shortly after CPAG's inception, Des Wilson, the Director of Shelter - The Campaign for the Homeless, had been co-opted to the Executive largely, it seems, for two reasons. First, he could provide an extra dimension of expertise on a poverty-related issue, homelessness. Secondly, on an organisational level, his co-option would facilitate co-operation between the two groups where a joint-approach to policy might be desirable given CPAG's very limited resources; his presence on the Executive would also be useful in identifying any possibility of the duplication of resources and energy before those resources were committed.

51. Executive Minutes 15th November 1968 - Ralph Miliband concluded that the continuation of the false belief in 'affluence' well into the depressed sixties was a key factor in distorting the public view of poverty....."The very concept of the 'affluent society' and the emphasis that poverty was a matter of special cases, helped to exile the poor to the outer periphery of society, inadequate, often even perversely and deliberately inadequate".
52. Executive Minutes 15th November 1968

This relationship is not an uncommon one in interest group politics. Many environmental groups, particularly local amenity societies, deliberately co-opt individuals from each other's executives for precisely the same reasons cited above. The author has noted elsewhere that in many interest group executives there is....."a horizontal power structure which is considered both as a constituent of the normal executive decision-making process and also as an external limb designed to further the results of that process".⁽⁵³⁾ This might be termed an 'auxiliary power structure', based as it is upon the notion that co-options from other groups and agencies in the 'issue-area' in question facilitate the mobilisation of resources, personnel and expertise and, through sharing, reduce the possibility of waste through duplicity.⁽⁵⁴⁾

By November 1968 the state of CPAGs resources and the natural assumption that its failure to make a major impact upon Government was somehow linked to the poverty of the organisation (in every sense of the term) had produced support within the group for a much more structured relationship with Shelter.

53. McCarthy, M. A. The Politics of Influence - An Analysis of the Methodology of an Environmental Pressure Group. Unpublished M. A. Thesis, University of Keele 1976.

54. Wilson was clearly convinced that Shelter would benefit from the proven ability of CPAG to communicate its arguments clearly and effectively. The ultimate failure of 'pay-off', he seems to have reasoned, was the outcome of limited resources and organisational strength on CPAG's part. Evidently, he felt, Shelter could alleviate this problem and simultaneously enhance its own influence. He commented in Spring 1968 that....."Militancy and the appeal to the middle-class conscience are not easily made compatible. Whilst Shelter has so far succeeded in walking the tightrope between what is and is not acceptable in the way of political and other pressure, it has not been able to hammer home a lot of its most strongly held views on many different aspects of housing policy, both national and local".
A new organisation then, combining the skills and resources of both groups, and free of the political constraints of charitable status would be able to tackle the inter-related problems of poverty and poor housing and homelessness on both tactical levels....."The constructive question to ask is what else can or should be done by other or new organisations to advance the ideal of a socially just society which we all share. The answer to that question may be the setting up of a non-charitable campaign that enables organisations like Shelter and CPAG to continue on their way - for their way produces its results - whilst picking up the more prickly issues that they cannot touch". Poverty No. 6 Spring 1968 p. 16

Following a special meeting of the executive on 15th November 1968 the group's chairman, Fred Philp, attempted to explain the growing support for closer links with Shelter.....

....."CPAG has tended to concentrate its influence on a small section of the community which is knowledgeable, socially conscious and influential - Ministers, Government Departments, Universities and social workers. Convincing this group can produce rapid action but the gains are small and precarious without a much broader body of public pressure. Ministers are now afraid that they have already taken praiseworthy action to meet a social problem (e. g. increasing family allowances) only to have it misunderstood and indeed opposed even by the mass of their own supporters". (55)

The Committee felt, therefore, that it must devote its attention to arousing, over a broad front, public awareness of family poverty and public support for measures to relieve it. In order to do this, and to boost its influence further, the group needed, said Philp.....

....."to produce by research the facts and well-documented policy statements which are needed by those who will be required to act in response to public opinion and by those who will undertake the propaganda and education which will create informed public opinion..... latterly we have tended not to fulfill this objective as well as we might because the attention of our expert but limited staff has been absorbed in administrative work concerned with the membership and local groups and with money-raising". (56)

It was Philp's conclusion that the group needed to expand its resources and activities and that a closer association with the relatively wealthy Shelter organisation could be the solution to the dilemma. Involvement with Shelter was not only attractive for economic reasons, it could be soundly justified for organisational, political and publicity reasons also. Shelter could offer CPAG both the resources and the experience it needed to undertake a mass public relations campaign based on sound research. A closer association also offered the possibility of eliminating, or at least reducing, duplications of effort and the opportunity to create a more integrated approach to poverty in all its forms. (57) As Philp went on to point out.....

....."We believe that CPAG and Shelter have the same aims. Although Shelter

has concentrated on housing and CPAG on poverty, both are essentially concerned to create public sympathy for families who are at a disadvantage in our society so that they may receive adequate housing, income, education and such care as will enable the children to develop their potentialities in a secure environment."(58)

An alternative did exist, but appears to have won little support from either Fred Philp or Walter Birmingham. This would have been for CPAG itself to embark upon a public relations and fund-raising campaign. To do so, argued Philp, would mean recruiting a public relations officer in a financial situation where, at the end of October 1968, CPAG had only £2,400. in hand with a forthcoming annual expenditure commitment of £6,000. At this moment in time he felt it unlikely that the group could receive further grants from the charitable trusts which had helped establish and finance the group in its first two years. The Shelter solution, therefore, was attractive, could be justified and, ultimately, was highly convenient. By early December Lynes, Philp and Wilson had reached a mutual agreement on the desirability of a formal amalgamation, subject to certain conditions.

The suggested terms of agreement reveal Lynes' firm determination to retain the identities of both groups within the superstructure of the amalgamated form. Shelter was to establish a policy group concerned with family poverty, which would simply comprise of the existing national executive of CPAG. Future members of this policy group were to be elected by members of Shelter, who would attach themselves to proposed local poverty action groups, not unlike CPAG's own branches. Indeed existing branches would be reconstituted as local Shelter groups concerned with family poverty.

As regards financing this venture Shelter was to underwrite the cost of providing a full-time executive secretary and secretariat for the 'policy

group' and this executive secretary would continue to produce and edit Poverty, likely to be retitled and enlarged and diversified in format to cover Shelter's interests in the field of policy. Again the cost was to be underwritten by Shelter. (59)

Inevitably, what began as a convenient informal arrangement for liaison and co-operation was rapidly transformed into a rather crude and transparent attempt at a take-over of one group by another. That it progressed this far was substantially due to the 'machinations' of Des Wilson and the 'poverty' of CPAG's own tiny organisation obliged to compete in an arena where it was regularly outflanked by those with superior organisation and resources. Wilsons' offer of a possible solution to this problem, however, obscured the fact that Shelter itself had reached an impasse and was clearly in need of a new direction to bolster its now flagging public impact. The offer, therefore, met demands for expediency on both sides.

However, it also succeeded in producing a crisis of identity within CPAG and a split between Lynes, Philp and Birmingham, who were in support of it, and Peter Townsend and Audrey Harvey, who led a faction strongly opposed to it. (60) Indeed, the fact that Wilson's proposals did not progress beyond a blueprint was largely due to a rearguard action on the part of Townsend and Harvey who perceived a swift end to the group's identity and autonomy once the superior resources and experience of the Shelter organisation came into play. This resistance is revealed in Lynes's own assessment of the Wilson scheme, to which he, of course, was a willing party.....

....."I think perhaps he did want something like an amalgamation or, if you like a 'take-over'. Obviously because Shelter was so much bigger than CPAG the CPAG people would have inevitably have viewed it as a take-over and that is probably why it never happened". (61)

Immediately after its rejection Tony Lynes departed and Frank Field was

59. Des Wilson to Tony Lynes 9th January 1969.

60. Interview with Peter Townsend 1st December 1979.

61. Interview with Tony Lynes 31st May 1979.

appointed as his successor to the new post of Director of CPAG.

Publicity, Propaganda and Politics - A New Strategy

Frank Field's appointment as Director⁽⁶²⁾ is not so much important for a change in leadership but, rather, for a change in the style of leadership. Where Lynes had been essentially the secretary of an interest group in the orthodox sense of performing both political and administrative tasks, Field's role as Director was to remain very firmly in the realm of the former with the more mundane functions of administration and fund-raising delegated to a larger secretarial and support staff.⁽⁶³⁾ The distinction is important, for both Field himself and the executive committee in general were agreed on the need for a new, more aggressive role for the group.

As if taking a lead from Fred Philips remarks on the need for more publicity Field commented in his first Directors Report. "I would like the Executive Committee to consider as a matter of urgency ways in which the group can affect the public's attitude to poverty. The ignorance of the problem and hostility to poorer sections of the community is one of the counteracting

62. Field took over as Director of CPAG on February 6th 1969. Aged 26, he was the Deputy Head of General Studies at Hammersmith College of Further Education: he had four years experience as a local councillor in Hounslow and was unsuccessful Labour Candidate for South Bucks. in the 1966 General Election. Both Field's appointment and the creation of a Legal Department for the Group were financed by a Grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.
63. Alastair Service, Chairman of the Family Planning Association and a parliamentary lobbyist of some standing, having been a key figure in gaining parliamentary support for the Abortion, Divorce, Vasectomy and Public Lending Rights Bills of the last 12 years, has commented on this that. "when you look around now at NCCL and at CPAG, for example, you will see that not only have they got people able to talk to senior civil servants on their own level, but people with the particular thrust of mind to actually want to do that, whereas I think before if you looked at similar appointments in the early sixties you would have seen more administrative appointments, committees were looking for administrative capabilities and ability to serve the committee rather than a thrusting force for that particular pressure group." Interview 29th October 1976.

pressures against the group's views being more willingly accepted by Government". (64)

This task of elivening the poverty debate and dispelling popular misconceptions about the poor was an uphill one. The group's task was not simply one of education; in some ways this was the most straightforward obstacle to be overcome. Much more difficult was the task of exposing prejudice and bias, of eroding entrenched opinion built upon ignorance and misconception, and of effectively tackling the systemic discrimination against the poor. Nor was it enough to attract sympathy for the group's aims, it was important to translate this into active, structured support capable of provoking Government action.

Thus, in this context, Ralph Miliband writes that. "It is proper to be moved by television programmes on slum dwellers, or on the old or deprived children. On the other hand, such emotions do not, in practice, have much concrete consequence. More important, there are also strong contrary emotions at work. Thus there is a widespread suspicion, which affects all classes, that many people in poverty 'have only themselves to blame'; and there is a corresponding resentment that such people should be 'getting something for nothing'. Both the suspicion and the resentment are naturally much encouraged by official denunciation of 'scroungers' and 'layabouts'; and while such denunciations may be qualified by the suggestion that they only apply to small numbers of people, it may be summarised that it is the denunciation rather than the qualification that makes the impact". (65)

One of the new Director's early ideas to combat 'popular misconception' was a proposal to set up a 'Publicity sub-Committee' consisting of two executive

64. Director's Report 21st March 1969

65. Wedderburn p.188

committee members and sympathetic individuals working in T.V., radio and the press, whose function would be to advise him how information from the group and from sympathetic academics would best be publicised and what form this should take. (66) A formally constituted sub-committee does not appear to have progressed beyond the drawing-board but Field himself became particularly active in the propaganda/publicity field over the next year contributing to discussions on poverty on a variety of media outlets including Help Magazine, 'Womans Hour', a number of BBC documentaries and a Thames Television series called 'Can I Help You?'

Field has clearly found the media a sympathetic clearing-house for the group's views and cites, in particular, the usefulness of television in communicating those views to what he calls "middle-ground England". (67) Programmes like Thames 'Good Afternoon' and BBC Radio's 'Jimmy Young Show' have been especially important in that they both attract a substantial following and provide a useful vehicle for the dissemination of the type of information and opinion that most people can absorb. (68) In this way Field's early publicity exploits stand in marked contrast to those of Lynes who, much less publicity-orientated, confined propaganda to highly selective targets within Government and the quality press.

66. Executive Minutes March 1969.

67. Interview with Frank Field 25th July 1977

68. *ibid* - Field claims that the 'Jimmy Young Show' is "immensely useful in that politicians give the show considerable attention and he recalls actually having been asked by Ministers which programmes are most useful for getting views across and has since noticed them relentlessly pursuing issues on Young's programme. He also notes that such programmes together with media coverage in general have been very important in persuading the Trade Unions that CPAG is the key voice in the field and, therefore, worth listening to. Such programmes, listened to surprisingly regularly by Ministers and Trade Union leaders, are important vehicles for getting issues across to them when they haven't the time or inclination to pick up and read the pamphlets of the Group.

Inexperienced in poverty affairs and in running an interest group of any type, Field can be considered fortunate in his sense of timing in joining the group. In retrospect he seems fortunate in having joined a group dissatisfied with its campaign impact and willing to entertain new ideas, a bolder strategy and the infusion of new blood. In attempting to explain this willingness it is useful once more to return to Grant's Insider - Outsider dichotomy. It could be argued, as will be shown in the next chapter, that between 1965-69 CPAG may have considered itself, and others may have also considered it, as something of an 'Insider Group' within the Labour party. Support for this view can be found by examining the degree of overlapping membership between group and party, the appointment of group members and sympathisers to policy advisory positions in the party both in the opposition years and, to a lesser extent, during the years of office, and in the election of a significant number of CPAG members, executive and rank and file, to the party's Social Policy Sub-Committee.

However, it is clear from the discussion in previous chapters that CPAG were not as influential within the Labour Government as they had been within the Labour Party. The unexpected announcement of Douglas Houghton's review of social services, the debacle over the delayed payment of a family allowance increase, the decline in public sympathy for the issue of poverty after 1966, and the emergence of new issues like devaluation, industrial relations and prices and incomes policy conspired to force poverty off the political agenda well before Tony Lynes finally resigned. The pressures for a change of strategy, which had been building up before Lynes departed, are in major part a reflection of these adverse changes in the group's environment. These, in turn, may prove the demand for change to be irresistible. As Wynn Grant notes.....

....."Pressures for a change of strategy may emanate from the leadership, the membership or from a new leadership responding to a change in the mood of the membership.....although the identification of the internal sources of pressure for change is of some importance, these internal pressures are often a reflection of some change in the group's external environment". (69)

Recognition of this fact was evident in Philp's own admission that the CPAG Committee. . . . "had to recognise that in some respects it had not achieved as much as it would have wished. . . ." and that there had been "no growth of public support for higher family allowances nor any general movement to press for improvements in the situation of families with low incomes". (70)

Certainly the Group's position was further exacerbated by the anomalous fashion in which family allowance increases were implemented as part of the clawback scheme in 1968, producing little in the way of benefit and much in the way of public backlash, especially among middle income groups. As Grant concludes. . . . "a decline in public sympathy (or among some section of the public) for the groups objectives. . . ." is often a key factor in persuading group leaders to adopt new strategies.ⁿ⁽⁷¹⁾ The willingness of the CPAG executive to appoint an unproven figure like Frank Field as Tony Lynes successor laid the foundation for such a 'new strategy'. (72) Much of that new strategy was to focus on public relations and a broadening of the group's 'educational' activities.

Field was neither a protégé of the Titmuss-Townsend 'circle' at the LSE to which Lynes had belonged nor was he a familiar figure on the contemporary

70. Memorandum 30.11.68.

71. Grant p. 7

72. It is often crucial to the success of a new and perhaps untried 'leader' that his ideas, tactics and general strategy are given a fair hearing and do not meet with too much resistance from activists long associated with the group. Ultimately they have the power to both undermine and withdraw the 'power' of a full-time official. It is important for both sides to acknowledge the fact and meet half-way. As MacIver notes. . . . "social power is in the last resort derivative, not inherent in the groups or individuals who direct, control or were other groups or individuals. The power a man has is the power he disposes; it is not intrinsically his own. He cannot command unless another obeys. He cannot control unless the social organisation invests him with the apparatus of control". MacIver, R. The Web of Government MacMillan 1947 pp 107-8

social policy scene. Ironically, he was perhaps 'fortunate' in arriving at CPAG without the range of close connections and acquaintances that Tony Lynes had enjoyed within the Labour Government - connections which, in retrospect, may well have constrained his adoption of a more aggressively critical stance against the growing revisionism in Labour's social policy after 1964. ⁽⁷³⁾ In this sense, Field was not as sympathetic towards the party's apologists as Lynes might have at times appeared to be. He had never been a member of the party's social policy sub-committee; he had never been part of the tight caucus of academics who had contributed to the formulation of party policy in the years of opposition; he was also much less subscripitive to the Fabian brand of gradualism ⁽⁷⁴⁾ favoured by Lynes and leading members of the CPAG Executive. Arriving at CPAG as an 'outsider' he was perhaps better placed to offer insights and observations about the impasse at which CPAG found itself in 1969 than those already involved. ⁽⁷⁵⁾

Ultimately, he was fortunate in that shortly after his arrival the Chairmanship of CPAG also changed hands, with Fred Philp handing over to Peter Townsend.

73. Field has commented. "Tony Lynes knew lots of Cabinet Ministers on a personal level, I didn't want to know them on a personal level. . . . my first job here was to build up expertise and that is what has happened, I was perhaps the last person in the country to go about saying nice things about Harold Wilson". Interview 25th May 1977.
74. A useful analysis by Fabians, of Fabian approaches to pressure group politics. the dissemination of ideas and the 'permeation' of institutions - can be found in Cole, G.D.H. and Postgate, R. The Common People - University Paperbacks 1961 esp. p. 423
75. Field notes, for example, that CPAG's relationship with the Labour Party and the latter's concern for the poor were not what they should have been. "I had this myth in my mind about what the Labour Party stood for and its passionate concern for the poor and then one was eliciting what was actually happening. . . . and it was from this conflict that was born 'the poor get poorer under Labour campaign and certainly whilst I was here building up information I did not want to become friends with them on a personal level, and certainly I resist efforts to become personally involved with Ministers, even my friends who are Ministers. When I write to them in their formal capacity or see them I address them as 'Minister' or 'Secretary of State' not as Michael, Tom, Harry etc." Interview 25th May 1977

Their 'partnership' in forging a new style and role for CPAG, a determined switch from the defensive to the offensive, was crucial not only to the group's regeneration but to its survival in the political arena. Nowhere is this watershed in the group's political development more sharply demonstrated than in the 'Poor Get Poorer Under Labour' Campaign, initiated by Field and strongly supported by Townsend, during the run-up to the 1970 General Election. (76)

Given that the relationship between an interest group's Secretary/Director (i. e. full-time official) and Chairman is usually the one most crucial to both the successful running of the group and the outcome of the internal decision-making process, it is imperative that either their views are in harmony (especially when the organisation must move in new directions) or that progress results from the type of constructive conflict that public administrators refer to as 'creative tension'. (77) It may be useful, in the circumstances described above, that when change does occur it is not confined to one or other of these posts.

An incoming official, faced with the situation of having to work closely with a Chairman, no matter how enlightened, who presided over the career of his predecessor may well encounter some resistance to his ideas, to his

76. See 'Under Labour, the Poor get Poorer' "Insight" The Sunday Times 22nd March 1970.

77. Truman has concluded that the relationships within the active minority who control an interest group and the relationships between that active minority and the rest of the group are crucial not only to the group's success but to its continued existence. "Preservation and strengthening of the group's cohesion become the prime objectives of the active minority, for without cohesion the group becomes ineffective, and without a measure of effectiveness either the leadership must change or the group must cease to exist". Truman, D. The Governmental Process 2nd Edition Alfred Knopf New York 1971 p. 188.

Indeed, it may be argued that Tony Lynes had, in a broad sense, perceived the inevitability of these alternatives in 1968/69 and had decided that he, rather than the group itself, would bring about a change in leadership.

style of doing things, often being gently instructed and reminded that the previous official never did this or that or saw the need to challenge his Chairman. Such a situation might be particularly 'pointed' if the official is a relatively unproven individual obliged to work with an experienced Chairman. In the same way that an 'iron law of oligarchy' applies in most interest groups in the 'pre-selection' of new members to executive committees to ensure balance and socialisation in the 'articles of faith,' the procedural norms and values by which the group conducts its activities, the relationship between Chairman and full-time official may be seen as archetypal. (78)

A 'sitting' Chairman is, then, well placed to socialise his new officer and influence his style of direction or administration.

If an interest group requires a change of direction and if some change of personnel is desirable or necessary, then change must take place in as many of the key positions within the group as is possible without threatening the morale or stability of that group. (79) To generalise from this, a situation might be contemplated where the posts of Chairman, Secretary and two Executive posts (usually out of an executive numbering 10-12 individuals) change hands, thus ensuring an infusion of new blood whilst retaining stability in the broader sense in that the Executive, traditionally a repository for expertise, knowledge and experience and an active force for continuity, remains unthreatened by the minimal change imposed by the influx of 2-3 new members.

This was precisely the situation which occurred at CPAG between February and July 1969 with the posts of Director and Chairman changing hands and an

78. *ibid* pp 139-55 and Chapters 6 and 7

79. See Verba, S. 'Organisational Membership and Democratic Consensus' *Journal of Politics* Vol 27 Aug 1965. pp 467-97 and Hindell, K. and Sims, M. 'How the Abortion Lobby worked' in Kimber, R. and Richardson J. J. (eds) Pressure Groups in Britain. Dent & Co. 1974.

influx of three new members to the Executive Committee taking place. Field, however, was doubly fortunate in that while Townsend took over from Philp as Chairman, the latter remained on the Executive as an invaluable source of advice and knowledge to the inexperienced new Director. Peter Townsend and Harriet Wilson, a founding member, also played broadly similar advisory roles, providing the necessary expertise and experience to which Field could defer when in difficulty. (80)

However, Townsend played a unique role in establishing the identity of the new Director not simply within the group but, crucially, with those with whom Field had to deal on behalf of the group. Field comments.....

"because I was unknown it was immensely important to be able to use his name in gaining credibility for what I did and this is the major debt that I owe and the group owes Peter Townsend". (81) Townsend, himself, confirms this relationship describing Field as "an inspired appointment" and.....
 ..."somebody who could apply energy and intellectual skills" (82) but who, like anyone else coming to such a post 'cold', as it were, required time and guidance in acquiring expertise and a personal style. It fell to Townsend to give that time and guidance. Indeed, when Field fell ill shortly after his appointment Townsend spent three months of his own sabbatical year running CPAG from his post at the University of Essex. (83)

Like Tony Lynes, Peter Townsend was a member of the Labour Party's

80. As Truman has said....."It should be noted.....that the leader need not always initiate all actions involving members of the group. In fact, the most successful leader responds in private to the actions of individuals who are among his followers in the group - that is, he 'takes advice' from individuals but 'gives orders' to the group". p.189 Field was thus able in his early days at CPAG to benefit from the supportive roles played by Townsend, Philp and Wilson and to utilise their experience and judgement in 'legitimising' his control of the group.

81. Interview with Frank Field 22nd February 1979.

82. Interview with Peter Townsend 18th December 1979.

83. *ibid*

Social Policy Sub-Committee, he had participated in the drawing up of New Frontiers of Social Security when the party was in opposition and was a member of that tight caucus of academics who were closely interwoven and identified with the upper echelons of the Labour Government. Field was therefore able to utilise the contacts shared by both his Chairman and predecessor without having to feel constrained by too close an association with the party's 'old boy network'. He was therefore able to build upon foundations laid by Lynes, to exploit some of the latter's more productive channels of influence and yet, significantly, remain free to criticise and abandon those channels of influence when they failed him.

Sustaining the Family Allowance Campaign

Like Lynes, Field was to invest most of CPAG's energy in promoting a rise in family allowances that would be sufficient to ensure that those with large families would not be penalised economically for the number of children they had. Assessing both the work of his predecessor and his own early months of office, Field has commented that the groups main strength lay in....."the agreement of its members to campaign around one key issue. From early 1967, the executive committee decided that an increase in Family Allowances was the only immediate and effective way of relieving family poverty". (84)

In his final months of office even Lynes' patience had worn thin with the Labour Government. He had complained bitterly about the marginal family allowance increases awarded in 1968....."It was the boast of the Labour Party at the 1966 General Election that, despite the economic crisis of the previous 18 months the Labour Government had not jettisoned the 'central objectives of its policy'. The first of those objectives was 'to ensure that

even in times of economic crisis those in need should be helped by the State'. . . . The second objective was. . . . 'to establish a clear system of priorities in public expenditure'. . . . to date not a single measure to protect the poorest families, those living below the supplementary benefit level, has been taken, while the Social Service cuts announced in January have inevitably added to their hardships". (85)

In the Summer of 1968 Lynes had complained to Judith Hart, Minister of Social Security, that after the increase in Family Allowances in April of that year CPAG had been deluged with evidence that most families on Supplementary Benefit were no better off. His argument had been straightforward. Higher Family Allowances did not improve the position of Supplementary Benefit claimants as their total income is determined by the SB scale and unless that scale was raised in line with the increase in Family Allowances they found that what they had gained was immediately taken away again by the Supplementary Benefits Commission. (86)

Lynes' charge that the Government was hitting the poorest very hard through retention of this anomaly was met with particularly fierce resistance from Hart who countered that. . . . "it is quite wrong and misleading to suggest that the government has not fulfilled its pledge to protect the most vulnerable from price changes resulting from devaluation. In Autumn both Supplementary Benefit rates and Family Allowances are to be increased so that both Families depending on Supplementary Benefit and others with low incomes will receive the help the Government has promised. . . . I cannot accept that there is any case for advancing the Autumn increase in Supplementary Benefit rates". (87)

86. Poverty No. 7 Summer 1968

87. ibid

" In the Autumn the group had launched another tirade, this time directed at the paucity of government efforts to advertise and inform people of their rights to benefits. At the party's annual conference in 1968 Peter Townsend had attempted to expose what he saw as the failure of Labour's programme...

....."Parties which are committed to greater equality often modify their principles in office. Vested interests are difficult to dislodge. Those with power and status have unsuspected resilience. Apologists of Labour's record in power would cut better figures if they could demonstrate that the Government was pursuing coherent objectives and, despite slow progress, had acted on crucial occasions in conformity with these objectives. The record on immigration and colour has been disastrous and that on unemployment almost as bad. Little or no serious attempt has been made to redistribute wealth. And the war on poverty has been weak and unco-ordinated. After devaluation the Government promised to protect the poor, but announced measures which left many of them worse off". (88)

In perhaps his most determined critique of policy to date Townsend went on to claim that not only was the Labour Government reneging on its commitments to the poor but it was hoping, with some cynicism, that its 'allies' within the voluntary movement would step into the breach and pick up where it had left off. This, he felt, was neither acceptable or remotely realistic in tackling effectively the massive social welfare problems confronting Britain in the late sixties....."We all agree that voluntary bodies can only exert pressure and provide chapter and verse for the concerted political action that only government and related institutions can provide. What is lacking is a central definition of objectives and strategy to meet them. The need for these is not being met within the existing political framework and is being recognised and expressed outside it." (89)

In the Summer of 1969, in his first editorial in Poverty, Field announced that raising Family Allowances would remain CPAG's chief "political target". Commenting on the Governments 'Review of Public Expenditure' which had done further serious damage to the economic position of the poor he added

88. Poverty No. 9 Winter 1968

89. ibid

....."Against this background of a worsening financial position for low income groups, and of the large numbers just excluded by the statutory definition from the numbers of the poor, CPAG intends to campaign for an increase in the Family Allowance to 35 shillings for each child, including the first. This inclusion makes the reform much more expensive, the gross cost is £940 millions compared to £295 millions if the first child is excluded. However, the claw-back method cuts the £940 millions to £115 millions and the £295 millions to £40 millions. The move to enlarge family allowances and benefit the first child, then becomes financially possible and therefore politically possible". (90)

In the event Field miscalculated that possibility and was forced to reflect some time later....."Why, with such powerful allies, has the group not met with much greater success? Specifically, why was it that reforms costing only £40 million (the net cost of implementing the first stage of CPAGs January 1970 proposals) have met with such resistance?". (91)

The Question was then, what had gone wrong. Field, like Lynes, attributed the failure partly to the public confusion following the 1967-68 announcement of Family Allowance increases and the Government's acceptance of clawback only after part of the first increase had been paid to families. In addition it had also taken over 3 years, the duration of the review of Social Services, for the Government to announce any increase in the first place. A difficult situation was further exacerbated by Government restriction of incomes through its wage policy....."consequently, the reforms to help poor families were made at a time when those at work felt particularly aggrieved by other government actions which penalised their efforts to earn a decent wage". (92)

90. Poverty No. 11 Summer 1969
 91. Bull pp 150-51
 92. ibid

Field also laid a major share of the blame at the door of CPAG which, he argued. "did not lobby anywhere near hard enough for a campaign to explain what clawback was and why it was being brought into operation; nor did it convince the Government of the need for a massive educational campaign on the extent of family poverty, and the importance of increases in Family Allowances to any meaningful anti-poverty strategy. With the lack of a positive lead, the welfare hawks had found it easy to drag the increased allowances into the ever-widening work-shy-scrungers debate. (93) The result was catastrophic, the previous political antipathy to Family Allowances was doubly re-inforced". (94)

It was against this background of failure, hostility and their fundamental disillusionment with the Labour Government that CPAG entered the election year of 1970 obliged and prepared to devise a new strategy to galvanise Government action on poverty and, in doing so, to distance itself from the party which it genuinely believed took seriously its socialist commitment, because the party had clearly. "distanced itself from the poor". (95)

93. See 'Promoting the Welfare of Scroungers' by Meacher, M.
Poverty No. 15 1970
 94. ibid
 95. Interview with Frank Field 25th July 1977.

CHAPTER 5

' The Poor Get Poorer Under Labour' - CPAG-Labour Party Relations

It has been observed that. "Many groups have close traditional, empirical and even administrative links with parties, which will give them added leverage when policies relevant to their group interests are being considered. The reverse side of the coin is that this close association may militate against exercise of influence on the other party when it is in power." (1)

Furthermore, any additional influence upon party policy may come from the fact that. "Many party members at all levels of the party will also be members of groups, or will be sympathetic towards interests of various kinds". While, normally, party discipline and party loyalty will prevail in any conflict of interest for an MP, or a party official and probably for the rank and file of the party also, it may be supposed that. "such group interests will not be without influence. . . . (which). . . . may be exercised in debate, in polemics in party organs, in voting within party meetings and by lobbying in the party". (2)

It has also been concluded that. "the influence of organised groups is felt not only on but also in the political parties". (3) Overlapping membership between groups and political parties serves to exert an influence in both directions and generally re-inforce the attitudes, values and opinions of the individuals concerned. (4)

1. Roberts, G.K. Political Parties and Pressure Groups in Britain (Weidenfeld) 1970 p. 99
2. ibid
3. Potter, A. Organised Groups in British National Politics Greenwood Press Connecticut 1975 (Reprinted from Faber and Faber Edition 1961) p. 295
4. See Harrison, M. Trade Unions and the Labour Party Since 1945 Allen & Unwin 1960; Taylor, R. The Fifth Estate Pan 1980 ed. Ch. 4 and Simpson, W. Labour: The Unions and the Party

That some interest groups sustain interaction with one particular party, rather than negotiating across the political spectrum, is clear from recent political history. The business community is broadly identified with the Conservative Party. In recent years 'libertarian' or free enterprise groups like the National Association for Freedom, the Voice of the Independent Centre, the National Association of Ratepayers Action Groups. Aims for Freedom and Enterprise, The Economic League and the National Federation of the Self-Employed, ⁽⁵⁾ have all found considerable sympathy for their views in the party which clearly espouses the brand of economic philosophy of which they are familiar protagonists.

Perhaps the classic post-war cases of interest groups attempting to 'colonise' a single political party in favour of their cause are the Road Haulage Association's anti-nationalisation campaign ⁽⁶⁾ and, more recently, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament which was almost wholly conducted, in the sphere of party politics, via the internal machinery of the Labour Party. ⁽⁷⁾ In both cases, the respective philosophies and values of the parties were identified by those groups as highly amenable to their own cause. In 1951, for example, members of the RHA were....."urged to strain every effort towards securing a conservative victory. It is no exaggeration to say that in doing so they are fighting for their friends against their enemies". ⁽⁸⁾

Similarly, Peggy Duff has commented upon CND's strategy of working through the Labour Party and its annual conferences that....."certainly most of

5. See McCarthy, M. A. 'Organising the Independent Centre' Political Quarterly June/Sept 1978 and King, R. and Nugent, N. eds. Respectable Rebels Hodder and Stoughton 1979 Ch 3 and 7
6. Potter op cit pp 299-31
7. Parkin, F. Middle Class Radicalism: The Social Bases of the CND University of Manchester Press 1968 pp 110-24
8. The RoadWay Vol XVII No.10 October 1951 p. 8

those who established the campaign in 1958 aimed to achieve nuclear disarmament through the Labour Party.....Many of those who came out on the early marches, set up the local groups, served on regional committees and involved themselves in CND in many different ways, were the traditional old Labour left. These were the people who had supported Nye and the Bevanites in the early 50s, who had stormed down Whitehall on the Suez Demonstration of 1956. They were left-wing MPs, left members of local labour parties, trade union branches, left-wing co-operators". (9)

Bridget Pym has suggested that....."some soils are more receptive to reformist plants than others"⁽¹⁰⁾.....and it is clear in the early sixties and after it had taken office in 1964 that many promotional or cause groups had made their mark upon the Labour Party. Abortion law reform, criminal law reform and social reform were three important areas in which a flurry of interest group activity had been effective in persuading the party to provide parliamentary time for debate and, eventually, legislation, although the Abortion Bill was, of course, introduced by a Liberal member. (11)

The values a group holds will, of course, play a crucial part in determining which party the group will concentrate its efforts on. The values which underpin abortion law reform, the abolition of capital punishment, state aid for the poor and low paid have been traditionally viewed as consistent with the social, especially egalitarian, values of the 'collectivist' Labour Party. As Alan Potter has noted....."It is, for example, difficult for a 'left-wing' group to find a 'sound' Conservative. If it succeeds, his 'soundness' is liable to become suspect. In 1956 almost all the Labour MPs supported the

9. Duff, P. Left, Left, Left. Allison and Busby 1971 p. 184 and pp 185-2001
See also MacFarlane, L.J. Issues in British Politics Since 1945
Longman 1975 pp 105-13.
10. Pym, B. Pressure Groups and the Permissive Society p. 110
David and Charles 1974 p. 110
11. ibid see pp 69-81, 66-69 and 81-88 respectively.

Private Members Bill to abolish capital punishment. The great majority of Conservative MPs opposed it. Conservative constituency committees regarded abolition as a 'left-wing' cause and retention of capital punishment as an article of Conservative faith". (12)

It may be argued then that groups will align themselves or seek to work through those political parties with which they have a 'value empathy'. The belief, in particular, that the Labour Party is about 'equality' is a factor which, initially, attracts many cause groups concerned with social reform to work through or in support of the party. As Drucker points out such pressure groups....."expect more of a Labour Government. Thus, we see that both those who are in favour of more equality and those who are opposed to it expect Labour to defend and extend the laws and practices which are aimed at inducing it".....Labour is about equality in that it lives in a national political environment in which others expect it to be about equality." (13) Perhaps more significantly, as will be shown later, he adds that....."This expectation seems to transcend the lack of evidence that Labour has created a more equal Britain". (14)

We return, then, to the point made earlier that many interest groups have long-standing and often highly structured links with a particular party which may well enhance their influence within that party. The corollary to this relationship, of course, is that the group's freedom to negotiate with a rival political party may well be constrained by that relationship and, indeed, the rival party itself may be reluctant to consult freely with the group because of its apparent partisanship. Perhaps the most striking recent example of this is the TUC which, in 1971, strengthened and formalised its links with

12. Potter p. 304

13. Drucker, H. M. Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party. George Allen and Unwin 1979 pp 57-58

14. *ibid* p. 58

the Labour Party through the creation of the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee which presided, when Labour returned to power in 1974, over the formulation and implementation of the Social Contract. (15)

Clearly, however, on economic issues, partisanship may not only be desirable but obligatory in the sense that the values and principles upheld by an economic interest group may be unacceptable or even anathema to one of the main political parties. The interest group in question, therefore, will be compelled to work through the party most favourably disposed to its views; it would not, tactically or philosophically, be in a position to lobby across party lines. (16)

Promotional groups of the CPAG type, (and here we may include groups like Gingerbread, The National Council for One Parent Families, Disablement Income Group, Shelter and Mind) however, are much less constrained in their political affiliation despite the apparent coincidence of their values with those of the Labour Party. Alastair Service, Chairman of the Family Planning Association, has, for example, commented that while the Labour Party may appear to be more closely identified with 'social issues' than the Conservative Party, much depends upon the values, idealism and goodwill of individual MPs; each is in abundance in the House of Commons and may be readily exploited provided the lobbyist ensures a....."spirit of involvement.....a very important thing in parliamentary reform because

15. Taylor, R. The Fifth Estate Pan 1980 Ch. 4

16. An example here would be the Road Haulage Association during the reaction in the late forties and early fifties to Labour's nationalisation plans. The RHAs views were not simply rejected by the party but were regarded by many within it as anathema. Similar cases could be found with the 'sugar lobby' in 1951 and with Bristol Channel Ship Repairers in 1975 which worked almost wholly through the Conservative, Liberal and Nationalist parties to win support for its campaign to remove shiprepairing firms from the provisions of Labour's 'Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill'.

you've got no weapons, no pressure you can apply. . . . you have to make them feel that they are involved and tap the idealistic side that is almost always there in almost all politicians and is suppressed by ordinary parliamentary life". (17)

For most groups activities directed through or in support of a party will be simply one, and probably a secondary, channel of influence in the pursuit of their goals. Those seeking effective and sustained influence upon policy will more realistically direct the greater part of their effort towards Whitehall rather than Westminster. Liaison or association with a party may be a useful initial or preliminary tactic for a group, especially in propaganda/public relations terms. However, as Richardson observes, most groups must recognise fairly quickly that. "it is important. . . . to develop a close relationship with civil servants and local government officials as they are influential in the formulation of policy options. . . . for their political masters". (18)

Furthermore, there may well be danger in a group concentrating its efforts in the sphere of party politics. Alan Potter has thus concluded that. "promotional groups in close touch with Government Departments avoid party politics because their position depends far more than that of the spokesman groups on the value the Government attaches to their advice. Spokesman groups are consulted in their representative capacity. Other promotional groups avoid party politics, too, even if they have a close affinity for a particular party. Major channels of communication, such as broadcasting and schools, are closed or very constricted for anything that is regarded as party political. A group that aligns itself openly with one party not only loses

17. Interview with Alastair Service, Chairman FPA 29.10.79.
 18. Richardson, J. J. 'The Environmental Issue and the Public in Decision Making in Britain, Block V, Pollution and Environment' Open University Press Milton Keynes 1977 p. 29

what support it has in the other but also exposes itself to the charge of being a 'splinter' group in the first". (19)

This latter point, together with the recognition by many within CPAG that the group had not achieved all they had hoped for under a Labour Government, was crucial in Field's decision to distance the group from the party partly in the belief that the Labour Party had distanced itself from the poor. (20)

It would be erroneous, however, to view this decision (as some within the Labour Party appear to have done) as a product of pique or retaliation, nor should it be viewed as an entirely isolated 'one-off' gesture. The decision to become 'less-partisan' should be viewed as a constructive political tactic and the logical outcome of a rather unsuccessful over-identification with the party in the preceding years. Field was supported in this decision, as will be shown shortly, by Peter Townsend.

It could be argued with some justification that Field's initiative was rash and, perhaps, poorly judged. Certainly, in retrospect, it seems naive. However, the need for a new initiative, a change in policy and perhaps a fresh orientation for the group was broadly acknowledged by an executive whose patience with the Labour Government was by now exhausted. Accordingly, the decision to publish 'Poverty and the Labour Government' does not appear to have been a particularly contentious one within CPAG and Field, supported by Townsend, seems to have encountered little resistance in pushing it through.

Field has commented that it had always been his function as CPAG Director to obtain the 'best possible deal' for the poor and that, initially, he felt this could be done most effectively by lobbying across party lines, even at the risk of losing any previous goodwill held between the Labour Party and

19. Potter p. 305

20. Interview with Frank Field 25. 7. 77.

CPAG. Ultimately, of course, the decision to adopt a less partisan approach stems from a recognition that 'goodwill' is no substitute for effective action on issues by the party concerned and, of course, that 'your' party is no longer in office. Such a tactic inevitably involves risk in that a group may lose the goodwill of its former ally and fail to make a significant impression upon the outlook of a rival party. As Chapters 6 and 7 show, CPAG may be judged to have found themselves in precisely this situation between 1970-74. In his early, and inexperienced, months of office, however, Field clearly felt the risk was necessary and that it offered an opportunity for the group....."to look for areas of agreement between parties, rather than (it) becoming a Socialist tail". (21)

Allan Potter has suggested that the risk may appear, at the time of decision, to be exaggerated. He has noted that....."unless the party lines are already drawn firmly, a group can usually count on what may be called the 'tandem' effect. On most questions the parties are not likely to be far apart. This is a characteristic of the two party system. As long as a group does not make its cause a straight party matter, if it succeeds in moving one party, the other is likely to move too. Indeed, the parties may begin competing with each other in moving ahead."(22)

There was little evidence, however, that this new tactic could succeed where a closely partisan approach had failed. As Keith Banting has commented....."As a bi-partisan issue, poverty lacked the excitement of party warfare.....it was not a leading issue of the day". (23) Furthermore given the recent furore over clawback and raised family allowances there was even less evidence that the major parties could be manoeuvred into a

21. ibid
 22. Potter pp 305-06
 23. Banting p. 75

a situation where they would actually try to outdo each other in their determination 'to do something' about poverty. Indeed, such evidence as did exist firmly pointed to the contrary. By 1969 both parties were cautious of taking the initiative because of the debacle of 1968 and the much publicised opposition of working and middle-class income groups to further welfare expenditure. Accordingly, George Brown discovered during the 1970 General Election campaign that for many middle-class people.....
 .."the most unpopular thing the Labour Government ever did was to arrange to 'claw-back' family allowances from the better-off". (24)

It might be argued then that the decision to opt for a strong critique of Labour's record during the election campaign and the adoption of a less partisan approach was either ill-thought-out, naive or a 'clutching of straws'.

The Labour Party Social Policy Sub-Committee

Before considering the 'poor get poorer under Labour' theme it is appropriate that we should examine the nature and extent of CPAG's relationship with the Labour Party. It has already been established that this relationship is not a formal one and that it relies essentially upon the shared values, opinions and political outlook of Labour politicians and leading academics, themselves party members, who have come together under the umbrella of the party's social policy sub-committee. (25)

24. Brown, G. In My Way Gollancz 1971 p. 270. It should be noted, however, that the evidence of 'opposition' often seemed contrived and confused. In particular the media seems too easily to have mistaken opposition to the confused arrangements of 'clawback' for opposition to increased welfare expenditure in general. See New Society 12.10.67. pp 512-16 and 13.1.67. pp 93-4. See also The Guardian 23.3.66 and 1.2.67. and The Observer 16.10.66 and 4.12.66 and The Economist 3.12.66.
25. A sub-committee of the party's National Executive Committee and previously known as the Study Group on Social Affairs. It is composed of both NEC members and co-optees and numbers senior party figures leading academics and trade unionists among its ranks.

Members of the Committee are appointed as individual party members not as representatives or delegates of important groups in the social policy field. Though, clearly, on occasion, individuals from such groups do find their way on to the Committee. Efforts have, for example, been made to co-opt Frank Field to the Committee, largely it would seem on the instigation of Peter Townsend, in recognition of his experience and status as Director of CPAG. In keeping with his non-partisan policy Field has declined, arguing that this would be an inappropriate move unless other parties were to offer him similar representation. ⁽²⁶⁾ Ironically, the place 'allocated' for him eventually fell to his Assistant Director, Ruth Lister, who was appointed on a "purely individual basis."⁽²⁷⁾

Ruth Lister, herself, is sceptical of the Committee's power. Her own appointment, given that she has never been a party activist, more a "marginal member", suggests that membership is selective. ⁽²⁸⁾ She had hoped that her membership of the Committee would be an effective vehicle for influencing party policy but has since concluded that the work of the Committee tends generally to be "uninspiring and non-controversial". Real executive power rests with the Party's Research Department. The Social Policy Sub-Committee essentially assumes the role of 'brains trust'; a forum in which political realists trade interests and ideas with the 'planners' of the academic fraternity. ⁽²⁹⁾

26. Interview with Frank Field 25.7.77.
27. Interview with Ruth Lister, Assistant Director CPAG (and Field's successor from April 1979) 28.7.77.
28. *Ibid* - significantly, David Piachaud (Interview with Author 14.6.77) confirms that he too, arrived on the committee through what he terms "straightforward patronage". His membership was 'facilitated' by Brian Abel-Smith and Richard Crossman in 1971 and he has remained there ever since.
29. Significantly, both Lister and Nicholas Bosanquet identified Brian Abel-Smith as the key, influential figure on the committee.

A similar assessment is given by another CPAG member on the committee, Nicholas Bosanquet who, though arguing that it is....."heavily influenced by CPAG....." concludes that its real influence lies in.....
 "providing inputs for the real political in-fighters like Barbara Castle in the past and in its influence with members of the NEC". (30) Bosanquet views the committee as a valuable and influential forum in which ideas can be raised, "plugged" and steered onto the manifesto. Significantly, Bosanquet too, owes his place on the committee to an 'old-boy network' dating from the mid-fifties and numbering Abel-Smith, Townsend, Titmuss and Lynes among its ranks. (31) Bosanquet's assessment of CPAG influence within the committee is shared by Peter Townsend who agrees that there is evidence of a relatively strong and influential "caucus" or "ideas group" in the committee which draws its inspiration from CPAG. (32)

It is interesting, in this light, to examine the total complement of MPs, Ministers, academics and trade unionists who have served on this committee since the Labour Party returned to power in 1964. The following pages illustrate the full membership of the social policy sub-committee in any given year and show, overall, that between 1964 and 1976 some 87 individuals have served on it. Of these, some 21 members had formal or informal connections with the Child Poverty Action Group.

Anyone wishing to offer analysis of CPAG influence within the social policy sub-committee is presented with a considerable difficulty here and one worthy of a separate thesis. It is virtually impossible to rigorously and scientifically quantify the 'influence' of one group within another when members of the former are not officially regarded as its representatives or delegates when taking part in meetings of the latter. Any assessment of influence is

30. Interview with Nicholas Bosanquet 22.2.79.

31. *ibid*

32. Interview with Peter Townsend 18.12.79.

further impeded by the fact that CPAG members or supporters within the committee do not necessarily act as a cohesive caucus or body of opinion.

However, some general points can be made about the composition of the committee in these years. First of all, three broad membership types are apparent. These are Parliamentary members such as R. H. S. Crossman, Lena Jeger, Shirley Williams and Judith Hart. Secondly, there are academic members, many of whom were concurrently Ministerial policy advisers on social policy. These included Professors Richard Titmuss, Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend and, of course, Tony Lynes. The final group, one which Bosanquet has described as a counterbalance to academic influence within the committee, can be termed the trade union group. ⁽³³⁾ During the period in question this has included Len Murray, Ray Gunter, Bill Simpson and Peter Jacques - the latter being the head of the TUC's own Social Insurance Committee.

Both Townsend and Bosanquet have suggested that the relationship between the academic members of the Committee and the trade unionists has not always been an easy one. There had certainly been friction between the idealism and forward planning of the academic group led by Titmuss in the fifties and the pragmatism and 'real politik' of the trade union caucus. The tension which rose to the surface during the committee's work on Labour's plans for reform of National Superannuation in the late fifties led Crossman to conclude that there was....."a strange new alignment growing up in the party. On one side are the socialist intellectuals, who want to prepare blueprints.....and on the other side are the trade unionists, who are suspicious of this kind of socialist planning". ⁽³⁴⁾ A similar tension emerged

33. Bosanquet notes that....."Academic influence within the committee is more often than not balanced by that of the trade union element. The academics really provide inputs which are either taken up or shot down". Interview 22. 2. 79.

34. Banting p. 171

as will be shown in Chapter 9, during the child benefits campaign in the period 1975-77.

A second general observation to be made of the committee is that there is evidence of a strong continuity of membership. If the correlation between the election year 1964 and 1965, when only 7% of those sitting on the 1965 committee had served in 1964, is discounted it will be seen that continuity of membership exceeds 50% in all subsequent years except the election year period 1970-71. This observation will be discussed shortly, but to understand its full implications some additional factors must first be considered.

It was noted earlier that of the 87 individuals who served in the 1965-76 period 21 had formal or informal CPAG connections. The former may be identified as CPAG members or personnel. The latter, and larger, group could be broadly termed 'apparatchiks' - i. e. those who seek to advance the cause of a group, administrative or political, within a contiguous environment.⁽³⁵⁾ In its narrow sense the term apparatchik is more usually applied to an individual in the formal employ of a group, party or organisation. Here the term is applied to those who advance CPAG's viewpoint because they actually share that viewpoint. Obvious examples of both types here are those MPs who regularly agree to ask Parliamentary Questions and move Adjournment Debates on CPAG's behalf and those academics who, while not necessarily members of the group, contribute to CPAG literature and are sympathetic to its views in debate or party polemics.

This introduces a fourth general observation. The CPAG 'caucus' within the Committee may be further categorised occupationally i. e. those from the

35. Author's definition

academic profession and parliamentarians. During the period cited the academic element has included Professors Peter Townsend, Brian Abel-Smith David Donnison, Tony Atkinson and Richard Titmuss. Non-professorial sympathisers have included Nicholas Bosanquet, Tony Lynes and David Piachaud. Inevitably, support has varied between individuals so that, at various times, Titmuss, Abel-Smith and Piachaud have been more cautious and qualified in their support of CPAG than the others - an outcome which may be partly attributed to the constraints imposed by their tenure of advisory posts in Government. (36)

Indeed, many of the individuals listed above have been further linked by a common association with Government. Abel-Smith was Senior Policy Adviser to Richard Crossman at the DHSS 1968-70 and later Special Policy Adviser to David Ennals 1976-78. Donnison and Titmuss have respectively occupied the posts of Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission, the former sitting from 1975 to 1980 and the latter from 1968-73. All three men were close advisers to Richard Crossman when he was Secretary of State of Social Services. (37) Before becoming CPAG's first Secretary Tony Lynes had worked in an advisory capacity at the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance and in 1974 became a policy adviser to David Ennals at the DHSS working, incidentally, under Brian Abel-Smith. David Piachaud has been both a part-time and full-time members of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit since 1974 and despite his areas of disagreement

36. 'Under Labour the Poor Get Poorer' Sunday Times 22. 3. 70.

37. It is interesting to note that Donnison's acquaintance with Crossman appears to have begun when Richard Titmuss, a confidant of Crossman, suggested that Donnison would prove a useful advisor to the latter in his formulation of a Rent Bill. He was later, in 1969, to become Director of the Centre for Environmental Studies. Crossman, R. H. S. Diaries Vol I p. 24
Crossman also went on to refer to Titmuss and Abel-Smith as his "own brains trust". Diaries Vol III p. 139

with Frank Field⁽³⁸⁾ has regularly contributed to CPAG's journal Poverty and has co-authored with Field a series of major articles on the 'poverty trap'.⁽³⁹⁾ Nicholas Bosanquet has also been a contributor to Poverty,⁽⁴⁰⁾ is a CPAG member and was jointly responsible with Frank Field for a series of meetings in 1971-1972 between CPAG and Trade Union leaders to determine areas and issues on which the two could promote a joint-approach. Tony Atkinson has also been a contributor to Poverty and the CPAG's research pamphlets.⁽⁴¹⁾

The parliamentary element is made up of MPs who are, similarly, either members of the group or 'actively' sympathetic to it. The intensity of their commitment varies considerably. Strong support for the group over the years ranging from Parliamentary Questions, moving adjournment debates, writing on behalf of CPAG, assisting it with fundraising and so on has come from David Owen, Lena Jeger, Jack Ashley, Joan Lester, Bruce George, Bruce Douglas-Mann, Michael Meacher, Alf Morris, Renee Short, Peggy Herbison and Frank Allaun.

Owen, Jeger, Douglas-Mann, Meacher and George are all or have been, CPAG members. Meacher⁽⁴²⁾ and Jeger have been regular contributors to CPAG literature and along with these others have been leading activists within

38. He disagreed with both Field's 'Poor get Poorer' Campaign in 1970 which he felt had undermined the party's electoral advantage and, as a member of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit was embarrassed by Field's involvement in the controversial Child Benefits 'Leak' of 1976. Interview 14. 6. 77.
39. See Field, F. and Piachaud, D. 'The Poverty Trap' New Statesman 3.12.71. Field and Piachaud 'How to Bargain Away Poverty' Tribune 31.12.71. Piachaud, D. 'A Profile of Family Poverty' Poverty No.19 Summer 1971 and 'Fair Stages - The Effects of the Government's Pay Policy' Poverty No. 26 1973
40. See Bosanquet, N. 'Jobs and the Low Paid Worker' Poverty No.18 1971
41. See Atkinson, A. and Townsend, P. 'The Advantage of Universal Family Allowances' Poverty No.16/17
42. See Meacher, M. 'Promoting the Welfare of Scroungers' Poverty No.15 1970

a CPAG all-party group in the Commons. Bruce Douglas-Mann, in addition to being a CPAG member, was also the Group's legal adviser from the late sixties and throughout the early seventies.⁽⁴³⁾ In the same way that Owen was closely associated with Lynes, so Meacher has been a close Parliamentary ally of Field. Morris, Short, Lestor, Ashley and Allaun have all been notable members of the Common's CPAG 'group' and have all asked Parliamentary Questions on the group's behalf. Bruce George has been the most prominent member of this group in recent years, asking in the period July 1975 to July 1977 alone some 105 Parliamentary Questions, on behalf of CPAG. In this period Labour members asked 243 questions, Conservatives 119 and Liberals asked 82, of which 73 were asked by Richard Wainwright.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Peggy Herbison, apart from being a keen ministerial protagonist of many ideas associated with CPAG, the most prominent being 'clawback', also assisted Field in the early seventies in enlisting funds and support from the trade union movement for the group.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Despite CPAG's later critique of Labour's record in office there is some evidence of common ground between interest group and party. Though it is

43. Appointed in 1967, he had first mooted the idea of CPAG establishing a separate body to take over the non-charitable activities of CPAG. "since some of our more prominent activities are clearly not within the legal definition of charitable work". He advocated the creation of a Welfare Rights Office which in some sense came to fruition with the creation of the group's independent citizen Rights Office in 1969. - Executive Minutes 22.11.76.
44. Author's figures - a random survey of the period July 1975 to July 1977 revealed that some 447 Parliamentary Questions had been asked by MPs from all parties on CPAGs behalf. The breakdown was as follows: Labour (12 MPs) - 243 P. Q. s; Conservatives (5) - 119 P. Q. s; Liberals (3) 82 P. Q. s; Plaid Cymru (1) 3 P. Q. s
Prominent among the Questioners were:
Bruce George (Lab. Walsall South) - 105
Richard Wainwright (Lib. Colne Valley) - 73
Neil Kinnock (Lab Bedwelty) - 69
Lynda Chalker (Cons. Wallasey) - 62
Andrew Bennett (Lab Stockport) - 82
Peter Bottomley (Con. Greenwich & Woolwich West) - 43
Jo Richardson (Lab. Barking) - 27
Bryan Gould (Lab Southampton Test) - 21
45. February 1970 - discussed in full in Ch. 8

difficult to prove that CPAG directly influenced much of Labour's social policy, it is clear that the group, together with the support given by its parliamentary sympathisers and those within the social policy sub-committee, did, at the very least, help shape and contribute to a climate of debate which made much of that social policy possible. Whilst Labour Ministers might claim that they were, of their own volition, already moving in this policy direction or that, it is clear that CPAG helped to keep the poverty issue 'on the boil'. Indeed, it might be argued that much of the group's role was essentially defensive. Had it not existed to pursue a role as the party's 'social conscience' then the weakening of the government's resolve in the field of social policy might have been greater.

A number of points are salient here. To ensure that an influence upon policy is first achieved and then sustained it is not enough for an interest group to simply have sympathisers 'on the inside'. Kimber and Richardson note, for example, that a battery of factors ultimately influence the success or failure of interest groups seeking to influence or amend policy. These include 'advance intelligence', which we discuss in Chapters 9 and 10, liaison with policy-makers and administrators, the merits and demerits of the issue at stake, the ability of the group to argue its case reasonably and articulately, its access to parliamentary support, its relations with the media, the sufficiency of its resources and, ultimately, its ability to employ sanctions. (46)

These factors are discussed at various points in this study. It is appropriate at this point, however, to consider access to sympathisers in positions of influence.

It is imperative that such individuals obtain reasonable access to senior ministers. In doing so they keep ministers abreast of current developments

(and may take advantage of the opportunity to present their own group's interpretation of these events) and, secondly, they help to offset the dilution and modification to which their proposals would be subject if they were submitted at lower levels of the policymaking process. It is important, then, that the social policy sub-committee also has its fair share of senior Ministers or senior figures within the party to make membership worthwhile. Examination of the 1964 committee, for example, reveals the presence of Harold Wilson, George Brown, Richard Crossman, James Callaghan, Margaret Herbison and Douglas Houghton among the overall membership. Furthermore, examination of the changes in membership over the years shows that there has invariably been a Senior Ministerial 'presence' and a caucus from the social service ministries, as might be expected.

Finally, given that committee memberships invariably change it is important to note that any apparent CPAG 'influence' within the committee has not been effectively reduced by this change. It is appropriate, therefore, that we return to the points made earlier about continuity. Discounting 1964 because of the distortion upon the committee size and structure produced by the atypical events of a General Election, and taking 1965 as the base year, the following pattern of continuity between the years 1965-76 and some indication of apparent CPAG strength on the committee is revealed.

Apparent CPAG 'Support' on the Labour Party Social Policy Sub-Committee

Table 1

Years	<u>Continuity</u> (i. e. % of previous years membership recurring in a succeeding year)	<u>Changes in Apparent CPAG 'Support'</u>
1965-66	70% (carried over from 1964-65)	Lost - Lynes Gain - Abel-Smith, Townsend
1966-67	60%	Gain - Donnison, Jeger
1967-68	53%	Lost - Titmuss Gain - Herbison, Allaun
1968-69	100%	Lost - Herbison
1969-70	100%	No Changes
1970-71	27% (Electoral distortion)	Lost - Townsend Gain - Lynes, Piachaud, Titmuss, Lestor, Morris
1971-72	74%	Gain - Meacher, Townsend, Castle
1972-73	97%	Lost - Titmuss Gain - Bosanquet
1973-74	70%	Gain - Owen, Ashley
1974-75	55%	Gain - Lister, Atkinson, George, Short, Douglas-Mann
1975-76	98%	No Changes

Over the period in question 1964-76 some 24% of all committee members had some connection with CPAG based on the qualification of the terms 'formal' and 'informal' cited earlier. In 1969, in the fourth year of Tony Lynes office CPAG members and 'supporters' of the group represented a 'caucus' of 43% on the social policy sub-committee. Similarly, in 1973, the fourth full year of Frank Field's office, it was 38%. It should also be noted that despite their clear disagreement with CPAG's General Election tactics in 1970 (to be discussed shortly) Titmuss, Abel-Smith and Piachaud have still been included among those generally supportive of CPAG policy. Their disagreements have tended to centre more on means than upon ends. The individuals making up this 'caucus' have been termed supporters on the basis of either formal

membership of CPAG, as regular (supportive) contributors to its journal, those active in Parliament on its behalf and those who are independently identified with CPAG ideas/policy proposals.

Membership of the Labour Party's Social Policy Sub-Committee*1964-76

1964 - (Study Group on Social Security and Old Age)

Chairman R. H. S. Crossman (Chairman - Study Group on Social Security in Opposition. Minister for Housing and Local Government 1964-66. Secretary of State for Social Services 1966-68)

G. Brown (Deputy Prime Minister - Secretary of State at DEA 1964-66)

L. J. Callaghan (Chancellor of Exchequer 1964-67)

R. Gunter (Minister of Labour)

*M. Herbison (Minister of Pensions & National Insurance; Minister of Social Security)

J. Lee (Parl. Sec. - Ministry Public Buildings & Works)

D. McGarvey

F. Mulley (Junior Minister at Defence; Sec. State Social Services 1974-76)

H. R. Nicholas

H. Wilson (Prime Minister)

*Co-optees B. Abel-Smith (Prof. Social Admin LSE; Senior Policy Adviser DHSS 1968-70 and 76-78)

A. Duval

J. Griffiths (Sec. State for Wales)

D. Houghton (Chancellor Duchy of Lancaster - Overlord 'Review of Social Services' 1964-67)

D. Jay (President of Board of Trade)

*L. Jeger MP

*A. Lynes (Research Officer MPNI 1965 - Secretary CPAG 1966-69)

R. Prentice (Minister of State DES)

J. Prevet

G. W. Reynolds MP (Under Sec. of State Defence - Army)

W. Ross (Sec State for Scotland)

Dr. S. Sharman

Mrs. P. Stedman

*Professor R. Titmuss (Deputy Chairman SBC 1968-73)

*Professor P. Townsend (Chairman CPAG 1969-80)

L. Murray (TUC)

W. J. Skinner

L. T. Wright.

CPAG 'Support' - 22%

* Denotes CPAG 'Supporter'

1965 Membership

Chairman Jennie Lee MP (Parl Sec. Ministry of Public Buildings & Works)
 A. Bacon MP (Min. State Home Office)
 A. Skeffington MP (Parl. Sec. Land/Natural Resources)
 E. White MP (Under Sec. State Colonies)
 A. Blenkinsop MP (Vice Chairman Parl. Labour Party)
 D. Ginsburg MP
 J. Hart MP (Min. Social Security from June 1967 - Aug. 1968)
 D. Howell MP (Under Sec. State DES)
 *A. Lynes
 *R. Titmuss
 S. Williams MP (April 1966 became Min. Labour)

CPAG 'Support'
 1965 18%

1966 Membership

J. Lee MP
 A. Bacon MP
 W. Simpson (Gen. Sec FWU-Member NEC)
 E. White MP
 A. Blenkinsop MP
 D. Ginsburg MP
 J. Hart MP
 D. Howell MP
 P. Short MP (Jun. Min Technology 1966)
 *B. Abel-Smith
 *R. Titmuss
 *P. Townsend
 S. Williams MP

CPAG 'Support' 1966
 23%

- Denotes CPAG 'Supporter'

1968 Membership

W. Simpson
 *F. Allaun MP
 *M. Herbison MP
 N. Buchan MP
 B. Davies
 *Prof D. Donnison
 W. Hamling MP
 J. Hart MP
 *L. Jeger MP
 S. Petch
 Dr. D. Kew MP
 *B. Abel-Smith
 *P. Townsend
 *B. Whitaker MP
 S. Williams MP

CPAG 'Support' 1968
 47%

1967 Membership

W. Simpson
 J. Lee MP
 A. Bacon MP
 E. White MP
 A. Blenkinsop MP
 N. Buchan MP
 B. Davies
 *Prof. D. Donnison (Chairman SBC)
 D. Ginsburg MP
 *H. Glennerster (CPAG Member ,
 Writer on Social Policy)
 J. Hart MP
 *L. Jeger MP
 N. Pentland MP (Parl Sec MPNI)
 *B. Abel-Smith
 *R. Titmuss
 *P. Townsend
 S. Williams MP

CPAG 'Support' 1967
 32%

1969 Membership

W. Simpson
 *F. Allaun MP
 N. Buchan MP
 B. Davies
 *Prof. D. Donnison
 W. Hamling MP
 J. Hart MP
 *L. Jeger MP
 Dr. D. Kew MP
 S. Petch
 *B. Abel-Smith
 *P. Townsend
 *B. Whitaker MP
 S. Williams MP

CPAG 'Support' 1969
 43%

1970 Membership

W. Simpson (Chairman)
 * F. Allaun MP
 N. Buchan MP
 Dr. B. Davies
 * D. Donnison
 W. Hamling MP
 J. Hart MP
 * L. Jeger MP
 Dr. D. Kew
 S. Perch
 * B. Abel-Smith
 * P. Townsend
 B. Whitaker MP
 S. Williams MP

CPAG 'Support' 1970
 43%

1971 Membership

W. Simpson
 F. Chapple
 J. Diamond
 Dr. B. Davies
 * D. Donnison
 M. Rees MP
 J. Hart MP
 * L. Jeger MP
 R. H. S. Crossman MP
 D. Ennals (Jan 69 Min Soc Security)
 * B. Abel-Smith
 * R. Titmuss
 L. Pavitt MP
 S. Williams MP
 * A. Lynes
 * D. Piachaud (Contributor to CPAG
 Publications)
 Dr. A. Sheiham
 Dr. S. Summerskill
 Mrs. S. Wright
 * Joan Lestor MP
 * A. Morris
 B. O'Malley MP (Deputy Chief Whip
 & Under Sec Social Security
 Aug. 1969)

CPAG 'Support' 1971
 36%

1972 Membership

W. Simpson (Chairman Labour Party NEC)
 B. Castle MP
 J. Diamond MP
 B. DAVIES
 * D. Donnison
 * P. Townsend
 J. Hart MP
 * L. Jeger MP
 R. H. S. Crossman MP
 D. Ennals
 * B. Abel-Smith
 * R. Titmuss
 L. Pavitt MP
 S. Williams MP
 * A. Lynes
 * D. Piachaud (CPAG Member)
 A. Sheiham
 S. Summerskill MP
 S. Wright
 * J. Lestor MP
 * Alf Morris MP
 B. O'Malley MP
 Dr. A. Whitehead
 P. Jacques (Head TUC Social Ins. Com)
 J. Dunwoody
 * M. Meacher MP (CPAG Member)
 T. Driberg

CPAG 'Support' 1972
 35%

1973 Membership

B. Castle (Chairman)
 W. Simpson
 J. Diamond MP
 ** P. Townsend
 J. Hart MP
 * L. Jeger MP
 R. Crossman MP
 D. Ennals MP
 * B. Abel-Smith
 * N. Bosanquet (CPAG Member)
 L. Pavitt MP
 S. Williams MP
 * A. Lynes
 * D. Piachaud
 A. Sheiham
 S. Wright
 * J. Lestor MP
 * A. Morris MP
 B. O'Malley MP
 A. Whitehead
 P. Jacques
 J. Dunwoody
 * M. Meacher MP

CPAG 'Support' 1973
 38%

1974 Membership

*B. Castle MP (Sec. State Social Services 1974-76)
 J. Hart MP
 *L. Jeger MP
 W. Simpson
 S. Williams MP
 *B. Abel-Smith
 *J. Ashley MP
 J. Beacham
 *N. Bosanquet
 M. Cohen
 B. Davies
 J. Dunwoody MP
 D. Ennals MP
 V. Guttsman
 P. Jacques
 *A. Lynes
 *A. Morris MP
 *M. Meacher MP
 B. O'Malley MP (Junior Minister DHSS)
 *D. Owen MP (Junior Minister DHSS)
 L. Pavitt MP
 *D. Piachaud
 J. Silkin
 A. Sheiham
 *P. Townsend
 E. Arnot

CPAG 'Support' 1974
 40%

1975 Membership

*B. Castle MP (Chairman)
 T. Bradley MP
 *J. Ashley MP
 A. Bates MP
 A. Jones MP
 *P. Townsend
 *D. Owen MP (Member)
 *Prof. A. Atkinson
 M. Cohen
 D. Ennals MP
 *B. Abel-Smith
 *N. Bosanquet (Member)
 L. Pavitt MP
 B. Dix (NUPE)
 *A. Lynes
 *D. Piachaud (CPAG Member)
 V. Guttsman
 *R. Lister (Asst. Director CPAG)
 N. Grant
 A. Prime
 *Alf Morris MP
 B. O'Malley MP
 *B. George MP (Member)
 P. Jacques
 T. Dunwoody
 *M. Meacher MP (Member)
 *R. Short MP
 H. Hickling
 *B. Douglas-Mann MP (Member & CPAG
 Legal Advisor)

CPAG 'Support' 1975
 52%

1976 Membership

*B. Castle MP
 T. Bradley MP
 *J. Ashley MP
 A. Bates MP
 R. Sheldon MP
 *P. Townsend
 *D. Owen MP
 *Prof. A. Atkinson
 M. Cohen
 D. Ennals MP
 *B. Abel-Smith
 *N. Bosanquet
 L. Pavitt MP
 B. Dix
 *A. Lynes
 *D. Piachaud
 V. Guttsman
 *R. Lister
 N. Grant
 A. Prinzw
 *A. Morris MP
 B. O'Malley MP
 *B. George MP
 P. Jacques
 *M. Meacher MP
 R. Short MP
 H. Hickling
 *B. Douglas-Mann MP

CPAG 'Support' 1976
 55%

CPAG's relationship with the Labour Party has taken forms other than overlapping membership on the social policy sub-committee. Many CPAG members, workers and executive members have, over the years, been keen Labour activists and have worked indirectly on CPAG's behalf at constituency meetings and party conferences, presenting CPAG demands in the accepted constitutional framework of constituency resolutions. This is a favourite tactic for a group with overlapping party membership to adopt and it will be fully considered in the next chapter.

It is appropriate, however, to note the view of Jonathan Bradshaw, a member of CPAG's National Executive and Chairman of its York Branch, on the usefulness of such a tactic. Himself a Labour activist, Bradshaw has commented upon CPAG's influence at conference and within the social policy sub-committee as evidence that..... "we've colonised the policy-making parts of the Labour Party but never Government and Ministers". (48) He attributes the failure to make a sustained impression on the latter to the fact that most of the key ministers in CPAG's lifetime formed their opinions, and were most receptive to influence, long before CPAG evolved and those that CPAG has strongly influenced, such as Michael Meacher, are still working their way up the ranks.

He adds then..... "we haven't got leverage on these men and women, they were all there or thereabouts before CPAG was invented. Michael Meacher's generation of politicians grew up with us and are much closer to us". (49) Perhaps his most significant comment is that he makes upon the loyalties of those individuals who do hold overlapping membership of CPAG and are members of the Labour Party..... "Most of the people who work for CPAG and are members of the Labour Party work for CPAG first and the

48. Interview with Jonathan Bradshaw 2. 11. 78.

49. *ibid*

party second. I know I certainly do and if the Labour Party doesn't fulfill aspirations I hold of it then I look around for alternatives and would not hold back from criticising it". (50)

Poverty and Labour - The 'Poor Get Poorer' Approach

Bradshaw's latter comments are borne out in conversation with other CPAG members and staff. Many were genuinely buoyant at Field's decision to mount a concerted attack upon Labour's record. Many feel the criticism and distrust that was evoked was much deserved. The questions arise then how did the campaign come about and how did it develop against this backdrop of apparently close party-group relations. Field's comments about not wanting CPAG to become (or remain) a "socialist tail" have already been noted and there was a clear tactical factor involved in the decision to castigate the party in the emotionally charged atmosphere of a general election campaign. If the decision to adopt this course had ever been in doubt then events taking place in the last months of the Labour Government ensured that any uncertainty was removed.

Clawback, as has been noted, had already produced its problems. Many felt those problems were further accentuated by the Government's apparent lack of political will to make a co-ordinated attack on poverty in general. The problem of the disabled, for example, had been raised continuously since 1964 but it was not until 1968 that the Government embarked upon "urgent" research into the matter. (51) Similarly, the problems faced by fatherless families had been raised in the early months of the first Wilson administration but it was not until January 1969 that a White Paper announced the setting up of a committee of inquiry into the problem and not until November were its members finally chosen. For many observers, including the Labour MP

50. ibid

51. Sunday Times 22. 3. 70.

Peter Archer, it seemed that....."the steam had really run out of the Poverty issue".⁽⁵²⁾ CPAG's immediate task, therefore, was to get poverty back on to the political agenda.

In January 1970 Field and Townsend began the task by outlining the group's controversial view that poverty had increased under the Labour Governments to the party's Backbench Social Security Committee. As they had calculated, their analysis drew the unanimous response that the party could not go into an election year facing such a charge.⁽⁵³⁾ However, it was even more important that the Group draw a similar response from the party leadership. A request for a meeting with the Prime Minister on October 21st 1969 had already drawn a polite reply that Mr. Wilson was too busy to see the group. On January 28th, however, they were successful in obtaining a 90 minute interview with Richard Crossman, Secretary of State for Social Services. It was not a fruitful meeting. Crossman's response was terse and uncompromising....."People will simply never believe you....." he warned.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Despite this view, the Prime Minister had taken the claims seriously enough to inform the group on February 3rd that he had arranged for them to put their case to the Chancellor, Roy Jenkins, before the April Budget.

In the interim the Government launched something of a counter-attack which clearly, and publicly, divided its academic supporters. On the 6th February in an article "Poverty in Britain and How to Overcome it" Tribune had reprinted the key points of CPAG's recent memorandum to the Chancellor, echoing the group's charge that....."not only has the Wilson Government utterly failed to make inroads into the poverty problem, but in many ways the

52. ibid

53. ibid

54. ibid and Diaries Vol III pp 791-93

plight of poor families is now worse than when the Government took office."⁽⁵⁵⁾
 A week later the Government joined debate, David Ennals replying on its behalf that CPAG's conclusions could only be reached. "by the most selective and misleading use of statistics and what seems to be an almost total failure to appreciate the impact of many recent achievements of the Government in the field of Social Security".⁽⁵⁶⁾

It is significant, however, that shortly after, Professor A. B. Atkinson, a CPAG supporter, addressed a Fabian Society Conference on 'Labour and Inequality' and proceeded to lay bare the minister's argument. Ennals had claimed in Tribune and later at CPAG's 1970 AGM that Government expenditure on Social Security had risen from £1,960 million in 1964 to £3,600 million in 1969. However, Atkinson went on to show, fully endorsing the CPAG view, that Ennals had neglected to account for the increase in unemployment, demographic changes and the use of clawback which had involved a switch from child tax allowances to family allowances and that only part of the increase in family allowances could therefore be regarded as net benefit. Atkinson concluded that the actual increases between 1964/5 and 1969/70 on Social Security Expenditure were less than half the amount suggested.⁽⁵⁷⁾

This disagreement raises once more the whole notion of problem definition referred to by Stringer and Richardson.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Interested parties may differ so widely in their assessment of a problem that one might actually define it out

55. Tribune 6. 2. 70.

56. Tribune 13. 2. 70

57. See Atkinson, A. B. Inequality and Social Security - Labour's Record a paper delivered to the Fabian Conference on 'Labour and Inequality' January 9th-10th 1971 esp. p. 3 - Reprinted in Townsend, P. and Bosanquet, N. Labour and Inequality Fabian Society 1972 pp 12-25

58. Stringer, J. K. and Richardson J. J. Managing the Political Agenda: Problem Definition and Policy-making in Britain Parliamentary Affairs Winter 1980 pp 23-39

of existence while another might consider it so extensive and grave that its solution is worthy of action at the highest levels of government. Conflicting definitions or emphases of a problem may well keep it from the political agenda and contribute to confusion and misunderstanding in public debate. It is clear in the mid-sixties, for example, that public ignorance or misconception regarding the nature and extent of poverty may well have been fuelled by the conflicting definitions of the problems offered by academics and civil servants respectively.

Keith Banting notes that....."some officials were uncomfortable with the relative conception of poverty.....more importantly, officials were not completely happy with the use of supplementary benefits as a poverty line. They realised that every increase in the benefits level would increase the number of working families classified as poor; even if they took action to solve the problem, it would re-emerge with the next increase. Administrators regarded that prospect with distinctly less enthusiasm than did the academics. The Ministry never formally acknowledged a poverty line or used the word 'poverty' in their publications and in 1967 one of the Social Security Ministers, Patrick Gordon Walker, publicly criticised 'the continual raising of the standard and definition of what we mean by poverty'. (59)

The result inevitably was that the official definition of the 'problem' identified by CPAG was much narrower and, therefore, the members deemed to be in poverty were accordingly much lower."Administrators rejected Abel-Smith and Townsend's use of 140 per cent of supplementary benefit levels (as the real poverty line), contending that CPAG was deliberately overstating its case, and in the Ministry's own survey only the basic levels were used. The inevitable result was that a much smaller proportion of the

population were deemed to be in low-income families: 7 percent of all families with children fell below the line but many of these were already receiving, or were eligible for, supplementary benefits; only 4% of families with a father in full-time work fell below the Ministry's line". (60)

Politicians and civil servants may, as a result of their narrower definitions of a problem, deliberately seek to tackle it through the use of what Stringer and Richardson call "placebo policies". (61) It is their view that. "as governments become increasingly overloaded, we might expect them to pay even greater attention to the possibility of handling indicators in such a way as to define problems out of existence." (62) In the sixties, then, Labour's narrower definition of the problem of poverty and the introduction of 'Placebo policies' such as earnings related benefit for sickness and unemployment, a refashioned National Assistance Board and the temporary use of clawback, contributed to a popular belief that something was being done about the problem and enabled it to be hustled from the political agenda by 1968. David Ennals selective assessment of the extent of the problem in February 1970 and his defence of Labour's record must therefore be seen as consistent with the Government's definition and approach to the problem since 1964.

However. "the difficulty with "placebo policies" is that ultimately they may be seen as such. With the realisation that there has been no positive attempt to provide a long term solution the "problem" may well return to the political agenda". (63) That, of course, was precisely the intention of CPAG during the 1970 General Election. Realistically, Professor Atkinson's alternative assessment of Labour's record 1964-70 was,

- 60. ibid pp 76-77
- 61. Stringer and Richardson p. 29
- 62. ibid
- 63. ibid

accidentally or deliberately, a feature of this strategy - an attempt to expose Labour policy as selective and essentially "placebo" in character.

His conclusions were, then, that the claims made for the increase in aggregate 'effort' in the field of social security expenditure under Labour were exaggerated, with much of the expenditure increase due to demographic changes. Secondly, though Labour had increased the level of national insurance benefits in 1965, they failed subsequently, over the next 5 years, to keep pace with rising earnings. Thirdly, the introduction of supplementary benefits had failed to eliminate the problem of non-take up of benefit entitlement. Finally, the gain to low income families from the 1968 rise in family allowances had largely been offset by higher national insurance contributions and income tax. (64)

At the beginning of March 1970 the rift between academics and politicians was complicated further. CPAG persuaded sixteen eminent social scientists to sign a letter to The Times endorsing the case for an increase in family allowances but Richard Titmuss, Brian Abel-Smith and David Pichaud declined to sign. (65) Abel-Smith was, at the time, a senior policy adviser to Richard Crossman and his refusal was understood. Titmuss, however, very much the 'father figure' of modern social administration was not constrained in this way and appears to have refused to sign on the basis of his lifelong loyalty to the Labour Party and in his belief that any critique of Labour's record, despite its shortcomings, was playing into the hands of a Conservative Party which, otherwise, looked to have little chance of winning the election. (66)

- 64. Atkinson, p 24
- 65. Sunday Times 20. 3. 70.
- 66. ibid

Fears that an emotional and damaging public split with Titmuss would ensue if the Government persuaded the latter to draft an official reply to The Times letter were finally allayed when Douglas Houghton....."took round the lobbies a letter - drafted in Crossman's Ministry - and cajoled likely backbenchers into signing". (67) Those who did not sign, among them Michael Barnes the Chairman of the Backbench Social Security Committee, were, it was reported, subject to jibes of disloyalty and betrayal. (68)

Jenkins' Last Budget

On March 3rd 1970 a deputation from CPAG met with the Chancellor, Roy Jenkins, at the Treasury. Since only three other groups, the TUC, the CBI and the Scotch Whisky Association, had actually met with Jenkins himself that year it seemed clear that the party leadership had taken CPAG's case seriously. Indeed, the Group were described as reaching Jenkins by.....
 .."an exercise in political muscle which, over the last three months, has caused controversy and bitterness inside the Labour Party and the Cabinet, has damaged at least two political careers, and may provide a bitterly contested issue for the General Election". (69)

That issue, of course, centered on the case that poverty had actually increased under a party historically and electorally identified with its diminution. The fact that 1970 was an election year and that Roy Jenkins' April Budget offered an eleventh hour opportunity for the Government to win votes had certainly not escaped CPAG. The Group's strategy was summed up by Field.....
 "This is an election year. Almost certainly this is Jenkins' last scheduled Budget. Very well, we shall make the Government buy us off". (70)

67. ibid

68. ibid and Interviews with Frank Field 25. 7. 77. and Peter Townsend 18. 12. 79. and Nicholas Bosanquet 22. 2. 79.

69. Sunday Times 20. 3. 70

70. ibid

Field and Townsend continued to lobby Jenkins right up to the eve of Budget on April 13th. On the 14th Jenkins presented his third and final Budget and CPAG clearly viewed it as a defeat for the principles on which they had fought. Clearly, the Chancellor had not deemed it necessary, on the strength of CPAG's case, to 'buy the group off' in the way Field had hoped. Townsend, in a newspaper interview, described it as....."a totally weak Budget from a Government which chooses expediency instead of justice.....", (71) one designed to benefit more in the middle-income range instead of those whom CPAG regarded as the real needy. In particular, its recommendations had shattered CPAG's hopes of winning increases in family allowances that would have raised them to the level of 35 shillings that Field had advocated on his appointment as Director.

There is some evidence to suggest that the Government felt it could refute or at least undermine CPAG's case thereby obviating the need to make any unprogrammed Budget concessions. On April 16th, for instance, David Ennals, Richard Crossman and Brian Abel-Smith examined and co-revised a "long, intricate defensive speech"⁽⁷²⁾ that Ennals was to deliver on labour's record at CPAG's A. G. M. on April 19th. Of the Budget itself Crossman was able to reflect....."I still feel unhappy about the way I fell into a bitter argument with Peter Townsend, when he came to represent the CPAG a few weeks ago. In this respect Roy's budget is a relief to me because it does give some money to the lowest possible income groups. and to this extent we should have spiked the guns of the CPAG and of Peter Townsend and his friends".⁽⁷³⁾

71. The Guardian 15. 4. 70.

72. Howard, A. ed The Crossman Diaries Magnum 1979 p. 706

73. Even as early as 1968 Crossman indicated that the Party's leaders were afraid of losing votes by appearing too radical in the social policy sphere....."We've abolished the NAB and brought in an enormously humane system of supplementary allowances but we seem to have been almost ashamed of these tremendous social reforms partly because of the continuous criticism of CPAG on the one hand, and on the other the continual attacks of the general public that we are tolerating scroungers..... Then there are family allowances. At the by-elections we've been ashamed to claim that we have increased them because we're afraid of losing votes".
Diaries Vol III p. 140

The Prime Minister had also been cautious about making concessions, fearing an electoral resistance to family allowance increases that could rock his party's election prospects. To large numbers of people family allowances were an unpopular measure and much of CPAGs effectiveness as a campaigning group was reduced by its inability to overcome popular prejudice. If the latter in itself was not enough of an obstacle for the Group to overcome its efforts met with additional resistance from politicians anxious not to alienate votes. In an effort to counter this 'resistance' and offset a widely-held 'scroungerphobia' Field enlisted the support of a number of senior trade union leaders including Jack Jones (TGWU), Clive Jenkins (ASTMS) John Boyd (EU), Bill Anderson (NALGO) and Allan Fisher (NUPE) in co-signing a letter to Roy Jenkins on the eve of Budget urging him to reconsider an increase in family allowances. (74)

A discussion of the role played by trade unionists in social policy takes place in Chapters 7 and 8 but it is interesting to note here both the new initiative taken by the group in enlisting union support and the rather unrealistic eleventh hour nature of the appeal made to a Chancellor who had almost certainly finalised his Budget weeks earlier. It is possible, therefore, that this appeal was a combination of 'straw-clutching' and the firing of a warning shot across the bows of a party that had gone off course.

74. The idea was devised in December 1969 and was influenced by the view of Sir John Whalley, Former Deputy Secretary at the DHSS and briefly a CPAG Committee member, that CPAG should identify its aims with those of the influential trade union movement. This enabled the group to at least briefly boost its case and reduce its own political isolation. (discussed in full Ch. 8)

On the 18th May Harold Wilson announced the dissolution of Parliament and called a General Election. In anticipation, CPAG had secured a donation of £1,000 from the Rowntree Trust to help in the production of election material and fund an 'educational' campaign directed at MPs detailing the material welfare of the poor after 6 years of Labour Government. (75) In the same month the group released a broadsheet to the national press with a challenging first paragraph which read....."The poor, worse off under Labour - with the Election Campaign about to start the Child Poverty Action Group has reaffirmed its belief that the poor are worse off as a result of the Labour Government". (76)

It went on to point out that by January 1970 those on supplementary benefit were relatively poorer compared to March 1965. Even when the proposed November increases were taken into account the gap would not close and would probably widen. The failure to announce a corresponding increase in National Insurance Benefits also meant that this group of claimants would continue to experience a relative decline in living standards. (77) Finally, there was the need to consider the perilous position of the low wage earner. "On a number of occasions you've stressed the need to increase family allowances each time adjustments are made to supplementary benefits otherwise the disincentive to work is perilously increased. Why is it then that the last two increases in supplementary benefit rates have not been accompanied with a corresponding increase in family allowances". (78)

75. Directors Report May-June 1970. The £1,000 donation from the Rowntree Trust followed an earlier donation in January 1969 of £15,000 which had enabled the group to establish a legal department. The money donated in 1970 enabled CPAG to produce Poor Families and the Election which was sent to all candidates in the election. Field remarked....."They will be asked to endorse a five point programme and I hope this will then give us the basis for a CPAG group in the new House of Commons".

76. CPAG - Press Release Poor Worse Off Under Labour 22. 5. 70.

77. ibid

78. ibid

The reaction of Labour politicians to CPAG's campaign varied from dismay and panic to outright anger. David Ennals, retiring Minister of Social Security, was one of those who fell into the former category. Speaking at the group's A. G. M. in April, shortly after the Budget, he had urged that more private meetings with CPAG take place (consultation which had been rather infrequent when CPAG had adopted a moderate approach) instead of the group resorting to what he saw as highly damaging, vituperative public exchanges with Labour politicians in the media. He also took some pains to stress that organisations like CPAG....."which hit sharply at Government will receive a strong counter-reaction". (79)

A number of points are worth comment here. Firstly, the nature of his remarks to the Group, indeed his chastisement of it, suggest that the party did consider that it had a fairly strong relationship with CPAG and that it did view it as an 'ally' of sorts. (80) Secondly, his warnings of a "strong counter-reaction" against the Government's critics suggest that the Government did take CPAG's campaign seriously, though, equally, it may have misjudged the intensity of that campaign. Though a strong counter reaction to such criticism may well be defended as a means of safeguarding political myth - i. e. the association of Labour with social justice and policies to improve the material welfare of the poor - it also carried with it some suggestion that the party leadership felt itself beyond reproach, certainly in public. It is also interesting to note that Ennals' defence of the Government's record at the CPAG A. G. M. was prepared for him by Brian Abel-Smith, historically a strong supporter of CPAG. (81) His involvement would seem to confirm the apparent split between Labour's academic supporters discussed earlier.

79. Minutes of the CPAG Annual General Meeting April 19th 1970
 80. See for example Crossman's comments on CPAG as....."our own friends....." Diaries Vol III p.791
 81. Howard, A. ed. The Crossman Diaries op cit p. 706

The conflict was thus already marked before CPAG launched two further blows to Labour's record in June 1970. On the 11th, the Group published the findings of a sample survey it had conducted in 80 constituencies to discover the views of candidates from all parties on the issue of raising family allowances....."as the best method of reducing child poverty". (82)

Few candidates, the group claimed, had experienced any complaints against clawback, the issue on which Labour had expected electoral resistance. No candidate polled believed that family allowances encouraged large families, indeed the only objection the group claimed to have encountered to raised allowances was that some parents did not spend the money on the children. Over 70% of the candidates interviewed favoured the rises suggested by CPAG and of these only 5 favoured means-tested methods of recouping the increase. (83)

The most damaging critique of Labour's record was to follow in the week of the election, when every parliamentary candidate was sent a copy of the group's policy manifesto - Poor Families and the Election. An analysis of all three manifestoes was offered with the most criticism reserved for the Labour Party. Acknowledging efforts already made in the social policy field, the group charged....."the dimensions of poverty have not been diminished and some groups have not kept pace with the increasing affluence of others. In particular there are the following matters which justify deep concern..... national insurance and supplementary benefits have lagged behind average industrial earnings. The wage rates of the lowest paid have not kept pace with other earnings. Since 1964 unemployment and particularly long-term unemployment, has increased and some unemployment allowances have fallen in real value. The need for a comprehensive disability scheme has not been recognised". (84)

82. CPAG - Press Release June 11th 1970

83. ibid

84. CPAG (Election) Policy Manifesto - A War on Poverty - Poor Families and the Election June 1970 'The Government's Recent Record Section I

Commenting on the party's 1970 manifesto, Townsend's earlier arguments about co-ordination and a coherent approach to social policy-making rang loud. "There is still no evidence of really co-ordinated planning of social policy through, say, a central department of social planning. Neither is there evidence that priority will be given to the most urgent problems of poverty".⁽⁸⁵⁾ The manifesto did not contain a specific pledge to raise family allowances, only to review them. There was no commitment to a comprehensive disability pensions scheme. There was no reference to the financial problems of supporting older children at school which the group regarded as a "deplorable omission" given that the Government had already reneged on a 1964 manifesto commitment to do this. Neither was there any commitment to reducing means-tested schemes in favour of schemes for paying benefit as of right.

The Reaction and Outcome - The Exposure of Party Myth

The response of the party leaders to CPAGs 'manifesto' varied. Jeremy Thorpe sent a postcard to acknowledge he'd received it. Harold Wilson merely replied that Labour's record spoke for itself⁽⁸⁶⁾ and Edward Heath wrote to Frank Field on June 1st confirming his belief that. "the only way of tackling family poverty in the short term is to increase family allowances and operate the clawback principle".⁽⁸⁷⁾ It was clear, however, that a watershed had been reached in CPAGs relationship with the Labour Party. This watershed was compounded by the group's exposure of party myth.

In questioning these myths CPAG were undermining the spirit of labourism, the very ethos of the party.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Banting has noted that. "within the Labour Party there was a pervasive assumption that - whatever else it stood for - Labour was 'about poverty'. Poverty was a common touchstone

85. ibid 'The Labour Manifesto' part II

86. Bull op cit pp 152-3

87. Poverty No. 16/17 1970

88. An excellent account of Labour's ethos is given in Drucker, H. H. Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party. George, Allen & Unwin 1979 Ch. 2

for Labour MPs who disagreed furiously about virtually everything else. The issue spanned the ideological divisions between left and right that had racked the party throughout the 1950s; for Aneurin Bevan, poverty was one of the great social forces in conflict with modern society, and for Anthony Crosland the basic definition of a socialist was one who gave exceptional priority to overcoming 'poverty and social squalor'; Harold Wilson argued that there was strong commitment 'among Labour Party members at all levels to end poverty' and Crossman contended that 'as socialists we care more about poverty than anything else'.⁽⁸⁹⁾

During the early years of the Labour Government CPAG had appeared to largely accept this myth, believing that the party had been mandated to combat poverty and deferring to it as though it took seriously its socialist commitment.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Certainly in opposition and during the elections of 1959 and 1964 the party had given a firm indication that action on poverty would be a major priority if it was elected to power. However, the U-turn in socialist policies after 1948 during Attlees administration, the introduction of prescription charges in 1950 by Gaitskell and the switch of emphasis to the achievement of economic growth as the prerequisite of social reform by Harold Wilson in speeches in 1963 and 1964 suggest that the poverty lobby should have been rather more cautious in its expectations of a Labour Government - particularly one faced with major economic problems, yet determined to manage the economy successfully. This apparent deference to 'myth' therefore carried with it a degree of naiveté, a lack of political realism, a failure to recognise that poverty was a priority not one priority and that its alleviation, in tactical terms, depended on the tackling of what party leaders saw as more urgent priorities first.

89. Banting p. 74 and Bevan, A. In Place of Fear Quarter 1978 Ch. 1
90. Bull, p 150

However, unrealistic some of the earlier assumptions and expectations were, much of CPAG's critique must remain justified if only as a tactical means of dissociating the group from the party and its record. If CPAG had not attacked Labour's record then it is likely that other groups such as Shelter or the Claimants Unions would have and any untimely association of CPAG with that record would have been easily presented as an endorsement of it. (91) One can only speculate whether the group would have resorted to such a critique had Field not arrived as Director in 1969 and had a General Election not been in the offing. It must also be said that the decision to proceed with such a campaign, though widely supported in the group, could well have been seen by Field as a means of establishing his own imprint

91. This implies, of course, that in certain fields of policy interest groups are often in competition - for resources, attention and for changes in or the introduction of policies they oppose or favour. In both the fields of environmental policy and social policy this may be seen to be the case. The emergence of radical environmental groups like Friends of the Earth with an eye for publicity has produced a new, and uncharacteristic aggression in the previously sedate activities of long-established bodies like the CPRE, which may see their own consultative links with Government threatened by the emergence of highly active, high-profile groups like FOE. See Richardson and Jordan pp 81-84 and McCarthy, M. A. The Politics of Influence - The Methodology of an Environmental Pressure Group - unpublished M. A. Thesis Univ. of Keele 1976 In the social policy field groups like CPAG, Shelter, Gingerbread, Mind, Dig and Age Concern might all be seen as competitors for resources, attention and legislative change. To a considerable extent this 'competition' and the urgency to publicly demonstrate their influence or the importance of their particular case have been obstacles to the formation of a coherent 'poverty lobby' or 'welfare lobby' in Britain. Perhaps the best recent illustration of group competition has been in the field of abortion where there are not only strong pro and anti lobbies but competition within these lobbies themselves. This is particularly the case on the pro side with clear divisions existing between the Abortion Law Reform Association, the National Abortion Campaign (with which it has strong connections) and A Woman's Right to Choose, not to mention the growing array of national and local feminist organisations fighting for abortion on demand or abortion law reform. Interview with Rose Schapiro, National Organiser - National Abortion Campaign. 29.10.76.

and authority upon the group. A sensationalised propaganda exercise of this type could have been justified as a genuine attempt to get poverty back at the forefront of political debate but it may also be seen as a convenient means of bringing the new and unknown Director into the public spotlight. More generally, the campaign may be seen as a broad appeal to the general public, a break from the "low-profile"⁽⁹²⁾ style adopted by Tony Lynes.

Field has confirmed that, for him, the *raison d'être* of the campaign was the attempt to expose the myths surrounding the party. "the linch pin of CPAG's strategy was that the rigorous questioning of Labour's poverty record would somehow lead to a shift in resources towards the least well off: surely no party would go complacently into an election year when its central myth was being so critically examined? But we overestimated the extent to which politicians respond in a totally rational manner and underestimated the way a party's programme becomes like an offspring: to be criticised in private but defended in public".⁽⁹³⁾

There are some important points worth noting here. First of all Field's view that Labour's "central myth" was its concern to do something about poverty was, as was noted earlier, rather inaccurate. Secondly, it is clear from the comments of Wilson, Crossman and Ennals and from the provisions of Jenkins' last Budget that Labour did not regard itself as going "complacently into an election year" and that it felt it could meet CPAG's criticisms and defend its record.

92. If the assessment of CPAG's relationship with and influence within the Labour Party given earlier is accepted then the 'poor get poorer' campaign may illustrate an interest group using what Grant refers to as its. "options of 'exit' and 'voice' to bring about a change of strategy".

In this way CPAG was moving away from the 'low profile' style it had adopted under Lynes i. e. the use of selective contacts, behind the scenes negotiation and non-disruption, to a 'high profile' style involving a considerable emphasis on the cultivation of public opinion as a lever for action. Grant p. 8

93. Bull p. 15

Where CPAG were right was in their belief that Labour sought to 'privatise' such disputes and reconcile them 'fraternally' away from the public spotlight. Yet even here it could be argued that CPAG's overtly public campaign was impolitic given the reaction to the clawback and the resistance to increases in family allowances that many MPs claimed to have encountered in the constituencies. (94)

It must also be pointed out that many Labour politicians did feel strongly about this public exposure of party myth and some appear to have felt themselves beyond reproach. Jonathan Bradshaw was one of those who felt he'd detected an element of arrogance in the reaction of some Labour Ministers..... "certainly one thing that does come out of all this was that CPAG held up a mirror for ministers to look into and virtually all of them saw hypocrites and false prophets. CPAG had effectively exploded myths on the part of the party and had provoked a rupture of conscience that the arrogant and vain could not stomachI think at the time they thought that we would support them all the time and I think it is only right that we didn't". (95)

This view is partly borne out by David Piachaud who was among those academic supporters of the Labour Party who were clearly disturbed or angered at the time by what they saw as CPAG's role in....."undermining one of Labour's natural electoral advantages". (96) i. e. that it was the party most likely to deliver social reforms which would benefit the impoverished. Piachaud does add, however, that in retrospect the tactic was probably necessary to enable CPAG to negotiate across the political spectrum during

94. See Hansard (Commons) Vol 762 cols. 182-298
 95. Interview with Jonathan Bradshaw 2. 11. 78.
 96. Interview with David Piachaud 14. 6. 77.

the election run-in. (97)

Perhaps the most significant insight into the reaction of senior party figures to the campaign, has come from one who was very much a victim of it, Richard Crossman. Even in the early days of the campaign back in January 1970, Crossman was keenly aware of the impending conflict. After a particularly heated T. V. discussion on poverty with Peter Townsend, he wrote....."We are in trouble here because the attack is on our most sensitive point, our humanity. We ourselves are uncomfortable about the record Peter Townsend and his friends in the Child Poverty Action Group are attacking. In one way we are terribly bureaucratic. There was another Tory Private Members Bill on Friday, seeking to grant the full National Insurance Pension to the over-80s who are excluded from the 1948 Bill. It would have cost us practically nothing because half of these people are on Supplementary Benefit already but, no, we won't do it because of the sanctity of the contributory principle and this kind of attitude looks meaner and meaner". (98)

By February 8th, as Crossman notes, Wilson himself had become seriously disturbed by the aggressiveness of CPAG's campaign and was worried that ammunition with which to destroy the Labour Government was being readily placed in Tory hands....."Its true that if the press and the Opposition

97. Field has made a crucial rationalisation of the campaign here and suggests that, in effect, all the group was doing was reminding and questioning the party about what it had said in the past - an obvious tactic for a cause group....."Its a fairly delicate operation, there are no great battalions behind us, theres no clove, its having a conviction about what one is doing and seeing the opening, that chink of political light which we take a crowbar to and, using the force of others on behalf of the campaign..... that's the process, that's what makes it very political, you trap people by their use of language, questioning what they have said". Interview 26.7.77.

98. Diaries Vol III p. 791

work hard enough the Government can seem to lack compassion and this is even more credible when our own friends like the Child Poverty Action Group mercilessly attack us, as they have done in this weeks New Statesman. All we have done on pensions and benefits and National Superannuation is dismissed as utterly hopeless and, once we are denounced by our own side, the Tory stuff, odious as it is, becomes effective. These threats have seriously alarmed Harold". (99)

An interesting comment on the campaign has been offered by Bob Brown, Minister for Social Security in 1974 when the party returned to power. Brown supports the widely held view in the party that pressure groups can and do frequently twist the facts to suit their own ends. He comments on the campaign....."none of us were very pleased at all because the facts just don't bear examination but in the heat of an election campaign, a statement like that, regardless of what you do later to put things right means the damage is done. There isn't any doubt that if someone like Frank Field stands up and says black is white an awful lot of people will believe him". (100)

The manner in which the campaign was orchestrated firmly points to the fact

99. ibid p. 809
100. Interview with Bob Brown, Minister for Social Security (Feb-Oct 1974) 20. 2. 79. It is interesting to examine Brown's view against the findings made by Dearlove in his study of policymaking in local government and the attitudes of councillors to pressure group demands. Dearlove found that councillors tended to classify groups as either "helpful" or "unhelpful". The former were regarded as those which made demands largely consistent with the councillors own views and values and, crucially, what they felt the system could deliver. On the other hand....."the groups which they consider are not helpful are all making demands which either challenge established council commitments, or else urge the council to extend the range of their activity beyond the limit they consider to be proper".
- Dearlove, J. The Politics of Policy in Local Government Cambridge University Press 1973 p.168
- The comments of Bob Brown, Richard Crossman, David Ennals et al confirm that a similar classification of groups takes place at central level and that the attitudes and expectations of ministers may well be broadly typical of those discovered by Dearlove among local politicians.

that CPAG had, and continues to have, greater expectations of the Labour Party than it does of the Conservatives. As Field explains....."That is why whenever we write something they say why are you that much more bitter towards us. These are Ministers saying this. It is unfair, you judge us much more harshly than the Tories. But one does expect more. It is also part of our cover. I think at all costs the group must not be seen as favouring the Labour Party. I think then that we probably do judge them harder". (101)

Nor did Field agree with one view that there were mitigating factors, such as acute balance of payments problems, devaluation, industrial crises and an overwhelming burden of legislation to get onto the statute books, in the party's failure to deliver the reforms called for by CPAG. (102) He felt, simply, that the party didn't try hard enough and was unlikely to do so, unless provoked by groups like CPAG. This is a view echoed by Jane Streater, a former Assistant Director of CPAG and currently Director of the National Council for One Parent Families. It is Streater's view that groups like CPAG will always be more critical of the Labour Party simply because "one expects more of one's own side". (103)

Peter Townsend has also taken up Field's point that Labour 'didn't try hard enough' and has concluded that Labour failed to resist civil service efforts to block radical policy initiatives. Reflecting on Labour's record he says....

101. Interview with Frank Field 26.7.77.
 102. Bob Brown echoes a widely held view in the Labour Party regarding the Party's difficulties in fulfilling promises made in 1964.....
 "Its easy to write policy statements in opposition and to be determining what you actually think are feasible things to do, but once you get into government and you get a look at the books and you actually see what the financial constraints are you regretably have got to trim what has been near and dear for years".
 He suggests also that socialism is the language of priorities and implies that pressure groups too frequently assume there is a "bottomless purse".
 Interview 20.2.79.
 103. Interview with Jane Streater 25.1.80.

"Although at the time I was a supporter of Wilson rather than Gaitskell I have to now go back and reflect that if we had had Gaitskell we'd have probably had more, radical social policies than we had under the successive administrations of Wilson. I think, because, Gaitskell, rather like Heath in some ways, would have obstinately resisted the mandarins in the 'establishment' instead of just merely representing them as Wilson did". (104)

Clearly, one of the most effective avenues of provocation is to question party myths. Field has commented that....."one of the pressures on parties is the myths about them and it is very important to get under the skin of the myth and kick like hell. The Group's job is to question myths". (105) He reveals that he had read somewhere that Crossman had spoken of myths as the 'inner mobilising force of the party' and....."I thought good he is telling me how to succeed in lobbying the party, simply hit it where it hurts by questioning its myths. This was what the 'Poor Get Poorer' and 'Labour's Curse - Unemployment'". (106)

Field believes that the 1970 campaign also distanced CPAG from all other contemporary interest groups in terms of style. The campaign, he argued, proved that CPAG was fundamentally committed to the poor, extremely serious about the Government's record and was willing to jeopardise what relationship it did have with the Labour Party in order to improve the poor's lot. Group-party relations and individual relationships were very tense and strained for some time after but Field is convinced that the group emerged from the experience with its integrity and commitment intact and its status and

104. Interview with Peter Townsend 18.12.79.
 105. Interview with Frank Field 26.7.77.
 106. ibid

credibility enhanced. (107) He says of the campaign....."We were never harmed by it. We gained a status which the Group had never had, which is immense intellectual-political-goodwill capital, on which we are still drawing. That campaign, I believe, took us away from the rest of the pressure-groups, we had a totally different style..... we were a much more serious group of professionals than any other had produced". (108)

The fact remains, however, that the necessity for CPAG to publish Poverty and the Labour Government and to conduct a 'high profile' media campaign such as it did in the early weeks of a General Election run-in, only confirms the group's failure to influence Labour in office and its own exclusion from the official policy community - a fact further borne out by the review of social services and by CPAG's exclusion from the Lancaster House Conference. 'Poor Get Poorer' provided a classic illustration of an 'outsider' group having to resort to a dramatic media campaign to compensate, in part, for its own inability to achieve regular and effective consultation.

The campaign contrasted strikingly with the acquiescence and misplaced deference characteristic of CPAG in its early years. The group had regularly lobbied, gently chastised and, on occasion, bitterly complained to the government about its treatment of the poor; but it had never compromised,

107. It should be noted, for example, that Peter Townsend, a strong Labour supporter, was himself initially against the campaign but swung round to support Field, despite taking considerable criticism from party colleagues. Field, himself, had threatened to resign if the campaign did not go through and won strong support from Harriet Wilson and Walter Birmingham, whom he describes as a "very strong labour man", for his plan. He comments that the decision to proceed was extremely important because....."it indicated that CPAG was even prepared to oppose its own side, the Labour Party, if it was failing to deliver the goods". In addition, because of it, he feels the attitude of the Conservatives immediately became more constructive and they undertook to keep the issue alive during Heath's administration. Interview with Frank Field 25.7.77.
108. *ibid*

harrassed or attempted to bully it in the way it did in 1970. (109)

Essentially, CPAG had adopted a moderate style of gentle persuasion and erosion of resistance in keeping with the Fabian style of its early leadership. When the Labour Government had complained of wanting to legislate but of having to submit to the 'realities of the situation' then CPAG had tended to submit along with it. If nothing else, the new leadership demonstrated in 1970 that the groundrules of group-party politics should be observed, and could be broken, by both sides.

As Field commented....."This party responds not through principle but by being shown, or by thinking, that it will have its red boxes snatched away from it. That is the weapon we have, that we will actually cost them votes. They will find it much more difficult to mobilise their traditional support, and one goes in slogging.....they have to be shocked and shamed and bullied into doing the right things.....sometimes the Chancellor will have to agree to see us because sometimes we say things that will cost votes". (110)

Of course, when a group is making a case that, in particular, attacks the myths or image built up by a party, such as its humanity, as Crossman observed, then the party's future attentiveness will be much easier to secure. (111)

109. This apparent difference in styles and the emphasis on day to day political realities characterised by the 1970 campaign has been summed up thus by Field....."Never mind what notions you have in your head about how society should work, what we are saying is that principles should be applied out of practice and thats still the place on par with the conduct of affairs in this country, and people don't like, as Ministers, to have had a rough press and go home to face their wives and friends..... it is actually very important to give people stick in public, it does concentrate their mind wonderfully and they get up and say how much they agree with you but can't manage your demands just yet". Interview 25. 7. 77.

110. *ibid*

111. An interesting point worth noting here, also, is another of the party's well flaunted myths - that of being the only party capable of dealing constructively and, if necessary, 'controlling' the trade unions. This particular myth was firmly exploded by their pressure-group activities in 1978 and particularly in the winter of 1978, when they resorted to industrial action in their rejection of Labour's pay policy - action precipitated by what they saw as a Government 'sell-out' on prices and incomes and unemployment policy.

CHAPTER 6

Rethink - Dealing with the Conservatives

The 'poor get poorer' campaign may be viewed as having some theoretical significance also. The disruption it brought about, albeit temporary, between CPAG and the Labour party may be considered broadly within the framework of what Robert Salisbury has termed the 'homeostatic mechanism hypothesis'.⁽¹⁾ Salisbury views the effect of this mechanism upon a hitherto temporarily stable pluralist order as one in which. "a putative equilibrium among social groups is disturbed as a consequence of such socially disruptive factors as technological innovation, war, transportation or communication changes and such macro-social processes as major population movements, business cycle fluctuations and industrialisation. The disequilibrium will evoke a response from the disadvantaged sectors as they seek to restore a viable balance".⁽²⁾

Since Salisbury's qualification of "consequence" is illustrative it might be argued that the so called "putative equilibrium" may be disturbed precisely because it is putative or supposed. As interest groups come to recognise that other groups have a clear pre-eminence in what is supposed to be a situation of balance and that, consequently, the equilibrate nature of the political and social order is, in reality, distorted to their disadvantage, they may be expected to attempt to eliminate or correct those disadvantages and restore a "viable balance".

In the period 1964-70 party myth may be seen to have contributed significantly to a putative equilibrium in which many people clearly believed, not the least of whom were Labour politicians themselves. Party myth fuelled a

1. Salisbury, R. H. Interest Group Politics in America Harper & Row New York 1970 p. 35
2. ibid pp 35-36

widely held belief that the Labour Party was, and would continue to be, 'soft' on the poor, on the unemployed and on the trade unions, just as, in the seventies the party was seen as being 'soft' on law and order, on permissiveness and on industrial unrest. (3) The largely cosmetic reforms of 1966 and 67 and the placebo character of much of Labour's social policy were reasonably convincing to the less discerning onlooker that Labour was doing something to combat poverty. Indeed, the reaction to clawback indicates that for many people Labour was doing too much.

Until the late sixties, then, Labour was able to draw upon the goodwill shown to it in the elections of 1964 and 1966. Certainly until the end of the sixties criticism had been muted as the Government repeatedly asked for time, in the wake of economic difficulties, to fulfill its promises. The relationship between the Government and its own backbenchers, its supporters in the country and among the ranks of the 'voluntary movement' remained as it was in 1964. Support and deference were still forthcoming and interest groups like Shelter and CPAG still preferred to articulate their own preferences through a government with which they could claim to have some value empathy. There was still not a convinced need to disrupt those relationships and question the 'equilibrium'. By 1969-70, however, the goodwill had been largely exhausted, the myths had worn thin and the government's critics, in their frustration, acquired a new urgency and vociferousness. This was particularly clear in the backlash the Government received from the trade union movement and the poverty lobby. The 'poor get poorer' campaign may be seen as an effort to restore the 'viable balance' to which Salisbury refers. It was an attempt to demonstrate that the putative equilibrium actually was putative and that a re-ordered equilibrium of social and political forces more sympathetic to the poor could only come about through a disruption of the status quo.

Post-Election Expectations

Before considering the response of the Heath administration to poverty it is useful to recall the precedents established by previous Conservative Governments. An appropriate starting point for any such resumé is the 1950 General Election, the first to be fought after the creation of the modern welfare state by the Attlee administration. Conservative intentions in the social policy field were outlined more by implication than exposition during attacks upon the record of the Attlee Government. The party's 1950 manifesto, for example, charged that Labour had....."spread the talk that social welfare is something to be had from the state free, gratis and for nothing".....⁽⁴⁾ It warned the electorate that....."a vote for socialism is a vote to continue the policy which has endangered our economic and present independence both as a nation and as men and women".⁽⁵⁾ While committing the party to support the Welfare State the manifesto warned finally that....."Britain can only enjoy the Social Services for which she is prepared to work".⁽⁶⁾ The principle features of subsequent Conservative policy were thus quite clear. The level of benefits and services would be related to the nation's economic performance, and selectivity, not universality, would represent the key principle in determining their allocation. Andrew Gamble has noted that the Conservative vision of an affluent Britain created by the release of private initiative and enterprise, hitherto restrained by Labour's 'collectivism' and the revival of the slogan 'a property-owning democracy'....."reinforced the crusade for selective rather than universal welfare benefits that took root in the party during the 1950s".⁽⁷⁾

4. Gamble, A. The Conservative Nation Routledge & Kegan Paul 1974 p. 56
5. ibid
6. ibid
7. ibid pp 59-60 and Eccles, D. The New Conservatism 4th August 1951 p. 4

In 1953 the Conservatives merged the Ministry of Pensions with the Ministry of National Insurance to create MPNI and John Boyd-Carpenter was appointed as its head in 1955. In 1959 he announced an important new turn in social policy. In keeping with the party's belief that the level of services and benefits must somehow mirror national economic performance he introduced an increase in scale rates which broke with the Beveridge tradition of covering 'subsistence needs' and the rise in the cost of living, and now pegged them at a level where the party could claim to have given claimants a share in the country's growing prosperity. The basis for this 'advance in standards' was, as Boyd-Carpenter pointed out, the "considerable measure of stability" achieved in the area of retail prices.⁽⁸⁾ The party's success in curbing price inflation had brought with it economic stability and the possibility of a more flexible approach to welfare, so much so that in the early sixties one senior party figure could claim that.....! "We have a better and fairer distribution of incomes today than we had ten or eleven years ago".⁽⁹⁾

However, this new found 'generosity' could not be sustained. Conservative policy rested firmly upon the principle that increased welfare expenditure could only come from improved economic performance. The economic crisis of 1961-2 effectively curtailed, therefore, any further extension of the principle established by Boyd-Carpenter with the result that in 1961 the Conservative Government felt that the economy could only afford to adopt in a rather limited and piecemeal form the Opposition's 1957 plans for earnings-related pensions. Rosemary Marten, former research officer on Social Security policy in the Conservative Research Department has noted that more money was lost to social services between 1964-70 by the failure of the economic growth

8. Birch, The Shaping of the Welfare State Longman 1974 p. 274
9. Cit. Banting p. 68
10. Marten, R. 'The Tories': Reformers or Reactionaries' Poverty No. 19 p. 6

rate in previous years than was actually gained by increased taxation. She concludes that....."had the growth rate not fallen so much from an average of 3.8% per annum between 1959 and 1964 to an average of 2.2% per annum from 1964 to 1969, and had the run on the £ not begun the day the 1965 pensions increases were announced, overall social service spending would have increased more than it did". (10)

It is useful at this point to consider some of the statistical evidence available for social security expenditure in the period 1951-68. Current expenditure on social security as a percentage of gross national product at factor cost shows a striking constancy throughout the life of both the Conservative and Labour governments. In 1951, for example, expenditure on social security as a percentage of GNP was 0.3%, in 1960 it remained at this figure and in 1964 and 1968 it was 0.4%. (11) In the same period family allowances, expressed as a proportion of total personal income, figured at 0.6% in 1951 and 1960, at 0.5% in 1964 and 0.8% in 1968, the year of Labour's increase.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of social security expenditure in the period cited is, as Brian Abel-Smith notes, that it has....."been increasing within the framework of the 1945-46 legislation quite apart from changes in policy". (12) Indeed, the evidence in this study suggests that the importance of party policy as such has often been cosmetic and, on occasion, quite misleading. The value of family allowances seems to have been affected far more closely by the state of the economy than by apparent policy change. Furthermore, increases in social security expenditure have tended to mask the fact of demographic changes so that closer scrutiny of gross increases reveals both a growing number of welfare recipients and little change in the relative value of benefits paid. In the period 1951 to 1964, for

10. Marten, R. 'The Tories: Reformers or Reactionaries' Poverty No. 19 p. 6
11. Abel-Smith, B. 'Public Expenditure on the Social Services' Social Trends C. S. O. 1970.
12. ibid p. 18

example, the total population increased by 7.2% while the population under 20 increased by 14.6%.⁽¹³⁾

By the General Election of 1964 the new Conservative leader, Edward Heath, much influenced by the ideas of the Bow Group, had come to conclude that five major policy changes were necessary in 'putting Britain Right Ahead', one of which was the establishment of "selectivity in place of universalism in the social services".⁽¹⁴⁾ At his first conference as party leader in 1965 Heath declared that one of the party's three crucial avenues for the future would be....."the transformation of the Welfare State to meet 'our needs' today".⁽¹⁵⁾ His view, albeit one offered in opposition, constituted a firm rejection of any ideological content in welfarism and pointed, instead, to a new pragmatic and diminished role for the welfare system as a 'casualty clearing station'. This view was further outlined some years later by a Conservative spokesman on social services, John Selwyn Gummer.....
 "We can take refuge in the difficulty of finding an alternative as an excuse for perpetuating the present position but we cannot ignore the fact, on the simplest level, the system of social security reinforces the proper appreciation of the rights of the deprived, while often weakening the equally important realisation of the duties of the fortunate".⁽¹⁶⁾

The crux of the party's plans for the 'transformation of the welfare state lay in the belief that welfare expenditure was already very high but so thinly spread out because of the traditional insistence upon universality, that its impact was limited. Rather than increase expenditure, which the party felt the nation could not afford - and which it saw as a vote loser in a General

13. ibid p.14

14. Crossbow No. 42

15. Gamble p. 92

16. Gummer, J. S. 'A Conservative Approach to the Social Services' Political Quarterly Oct-December 1973 pp 425-35

Election contest - it made greater sense to redefine the terms by which benefits could be claimed, thereby disqualifying some groups of claimants from receiving assistance (or reducing the level) and then to redistribute the 'savings' to the neediest. In policy terms selectivity was both attractive and made great sense. It enabled what the right of the party saw as a more cost-effective approach to welfare and it largely satisfied the demands of the progressive wing of the party which sought to maintain the commitment to welfarism. Essentially, however, selectivity appealed to and 'consummated' that tradition of thought within the Conservative party that emphasised self-help, independence and a spirit of individualism; where help was proved to be necessary selectivity would ensure that some level of 'charitable' assistance was forthcoming. As one Conservative MP has since explained. "Conservative social policy seeks to use the social services to set people up rather than to drag them down to a dependence upon welfare. Its preoccupation with help to the permanently needy is matched by a belief that it is best to ensure that as many as possible make provision for themselves rather than expect the state to undertake the task". (17)

The Conservative response to the re-emergence of poverty as an issue in the mid-sixties therefore reflected party traditions and interests. Ironically, as Banting has shown, the campaign waged by CPAG and its academic supporters could be readily used to 'beat the drum of selectivity'. Despite all the expenditure on social security and social services since 1945 CPAG had shown that serious and often large pockets of poverty still existed and that the level of benefit dispensed was inadequate for needs. (18) Such a discovery served only to reinforce the Conservative's belief that the overall

17. *ibid* p. 432

18. See the commentary on 'selectivity' in Poverty No. 4 1967; 'Towards a policy for Family Poverty' Poverty No. 11 1969; see also the discussion on selectivity and Negative Income Tax by R. Marten in Poverty No. 11 pp 9-11 and for a comprehensive discussion of the nature and extent of poverty see Townsend, P. The Concept of Poverty Heinemann 1970

level of welfare expenditure should be re-ordered so that the bulk of resources was concentrated on the most needy.

As Banting notes....."The party were in the process of elaborating a selectivist approach to social policy: they argued that the existing universal benefits and services were often wasteful, their costs so high that not enough could be done for the truly needy, and that the solution was greater selectivity to concentrate spending directly on the poor. This doctrine had been developing within the party for several years but it received a major boost from the CPAG campaign. For selectivists, here was dramatic proof that hardship was being ignored despite vast expenditures on social programmes; child poverty was quickly linked in conservative speeches with demands for the reintroduction of prescription charges, reform of council house subsidies and reliance on occupational rather than state pensions". (19)

For all that, however, family poverty never became a major issue within the Conservative party as a whole and never became a key element in its attack upon the Labour Government in the period 1964-70. Indeed it was only during the election campaign of 1970, in the course of CPAG's attack upon Labour's record, that the Conservatives took up the issue in any broad sense.

In May 1970, shortly before his death, Iain Macleod, the Conservative Shadow Chancellor and a well-respected 'progressive', had met with Field and Townsend, at his own request, and had committed the party to an increase in Family Allowances. Some weeks earlier during the debate on Jenkins third Budget he had also drawn attention to what he saw as a major omission, namely....."any relief directly aimed at child poverty". (20) He had gone on to point out that....."There are still about 250,000 children living in poverty, if we define that as an income below the scales of requirements of supplementary benefits levels". (21) As a means of bringing immediate relief to these children MacLeod advocated an increase in family allowances with the increase being concentrated on low income groups by the operation of the clawback principle though he, like his Labour counterpart, anticipated that it would not be....."a very popular thing to do". (22)

19. Banting pp 75-76
 20. Hansard (Commons) Vol 798 Cols 1400-1401
 21. ibid
 22. ibid

Macleod's view in 1970 was markedly different from that which he held in the immediate wake of the devaluation measures of 1968 when he complained that clawback was a "thoroughly bad" principle and one which inflicted an unacceptable burden on richer parents. Inconsistent or not, Macleod had come to believe by mid-1970 that if Negative Income Tax, an essentially long term solution, could not be applied then there was no alternative in the short term....."except an increase in family allowances and, given the amount of money the Chancellor has, that implies clawback. Although I do not like it, I believe it to be the right answer". (23)

During the subsequent election campaign the party pledged, if it came to power, to tackle family poverty as a priority. Its election manifesto, A Brighter Tomorrow, promised....."we will tackle the problem of family poverty and ensure that adequate family allowances go to them that need them. (24) When Frank Field asked Edward Heath if this reinforced MacLeod's earlier statements he had replied....."We accept that, as Mr. MacLeod said in his Budget speech, the only way of tackling family poverty in the short term, is to increase family allowances and operate the clawback principle....."(25)

CPAG were, nevertheless, cautious in their optimism, and had recognised the allusion to selectivity in the assurances that had been given. Summarising A Brighter Tomorrow in their own election statement, the group noted that "The pledge to raise family allowances for all qualifying families, clawing back the increase from families claiming the full child tax allowances,

23. ibid co.1413

24. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in CPAG's own General Election policy manifesto the Group had written..... "The Conservative Party shows little awareness of the extent of poverty, or of the problems of families with low incomes and therefore of the need for a broad and co-ordinated programme of action covering fiscal, incomes and social policies".

25. Poverty No.16/17 p. 30

has not been explicitly stated in the manifesto. The manifesto comes dangerously near to proposing that family allowances should be means-tested. This would be wrong in principle and should be specifically rejected". (26)

With the election won it appeared at first that the Conservatives might enter office cautiously, prepared for a period of inactivity while policy options were discussed and priorities established. However, Edward Heath had considerably overhauled the machinery of the party in opposition and had established the most elaborate structure of research and policy committees the party had witnessed. He talked at his first party conference after becoming Prime Minister of the need for the new government to achieve a 'quiet revolution' and this was to be done by largely building upon the work done in opposition by these committees.

A Conservative biographer, Patrick Cosgrave, has noted. "the Heath Government was unusual in the extraordinary amount of research, argument and preparation that had gone into its five years of preparation for office: it was the proud boast of every minister that no cabinet in British history had been so well prepared for its task. Indeed. it was not uncommon for the Prime Minister to ensure that there was a copy of the 1970 manifesto on the table at Cabinet meetings, so that a check could be kept on progress made in fulfilling its undertakings. Even after the about-turns in economic and industrial policy. . . . Heath pursued the implementation of even minor manifesto pledges with obsessive, perhaps compensatory, rigour". (27)

Any illusions then, that this new government would commence its term of

26. CPAG - A War on Poverty - Poor Families and the Election
June 1970
27. Cosgrave, P. Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister Arrow 1979
pp 80-81

office unsure of direction were quickly dismissed. Before the summer recess commenced all the new ministers were in a position to thoroughly brief their senior civil servants as to how they expected to achieve Mr. Heath's "quiet and total revolution in the British way of life".⁽²⁸⁾ The basis for this 'revolution' was the introduction of a more rationalistic approach to policy appraisal in place of the highly pluralist style long favoured in British central administration. The 1970 White Paper The Re-organisation of Central Government⁽²⁹⁾ had provided, inter al, for the creation of the PAR - Programme Analysis and Review.

PAR's concern with the relative value and cost effectiveness of individual projects and policies was illustrated at an early stage, as we shall see, in the introduction of the Family Income Supplement. Its concern with policy analysis and the extent to which resource allocation and use achieved agreed objectives made it an important contributory factor in the Government's plans for the 'transformation of the welfare state to meet our needs today'.⁽³⁰⁾ The White Paper had carried with it the party leadership's firm belief that policies should fulfil definite specifiable objectives. A major aim in the field of social policy then, aided ironically by CPAG's efforts to demonstrate the existence of serious pockets of poverty, was the rationalisation of the welfare system to meet the needs of the very poor. The White Paper also, as Richardson and Jordan point out....."owed something to another strand of reformist thought, and advocated quantitative aids to decision-making - a 'best value for money' approach in selecting between options....."⁽³¹⁾ This fitted perfectly with the belief noted earlier that the problems of welfare may have owed less to the amount of resources allocated than to the

28. The Times 27.10.70.

29. Cmnd 4506

30. See Spiers, M. Techniques and Public Administration Fontana 1975 pp 101-05

31. Governing Under Pressure p. 36

the actual management of them. The result was that the October 1970 paper New Policies for Public Spending provided for the allocation of £92 million in 1971-72 to previous programmes of social service expenditure and also for reductions in some parts of these programmes of £143 million resulting in a net loss of £51 million. Looking ahead to 1974-75 the net loss scheduled was to be £460 million. The basis for these reductions was the Government's concern to 'establish more sensible priorities'.⁽³²⁾ It also reflected the Government's reluctance to finance a huge public sector borrowing requirement out of the proceeds of increased taxation - an approach many Conservatives saw as a recipe for electoral disaster.

The result was that the decision to introduce FIS. "resulted from the adoption of rational criteria and analysis. The political solution would have been to honour the promise about family allowances regardless. But it could also be argued that the government was keeping a weather eye on political criteria in the future. The analysis suggested not only that the family allowance scheme would be expensive and inefficient. . . . but that it would antagonise voters who disliked losing from one pocket what they gained in another".⁽³³⁾

The Introduction of Family Income Supplement.

On September 8th 1970 Sir Keith Joseph, the new Secretary of State for Social Services met with Frank Field and Peter Townsend for over an hour to discuss his party's plans for the poor. CPAG's aim was to remind the Conservatives of their pre-election assurances and to dissuade them from implementing a recently-mooted, new means-tested family allowance 'supplement' similar to that which James Callaghan had tried, unsuccessfully to introduce in 1967. It was argued that the introduction of the new scheme

32. Poverty No.19 p. 6

33. Brown, R. G. S. The Management of Welfare Fontana 1975 p. 209

effectively amounted to a....."decision not to honour the 1970 election promise to direct more cash aid to low income families by means of increased family allowances but instead to supplement wages through Family Income Supplement". (34)

It had been CPAG's view that the best way to take families out of poverty was by raising family allowances and, in order that better off families did not benefit from the rise, they proposed that income tax payers should pay back their rise by forfeiting their tax deductible child allowances. However, despite their assurances before the election both Edward Heath and Iain MacLeod had voiced fears about the popularity of clawback and both had also alluded to some possibility of more selectivity. On coming to power their reservations about such a scheme were further reinforced by the findings of a study conducted, as R. G. S. Brown has noted, probably in the Economic Advisers' branch of the DHSS. The conclusions were threefold"Firstly, that a rise in family allowances, as advocated by CPAG, would fail to help a third of poor families, since they only had one child; secondly, some of the poor families who did receive increased allowances would lose them again through income tax; finally, there was the apparent economic and administrative irrationality of a scheme which would pay out £187 million, of which 97% would be recovered through income tax leaving only £6 million in the pockets of the families it was designed to benefit". (35)

The first obstacle could have been overcome, as CPAG had long advocated, by extending family allowances to the first child. However, the Group had not prepared its case as thoroughly as it might have. In particular, its own reasoning does not appear to have been sensitive to the overall framework of Conservative policy and the Government's desire to contain public

34. ibid p. 200

35. ibid

expenditure where possible. As Brown points out....."further calculations showed that this would be very costly and administrative studies made it clear that it would take too long to introduce. It was therefore evident that the family allowance scheme would be relatively inefficient and the government was forced to consider alternative ways of relieving poverty among low earners".⁽³⁶⁾ This was a significant conclusion, not the least because it indicated that the CPAG family allowance scheme was not rejected on the basis of policy preference but because of its apparent inefficiency and, crucially, its difficulty to administer. Furthermore, the introduction of the cheaper, means-tested FIS may have been seen by the Government as an important step to fulfilling a manifesto pledge that a new Conservative Government....."in coming to its decisions.....must always recognise that its responsibility is to the people and all the people....."⁽³⁷⁾ Chief among these responsibilities was a concern to lessen the burden on the tax payer.

Accordingly, the alternative favoured by the Government was to supplement the wages of the poorest with an income supplement which would make up half the difference between actual earnings and an amount indexed to family size and general living standards. This scheme would cost some £8 million. Its principal drawback for CPAG was that low wage-earners would be subject to a means-test to determine their qualification for it. Furthermore, the Group voiced its serious fears that the nature of the scheme would discourage take-up since it reinforced stigma.

Brown notes that....."The final decision to adopt FIS must have been taken in Cabinet or a Cabinet committee and it is likely that agreement was reached on the principle at an early stage, before DHSS officials invested

36. ibid
37. Poverty 19 p. 5

too much time in detailed planning. If so, the Cabinet probably had before it a short paper signed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State explaining the objections to family allowances and requesting authority for the Secretary of State to prepare the new scheme. Final approval would probably have been based upon a short paper from the Secretary of State alone, indicating that the financial implications had been agreed with the Chancellor and drawing attention to any aspects that might cause controversy, perhaps with particular reference to any objections that had been raised in consultations....."(38)

There is little evidence to be found of CPAG taking part in such consultations on FIS other than their early meeting with Sir Keith Joseph. Furthermore the speed with which legislation was introduced suggests that preparations for such a scheme were already well advanced within the DHSS before the Conservatives took office. Indeed, Rosemary Marten recalls from her work in the Conservative Research Department that....."certainly no thought had been given to the scheme before the June election". (39)

The apparent lack of consultation and the speed with which the scheme was executed points to the strong role played by the DHSS and seems to confirm Brown's view that....."policy-making will.... be left to those who run the service unless there are strong counterveiling pressures compelling the political leadership to pay attention to wider factors". (40)

There had, of course, been specific pledges given to CPAG by Edward Heath and Iain MacLeod that family poverty would be tackled in the short run by an increase in family allowances. Perhaps what CPAG had not fully accepted was that 'pledges' made in Opposition, and often in ignorance of the facts of government, are often set aside in office when their fulfilment becomes

38. ibid
 39. Poverty 19 p. 5
 40. Brown p. 210

unrealistic, impossible or politically unacceptable. As Rosemary Marten points out....."there was a specific pledge to tackle poverty in the short term by increasing family allowances and operating the claw-back principle. It was thought at the time that a 50p increase would cost £30 million net a year. What was not appreciated was the disastrous effect of the Budget tax changes and inflation: the poverty threshold and the standard tax rate threshold had got too close for another increase using claw-back."⁽⁴¹⁾

Both the selective nature of the benefit and its restricted application were unacceptable to CPAG. In total some 190,000 households, containing roughly half a million children, would receive a supplement to their income but, as CPAG, pointed out....."the Family Income Supplement is aimed to help only the poorest of the poor, and it limits help to families with fathers in full-time work earning less than the current supplementary benefit rates".⁽⁴²⁾

It has been argued that the Conservatives accepted the scheme too readily, without fully thinking through the marginal impact it was likely to have.....
....."Had the possible effects on incentive and the probable effects of low take-up really been thought through? Had the scale of help needed really been considered. Sir Keith Joseph in the 2nd reading debate on the Bill, defending it from the accusation of a return to Speenhamland, said that it would help well under one per cent of working households. While winning one argument, he was losing another - that of the effectiveness of help".⁽⁴³⁾

The conflicting nature of 'problem definition' that CPAG had encountered in the mid-sixties with numbers in poverty was also apparent in the rival definitions of the 'problem' given by itself and the DHSS during the FIS

41. Poverty 19 p. 5
 42. Poverty 16/17 p. 4
 43. Poverty 19 pp 5-6

episode. During the Bill's second reading, for example, Keith Joseph had gone on to state that FIS would bring....."help to over one half of the households below supplementary benefit level".⁽⁴⁴⁾ CPAG, however, were convinced that the Secretary of State had underestimated the number of families in poverty and offered their own estimate of 300,000 households comprising 1.3 million people, who they felt should have qualified for aid of this sort. The £8 million set aside for this purpose therefore seemed derisory to the group. Indeed, Iain MacLeod had earlier pledged some £30 million towards assisting low income families in this way and this figure had been calculated on the assumption that the Chancellor would have a round £220 million at his disposal.⁽⁴⁵⁾ However, MacLeod's successor, Anthony Barber, awarded to the tax payer a sum of over £300 million in rebates and concessions, fulfilling in the process a major election pledge to the party's supporters. To some extent overlooking the crucial importance of this particular pledge, a 'reward' for votes cast, CPAG added....."on this basis one would have expected £50 million to go to relieving family poverty, and if the true dimensions of the problem had been realised, possibly more".⁽⁴⁶⁾

By the Autumn of 1970, then, it was clear that where CPAG had seen Labour as failing to act on the poor's behalf, the Conservatives seemed likely to intervene largely to control expenditure and increase selectivity.

Sir Keith Joseph had set the tone at the party's annual conference in September where he had taken great pains to elaborate the abuses inflicted upon the welfare system by those who he alleged to be 'scroungers' and 'layabouts' and was supported for his pledge to increase official invigilation of claimants in receipt of supplementary benefits. In policy terms it was an occasion for the party to register its support once more for selectivity and

44. Hansard (Commons) Vol. 806 col. 223

45. Poverty No. 16/17 pp 3-4

46. ibid See also CPAG broadsheet A Better Tomorrow for the Poor

expenditure control.

Secondly, he pledged to extend the number of benefits covered by selectivity, and, thirdly, declared his intention to impose new charges for a variety of items and services available through the National Health Service. Again it must be emphasised, despite CPAG's subsequent reaction, that such a strategy was firmly in keeping with Edward Heath's comments in 1965 concerning the 'transformation of the welfare state'. Gummer has commented that this brand of conservatism expresses a distinct attitude towards social policy and it must be added that the inevitability of the strategy had been well signposted throughout the sixties. Though the party's intentions may have appeared somewhat vague during the election, its traditional approach to social policy remained distinct and unchallenged. . . .

. . . . The social services are charged not just with the duty of relieving poverty but also with the task of enabling the recipient to move from dependence to independence. The priorities are therefore clear. First, help to those permanently in need. Secondly, the creation of an effective structure to gather up all those who, temporarily or not, need additional help. Thirdly, the extension of ways by which many of those at present condemned to dependence can begin to provide for themselves". (47)

The CPAG reaction to FIS was sharp. The Group's Islington branch, in a move which heralded the 'high profile' style the group was increasingly forced to adopt over the next few years, called upon CPAG to convene a national conference which would bring together all organisations and groups who held a common concern for the welfare of the underprivileged and which would consider ways of mobilising resistance to the government's intention for a reduction in welfare expenditure. (48) Nothing substantial came from this call apart from a few ad hoc meetings with the nascent claimants unions, which largely sought advice and material assistance from the group, and a similar series of meetings with research officers of trade unions which

47. Gummer p. 434

48. CPAG Executive Minutes 24. 9. 70.

numbered many low paid workers within their ranks. While ideas and literature do seem to have been traded, concerted action and joint-initiatives on poverty and low pay do not. (49)

The October Mini-Budget

The pattern that Keith Joseph had set in September was to be further reinforced on October 27th when Anthony Barber presented his 'mini-budget' to the House of Commons. Income tax was substantially reduced and public expenditure cut by £330 million in 1971-72, increasing to cuts of £1,600 million in the year 1974-75. Cheap welfare milk was abolished, prescription, dental, spectacles and school meal charges were all raised. Free school milk for children over the age of 7 was discontinued and a substantial cut in housing subsidies and agricultural support was effected. In addition, the pledge to raise family allowances was set aside and, in place of it, the means-tested Family Income Supplement formally introduced. (50)

The Group's chairman, writing in 1974, spoke of the mini-budget as marking a turning point in social history and being tantamount to a declaration of class warfare....."It represented a return to the more authoritarian and doctrinaire principles of Tory social philosophy, which no Tory Administration of the post war years had dared espouse and to which the Heath Administration

49. ibid - the meetings with trade union research officers were arranged with the help of Giles Radice of the GMWU and Nicholas Bosanquet, then of the Prices and Incomes Board. A full discussion follows in later chapters.
50. David Barker notes....."on October 28th 1970, however, the new Government published a Bill which signified a radical departure not only from its stated policy in opposition but from any previous attempt in this country, at least in the recent past, to grapple with the problem of relating income to family size". Barker, D. 'The Family Income Supplement' in Bull, D. ed. Family Poverty pp 81-82 While the Conservative's had claimed that FIS was a necessary expedient whose shape had been dictated by the tax structure created by the Labour Government, Barker stresses that the claim was only partly true and that the decision to introduce FIS was as much a political decision as it was technical. It offered the opportunity for the Government to create sufficient fiscal flexibility to finance their promised tax cuts to the better-off.

has obstinately clung". (51)

Townsend went on....."the management of the social services and social security, in particular, was to be more strongly infused with the principle of conditional welfare for the few....through means-tested benefits, the prosperous working class would be obliged to 'fend for themselves' and 'stand on their own feet' and the undeserving poor, the so called work-shy, cohabiters and deceitful immigrants, would be properly vetted and controlled. For the small class of deserving poor, on the other hand - new forms of national charity should properly be developed and dispensed. The strategy reaffirmed, in short, the paramountcy of the values of the market". (52)

Townsend thus summed up, somewhat polemically, the essence of Conservative social policy during the Heath administration - conditional welfare for those identified as the 'neediest' and the cultivation of a 'spirit of independence' in less deserving cases. This dichotomy had been made quite clear by Conservative spokesmen, though their interpretation of its rationale and effects would undoubtedly have been more generous. Gummer, for example, noted that....."It sums up the two basic elements which underlie our thought - the necessity for society to see that those who need help can get their share of the community's wealth and at the same time the responsibility of the individual to help himself and contribute towards the common good". (53)

Andrew Gamble attributes Conservative policy at that time to what he sees as the strained priorities of the post-war welfare consensus. Significantly, he points to Britain's fundamental economic problems as the determinant of what could or could not be done by the Heath Government. Stagnation and

51. Townsend, P. 'The Social Underdevelopment of Britain'New Statesman 1. 3. 74.
 52. ibid
 53. Gamble p.434

inflation had become so intractable that....."Any government elected in 1970 would therefore have needed to rethink some of the priorities of the post-war politics of power".⁽⁵⁴⁾ This, he contends, Edward Heath attempted to do and this attempt may be seen in the 'transformation of the Welfare State'. It should also be noted, despite the apparent divisiveness of Conservative budgets and selectivity in welfare, that there had been sympathy within the Labour Cabinet also for a similar approach in 1966-67 and that James Callaghan had, himself, only just failed in a bid to introduce a means-tested 'family income supplement'.

There is some evidence to suggest that Heath's adherence to the 'competition policy' outlined in the mid-sixties was a gamble which, if successful, would produce economic growth and enable the party to include claimants in the general prosperity of the country as it had done under Boyd-Carpenter in 1959. There was also a strong similarity with the Wilsonian belief that increased welfare expenditure must be contingent upon economic growth, especially if the economy was stagnant....."If the economy broke out of the vice of stagnation and inflation there would be greater rewards for everyone. The welfare consensus and the politics of interest group bargaining could be established on a firm base once more".⁽⁵⁵⁾ There were two major problems, however, which the Conservatives failed to deal with. Firstly, they failed to explain their intentions, their strategy, to the electorate. Secondly, and more importantly, the living standards of wage-earners had somehow to be cut in the short term.

The outcome, as one commentator has noted was that....."The budget deficit was allowed to grow astronomically. In addition, savings that were made in public expenditure were directed at the living standards of wage-

54. Gamble p. 220

55. *ibid*

earners - these included the rise in rents under the Housing Finance Act and the increase in charges for health and school milk. The result was an enormous increase in the pressure of demand and therefore more rapid inflation at the very time that workers' living standards were being squeezed". (56)

CPAG clearly felt some responsibility for this state of affairs. Field commented in 1971..... "if CPAG unintentionally played a role, however small, in Labour's defeat, then given the move towards inequality upon which this Government has embarked, the Group acted against the poor's short-term interests. Although at the time it was difficult to say anything good about the Labour Government, that administration has taken on an almost Christ-like appearance in comparison with the present government". (57)

The full extent of the dilemma in which CPAG found itself during the 1970 election campaign is only apparent when the terms of the mini-budget are considered. There can be little doubt that the Group was taking a major gamble by distancing itself from the Labour Party and by soliciting Conservative support. There was little evidence, other than MacLeod's comments in the Commons and Heath's subsequent letter to the Group, to suggest that the Conservatives were more likely to deliver reform and increase family allowances than the Labour Party were. The wisdom of the group's gamble must also be questioned against the fact that both sets of promises, vague or otherwise, had been largely made in the atmosphere of the General Election campaign. CPAG's awareness, as a result of its experience with the Labour Government, that there was a significant credibility gap between what a party promises in opposition (and during

56: ibid p.224 and Field, F. One Nation - The Conservatives Record since June 1970. Poverty Pamphlet No.12 Sept. 1972
57. Bull ed. pp 153-54

election campaigns), and what it is able or willing to do when in office might have led it to be rather more realistic in its hopes of Conservative policy. (58)

Some note of caution had been struck in the group's own policy manifesto but CPAG seems to have refrained from questioning Conservative policy more directly, perhaps in an effort to win support in the party should it come to power. That is not to doubt that many within CPAG were anticipating the sort of measures effected by the October mini-budget. What is clear, is that between January and June 1970 CPAG were in no position, given their commitment to raise family allowances, to do anything else but set aside their reservations and approach the Conservatives constructively and with an open mind.

Peter Townsend felt that the Conservative manifesto already contained. "the ingredients for a more divisive strategy". These included the pledges to cut income tax and surtax, reduce public expenditure, extend private and occupational pension schemes, change the housing subsidy scheme, sell council houses and take. "firm action to deal with abuse of the Social Security system. so as to prevent the whole system from being brought into disrepute by the shirkers and scroungers". (59) Even so, Townsend, like others in the group, felt the ambiguity of the manifesto was such that some degree of optimism could be justified. "in deference to the poverty lobby the harsh implications of the manifesto were tempered

58. Rarely, when in office, do parties break radically with the past. Townsend notes. "the social policy of a government can be evaluated in different ways - in relation to long-established party objectives and principles; the expression of those objectives and principles in the party manifesto; the internal consistency of the statement of objectives and the means chosen for fulfilling these objectives; the standards and tests for policies which it perceives and accepts and more objective standards of social need or condition". New Statesman 1. 3. 74. See also Fowler, G. 'The politics of social Administration' Public Administration Bulletin August 1977 pp 2-10
59. New Statesman 1. 3. 74.

by unspecific promises to protect pensioner's living standards, improve benefits for the ill and disabled, give priority to community services, tackle the problem of family poverty and ensure that adequate family allowances go to those families that need them". (60)

So that....."although the auguries were ominous these were therefore grounds for supposing, especially when the party failed to secure a majority of the votes of the electorate, that the inegalitarian and authoritarian predispositions of Tory social strategy might be moderated in practice". (61)

However, the subsequent failure to moderate that strategy in practice resulted in an urgent rethink on the part of CPAG, of its own tactics and attitudes towards the new government. Townsend had already anticipated the worst. On the morning of the mini-budget CPAG released a press bulletin which quoted the Chairman as saying....."if the Government announces a different scheme it will have to be cross-examined vigorously about the history of its commitments. It will have to prove that the CPAG scheme is impracticable. And it will have to demonstrate that the alternative favoured is likely to be more effective in reducing poverty and also preferable in administrative, economic and social terms." (62)

The Internal Appraisal of Style

The next two weeks saw the beginning of the 'vigorous cross-examination' of which Townsend talked. Equally significantly, CPAG's own tactics and style were to be the subject of rigorous appraisal, discussion and friction.

Frank Field's decision to write at length to the Prime Minister to remind him of pre-election pledges which had now been seriously modified or reneged upon and his subsequent release to the press of a highly polemical critique of Tory policy starkly entitled "Has Heath Ratted on the Poor" exposed the

60. ibid
61. ibid
62. ibid

same anxieties and reservations within the group about style and tactics that had been raised by the 'Poor Get Poorer' campaign some months earlier.

Concern within the group at this rather abrasive new twist in CPAG's attitude towards the Government was voiced by Fred Philp who wrote to Peter Townsend, the Chairman. "I was not very happy about Frank's letter to the Prime Minister. The basic arguments are sound but the letter was far too long and I doubt whether it does much good to question Heath's integrity so directly. I think this letter will tend to alienate rather than persuade Heath and his colleagues to do any of the things we want them to do. The heading of the accompanying press release 'Has Heath Ratted on the Poor?' may win the applause of Tuesdays Meeting but it does not enhance the reputation of CPAG as a responsible body concerned to press a carefully reasoned case". (63)

Philp's remarks are of considerable significance, not least because they indicate some residual support within CPAG for the low-key, Fabian style of elite persuasion adopted under Tony Lynes. For Philp, and those who supported this view, CPAG should be seen as a responsible, objective interest group whose role was only tangentially political and whose route to influence lay through research, persuasion and discrete negotiation. Its essential role must be to uncover evidence of poverty and present the facts as part of a reasoned dialogue on the subject with policymakers in Government and the Bureaucracy.

The 'necessity' to adopt such an abrasive style confirms the view noted in previous chapters that CPAG had failed to achieve status as an 'insider group'

63. Fred Philp to Peter Townsend 4.11.70.

regularly and meaningfully consulted on issues affecting its 'clients'. Grant observes that. "the most important distinguishing characteristic of insider groups is their tendency to adopt a 'strategy of responsibility'". (64) It seems clear, however, that many within the group regarded such a strategy as ineffectual and inappropriate in the circumstances of what they saw as a Conservative attempt to erode the welfare system through changes and selectivity.

The main reason for the 'Poor get Poorer' campaign had been to demonstrate that the group would only tolerate broken promises and inertia to a point and then it would respond with any means at its disposal, most notably, damaging attacks in the media. In this sense, Field's attack upon the Conservatives was consistent with the tactics employed during the 'Poor get Poorer' campaign. Acknowledging the dilemma that the cause group, lacking effective sanctions, finds itself in when confronted with a Government which may seem to be undermining what little progress has been recently achieved, it must be said that CPAG's reaction may still have been judged somewhat hasty and certainly caustic.

Grant notes that. "it is characteristic of politically unsophisticated outsider groups that their demands are presented in strident terms", (65) and it seems clear that CPAG could be seen as moving uncomfortably close to such an image. CPAG has not always recognised, or perhaps acknowledged the highly incremental nature of the policy process and could be criticised for making the natural, but elementary, error of 'jumping in feet first'. Essentially, as during the 'poor get poorer' campaign, CPAG was allowing its heart to rule its head. Its criticism of Conservative policy may well have been justified, but the group's tactical sense seems to have been impaired.

64. Grant lp. 5

65. ibid p. 10

It could be argued that a more realistic alternative would have been to continue the 'reasoned dialogue' a little longer and attempt to more fully understand the thinking and ethos of a party with which, unlike Labour, it had had no previous dealing, before using its prerogative of 'exit' and 'voice', in such strident fashion. As Philp himself pointed out, such a response may well have been deserving and was likely to win the enthusiastic support of CPAG members, but the group's immediate concern was not to play to the gallery but to achieve and sustain effective consultation with Government. The alternatives, as Grant notes, are clear. Groups which fail to show the necessary "tact and discretion" and which are too strident in their criticism of Government policy may find themselves excluded in future from the consultative process. (66)

Conversely, some within the group saw CPAG's impact upon the consultative process as minimal and viewed Philp's reasoning as cautious and inappropriate. Townsend, for example, replied....."uncomfortable as it can be for us as a pressure-group to remind a Government or political party of a failure to honour commitments (for we are bound to attract the opprobrium of loyalists) it has to be done. This is the only way we can make our (small) contribution to the need for a better political morality. I believe it is also necessary in order to maintain the integrity of the group and gain the unqualified respect of the public. But, as you know, much depends on emphasis and style and the relationship of criticism to constructive proposals. We are trying to do our best under the pressure of events". (67)

Townsend raises a number of important points here. His comments about maintaining the "integrity of the group" indicate his belief that the group,

66. see McCarthy, M. A. 'Organising the Independent Centre' Political Quarterly July-September 1978 esp. pp 299-301
 67. Peter Townsend to Fred Philp 9. 11. 70.

must not be seen to endorse either inertia or regressive policies. This belief had been a central theme of 'poor get poorer'. His reference to gaining the "unqualified respect of the public" is particularly significant and confirms the view expressed both by himself and Field, at the time of the latter's appointment, that the group must seek new strategies, especially the cultivation of a much broader public support for its work. However, it is Townsend's concern with style which best illustrates the differences voiced within CPAG at this time.

Implicit in Philp's view was a concern for the style and image of CPAG as a campaigning group whose effectiveness depended upon its ability to persuade by reasoned argument and by the presentation of fact. His call for caution and moderation could therefore have been interpreted as an entreaty not to embark upon a course which could damage the group itself and what he clearly regarded as its prestigious image. While there is an obvious equation between a group's image and its ability to influence policy it must not be allowed to produce a spurious loyalty to the group per se rather than its aims. Townsend feared that a 'trade-off' of this sort could easily occur if the group remained too cautious in its criticism of government policy or if it held back from engaging in activities which might be described as abrasive or confrontational. (68)

The need to avoid or reduce such a trade-off is likely to be reinforced in the CPAG-type of client group, unlike the sectional or defensive group, membership of which offers clear associational and selective incentives, and which is both composed of and administered by a definitive public. CPAG, like many similar middle-class 'client-groups' works on behalf of a broader public; benefits therefore are not exclusive to members or activists and

will accrue largely to the 'client' who is usually not a member of the group.

This notion of 'selective incentives' for group membership has been widely documented. In the fifties Talcott Parsons and Neil Smelser postulated that 'performance' throughout society is proportional to the 'rewards' and 'sanctions' involved. They argued that individuals deliberately associate themselves with various groups or causes because they envisage some personal gain being made from that association. (69) More recently, Mancur Olson Junior has revised this hypothesis and given it an economic perspective. He argues that individuals will rationally associate themselves with a group that can offer them a service, reward, satisfaction or office that is based on the notion of 'excludability'. His contention is, therefore, that anyone joining a voluntary association of the CPAG type must be given some sort of "selective incentive" to do so. (70)

As a result of its 'client' role and the fact that its members and staff are almost, if not entirely, middle-class activists and therefore not poor, CPAG can only offer two realistic selective incentives, other than copies of its journal Poverty, to those who wish to join it. The first may be termed the 'associational incentive' i. e. the kudos, status, prestige and sense of identification to be had from joining a group like CPAG. The second is 'altruism' i. e. though an individual may join CPAG for altruistic reasons vis a vis a desire to help the poor, the ultimate selective incentive is self-satisfaction, though this is difficult to substantiate.

The 'poor get poorer' campaign was something of a trade-off between these two incentives. The associational benefits were clearly at risk as the group

69. Parsons, T. and Smelser, N. Economy and Society Glencoe Free Press 1954 pp 50-69

70. Olsen, Jnr, M. The Logic of Collective Action Harvard University Press 1971 pp 13-17

challenged the very legitimacy of the Government. In doing so, however, members were at least assured of some personal satisfaction. Many, as Bradshaw was quoted as commenting earlier, saw it as 'one in the eye', a gesture of retaliation. In these ways then, although members don't necessarily benefit from higher FIS or raised Family Allowances or an end to the 'poverty trap', they can be assured of some benefit from their membership or activism. It was Townsend's concern, however, that members should not be distracted by the benefits of an ongoing association with CPAG itself in favour of the satisfaction to be achieved by seeking in every way possible, regardless of group image, to secure action on poverty. This, he implied, could be the unhappy and self-indulgent outcome of continued caution and moderation such as Philp seemed to suggest, in his view that Field's original press release did not..... "enhance the reputation of CPAG as a responsible body concerned to press a carefully reasoned case". (71) The evidence suggests, however, that Philp may have been right in his criticism.

The Objections to FIS

The measures contained in the October mini-budget and CPAGs reaction to them ensured that, for the immediate future at least, the group would respond to other promises with some scepticism and to further 'cuts' with outright

71. Zald and Ash have commented that as a 'social movement organisation' of the CPAG type attains an economic and social base in society (and here I would argue this includes factors such as the activists' own concern with maintaining his salary, lifestyle and his wish for social/political status or prestige) and as the original charismatic leadership is replaced, a bureaucratic structure emerges and a general accommodation to society occurs..... "The participants in this structure have a stake in preserving the organisation, regardless of its ability to attain goals". In some way, then, the decision to undertake the 'poor get poorer' campaign contributed significantly in countervailing this trend to organisational consolidation and also ensured that the group would break free from the constraints imposed as a result of its deference towards the Labour Government between 1965-69. See Zald, M.N. and Ash, R. 'Social Movement Organisations, Growth, Decay and Change' in Social Forces No. 44 March 1966 pp 327-40

hostility. The overriding tactic was to repeatedly 'remind' party leaders what they had previously stated in public. Where promises had been broken the group was quick to expose the fact in the media; where recommendations had been made the group continued to press for legislation. Their task was aided by Edward Heath's own penchant for popular slogans like the promise of 'A Better Tomorrow', of a 'Quiet revolution' affecting every aspect of British life and, most obviously, his use of themes like the 'one nation'.⁽⁷²⁾ Each were ready targets for an increasingly publicity-oriented CPAG.

The group was particularly concerned to show that the introduction of FIS was wholly inconsistent with Edward Heath's post-election comment that his Government's aim would be..... "not to divide, but to unite and, where there are differences, to bring reconciliation".⁽⁷³⁾ Neither the introduction of FIS or the October mini-budget could be even loosely described as efforts to 'bring reconciliation'. The group's principal, non-economic, objections to FIS concerned the likelihood of low take-up as a result of its means-tested nature and the limited publicity about the scheme. There was considerable recent evidence to show that poor or limited publicity could have a serious depressive effect upon benefit take-up.

Even after the 1966 Social Security Act, and despite considerable publicity about the availability and right to benefit, Tony Atkinson had shown that there were still 600,000 old people, quite apart from additional groups of people becoming eligible for supplementary assistance for the first time since the 1966 Act, who were eligible for assistance under this means-tested programme but not receiving it. By 1970 these represented about 27% of individuals eligible for assistance.⁽⁷⁴⁾

72. The Times 20.6.70.

73. ibid

74. Atkinson, A. B. Poverty in Britain and the Reform of Social Security Cambridge University Press 1969 p. 76

The 1966 Ministry of Social Security Report Circumstances of Families also found evidence of individuals entitled to supplementary benefit who were not obtaining it, whether through pride or ignorance of their rights. ⁽⁷⁵⁾ During the Labour governments of 1964-70 the official targets for the take-up of free school dinners were never reached and remained about 70,000 short.

Anthony Crosland when Secretary of State for Education, had admitted that. "not only in school meals but also in many other fields we still have not discovered satisfactory methods by which we can make it clear to people who are entitled to free benefits that they are so entitled and how best they can claim them". ⁽⁷⁶⁾

Similar evidence also existed on the take-up of free welfare foods. The rate rebate scheme was yet another measure where take-up had been very poor, so much so that CPAG were able to persuade Peter Walker, Secretary of State for the Environment, of the need to conduct an advertising drive in an area which had exceptionally low take-up. ⁽⁷⁷⁾ The group estimated from Circumstances of Families that only 10% of eligible low-income households were claiming the rebates and the Report of the Administration of the Wage Stop (1967) showed that only 16 out of 52 families surveyed claimed rate rebates.

CPAG had also estimated in Spring 1968 that in the last year of prescription charges before they were abolished and then reintroduced (1963) less than one in five low paid workers claimed their rights to free medicine and a similar take-up was evident on optical and dental care. There was, therefore, considerable evidence to show, in the wake of broken Conservative pledges, that the alternative means-tested measures the party had initiated were derisory in resource terms and unrealistic in terms of expected take-up.

75. Ministry of Social Security. Circumstances of Families HMSO 1966
 76. Hansard (Commons) Vol 750 col 959
 77. See Marten, R. in Poverty No. 19

A major responsibility for CPAG then, in the months that followed was
 "a cautious appraisal of FIS". (78)

During those months the Conservative Government embarked on.....
 "the most comprehensive and expensive advertising campaign ever on poor
 people's rights to means-tested help". in order to meet Keith Joseph's
 extremely high take-up target of 85% for FIS. (79) By the Summer of 1971
 CPAG could point out that even after the Secretary of State had raised the
 qualifying earnings level in order to keep the scheme in line with inflation,
 the Government had still yet to achieve a 50% take-up on the original numbers
 thought to be eligible.

They commented..... "In the tradition that attack is the best form of
 defence, the Government has begun to claim success for its social policy.
 But in doing so it has underlined the very limited scope of the anti-poverty
 programme. By adding 85,000 families to the rolls for free welfare foods,
 57,000 for free medicine, or only 42,000 for dental care, can the Government
 really claim that it has made serious inroads into poverty". (80) In addition,
 the group reminded the Secretary of State of statements he had made
 previously about the welfare of the poor..... "when Sir Keith outlined the
 Government's controversial strategy, he promised to reconsider the whole
 programme if it failed to reach those in need. Sir Keith's colleagues have
 kept their promises to the richer sections of the community. The important
 question is whether the Government will keep faith with the poor. If the
 Heath administration is going to fulfill its pledge of tackling family poverty
 within the lifetime of a Parliament, it needs to change course - and quickly". (81)

78. Poverty No.16/17 p12
 79. Poverty No.19
 80. ibid
 81. ibid

The objections to FIS were further compounded by the timing of its introduction. Although the increased social service charges outlined in the mini-budget were to come into force in April 1971, FIS was not scheduled for operation until September. Field has revealed that the group certainly did not expect the Government to increase family allowances and thereby make many families ineligible for income supplements before the FIS scheme came into effect and so it decided that its annual visit to the Chancellor should be concerned not only with its perennial plea for an increase in family allowances, but with a demand to raise the tax threshold. (82)

In its March 1971 Memorandum to the Chancellor the group highlighted the problems of the large numbers of workers who did a full week's work, earning less than their theoretical supplementary benefit entitlement but who continued to pay tax at the standard rate. (83) The memorandum demonstrated two alternative methods of introducing a minimum earned-income relief which would lift out of tax workers earning 'poverty wages'. However, their ideas fell on deaf ears and, to some extent, were turned 'upside down' by the Chancellor.

Field commented. "Alas, our explanations must have been inadequate, for instead of opting to take the poor out of tax, the Chancellor effected our proposal to the higher reaches of the tax range, so that those at the top paid less tax". (84) This was all the more surprising as Barber had said that he wanted to do all he could to help the poor but that the money wasn't available.

In addition to these concessions, Anthony Barber's 1971 budget redirected

- 82. Bull p. 155
- 83. CPAG 'A Plan to Help Low Paid Workers and Overcome Family Poverty' reproduced in Poverty No. 18 pp 14-20 March 1971
- 84. Bull p. 155

to taxpayers an enormous budget surplus. This meant that, beginning with Roy Jenkins final budget, some £1,200 million was to be returned to taxpayers by the end of the financial year. The amount allocated specifically to families totalled £215 million; of this some £207 million in child tax allowances benefitted the largely better-off taxpayers while a meagre £8 million fell to the very poorest families. By March 1972, Anthony Barber's assurances that resources were not available to assist the poor appeared hollow, if not cynical, against his boast that his budgets had reduced the burden of taxation by over £3,000 million.⁽⁸⁵⁾ As Field noted at the time. "he has thus fulfilled an election promise, but his budgets have broken Mr. Heath's pledge to create one nation".⁽⁸⁶⁾

In March 1972, CPAG presented a further memorandum to the Chancellor which carried a critique of government policy and a review of broken promises. It was appropriately titled One Nation: The Conservative's Record Since June 1970 and was published in September as a Poverty pamphlet. In it, the group spoke of Anthony Barber's period of office as. "the age of redistribution of income to the rich". Crucially, Field commented "And our grandchildren will be at a loss to understand why this aspect of the 'quiet revolution' raised almost no comment in public debate".⁽⁸⁷⁾ CPAG's own failure to influence the course of Government policy and the remaining options open to it to do so were to come under intense scrutiny during the ensuing 'post mortem'.

The Need for a New Strategy

The problem of cohesion is a crucial one for an interest group closely

85. Harrison, A. 'Where's the Money Gone?' Poverty No. 23 Summer 1972 and Hansard (Commons) Vol 833 Col 1390 21.3.72.
86. Bull p.157
87. Field, F. One Nation: The Conservative's Record Since June 1970 Poverty Pamphlet No.12 September 1972 p.12

involved in politics, its degree of unity is often fundamental in determining the amount of success it is likely to enjoy. No group can afford to present itself to policymakers as divided, indecisive or factionalised. On the contrary, its image must be that of an articulate, coherent body whose leaders or delegates are seen as expressing a unanimous viewpoint in their dealings with Government. (88) In a period of transition, however, as perhaps when leading officers change or a long-established policy begins to fail, personalities and opinions tend to become more strident.

On the one hand, established leading members of the group may decide that the time is right to test the mettle of their new leaders, on the other, new, perhaps more radical and opinionated members may wish to make their own mark upon the group and launch a critique of failing strategies. In turn, the leader or leaders of a group in such situations must themselves have anticipated criticism, dwindling confidence in their efforts or anxieties about their political style and must be prepared to use any machinery and power at their disposal to meet these problems and re-establish cohesion. (89) Of crucial importance is the need to contain differences within the tight circle of the group and prevent minor dissension from erupting into a major split which could do irreparable damage to the group if reported in the press and in government circles. (90)

88. Truman Chapter 6

89. A useful illustration of this in a similar field is the current spate of political 'in-fighting' between rival factions within the Parliamentary Labour Party. The Party leader, James Callaghan under strong pressure to resign by the Left led by Mr. Tony Benn and sections of the NEC, has sought to forge an alliance with a group of Senior trade union leaders from the Labour Party - TUC Liaison Committee, led by Mr. David Basnett, in an effort to forestall a constitutional revision within the party which would give further impetus to left-wing ascendancy.

See The Observer 22. 7. 79; The Sunday Telegraph 29. 7. 79. and 'Callaghan Unity Appeal Backed' The Guardian 4. 9. 80.

90. Truman notes for example. "since unity and the appearance of unity are essential ingredients in a political formulae for group effectiveness, most groups are careful to reveal as little as possible to the outsider concerning such internecine struggles. . . . the effectiveness of this device is indicated by the tendency of many observers to take these groups at their own estimate, to accept unquestioningly their own protestations of unity, to avoid the question of cohesion". p. 168

Maintaining cohesion may be all the more difficult where the leader of the group, as was the case with Frank Field, has sought to increasingly delegate tasks and responsibilities to staff and executive members. Between 1965-69 CPAG was essentially a one man affair, with very little, if any, delegation, largely because there wasn't anybody else to delegate to. Internal cohesion, the possibility of splits, conflict, factionalism and so on were thus of negligible concern because they could never really enter the sort of relationship Tony Lynes had forged with his executive. Under Field, however, the likelihood of threats to internal cohesion were much greater for a number of reasons.

Under the new Director, delegation was practised to a marked degree, reflecting both his belief in creating a specialist division of labour and in enabling himself to deal with the essentially political and propaganda aspects of the group's work. Legal responsibilities, for example, fell to staff in the group's Citizen's Rights Office and to the groups legal adviser, Bruce Douglas-Mann initially and, latterly, to Henry Hodge the group's own Solicitor, not to the Director. Under Field's direction then, responsibilities, specialisation and the complement of staff all increased. Field's initial unfamiliarity with social policy also necessitated a pronounced reliance on some staff and members of the executive for early advice and guidance. (91)

In addition, Field also democratised the policymaking structure of the group and gave it a more federal character by awarding CPAG branches a much stronger representation on the group's executive committee. Allied to these changes, were the director's own beliefs that the staff, particularly specialist staff, must become closely involved in policymaking and secondly that the staff constituted a highly qualified and articulate team whose advice

91. Interview with Frank Field 26. 7. 77.

it would be valuable to consider and impolitic to ignore. It seems clear, however, that Field's belief was not always practised. To a great extent, staff seem largely to have played the role of feeders of information and inputs to the director who ultimately came to decide between policy alternatives. Consultation certainly did take place but Field's power of 'ultimate decision' seems to have been well-defined.

One of Field's Assistant Directors spoke of the twice weekly policy meetings between the director and his senior staff as..... "largely a meeting for Frank to get the feel of what was going on that week, what the issues were. Not in terms of internal organisation or management but in terms of policy and whether to decide to pursue a certain issue..... There was no laid down formal status for those meetings and one wasn't really sure whether this was a collective decision-making thing. It was a group Frank consulted with and then by general agreement he went ahead and did things....."(92)

It must be concluded, from discussion with members of this 'policy group' that the appearance of consultation was frequently more substantive than the consultation itself. Meaningful consultation, as in many interest groups constructed in this hierarchic fashion, seems to have varied in direct proportion to the director's command of an issue or his determination to see an issue through personally. The style is not an untypical one and it is interesting to note that Jane Streater, one of that policy group, has found herself adopting a similar relationship with staff in her role as director of the National Council of One Parent Families. (93)

The scope for dissension, criticism and struggle was therefore increased in the period after Lyne's departure. Indeed, Lynes himself played some part

92. Interview with Jane Streater Assistant Director CPAG 1972-75 and currently Director NCOPF 25.1.80.
 93. *ibid*

in occasional opposition to Frank Field's political tactics. He was clearly dissatisfied with Field's decision to rebuff Des Wilson's plans for the Shelter-CPAG 'merger' and was unhappy with Field and Townsend's plans to publish detailed policy statements on clawback, which he felt would encounter serious "political difficulties".⁽⁹⁴⁾ Lynes had also led the attack upon the confrontation tone of Field's 1969 memorandum to the Chancellor, A Policy for Families. As noted earlier, the 'poor get poorer' campaign also brought forth some internal conflict and a questioning of the new director's political judgement. Some were later to complain of his abrasive press release on the Conservative's social policy, while others, as will be shown shortly, complained that he had courted the party's leaders too long to the detriment of the group's already-strained relationship with the Labour Party. Personal criticism, a critique of his tactical awareness and a revision of policy were imminent after Anthony Barber's 1972 budget by which time any remaining hopes for a Conservative initiative on poverty had been flattened. For Field, the most effective way to overcome this criticism and thereby strengthen his own authority within the group was to pre-empt it.

In his Directors Report of June 1972 he spoke of the overall goal of the group as having always been to make effective a redistribution of resources to the poor and that this required two moves on the group's part. First, designing policies which would achieve that desired redistribution and, secondly, persuading government to implement those policies. Despite the early successes of the group in highlighting the injustice of the wage stop, of persuading the government to adopt clawback and helping to win official recognition that benefits were a right, by 1972 a growth in conflict and confrontation between government and the group had developed. The first question which Field therefore sought to answer was why this conflict had occurred.

94. Tony Lynes to John Veit Wilson (CPAG Executive) 13.11.70.

....."The short answer is that we had ceased to have any measurable effect....long before 1969, the Labour administration had, to put it politely, run out of steam. As a result, poverty was just one of the issues that were struck off the political agenda". (95)

Commenting on his tactic to re-establish poverty as a live issue, the 'poor get poorer' campaign, he added....."the first task, therefore, seemed to be to get this back into political debate. I naively thought that to do so would be in the poor's interest because it would somehow automatically lead to a redistribution of income to low income families. One of the small achievements of Poverty and the Labour Government was that it made poverty a political issue again". (96)

However, as Field went on to point out, presumably in anticipation of the criticism likely to be levelled at him, it did not lead to success on the income front and here he saw a great irony....."As a result of this memorandum, the group gained a public recognition it had hitherto lacked, but the poor gained nothing. Lately this irony has taken a further cruel twist. The group, albeit reluctantly, helped to contribute (even if only in small measure) to a Tory victory. The Conservative Government has made our activities even more necessary". (97) The purpose of his report, then, was to discover and discuss....."the strategies open to a small group like CPAG who wish to influence events". (98)

96. ibid - MacFarlane concludes that Poverty and the Labour Government and Poor Families and the Election were instrumental in bringing poverty to the fore again as an election issue. They were submitted to the parties in the hope of getting "a fair deal" for the "3/4 of a million children in families which are poor". He comments.....
 .."The parties responded to the appeal. The Labour Party, accepted that there was a 'continuing problem of poverty in low income families', pointed to its record and promised to 'review the present system of family allowances and income tax child allowances'. The Conservatives pledged themselves to 'tackle the problem of family poverty and ensure that adequate family allowances go to those families that need them. A scheme based on negative income tax, they claimed, 'would allow benefits to be related to family need; other families would benefit by reduced taxation. "
 MacFarlane, L.J. Issues in British Politics Since 1945 pp 58-59
97. Directors Report p. 4
98. ibid p. 5

A major issue on which Field anticipated disagreement was the group's relationship with the major political parties. While many interest groups rigidly adhered to a non-partisan style in the belief that both parties were "almost equally open to persuasion", (99) Field sought to anticipate the question of whether this sort of approach was fitting for an issue like poverty. In other words, should CPAG continue to reaffirm their 1970 General Election tactics. The answer to the question 'which strategy?' would depend of course primarily on what sort of policies the group sought from Government. Measures aimed at raising the income of the poorest groups in society were favoured, albeit by different methods, by both parties. The real problem lay, however, in the possibility that that the group was coming to realise more and more that..... "a successful anti-poverty programme will entail a much greater equality in our society".....and.... "how do we react to this when the present government has made it abundantly clear on many occasions that it is violently opposed to such a belief ?" (100)

Oddly, despite the group's recent criticisms, Field still favoured a dialogue with both parties and a subscription to the 'rules of the game' where expedient. This was to include the asking of Parliamentary Questions, canvassing and lecturing to MPs, mailing the group's literature and memoranda to ministers and opposition spokesmen and the lobbying of Commons Committees. He was also in favour of taking up Tony Benn's suggestion, if it was meaningful, of establishing regular and more formalised consultation between Labour's National Executive Committee and groups like CPAG, DIG, Shelter and so on, though he recognised that if this ever came off, which doesn't seem to have been the case, CPAG would have to make similar overtures to the Conservatives in keeping with its 'non-partisanship'.

99. See Finer, S. E. 'Interest Groups and the Political Process in Great Britain' in Ehrmann, H. W. ed Interest Groups on Four Continents. Pittsburgh University Press 1967 pp 133-35

100. Directors Report p. 5

Finer talks of interest groups as having one of three types of relationship with the two major parties. The strongest and more formal of those is "embodiment" or affiliation.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ In 1978, for example, some 67 trade unions were formally affiliated to the Labour Party: they sponsor MPs, contribute to election funds, and their leaders occupy senior positions in joint party-union bodies like the Liaison Committee and the NEC.

In the case of the Conservative Party, Finer contends that formal affiliation as such is replaced by "alignment". Business, Industry, Commerce and Farming, for example,....."must be regarded as 'aligned' with the Conservative Party". In other words....."the link between them is not made by the organisations qua organisations but by the fact that the private individuals who compose these organisations do, as individuals, have overwhelming links with the Conservative and not the Labour Party".⁽¹⁰²⁾ The evidence presented in Chapter 5, however, firmly suggests that CPAG has traditionally been 'aligned' in much the same way with the Labour Party, through the close association and overlapping membership of CPAG members with the party.

The final category of relationship that Finer identifies may be seen to describe CPAG's relationship with the parties in the aftermath of both 'poor get poorer' and the October mini-budget. In this case a group comes to play an "uncommitted" or "hard to get" role in its relationship with the parties. Its lobbying approach becomes either non or bi-partisan and it seeks crossbench support for its ideas and policy proposals.⁽¹⁰³⁾

In the short space of time since Field's arrival as director CPAG may be seen to have explored both 'aligned' and 'uncommitted' approaches towards the major parties, neither of which brought lasting success. The remaining

101. Finer op cit in Ehrmann ed.
 102. ibid
 103. ibid

options open to the group were thus re-establishing alignment with the Labour Party in an effort to reconstruct and make more productive their early relationship or, alternatively, to seek alignment and perhaps even 'embodiment' with some other political 'force' with which it had a value empathy. In the event, the group sought to do both by rebuilding its relationship with the party at grass roots, rather than front bench, level and by establishing liaison and affiliation between itself and some parts of the increasingly influential trade union movement. It is to a discussion of this new strategy that we now turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

Getting Poverty Back on the Political Agenda - An Alliance with the Labour 'Movement'

In this Chapter an attempt is made to demonstrate the development of CPAGs bipartite approach to the political and industrial wings of the Labour Movement and to offer some explanation for the increasingly influential and 'societal' role that the unions came to play in Labour's policymaking structure with reference to the theory of union 'politicisation' advanced first by Perlman⁽¹⁾ and latterly by Richter,⁽²⁾ and more recently by those who see Britain moving towards a 'corporatist' style of Government.⁽³⁾

The development of this approach largely had its origins in the strategy debate initiated by Field's Directors Report. Having mooted the prospect of a realignment with the Labour Party Field had asked what guarantee would there be that Labour would go on to honour its commitments assuming that it had committed itself to CPAGs programme in the first place. The reverse had already happened once. His answer to his own question is fundamental to this next phase of CPAGs anti-poverty strategy.....

....."what part of the Labour Movement has shown itself able to veto actions of a Labour Government of which it strongly disapproves? Not only was Barbara Castle's In Place of Strife withdrawn under trade union pressure, but so too was the Family Income Supplement when first presented to Cabinet in 1967. Given the ability the trade unions have to influence a Labour Government how should we go about getting across our ideas to trade union leaders, as well as the rank and file?"(4)

As will be shown shortly, liaison with the unions was to become perhaps the

1. Perlman, S. A Theory of the Labour Movement MacMillan New York 1928
2. Richter, I. Political Purpose in Trade Unions George Allen & Unwin 1973
3. See for example, Brittan, S. Towards a Corporate State Encounter June 1975. Smith, T. The Politics of the Corporate Economy Martin Robertson 1979 and Wilensky, H. L. The New Corporatism, Centralisation and the Welfare State Sage London and Beverly Hills 1976
4. Directors Report June 1972

most crucial and potentially fruitful phase in CPAGs anti-poverty strategy. In the interim, however, it remained simply one among a number of issues likely to prove contentious in any subsequent re-examination of CPAG policy. (5) That re-examination commenced in July 1972 with the production of a paper, Future CPAG Policy and Strategy, by Malcolm Wicks, a lecturer in social policy and the new co-editor, with Field, of the Group's journal Poverty.

It was Wick's view that CPAG had been too selective in its choice of which issues to contend and had unnecessarily narrowed the poverty debate to a small number of publics which made up the "very poorest" rather than the "broad poor". The result of this, he argued, was that 'resources' i.e. media coverage, money, manpower, were underutilised and, secondly, such a narrow concentration on the very poorest inevitably isolated them from the broader issues of poverty where they shared problems with much larger publics, It also encouraged the erroneous and 'damaging' view that poverty may in fact, only be experienced by very narrow groupings like FIS claimants and those affected by cohabitation and wage-stop rulings. There was some evidence, as was shown earlier, to support this view and it is clear that the Conservatives had used some of CPAGs evidence of poverty among the very poorest to 'beat the drum' of selectivity.

Wick's view, then, was that the group appeared to have failed to cohere the

5. Finer notes that the 'cause' orientation of promotional groups leads to intense membership activity to sustain the cause, ensure its proper direction and constantly re-appraise it. He says of groups like CPAG that....."It is the raison d'etre of such associations, not only to plug a line, but to have one to plug. The discussion of the correct line is central to the member's participation and in the nature of the case e.g. matters of temperance, bloodsports, women's rights - it tends to produce uncompromising attitudes which are philosophically irreducible. Hence member participation tends to be high". p.127 in Erhmann, H. ed. Interest Groups on 4 Continents University of Pittsburgh Press 1967

broad lobby and tie in with issues like incomes policy, social security, education, housing and welfare rights where the strength of numbers affected by these issues might have encouraged more media and parliamentary attention and valuable economies of scale in the distribution and employment of the group's limited resources. (6)

Wicks singled out CPAGs rather obsessive concern with supplementary benefit as a case in point. "even within the field of supplementary benefit, which after all covers a very substantial minority of persons, we have had very much to say about issues like cohabitation which affects a tiny number of persons, rather than with issues like the scale rates that affect many millions". (7) Essentially, Wicks sought to illustrate a failure on the Group's part to fully perceive the common ground between issues and publics.

Expressing his fears that CPAGs approach had given impetus to a narrow definition of poverty and therefore an underestimation of it, he commented. "Ironically, although we all accept the concept of relative poverty, our campaigns probably reinforce the strongly held notion of a subsistence definition of the problem. By concentrating most of our resources on the poorest we have forgotten about the poor and neglected issues that affect society as a whole, such as housing costs, a free health service, unemployment". (8) His conclusion was that. "The poorest will only ever significantly improve their lot when working people as a whole become interested in their cause which in many respects - the cost of bringing up children, decent health and education, housing etc. - they see as their cause too". (9)

6. For a discussion of this broader approach to 'consumerism' see Syson L. and Brooke, R. 'The Voice of the Consumer' in Lapping, B. and Radice, G. More Power to the People. Longmans 1968.
7. Wicks, M. Future CPAG Policy and Strategy, A Discussion paper 21. 7. 72.
8. *ibid*
9. *ibid*

An issue on which there existed a clear need for liaison was unemployment. In another discussion paper, Poverty and Unemployment, Adrian Sinfield also an Executive Member and a colleague of Peter Townsend's at Essex University, charged that CPAGs most pressing concern should now be to draw urgent attention to the need for a drastic reduction in unemployment, an issue which he felt the group had seriously overlooked. in the past.

He added....."an authoritative statement should be personally submitted to the Secretary of State for Employment by the leading members of CPAG. After all, unemployment does hurt innocent children, for it is a major cause of child poverty".⁽¹⁰⁾ His argument also fell broadly into line with Wick's call for more attention and resources to be spent on the 'broad poor'. After all, in the period 1965-72 unemployment among men had more than trebled. Again, like Wicks, he argued strongly for....."close co-ordination with other groups.....to emphasise the continued heavier impact of unemployment on the most vulnerable..... Those in the most depressed regions, the unskilled, the older worker and the disabled".⁽¹¹⁾

The failure or superficial effect of government programmes to assist these groups had, he charged, only been the subject of isolated campaigns with the result that the group's influence had been marginal. Now there was
 ..."a need for a concerted programme of public education on the unequal burden of the social costs of unemployment".⁽¹²⁾ Once more, he echoed Wick's comments on the broader, national issues of poverty, in this case unemployed males not claiming and thus failing to receive their rightful benefits. In 1972 over 150,000 men who were entitled to a supplementary

10. Sinfield, A. Poverty and Unemployment Discussion paper June 1972.

11. ibid

12. ibid - A case in point here was that of the disabled unemployed. By 1972, of the 58% of all firms covered by the Disabled Persons (unemployment) Act to employ the statutory 3% quota of registered disabled, not one had reached this target figure.

allowance in addition to their national insurance unemployment benefit failed to claim this rightful support. In February 1972 this represented as much as 20% of all unemployed men. In addition, probably 50,000 unemployed men were not receiving any supplementary allowance despite having exhausted their full year's entitlement to national insurance unemployment benefit. It is interesting to note that Sinfield brought the group full circle in his paper when he complained also about the inadequacy of the official statistics on unemployment and the take-up of benefits; a cry which heralded the 1962 NAB statistics campaign. Perhaps the most significant theme of both Wick's and Sinfield's criticisms of CPAG policy, however, was the emphasis on the need for a broader assault on the many various but related facets of poverty and for closer co-operation with groups affected by or interested in these issues. On this latter point their views were broadly consistent with Fields own suggestion of liaison with the unions.

Oliver Garceau has observed that....."the most baffling problems of democratic government are to be found not in legislatures or executives, not even in group alignments and conflicts, but in the internal politics of thegroups upon which the whole system has turned out in large measure to rest". (13) That is not to say that these problems threaten or in any way detract from democratic government; indeed their critical, and in some cases dialectical, nature is germane to the whole process of democratic politics. Internal wrangles of the policy kind at once ensure that participation endures and that the opinions of others contribute to the establishment of the parameters within which leaders make their decisions. That participation is all the more meaningful when leaders actually join debate with their critics and the token critical monologue is transformed into a dialogue between the critics and the criticised. In a way, it enables a 'sharing of power', albeit temporary, between leaders and led.

13. Garceau, O. The Political Life of the American Medical Association
Harvard University Press Massachusetts 1941 p.13

As Arnstein has noted....."participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo". (14)

Accepting Arnstein's typology of participation it could be argued that Field needed to effect some sort of 'partnership' with his critics in any subsequent reformulation of policy or strategy. Such a 'partnership' need only be temporary until a group leader perceives that he has met or brought criticism under control but its short term value is important in creating an impression of the 'democratising of power' in that it....."enables them (the critics) to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power-holders". (15)

It also seems to show to a group leader what is and isn't politic at a given point in time. After all, as Harold Lasswell has pointed out....."Power is an interpersonal situation; those who hold power are empowered. They depend upon and continue only so long as there is a continuing stream of empowering responses". (16) The onus was thus upon the Director to respond and join debate with both this small group of critics and a larger body of executive opinion that favoured a general rethink of CPAG strategy.

The Counter Argument - Field's Re-Joinder

At an Executive Meeting called to discuss Wicks's paper, Field sought to offer an alternative view. In a paper, Future CPAG Policy and Strategy - A Re-joinder, he first addressed himself to Wicks's contention that the group had been concerning itself with issues affecting only a small number of claimants and....."thereby contributing to a rather limited view of poverty".

14. Arnstein, S. 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation' AIP Journal July 1969.

15. *ibid*

16. Lasswell, H.D. Power and Personality Norton and Co. New York 1948 p.10

Three years earlier, he pointed out, CPAG had made a choice of how best to use its resources and it had been believed that means-tests would grow in importance. "and that CPAGs voice should be central to this debate". Since this decision all CPAGs resources had been directed to this end. Field agreed that the group had still to convince the government that means-tests were divisive, ineffective and inefficient, but considered that the group was beginning to break the deadlock arguing, for example, that. "no senior civil servant now goes before a minister and defends a means-tested approach in social security". and that. "this success is directly attributed by them to CPAGs continuing onslaught". (17)

This view was partially borne out by both Ken Hickman, a Principal Secretary and by Bob Brown, Minister of Social Security in 1974, though they were rightly cautious of attributing influence to CPAG in such an absolute fashion as Field. The latter's own 'evidence' for this assertion appears to have come largely from Anthony Crocker, former Principal Secretary at the DHSS with responsibility for child benefits. (18) However, the 'evidence', such as it is, is curiously at variance with the striking lack of direct regular consultation between CPAG and Departmental civil servants.

As regards the concentration on minor issues Field felt that this did at least give the group an opportunity to present injustices in a wider context on radio, T. V. news reports and discussion programmes. (19) Such issues were

17. Field, F. Future CPAG Policy and Strategy: A Rejoinder Discussion Paper July 1972.
18. ibid - It is interesting to note that this fact had been confirmed for Field later by Tony Crocker, former Principal Secretary at the DHSS with responsibility for child benefits. Interview with F. Field 22. 2. 79. CPAGs 'influence' was also borne out in interviews between the author and Bob Brown, Minister of Social Security 1974. and with Ken Hickman,
19. Particular success here, in addition to the programmes mentioned in Chapter 4, had been achieved on the programme '24 Hours'. Both The Sun and The Daily Mail had given the group very good coverage. However, Field's main disappointment was CPAGs failure to get coverage on a regular basis on the popular early evening 'magazine' programme, 'Nationwide' and on the radio programme 'Today'.

always considered by the group in reference to the broader issues of poverty, such as the failure of means-tests or the principal cause of poverty, low wages. Of Wicks's general argument that CPAG should undertake an increasing number of policies until working people saw the poor's cause as theirs also, Field replied....."CPAG does not have the manpower, resources or skills for such an approach. Even if it did, I would question if it would be the best way for an interest group to go about its business. There are numerous examples of groups with limited goals being successful, How many of those who have hankered after becoming a political movement have been successful?"(20)

On broadening CPAGs liaison with other groups Field had, anyway, already pre-empted much of Malcolm Wicks's argument with his own suggestion of "a radical change in the way in which the group attempts to influence the debate". This was to be done, as he had said in his June Report to the Executive, by building up links with the trade unions. In October, perhaps the real nature of this executive 'split became apparent when another member, John Veit Wilson, attempted to give some organisational perspective to the wrangle with his view that the attitudes, activities and style of CPAG were a product of the Executive Committee's largely academic concern with 'what is to be done' to alleviate poverty. They bore very little relationship, therefore, with what the poor feel ought to be done. Academic judgement and moral indignation were, he argued, therefore substituted for actual proven experience of multiple deprivation. Inevitably, he felt, this induced a

20. This view may be borne out in examining the way in which CND became less influential in the early sixties as a result of broadening its interests from the single issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament to a more generalised and value-laden demand for a 'new pacifist society'. Similar problems have also been encountered by the claimants unions which have favoured a highly political and multi-issue based approach to poverty through direct critiques of 'capitalist society'.

"particular" view. (21)

Members of the executive, he asserted. "recognised that the effective dissemination of a specific message usually necessitates the creation of an ongoing organisation to do it. It is important to identify the product clearly. It is not the opinions or interests as articulated by themselves of the poor or of any other large section of the population. . . . the role of CPAG as a pressure group to put forward the evidence for a definition of poverty and to devise and publicise the realistic policies which may be adopted to deal with it is not inconsistent with the recognition of its supporters that this is not all they believe needs doing elsewhere." (22)

Significantly, Veit Wilson pointed to the inevitability and the danger of individuals confusing their own wider personal ideologies with the stated and narrower, philosophy of the group. "We must clarify our minds as to the effectiveness of a lobby group promoting a particular message in the political system we have got and distinguish this from our personal desires to use CPAG as an umbrella for our personal wider ideological concerns which involve much more than this particular message and require another kind of organisation (sectional interest, ginger group or political party)". (23)

In deference to Wicks' argument, Veit Wilson conceded that individually the

21. Syson and Brooke have warned that a major fault of or objection to some pressure groups of the CPAG type is their "predominantly middle-class character". They add. "It could be argued that if they are in touch with and express the needs of those who are not articulate, then it does not matter. But the danger is that they will remain aloof from those experiencing the actual conditions on which a campaign is based, so that there will be inadequate participation and those most in need will receive the least help". in Lapping and Radice eds. *op. cit.* p. 67
22. Veit-Wilson, J. The Functions and Structure of CPAG Discussion Paper October 1972.
23. *ibid*

Executive Committee might well share the former's view that CPAG concerned itself too much with the 'poorest', but argued that the Group must not allow its tactical activities to become ends in themselves. By concentrating the Group's efforts and resources on alleviating the burden of the poorest, both he and Field appeared to suggest that the problems of the poor in general would be partially alleviated by the wide application of some of the measures designed to aid the former group. Both Field and Veit Wilson were, in effect, restating CPAG's traditional concern to lobby around one central issue, family poverty, and to tackle it through increased family allowances. To depart from this course and adopt a more value-laden strategy concerned with a redistribution of wealth and a sweeping attack on the nature of capitalist society was seen as too vague and general to win broad public support and too overtly political to do much more than alienate the goodwill of policymakers. Conversely, the attractions of a single issue campaign were multiple. The issue could be easily delimited and therefore identified by both the public and politicians, it facilitated a coherent approach to action, enabled a reasonably efficient use of resources and enabled the group to specialise to an extent where they could develop a valuable expertise which government might prefer not to ignore. (24)

It is interesting to note, however, that even some ten months later in May 1973, some of the issues at stake had still not been resolved. In April a report from the Group's administrative staff had complained that.....

24. Kimber and Richardson have observed that such a selective approach is often a prominent factor in successful cause group campaigns. They note for example that..... "Groups must be selective.... because they have limited resources.... outright opposition to everything regardless of the merits of the case is not only an irrational policy, but is also likely to prove counter productive".
 Kimber, R. and Richardson, J. J. Campaigning for the Environment
 Routledge and Kegan Paul 1974 pp 215-16

"Although the group is constantly probing the administration by tabling a large number of PQs, helping MPs with material for Adjournment Debates and by writing personally to members of the Government, we still do not fully use all the material coming into the Group's possession". (25) Most of that failure to successfully utilise material and tackle government policy was partly attributed to the fact that staff felt unsure and unclear about the group's stand on a number of issues; indeed, whether it actually had a policy on some issues.

The seriousness of the dilemma, and it is one which once more raised the problems of internal cohesion and unanimity of viewpoint, was most clearly expressed by Ruth Lister in a memorandum to the executive two weeks later.

....."The lack of such policies has meant the staff are not always certain, when asked for public statements, whether they are voicing their own personal opinions or can claim to be expressing the views of the group as a whole. The unsatisfactory nature of this situation was highlighted in the last week when it was decided to table a number of amendments to the National Insurance and Social Securities Bill now before Parliament; we realised that on the question of the wage stop and the cohabitation rules in particular we were unable to say what group policy was with regard to the substance of these rules". (26)

It was clear, then, by the time of Anthony Barber's fourth budget in April 1973 that CPAG must embark upon a new strategy which would not only create new initiatives in tackling poverty but which would also help establish the Group's own sense of direction in the wake of a minor identity crisis. Field's own faith in the idea of an 'alliance' with the trade unions as a means of 'enforcing' Labour's future election pledges and assisting the Group's 'redirection' was to gather strength in the latter part of Edward Heath's administration. In the interim, however, further criticism of the Group's 'non-aligned' status had produced a fresh initiative in re-establishing CPAG's relationship with the Labour Party.

25. Report of CPAG General Office 27. 4. 73.

26. Ruth Lister Memorandum to the CPAG Executive 13. 5. 73.

CPAG and the Labour Party Conference

Strong criticism of the continued breakdown in CPAGs relations with the Labour Party after 'poor get poorer' had come from two relatively new figures in the Group. Stuart Weir, later to become Director of the Group's Citizens Rights Office and Jane Streater, Assistant Director with responsibility for branches. Both were uneasy about the Group's relationship with the Conservative Government, firm in their belief that CPAG was not being critical enough. The muted tone of CPAGs criticism until late 1972 seems largely to have stemmed from the fact that the Group's Director was 'working behind the scenes' on an individual basis in the hope that concessions could be won. (27) These did not materialise, however, and Streater and Weir were reluctant to neglect the groups disrupted relationship with the Labour party any longer. It must be said, however, regardless of the Group's belief in the misdirection of Conservative policy, that CPAG -Conservative relations could not have been helped by the overtly pro-Labour make-up of the Group's executive or by the reluctance of many within it to work with the Conservatives. Streater and Weir, for example, were committed to a realignment with the Labour Party as a matter of some urgency and both saw an exercise in political education at grass roots level as an important new initiative in forcing poverty back to the political agenda. The first stage of this 'exercise' was to take place at the Labour Party Conference of 1972. (28) In the event, any further thoughts of 'neutrality' were abandoned.

They were initially aided in their efforts to stimulate delegate interest in

27. The adoption of a discrete, 'behind the scenes', 'negotiatory' strategy tends to characterise the successful pressure-group - particularly cause-groups which lack socio-economic leverage. Those adopting this approach are likely to be regarded already as 'Insider groups' or are striving towards that status. Adoption of dramatic, abrasive and publicity-orientated strategies invariably characterise those with outside-status. Field was here trying to shift CPAG away from the latter towards the former. See Grant op cit.

28. Interview with Jane Streater 25.1.80.

poverty and in the work of CPAG by Weir's own personal contacts. The latter had worked as a diarist for The Times newspaper and had made a number of useful contacts whose influence proved valuable at the conference. Chief among these was Frances Morell, unofficially Tony Benn's press officer. Through Morrell, they were able to 'buttonhole' both Benn and another sympathetic MP, Frank Allaun, who used their influence at conference to generate some initial interest in both the CPAG delegation and its fringe meeting.

However, CPAGs attendance at the 1972 conference was "avowedly exploratory" and was not helped by the exclusion of poverty from the schedule of debate. Nevertheless, Weir was confident that the experience had been useful and could be built upon to achieve a more lasting impact at the 1973 conference. He wrote at the time....."our attendance at the conference gives us the opportunity of informally reviewing contacts and extending them. We would also wish to put to use our knowledge of the policy-making processes of the Labour Conference and organise contacts with local parties to influence the resolutions and amendments to resolutions submitted for the next conference. We suggest that we begin by contacting those parties which submitted resolutions and amendments this year and by asking CPAG members who are active in local CLPs to put forward resolutions and amendments. We would also have to be prepared for the compositing process (i. e. the business of deciding the form of resolutions for debate). As this year's conference debated only a few social policy resolutions..... it is likely that the 1973 conference will devote more time to social policy". (29)

This was a logical strategy for a group which considered it was rapidly

exhausting its avenues of influence. Despite the fact that conferences have not always been the most effective vehicles for influencing the party leadership they remain a useful base upon which to build grass roots political education and the 'conference strategy' appears popular with groups having overlapping party memberships. In 1958, for example, Peggy Duff, Organising Secretary of CND, put the case for unilateral disarmament to the Labour Party's annual conference not in her capacity as a CND Officer, but as a conference delegate from St. Pancras North Constituency Labour Party. Indeed, a number of the resolutions at conference that year were orchestrated through constituency parties by CND's Labour Advisory Group, a body of Labour activists including Frank Beswick MP (then Chairman of London Co-Operative Society's Political Committee), John Horner, General Secretary of the FBU, Harry Knight Secretary of ASSET, Stephen Swingler MP, and a Labour Councillor from Oxford, Olive Gibbs. (30)

Similarly in 1955 the interests of the Officers Pensions Society were raised informally at the Conservative Annual conference by General Sir Frank Messervy in his role as delegate from Wokingham Conservative Association. (31) More recently in 1976 and 1977 members of the National Federation of the Self-Employed were urged by their officers to raise the interests of small businessmen in their capacities as Conservative party activists both locally at constituency level and at annual conference. (32) The classic recent case of CPAG doing the same was the 1976 Child Benefits Campaign when CPAG activists campaigned vigorously within the Labour Party for prompt enactment of the child benefit scheme. In keeping with his comments after the 1972 conference, Stuart Weir made a major contribution to composite 35 at the 1976 party conference in his capacity as a delegate from Hackney South

30. Duff, P. Left, Left, Left. Allison & Busby 1971 p. 185
 31. Potter p. 308
 32. McCarthy op cit.

and Shoreditch Labour Party, which barely disguised his role as an advocate for CPAG. (33)

Weir's post-1972 conference comments were a recognition of the receptiveness of the Labour Party to this sort of strategy. Lewis Minkin notes that over the last twenty years or so constituency Labour parties have been.....
"subject to organised attempts to instigate and mobilise resolutions and amendments for the Annual Conference. This was never carried out directly by the NEC or the parliamentary leadership..... The activity was always carried on by groups independent of the official institutions of the party". (34)

Some of this instigation took place via an open appeal circulated directly to constituency parties and he notes..... "Normally the organisations indulging in this open form of appeal were those whose purposes are widely shared within the party. The Campaign for the Young Chronic Sick and the CPAG were among those who attempted this exercise". (35) He notes further that..... "Perhaps the most successful operation was mounted by the CPAG in the early seventies using specimen resolutions sent out direct to the constituency parties and to their local action groups". (36) It is also significant to add that Streater and Weir were in contact with Minkin during the conferences of 1972 and 1973 when he was completing his study of the Labour Party Conference, and it is clear that he offered them some valuable advice as to the mechanics of resolution making. (37)

- 33. Annual Report of the Labour Party Conference 1976 (75th) Child Benefit Scheme Composite No. 35 para 261
- 34. Minkin pp 41-42
- 35. ibid p. 42
- 36. ibid p. 370
- 37. Interview with Jane Streater 25.1.80.

Accordingly, Minkin was able to conclude that....."The most successful organisation in stimulating resolutions was the CPAG. In 1973, working through sympathisers and through direct circulation of the CLPs, it produced 24 resolutions and 5 amendments which could be traced to its circulation. This was an unusually high figure. In general the preliminary agenda of the Party Conference with its approximately 500 resolutions and amendments was remarkable for its spontaneous character". (38) How then did CPAG come to be so apparently successful in 1973?

The Group approached the formulation of its conference strategy with three main objectives. These were, firstly, to ensure that issues such as family allowances, a minimum wage, reform of social security, and abandonment of the wage-stop were debated at conference by persuading CLPs to put forward differing resolutions on these issues. Secondly, the group sought to widen the debate on such issues within the Labour movement by introducing the 'home responsibility payment' and a minimum wage fixed at a percentage of average earnings. Finally, the group sought "to add to the Labour Party's Programme for Britain, a document more given to good intentions than commitments, more specific pledges on family allowances, reform of the social security system, the abolition of means-tests etc.". (39)

The Group did make some initial errors of judgement in its objectives. It subsequently noted, for example, that....."by proposing that the minimum wage should be set at 80% of average earnings we inevitably forced the platform into opposition....." However the group could still claim some success....."But CPAG certainly did make an acknowledged impact; the issue of poverty was brought to the forefront; and $3\frac{1}{2}$ out of $5\frac{1}{2}$ resolutions

38. Minkin p. 406
39. CPAG and the Labour Party Conference 1973 p. 1

inspired by the group were passed and will be added to the Party's programme". (40)

Resolutions on major issues for the Group, such as a minimum wage, family allowances, taxation, supplementary benefits, housing and educational benefits were sent by CPAG to all constituency Labour parties in Britain with a covering request that each consider submitting one for the conference. The aim was twofold - to get resolutions submitted and for CLPs to debate the issues at ward level. This attempt to develop a grass roots exercise in 'political education' was reinforced and given further impetus by 'follow-up' correspondence and visits to CLPs prior to conference to confirm that the issues had at least been seriously discussed, if not taken up. When the list of conference resolutions was published in July 1973 the group could claim. "our suggestions were well represented. Some resolutions were worded exactly as we suggested and signed by three or four parties". (41)

This claim for 'success' in getting resolutions on the conference agenda is borne out in cross-comparisons with the 1972 list of resolutions. In 1972, for example, there were 6 resolutions on the issue of a minimum wage. In July 1973 this had risen to 14, eight of which had originated with CPAG. On family allowances there had only been one resolution in 1972 but seven in 1973, all of which were CPAGs. A similar pattern could be found in the case of supplementary benefits; seven resolutions in 1972 but 13 in 1973, seven of which CPAG claimed. "Were comprehensive ones of ours". (42)

In addition to canvassing all constituency Labour Partys in this way, a small number were also asked to submit amendments. "so that there would

40. ibid p.1
41. ibid p.2
42. ibid

be cross reference of resolutions (e. g. to amend family allowances to include reference to tax credits, and to amend social services and welfare to include family allowances) and to enable more of 'our' delegates to be present at the crucial compositing meeting". (43)

The final agenda of resolutions for the 1973 conference therefore contained resolutions from the following constituency Labour Parties.

CPAG Influence upon Social Policy Resolutions Submitted to the 1973 (44)
Labour Party Conference

<u>Influence</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Constituency Party</u>
	<u>Minimum Wage Para 116-137</u>	
	116	Upminster
	117	Aberdeen South
*	118	Wolverhampton South West
	119	Sidcup
*+	119	Newcastle-upon-Tyne - Amendment
*	120	Bermondsey
+	121	NUPE
	121	Coventry Sth East - Amendment
	122	Bedford
	122	Glasgow
	123	Brecon & Radnor
	124	Torbay
*	125	Birkenhead
**	125	Paddington
*	125	Merthyr Tydfil
*	126	Folkestone & Hythe - Amendment
*+	126	Bury St. Edmunds - Amendment
*	127	Mitcham & Morden

* - Denotes resolution written by CPAG

+ - Denotes CLP known to have CPAG 'Contacts' i. e. Members/Supporters

43. ibid

44. Tables adapted from CPAG and the Labour Party Conference 1973
pp 2-4

<u>Influence</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Constituency Party</u>
	<u>Social Security Paras 231-241</u>	
	231	Devizes
	232	Hitchin
	232	Eton & Slouth - Amendment
	233	Portsmouth South
	233	Havant & Waterloo - Amendment
*+	234	Oxford
	235	Nantwich
*	236	Howden
*	236	Bradford
*	237	Lambeth Central
*	238	Beaconsfield
*+	239	Cambridge
*	240	Penrith & Border
	241	Post Office Engineering Union

<u>Influence</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Constituency Party</u>
	<u>Taxation 242-254</u>	
	242	Stepney & Poplar
	243	Eastleigh
	244	Oldham East
	245	Hemsworth
	246	Luton
	247	Dartford
	24	Maidstone - Amendment
	248	Carlton
	248	Yarmouth - Amendment
	249	Harlow West
	250	Northwich
	251	Wood Green
	252	Birmingham, Perry Barr
*+	253	Chelmsford - (Tax Credits)
*	254	Welwyn & Harfield (Tax Credits)
*	254	Brent North (Tax Credits)
*+	254	Harlow (Tax Credits) - Amendment

<u>Influence</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Constituency Party</u>
	<u>Family Allowances 255-260</u>	
*	255	Liverpool Toxteth
*	256	Ormskirk
*+	257	Norwich North
*	258	Saffron Waldon
*	259	Chesham & Amersham
*+	259	Bury St. Edmunds
*	259	Leicester - Amendment
*+	259	Chelmsford - Amendment
*+	260	Salisbury
*+	260	Blackpool Sth - Amendment

<u>Influence</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Constituency Party</u>
	<u>Elimination of Poverty - 424</u>	
*	424	Swansea Borough
*	424	Crewe

<u>Influence</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Constituency Party</u>
	<u>Housing 157-94</u>	
*	161	Battersea North
*	161	Nat. Union Agricultural & Allied Workers - Amendment
*	162	Newbury

<u>Influence</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Constituency Party</u>
	<u>Education 270-289</u>	
*	272	Bath
*	272	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
*	272	Aberdeen Sth - Amendment
*	273	Ravensbourne

Perhaps the most frustrating feature of the conference debate for CPAG was that the conference arrangements committee had split the resolutions into the sections outlined above i. e. Education, Social Security, Family Allowances, which corresponded both with the sectionalised format of the party's programme and the manner in which social policy in general had been broken down into policy sectors since Beveridge. This meant of course, that there would be no comprehensive debate on poverty and, indeed, section 424 on "The Elimination of Poverty" came at the end of the conference agenda - a fact which CPAG saw as an indication of low priority. It is interesting to note, however, that subsequent protests about the "arbitrary categorisation" by 'CPAG delegates' from Bury St. Edmunds and Salisbury CLPs led to a discussion by the NEC and, after the matter was again raised on the first morning of conference, to a comment by the Conference Chairman, Barbara Castle, in her address, that she regretted. "that we have not had one comprehensive debate on poverty at this conference". (45)

The submission of resolutions for debate constituted only the first stage of the conference strategy. The second stage resembled another "follow-up" exercise and involved securing publicity for the group's conference activities, both at conference itself and in the national media, organising leafletting, fringe-meetings and individual lobbying of conference delegates. The major breakthrough in stimulating interest in poverty came with the publication by CPAG of a set of 'briefing notes' for delegates called Unequal Britain. Jane Streater points out that not only was this distributed to nearly every delegate but most actually seemed to read it and then passed it on to their constituency parties for wider discussion. (46)

45. ibid p. 4

46. Interview with Jane Streater 25.1.80. The major value of 'Unequal Britain for a conference exercise was, according to Streater, that it "produced straightforward arguments which delegates could easily pick up".

Interest was also stimulated by holding a 'fringe meeting' on Poverty and the Redistribution of Wealth which was designed to both introduce the work of the group and present its conference theme. Some 500 people attended to hear addresses by Tony Benn, Joan Lester, Jack Jones, Frank Field and Peter Burns. of War on Want. The meeting produced reports on two BBC News programmes and it led to a call by Tony Benn for..... "a new anti-poverty alliance of Trade Unions, the Labour Party and radical pressure groups pledged to fight together for the elimination of poverty in Britain". (47)

In addition, CPAGs presence at conference led to an article in The Guardian on the eve of conference, a mention in Open File, a Granada T.V. Interview with Frank Field, calls in both the New Statesman and The Spectator for a poverty debate at conference and a BBC interview with Barbara Castle which raised many of the arguments and questions put forward by the Group.

Oddly, the most interesting outcome of CPAGs attendance at the conference stemmed from one of its failures. All the issues noted earlier, but one, were either accepted by the NEC or remitted for further discussion. The exception was family allowances..... "the NEC (in collaboration with the Big Unions) opposed the Family Allowance resolution and there had been no real opportunity to relate the issues. The Family Allowance resolution was opposed because 'the drafters have included a home responsibility payment which we have not yet thought through and above all because it wants to commit us to a specific figure on the tax threshold'. (B. Castle)". (48)

The rejection of the Family Allowance resolutions and the clear role played in that rejection by some major unions led Streater and Weir to conclude that the group must now build upon its conference strategy by taking up Frank Field's 1972 proposals for liaison with the trade union movement..... "When we

47. CPAG and the Labour Party Conference 1973 p. 9
48. ibid

knew that the NEC were opposing the Family Allowance resolution, we made a point of talking to as many union delegations as possible to ask for support. Although the support was not forthcoming, we are now in a position to follow up some of our contacts. Perhaps one of the most encouraging things said by a union leader was that they were proposing a resolution because they wanted to show that they were concerned with those out of work as well as those within work. A precedent has of course been set by the TGWU in relation to pensions and possibly one of the most important tasks for CPAG is to encourage this trend". (49)

Before examining how this trend was 'encouraged' it is useful to consider both its origins and its strength. Looking, in particular, at the history of union influence upon Labour's social policy.

Trade Unions and Welfarism - An Historical Overview

Whilst the British trade union movement has traditionally concerned itself with securing acceptable conditions of employment for its members it has, on occasion, ventured beyond its sectional role and has sought to win reform and change where the benefits would accrue to non-trade unionists also. Many trade unions, in addition to their stated economic and industrial goals, have far-reaching social and political aims incorporated in their constitutions. Rule 4 of the NURs constitution, for example, states that one aim of the union is....."To work for the supercession of the capitalist system by a socialistic order of society". (50) Similarly, rules 2(e) and 2(i) of the TGWU state respectively that the unions aims include....."The furtherance of political objects of any kind" (51) and....."The furtherance of, or participation, financial or otherwise, directly or indirectly, in the work or purpose of any association or federal body having for its objects the furthering

49. ibid

50. Quoted in Taylor, A. and Fyrth, J. Political Action Arrow 1979
p. 118

51. ibid p. 119

of the interests of labour, trade unionism or trade unionists, including the securing of a real measure of control in industry and participation by the workers in management, in the interests of labour and the general community."⁽⁵²⁾ The latter aim, as we shall see, could hardly have been lost on those members of CPAG who combined with members of other central London charities in 1973 to form a branch of the TGWU partly in the belief that participation in the formulation of the unions social policy could produce benefits that would be felt beyond the narrow confines of the paid membership and would accrue, in part, to those 'organised out of society'.⁽⁵³⁾

Perhaps the two best recent examples of trade union statements on social policy have come in the TUCs evidence to the (Donovan) Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employer's Organisations in 1968⁽⁵⁴⁾ and to the (Diamond) Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth in 1978.⁽⁵⁵⁾ In its evidence to the Donovan Commission the TUC set out the ten principal objects of British trade unions. The first two, improved terms of employment and improved physical environment in the workplace, are the sort of sectional demands expected from associations established to serve the interests of its paid members. The remaining eight, however, present a rather different image of trade unions and indicate a broad concern for the welfare of the community at large. These include full employment and national prosperity; security of employment and income; improved social security; a voice in government and improved public and social services.⁽⁵⁶⁾

52. ibid

53. Interview with Marigold Johnson, Trade Union Liaison Officer for CPAG.

54. (Lord Donovan) Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations. 1965-68 Report CMND 3623 HMSO June 1968

55. See Lord Diamond. Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth Report No. 6 'Lower Incomes' CMND 7175 HMSO 1978

56. Taylor and Fyrth op cit p. 118

A similar picture emerges from the evidence presented to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth 1978. The TUCs evidence was divided into six issues. The six were (a) Low Paid Workers (b) Social Security (c) Family Support (d) Taxation and the 'Poverty Trap' (e) The Social Wage and (f) Unemployment and Multiple Deprivation. (57)

Of its wider interests and its own 'societal role' in achieving them, the TUC submission comments....."The TUC has been active in pressing for legislation to reduce areas of discrimination; for example, the Equal Pay Act, the Sex Discrimination Act and the Employment Protection Act..... Nevertheless the TUC believes that the biggest single force in reducing low pay caused by discriminatory practices is the extension of effective collective bargaining through active trade union organisation into areas in which discrimination is practised". (58)

On the issue of social security the TUC states....."It has consistently been the policy of the TUC that National Insurance Benefits should provide an adequate income as of right without dependence on means-tested benefit for all those people genuinely seeking work or not in the employment field. To achieve this the gaps in the National Insurance scheme must be filled and the level of National Insurance benefits raised substantially". (59)

The TUC evidence left the Commission in no doubt as to the unions own solutions for the alleviation of poverty through low pay....."The aim of the TUC therefore is to find ways in which the need for the present kind of benefits can be removed and at the same time make a substantial improvement in the financial position of low income families. The main methods must be to increase National Insurance benefits and low pay..... and relieve the tax burden on the lowest paid workers". (60)

57. Diamond Report op cit pp. 548-72

58. ibid p. 550 para 9

59. ibid p. 558 para 47

60. ibid p. 559 para 58

It is useful to note the range of TUC evidence to the Diamond Commission because not only is that evidence, arguably, the most detailed of its type to date but also because it is the most recent stage in an evolutionary process of TUC social policy which began, in its modern form, some fifty years earlier. Thus in 1977-78 we find the TUC presenting evidence and policy initiatives on such matters as Child Benefits, Low Pay, Multiple Deprivation, Means-Tested allowances, Housing Support, the effectiveness of Wage Councils, Taxation and the Poverty Trap and Welfare Provision. (61) The list is by no means exhaustive. To understand how the TUC and individual unions have reached this broader societal concern some historical illustration is necessary.

Trade unions had, for example, as early as the turn of the century, been closely involved in the campaign for the introduction of state-financed school meals and had favoured the idea of state maintenance for children. Both issues were raised at the Annual Conference of the Labour Representation Committee in 1905 and, in the same year, the TUC, the London Trades Council and the Social Democratic Federation held a conference to consider. "the state maintenance of children as a necessary corollary of universal compulsory education". (62) Significantly, Hilary Land notes that. "The 'first step' towards this: School Meals financed by the Exchequer was supported unanimously, but a proposal for full maintenance was rejected as 'a revolutionary proposal' which 'would excite great prejudice and alarm'". (63)

Even earlier, in 1889, the Parliamentary Committee, which administered the TUC well before unions combined to produce their own party, discussed matters including old age pensions, child labour, electoral reform and public

61. See especially paras 25-39, 47-49 and 51-95
 62. Land, H. 'Family Allowances and the trade unions' Poverty 12/13 1969 p. 8
 63. ibid

utilities. The rationale for this broader concern has perhaps only been fully understood in retrospect.....

....."In the more general sense, unions cannot truly improve the real wages and standards of living of their members unless they concern themselves with the economic direction of our resources and the distribution of wealth in our society. If trade unions are to be concerned with their employed members, how can they be effective without having some analysis about the cause of unemployment and the means to put it right? How can the unions be concerned with what gross wages will be for their members and remain unconcerned with what the member takes home after tax and insurance? How can a union be concerned with a member when he is well and working and yet stay inactive on his or her behalf when he is sick or not working?" (64)

The short answer, of course, is they can't. For a trade union to perform its stated functions efficiently it must operate beyond the circumscribed employer-employee relationship. Unions....."must be ever seeking to establish the kind of economic and social framework within which they can best carry out their responsibilities on behalf of their members. Looking after the whole man or woman is the only sensible way the unions can fulfill their duties to their members". (65)

It is no longer possible in a highly developed society with massive technological interdependence of industry and the blurring of economy and polity to isolate the trade unionist in the workplace from the trade unionist at leisure. His interests, values and expectations will, necessarily, carry into other spheres of his existence. (66) The trade unionist, like other individuals, is himself... .."a universe of interests" (67) whose orbits intersect and whose influences vary with time and circumstance. The trade unionist may also be a single parent, a claimant of child benefits, an expectant mother, a ratepayer, a mortgagee, a council tenant and a consumer.

64. Simpson, W. Labour: The Unions and the Party George Allen & Unwin 1973 pp 53-54
65. ibid p. 54
66. See 'Power Without a Lever' The Guardian 1. 9. 75.
67. Miller, J.D.B. The Nature of Politics Pelican 1971 p. 44

As J.D.B. Miller notes....."Each of these represents a potential connection with an interest, depending upon how much he is absorbed in the particular aspect of his life and what degree of organisation and self-consciousness the interest has in the community at large". (68) Crucially, many of the trade unionists interests are interdependent. Changes in the nature or status of one interest may well produce an outcome that can enhance or harm another. Inevitably, advances or failures in the workplace may produce similar outcomes for the trade unionists interests elsewhere. Goals may remain unfulfilled, benefits lost, unless some sort of initiative or intervention from a structured organisation takes place and creates a framework in which the essentials for the individuals wider liberation and development may be established. (69)

The outcome has been a recognition on the part of the trade unions from quite early in their development that their socio-economic security cannot be wholly achieved within the confines of the employer-employee relationship. Factors and circumstances extrinsic to that relationship, such as the stability of the currency, the balance of payments situation, the levels and availability of state benefits to be paid in times of sickness or unemployment, the policy priorities of the governing party and so on, will all affect their members life chances. Ultimately, they may threaten the strength and stability of trade unions themselves. Inevitably, then, trade unions have long recognised the need to represent 'whole man' rather than 'fragmented man' and to act outside of the workplace in order to sustain or preserve the

68. ibid p. 42

69. See Miller Chapter 7 - He states that institutions, Government, and corporate bodies like the TUC, are the means whereby conflicts of interest are....."registered, resolved, altered and maintained". The recognition of the diversity or plural nature of society will oblige group or institution leaders to concede that gains made for their members or 'clients' in their own exclusive sphere of interest will inevitably be influenced by events taking place within and between other interests in which their members have some concern.

achievements won within it". (70)

An early illustration of this took place in the period 1934-36 during which an important social struggle was waged by some unions in order to preserve the standards of unemployment relief. John Strachey commented.....
 "successive attempts were made by the National Government to depress the national standard of life by making alterations in the rules governing the receipt of unemployment relief. These attempts were resisted with a very considerable measure of success..... (and)..... the Government was on several occasions constrained to modify drastically their original proposals to the advantage of the unemployed". (71)

This concern for the unemployed is a crucial one and is, of course, a logical outcome of the traditional concern for those in work. Such a concern, as CPAG has persistently tried to show since 1965 is consistent with the view that the welfare of those in work can only be fully established by improving the lot of those without employment.

As Strachey noted in the thirties..... "If the unemployed are driven by starvation to accept any wages and conditions of work offered to them, it will be clearly impossible for the employed workers to maintain, still less to improve, their wage rates..... the struggle for the defence of the national standard of life is, to a considerable extent, fought out over the question of the rates and conditions of unemployment benefit". (72)

His comments ring as true in 1979 as they clearly did in 1939 and lend

70. Radice notes, for instance, that..... "in order to create a framework in which trade unionism could function, they had to operate politically as well as industrially. They also realised that workers were consumers and parents, tenants and potential householders, sometimes unemployed and sick and certainly, in the end, all destined to be superannuated from their unemployment".
 Radice, G. The Industrial Democrats George Allen & Unwin 1978 p. 88
71. Strachey, J. What Are We To Do? Gollancz, Left Book Club Edition 1938 p. 186
72. *ibid*

support for the view that in a time of economic uncertainty every trade unionist is a potential claimant of unemployment benefit. (73) To strengthen the position of the employed one must first strengthen the position of the unemployed. Any initiative in this area has tended, therefore, to be a curious mixture of self-preservation and moral responsibility. This is illustrated on the issue of family allowances.

The Trade Unions and Family Allowances

The early interest shown by the labour movement in state maintenance of children was sustained throughout the first quarter of the 20th century and resulted, in 1928, in the setting up of a joint Labour Party-TUC committee to discuss a proposal for a national scheme of allowances financed from taxation. However, giving some early indication of the union's somewhat ambivalent attitude towards family support, the TUCs own executive decided in 1930 that any decision on the matter should be postponed until the social services were more fully developed. (74) The result was that eleven years passed before family allowances were again discussed at conference.

This apparent concern with social services development was little more than a 'red-herring'. The real reasons for non-committal were much more fundamental and show, inevitably, that the union's concern with community welfare may well be important but, nevertheless, that it is secondary to their concern to defend workplace interests first. Land notes. "This caution towards accepting family allowances was based primarily on the fact

73. Crucial to this reasoning is an article by Frank Field and David Pichaud in 1971 in which they coined the term 'poverty trap' and attempted to demonstrate to trade unions the impact of social policy upon their members income and livelihood. See Field, F. and Pichaud, D. 'The Poverty Trap' New Statesman 3. 12. 71. and Pichaud, D. 'Poverty and Taxation' Political Quarterly Vol. 42 No. 1 Jan-March 1971 pp 31-44 and CPAG: A Social Contract for Families Poverty Pamphlet No. 19 November 1974.
74. Land op cit Poverty No. 12/13 1969

their introduction would interfere with wage negotiations. . . . Moreover, many other supporters of family allowances, including Beveridge, favoured occupational or contributory schemes either of which, trade unionists argued, would penalise the childless worker". (75)

Trade union leaders feared that, as in France, occupational family allowances would be paid for at the expense of higher wages. Such a principle was unacceptable to British trade unions and suspicion of such a scheme was further fuelled by the growing support for it among the Conservative Party in the late thirties. Their importance to the war effort, however, considerably strengthened both the trade unions general position and their determination to resist interference in wage bargaining by Government. Their success in withstanding the latter contributed to a mood of self-confidence such that, in 1941, "it was thought 'opportune' to reconsider family allowances at the Labour Party and TUC Annual Conferences because 'we do not think that the payments of allowances during the war would materially handicap the unions in their present fight to maintain and improve standards". (76)

However, as Land points out. "at the TUC Conference a motion in favour of the introduction of family allowances was referred back for further discussion. Opinion within the trade union movement had shifted, but not far enough". (77)

It is clear that the experience of the war transformed the position of the trade unions. The co-operation of the unions and their members proved indispensable in a situation where manpower was the ultimate scarce resource. Yet, as Beer notes. "Labour did not accept those heavy burdens without receiving and indeed demanding major concessions from other groups in

75. ibid
76. ibid
77. ibid

society..... Ministers and civil servants who had found certain extensions of the social services 'financially impossible' during peacetime and the early part of the war now accepted them and put them into effect". (78) This influence was demonstrated most significantly on the issue on which the unions had been most cautious, family allowances.

Throughout 1942 pressure had mounted upon the Government for the introduction of family allowances with the result that in May it published a White Paper on the subject. In Parliament, over 200 MPs of all parties actively pressed for a debate on the issue and in the same year William Beveridge, working closely with the head of the TUCs own social Insurance Department, (79) had given further impetus to the call for family allowances by drawing attention to the inability of existing social policies to cope with the projected growth in young dependants. When family allowances were finally debated in June 1942 there was a significant parliamentary majority in favour of their introduction. (80)

It is clear, however, that the Government still saw, or found it useful to present, the unions as the major obstacle to any family allowance scheme "The Government, however, would only act in the light of 'the report of the Beveridge Committee, the further conclusions of organised labour, and the financial position', because, the Chancellor told the House, 'it is a matter of special importance; family allowances have long been the subject of discussion in trade union circles which have been particularly apprehensive about their effects on wage negotiations". (81)

In the event, Beveridge, in close consultation with the TUC, recommended a

78. Beer, S. Modern British Politics Faber 1971 p. 212
 79. See May, T. Trade Unions and Pressure Group Politics Saxon House 1975. and Beveridge, W. Power and Influence 1953 pp 296-317
 80. Land, p. 9 and Hall, Land, Parker & Webb - Change, Choice and Conflict in Social Policy Heinemann 1975 pp 179-96
 81. ibid (both)

scheme financed by tax revenues partly, it would seem, because the Government....." was not prepared to implement a scheme which was unacceptable to the trade unions". At its 1942 Conference the TUC gave its support for the scheme and in the following February the Government committed itself to its early introduction.

The fifties saw little development in the unions interest in social policy. The early and cautious pragmatism of the Conservative Government helped to take the 'edge' out of industrial relations and largely obviated the need for unions to move in to the political arena. The apparent affluence of the early fifties and their desire to consolidate their war time achievements led the trade unions to confine their initiatives to the industrial arena.

An interesting explanation of this reversion to the traditional concerns of wage bargaining has been offered by Richter⁽⁸²⁾ in his reinterpretation of Perlman's early work on trades unions and politics.⁽⁸³⁾ He comments of this period that....."the leaders felt they could continue to conduct traditional pure and simple unionism successfully without significant involvement in national economic and political policy formation.... although they maintained the historic alliance with the Labour Party and indeed, beginning in the early 1950s, greatly expanded that commitment at the parliamentary party level. they did not rely on it either for their conventional bargaining function or for broad social policy purposes."⁽⁸⁴⁾

It is Richter's contention, after Perlman, that during periods of economic and industrial stability when, crucially, there is no significant challenge to

82. Richter, I. Political Purpose in Trade Unions George Allen & Unwin 1973
 83. Perlman, S. A Theory of the Labour Movement MacMillan New York 1928
 84. Richter p.17

their legal status, trade unions will confine their activities to the workplace and eschew wider political involvement in society. Their self-confinement in the fifties was further reinforced by the fact that the Labour Government 1945-51 failed to fully implement its election programme of 1945 and, in following a social democratic course, largely met the aspirations of senior union leaders. Full implementation of the manifesto would have brought with it the demise of free collective bargaining and the erosion of the economic power of the major unions. Any deflection from that course then was to be welcomed.

As Richter notes....."The predominant trade union leaders took organisational steps within the Labour Party to limit rather than to advance political action in a conventional sense. They did so because they wanted to be certain that the Labour Party would not choose a leader who would initiate policies that might endanger existing national bargaining patterns"⁽⁸⁵⁾

For Perlman, a major characteristic of British unions was the rarity and brevity of their flirtation with politics beyond the market place. Indeed, it was his contention that ever since the early struggles to win their legality, achieved in 1860, a resort to political action or initiative had become more and more remote. Later threats to that legal status invariably produced real political action but this had not been sustained enough for effective development into a long-term socialistic programme. Indeed, as was shown in the 1934-36 struggle over unemployment benefit, union leaders have treated attempts to create a wider political programme (with the possible recent exception of the social contract) with hostility.

Perlman wrote....."the unions as a whole will finance the Labour Party

with its socialistic programme and socialistic leadership, and more than half the membership will vote for its socialistic candidate. But the heart of British unionism is still in these jealously revered organisations that stand guard over the collective economic opportunity of each group - the jobs and the working conditions that go with the jobs". (86)

This is borne out by Richter's own observations of the activities of the AEU (now AEUW) and the TGWU, of which he considers the most important to be "that since 1945 the predominant section of the British movement has not sought central planning nor social change; nor has it found it necessary to engage in political action for the economic goals of the operational requirements of the unions. what comes through then. is that the underlying objective of political action in the post-war years was simply the achievement, maintenance or restoration of 'free collective bargaining". (87)

It is clear that under strong and centralised leadership the labour movement was largely content with the post-war social and economic arrangements and was prepared to resist initiatives that might interfere with the traditional bargaining process. Principally, General Council policy was designed to preserve a status quo which, during the war years, had been favourable to the movement's traditional goals. Furthermore, this emphasis on traditional responsibilities was to endure throughout the sixties.

The sixties were marked by a rationalisation in the structure of the labour movement and by a further consolidation of the TUC. The reasons for this have been documented elsewhere and are beyond the scope of this study. (88)

86. Perlman Chapter 4

87. Richter p. 218

88. See Smith, T. The Politics of the Corporate Economy Martin Robertson 1979; Taylor, R. The Fifth Estate Pan 1980 Ch. 1 and Currie, R. Industrial Politics Oxford University Press 1979

It is appropriate to note, however, that in this decade the three largest employers organisations came together to form the CBI, the distributive trades coalesced to form the Retail Consortium in 1967 and the trade union sector recorded some 117 mergers. More significantly, attendant upon these developments was a " tropical growth in interest groups catering for the under-enfranchised elements in society; these included the Consumers Association, Shelter, CPAG, the Claimants and Unemployed Workers Union and many others seeking to influence the contents of the public agenda". (89)

Of particular significance was the creation of a group of new planning agencies which served to contribute further to the developing corporate prestige of the TUC. For Trevor Smith the new agencies were "an authoritative acknowledgement of the erstwhile de facto situation among interest groups that a two-tier system of representation existed. Membership of NEDC indicated the granting of a superior franchise: it was an exercise in elite accommodation". (90) In short, the 'franchise' confirmed for those who still held doubts that the labour movement had arrived, and was likely to remain at the highest echelons of government.

This 'arrival' did not go unrecognised in the broader political arena, not least of all by CPAG who made a somewhat hesitant and unsuccessful approach to the TUC as early as 1967 for funds to expand their activities. This approach had undoubtedly been prompted by a resumption of trade union interest in Government proposals in 1964 for wage-related social security benefits and their growing concern about the extent to which the unpopular 'wage-stop' ruling would apply unless family allowances were increased. However, the

89. Smith, T. Trends and Tendencies in Re-ordering the Representation of Interests in Britain. paper delivered to the political studies association conference, University of Nottingham 1975. p. 6

90. ibid

lesson that must be drawn from the first two decades after the war is that the unions preferred to adopt their traditional role as an industrial 'sectional' interest group acquiring a broader political or social outlook only on those occasions when policies or initiatives emerged elsewhere which would threaten those 'sectional' interests. Their concern with the issue of family allowances appears to have developed as a reaction to events elsewhere and should be seen as an extension, rather than as an abandonment, of their usual defensive role. Government proposals for family support were seen by the trade unions as a potential threat to the traditional wage bargaining process. It was therefore politic for them to respond with alternative proposals which would broadly satisfy the needs of families and which would preserve intact the bargaining framework. This principle of wages first and allowances second was not to be readily abandoned, and is a theme to which we will return shortly.

Both Perlman and Richter have suggested that when their legal status is threatened trade unions will resort to political action to defend their interests, and that there is a likelihood that this 'politicisation' will, at least temporarily broaden those interests. The events between 1964-69 do reveal a successful, albeit limited, resort to forms of political action. This was largely confined to the limited application of direct threats of non-co-operation with future legislation; because of their unique relationship with the Labour Party and the latter's reliance upon the unions political and financial support, resolution of the issue took place within the consultative framework of the labour movement and any disruption which did take place was confined to a narrow section of the polity and therefore constrained from erupting into the economic sphere also. (91)

91. For an account of trade union-labour party relations between 1964-69 and the reaction to the Donovan and In Place of Strife proposals see Hutt, A. British Trade Unionism Lawrence & Wishart 1975 Ch. 14 Taylor op cit. Ch. 3 and Clutterbuck, R. Britain in Agony: The Growth of Political Violence.

This is important, because Perlman's thesis suggests wider political and social goals only being achieved when trade union action takes the whole economy as its chief target. This period, however, saw the unions confine their threats and action to a private internal wrangle with their political wing. The resolution of the issues raised by In Place of Strife show quite clearly that the party was firmly on the defensive. It is clear from the comments of both Wilson and Crossman that the unions had always held the upper hand and that the party contemplated a rupture in their historic alliance, in what was widely believed to be an election year, with abject horror. (92) There was little need, therefore, for the unions to develop what could be seen as a 'family dispute' into a call for the fulfilment of non-industrial goals. Their single concern in this period was to preserve the status quo ante Donovan and, in doing so, restore to themselves the sole right to resolve inter union disputes. This, they successfully achieved.

Some limited intervention in the social sphere did take place in this period. In March 1966, for example, the TUC announced that it was to continue its 1964 efforts to raise family allowances by once again pressurising the Government into action; this at a time when rumours of a split over prices and incomes policy were rife. (93) The TUCs concern with family support was best expressed in an article in The Times later that month. "TUC attention has concentrated hitherto on anomalies in the position of family men with low earnings. . . . They adopt the Beveridge argument that it is irrational to provide subsistence in unemployment and sickness and not while a man is working. The TUC view is that to provide adequate incomes for lower paid families, family allowances could be substantially increased and part of the provision for children, at present made through national insurance, transferred to family allowances. Family allowances would be greatly increased

92. Crossman Diaries (condensed version) pp 558-9
 93. Crossman Diaries Vol I p. 471

therefore without additional cost if they were regarded as taking the place of income tax allowances for children, particularly as surtax and income tax payers would presumably continue to pay tax on the allowances". (94)

In February 1967, as has been noted, senior trade union leaders developed this concern further with their intervention in the wrangle over the introduction of a means-tested 'family income supplement'. (95) Of considerable significance on this occasion, as CPAG was later to recognise, was the fact that the unions had successfully intervened in the course of a cabinet debate and not, as usual, during the early stages of policy-making. It is arguable whether or not this intervention was a response to the threat to trade union legal status posed by the Donovan commission. What is clear is that the Labour Government's attempts to maintain some sort of fragile rapport with the unions on the thorny problem of prices and incomes may well have been served by bowing to union pressure on this occasion and eliminating any further consideration of a means-tested benefit. The TUC also made some reference to social policy in their submission to the Donovan Commission but little emerged from this.

As a test of the Perlman-Richter thesis trade union action during this period was a qualified failure. The unions were faced with a serious threat to their legal status and did counter with limited political action to overcome it. In this they were resoundingly successful, but their action did not develop the broader social and political concern that Perlman and Richter saw as likely by-products of the response to such a threat. (96) It is possible that the latter did not develop because of the highly circumscribed nature of the dispute and the relationship between the parties involved. However, the fact that the

94. The Times 28. 3. 66.
 95. Crossman Diaries Vol II pp 251-3
 96. Richter Ch. 12

unions quickly lapsed into their pre-Donovan insularity and failed to generate more than polite opposition to the social service cuts of 1969 confirms that their primary concern was industrial and that they were not prepared to enlarge upon it. (97) This is a point we shall consider in more detail in the following two chapters. It is useful here, however, to note Hilary Land's view that family allowances have, historically, been isolated from the development and administration of other Social Security benefits, such as unemployment and earnings-related benefits, which trade unionists may see as of more direct interest to them with the result that their declining value has tended to be overlooked except in periods of economic hardship and unemployment when their importance has become more evident. (98) This is best illustrated by the silence of the TUC on the issue during the 'affluent fifties' and the contrasting concern expressed by the trade union movement during the economic crises of the seventies.

CPAG and the Unions - The Early Initiatives

It is appropriate at this point to consider CPAGs efforts to stimulate trade union interest in and enlist their support for fresh initiatives to combat poverty in this period. The earliest evidence of any such effort dates from May 1967 when CPAG sent over 5,000 copies of its wage-stop pamphlet to the Transport and General Workers Union as a means of demonstrating the realities of life on unemployment benefit. In emphasising what the group saw as the 'punitive' nature of the wage stop and stressing the need for those in employment to secure a realistic standard of living for those out of work,

97. Richter notes, for example, that....."one remarkable feature of the post 1967 period was the negligible political reaction from the Labour movement to the increasing level of joblessness, despite certain local, and unofficial, protests in some areas". p. 226 This contrasted quite markedly with the U. S. A. where severe unemployment had been a major stimulus to political action on the part of the AFL-CIO.
98. Hall, Land, Parker and Webb p. 228 & p. 230

Tony Lynes was building on the interest shown in the ruling by the unions in 1964 and was echoing the type of argument advanced by Strachey some 30 years earlier. The pamphlet seems to have had little active impact upon the TGWU, though it was instrumental in the Ministry of Social Security's publication of a White Paper on the subject some months later. (99)

An issue on which the TUC and CPAG could find some common ground was the introduction of a national minimum wage. During the summer of 1967 the TUC agreed to adopt the TGWU's proposal for a minimum wage of £15.00 which CPAG felt was a first positive step towards reducing the role of low pay in producing family poverty. This common interest was expressed by Frank Cousins, a cabinet minister and former general secretary of the TGWU in Poverty some weeks later.

....."the trade union campaign for a £15 national minimum wage and the work of bodies such as the Child Poverty Action Group emphasise different aspects of the attack on poverty, but their work is complementary not competitive.....trade unionists know that social benefits such as family allowances, will always have a role to play in establishing social justice. Increasing real wages will make the problem of dire poverty less urgent, but it will not remove the case for equalisation of incomes upwards, either through positive family allowances or tax allowances". (100)

Cousins was keen to demonstrate, however, that while the labour movement was anxious to provide a degree of social justice through the collective bargaining framework, the principal responsibility for family support must remain with the state. To deviate from this traditional view would, he implied, involve the unions far too much in politics and allow the intrusion of an unacceptable artificiality into the bargaining process.

99. The Administration of the Wage Stop - A Report by the Supplementary Benefits Commission to the Ministry of Social Security HMSO November 1967. The Report was rather vague and evasive in its analysis of the wage-stop but it took up CPAG's suggestion that increased family allowances would be an effective and immediate means of extending help to the 27,000 families getting reduced supplementary allowances.

100. Cousins, F. 'A Minimum Wage' Poverty No. 3 Summer 1967 p. 6

....."wages in general will always be determined in the main by industrial factors, based on some concept of 'the rate for the job' or 'fair wages'. Of necessity, one negotiates in the knowledge that the settlement of the minimum rate should give a worker the means to provide a good standard of living and home for the family, but taking into account the size of the family is an additional matter. This is certainly where social benefits in the form of family allowances, have a key role". (101)

In retrospect, Cousins concern with family support seems rather superficial and the nature of his argument must be seen as posting a warning against optimism and high expectations. Indeed, the latter part of his commentary quite clearly shows the traditional reluctance of trade unionists to develop a concern beyond the workplace. However, for a nascent pressure group still exploring avenues of influence Cousins arguments were sufficiently ambivalent and interspersed with the odd encouraging phrase as to not distract Lynes just yet from his plan to enlist union support.

The Group's next task was to sound out the labour movements willingness to provide the funds that it urgently required to sustain and expand its activities. In June 1967 Lynes wrote to Lord Cooper of the GMWU and to George Woodcock TUC General Secretary, outlining the group's financial difficulties and urging monetary assistance for a body sharing a 'common cause'....."I am writing to ask whether the TUC would be prepared to contribute towards the cost of continuing the work of this group..... The relevance of our campaign to the interests of the trade union movement and particularly to your unions proposals for helping lower-paid workers hardly needs stressing".⁽¹⁰²⁾

It is clear, however, that most individual unions and the TUC itself were reluctant or unable to furnish aid of that sort. George Woodcock echoed the general sentiment....."while we welcome your support in focussing public

101. ibid

102. Tony Lynes to Lord Cooper, General Secretary National Union of General and Municipal Workers 13. 6. 67. and to George Woodcock General Secretary TUC 12. 7. 67.

attention on this problem (the low paid) the General Council do not normally contribute to bodies campaigning for improved social security benefits". (103)

The latter part of Woodcock's statement, echoing Cousins earlier comments, suggests that perhaps financial assistance was not the real barrier but, rather, the TUCs own ambivalence towards the 'morality' of bringing social security benefits more and more into line with what a worker might actually earn in full-time employment. (104) Indeed it would have been most difficult for the General Council or individual unions to carry this sort of initiative beyond the prejudices and insularity of a rank and file concerned, naturally, with maintaining differentials both within and outside of the workplace. (105)

In August, Lynes spelt out the next stage of his approach to the unions and emphasised their value as intermediaries in the dialogue between Government and governed. In a memorandum to the CPAG Executive he wrote..... 'In view of the recent unemployment figures, the probability of higher unemployment this Winter and the fact that family allowances will not go up

103. George Woodcock to Tony Lynes 21. 7. 67.

104. Lynes had explained the dilemma himself..... "The wage-stop condemns the unemployed man and his family to live below the level of income officially recognised as adequate to meet their needs. Because the man's normal earnings, as estimated by the Ministry of Labour, would be too low to raise the family above the poverty line, they must be kept below the poverty line when he is out of work.... without the wage-stop, a small minority of unemployed men might be tempted to remain out of work, since they would be better off on supplementary benefit, so, to avoid this risk the innocent must suffer too....." Poverty No. 2 Spring 1967 p. 4

105. Not all CPAGs Executive agreed that this was an effective approach Jonathan Bradshaw, for example, commented..... "I was never very convinced that this was an effective strategy, it always seemed to me that unions have been directing their energies in other directions, shop floor issues rather than social issues, wages rather than benefits, the skilled articulate workers rather than the low paid inarticulate workers. I remember going to the Trades Council in York (1967) to talk about the need to do something about people out of work as well as those in work and I remember trying to get them to support the claimants unions, but the unemployed were just 'scroungers'. The question was not that work was unavailable but that they had chosen not to work". Interview 2. 11. 78.

for most families until April. . . . I think we should urge the Government to suspend the wage stop this Winter. The obvious time to make this situation is during the TUC Conference at Brighton next week". (106)

The outcome was that in September Lynes decided to approach the TUC for support of a more general kind. In a letter to the editors of the provincial press he stressed the urgency of CPAGs latest statement on the anomalies of the wage stop in the wake of fresh government predictions of higher unemployment that Winter. In his covering letter Lynes stated that, for the first time, a major CPAG policy statement would not only be presented to the Minister of Social Security and the Chairman of the SBC but to all members of the TUC General Council and would be distributed to every delegate at the TUC Conference.

Again, however, the Group failed to make any real progress on the wage stop issue. Conference chose, instead, to address itself once more to the less controversial issue of family allowances. (107) The subsequent resolution to ask the Government to give a ten shilling increase in allowances in addition to the extra seven shillings due to be paid in April 1968 and the process of argument which justified it did at least bring some encouragement to the

106. Memorandum to the Executive Committee 30. 8. 67.

107. While statements on family allowances were generally regarded as 'safer' i. e. less controversial than those on proposals for increased unemployment benefits, the family allowances issue did generate some dissension and resentment within the Labour Movement.

Bradshaw commented that. "The main focus of our campaign has been family allowances and child benefits and wherever you talk frankly to union organisers they say that families are a minority group among their members and that there is a good deal of prejudice about families. Most of their members have already passed on from the child rearing stage or are still to bring families into the world and the numbers of men who are worried about family benefits is very small and even those men who have families are not terribly interested in the issue".
Interview 2. 11. 78.

Group after the disappointment of the wage-stop. In a moment of self-congratulation Lynes was moved to comment that the TUC resolution was...
 "precisely the policy put forward in recent months by the Child Poverty Action Group". (108)

Nevertheless, Lynes chose not to attempt any further initiatives towards the unions largely for three reasons. Principally the Group lacked a network of trade union contacts to facilitate and accelerate the development of the sort of 'alliance' Lynes had earlier envisaged. Lynes was subsequently introduced to a number of 'contacts' by a Scottish trade unionist, Iain Jordan, but was unable to develop these to any significant extent. Secondly, it was Lynes opinion that the trade unions were simply not interested enough in family allowances and related issues to develop their concern beyond the traditional 'salutatory' resolution at annual conference. This was clearly demonstrated in a meeting Lynes had with Jack Jones, arranged through Iain Jordan and Norman Willis, then Deputy General Secretary of the TGWU. Lynes learned that while Jones was interested in and sympathetic towards CPAG he did not view family support as of more than peripheral trade union interest and was not willing to act upon this issue. (109) Thirdly, a combination of scarce resources, early disappointments and his own belief in a low political profile discouraged Lynes from making any further attempt to win union support.

The idea of CPAG- union liaison was not dead however. In April 1968 the idea was revived by Iain Jordan, then a member of the CPAG Executive, who proposed a more selective and structured strategy to win the support of the unions. His proposal was that the CPAG Executive should co-opt trade unionists in an attempt to forge supportive links with and gain a closer insight into the

108. Poverty No. 5 p.14

109. Interview with Tony Lynes 31.5.79.

workings of the unions. This was an interesting departure from Lynes approach. Jordan recognised both the need to understand the mechanics of policy formulation in the trade union movement and the importance of presenting external proposals or 'in-puts' in such a way that they were readily acceptable to this machinery. Until this point CPAG had presented 'in-puts' in rather ad hoc fashion and with little appreciation of the nuances and idiosyncracies of union policy-making.

The group had made little effort to see issues from a union point of view when pressing for support. It might, for example, have recognised more determinedly to its own advantage that, at a given moment in time, the vast majority of trade unionists either do not have children or their families are fully grown and that their interest in family allowances will be marginal. Any strategy to win their support for an increase must therefore be sensitive to this fact and presented in a manner which will not produce disinterest or alienation. CPAG, perhaps also suffered because of its rather 'intellectual' image and its elitist approach to union leaders. Intellectuals have traditionally had, at best, an uneasy relationship with the trade union movement and CPAGs failure to adopt a 'grass-roots' strategy, at least in conjunction with the approach to senior trade unionists, can have done little to improve that relationship.

Jordan seems to have been one of the few who recognised this. He proposed, among other things, (1) that a leaflet should be prepared and directed mainly at the trade unionists explaining their common interests; (2) a memorandum should be sent to all CPAG branches advising them on how to contact local trades councils and to encourage trade union branches to affiliate to CPAG; (3) a list of trade councils was to be obtained from the TUC and used to give branches the addresses of trade councils in their areas and to send literature direct from national office and invite them to affiliate to the group nationally;

(4) Finally, Jordan proposed that information be collected about resolutions sent to the conferences of individual unions and the TUC itself. This, he agreed, would enable CPAG to use its time and resources more selectively by liaising only with those unions with a proven orientation towards social policy. ⁽¹¹⁰⁾

It is significant that on the day Jordan had first suggested closer links with the unions Rosemary Vear, a CPAG worker, had delivered a paper to the CPAG conference at Manchester on Poverty and Social Action in which she had charged. "direct work with the trade unions and the poor are the most neglected sections of our work so far". ⁽¹¹¹⁾ Despite this recognition within the group for closer links with the unions the implementation of Jordan's proposals was deferred until after the appointment of Frank Field in February 1969.

Inevitably, the confusion into which the Group was thrown at the time of Lynes resignation contributed to the delay in resuming attempts to attract union support. However, Lynes makes it clear that his own political style was inconsistent with the sort of approach required to win and retain that support. ⁽¹¹²⁾ Furthermore, he appears to have lost the will to do so after the TUC conference of September 1967. It is also reasonable to speculate that Lynes was not prepared to press too hard in the direction of the unions for fear of prejudicing the value of his network of ministerial and civil servant contacts of whom he still had high hopes. ⁽¹¹³⁾ Ultimately, it must be

110. Executive Committee Minutes 28. 4. 68.

111. Vear, R. Local Action on Poverty CPAG April 27th 1968

112. Interview with Tony Lynes 31. 5. 79.

113. Banting notes, for example, that after leaving the Ministry of Pensions. "Lynes did maintain contact with his ex-colleagues; indeed a series of informal policy seminars attended by both academics and middle-level officials was held in his flat. These contacts proved important in co-ordinating Ministry and CPAG strategy at a critical juncture." However, as he goes on to note. "they did not represent a direct involvement in policy-making". p. 87

concluded that Lynes recognised that the unions would not easily be persuaded into supporting what they largely saw as non-union issues and that CPAGs resources were neither adequate or appropriate for an intensive grass-roots strategy such as that proposed by Jordan in 1968. and finally launched by the group in the early seventies.

In the interim the idea of a trade union initiative in social policy was kept alive in a series of articles exploring the possibilities of union action on low pay, especially in the wake of an apparent Government default on the issue. One of the most important of these appeared in the periodical New Society a week after the 1968 TUC conference. Crucially, it pointed out that although Richard Crossman, Secretary of State for Social Services, realised that low pay and the failure of Labour's incomes policy were major causes of poverty he was....."politically reluctant to draw the conclusion that family allowances should go up". (114) and he had chosen to concentrate, instead, on the low pay issue.

This concern, charged, New Society, was spurious and evasive since the Government had already shown itself intransigent on the subject of minimum wage legislation. despite there being a clear case for it. More curious was the sight of a labour government elected to promote social justice passing the buck on family poverty to a trade union movement which had repeatedly stressed that its responsibilities lay elsewhere and that family support was the concern of the state.

The author wrote....."Beveridge insisted on family allowances for those in work as a pre-requisite of adequate social security benefits for the non-working population. Both Mrs. Hart and Crossman, however, are politically reluctant to draw the conclusion that family allowances should go up. Instead, they emphasise the need to concentrate wage increases on the low paid. Mrs. Hart has even implied that, if family poverty still exists, the responsibility is not hers but that of the unions". (115)

114. 'The Morality of Idleness' New Society 12. 9. 68.

115. ibid

Mrs. Hart did have a point, though she was hardly likely to endear herself or her party to the trade unions by expressing it. As New Society pointed out, there was very little recent evidence that wages policy had brought about any measurable improvement in the position of the low-paid. However, it concluded....."short of minimum wage legislation of the kind that the unions are demanding (and which the government clearly has no intention of enacting), further increases in family allowances seem essential if the overlap of benefits and earnings is to be eliminated". (116)

A similar analysis was put forward by Norman Atkinson in a Tribune study of low pay. (117) Atkinson showed that in 1938 the percentage of total personal income going to wages and salaries before tax was 55%. In 1967, it was still only 63% despite a massive 41% expansion in the work force. Atkinson concluded that the implications were alarming as the trade unions had clearly failed to take advantage of their strength and tackle the issue of wealth distribution.

The argument was re-worked by John Edmonds and Giles Radice, both research officers with the GMWU, in Low Pay February 1969. (118) In line with CPAG, they recommended that the low paid could be helped by the reform of social security and taxation policy which could then properly supplement and protect their income. Secondly, they fixed a responsibility upon the unions to protect the bargaining position of the low paid in the workplace so that they could increase their earnings. Additionally, they argued for a statutory minimum wage and an increase in family allowances to an "adequate" level - the onus for achieving these was placed firmly in the direction of the trade union movement. If active co-operation between

116. ibid

117. Atkinson, N. Whatever Happened to Our Wages? Tribune Pamphlet 1969

118. Radice, G. and Edmonds, J. Low Pay Fabian Research Series No. 270 Feb. 1969.

CPAG and the unions had temporarily failed then at least a dialogue was maintained in the media which helped to remind the unions of the broader social role some felt they should adopt. Furthermore, by keeping the issue on the boil in the months of transition, the group was better placed to resume its efforts to enlist trade union support in the Autumn of 1969.

Early efforts to do this, under Frank Fields direction, were largely confined to fundraising. Towards the end of March 1969 approaches were made to Lord Balogh, Lord Sainsbury and Peggy Herbison, to ask their assistance and lend their names to a fresh fundraising bid. ⁽¹¹⁹⁾ This seems to have met with a rather protracted delay but by February 1970 the group was ready to launch a major appeal for funds, directed mainly at the trade unions. Herbison's contacts and her known sympathy for the group's work made her an obvious choice as the principal signatory to a covering letter.

She wrote of the groups activities. "Their campaign helped me when I was Minister of Social Security to get an important increase in family allowances - a move which I'm sure you know the TUC strongly supported. Unfortunately, in spite of increased family allowances, poor families are still in need of help and the task of CPAG - as well as the whole labour movement - remains as relevant today as it did four years ago. . . . The group. . . . is pioneering the development of welfare law in this country. This is a field which will grow in the near future and will become of vital interest to all trade unions. I am, therefore, writing to ask if you would consider seriously making a grant to CPAG and also consider what ways the group might be of use to your union, particularly on the research side". ⁽¹²⁰⁾

Her closing comments indicate a further development of Tony Lynes' early

119. CPAG Executive Committee Minutes March 1969
120. ibid February 1970.

attempts to show the mutual nature of the benefits that could accrue from liaison between CPAG and the unions. CPAG was now making more elaborate efforts to do the same. The group's former Trade Union Liaison Officer confirmed that, at the time of her appointment, a 'two-way flow' strategy was prominent in CPAGs thinking. (121)

....."There were three aims, deliberately kept rather vague to see how the work developed. First, to 'lobby' trade union leaders and TUC staff on the changes in social security policy which the group was currently hoping to see; secondly, to have a two-way educational exchange in which the liaison officer would be available to summarise CPAG publications for trade union journals, speak to branch or shop stewards meetings and at the same time approach both national and branch officers to support CPAG branches, speak at meetings and supply the group with data". (122)

Meanwhile, in March 1970, Frank Field was successful in persuading a number of leading trade unionists, including Bill Simpson of the AUEFN, Clive Jenkins ASTMS, Henry Chapman CAWU, A. G. Brooks NUBE and John Boyd of AUEFW to co-sign a letter to the Prime Minister demanding

121. This tactic holds some implications for the 'Exchange Theory' of group politics - Garson, for example, notes that....."The exchange theory of groups portrayed group leaders as entrepreneurs selling the benefits of group affiliation for a price. Political organisations were quasi-firms, producing and exchanging legitimacy (a quasi-good) in a broader political exchange environment". Garson, D. G. Group Theories of Politics Sage Vol 61 1978 pp 140-1
- Ordinarily, group theorists have spoken of Exchange Theory as illuminating a relationship between a group and its members or, more classically, between groups and the state. However, it would not be unreasonable to proffer a further variation on this theme i. e. the relationship between groups alone. In the example cited, CPAG was offering to exchange specialist information, skills and advice in return for the political support of the trade union movement. In this way, groups may combine rationally in pursuit of their overlapping interest to the higher market i. e. that in which they must deal directly with the state. In making a rational 'exchange' at an early stage in the bargaining process they each enhance their propensity for goal achievement.
122. Interview with Marigold Johnson, CPAG Trade Union Liaison Officer.

action to improve low wages and increase family allowances. (123) In April 1970 Herbison's call for action also attracted the desired support. On the eve of Roy Jenkins final budget Harold Wilson received a joint-letter from CPAG and leading trade unionists representing over 3½ million workers, urging a substantial increase in family allowances. However, such a gesture must be seen for what it is, a protest at a fait accompli, an admission of failure to influence policy, not a fresh attempt to do so. CPAG's success, then, was simply in persuading some trade union leaders that budgetary policy overlooked the problems of poverty but the gesture came much too late to be other than an eleventh-hour protest.

However, the group was anxious to demonstrate that the gesture might be more substantial than it appeared. Field wrote....."In this joint approach, the trade union leaders and CPAG claim that the economic consequences of devaluation have disproportionately fallen on the least privileged and this has been contrary to the Government's initial intention..... both the Child Poverty Action Group and the representatives of one seventh of the entire labour force urge the Prime Minister to make a large increase in family allowances in tomorrow's budget". (124)

In May, a second appeal went out from Herbison on behalf of the group and this also met with some limited support. (125)

123. CPAG Executive Committee Minutes March 1970.
In January, Field had also been successful in persuading the TUC General Council to push for higher family allowances. His lengthy memorandum on the subject was substantially quoted from during the General Council's meeting with Richard Crossman on the Labour Government's new Social Insurance Scheme and in their later representations to the Chancellor. Revealed to Field from C. R. Dale, Secretary, Social Insurance Dept. of TUC (undated)
124. CPAG A Plan to Help the Low-Paid and Overcome Family Poverty Memorandum to the Chancellor Poverty No.18 1971.
125. Clive Jenkins of ASTMS, for Example, wrote back on 7. 5. 70..... "I am personally entirely in sympathy with the aims and objects of the Group and I will be raising your letter at the next meeting of the General Purposes Committee of this Association". Alan Fisher, NUPE, wrote 6. 5. 70..... "I will certainly take this to the next meeting of my finance committee for their consideration". A few unions made immediate small donations. Lord Cooper of the GMWU sent £100 from his Executive Committee, the Draftsmans and Allied Technicians Association sent a nominal £5 and ASTMS forwarded £25.

In June the Labour Party suffered defeat at the General Election and Edward Heath's Conservative Government came to power. Committed to a new Industrial Relations Bill, which took much of its form from the Donovan and In Place of Strife proposals which the unions had so strongly opposed, the Heath Government embarked on a course of action which led to confrontation with the trade union movement and which produced the sort of outcomes predicted in the Perlman and Richter 'models'. It was during this next phase, the period 1971-76, that the unions developed more fully a concern beyond that of free collective bargaining as their legal status came under attack. (126) Accordingly, the unions sought to construct with the Labour Party a formula that would return the party to office and compensate them for the sacrifices they had to make to help the party realise that goal. (127)

It is interesting to note that it was only after the struggle over the Donovan Report and In Place of Strife, when victory had been achieved, that the trade

126. Harold Wilson has observed that the seeds for confrontation had been sown before the Conservatives came to power. "As industrial relations, in political speeches and press comments, became more and more an issue in the forthcoming election - with Mr. Heath's highly-publicised union-bashing on the eve of each by-election or GLC and other local elections - one question began to assume more importance. Were the Conservatives, for electoral purposes, prepared to put at risk what had been a great achievement between Government and TUC. . . . and make industrial relations the casualty of a drive for political power? All the signs, as the election drew near, were that they were prepared to act in this way. The final answer was not to emerge until after the election, when the TUCs repeated willingness to help avert a strike, or to settle a strike once it had begun, was rudely rebuffed". The Labour Government 1964-70 p. 834

127. In mid-1971, Hugh Scanlon, answering a question about the involvement of unions in politics as a result of Government attempts to curb their power, wrote. "Of course, this involves us in politics. Indeed, issues such as legislation against unions and unemployment, are making unions more politically involved than ever before in the post-war period. It is inevitable that we shall see a greater involvement by trade unions in the affairs of the Labour Party, which can only be to the benefit of both the industrial and political wings of our movement".
Hugh Scanlon to Irving Richter 18. 5. 71. Quoted in Richter op cit p226.

unions really developed a strong interest in the area of social policy, not the least because their primary interest, the maintenance of free collective bargaining, was temporarily surrendered. This is important since both Perlman and Richter imply that this outcome will develop during and as part of the struggle.⁽¹²⁸⁾ Reasons for this apparent anomaly have already been suggested and the close 'fraternal' links between the Labour Party and the unions seems to have played a major role in narrowing the focus and the effects of the struggles in the late sixties. This was not the case, however, during the Conservative's period of office 1970-74 and, as will be shown, this latter attack upon trade union power did produce developments predicted in the Perlman-Richter thesis.

Finally, there was a growing awareness on the part of the unions after their successful resistance to In Place of Strife, a victory achieved at the highest level of Government, that they had reached a position in the polity where they could effectively challenge the Executive. This awareness, combined with Labour's serious political demise after 1969 and the resulting tension between its industrial and political wings, appears to have convinced many trade union leaders, at least temporarily, that the onus of challenge to the Conservative's industrial relations proposals and reductions in public expenditure rested with them and not the opposition party.⁽¹²⁹⁾ Only in the

128. As indeed it did do during the industrial relations struggle 1971-74, the major by-product of which was the formulation of the 'Social Contract' between the TUC and the Labour Party and a pledge to repeal the Conservative Industrial Relations and Housing Finance acts.

129. Richter comments. "The resultant new power and confidence of the industrial wing of the movement was widely noted following the Labour Government's surrender. It could be utilised for broader purposes than the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act and restoration of the Status quo ante. Indeed some leaders of the industrial wing assured swifter progress towards the goal of socialism". pp 227-28.

Eric Heffer, indeed, viewed the immediate post-election period and the struggle over industrial relations as making the ascendancy of the trade union left, in contrast to the 'intellectual' Bevanite left of the fifties. Heffer, E. 'The Left on the Left : Consensus and the Price of the Bill' Spectator 13. 2. 71.

early months of 1971 as the rift between party and unions begin to heal did a viable joint-approach to policy emerge. In the interim, the initiatives taken by CPAG and others towards the unions and their search for a new 'lead' served only to strengthen the unions vanguard role.

The essence of this development has been explained by Frank Chapple of the EEPTU who has charged that....."the lack of leadership by other institutions is creating a situation where a new role is being forced upon the trade unions. Accordingly, all those in the trades union movement are having to adapt to the new function in order to ensure that the vacuum is not filled by other views which could be detrimental to the interests of the country and to the trades unions". (130)

A more perceptive and succinct explanation of the unions role in the polity in the seventies is, as we shall see in the next chapter, difficult to find. We now turn to CPAGs response to this development.

130. McGill, J. Industry, the State and the Individual 'Blackie 1976 p. 96

CHAPTER 8

Socialising the Unions

While CPAG had initiated a number of approaches to the trade unions in the early months of Frank Field's office, they represented little more than a revival of Tony Lynes earlier attempts to involve the unions in fundraising, letter signing and policy endorsement. They certainly cannot be viewed as a coherent and long-term strategy to establish a sustained liaison with the unions. Nor were these efforts consistent with the sort of structural, grass-roots approach advocated by Iain Jordan in 1968, which had been rejected by Lynes in favour of elite persuasion. Essentially, Field's early initiatives derived from the need for the group to acquire funds and, more significantly, from its concern for the hostility shown to the poor by large sections of the community, most notably the working class. In his first Directors Report Field had analysed the tasks facing the group and concluded that.....

"The ignorance of the problem (poverty) and hostility to poorer sections of the community is one of the counteracting pressures against the group's views being more willingly accepted by Government". (1)

Field went on to assess the problem in terms of class inequality. For him, a reduction of this hostility and prejudice and the elimination of ignorance through education would be a means of making an inroad upon this inequality. He felt it important to demonstrate to the working class, especially to the labour movement, and not simply to the informed middle class as Lynes had perhaps too selectively done, that poverty was a product of class inequality⁽²⁾

1. Directors Report to CPAG Executive 21. 3. 69.
2. A comprehensive analysis of poverty in class terms has been offered by Bill Jordan in Paupers - The Making of the New Claiming Class Routledge Kegan and Paul 1973.
See also Field, F. ed. The Conscript Army Routledge Kegan and Paul 1977 Chapters 2 and 3. For a comparative study, in the field of education, see Byrne, D.: Williamson, B. and Fletcher, B. The Poverty of Education Martin Robertson 1975

and a problem that could befall any worker with a large family or one who found himself out of work for a short time. An immediate task for the group then was to first demonstrate to the trade union movement the importance of keeping abreast of social security matters and, secondly, to encourage the movement to lend its socio-economic leverage to the campaign for improved benefits.

The importance of recognising the poor as simply the lowest stratum of the working class and thereby a highly relevant target for any political activity affecting or emanating from that class has been stated by Miliband, who comments....."The basic fact is that the poor are an integral part of the working class - its poorest and most disadvantaged stratum. They need to be seen as such, as part of a continuum, the more so as many workers who are not 'deprived' in the official sense live in permanent danger of entering the ranks of the deprived; and that they share in any case many of the disadvantages which effect the deprived. Poverty is a class thing, closely linked to a general situation of class inequality; and ultimately remediablein general class terms". (3)

One of the most realistic means of achieving the remedy to which Miliband refers is to harness the influence of what has been called the "socio-economic leverage" of the trade unions, and direct it into effective forms of action. (4)

3. Miliband, R. 'Politics and Poverty' in Wedderburn, D. ed. Poverty, Inequality and Class Culture. Cambridge University Press 1974 Ch. 9 p.185
4. Finer, S. E. 'The Political Power of Organised Labour' Government and Opposition 1974 pp 391-406. Miliband notes that....."In terms of pressure group politics, the most important of all such voices (i. e. on the poor's behalf) is - or could be - that of the trade union movement; and both individual unions and the TUC have, in the last few years, shown much greater concern for low-paid workers and for the deprived generally than in earlier periods. Given the fragmentation of organised labour, its sectional divisions and its usually low level of solidarity this must be reckoned as progress indeed". p.191

A meeting with Peggy Herbison early in 1970 convinced Field of the potential the unions held for advancing CPAG's goals. ⁽⁵⁾ Herbison had disclosed that while she was Minister of Social Security, James Callaghan had tried to introduce a means-tested family income supplement. Almost immediately she had received a strongly-worded letter from the unions urging her to frustrate its progress. ⁽⁶⁾ On this occasion, generally unknown to public opinion, trade union opposition was sufficient to persuade Callaghan to abandon his plans and it was left to the Heath Government to revive them. ⁽⁷⁾

This, together with the In Place of Strife debacle, persuaded Field that the unions were both powerful and sympathetic enough to promote the welfare of non-trade-unionists also and provided him with the initiative to carry CPAG demands to Congress House. ⁽⁸⁾ The outcome has been a concerted attempt on the part of the group to 'prime' the unions social conscience. Salient to this attempt was the need to develop the early superficial liaison on letter signing and fundraising into a substantive, ongoing dialogue at leadership, grass-roots and research department levels.

An impromptu discussion between Field, Nicholas Bosanquet of the LSE (and formerly of the Prices and Incomes Board) and Giles Radice of the GMWU Research Department on the usefulness of extending group-union links produced an informal meeting between CPAG and trade unionists on the 24th September

5. Interview with Frank Field 25. 7. 77.
6. Even here it should be noted that Peggy Herbison herself had "orchestrated" the trade union reaction after 'leaking' the Callaghan proposal to them in the first place. See Banting op cit p.152 and Crossman Diaries Vol II pp 251-3
7. See Poverty Pamphlet No. 19 A Social Contract for Families November 1974 pp 3-7 and Poverty 16/17 pp 8-16
8. Reflecting on Herbisons disclosures, Field says that....."it was at that point that a strategy did evolve of not so much being concerned with rank and file trade unionists because we do not have the skills or expertise to do that, or the resources, but channelling in heavily to the trade union leadership". Interview 22. 2. 79.

1970, the object being....."to provide regular contacts between CPAG and the unions and to talk over issues of mutual interest".⁽⁹⁾ Representatives, mainly research staff, from the GMWU, NUT, USDAW, NUPE, TUC, ASW, TGWU and NUTEW took part in the discussion with Field and Harriet Bretherton of CPAG. The key issue, and initial reason for calling the meeting was low pay and, specifically, how to keep this issue at the forefront of the political debate.⁽¹⁰⁾ Other matters discussed were the relationships between tax paid and benefits received, a concern of Bosanquet, together with the possibility of reform or abolition of tax inequities and reform of wages councils, a major interest of Field.⁽¹¹⁾

In November 1970 this co-operation extended further when a number of unions and social service organisations embarked on a campaign to induce the Government to rethink its social policy, particularly its favouring of selectivity over universality.⁽¹²⁾ The General Secretary of the TGWU,

9. CPAG Executive Committee Minutes September 1970
10. The key figure in setting up this 'dialogue' was Nicholas Bosanquet, whose contacts with these trade unions derived from his earlier work with the Prices and Incomes Board for which he had co-authored a report on low pay. He says of the original meeting....."at that time I was fairly well informed on the subject and I convened a meeting: I think it was the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers Research Officer, USDAW, some GMWU Research Officers and Norman Willis of the TGWU, who was probably the most prominent trade unionist in his area, and we had a general discussion about low pay and a subsequent meeting on ways that CPAG would work in with the trade union movement". He also speculates that the meetings encouraged Field to later set up the Low Pay Unit. Interview with Nicholas Bosanquet 22. 2. 79.
11. It is interesting to note here that CPAG were attempting to explore possible areas of mutual concern between themselves and the trade unions by sounding out and appealing to the latter's self-interest. This is a tactic which has been successfully employed by groups in the U. S. A. which lack socio-economic leverage. Environmental groups have for example, combined with labour unions and, in some cases, business corporations, wielding substantial political influence, to strengthen their cause. See Roos Jnr, L. J. The Politics of Ecosuicide Holt, Rinehart & Winston Illinois 1971 Ch. 1, 2, 4 & 16 and Crensen, M. The Unpolitics of Air Pollution Baltimore University Press 1971
12. This included representatives from NUPE, TGWU, USDAW, Family Service Units, East London Settlement, BASW, NCCL, National for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, National Institute of Social Work Training, The Albany Settlement, Shelter, Mothers in Action, NUS, Quest, Task Force and the Claimants Unions, CPAG Press release 'A Warning Voice' November 4th 1970

Jack Jones, described the campaign as marking....." a significant development in collaboration between different organisations concerned with social rights and with the interests of the low paid and the poor". (13)

This was an important development in the attack upon poverty because the unions were publicly stating their belief in a causal relationship between low pay and poverty and thereby appeared to subscribe to the 'class inequality' analysis that Miliband argues is the key pre-requisite for remedial political action. More realistically, however, the unions were coming to accept the importance of social security issues to their members and were, therefore, pursuing their own rational self-interest. In a letter to the group Vic Feather confirmed the TUC General Council's support for CPAG's efforts and restated union opposition to FIS.....

....."At a time when the Government is actively resisting wage claims which would enable workers to obtain decent basic rates of pay, their proposal of a family income supplement will be offensive both to the dignity and to the sense of justice of the workpeople of this country..... The Government's whole approach to social policy is a disaster. One almost gasps with incredulity that any government today in Britain, can hit at one go the sick, the injured, the old, the low-paid, the family and every wage-earner; yet at the same time can hand out the biggest rewards to the biggest surtax payer. Only a two-faced government could talk about 'one nation' in this context and the Child Poverty Action Group, in developing its protest, has the best wishes of the whole trade union movement". (14)

The earlier insularity of Frank Cousin's analysis of wages, social security and the role of unions now appeared diminished as Feather revealed the implicit preparedness of the unions to step beyond the traditional parameters of free collective bargaining to secure realistic levels of family support. The TUC had reached the same conclusions as CPAG that wages, taxation and social insurance issues were closely related and that isolated

13. ibid

14. Feather argued that child poverty could not be achieved by wage increases alone. Instead....."The solution lies in using a battery of means which can be concentrated in the area of most need. The income tax and social benefit systems must take account of the needs of different sized families in a way that the wages system cannot".
Vic Feather 'Low Pay and Poverty' Poverty No.16/17 pp 29-30

consideration of each was unrealistic. ⁽¹⁵⁾ The fact remains, however, that the unions have only accepted this interrelationship when it has been expedient for them to do so, as will be shown in Chapter 10.

Throughout November CPAG and the TUC maintained a correspondence on the Conservatives plans to introduce FIS. An interesting feature of this was the request made by Peter Townsend to Vic Feather on the 19th November for TUC assistance in collecting information on the social security system administered by a number of European governments by means of joint organisations of employers and unions. CPAG were anxious to demonstrate the considerable support that the unions could give to the poor. "In moving towards a more coherent policy for the low paid and their families. . . we believe it might be very helpful in present circumstances to investigate whether some new social security benefits might be better administered if they had a direct controlling interest in the shape of union representation". Townsend restated his argument some weeks later. "compared with other countries Britian's social security benefits seem to be flagging in recent years. One of the reasons for this may be the lack of union involvement in their administration". ⁽¹⁶⁾

15. Feather commented, for example. "At the TUC we are suggesting that in respect of those who pay tax the introduction of a minimum earned income allowance, coupled with an increase in family allowances, including an extension of the clawback, would bear directly on the problem of family poverty". Poverty 16/17
16. Peter Townsend to Vic Feather 19.11.70. - Feather replied on 27.11.70 offering the address of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Correspondence between the two also took place on 10th November on the subject of FIS and December 1st on the administration of social security. The interesting observation to be made of this dialogue is that it largely grew out of CPAGs hopes for developing the interest shown by Vic Feather in the campaign launched by the group on November 4th (Footnote 12). While a large number of organisations were represented at the initial meeting, there is little subsequent evidence of a joint approach and it can only be assumed that each organisation acted independently within a general frame of reference agreed upon at the Nov. 4th meeting.

This resort to 'flattery' and deference was an interesting new departure for CPAG. Townsend was firmly indicating that direct union participation in the administration and formulation of social security benefits would be an effective means of both revising and democratising them. Townsend's latter point was a statement of CPAG's growing belief in the unions' developing 'societal' role. In addition, he was usefully exploiting the possible sense of pique that British trade unions might have felt at the thought that they, unlike their European counterparts, were excluded from involvement in a branch of social insurance that must be the concern of any trade unionist.

Throughout the closing months of 1970 and early into the new year, CPAG and the TUC undertook both individual and collective efforts to persuade the Heath Government to initiate fiscal measures which would raise the tax threshold and lift workers earning 'poverty wages' out of the taxation system. CPAG, itself, was concerned that the tax thresholds should be lifted above the supplementary benefit scale rates. A request to this effect was sent jointly by the group and the leaders of 20 major unions to Edward Heath in March 1971. (17)

17. It read....."Although the scale rates assure most supplementary benefit recipients of a minimum income, those who comprise the largest single group in poverty, the low wage earner - work a full week for a wage which is less than their theoretical supplementary benefit entitlement. A further injustice occurs as the income at which these men start to pay income tax is below the supplementary benefit level. So not only do they earn less than the official minimum but they are taxed at the standard rate on their poverty wages". The group was anxious to emphasise the joint approach taken by the TUC and CPAG on these issues....."During the past two years the TUC has made representation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting a reform of the tax system in order to raise the tax threshold and to lift out of tax workers earning poverty wages.... Similar representations have been made to the Chancellor by the CPAG. They presented him with two schemes which would lift the tax thresholds above the supplementary benefit scale rates". In conclusion, they added....."we would therefore urge you to not only raise the tax threshold in this year's budget.... but to support this by increasing family allowances. Combined, these two measures would make a very substantial contribution to overcoming family poverty".
- Frank Field to Edward Heath 26. 3. 71 on behalf of CPAG and the General Secretaries of USDAW, NALGO, NAAAW, NACODS, NUM, DATA, NUPE, Bakers Union, NUS, ASTMS, TGWU, CPSA, POEU, NUTGW, FBU, ACTHW, AUEFW, Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers Civil Service, Union, and the Power Loom Carpet Weavers & Textile Workers Association.

Meanwhile, in January, Field had invited Nicholas Bosanquet to address an internal CPAG discussion on strategy with principal reference to the question 'How Far is a Wages Policy a Necessary Part of any Strategy for Dealing with Family Poverty?' This appears to have been the combined result of Field's wish to develop the discussive approach with the unions established at the meeting the previous September and of Bosanquet's own analysis of the interrelationship of wages and poverty. This analysis was published by CPAG a short time later. (18) In it, he warned of the dangers of groups like CPAG remaining insular in the tactical sense and too single-minded in their choice of issues.

....."The pattern of debate has had clear political consequences - in two main ways. First, the advocates of the poor have let themselves be shut off into a special lobby in which they appeared only to be concerned with policies for social security. No challenge has been made on the central ground of general economic policy - and its effects on the low-paid. Secondly, the debate on low pay in employment has concentrated on methods of raising pay - as if employment would be left to take care of itself". (19)

His conclusion, not altogether different from the 'growth-first' strategies of Wilson and Heath, was that there was....."a need for all those interested in poverty to press as a matter for first priority for general reflation of the economy. The best immediate help to the low paid would be a growing economy with abundant job opportunities". (20)

Of particular importance was the attention he drew to the view that the low-paid are such because of their lack of bargaining power. This, he argued, brought with it the need to recognise that....."the first priority then becomes for the organised labour movement to 'shame' employers into paying better wages". (21) Clearly, what CPAG themselves have drawn from this is an awareness that if the labour movement were reluctant or unable to

18. Bosanquet, N. 'Jobs and the Low Paid Worker' Poverty No. 18 Spring 1971 and reprinted in Butterworth, E. and Weir, D. eds. Social Problems of Modern Britain Fontana 1973.
19. Poverty No. 18 p. 2
20. ibid p. 5
21. ibid p. 2

achieve this on their own then groups sharing broadly similar interests must lend their support to a joint-approach. As Bosanquet went on to conclude....."the evidence suggests a general moral for the poverty lobby. We have to extend our attack. The interests of the poor are vitally affected by general economic policies. To help the poor we need changes in these - as well as new and specific policies and spending commitments against poverty". (22)

Support for the idea of a closer liaison between CPAG and the unions and for a much stronger interest in the subject of poverty on the part of the latter had also come from Sir John Walley, Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Social Security during Peggy Herbison's office. Writing in 1971 Walley argued that....."In a campaign for child endowment there must clearly be the closest possible co-operation with the TUC....."(23) More specifically, he had earlier urged CPAG to identify its own views as far as possible with official TUC policy acknowledging, in particular, the TUCs call for a boost to family support in its 1969 Economic Review.

Like Bosanquet he was concerned that CPAG should extend co-operation as widely as possible....."Bring out that all sorts of other people have the same interest..... Anyone concerned about the country's future is a potential ally. So are employers and economists bothered about wage inflation; common market enthusiasts; educationists; women seeking to establish equal pay; income tax reformers concerned about incentives for the young family man; those interested in the unmarried or deserted mother; even those who complain that social security benefits are too lavish and are exploited by scroungers! Children's allowances when explained should be of great interest to all these". (24)

22. ibid p. 6

23. Walley, J. 'Childrens Allowances: An Economic and Social Necessity' in Bull, D. ed Family Poverty Duckworth 1972 p. 117

24. 'A New Deal for the Family' Poverty No. 10 Spring 1969

Both Walley and Bosanquet were acknowledging the importance of harnessing ideas to power. Both identified the fact that knowledge alone was largely worthless unless it was employed by influential or powerful forces such as the TUC. Walley had also raised the need for CPAG to recognise the 'negative' power wielded by the labour movement - the power to undermine CPAGs plans for broad social reform by simply serving their members' traditional workplace interests. Walley had warned, for example, that the average trade unionist saw the wage stop as "common sense" and that it made better tactical sense to criticise not the ruling itself but the shortcomings of a society which made such a ruling necessary. Similarly, he advised the group not to alienate better-off families with suggestions that they should not be entitled to child tax allowances. His own experience at the Ministry of Social Security had led him to conclude that....."The case for cutting these to accommodate other direct payments can be made without any such suggestion; and it will go down a lot better (and arouse interest!) if it is accompanied by an expression of concern that the recognition of family responsibilities in this country's tax structure is so inadequate". (25)

An early response to this fresh call for co-operation with the unions took the form of a second meeting between CPAG and research staff from unions representing low paid workers. (26) Again these included officers from the NUTGW, USDAW and Norman Willis, of the TGWU. Little progress came from this, however, partly because, as Bosanquet has shown, CPAG and the unions were "talking a different language". (27) This 'communication breakdown' became clear in the publication of an article on the 'Poverty Trap' by Frank Field and David Fiachaud in December and in the subsequent reply made by Jack Jones of the TGWU.

25. ibid p.12

26. Bosanquet to author 3.4.79. The meeting took place on 22 September 1971 and Bosanquet describes it as....."an exploratory discussion which had no very immediate result".

27. Bosanquet, N. 'Trade Unions and the Poor' Poverty No. 22 Spring 1972

It was Field and Piachaud's controversial view that....."for millions of low paid workers very substantial pay increases have the absurd effect of increasing only marginally their family's net income and in some cases actually make the family worse off".⁽²⁸⁾ Crucially, they argued....."We have reached the position where it is positively detrimental to many members interests for the unions to negotiate large wage increases".⁽²⁹⁾ Responsibility for this anomalistic state of affairs, they charged, lay with the Government's "polarising pursuits of selectivity and a means-test society".⁽³⁰⁾

The unfortunate result was what the authors termed 'The Poverty Trap'. As family income increased as a result of such wage rises then tax liability also increased and, crucially, a family's entitlement to some state benefits could be lost as gross income came to exceed the entitlement thresholds. In addition, as earnings increased so a family's entitlement to free school dinners ceased; exemptions on such things as prescription charges also ceased. The brunt of this 'what the Lord giveth' approach fell, in particular, on the poorest families, so much so argued the authors that a £1 wage increase may actually leave some families marginally worse off than before.

For Field and Piachaud the solution to the poverty trap lay in concerted trade union action, for which they saw two clear alternatives....."The first is to try to blast the low-paid out of the means-test net. To achieve this the unions must win increases of up to 40-50% for the low-paid..... Alternatively, the trade unions can insist that improvements in benefits

28. Field, F. and Piachaud, D. 'The Poverty Trap' New Statesman 3.12.71. The arguments advanced here largely stemmed from an earlier article by Piachaud 'Poverty and Taxation' Political Quarterly Vol. 42 No.1 Jan-March 1971 pp 31-44. This has since been developed further by Jonathan Bradshaw and Isabel Wakeman in 'The Poverty Trap up-Dated' Political Quarterly 1972 Vol. 43
29. 'The Poverty Trap' New Statesman 3.12.71.
30. ibid

should be a normal and important part of the annual wage negotiations. Then, if the Government concedes adequate increases in national insurance benefits and family allowances, wage settlements may be correspondingly reduced. This latter strategy is in the interests of low-paid families, unions, employers and the Government". (31)

What Field and Piachaud suggested, therefore, was that increased family allowances must remain as high a priority with the unions as increased pay; it was essential that benefits be adequate enough to ensure that all working families were substantially above the poverty line. Significantly, they argued, this situation would also go some way to countering the prejudices of those who complained that the unemployed received enough state support so as to discourage the incentive to work. (32) It is interesting to note that Sir John Walley had advised the group two years earlier to take just such an approach. "Everyone believes that work should bring some reward. Make it absolutely clear that those for whom you seek a better deal are men and women in regular work who want to do the best they can for their children but just have not the means." (33)

Like Townsend before them, the authors were keen to be seen appealing to both the union's self-interest and their wider sense of social responsibility. "For the unions it is a great and novel opportunity. By demanding - and obtaining - as part of the next wage round a return to the principles of Beveridge they would increase the net pay of family men, concentrating help on those with family responsibilities who are in greatest need, lift most working families off means tests and clear the poverty line and build a firm base from which minimum wage demands could be launched. If they

31. ibid

32. See Marquand, D. "And That Great Fat Pig" New Statesman 18. 9. 70.

33. Poverty No. 10

seize their chance there is a real possibility that the lasting consequence of the government's means-test madness will be an extension of universal social provision achieved through union strength". (34)

It is clear, however, that the views expressed by Field and Piachaud did not win the support among trade unionists they had hoped for. A number of trade unionists were clearly irritated by the directness with which Field and Piachaud appeared to be telling them how to conduct their affairs. The TUC's own Press and Publications Officer wrote, for example, that the authors were....."preaching to the converted". (35) Others objected in a more pointed tone to what they saw as an 'outside intrusion' into their affairs.....
"the unions are as concerned as Messrs. Field and Piachaud over implications of Government policy on real wages and they utilise as much informative research on this subject as comes to their attention. But a solution to the problems of low income families demands a more politic and comprehensive approach than that which depends on 'meetings with the Chancellor'". (36)

There is little doubt that some trade unionists were angered by the unduly pedantic style adopted by the authors. Where arguments should have been persuasive they were interpreted as instructive. The episode showed once more the traditional unease between intellectuals and trade unionists and the fundamental tensions between prescriptive and pragmatic viewpoints. Jack Jones of the TGWU echoed the sense of naivete and intrusiveness that many associated with the Field-Piachaud article....."The vicious 'poverty gap' that the Government's dogmatic policy of means-tested social benefits has created must be taken up as a challenge by the trade unions on

34. New Statesman 3.12.71.

35. 'Correspondence' New Statesman Dec 17th 1971

36. ibid

the wages front.but to talk as if concessions in the state benefits field can be used as a 'quid pro quo' for wage restraint in some form of 'annual negotiations' is to fly in the face of reality". (37)

Jones was prepared to concede, however, that the unions had not been as active against poverty as they could be. "there can be little disagreement among us that the situation that has been created requires stronger action by the unions - and trade unionists should welcome pressure from concerted groups to this end. instead of being on the defensive for so many years the unions should have challenged the politicians themselves to treat better wages for ordinary families as a central feature of economic policy, instead of it being the fag end of what was left over when the Treasury and Military men had pushed their priorities first". (38)

37. Jones, J. 'Wages and Social Security' New Statesman 7.1.72. - It is important to note here that the fulfilment of CPAGs demands would have required a shift in the thinking of the British trade union movement towards that of their Continental and Scandinavian counterparts. Castles and Parkin have both shown, for example, that Scandinavian trade unions have been far more flexible in their approach to any suggested interrelationship between welfare benefits, social security in particular, and wage bargaining. Castles notes that there has been. "an emphasis on the relative unity and integration of the Scandinavian labour movements, the evolution of an ideology focusing on social reform rather than social ownership, and the adoption of a strategy premised on class collaboration and the use of labour movement solidarity as mechanisms providing the resource base for reform" Castles, F. The Social Democratic Image of Society Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978 p.46. - See also Parkin, F. Class Inequality and Political Order MacGibbon & Kee 1971
38. ibid - an interesting point made by Jones was that the attack on poverty must be three-sided i. e. from groups like CPAG, from the unions and from the Labour Party itself. Precisely the sort of concerted action envisaged in the early days of the social contract. He notes, for example. "Pressure to lift minimum wage levels helps make the case against the 'poverty gap' and arguments against means-testing reinforce the higher wages case. That is why we have to have close working from both sides - and why the Labour Party itself must not only be committed to the general principle of reversing the Government's policy, but have ideas ready in detail - perhaps based on the concept of increasing supplementary and other benefits in line with increased wages and prices".

Nevertheless, Jones, like other trade unionists before him, had recognised the dangers to free collective bargaining in the strategies advanced by CPAG and Field and Piachaud respectively. It was here that their reasoning was at its most unrealistic. Anything that could be even vaguely construed as detrimental to free collective bargaining was unacceptable. In effect, trade union leaders saw CPAG and its supporters asking them to relegate their own members interests in favour of a vague appeal to a broader public many of which held no allegiance to the unions. The authors had seriously underestimated the importance of the trade union movement as a sectional interest group in their assessment of its influence upon Government. That influence had been achieved and legitimised because of, rather than in spite of, the unions traditional sectoral role. Any suggestion of deviation from this was, therefore, to be resisted.

Furthermore, reference to earlier issues of CPAG's own journal Poverty would have confirmed the trade union view on free collective bargaining, incomes policy and social security. Frank Cousins had already advised the group in 1967 that the Labour movement would resist attempts from any quarter to confuse its responsibilities with that of the state. Jack Jones now re-affirmed this view....."Government policies must not be permitted to create a situation where workers become dependent upon the goodwill and kindness of the state for major elements of their standard of living - that way lies continued poverty. Trade unions.....have to work for a good social security system, without undermining the independent organisation of workers into powerful trade unions, for this is one of the most important ingredients of a successful democracy. This remains a fundamental reason why it would be dangerous to try to patch up the situation the Government has created by weakening the part that higher wages can play in raising

living standards". (39)

Jack Jones was not the only trade unionist to engage in a public dialogue with the authors. On December 10th Field and Piachaud had restated their case in the columns of Tribune that wage increases actually make some trade union members worse off. Two weeks later Charles Donnet and David Lipsey of the GMWU, one of the unions representing the low-paid with which CPAG had sought a dialogue, offered a further trade union response. Where Jones had been rather ambiguous Donnet and Lipsey were straight to the point, expressing their surprise and regret that Field and Piachaud....."should seek to put the onus on the trade unions and particularly that they should single out as their prime target the local authority union negotiators". (40)

One of the more striking observations made by Donnet and Lipsey was that trade unionists were reluctant to fall back on state benefits where their wages were insufficient to meet the costs of keeping their families. Where CPAG and its supporters had argued for improved benefits to supplement wages, the unions felt that the correct strategy was to simply raise wages to a 'realistic' level. Inevitably, however, as inflation takes hold the larger family, a significant minority among trade unionists, will always suffer.

Crucially, the unions appear to have viewed the emphasis on the correlation between benefits and wages as a potential threat to the bargaining process. (41)

39. Of particular importance here was Jones's view of the unique nature and role of the trade union movement and his belief that this could be seriously diminished or modified if the collective bargaining mechanism was tampered with. His concern was to get wage settlements over first and then, developing their impetus, swing round to tackle poverty on a broader front. In this way the trade union role could be doubly important....."Important as a progressive pressure group is, the trade union movement is something more - it is a civilising factor in an industrialised society and the basis for much wider progress in the future".
40. Donnet, C. and Lipsey, D. 'How to Bargain Away Poverty' (Reply) Tribune 24.12.71.
41. See Bradshaw and Wakeman op cit pp 464-5 and correspondence in the New Statesman 17.12.71.

If the level of benefits was maintained at an adequate level it could become an excuse for employers, including the government, to keep the wages element in income at an artificially low level. While this might assist a large group of families the unions could also argue that it would penalise those without a family to rear, the majority of the workforce. In essence this was a reiteration of the arguments expressed both by Frank Cousins and by Jack Jones in his meeting with Tony Lynes in 1967.

Donnet and Lipsey were also at pains to point out Field and Piachaud's "ignorance of collective bargaining" and emphasise the precise parameters of union responsibility. "As unions we do not negotiate direct with the Government but with the employer. We would have got the answer we deserved had we gone along to the local authority employers and asked not for a wage increase but for an increase in family allowances. Only Governments can put up family allowances, and of course there has been constant pressure on the Government for the TUC to do just this". (42)

The implications of this union reply were interesting. Either the unions were already keenly aware of and were responding to the family allowance issue and therefore regarded Field and Piachaud's intervention as something of an affront or the trade unions were not, as Field and Piachaud implied, the active force they liked to think themselves, in which case the latter's intervention would still be unwelcome. Donnet and Lipsey's comments suggest the latter. They concluded, for example, that. "union negotiators are well aware of the problems caused by the wider range of government means-tested benefits. But this just makes us more determined to raise our members working wage above the level at which all these apply, and in local authorities we are making a lot of progress. As for family

allowances we shall continue to pursue improvements here through the TUC - but not at the cost of agreeing to the continuation of poverty wages or lower real wages for our members". (43)

It is difficult to apportion blame for this episode, aptly described earlier by Bosanquet as a 'communication breakdown'. Certainly CPAG misjudged both the trade union mood and the nature of their responsibilities. However, the trade union response had also brought with it errors of judgement and misunderstanding, not the least of which was their confusion of FIS, a means-tested benefit, with the universally available Family Allowance and the notion that Field and Piachaud were in some way suggesting action on family allowances as a substitute for wage increases. (44) As the latter concluded....."we are.....asking trade unions to revalue the importance they put on TUC negotiations with the Government over welfare state benefits. Collective bargaining, yes, but haven't we outgrown the age when this is the only important thing the trade unions are concerned with". (45)

There is no doubt that Field and Piachaud had antagonised a number of trade unionists who clearly were irritated by the directness and apparent intrusiveness of their approach. Yet, they had provoked a significant reaction and had raised a number of issues for discussion. Principal among these was (46)

43. ibid

44. Field and Piachaud 'How to Bargain Away Poverty' (Reply) Tribune 31.12.71.

45. ibid

46. ibid - commenting on the impact of the 'Poverty Trap' article some years later Field attempted to explain its reasoning....."those were efforts to forge a trade union link up from the early 70s onwards and important in that was really the 'poverty trap' article, in that up to that point trade unions kept saying well we really must be concerned about these issues, but didn't really do much about it. The point of the article was that it summed up, in very ordinary language, the whole state of welfare for very many people, the overlap of taxation and benefits, and that trade unions had to be concerned because they couldn't win real wage increases for their members but it could actually make them worse off".

the perennial question of whether the unions should remain sectional interest groups or become quasi-promotional groups concerned with broader social and economic issues affecting the community at large.

In an effort to explore this issue further and establish a more constructive joint approach to poverty and low pay than had hitherto been achieved the group arranged what was to be the first in a series of small conferences between itself and representatives of various unions and their research departments. Bosanquet describes this as another "seminar type event".

Once again there was a failure to achieve common ground. In his own account of the discussions Bosanquet reflects that CPAG were to be criticised for insularity and lack of action on some of the issues axiomatic to the debate. He notes..... "It seemed clear that the effects of the wage explosion of 1970-71, in contributing to more rapid inflation had made the lot of the poor worse rather than better. It seemed, too, that the existence of the poverty trap now made it very difficult for unions to win through collective bargaining substantial gains for their members. But CPAG..... could perhaps be criticised for having failed to concern themselves with broad issues in the distribution of income and wealth". (47)

Criticism for this failure came largely from Bernard Dix of NUPE who argued that it was quite impossible for unions to bargain about family allowances; that was the role of the state and the interest groups concerned. The principal task for the unions he said..... "was to shift the distribution of income through vigorous collective bargaining". (48) For Bosanquet, at least, the principal outcome of these discussions was the recognition that neither CPAG nor the unions, either individually or jointly, had a clear strategy for ending poverty. It is important to note further that the proposed 'series of conferences'

47. Poverty No. 22 Spring 72.

48. ibid

did not develop beyond this initial meeting. Indeed, during the following two years there is very little evidence of either joint CPAG-trade union initiatives or of any unilateral efforts by the group to revive union interest in its work.

Superficially, the lack of union activity in the social policy field during these years may be attributed to a trade union pre-occupation with resisting the Conservatives industrial relations policy. For much of the duration of the Heath Government the labour movement found its time, interest and energies consumed by efforts to oppose and evade the rulings of the Industrial Relations Act. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ Fundamentally, however, the extent and nature of trade union involvement in social policy must be seen as a direct function of the relationship of a particular policy to the traditional laws of free collective bargaining. Such a correlation has given the unions a very enigmatic role to play. They continue to represent a significant number of social service consumers and they clearly have the power to extend their influence upon British social policy-making. Yet their role remains selective and cautious. This has been illustrated in their approach to the issue of wage-supplementation through social policy and, particularly, in their attitude to the poverty trap.

The enigma has been expressed thus....."they have given a clear priority to their economic and wage bargaining functions and have been critical of policies which looked like attempts to buy off discontent about living standards. Where there has been an apparent clash of interests between social policy proposals and effective wage bargaining the former has been treated with suspicion; but even where this problem does not arise trade union expertise has been concentrated largely on the wages front. This choice reflects the priority accorded to earnings as a determinant of individual welfare by most trade unionists, and indeed by the whole society.....Although the unions are

49. See Taylor, R. The Fifth Estate Pan 1978 Ch. 4 and Heffer, E. The Class Struggle in Parliament

deeply involved in some areas of social service policy at a practical as well as an ideological level, this has not been their major pre-occupation.

Consequently, they have not done enough policy-thinking or research in the recent past to be really effective in those fields where wage bargaining is an incomplete response to poverty, deprivation and dis-welfare". (50)

The determination to keep free collective bargaining as sacrosanct as possible has long been a feature of British trade unionism. (51) Wage control and other forms of interference with the bargaining process have more often than not been regarded as 'political' attempts to combat inflation or recession at the expense of one section of the population - the labour movement.

Consequently....."Increased taxation and stabilised prices, held down with the help of subsidies financed out of general taxation...."have traditionally been more....."acceptable methods of combating inflation because the cost was born by the community in general". (52)

The arguments advanced variously by CPAG and by Field and Piachaud that the trade unions should become far more sensitive to social security policy in the course of their wage negotiations must appear, accordingly, as an unwelcome breach of the sanctity of wage bargaining and as an inappropriate means of strengthening or encouraging union involvement in social policy. In short, the group and its supporters were advocating a policy that was wholly unrealistic in its proposed breach of trade union tradition. After the breakdown of the group's early dialogue with the trade unions, the urgency of establishing liaison receded as the need for an internal reappraisal of strategy, discussed in Chapter 7, grew. While CPAG embarked upon its

50. Hall, P. Land, H. Parker, R. and Webb, A. Change, Choice and Conflict in Social Policy Heinemann 1975 pp 90-91
51. See Dorfman, G. A. Wage Politics in Britain 1945-67 Charles Knight 1974.
52. Hall, Land, Parker and Webb op cit p.185.

'rethink', culminating in a re-affirmation of the need to work with the trade unions, the unions themselves took important steps to re-establish their 'alliance' with the Labour Party in the wake of In Place of Strife and to develop a stronger interest in the welfare of the community at large. A new concept now found its way into the dialogue between unions and party - the 'social wage'⁽⁵³⁾ - which was to be achieved through the formulation and implementation of a 'social contract'. This was to have important implications for future CPAG strategy.

Labour's 'Rethink'

The shock of Labour's election defeat and the alienation of many within the labour movement from the party itself had given impetus to a reappraisal of Labour's policy priorities. With this came the inevitable post-mortem and the realisation that the party must take the initiative in winning back the confidence and support of its industrial wing. Barbara Castle was among the first to attempt a reparation, offering a tentative and somewhat pedantic 'apology' in the course of her own assessment as to what now must be done to heal the rift and put Labour back into office. Castle suggested a scheme in which unions could accept a flexible prices and incomes policy together with a battery of social and economic reforms which would act as the "sugar on the pill". In advocating this compromise on the thorny issue of incomes policy she was perhaps sowing the first seeds of the social contract that was formalised four years later.

On the question of family support, for instance, she commented....."However politically unpopular family allowances may be....no one has yet found a way of helping low income families without increasing them, so this is just another field in which the labour movement will have to get back to its basic educational job".⁽⁵⁴⁾

53. See Taylor p. 245

54. Castle, B. 'A Socialist Incomes Policy' New Statesman 25. 9. 70.

On a broader front she conceded that "any really fundamental attacks upon economic inequality such as wealth tax, national minimum wage, a positive policy for the low paid, were deferred because they were thought to endanger our over-riding economic aim."⁽⁵⁵⁾ It is interesting to note that some three months later Anthony Crosland was to echo this view, claiming that the party's pre-occupation with economic growth and stabilisation of the balance of payments as pre-requisites of increased social services expenditure had stultified party thinking throughout the period 1964-70 ⁽⁵⁶⁾ - a view long held by CPAG.

It remained with Castle, however, to provide the most emphatic argument for a socialist approach to incomes policy and the call for a resumption of co-operation between unions and party....."the most urgent need in the next few years is to develop a new dialogue between the trade union movement and the political one. We must be eager to learn from each other. Our first task is to re-establish confidence in each other's aims and then sit down and do some serious talking about means....."⁽⁵⁷⁾

Significantly, she offered a vision of social change in which government and unions would share responsibility....."unless those aims include a radical transformation of society, in which we share power as well as responsibility, rewards as well as sacrifices, and show mutual compassion to a degree we have not yet begun to contemplate, we cannot expect the trade unionist to drop his traditional defences against capitalism".⁽⁵⁸⁾ She concluded, like Perlman and Richter, that....."Industrial militancy will become self-defeating unless it is made the powerhouse for political change. For the past six years the Labour Government and the trade unions have each looked to the other to break the vicious circle. The time has come to forge a common strategy".⁽⁵⁹⁾

55. ibid

56. Crosland, A. 'A Social Democratic Britain' Fabian Tract 404 Jan 1971

57. Castle op cit

58. ibid

59. ibid

Other leading figures in the party were also converging on this view.

Tony Benn, for example, in calling for a new 'socialist renaissance' after the election wrote....."It is arguable that what has really happened has amounted to such a breakdown in the social contract, upon which parliamentary democracy by universal suffrage was based, that that contract now needs to be renegotiated on a basis that shares power more widely, before it can win general assent again."⁽⁶⁰⁾ The basis of that renegotiation was to be the promise of some form of powersharing with the trade union movement.

In mid-1971, with the Conservative drive on industrial relations gathering momentum, Harold Wilson took up the idea of a social contract or 'compact' between party and unions offering, like Castle, a programme of social and economic reform in exchange for co-operation in establishing and maintaining an incomes policy that would check inflation. Speaking in New York about Labour's problems on prices and incomes, Wilson commented....."for a statutory prices and incomes policy to be successful it must be based on consent: a wage freeze must be total; any statutory interference must be fair between groups, and individuals; any action of this kind must be made as far as possible tolerable by improved social services and, being universal, it could not discriminate between the public and private sector.....restraint in wages and salaries would not last long if prices and especially key prices were rising. By key prices I mean the principal elements in the expenditure of an average household, rent, bread, milk, school meals, commuter fares, shoes and clothing. In a general sense such a compact must be part of a national effort to raise living standards".⁽⁶¹⁾

Wilson was thus stating the need for a future Labour Government to go much

60. Benn, A. The New Politics: A Socialist Renaissance 1970
Fabian Society

61. 4. 5. 71. Quoted in Simpson pp 221-22

further than before in protecting the wellbeing of the individual. He had spoken of action on the prices of staple items in the household budget, implied the need for travel subsidies, clothing subsidies, a review of rent policy and, broadly, of the need for improved social services. Of particular concern to both CPAG and the unions he had also spoken of the need for fairness between groups of workers. In doing so he appeared to echo Castles' call for action to assist the low paid. An effective way of doing this, a method long advocated by CPAG, would be to raise the tax threshold thereby taking the low-paid worker 'out of tax'. Crucially, in emphasising the need for action on prices and taxation, Wilson sought to spread the burden of social reform throughout the community upon employers, workers and consumers alike, and thus paved the way for a more sympathetic response to incomes policy than had been the case in the past. Ultimately an incomes policy was needed to create the 'social wage' which CPAG had long favoured and the social wage itself was seen as the only precondition of such an incomes policy. (62)

Assessing Wilson's speech, Bill Simpson, General Secretary of the Foundry Workers Union, wrote....."the social compact accompanying even a voluntary prices and incomes policy must contain not only improved social benefits, but also policies which will lead to and maintain full employment. The social compact also means some significant shift in the redistribution of income and wealth in this country. This can be done by various taxation measures, such as increased capital gains and corporation taxes, the introduction of a wealth tax.....At the other end of the scale part of the increased income from the taxation measures mentioned should be used to take the low income families out of the income tax bracket altogether. This last action would be a complementary measure to assist the low-paid worker and this, allied with improvements in the social services used most by large

families and the chronic sick, would create the kind of socially just conditions within which a prices and incomes policy could stand a chance of success". (63)

In effect, where Wilson had really spoken of such measures in terms of palliatives Simpson viewed them more substantively as part of a bargain that could and must be struck between unions and party in order that the latter might again achieve office. A number of observations may be made here. First, the crucial point which emerges is that the historical 'electoral relationship' which existed between party and unions had now to be replaced by an alternative form of co-operation. Whereas in the past the party had expected the unions to show an automatic support for it both at and between elections it was now apparent that any future co-operation must be characterised by a 'spirit of mutuality' and the shaping of an intra-movement consensus that would remain constantly under review. (64)

Secondly, as Simpson argued, both the measures put forward by Wilson and himself would benefit every working man and woman and, generally, all those in social need. His view was simply....."what is good for those groups is good for Britain". (65) Both expressed a growing view that the unions must come to view their members as 'whole' rather than 'fragmented' man. The complex of interests, relationships and roles affecting or held by

63. Simpson p. 222-3

64. This was summed up most forcefully by Jack Jones of the TGWU in an address to a Fabian Society 'Fringe Meeting' at the 1971 Party Conference....."There is no reason at all why a joint policy cannot be worked out. But let us have the closest possible liaison. This is not just a matter of brainstorming in the backrooms of Congress House and Transport House just before the next election. In the past we have not had the dialogue necessary. The unions and the party leadership perhaps have both been unsure of their own ground but we can make this policy into a great campaign to open up the approach to genuine industrial democracy based on the unions". Taylor p. 130

65. Simpson p. 223

the trade unionist outside of his work situation necessitated a fresh political development in the role and remit of his representative association.

It is appropriate to comment further here on the exchange theory of group relations, briefly referred to earlier. Given that Labour was an opposition party at this moment in time it is reasonable to view the party in a loose sense as a 'group' - a number of individuals united by common aims or overlapping interests. In the period 1970-74 the Labour Party may be viewed as a 'group' organised to achieve a single goal - political office. Traditionally, it had been supported and assisted in the attainment of that goal by another group whose own interests were widely perceived as liable to enhancement as a result of this achievement. The party required the financial, organisational and electoral support of the trade unions while the latter expected, in return, favourable legislation, reform and a close involvement in the establishment of the party's policy priorities.

Their relationship was thus one of 'benefit exchange'.⁽⁶⁶⁾ As a result of events between 1965-69 that relationship was continuously strained until, in 1970, one of the participants concluded that the so called 'two-way flow' had broken down.⁽⁶⁷⁾ Its response was to terminate, if only temporarily, the exchange and withdraw its support of the other. There is an interesting

66. See Salisbury, R. Interest Group Politics in America. Harper & Row New York 1970 Chapter 3 - Salisbury adopts a conceptualisation of interest groups as 'entrepreneurs' competing against and bargaining with each other in a market situation. In doing so he draws, in part, on the economic analysis of interest group politics advanced by Mancur Olsen Junior in The Logic of Collective Action Harvard University Press 1971.
67. Dorfman has suggested that such a strain in the relationship between the party and its industrial wing should not be ascribed to the periodic emergence of isolated issues on which the two hold contrary viewpoints. Rather, he says..... "the central point to be drawn about the relationship is that there is a fundamental incompatibility between the purposes of trade unionism and the plans and policies of Labour Governments". p.148

similarity between CPAG and the trade union movement in their respective experiences with Labour 1964-70. At the outset of the Labour Government both clearly expected the economic wellbeing of their 'clients' to be enhanced by the legislative programme of a political party with which they each had a value empathy and some kind of quasi-formal relationship. Both CPAG and the trade unions had derived their *raison d'etre* from their protection of the interests of publics historically acknowledged as both key supporters and beneficiaries of Labour Governments - workers and the poor. In many cases, because of the poverty-trap, individuals found themselves classed in both these categories. Labour's record on both social policy and industrial relations had served by 1969 to alienate both these groups and it may be argued that, in the wake of the 1970 General Election, neither CPAG or the unions were disposed to an early 'rapprochement' with the party leadership. (68)

The unions were to largely go their own way for the best part of a year after the election. (69) For CPAG the new imperative, as shown in Chapter 7, was to acquire the support of an 'ally' whose influence in the political debate could help re-establish poverty as a major issue. Given their similar experience, what CPAG saw as their common interests, and their sense of frustration with Labour, an 'alliance' with the unions could not have been a more natural or convenient goal for CPAG. Such an 'alliance' depended, of course, on CPAGs ability to demonstrate it could meet the demands of a 'benefit exchange'.

68. John Gollan wrote....."In July 1970 Mr. Wilson's Government reaped the bitter harvest of alienation from its base, the grass roots of the labour movement, as a consequence of its efforts to stabilise British imperialism at the expense of the working class and its ill-starred efforts to destroy the independence, sovereignty and traditional function of the trade union movement". Hutt op cit p. 234
69. Again Gollan commented....."The damage was done. Large sections of the labour movement were disillusioned and looked towards self-reliance or militant industrial action rather than towards a Labour Government to protect their interests, particularly as the conduct of the election of 1970 was devoid of any indication that Mr. Wilson had learned the lessons of 1974. Hutt. p 234

It is interesting to note that the breakdown in union-party relations and in the early discussions between CPAG and the trade unions seems to have stemmed almost wholly from the latter's belief that its would-be 'partners' were not fulfilling their part of the relationship or were setting terms within it which were unacceptable to trade unions. The logical option for the unions was therefore to pursue their interest in such partnerships no further, or at least until more acceptable terms were put forward. As Salisbury notes. "if groups are organised through benefit exchange, it follows that they will dissolve whenever the benefits are inadequate to warrant continued support". (70) Where Salisbury spoke of the dissolution of the group as members withdrew support through non-realisation of goals, here the observation is applied, not unrealistically, to the relationship between groups themselves.

To re-establish a benefit exchange relationship, as the party and the unions did after 1971, perhaps more genuinely and equitably than before, requires assurances for and from both groups that there are incentives to do so. This is not simply because co-operation is often based on a perception of some sort of gain but also because co-operation may involve an element of sacrifice by both parties - in effect, a trade-off in the short term to secure a greater benefit in the long term. (71)

70. Salisbury p. 50

71. The social contract did, for example, require what were thought to be short-term sacrifices for long term gains - pay restraint and a suspension of free collective bargaining in return for a range of social and economic reforms and the promise of a stronger economy with more jobs. Marsh & Locksley wrote. "it would not be forgotten that the social contract is a two-sided bargain. In return for concessions from Government, the TUC have agreed to, and persuaded member unions to agree to, a policy of wage restraint which has prevented the achievement of their avowed aim of a return to free collective bargaining. So while the social contract has increased the influence of the TUC over policy, it has curtailed the effectiveness of an individual union's activity in its relations with employers associations and companies".
 Marsh, D and Locksley, G. Recognising Trade Union Power? An Analysis of the Economic and Political Power of Trade Unions in Britain. A paper to the Political Studies Association Conference at Warwick University March 1978 p. 29.

Salisbury identifies three types of benefit and, again, we may develop his hypothesis on an inter-group basis. These are 'material' benefits, 'solidary' benefits and 'expressive' benefits. (72) Each characterises a reward or benefit that the unions and the Labour Party might have expected to accrue from a re-establishment of co-operation between them. They therefore go some way in helping to explain the motives for joint action.

Salisbury describes material benefits as being....."always extrinsic to the parties involved in the transaction and are typically instrumental toward more fundamental values such as deference or well-being". (73) Certainly, the type of co-operation and programme envisaged by Simpson, Castle and Wilson et al was likely to produce a well-being, both material and metaphysical, as progress was made towards the socially-just society.

Solidary benefits are perhaps less obvious. However, their abstract quality is of great importance to the type of relationship enjoyed by the Labour party and the trade union movement. Solidary benefits are intrinsic to the parties involved, they are experienced exclusively by those closely tied by the relationship. The creation of a 'social compact' or 'contract' and the resumption of a working relationship between unions and party reaffirmed the strength of the Labour movement as a whole and opened the way for continued experience of such solidary, abstract benefits like fraternity, congeniality, a sense of equity, socialising and status, all of which contribute to both the well-being of individual members and to the ethos or idea of the movement itself. (74)

72. Salisbury pp 47-48

73. p. 43

74. Dorfman notes, in particular, that when Labour is out of power leaders from both the party and the trade union wings of the movement, . . . "tend to encourage these feelings of comradeship and identity rooted in traditional class consciousness". p. 148 See also Drucker op.cit pp 8-11 on Labour Party 'ethos' and Harrison, M. Trade Unions and the Labour Party Since 1945 George Allen & Unwin London 1960 p. 18 on union-party solidarity.

Finally, expressive benefits or, as Clark and Wilson have termed them Purposive Benefits⁽⁷⁵⁾....."consist of the realisation of suprapersonal goals, goals of the organisation or group. Although.....the benefits of such achievement may accrue to particular individuals they are not ordinarily divisible into units of value allocated to specific persons or charged against unit costs....."⁽⁷⁶⁾ Here a new social contract could reaffirm the 'will of the people', as Benn had implied, 'strengthen democracy', bring about 'social equity', assist in the creation of a 'socialistic order' and generally express values which, though held individually, were also symbolised by the suprapersonal goals of the movement.

On a more practical level, of course, the party could not have done without the unions either financially or organisationally.⁽⁷⁷⁾ Eric Heffer has expressed this dependency in his often quoted remark that....."Labour is nothing without the trade unions but the trade unions can survive without the Labour Party".⁽⁷⁸⁾ Additionally, Tony Benn commented in the Autumn of 1971....."The party when in power alienated the most important pressure group of all from it - the British trade union movement. We now need their energy and they now need our leadership if we are to succeed".⁽⁷⁹⁾ The strategy for success required, however, a new forum for consultation between the party and union leaderships.

75. Clark, P. and Wilson, J. 'Incentive Systems: A Theory of Organisations' Administrative Science Quarterly September 1961 pp 129-66

76. Salisbury p. 48

77. In the period 1970-74 some 41% of the Parliamentary Labour Party composed of trade union-sponsored MPs (only once, in 1945, has % fallen below a third). See May p. 29.
In 1970 the unions gave the party £1.6 million for the election campaign - in 1974 this rose to £3 million. In 1974 7,120,000 trade unionists paid the political levy to the Party (60% of all trade unionists). **Unions** made up 5.8 million of the party's total membership of 6.5 million in 1974. See Taylor, R. 'The Uneasy Alliance. Labour and the Unions' Political Quarterly Oct/Dec 1976 and Farnham, D. 'The Labour Alliance: Reality or Myth' Parliamentary Affairs Vol. XXIX No. 1 1976

The TUC - Labour Party Liaison Committee

Simpson has written that even before the party lost the election it was accepted that a more structured form of policy liaison with the unions was essential because of the lack of understanding as to why the party, when in power, must take decisions like In Place of Strife. He notes....."the need for some additional informal machinery was realised during the last two years of office of the last Government, and a small NEC liaison committee with trade union representatives was formed to meet a small cabinet committee each month. This arrangement proved valuable, but the policy liaison with the unions needs to be much stronger than that". (80)

It was Simpson's view that....."At top level in our movement there is a lack of political contact which must be bridged in some way". (81) Too often in opposition, he felt, the party had backed away from disputes or issues which it feared might divide the political and industrial wings of the movement. What was now needed was a new and powerful policymaking committee of both senior party and trade union figures which could initiate a series of meetings which must develop further....."because those involved recognise the need for them if the movement is to avoid the mistakes of the past. Someone, somewhere is waiting for a lead on this. The movement's future success may well depend on the willingness of a few people to recognise the necessity of this kind of regular, pressure-free, political get-together". (82)

80. Simpson p. 236. In explaining the need for a liaison body he notes. If there were a coherent trade union political philosophy on all main issues contact on policy issues would be simple, but the trade unions are as riven by political divisions as the party itself and therefore the trade union collective view at any given time on particular issues is not easy to obtain". This may help to explain why, as will be shown in the next chapter, there was a clear split within the trade union movement on a policy for the low paid.

81. *ibid*

82. p. 237

The 'political get-together' which did emerge fulfilled the need to draw together the senior members of the party and the key figures on the General Council. This TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee was to comprise of members of Labour's NEC, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the TUC General Council. ⁽⁸³⁾ It therefore drew its membership and influence from the three pinnacles of the Labour movement. While it was largely established to propose and to co-ordinate changes in industrial relations legislation it was inevitable, in accordance with the arguments and views expressed above, that it would widen the scope of its work to embrace social and economic matters also. This became increasingly plausible for the trade unions because they could now claim, that between 1965-74, Governments had sought to extend the influence of the state by politicising areas traditionally the exclusive concern of unions and employers. ⁽⁸⁴⁾ The historical reluctance of the General Council to venture beyond the parameters of industrial affairs now diminished as the unions recognised both the objective 'justice' of reversing this trend by themselves intervening in 'political' affairs and their growing ability to do this successfully. ⁽⁸⁵⁾

The power factor in the TUC-Labour Party liaison committee equation has

83. TUC. ABC of the TUC 1977 p. 22

84. John Gollan has noted that..... "with state intervention in industrial relations and the state itself emerging as the other side in many disputes; Strikes and industrial unrest are compelled to assume a political significance and the old reactionary efforts to compartmentalise industrial and political action are rapidly disappearing. Workers are no longer inhibited from taking industrial action because it has a political connotation; this shedding of such inhibitions has great political significance for the future". Hutt p. 258

85. Gollan notes..... "all the actions against the Industrial Relations Act or in defiance of the counter-inflation Act were obviously in part political and had to be so as the government was acting politically against the unions. But this tendency has gone even further. There has been official industrial action in support of pensioners and the NUPE strike, superimposing upon a wage claim the further demand for a rapid phasing out of private beds in NHS hospitals. There are matters which go beyond immediate industrial aims". Hutt p. 258

been noted by May and it confirms the assessment of trade union power advanced by Field in his Directors Report of June 1972....."the establishment of the Liaison Committee owed less to the position of the unions in the structure and financing of the Labour Party and far more to the need of the Parliamentary Labour Party to negotiate with a major interest group whose co-operation it saw as essential for the success of a future Labour Government. The historical link between the unions and the party with all its force of tradition and sentiment certainly contributed to the assessment that the difficulties that had been encountered between 1964 and 1970 were not just the difficulties of a Government and a major interest group, but of a Government and the major interest group". (86)

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of this came in the tripartite talks held by Government, CBI and the TUC between July and November 1972, during which Edward Heath offered employers and unions alike the chance to "share fully with the Government the benefits and obligations involved in running the economy". (87) The calling of the talks made it clear that not only did the Conservative Government wish to check the growing confrontation brought about by the Industrial Relations Act, but, more significantly, revealed the Government's own admission that it simply could not govern as effectively as it wished without taking the unions into its confidence. (88) To fail to do so would be to precipitate a clash far more disruptive and destructive than that over In Place of Strife. The wider implications of Heath's offer have been described by May who contends that as a result of the bargaining overtones of this offer..... "a degree of unease was expressed during the

86. May p. 43

87. Skidelsky, R. 'The State - Why it Will Grow' New Society 2.10. 75. and Cawson, A. 'Pluralism, Corporatism and the Role of the State'. Government and Opposition Spring 1978 Vol 13 No. 2

88. See Behrens, R. 'Blinkers for the Carthorse' - The Conservative Party and Trade Unions 1974-78. Political Quarterly Oct/Dec 1978 pp 457-66

course of the talks by those who felt that they represented a pronounced shift towards a 'corporatist' style in British politics. While many of those expressing unease would admit that much of the contact between interest groups and the Government went far beyond simple consultation and frequently did amount to bargaining, it was still felt that this was compatible with a pluralist approach to politics and the ultimate supremacy of a Government created through majority party support in Parliament". (89)

May identifies the expression of three types of 'anxiety'. Firstly, the views held by those who feared that 'bargaining' was taking place on major issues of economic and social policy and not simply on the details of policy. (90) Secondly, the fear that the role of parliament was likely to be peripheral and of diminished influence. (91) Finally, and crucially, that these tripartite talks implied an equality between the parties involved. The role of Government as the 'broker of interests' thus appeared to undergo a transformation. It may be argued that Government was now brought into, and no longer above, the competitive arena as simply one interest against others - perhaps the 'national interest' versus major sectional interests.

Apart from their reluctance to enter an institutionalised pattern of bargaining with the Government, which they considered more likely to impose responsibility than offer power, the trade unions considered their newly recognised strength potent enough to secure their demands unilaterally and

89. May p. 75

90. This development is fully discussed in two recent books. Smith, T. TUC - Politics of the Corporate Economy Martin Robertson 1979 and in Richardson, J. J. and Jordan, A. G. Governing Under Pressure Martin Robertson 1979 especially Ch. 3 and 6.

91. See Mackintosh, J. P. (PEP) 'Parliament and the Pressure Groups' (reprinted from The Social Science Institute: Reshaping Britain: A Programme of Economic and Social Reform. Vol XL Broadsheet No. 548 Dec. 1974 pp 79-98) in Stankiewicz, W. J. British Government in an Era of Reform. Collier MacMillan 1976 pp 154-77

externally to the tripartite framework. Their immediate concern was to oppose the Industrial Relations Bill and, subsequently, maintain non-co-operation with the strictures of the Act. In doing so, far from taking up Heath's offer of 'partnership', a period of unprecedented confrontation resulted during which industrial action and political posture became blurred. The essence of this confrontation has been expressed by Marsh and Locksley.

....."during the passage of the Bill, the TUC was most concerned to develop and harness solidarity within the trade union movement on this issue. On the basis of this solidarity, they devised a strategy which was to prove successful in severely restricting the administration of the Act. The General Council advised affiliated unions not to register under the Act and the few that did so were subsequently expelled. It also advised unions not to co-operate with the National Industrial Relations court and to attend its proceedings only when action was brought against them....."(92)

This ensured, as the TUC had calculated, that the proceedings would acquire a confrontationist air and the action of the unions, combined with a reluctance on the part of many large companies and employers organisations to resort to the act for fear of permanently damaging employer-employee relations severely undermined both the court and the provisions of the Act itself by the end of 1975. As Marsh and Locksley have concluded....."In this case, the trade union movement, with an almost unparalleled display of unity, managed to negate a piece of legislation by refusing to co-operate with its administration". (93)

The Social Contract

Throughout this period of confrontation the rift between the unions and the Labour Party narrowed and, through the newly-established framework, of the Liaison Committee, the unions secured the party's agreement to repeal the Industrial Relations Act when it returned to power. The role of the Liaison

92. Marsh & Locksley p. 29

93. ibid - see also Finer, S. E. The Political Power of Organised Labour Government and Opposition 1974. pp 391-406

Committee as a policymaking forum was crucial. Writing in 1976 Robert Taylor described it as....."the most vital decision-making body in the labour movement.....It is no exaggeration to say that the Liaison Committee was the architect of the social contract and the wide range of new policy initiatives that emerged in the 1970s". The unions were to play a particularly influential role in the committee's formulation of social and economic policy, subsequently advanced in Labour's Programme for Britian 1973 and the General Election Manifestoes of 1974

Individual analysis of the 1964-70 Governments by Castle, Wilson, Crosland, et al had already indicated a recognition by the party leadership of the need for a closer liaison with the unions and a more socialistic programme. In 1972 a more comprehensive assessment of past error and future need was offered in the party's Programme for Britain. It is important that the introduction is quoted almost in its entirety since its often contradictory line of reasoning echoed the ambivalence of Labour's earlier period of office. In a sense it was an exercise in pure pragmatism, containing both the promises that Labour supporters now looked for and, implicitly, the excuses for not fulfilling them.

It read....."no programme can meet all needs at once. Nor, for that matter, will it be possible for the next Labour Government in its first term to implement the whole programme which our members have laid down. These problems lead us to two conclusions.....First, whenever it comes to power, the next Labour Government will have a very long list of commitments - many requiring lengthy legislation and many requiring substantial amounts of money and resources. We therefore make it clear at the outset that Labour will have priorities worked out in consultation with the whole

movement....."(94)

The party thus made it clear that it would not be 'going it alone' in any new programme of legislation and that participation in and responsibility for new policy priorities would be more broadly based than before. Most striking however was the firmness with which the introduction sought to constrain expectations, particularly those of interest groups like CPAG which had felt themselves poorly let down by the 1964-70 governments.

....."Many of the various interest groups in Britain will find a good deal in this document to encourage them. We must therefore sound a note of warning. Shelter may be right to demand top priority for housing; the Child Poverty Action Group may be justified in calling for a first call on resources for the large family; the Pensioner's Associations and MIND have their own views of top priorities, as do other groups such as the Comprehensive Schools Committee and the Disablement Income Group. Everyone of those organisations can count on support from the Labour Party, and it may be that they are right in calling for high priority in their chosen fields but....."(95) and here came the rub....."they cannot all be first. The problem of deciding priorities, often a painful process of deciding the allocation of resources between almost equally excellent causes, is what politics is about".(96)

Nevertheless, to receive some acknowledgement of their efforts and a promise of support in such a major document must have given groups like CPAG and Shelter some encouragement for the future. The more positive approach adopted by the party and the unions at this time certainly gave impetus to the growing support within CPAG for renewed liaison with the Labour movement at both party and union level. It also resulted, as was shown in the previous chapter, in a resumption of CPAG activity at the Labour party conference of 1972.

CPAGs faith in, and expectations of distributive justice from the Labour Party for the poor have seemed occasionally justified by the party's

94. Labour Party Labours Programme for Britain 1972. p. 6
 95. ibid
 96. ibid

intermittent promises of reform. The following year, for example, the party expressed the view that....."The greatest scandal in Britain today is our tolerance of poverty. Over a million people are severely handicapped and get no statutory benefit. Eight million retirement pensioners get merely 1/5th of average industrial earnings and two million are forced to resort to supplementary benefits. Nearly half a million children live in families where a parent is in work but still get less in pay than supplementary benefit would bring; 84,000 families receive FIS.....The redistribution of income and wealth is essential if we are to tackle poverty effectively..... Socialism is about helping the poor and eliminating poverty. It is also about achieving a massive and irreversible shift in the distribution of wealth and income in favour of working people". (97)

Of particular interest were the comments made on supplementary benefit reform and a more sympathetic approach to claimants which were strikingly similar to the views expressed by CPAG in the previous two years. (98) In these two years intra-movement discussion of social policy flourished to an extent greater than at any conference since 1964. In 1972, pensions, the problems of pensioners as a social group, means-tested benefits and charges, financing of the NHS, care of the elderly and disabled and the problems of poverty and groups in need occupied the attention of

97. Labours Programme for Britain 1973 p. 8

98. See also Derrick, P. 'People's Capitalism' New Statesman 7. 6. 74 On page 72 of Labours Programme 1973 we find, for example.....
"more emphasis must be given to encouraging the sick and unemployed to claim supplementary benefits and the SBC must adopt the positive approach with these two groups of claimants that it has used with pensioners..... The present appeals Tribunal machinery must be overhauled in order to ensure a consistent approach between one local tribunal and another. Better treatment must be given to claimants living as members of another person's household".

delegates. (99) In 1973 it was again the problems, often related, of the elderly, the disabled and the poor. (100)

On the 24th June 1974, as part of the 'benefit exchange' discussed earlier the TUC agreed unanimously that union negotiators should, for the duration of the social contract, seek wage rises only in so far as they would keep abreast of the cost of living, taking account of both taxation and threshold agreements. Collective bargaining was to depend on the following guidelines; priority for agreements which would have beneficial effects on unit cost and efficiency and which could improve job security; there was to be a low pay minimum of £25 basic wage per week; the elimination of discrimination especially against women and improvement of non-wage benefits such as pension schemes, sick pay and the duration of holiday leave. In its wake the 'contract' was to open the door to the Sex Discrimination Act, the

99. At the 1972 conference, Mel Read an ASTMs delegate, speaking in favour of composite motion 21 on state benefits, commented. "we in the labour movement should hang our heads in shame at our recent record, between 1964 and 1970, the poor stayed poor. Pressure groups such as the Child Poverty Action Group were formed largely because of our failure to cope with poverty. The politics of the poor. . . . are truly those of despair, if their choice is to be between a Tory Government which does not pretend to care and a Labour Government which cares but lacks the will to support with the necessary money". p. 309
Speaking in support, Dick Wilson of Nottingham North CLP, urges the next labour government. "to undertake an urgent review of social benefits paid; to end the system of means-tested benefits and allowances for rents, rates, health service payments, free school meals, income supplement etc and to replace those (a) by adequate pensions, family allowances and education maintenance payments; (b) by the free provision of all health services; (c) by sufficient subsidies for housing, school meals, public transport and local government services generally, to place them within the reach of everyone, regardless of individual income, with a view to paying a rate more in keeping with the cost of retaining a family unit, as compared with the current cost of keeping dependents in care". p. 305
Report of the 71st Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1972.
100. See Report of the 72nd Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1973. Motion moved by Brian Stanley of the POEU on composite 28. pp 227-30 and 'The Appendix of Resolutions and Decisions of Conference' p. 362. See also the resolutions initiated by CPAG in Chapter 7.

Employment Protection Act, Trade Unions and Labour Relations Act, housing and prices subsidies and initiatives on family support and pension increases. Also promised were extension of public ownership, price control via a Prices Commission and a strengthening of consumer representation, and an attack upon unemployment.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Though much of this subsequently failed to materialise, and indeed many felt the situation later deteriorated in some of the fields under review,⁽¹⁰²⁾ at the time it was the promise and consensus for reform and innovation that mattered most to groups like CPAG and, indeed, the unions themselves.⁽¹⁰³⁾

The mood, pregnant with hope for the first time since 1964, was summed up by Michael Foot....."The Labour Party and the unions, united as never before in the way they believe they can serve the nation, offer a combination of cures for the immense problems which certainly face us. They are designed to produce a new industrial climate, a much wider sense of social justice, a new confidence that the Government will keep faith with the people and that the people as a whole will therefore respond to the national need".⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

101. See Clutterbuck pp 171-2 and Taylor (The Fifth Estate) Ch. 4

102. See 'The Strange Death of a Social Contract' New Statesman 26.1.79. and The Guardian 3.9.75.

103. May notes that in this period was born for the unions....."The opportunity to take the initiative and not simply to react to policies initiated elsewhere. Thus the defensive and negative aspects of trade union political action which have necessarily dominated its approach to the legal position of the unions are less in evidence and the unions have the opportunity to propose policies which they are anxious to see given legislative enactment".

He goes on to conclude that....."this enables the unions, at least in principle, to make more headway with some of their policies which are less directly related to the traditional union areas of wages, working conditions and the legal framework governing their activities. Thus the demands for a substantial increase in the old age pension which have been particularly pressed by the TGWU and adopted as TUC policy have been accepted by the Labour Party as a top priority, down to the precise monetary amount asked for by the TUC". May p.19

104 The Times 'Annual Financial and Economic Review' 26.9.74.

A Social Contract for Families

CPAG sought to develop this mood by offering their own 'social contract for families', a programme of reform that would include action on family allowances, national insurance and supplementary benefits, housing allowances, taxation and incomes policy. In doing so, it recognised the severe limitations imposed on such action by excessive inflation. "In the sixties, along with other organisations concerned about social issues, and poverty in particular, the Child Poverty Action Group was making policy proposals which would improve the situation of certain minorities. Now the need in policy is as much to prevent a deterioration in their situation as effect an improvement".⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Although government and trade unions were now making sympathetic gestures in its direction CPAG saw no reason to slow its own activity - rather, such gestures were seen as a spur to its efforts and an encouragement to a renewed attempt to liaise with the labour movement.

It therefore sought to develop this impetus and direct the attention of unions and the party towards groups it identified as particularly hard hit by inflation. Its own proposals included reforms to relate benefits and taxation to earnings, a call for a higher basic rate of family allowance, a lower rate of income tax, free school meals for all children, a one-parent family allowance in accordance with the recommendations of the Finer committee, a new disablement allowance and a housing allowance to help poorer tenants cope with increased rents.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ In advancing these proposals the group was restating a strategy pursued for more than five years. Significantly, it was also acting in the spirit of Labours Programme for Britain 1973, the 1974 White Paper on the Chronic Sick and Disabled and the social contract itself.

105. Field, F. & Townsend, P. 'A Social Contract for Families - Memorandum to the Chancellor November 1974. Poverty Pamphlet 19
106. ibid pp 31-42

Nevertheless, CPAG saw its proposals as the tip of the iceberg, the first thrust in a series of attacks upon social and economic injustice. Labour's 1973 programme had already set a firm gradualist tone and it would clearly have been unwise to eschew a selective strategy while the new Labour Government of February 1974 and the unions were still picking up the threads of their former relationship.

As their 1974 Memorandum to the Chancellor stated....."A concerted attack upon poverty would involve other measures - including a review of eligibility for unemployment insurance benefit; the introduction or improvement of earnings -related benefits, including pensions; the introduction of a minimum wage; reviews of urban aid programmes, the regional employment premium, rate support grants and local rating..... we have sought to concentrate on those matters of closest relevance to the responsibilities of the Chancellor in his preparation of the Budget bearing also in mind the desperate need to take a number of major steps to create a just society and thus ensure a reduction of inflationary and selfish pressures upon the economy". (107)

In retrospect, this memorandum like most of those before it, seems to have had little bearing on the Chancellor's policies. At the time, however, it was an integral part of CPAGs attempt to galvanise the Labour movement into action both - it may be said - to bring about social reform and to restore its own flagging morale. To bring about that reform the Group felt it imperative to influence the policy recommendations of the unions in their dialogue with Government. Their role as co-architects of the Social Contract and the continuation of their influence upon the Labour leadership after the election through the machinery of the Liaison committee confirmed the trade union movements status as an 'insider group'. This status had not gone

unrecognised by CPAG which, during this next period of Labour office, redoubled its efforts to work with and through the unions to achieve its own goals. Its ability to achieve them, however, rested to a considerable extent on how the unions viewed the prospect of liaison with CPAG - quite clearly, to date, an 'outsider group'. The unions role in the Social Contract and their 'partnership' with the new Labour Government carried with it the need for what Grant has termed a "strategy of responsibility".⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ The contract firmly embodied the principle of 'power with responsibility'. CPAG, of course, were neither bound in this way or a party to the terms of the contract. The party leadership had already alluded to the need for a patient and responsible approach to the establishment of priorities in the introduction to its 1972 Programme for Britain. In doing so it had raised the spectre of 'policy overcrowding' that had dogged its period of office 1964-70 and which had led to tension and hostility among its supporters. The following chapter examines the view that the Social Contract and the establishment of the Liaison Committee, by confirming upon the unions a social and economic, as well as an industrial, role, may have contributed significantly to a process of rationalisation within interest group politics in Britain in that it now became imperative for small groups like CPAG to channel their voice through the TUC - fast-developing as a key spokesman group on social issues. In the next chapter we therefore examine the growing involvement of the TUC and individual unions in social issues and how an outsider group like CPAG, inter al, sought to harness that interest for its own ends.

108. Grant p. 5

CHAPTER 9

Liaison with the Trade Unions - 1972-75

The re-emergence of industrial relations issues in the first two years of the Heath Government clearly disrupted CPAGs brief 'dialogue' with the trade union movement. Some minor progress was made in this period with one or two unions but its importance should not be exaggerated. Frank Field claimed in June 1972, for example, that a useful relationship had been established with a variety of unions which could be activated. "as issues arise which affect their sphere of influence". (1) Union representatives in the gas and electricity industries had, for example, provided CPAG with information on the number of families who, through poverty, had been unable to pay bills and had had their electricity and gas supplies cut off. This was seen as a particularly useful area of co-operation between unions and CPAG in light of the failure of the DHSS's own Memorandum of Guidance Fuel Debts Among Low Income Groups (2) (1972) to reduce significantly the hardship caused by disconnection.

In a similar vein, Field revealed that. "some local fire brigade workers have expressed concern at the greatly increased fire risk which results from these families Cooking on calor gas and lighting their homes with candles." and talked of meeting the Fire Brigades Union in July 1972. "to see what pressure they can exert to stop this practice and we are exploring why the SBC and local welfare departments are not meeting the bills of families who fall behind in their payment of gas or electricity bills". (3)

1. Directors Report June 1972 p. 9
2. See Johnson, M. and Rowland, M. Fuel Debts and the Poor Poverty Pamphlet No. 24 1976 p. 18
3. Directors Report June 1972.

That these examples constituted an effective dialogue, however, is arguable. There is scant reference to, or evidence of, such co-operation in either CPAGs executive committee minutes or in its publications on the fuel issue, such as Fuel Debts and the Poor. There seems to have been a tendency on Field's part to confuse general trade union sympathy for CPAGs fuel campaign with effective and substantive offers of assistance and support. It must also be pointed out that, far from winning union co-operation on this issue of disconnections, some CPAG members encountered strong resistance to the idea.

Jonathan Bradshaw, for instance, reveals that in the course of discussion between the Department of Energy and the National Executive of the Electricity Consumer Council, of which he is a member, he had sought to persuade his colleagues that the categories covered by the code of practice on disconnections of supply should be extended to cover all families with children, the disabled and a variety of low income groups, but was rebuffed and opposed, on some occasions quite vociferously, by the electrical industry unions.

Far from helping to alleviate the problems of the poor, Bradshaw was forced to conclude that this was one among a number of examples..... "where the interests of the people who work in these services have been against the interests of low income families and the power of the unions has actually been used to resist improvements and bring about changes which cause a deterioration in the quality of life for low income families".⁽⁴⁾ This is a theme to which we will return in the conclusion.

One of the most interesting initiatives undertaken by the group in 1972

4. Interview with Jonathan Bradshaw 2.11.78.

centred on an effort to establish a dialogue with the unions administering social security benefits in order to reach an agreement....."on a programme of reform for both workers in the social security section and the claimants". (5) The value of this 'joint-approach' had been stated by Hilary Rose who had argued in a CPAG publication that in many situations the victim of what she saw as the dehumanising system of state welfare was not always the claimant but often the dispenser of benefit. It was her view that....."The low paid bureaucrat behind the desk of the Social Security office or the Housing Department, stands at the abyss of the poverty he confronts daily, held back only by his respectability". (6)

Any campaign to improve the lot of the claimant while the bureaucrat's economic situation remained static would only serve, she argued, to aggravate the tension of their relationship. For Rose, it rested with the poverty lobby to recognise that....."Too often the bureaucrat and the client are trapped within their own labels and we have to look for methods of opening the trap". (7)

Rose's view carried with it an allusion to the sensitivity of DHSS staff to criticism by poverty groups. There was a tendency for roles to become stereotyped with the local officer too frequently, consciously or otherwise cast in the role of villain. Unconstructive criticism had the unfortunate result of adding to the tensions in the officer-claimant relationship. It was important, therefore, that groups like CPAG made efforts in future to consider the effects of their campaigns on both sides of this relationship. This new initiative was an effort to do just that.

Bradshaw notes that....."Supplementary Benefit officials have always

5. Directors Report
6. Rose, H. Rights, Participation and Conflict Poverty Pamphlet No. 4
7. ibid

been extremely sensitive to the criticisms of CPAG and Field was becoming increasingly aware of the antipathy between Social Security officials and CPAG, and what he was trying to do was really to get them to mobilise behind the campaign and see themselves as part of the problem they were talking about, instead of as the enemy all the time....."(8)

In essence, this new initiative to co-operate with and understand the problems faced by Social Security staff was a belated admission on CPAGs part that its campaigns had....."perhaps focussed too much on the 'appalling way social security officials treated claimants'....."(9)

Trade Unions and Low Pay

The decision to continue efforts to liaise with trade unions had been closely guided by Frank Field during CPAGs internal reappraisal of strategy. An immediate outcome was, as was shown in Chapter 7, the attendance of the group at the 1972 and 1973 Labour Party Conferences. The 'reality' of CPAG-Union relations was best summed up by Jane Streater and Stuart Weir after their visit to the 1972 conference....."we were encouraged by the warm reception the group received, but we felt that we are a long way from having any real influence upon the labour movement. The group has already discussed the need for a trade union liaison officer and union attitudes at conference have shown how necessary such an appointment is. In the meantime we need to seek to begin a dialogue now by building upon existing contacts. It is also necessary to begin a policy of education within the labour movement and to make more contacts at the local level, and of members of the NEC and in Transport House. Any attempt to influence policy-making should be by means of the democratic process within the party and not by a reliance on having a few mates on Transport House Policy Committees although, of course, we should continue to use them too".(10)

8. Interview with J. Bradshaw 2. 11. 78.

9. *ibid*

10. Report to the Executive on the CPAG/CRO Attendance at the Political Party Conferences 1972.

This latter jibe was almost certainly directed at Frank Field who seems to have relied quite heavily for his trade union 'strategy' on his relationship with David Basnett of the GMWU⁽¹¹⁾ and Terry Parry of the FBU. Both union leaders were known to be sympathetic to CPAG and were prominent in conference debates, fringe meetings and TUC discussions on poverty. However, as Streather and Weir were at pains to point out, Field's personal friendship with them was no substitute for a systematic and properly executed strategy to influence the trade unions at all levels, particularly at the grass roots. More striking is the fact that Frank Field seems to have monopolised this area of CPAGs work until the appointment of the group's Trade Union Liaison Officer, also his initiative. Though the issue of CPAG-Trade union liaison had been aired during the review of strategy in 1972 it is clear that the issue was introduced and stage-managed by the Director. It is also clear from discussion with CPAG staff and members of the Executive that no real group discussion of the liaison proposal took place until after Field had established the pattern of contact with Basnett, Parry et al and had made the appointment of a trade union liaison officer a fait accompli.⁽¹²⁾ Furthermore, the lack of wider group consultation in the appointment of the latter may have been, as we shall see, a key factor in Field's rather inappropriate choice.

An important outcome of the Group's attendance at the 1972 conference was

11. It is interesting to note that Basnett has traditionally placed great emphasis on trade union research and the wider education of his members. His own roots lay in trade union research and he welcomed the flow of information from CPAG on Social Security matters as a valuable contribution to his union's strong research orientation. Innis MacBeath notes that....."one of Mr. Basnett's jobs was as NUGMW Education Officer, when he not only pushed ahead with a large programme of membership education but had a leading share in giving the NUGMW the best funded and most professional research department in the movement". MacBeath, I. Cloth Cap and After George, Allen and Unwin 1973 p.190
12. Interviews with Malcolm Wicks, CPAG Executive 28.7.77. and with Jane Streather 25.1.80 and Ruth Lister 28.7.77.

the re-affirmation of its belief in the establishment of a national minimum wage and the need for an effective trade union strategy to combat low pay. Once more, as with family allowances, the group was on uncertain ground. Its early 1970-71 dialogue with trade union research officers on the subject of low pay had been selective, confining the discussion to representatives of unions with large numbers of low paid members. The group had not really tested general trade union opinion on a policy for the low-paid and had perhaps under-estimated the strong opposition to such a policy voiced by some unions. For the larger and the stronger unions such a policy implied a national minimum wage which, in turn, would necessitate statutory involvement in wage bargaining by Government.⁽¹³⁾ This was unacceptable.

The lack of concerted trade union action on low pay in the early seventies has proved a serious barrier to CPAGs efforts to assist low income groups. The maintenance of differentials and the pursuit of maximum self-interest by many of the more powerful unions has been a serious barrier to progress. This led the Prices and Incomes Board to comment in April 1971. "The unions have not, by and large, been particularly effective in improving the relative position of lower-paid workers. Any attempt to increase the earnings of the low paid solely by raising general levels of pay substantially will, in the absence of greater productivity, serve merely to increase the rate of cost inflation. A concerted trade union policy towards the low paid must involve a recognition that a relative improvement of the position of some must mean a relative worsening of the position of others".⁽¹⁴⁾

Matters have not been helped by taxation policy. In 1955 the average wage-earner, married with two children, paid a mere 3.3% of his gross income

13. See Taylor op cit pp 244-46 and the Low Pay Unit, Trade Unions and Taxation 1976.

14. Quoted in Taylor p. 245

in tax and national insurance contributions. By 1975 this figure had risen very sharply to 25% and by 1977 had reached 32%. Similarly, a worker with four children forfeited 20% of his income and this was in 1977 compared with only 2.5% in 1955. In this period, then, the tax burden of the average family increased eightfold. The taxation factor in pay bargaining was summed up in a 1976 study by the Low Pay Unit which concluded that....."Between 1970 and 1975 trade unions more than doubled gross pay for the male worker on the lowest decile.....The Inland Revenue, at the same time, more than trebled the tax bill of a worker in this position". (15)

The result has been, according to Robert Taylor....."that attacks on welfare state scroungers have been most vociferous among the low paid, some of whom would be better off for short periods on the dole than in active work. This is a low pay not a high benefit problem, but union failure to improve the wages of low paid workers makes it difficult to apply effective resistance to those who want to tax social benefits or lengthen the periods of time between their up-valuations. The unions have been far better organised in defending Government attacks on public sector jobs than in crusading for those on low wages. Indeed, a major failure of the unions has been over achieving a better deal for the low paid". (16)

The Group's strategy for influencing the unions has accordingly been seriously limited in the area of low pay by these factors and by the two-tier nature of the trade union movement. The strategy has, however, taken other forms and other issues as its target. One of the most interesting ventures of the group was its initiative in 1973 to combine with other central London charities and voluntary associations to form A. C. T. S. Branch 1/524 of the

15. Low Pay Unit Trade Unions and Taxation 1976.

16. Taylor p. 245 - for a lengthy discussion of this topic see Dorfman, G. Wage Politics in Britain 1945-67 Chas. Knight & Co. 1974

Transport and General Workers Union as a means of unionising its own staff and establishing a useful vehicle for sending resolutions to conference. One of the earliest aims of the branch 's social policy committee, consisting of representatives from Shelter, CPAG, SHAC and the North Lewisham Project, was to press the TGWU to establish its own central social policy committee on the lines of that created by the GMWU. (17)

In a submission to the Committee on Voluntary Organisations some time later, the group explained the raison d'etre of the branch and outlined the nature of its liaison with the labour movement. "CPAG operates on two levels. In the first instance its staff are active trade unionists. The Group was responsible for bringing into being a branch of the Transport and General Workers Union which caters for other similar voluntary bodies. The Group is also concerned in lobbying all trade unions. The trade unions are in a position to exert pressure on Government on many issues. CPAG hope to influence trade union policies from within. At the present time the trade unions are very anxious to improve their public image; to let it be seen that they are taking an overall view of issues beyond just that of salaries. CPAG want to be able to take advantage of this. They try to achieve results by discussion and by giving information to the unions". (18)

CPAG and the Labour Movement - The Role of Branches

It is perhaps only since 1974 that CPAGs efforts have had any measurable effect. The key to success in 1974 was to rest primarily in keeping liaison at a low key and testing any radical demands upon the labour movement

17. Interview with Marigold Johnson, Trade Union Liaison Officer CPAG 1974-77 and CPAG Child Poverty Looks to the Unions July 1974.
18. Summary of Oral evidence given by CPAG to the Committee on Voluntary Organisations 9.12.75. p. 3
Similarly, Frank Field wrote to Len Murray of the TUC on 22.1.74 "over recent years the CPAG have tried to strengthen its links with the trade union movement. We have tried to do this by providing information which trade unions could find useful in wage negotiations and also supplying individual members with data when they are going on official delegations".

initially upon 'friendly activists' who had been of some assistance in the past. Essentially, the idea was to continuously keep under review the mood of the movement thereby reducing the risk of untimely comments or intervention and, positively, enhancing the group's ability to exploit rapid changes in policy and attitude.

Significantly, the initiative for this low key strategy seems to have emerged from one of the group's branches, rather than from CPAG itself. Marigold Johnson, shortly to become the Group's Trade Union Liaison Officer, wrote to a member of the branch (Hull) in June..... "We shall have to feel our way just as you suggest, before trying to push any of the unions into backing the campaigns we want - chiefly by doing the sort of thing you propose, such as running a few sessions on benefits and asking them if they want a leaflet on any particular aspect..... clearly if there is any question of forwarding resolutions for TUC discussion it would be worth trying out a few on your activists". (19)

The principal theme was educative - a demonstration of the importance of social security matters, particularly with regard to redundancy, sickness benefits, strikes, accident and retirement to active trade unionists. (20)

19. Marigold Johnson to John Baker 20. 6. 74.

20. Nowhere had the importance of these issues been better demonstrated than in the Conservatives Social Security Bill, an adjunct to the Industrial Relations Bill, introduced by Keith Joseph in June/July 1971. The Bill abolished the traditional first 3 days of benefit for those unemployed, ill or injured for 2 weeks or more. In doing so the Government saved a miserly £19 million which contrasted rather starkly with the massive handouts returned to surtaxpayers at this time. The Act also included provisions which cut down social security to the wives and families of those on strike. The Government also abolished unemployment pay for the first six days if workers were on short-time working. In all, the Act constituted one of the most serious attacks to date upon the social insurance sphere of industrial relations and gave considerable substance to the arguments advanced by CPAG for trade union involvement and education in social benefits and welfare rights. In this light one of the Group's trade union liaison officers first tasks was to send copies of CPAG's pamphlet The Unemployed Workers and Strikers Guide to Social Securities to all unions

Events in Hull illustrate this. In a letter to the Secretary of the Hull Trades Council in June 1974, John Baker, a CPAG activist, wrote....."Members of the CPAG have been talking over these issues with the Trade Union Education Committee and last Friday an informal meeting decided to set up a new organisation - the Hull Trade Union Welfare Rights Group..... This, therefore, is to request the Trades Council to recommend all branches in Hull to elect delegates to the new group". (21)

The 'new group', under the guidance of the local CPAG branch, would, then, keep the trades council delegates informed of facts and developments on social security which directly affected trade unionists.

The apparent development in branch activity and initiative in the period from 1974 onwards is most significant. There seems to have been a striking undervaluation of the role of branches by CPAG until the latter half of 1972. The subsequent revaluation and revitalisation of the branch role after 1972 was largely due to the efforts of Jane Streather who was appointed in the Summer of that year as Assistant Director of CPAG with responsibility for branches. Until her appointment there seems to have been some very real tension between CPAG and its branches deriving substantially from the former's view of the latter as "information fodder" and its unreal expectations of branch activity. Streather also contends that while CPAG expected 'local knowledge' from its branches it gave very little information support to them in return. It is clear that CPAG, a full-time professional body, was not as patient with or understanding of branch efforts as perhaps it could have been. Equally, tensions arose over the often too parochial attitude of branches and their tendency to immerse themselves in issues, such as housing, which CPAG has traditionally not regarded as its concern. Difficulties and misunderstandings, therefore, had arisen on both sides. (22)

21. J. Baker, Hull CPAG to John Dunne, Secretary Hull Trades Council 24. 6. 74.

22. Interview with Jane Streather 25. 1. 80.

Nevertheless, any assessment of their relationship must carry with it a judgement that CPAG may have impaired its own efforts, and failed to utilise its full potential, by undervaluing the role that could be played locally by branches. In short, CPAG and its branches had (and to some extent continue to have) failed to establish a division of labour and responsibility with the result that the left hand has not always known what the right was doing. This is all the more surprising given the valuable contribution that the branches can make to the Group's work. In 1974, for example, after much reorganisation and re-assessment of their relationship (and the establishment of stronger branch representation on the Executive Committee)⁽²³⁾ the branches played a major role in supplying the information for CPAG's submission on Education Maintenance Allowances to the House of Commons Expenditure Committee.⁽²⁴⁾ Their role in establishing the grass roots approach to liaison with the Labour movement advocated by Streater and Weir in September 1972 was particularly important.

The raising of family allowances provided most common ground with the labour movement in 1974. Lord Allen, Chairman of the TUC, had already stated earlier in the year that the attack on family poverty was to be one of the TUC's top priorities.⁽²⁵⁾ The Group's chief task, therefore, was to develop ways and means of sustaining trade union interest in the issue and translating promise into action. Once again an important initiative was taken by one of the Group's branches, on this occasion Haringey, which submitted a paper outlining a possible strategy.

23. The group's constitution thus states. . . . "Branches Council Meetings shall be held from time to time, at which each branch shall be entitled to two voting representatives, if the paid up membership of the branch does not exceed 100, and an additional voting representative for every 50 branch members after the first 100. The Chairman at such meetings shall be elected at an annual Branches Council Meeting and shall be one of the 6 members of the NEC elected by the Branches Council".
24. Interview with Jane Streater 25.1.80.
25. CPAG Press Release Poverty Lobby at Trade Union Congress 4th Sept. 1974.

The Haringey branch argued that for the Group to make any real impact on the movement there must be some overall policy. This, they suggested, could be divided into 4 main areas (1) National and CPAG activity (2) Local trade union branch, trade council and CPAG branch activity (3) Research into low pay, wage negotiations and wage structure and (4) Rights Guides and welfare rights stalls advising trade unionists of their rights. (26)

It was Haringey's view that....."not only should CPAG lobby and pressure the TUC and its conference, and union leaders, but it also needs to lobby individual union conferences where contact can be made with local officials and elected lay delegates. This should also be carried through at Trade Council and union branch level where contact can be made with the rank and file movement". (27) The Haringey branch saw liaison at this grass roots level as particularly important because of a credibility gap between union leaders and their rank and file. The Branch considered that at national levels trades councils were largely ineffective but, at the local level, could be very useful vehicles for getting CPAGs views across. Additionally, local trade union branches could be viewed as potential recruiting grounds for CPAG members.

Liaison could expand in other directions also. In cases where CPAG branches were undertaking projects the assistance or guidance of the relevant union could be enlisted. Haringey, for example, had formed a sub-committee to take a critical look at educational welfare benefits and had enlisted the active guidance of the local branch of the National Union of Teachers. (28)

26. 2. 9. 74 (untitled) Haringey Poverty Action Group

27. ibid

28. It is interesting to note a similar development in the Autumn of 1979. Early in Sept. the NUT published a pamphlet The Case Against the Cuts which argued that Conservative cuts in education fail to yield the benefits claimed by the Conservative Government and that the education system having sustained cuts of £1.5 billion over the last 6 years cannot cope with further cash withdrawal. The pamphlet signalled the start of a campaign which was joined by CPAG and the Advisory Centre for Education. Together they were described as....."taking on the issue of the proposed end of statutory services such as school meals, milk and transport; providing information on how the cuts are hurting and how to fight them at local level". 'Wasting the Talents of 30,000 Young People' New Statesman 31. 8. 79.

Furthermore, they advocated more CPAG research into union-related matters like low pay, wage negotiations and wage structures, the 'poverty trap', overtime working and various related state and local authority benefits. Subsequently, the findings could be made available to the unions concerned.

Liaison with trade union branches and local trades councils has since become an important feature of CPAG branch activity. The vast majority of CPAG branches have successfully installed their speakers on the trade union discussion 'circuit' and many like Manchester, Oxford, Merseyside, Nottingham, Haringey and Hull have been co-opted to local trades councils in one capacity or another. The closer the examination of CPAG-Union liaison the more striking is the conclusion that it is at the local level that this liaison has been more substantive and more sustained. In contrast, liaison at national level has, with a few exceptions, been ephemeral and more productive of verbal support or assurances of support than firm evidence of it.

Furthermore, branch activity has come to manifest itself in a variety of often quite sophisticated forms, a long cry from the late 60s when many branches confined their activities to checking the availability of social security leaflets in local post offices. In the area of publications, for example, CPAG branches such as Colchester and Norwich were instrumental in 1977 in producing a major CPAG study of rural poverty;⁽²⁹⁾ In 1976 the Northern Ireland branch of the Group was similarly effective in helping to produce Poverty: The Facts in Northern Ireland.⁽³⁰⁾ Branches have long been prominent in contributions to CPAGs periodic assessment of free school

29. CPAG Walker, A. ed. Rural Poverty Poverty Pamphlet 37 Nov 1978
 30. CPAG Evason, E. Poverty: The Facts in Northern Ireland Poverty Pamphlet 27 October 1976

meal take-up, a critical factor in which, of course, is variation in regional take-up. The Haringey, York and Leicester branches have been particularly active on this issue. Two important recent illustrations of branch contribution to the CPAG effort have come with the publication of CPAGs evidence to the Finer Committee on One Parent Families⁽³¹⁾ and in the publication by CPAG of Welfare in Action in 1975, the culmination of two years work and collaboration between CPAG and its branches.⁽³²⁾

In 1976 the Rochdale Branch of NALGO and the local CPAG branch combined to organise meetings, advice stalls and leafletting about the Child Benefits campaign. The group's Edinburgh branch, aided by the local trades council and the WEA, established a welfare rights course for claimants and trade unionists in the city in 1976, a venture repeated more recently by the Leicester and Nottingham branches. Many CPAG branches have been particularly useful in advising trades councils as to the selection of representatives for supplementary benefit appeals tribunals, and local union branches and trades councils have for some years made a useful, if irregular, contribution to CPAG branch funds, through donations or fees for speakers. Marigold Johnson notes, for example, that "funds were certainly received specifically to cover the printing and postage costs of the Child Benefit campaign from individual unionists and branches. It would clearly conflict with charitable status for the group to lobby political sources directly, but help in kind (e. g. paper, fares etc) has been given!"⁽³³⁾

CPAG itself, was also keen to utilise the contacts of its members. Members were asked in 1974 to indicate whether they were active in any trade union branch so that the group could supply suggestions for resolutions and other

31. See The Finer Joint Action Committee. A Guide to the Finer Report
 32. CPAG Welfare Rights Working Party. Welfare in Action, Nov. 1975
 33. Marigold Johnson to Author. 26. 7. 77.

means of establishing closer contact with unions at the local level.

Marigold Johnson states that....."on the whole we concentrated most on the unions which had as members CPAG members - a filing system on this was set up, so that we could write to individual union members about CPAG moves - and, other than our own TGWU branch at head office, these tended to be the obvious white-collar unions: NALGO (overwhelming majority in CPAG membership) NUPE, ASTMS, ACCT, NUT, AUT and some of the civil service unions such as CPSA, with whom we had a number of meetings over DHSS cuts in early 1977". (34)

CPAG members were also asked if they were involved in bodies like BASW, Community Health Councils, Consumer Bodies, constituency parties, the Housing and Social Service Committees of local councils or any relevant voluntary associations through which CPAG views may be conveyed. (35) Some initial success in this was achieved with BASW (British Association of Social Workers), largely through the efforts of Sheila Kay of Merseyside CPAG and Jane Streater. Together they helped set up an interest group within BASW on poverty which was influential in developing a concern among social workers for policy issues. It was instrumental, in particular, claims Streater, in involving BASW members in the Tax Credit issue and in the opposition to the 1975 Children's Act. (36)

Oddly, CPAG does not seem to have been very influential within the central London charities branch of the TGWU that it helped to set up in 1973. Johnson notes that....."although the group has remained active in the union branch,

34. ibid

35. The contacts and expertise of its members is often one of the most valuable resources a 'cause' or 'promotional' group possesses and well organised groups will make early efforts to sound out this. See, for example, Kimber and Richardson: 'The Roskillers: Cublington Fights the Airport' in Kimber, R. & Richardson, J. J. eds, Campaigning for the Environment. Routledge & Kegan Paul 1974 Ch. 8

36. Interview with J. Streater 25.1.80. See also Brown, R. G. S. The Management of Welfare op cit p.130

it has not often enlisted the support of other groups except over the Child Benefit campaign". (37) The fragmentation that has characterised British Social policy and the rational self-interest pursued by individual trade unions and their members have both, it would seem, come to dominate the affairs of a body that CPAG had envisaged as a vehicle of change.

The Appointment of a Trade Union Liaison Officer.

In September 1974 CPAG held one of the first 'fringe-meetings' to be organised by a non-trade union body at the TUC Conference. Echoing the sentiments expressed by Lord Allen earlier Field remarked....."if the trade union movement wishes to continue its role of championing Britain's poor and hardpressed it will go away from this week's conference determined to see the two twin evils of our time - inflation and family poverty - brought under control. Earlier this year Lord Allen, TUC Chairman, made the abolition of family poverty the number one priority of the unions when they seek to influence the Chancellor's Autumn budget. From now on CPAG will put all its energies to supporting Lord Allen and his colleagues on the General Council on the need to increase family allowances and extend the scheme to the first child". (38)

Oddly, Field underplayed the inconsistency of this appeal, noted earlier, that wage increases to improve the lot of the low paid were likely to prove inflationary and that the alternative, improved Social Security/family

37. Marigold Johnson to Author 26.7.77.

38. CPAG Press Release Poverty Lobby at the TUC 4.9.74. Earlier in the year the group had announced....."CPAG, along with other concerned groups, is mounting a big campaign this Autumn to press for Family Allowances for the first child as a budget 1975 measure and an interim increase in existing family allowance to a minimum of £250. As part of this campaign, it will be urging the 70-odd CPAG branches to get together with local union branches, seeking support for resolutions at the political party conferences and the TUC. If unions are ready to act in support of wider social policy issues such as abolishing the 44 means-tested benefits in favour of universal measures such as FAM they will make good the hopes implicit in the Social Contract - and with the example of the TGWUs splendid stand on the pensions issue, CPAG feels confident of national support for a benefit just as closely linked to the long-term solution of the problem of poverty". Child Poverty Looks to the Unions. July 1974

allowance benefits, was not widely supported within the trade union movement. The group's efforts at conference depended, therefore, too much on exhortation.

In a press release immediately after conference the group revealed its intention to 'institutionalise' its liaison with the labour movement.....
"Recognising that the movement, and especially USDAW, has become increasingly concerned about the problems of poverty and that the wage-earner, as part of the family unit, must participate in government decision-making on social reforms, CPAG decided this Summer to appoint a Trade Union Liaison Officer, the first such officer in a charity-pressure group of this kind". (39)

This appointment fell to Marigold Johnson, a part-time worker with CPAG, in July 1974. Her appointment confirmed both CPAGs strong belief in the growing influence of the trade union movement upon social policy and the failure of the group's earlier and rather piecemeals efforts at liaison. She notes of her appointment....."Probably the strongest argument to influence the decision to appoint a member of CPAG staff to act as liaison officer with the unions was the realisation that the Government of the day was clearly intending to take the TUC into its confidence in decision-making, and that the unions were therefore likely to be in a position to influence social policy". (40)

Johnson's appointment centred on three aims of the group which were initially kept rather flexible until her role developed, Principally, it was the Liaison Officer's task to lobby union leaders and TUC staff on the changes in social security policy favoured by the group. This was to be augmented by a

39. ibid

40. Marigold Johnson to Author 26. 7. 77.

conventional two-way educational exchange in which the Liaison Officer would be available to summarise CPAG publications for trade union journals, speak to branch or shop steward meetings and at the same time approach both national and branch officers to support CPAG branches, speak at meetings and supply the group with data.

Johnson's appointment was very much Frank Field inspired⁽⁴¹⁾ and met with some scepticism from other staff and members who favoured a more 'appropriate' choice as Liaison Officer.⁽⁴²⁾ While Johnson had been active for some years in Labour Party politics and enjoyed a reputation within the London 'voluntary scene' she clearly was not the most suitable choice for this type of role. She had, by her own admission, few contacts within the trade union movement and was a little-known figure in trade union circles. Her upper middle class background could also have done little to enhance her prospects in liaising with trade union officials who had largely worked their way up the ranks and were traditionally suspicious of 'outsiders'. The group's chairman appears to have been remarkably deferential to Frank Field's presentation of her appointment as a *fait accompli* and did little to support the arguments of those members of staff and the Executive who favoured the appointment of an ex-Ruskin-type candidate or of a trade union research officer with a feeling for and knowledge of trade union politics.⁽⁴³⁾ Field's own view that trade unionists would welcome and be flattered by the opportunity to liaise with such an urbane and clearly articulate member of his staff seems flippant and poorly judged against the backdrop of trade union politics and his group's previous inability to establish an effective dialogue. It must also be added that, in retrospect, any achievements in trade-union-CPAG

41. *ibid* - She notes....."all ideas about CPAGs activities are agreed both at weekly staff meetings and discussed at Executive committee meetings every 6 weeks, but Frank Field is usually, as on this instance, the instigator".

42. Interview with J. Streather 25.1.80.

43. *ibid*

liaison appear to have largely stemmed from the personal efforts and contacts of the Director himself. That is not to say, however, that the Trade Union Liaison Officer did not have a useful background or support role to play.

Much of the Liaison Officer's work took the form of contributions on the group's work to various trade union journals and bulletins. (44) Writing in the journal Social Services Johnson sought to explain CPAGs concern with propaganda....."It has always been CPAGs belief that any voluntary organisation or pressure group achieves more by disseminating information than by any other means.....if more people are made aware of their rights as citizens, if more facts are known about the widespread poverty and deprivation that exists in this country, then a small organisation can bring about change". (45)

Oddly, this view seemed to ignore the fact that for the previous 10 years CPAG had released a deluge of information and data on poverty and deprivation to opinion leaders in Government, Whitehall, the Parties, the media and within the trade union movement and yet had failed to make a significant impact upon the problem. Such a view also carried with it the erroneous assumption, as had been proved repeatedly, that trade unionists would readily acquire an interest in the welfare of non-trade unionists or recognise a responsibility on their part to achieve social reform. The growing interest of the TGWU in the welfare of old age pensioners remained, at this point in time, the exception that proved the rule despite the sympathetic implications of the social contract.

44. See for example 'The Work of CPAG' Electrical Power Engineer Vol 56 No. 11 Nov. 1974. and 'CPAG Strengthens Ties with Trade Union Movement' Social Services 6. 7. 74.

CPAG were, perhaps, rather too presumptuous in their interpretation of the TGWU initiative as the beginning of a very real trend in union philosophy that would give encouragement to the development of a concern for the welfare of the community at large. A radio broadcast by Len Murray, TUC General Secretary, in June 1974 gave further impetus to this interpretation. The pensions campaign had been seen by the group as reflecting a shift in union thinking towards general social responsibility and Murray's view that "the TUC has now got to be exposed to much more pressure from activists, from a much wider range of representatives." and that this would mean for him. "the enlargement of politics and the involvement of a lot more people in the process of political decision-making" (46) was seized upon by the group as further indication of the trade union movements willingness to act 'societally'. While Murray's comments may well have seemed encouraging it is important to remember that in the case of the trade unions. "It is the power to withhold a function that constitutes their strength; not their power to coerce". (47) In other words the traditional socio-economic coverage of the unions has rested with their ability to withdraw their labour. It was and still is unthinkable, however, that trade unions would withdraw their labour in support of social security reform. The fact remains, that in the economic sphere the unions may state an intention and be able to carry it through by final resort to sanctions. In the case of social policy intention this facility did not and could not obtain. In other words, those interest groups which pinned hopes of social reform being achieved through trade union action were confusing the very real influence of the unions on economic and industrial issues with non-sanction-based moral persuasion on social policy issues.

46. 'What Are We Here for Brothers?' Transcript of Analysis Radio 4 13.6.74. p.14

47. Finer, S. E. The Political Power of Organised Labour. Government & Opposition.

Assessing the comments of Murray, Marigold Johnson had spoken of the immediate task of the group as....."building on the growing willingness of union leaders to concern themselves with aspects of welfare and social security outside wage bargaining....." and that....."if it can be harnessed to the campaigns of the poverty lobby it could exert great pressure". (48) Yet the principal evidence of this 'willingness', the TGWU pensions campaign, was atypical. Retirement pensions are one of the few subjects in which all trade unionists share a common interest. All will eventually qualify for them and all trade unionists naturally seek economic security in retirement. Retirement pensions, unlike other welfare payments, may also be seen as a natural extension of the wage system in the sense that trade unionists make the connection between weekly deductions from their pay as a means of financing their upkeep in retirement. A clear continuum is thus established. In the case of other welfare benefits, however, paid from tax revenues and insurance contributions, trade unionists may see themselves 'burdened' by the unemployed, the sick, those with families and so on. The connection may be no less clear but the implication may be far less acceptable.

This may be illustrated in the case of the wage stop. The group had, with good intention, despatched copies of its Unemployed Workers and Strikers Guide to Social Security and its Wage Stop pamphlet to all members of the TUCs Economic Committee and most of the major unions in the belief that"further trade union support will considerably strengthen pressure on the Government to announce the early abolition of this outdated and unjust rule and thereby implement the resolution passed at the 1973 Labour Party Conference". (49) The TUC had itself expressed its concern about the hardship

48. Marigold Johnson to Author 26. 7. 77.

49. Executive Committee Minutes 5. 7. 74.

caused by the ruling as early as 1964 in talks with the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance and had raised the possibility of introducing earnings related unemployment benefits. ⁽⁵⁰⁾ Yet the ruling had continued throughout the life of the Wilson Governments with little moderation and had led Sir John Walley, Deputy Secretary at the Ministry, to conclude in 1969 that "the ordinary citizen sees the wage stop as common sense". ⁽⁵¹⁾ The emotive implication of abolition for many trade unionists would be that their less well-paid colleagues would be able to receive more in periods of unemployment than in the course of their normal full-time employment. With this went the possibility, however, small, that life on the 'dole' would be more financially attractive than that in full-time employment. There was little reason to suppose, therefore, despite the party conference resolution of 1973, that trade union leaders would go out on a limb to campaign vigorously for an end to this ruling.

CPAG had similarly unrealistic expectations of early trade union action on family allowances. Discussions between the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Social Services made it clear by the Autumn of 1974 that action on family allowances would be limited and delayed. This produced the rather odd conclusion at a subsequent Executive Committee meeting of the group that. "this underlined the importance of the group's growing work with the trade unions as they were proving the one body to which the Government sometimes listened". ⁽⁵²⁾

This view was reached despite the statements on the trade union's role in family allowance campaigning made by Jack Jones, Frank Cousins, and Donnet and Lipsey et al in the sixties and early seventies. ⁽⁵³⁾

50. Report of the 90th Annual TUC Conference 1964 pp 164-66

51.

52. Executive Committee Minutes 5. 7. 74.

53. Support for increases in family support had been forthcoming from the TUC but the problem of verbal assurances of support and good intent being transformed into sustained political action remained. See TUC Economic Review 1970 p. 59

One of the few substantive gestures of support received by CPAG at this time came from the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers - a union with a significant proportion of both women and low-paid workers within its ranks. For these reasons USDAW had been more sympathetic than most unions to CPAG's efforts in the fields of low pay and family support. (54) The group's Director was also on close personal terms with its General Secretary, Lord Allen who had pledged himself, as Chairman of the TUC in 1974, to an attack on family poverty. In the July issue of its journal DAWN, the union submitted two propositions, agreed in discussions with CPAG, for consideration by the TUC at its Autumn conference and one for the Labour Party Conference. From the TUC it urged action on poverty and low pay and, secondly, support for the social contract. Of the party, again under the heading of poverty and low pay, it demanded the eradication of poverty focussing, especially, on the need for an increase in and extension of family allowances, an investigation of the effects of taxation, and a reduction in the range of means-tested benefits. (55)

The success of the group's subsequent attendance at the TUC conference is unclear. Throughout the Autumn USDAW had continued to actively support the group's family allowance campaign and, during conference, Lord Allen chaired a 'fringe meeting' on poverty convened by CPAG. Assessing the impact of the poverty debate upon the delegates Marigold Johnson later wrote "the day as a whole was extremely useful to CPAG. I established a lot of union contacts, but above all there cannot be a single delegate who remained unaware that CPAG existed as an active body keen to co-operate in

54. It is interesting to note here that USDAW has traditionally been one of the most 'politically' active and conscious of trade unions. It is useful to compare its efforts on family support and social security with those on unilateralism and nuclear disarmament in the early 60s.

See Parkin, F. Middle Class Radicalism. Manchester University Press 1968 pp 126-30

55. Dawn (USDAW) July 1974

the social policy of the movement". (56) Lord Allen was equally convinced that the group's presence had been beneficial both to itself and delegates. In a letter to Johnson he wrote. "I am glad that you are moving towards closer contact with the TUC, if not in an official capacity, certainly through personalities involved with trade union work. This I think essential and nothing but good. . . . will accrue from activity of this kind to the CPAG". (57)

The usefulness of this type of approach was tenuous, however, and it is interesting to note that the idea of holding a fringe meeting at the TUC conference was abandoned after this 'maiden' attempt. The public meeting was neither successful as a means of influencing policy or a profitable use of resources. As Marigold Johnson later explained. "an audience of 60 or 80 was to CPAG less useful than getting resolutions passed, and I think we were proved right when the Shelter TUC meeting the following year attracted twelve only". (58)

In 1974, at least, CPAG attracted more publicity for their appointment of a Trade Union Liaison Officer and for their attendance at the TUC conference than for their positive achievements through either. Their failure to make an impact upon the resolution-making process and to draw nothing more than a polite acknowledgement of their efforts from the TUC and the vast majority of trade unions confirmed their status as an 'outsider group' and obliged them increasingly to exaggerate both their influence and their progress

56. Marigold Johnson to C. Tyler 5. 9. 74.

57. Lord Allen, Chairman of TUC to Marigold Johnson 16. 9. 74.
An interesting observation on this personalised approach to winning union support has come from Johnathan Bradshaw. He notes.
"It wasn't working with the unions as a mass body but working with key union leaders and getting them to attach their names to memoranda and getting (later) the TUC Economic Committee to sponsor child benefits in their reports. It was never trying to mobilise the trade union movement. It was a very tacit type of support". Interview 2. 11. 78.

58. M. Johnson to Author 26. 7. 77.

through the media. The importance of the media in such situations has been stated by Grant who notes that....."unlike the high profile insider group, for which the use of the media is a supplementary strategy, securing media attention can be the main focus of an outsider group's activity....." and here, he adds, the group may simply attempt to....."create an opinion about public opinion". (59)

Whilst failing to achieve the ongoing consultative relationship it had sought with the trade unions, CPAG had attempted, nevertheless, to associate itself with the growing influence of the trade union movement by being seen to attend the latter's functions, by supplying it with information and research findings, by encouraging the issue of 'joint statements' on poverty and by 'beating the drum' of liaison. In reality the relationship was less than superficial. The alternative, therefore, was to make the illusion more substantive and enduring until, it was hoped, the unions themselves would come to accept the illusion as reality. This can be seen in its approach to the TUC.

Liaison with the TUC

Some weeks after conference the group's Liaison Officer commenced a short correspondence with the TUC. In a letter to all members of the Economic Committee she had issued a polite reminder about earlier TUC promises of action. In July she had asked the committee to endorse CPAG proposals for an increase in family allowances in its own submission to the Chancellor, remarking that....."The TUC Economic Committee agreed on that occasion to include a recommendation that one means of reflation would be to increase Family Allowances". (60) Since nothing had emerged from this she now asked whether the committee would be prepared to raise the issue again. Careful

59. Grant p. 9

60. M. Johnson to members of the TUC Economic Committee 23. 9. 74.

to stress a benefit exchange she went on to add that....."if the TUC Economic Committee is prepared to include discussion of a family allowance increase on its agenda, we would be very pleased to supply copies of the complete (CPAG) memorandum to the Chancellor. We would also like to suggest drawing the attention of your union members to the considerable amount of up to date information contained in the memorandum....."(61)

The group continued its efforts to 'persuade by correspondence' throughout October and November. Writing to Len Murray, TUC General Secretary in October Johnson commented....."we are hoping very much that when your Economic Committee meets to present recommendations to the Chancellor for his Autumn Budget the TUC will feel able to include some mention of those measures on its agenda. You will remember that the recommendation on family allowances was included in the proposals the TUC made to Mr. Healey in July, and we feel more strongly now that the Chancellor cannot afford to wait until next year to make some further provision....."(62)

Two weeks later she wrote again asking for....."this vital aspect of the social contract"(63) to be included on forthcoming agenda.

The response from Trade Union leaders amounted to little more than polite gestures of verbal support. Roy Grantham of Apex echoed the general view in a letter to Frank Field, confirming his tacit support for action on behalf of the low paid and those with families....."In giving this support, I want to make it clear that I deplore the position in which lowly-paid workers with families find that their take-home pay, including the family allowance, is no more than they could get on Social Security payments". (64) Once again

61. ibid

62. M. Johnson to L. Murray 17.10.74.

63. ibid 29.10.74.

64. Roy Grantham, General Secretary APEX to Frank Field 10.10.74.

the group appeared to confuse gestures of sympathy with offers or proof of outright support. In October, for example, it claimed as a success a discussion of its family allowance proposals at at least two meetings of the TUCs Economic Committee and declared that....."replies supporting our objectives have so far been received from 8 out of the 14 members..... A similar letter went to a further group of Trade Union leaders (13 non-members of the TUC Economic Committee) asking for a public commitment to support our proposals. Encouraging replies have so far been received, so we now have a total of twelve top TUC leaders already on record as willing to give support to our proposals". (65)

This 'support' can have held little more than propaganda value for CPAGs efforts. It was not translated into action and the response can only have been that expected from a trade union movement preoccupied with other issues. The general sympathy of trade union leaders to the problems of the poor and the low paid was never really in dispute. What was in dispute was their willingness and freedom to act in the interests of those groups. In looking too hard for signs of encouragement and support CPAG had unrealistically confused the former with the latter.

In a letter to the group's Liaison Officer, for example, David Lea, the Secretary of the TUC Economic Department, made it clear that the TUC also felt action on family allowances was overdue and he sympathised with CPAGs desire to raise this in discussion with the Chancellor. His comments did, however, carry a polite rebuke for the group and indicated, perhaps, a growing TUC irritation with CPAG 'reminders' of past promises.....

"the economic committee will be discussing their recommendations to the Chancellor at a meeting later today.... These are for the moment confidential but, as you point out, a recommendation on family allowances is

outstanding from the Committee's previous recommendations". (66)

Lea also preferred to defer the TUC-CPAG meeting pressed for by the group until, rather vaguely, the effects of the Budget measures were clarified. While CPAG viewed these as signs of encouragement they may easily have been interpreted as 'distancing' actions.

Similarly, on those occasions when TUC policy or policy statements appeared to resemble that advocated by the group CPAG was quick to attribute this to their own influence, despite the strong possibility, given the broad conditions of the social contract, that social security reform was already under close consideration by the TUCs own Research Department. Writing to Lea on November 8th, for example, Johnson remarked....."we were very pleased to see from press reports that the Economic Committee's recommendations to the Chancellor included in some measure at least those which we had submitted for your consideration". (67)

Had there previously existed an effective and ongoing dialogue between the two on the issues of low pay, child poverty and family support then CPAG would have known the precise pattern of trade union thinking on these and might have been much better placed to establish the extent of its own influence. In the event, this dialogue had been superficial and fragmented and the group could never be fully certain that the TUC was not working towards the same conclusions it had reached itself on these issues. Any positive claim to influence, therefore, was unfounded.

The opportunity to exchange views with the TUCs Economic Committee finally arose on December 5th. The TUC confirmed its support for the independence of each union in negotiating separate arrangements on pay and therefore felt it must reject CPAG proposals for either a Low Pay Board or a national minimum wage. Its rejection of these proposals was entirely

consistent with the views expressed by union leaders and their research staff since CPAGs inception. As regards CPAGs hopes of sending regular 'programmes for action', documents and proposals to the Economic Committee, David Lea made it clear that this would not be possible as the Committee, could not, constitutionally, consult with other groups. Its principal responsibility lay in looking after the interests of its members and any interest in broadly non-union issues like family allowances arose largely because they were seen as having some effect on their membership in other non-work, situations.

The Committee's view that union leaders and research staff would probably welcome the opportunity to read CPAG material but that their formal consideration of consultative documents and proposals produced by outside pressure groups was precluded amounted, in effect, to a 'brush-off' to the group. (68)

This procedure is of crucial importance in understanding both the TUCs role in policymaking and its relationship with outside interest groups. As the 'peak association' of the trade union movement the TUC has developed clear lines along which interests are channelled and policies formulated. Each year, the delegates conferences, both of the TUC itself and of individual unions, produce a considerable number of resolutions, many of which are concerned with social policy. The General Council has two key roles - to act upon resolutions and, secondly, to act independently as matters arise between these conferences; for example, as a result of Government proposals. Its principal job, therefore, is....."to represent its own members, there are no structures which are essentially designed for the advancement of pressure-group interests". (69)

68. Minutes of the Meeting between CPAG and TUC Economic Committee
6.12.74.
69. Interview with Trevor Mawer, Asst. Secretary TUC Social Insurance Department 31.5.79.

The General Council meets every month and is serviced by two key committees in the area under discussion here - the Social Insurance Committee and the Economic Committee. Trevor Mawer, the Assistant Secretary of the former, explains that groups like CPAG may well send documents and literature to these committees but a formal relationship is not possible....
 "Normally matters cannot be raised or submitted for agenda by non-affiliated bodies. An affiliated organisation can ask General Council though to consider submissions made by it, but there is no provision as such for non-affiliated bodies". (70)

The only other way for an interest group to get submissions discussed or issues raised is to persuade an affiliated union to do this on its behalf. CPAG had continuously sought to do this, without much success, since 1973 through its own involvement in a Central London branch of the TGWU and through resolutions put forward by sympathetic trade union branches throughout the country. Part of CPAG's failure to get its own resolutions on conference agenda stems from the fact that such resolutions are either inappropriate for trade union discussion or, more significantly, they are superfluous in the sense that the TUC is invariably kept up to date on the issues concerned by its own servicing committees. (71) Indeed, it is far from unlikely, as the Child Benefits campaign shows to some extent, that CPAG may be seen as 'treading on the toes' of such committees. Whilst its research findings are usually greeted with interest its attempts to galvanise trade union action are seen as intrusive and unwelcome, by those who consider it is telling them how to do their job.

Trevor Mawer confirms that the TUC has rejected any change in procedure to accommodate outside interests because it sees its prime responsibility to

70. ibid
 71. ibid

its own members who, significantly, are rarely 'poor' or the breadwinners for large families. (72) However, such political insularity may no longer benefit a major corporate interest that is widely viewed as a key 'estate' in the socio-political order. (73) Given the views expressed by senior trade unionists that the unions must increasingly move into politics in the same way that the state has chosen to politicise industrial relations, then it is reasonable to expect the trade union movement to expose its own views and policies to criticism and discussion by groups who hold an interest in these also. Not to do so seriously undermines the view of Len Murray, noted earlier, that the unions have come to recognise and welcome the "enlargement of politics". (74)

If the trade union movement is to concern itself with issues which affect its members outside of the workplace, such as unemployment, sickness, the Health Service, Pensions, single parenthood, discrimination and family poverty, then a case can be made for it to enlarge the scope of politics further by lending its political muscle to the struggle of interest groups, long active in these areas which often lack the necessary resources and skills to achieve sustained attention for the problems of their 'clients'.

The TUC clearly adopts the view that if it allows one group to achieve regular consultative status with it then the dam is effectively breached for a deluge of others to follow. As a result, CPAG has failed to develop a sustained consultation with the Social Insurance or Economic Committees. Consultation has been irregular, ad hoc and superficial, though it is likely that the group has been more successful in its efforts and in getting its

72. ibid

73. See Skidelsky R. 'The State-Why it will Grow' New Society
Paynter, W. 'Trade Unions and Government' Political Quarterly
Marsh, D. & Locksley, G. op cit and Taylor, R. The Fifth Estate
op cit.

74. Analysis op cit p. 9

views across to the trade union movement than any other group since CND. (75)

Trevor Mawer confirms that the group does have some influence on the TUC through its contacts with individual unions and sympathetic union leaders. He reveals, for example, that in some cases when dealings take place with individual unions it is clear that CPAG has briefed them beforehand. This has particularly been the case with the GMWU, NUPE, NALGO, USDAW and more recently, the CPSA and ASTMS which played important roles in the Child Benefits campaign 1975-77

In addition, Mawer feels that there is a discernible informal network of contacts within the trade union movement that has been useful in disseminating the group's ideas and in lobbying on its behalf. (76) Social or personal contact, together with the odd conference resolution from a friendly union have, however, proved poor substitutes for a more structured relationship with the TUC.

It is the 'white collar' unions like CPSA, ASTMS, NALGO, NUPE, ACCT, AUT and the NUT, together with the GMWU, USDAW and the Garment Workers that have proved most receptive to CPAG advances. Probably a key reason for this is their greater expectation of 'servicing'. They expect more literature, more discussion of policy and place a greater emphasis on the research side of trade unionism than do the strictly 'manual' unions. (77)

Allied to this, indeed probably the determinant of this, is the fact that such unions have better-paid workers, better educated workers and higher subscription incomes. Not only, then, is a greater awareness of social and economic issues evident, indeed cultivated, but those unions can afford to

75. Bosanquet comments of CPAG....."they never won the affection or, I think, the confidence of the trade union movement but on the other hand they didn't get seen as a totally hostile force by the trade union movement and that is important".
Interview 22.2.79.
76. Interview with T. Mawer 31.5.79.
77. See Lapping and Radice pp 46-54

research them further. The additional findings of groups like CPAG are therefore welcome and perhaps less subject to prejudice in their interpretation . Accordingly, resistance to new ideas and policy change is perhaps less in evidence in this sector of the labour movement.

CPAG quote David Lea stating during their meeting with the Economic Committee that the group....."had considerable influence and effectiveness as a pressure group.....(and) was in line with TUC policy on Family Allowances, wages councils and probably on employment protection....." and that he....."was anxious to ensure.....(CPAG) had all useful TUC documents and would be pleased to help by supporting them. CPAG reports etc., were valuable and should, where possible, be sent to all his officials at the TUC....."(78) Yet there is little evidence to support this assessment of the group's influence and it must be concluded that Lea was simply showing the usual courtesies.

Indeed, Lea's comments had also led the group to conclude....."In general, we must not be surprised to find TUC documents and policy more sympathetic than CPAG to Government - this was because we were concentrating on particular areas, whereas the TUC must have regard to the whole economy". (79) This pointed quite clearly to the 'strategy of responsibility' the TUC had been obliged to adopt as part of the terms of the Social Contract and an ongoing dialogue with Labour leaders through the Liaison Committee. It also indicated by implication, that the TUC would remain very cautious in its dealings with groups not party to that dialogue. The TUCs own 'insider' status depended upon its assumption of a 'strategy of responsibility' and it may well have considered that it was inappropriate and unethical for it to be seen to associate itself or its views too closely with those of CPAG

78. Minutes of CPAG-TUC Economic Committee Meeting Dec. 6th 1974.
79. ibid

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the TUC views pressure groups like CPAG as constantly requiring the filip of favourable publicity to draw attention to themselves and their work.⁽⁸⁰⁾ The TUC has no such requirement, it has a well-defined role to play in society in general and the economy in particular, and this is recognised and largely accepted by Government and public alike.⁽⁸¹⁾ It may be argued, therefore, that the TUC does not have to justify its existence or its activities to quite the same extent as small pressure groups who maintain part of their pressure by remaining newsworthy. Inevitably, criticism of Government is more likely to attract the attention of the media and the Group's membership (who like to see their leaders actually 'doing something') than passive support of official policy. In contrast, it is argued, the TUC stands very much on its own and enjoys institutionalised access to Government by virtue of its well-defined representativity. Briefly, then, it does not need to make waves to attract public or Government attention. Furthermore, it may be seriously embarrassed by its association with those who do.

The Group's Lobbying Activities

In a review of the group's lobbying activities in 1974, Frank Field claimed that efforts centred upon the trade union movement had already....."begun to pay dividends". In particular, he concluded that....."the group has a

80. Interview with T. Mawer 31. 5. 79.

81. Bob Brown, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the DHSS in 1974, endorses this view and points to the systematic contact between that Department and the TUC on matters of common interest.....
 .."Right through the period I was there Bryan O'Malley and I spent a lot of time with Peter Jacques and Terry Parry, representatives of the TUC Social Insurance Committee. I think that it's right and proper that if the TUC have a Committee which is more or less handling the ground that you as a Minister are handling you would be foolish not to liaise closely with them. After all, 11 million people are organised trade unionists and they are a force to be reckoned with in the country, they have a powerful voice and I think it is right that we ought to listen to the point of view of the TUC on social questions as, indeed, on every other".
 Interview 20. 2. 79.

right to take some credit for the increase in family allowances announced in the last Budget. However inadequate the increase is the group's lobbying activities have helped to net over £200 million for families in the coming year". (82)

While CPAG had certainly contributed to the climate of debate in which an increase in family allowances became acceptable and remained the only group in British politics actively campaigning for so long on this particular issue the certainty of its claim could not, of course, be fully substantiated. (83)

The group's lobbying efforts had taken a tripartite approach. The first centred on the relationship established by Field and, to a lesser extent, Johnson with individual trade union leaders. The second concerned the dialogue between CPAG staff and full-time officials of the unions and the TUC and the third was the group's 'grass-roots' approach to the trade union rank and file conducted, most successfully, by its branches.

It was the Director's view that the group's future co-operation with the unions rested on its ability to demonstrate their shared interests.....

....."Trade union leaders are in business to further the interests of their members as they conceive them, and it is important for us to show, wherever we can, the link in interests between the poor and the rest of the working community". (84)

82. Field, F. The Group's Lobbying Activities December 1974..... He went on to note....."For the last 4 years we have witnessed a major shift in power from the Executive to the Trade Union movement and the group's various lobbying activities reflect this change".

83. Ken Hickman, Principal Secretary at the DHSS says broadly of such claims....."It's very difficult to relate actual specific points to pressure groups activities.....except in the very broadest sense. Obviously, if you look at the CPAGs programme over the years and you look at legislation subsequently you can see where it's had an impact, but it's difficult to tie up particular specific points". Interview 22. 2. 79.
Hickman has been for some years the Principal Secretary concerned with the interaction of means-tested benefits and secretary of the Multi Purpose Claim Form Committee, working in the division concerned with FIS and family support.

84. The Group's Lobbying Activities op cit.

He also noted the particular role he believed the unions expected CPAG to play....."none of the trade unions expects us to become an appendage of the labour movement. They think we are far more valuable as an independent organisation even though this gives us the right to criticise the trade union movement". (85)

He went some way in explaining the rationale of the group's recent correspondence and meetings with the Economic and Social Policy Secretariat of the TUC by adding that he and Johnson had....."been attempting to find out how decisions are made and priorities arrived at, at Congress House". (86)

This initiative was, quite clearly, long overdue and it is surprising that greater efforts were not made in the period 1970-71 to discover this. This oversight seems to have led to the group not discovering until 1974 that.....
"although individual trade union groups can get particular issues raised on the agenda of relevant committees at the TUC, not surprisingly most of the power lies in the hands of full-time officials". (87)

Although his own observations bore out Mawer's comments about the TUC's reluctance to allow direct lobbying, Field remained convinced that.....
 .."they are influenced by our published material and the coverage we get in the media". (88)

85. ibid

86. ibid

87. ibid

88. Ken Hickman, Principal Secretary DHSS says of his own and colleagues reaction to CPAG material....."They make a case which, quite obviously, has to be answered..... CPAG put out a lot of what is, after all, quite well organised propaganda in the shape of various bulletins and the magazine Poverty, I think quite honestly that every time a well informed case is made out in Poverty the matter gets looked at. If it came to me, for example, I would look at it and analyse it and see how far that case could be made".
 Interview 22.2.79.

If the information, knowledge and contacts acquired in this period were to be of any use in furthering the groups aims Field felt they must be cohered within the framework of a fresh strategy to enlist more permanent union support and he identified a number of issues on which this might be done. These included the extension of national insurance benefits, means-testing, the extension of family allowances to the first child, inequality at work, discrimination against the non-industrially injured and public expenditure cuts. The key factor in enlisting union support lay, as he had noted earlier, in demonstrating the manner in which such issues affected trade unionists, as well as non-trade unionists. Given the unions frequent insistence that their first duty was to their members Field felt that it would be difficult for them not to act. The additional value of that action would lie in CPAGs selection of issues where union support would also bring about benefits to non-trade unionists. 'Publics' that were largely unorganised or poorly organised, such as the poor, single parents, the non-industrially injured and the consumer⁽⁸⁹⁾ would now benefit, he hoped, from the efforts of the unions because members of the latter could also be found among these groups.

The case of the long term unemployed illustrated this. Field claimed.
 . . . "we will be able to show that trade union members who remain unemployed for any length of time become disenfranchised in respect of National Insurance benefits. Hopefully this will allow us to mobilise trade union support not only for the extension of insurance benefits for the unemployed, but to those other groups who are at present excluded. We must also attempt to get the trade unions to campaign for an abolition of the discrimination against the unemployed in our Social Security System, such as the wage-stop, as well as the need of higher national insurance benefits".⁽⁹⁰⁾

89. See for example, Syson, L. and Brooke, R. 'The Voice of the Consumer' in Lapping and Radice Ch. 4
 90. The Groups Lobbying Activities p. 3

It was politic, as Sir John Whalley had advised earlier, for the group, where possible, to adapt its demands to previously stated union policy. (This may also have provided the opportunity for the group, on occasion, to have subsequently claimed to influence union policy). In the past, for example, CPAG had been in favour of the extension of legal aid to supplementary benefit appeals tribunals so that claimants could be assisted in the defence or articulation of their case. However, subsequent research by the group revealed that the vast majority of unions were opposed to this overtly 'legal' approach and favoured, instead, the proper training of trade union representatives as the best method of ensuring that the interests of those appealing were properly considered. The group therefore decided to abandon its own approach to the reform of supplementary benefits Appeals Tribunals in favour of the union majority view.⁽⁹¹⁾ Similarly, on the issue of discrimination against the industrially injured Field commented....."At present, the trade unions favour discriminating in favour of those claimants who have been industrially injured at work. It is very important for us to be able to show that many people's disability results from accidents at work, but are not officially recorded as such".⁽⁹²⁾

In early January 1975 the opportunity arose again for CPAG to meet with staff of the TUCs Social Insurance and Industrial Welfare Committee, including Peter Jacques, the Secretary, and his assistant Trevor Mawer. The occasion provided the opportunity for discussion on some of the issues Field had identified as priorities for the group. On national insurance benefits, for example, there was TUC support for the CPAG view that reform and extension

91. As Bosanquet notes....."people don't understand that the unions have a very definite business, a very definite set of issues to do with wages, earning levels, relativities, composition of pay etc. and this is a tremendously absorbing thing for them. If somehow you can't gear in what you do to their consuming interest you are going to be treated a bit like an outside maverick, an optional extra". Interview 22. 2. 79.
92. The Groups Lobbying Activities p. 4

of the principle were necessary. (93) The TUC, for instance, recognised the attractions of occupational pension schemes but agreed with CPAG that in the long term these had been responsible for the low level of the state pension scheme, on the issue of support for the non-industrially injured the TUC recommended that the terms of reference for industrial injuries benefits should be revised and that provision must be made somehow to include, as CPAG had favoured, diseases resulting from industrial processes.

Oddly, Jacques saw reform....."as widening the possibilities of collective bargaining over wage rates to sick and disabled with Government support, rather than a special hardship allowance". (94)

In doing so he was breaking somewhat with the traditional compartmentalisation of social policy and collective bargaining and advocating the use of union power in the latter to achieve reform in the former - something of a mellowing in approach since the debates on the 'poverty trap'.

The group's influence upon individual unions has varied considerably. It's relationships with USDAW and the GMWU have prospered largely because of the close contact between the group's Director and the General Secretaries of those unions. Research staff at GMWU have also been very sympathetic to CPAG ideas and literature. The union's General Secretary, David Basnett, had himself openly supported the group's stand on family allowances and the group clearly saw him as a key vehicle for advancing their views within

93. It was agreed by CPAG and staff of the TUC Social Insurance Committee that 3 major reforms were essential in this area..... (a) to review disability allowances so that fewer depend on supplementary benefits and take-up is up to the rate suggested by, for example, attendance allowance claims..... (b) to review earnings-related principle - it was "repulsive" to insist on a 6 monthly renewal of assessment. Earnings-related benefits 'perpetuate inequalities' in the view of the TUC..... (c) Sickness benefits - the TUC would support extension to those now excluded".
Memorandum of Meeting at Congress House 10.1.75.
94. ibid

(95)
 the General Council. The AUEW, by contrast, had not taken up any CPAG offers of literature or suggestions of articles for its journal and its General Secretary, Hugh Scanlon, had been among the most non-committal on the issue of family allowances despite his firm belief in a wider and more political role for unions. (96)

USDAW extended their concern over family poverty to the Scottish TUC Conference at Aberdeen in April 1975. In doing so the union made an implicit reference to the work of CPAG, calling upon Congress to note....."the reports of many organisations on the poverty of many families attempting to live on low pay and inadequate children's allowances. One of the ways to tackle the problems of large families on low pay, apart from trade union action is to tackle the question of children's allowances". (97) Similarly, the engineering section of the AUEW in Scotland, called for a radical overhaul of social services on much the same lines advocated by CPAG. (98)
 In doing so, both these unions gave some encouragement to a further effort, supported by the Scottish CPAG, to lobby delegates at conference and get its own policies mandated through incorporation in union

95. Interview with F. Field 25. 7. 71 and minutes of meeting between CPAG staff and Larry Whitty, Research Officer, GMWU at the Low Pay Unit 6. 2. 75. Co-operation with GMWU extended in October 1975 to CPAGs attendance at a GMWU discussion group on Pensions and Social Insurance (arranged by its Pensions and Social Services Dept.) with representatives of the DHSS, TUC, Age Concern, National Association of Pension Funds and the Company Pensions Information Centre.
96. M. Johnson to B. Mackenzie, University of Dundee 27.1. 75.
97. Report of the 78th Annual Conference of the Scottish TUC. Preliminary Agenda para. 110
98. This included the provision of the free school meals and restoration of free school milk, adequate funding for an occupational health service, and an immediate end to health charges. para 112

resolutions. (99)

It would be quite misleading, however, for CPAG or the observer to claim that the policies or resolutions which emerge at union conferences are directly attributable to the work of the group. Such claims, and CPAG have made them from time to time, are always undermined by the counter-claims of those lobbied against that they themselves were moving in that particular direction anyway and that the lobbying efforts of external interests were simply incidental. This appears, for the most part, to have been the traditional response of the TUC to CPAG lobbying. Perhaps what CPAG has done best is to stimulate interest in and discussion of issues, such as the wage-stop or family support, and then provide the literature and publicity back-up that helps sustain that discussion. (100)

Furthermore, the occasional resolution from sympathetic unions to TUC

99. Marigold Johnson wrote to a CPAG activist, Fred Twine, at the University of Aberdeen on 25. 3. 75. "looking through the agenda I see that USDAW has a resolution on poverty and family allowances and that the AUEW Engineering Section has a pretty radical resolution on the establishment of a socialist social service. It has been part of CPAGs pressure activity to try and urge resolutions along these lines through trade union branches, where we have active members prepared to speak on social policy resolutions. It was felt that it would be extremely helpful if you or anyone else you know who is a CPAG member in Aberdeen, could go along and chat up those delegates who seem keen on these two resolutions and particularly to see whether the delegates who speak to them would welcome the idea of any other suggestions for resolutions either at branch level or for next year's Scottish TUC".
100. Ken Hickman says that pressure groups can be quite useful in creating a favourable climate of opinion for a policy or its amendment. He reveals, for example, that the Piachaud article on poverty and taxation and the subsequent Field and Piachaud 'Poverty Trap' articles were key influences in persuading Government to review the effects of FIS. It would be misleading, he says, to conclude that they were the only factors involved, because the DHSS was obviously looking at the impact of FIS anyway. Nevertheless, the CPAG campaign did give an impetus to the DHSS review. Interview 22. 2. 79.

Conference and, perhaps, even the broad support of the General Council on an issue like Family Allowances are certainly no guarantee of Government action. For executive action to take place they often require that all the disparate groups involved in an issue, themselves driven by the sustained attention the issue receives in the media, combine their efforts and resources at the moment in time when Government itself is most sympathetic or vulnerable to their pressure. Such a situation obtained in the period 1975-78 when CPAG and the trade union movement channelled their energies into what became the child benefit campaign. This campaign brought full circle ten years of CPAG efforts in the family allowance field and brought it once more into conflict with a Labour Government procrastinating on an issue for which it had already stated its firm support. It is to a consideration of this campaign and the reality of CPAG -Trade union liaison that we now turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10

The Child Benefit Campaign

The Child Benefit Scheme which figured so prominently in discussion of British social policy between 1974 and 1978, rested upon the need for a merger of child tax relief and the family allowance and in transferring that relief from the wage-earning father to the mother in the form of an 'over-the-counter' payment. In its 1969 pamphlet, Labour's Social Strategy, the Labour Party had set out proposals for what later became its child endowment scheme. In 1972 the Conservatives developed the theme in a Green Paper advocating the idea of a child credit within the framework of its overall tax credit scheme. ⁽¹⁾ The major objection of women to the latter scheme was the proposed transformation of their 'over-the-counter' family allowance into a tax credit which could be set against the husband's tax liability and swallowed up in his pay packet. The strength of that objection was to take the form of a petition with over 300,000 signatures, presented to Parliament in 1972, demanding that any support for children should be payable to the mother at the post office. ⁽²⁾

The trade union movement had already publicly and unequivocally supported the introduction of child benefits payable to the mother in evidence to the Select Committee on Tax Credits set up by the Conservatives. ⁽³⁾ The TUC Economic Review of 1974 further endorsed the scheme and, in May, the final seal of approval was given by the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee in a

1. Proposals for a Tax-Credit System. Cmnd. 5116
2. See Hansard (Commons) 13th May 1975 cols. 331-32
3. ibid. Moving the 2nd reading Barbara Castle paid tribute to the trade union movement. "which has always supported that formula and which pressed it on the Select Committee through the evidence given by the TUC, although the unions frankly recognised that this formula would affect their members take-home pay. Undeterred, Vic Feather. . . . gave us some robust evidence to the effect that the mothers rights must be safeguarded". op cit. col. 331

statement which read....."It is of the utmost importance that the new Child Benefit scheme to be introduced next year provides benefits generous enough to represent a determined and concerted attack on the problem". (4)

In a similar vein, the Labour Party manifesto of October promised.....

"The Labour Government will attack family poverty by increasing family allowances and extending them to the first child through a new scheme of child credits payable to the mother". (5) The Conservatives, too, were committed to their introduction as the first stage in their own tax credit scheme. By October 1974, then, there existed a positive and encouraging consensus between both the political parties, the trade union movement and what might be broadly termed the 'family lobby' in favour of early action on family allowance reform.

An early initiative was not to materialise however. The Labour Government announced that it could not introduce the new scheme until April 1976 because of administrative and legislative difficulties. The response of the 'poverty lobby' was to cohere briefly and ineffectually under the co-ordination of an 'umbrella body', the Family Allowance Movement. (6) This new body was launched by a study group convened by the British Union of Family

4. 25th May 1975 quoted in CPAG. Do Not Abandon Child Benefits: A Briefing Note June 1976

5. ibid

6. FAM described its own Action Committee as....."representative of family organisations and political parties committed to the non-party political campaign for the 7 million mothers who get no allowance for their first child. "The Committee was chaired by Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams MP, chairman of the National Birthday Trust and included Margaret Wynn of BUFO, Luise Nandy of the London Council of Social Service, Jane Streather and Marigold Johnson of CPAG, Marie Whalley of BUFO, Helen Middleweek of the National Council for One Parent Families and Peter Bottomley, chairman of BUFO. see CPAG Family Allowance Movement July -Aug. 1974

Organisations, ⁽⁷⁾ the participants in which included CPAG, Gingerbread, the National Council for Social Services, National Council for One Parent Families, the Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations and the Mother's Union.

While action on family allowances for the first child remained the specific goal of FAM, their broader complaint was that. "No Government has accepted the urgency for direct action to help families during a period of rapid increases in the cost of living". ⁽⁸⁾ On the 16th July 1974, a delegation visited Barbara Castle, Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, with the aim of securing a commitment to an immediate extension of family allowance to the first child - their target date was April 1975. However, Castle reiterated that while the newly-elected Government did regard action on this issue as a priority, legislative and administrative problems still precluded any extension of existing provision before April 1976. ⁽⁹⁾

From FAMs point of view the case for an early, improved family allowance scheme was threefold. Family Allowances had not been increased since 1968 and, in succeeding years, inflation and the cost of living had risen to unprecedented levels. Existing allowances were therefore uneconomic. In addition, the frustration and sense of deprivation felt by those with families was further fuelled by changes in fiscal and taxation policy which had increasingly transferred spending power towards the single and the childless.

7. The British Union of Family Organisations is a branch of the International Union of Family Organisations. The objective of the latter is to promote the solidarity and wellbeing of the family. BUFO is essentially a co-ordinating body. The other participants were, the Council of Childrens Welfare, London Council of Social Service, the National Birthday Trust, National Board of Catholic Women, National Federation of Women's Institutes, National Marriage Guidance Council, Union of Catholic Mothers and the Women's Group on Public Welfare.
8. Family Allowance Movement op cit.
9. CPAG and Child Benefits: A Potted History internal CPAG brief undated.

Secondly, FAM argued that a clear decline in nutritional standards had resulted from this failure to keep family allowances at a realistic level. Expenditure on food in the first quarter of 1974 compared with the same quarter in 1973 rose by 12% while the general level of food prices had risen by nearly 19%. Such increases were inevitably seen as falling more heavily upon those with children.

Thirdly, as a result of these developments, (or non-developments) it followed that the mothers of seven million 'first' or 'only' children could not be expected to wait until the Labour Government had ironed out its 'administrative problems'. Few within the family lobby could forget that the party had made similar promises about early action on family support in 1964 and had then procrastinated for four more years. The FAM noted "An immediate increase in family allowances would ensure that families would be helped to meet the rising costs of living, and bring about a fairer distribution of spending power within the family". (10)

CPAG, embarking on the tenth year of its own campaign for improved family support, also drew attention to the peril of delay and stressed the importance of early action. "There are fourteen million children in this country. The responsibility for the welfare of these fourteen million falls on a minority of the population. At the present time 81% of children are found to be in a quarter of all households. The child benefit scheme would help to spread more fairly over the whole population the burden of rearing children. Child benefit would unify and simplify the system of income support for children". (11)

The group had stated at the time of FAMs inception that its own participation in the latter's campaign. "in no way limits our wider policy on family

10. Family Allowance Movement
11. Do Not Abandon Child Benefits

allowances".⁽¹²⁾ Indeed, it is clear that CPAG saw FAM as a useful, broadly-based vehicle for harnessing the type of massive grass roots support for extension that it could not, alone, have achieved. FAM was not, however, destined to play a critical or long term role and broke up shortly after its inception with each of its constituent organisations choosing to tackle the issue in their own distinct way. In addition to proving a rather unmanageable body, participation in FAM was not consistent with CPAGs traditional and highly individualistic approach to family support. Participation in FAM, to some extent, did act as a constraint upon the group despite the early belief that it would not do so. Furthermore, CPAG had long considered itself the best equipped and most experienced campaigning group of its type and its overriding concern with the issue of family allowances may have been at variance with the goals of other less experienced and less 'political' FAM participants for whom the issue of family allowances was, more usually, of secondary importance. This was the case, for example, with the National Council of Social Services, the Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations and the Mother's Union. Participation in 'umbrella' bodies of the FAM type invariably requires a trade-off or compromise in the views and proposals of the participants in order that an 'agreed policy' can emerge. It is not clear that CPAG, inter al, felt it necessary, or was prepared, to make such a compromise. Ultimately, the group seems to have concluded that it could best serve the cause for higher benefits by acting independently of FAM.

The break-up of FAM, one of the very few attempts to cohere the disparate strands of the 'family lobby', was all the more discouraging because CPAG itself had been largely unsuccessful in bestirring union leaders to action on the issue of family support and, although both party manifestoes referred to the scheme in their different ways in the October Election, the group never

12. Family Allowance Movement

succeeded in making it a platform issue for candidates. Indeed, it may well have seemed by the end of 1974 that interest in the issue had been 'killed'. In the Spring of 1975 that view gathered even more strength when the Cabinet again decided to postpone introduction of the scheme because of administrative difficulties, this time fixing April 1977 as the target date for commencement.

Reaching the Statute Book

To CPAGs 'surprise', however, the child benefit bill received its second reading on 13th May 1975. ⁽¹³⁾ Opening the debate Barbara Castle described the Bill as achieving....."a long overdue merger between child tax allowances and family allowances into a new universal, non-means-tested, tax-free cash benefit for all children, including the first, payable to the mother. In this way it ensures that the national provision for family support is concentrated first and foremost where it is needed most - on the poorest families; and that it goes to the person responsible for caring for the children and managing the budget for their food, clothing and other necessities" . ⁽¹⁴⁾

The group's response was to try to make up for their lack of advance intelligence by reacting quickly with briefing notes for backbenchers.....

....."We were rather taken by surprise as we hadn't expected it so soon and there had been no advance warning. We sent a briefing note to a number of MPs for the second reading debate and its some measure of CPAGs influence on the issue that our views were referred to a number of times and Barbara Castle quoted some of our memorandum in her speech - the CPAG seal of approval kind of thing. We did a detailed briefing for members sitting on the committee and had meetings with both sides to discuss our proposed amendments. Virtually all the amendments put down originated

13. Potted History

14. Hansard (Commons) 13. 5. 75. col. 330

with us....."(15)

The failure to secure advance intelligence is a serious obstacle to any group wishing to influence events. Finer has described such "intelligence" as a necessary condition for the success of pressure groups and has spoken of it as contributing to the "technical efficiency of the lobby".⁽¹⁶⁾ His view is that groups are more likely to be influential if they (a) have advance intelligence (b) have established access to friendly MPs and (c) have facilities for briefing. CPAG have been able to fulfill the last two conditions almost from their inception though it must be added that our findings so far have shown that backbenchers have played a very minor role in influencing the course of family policy. CPAG have failed, however, to secure advance intelligence either as a result of their own involvement in the policy-making process or through contacts with those who are involved. They have, since

15. Castle paid tribute, in particular, to CPAGs role in helping to abolish the wage stop....."Finally, I come to clause 18, which, by repealing para 2 of schedule 2 to the Supplementary Benefit Act of 1966, abolishes the Wage-stop. Unemployed claimants and others who are temporarily out of employment will no longer have their benefit restricted to the level of their net weekly earnings when working full-time in their normal occupation.....It is, of course, the substantial improvements we have made in the FIS prescribed amounts and in the needs allowances for rent and rates rebates which have unlocked the door to this reform. Here I pay a special tribute to the Child Poverty Action Group, which has campaigned for the abolition of wage-stop for the best part of a decade. Certainly the staff in the local offices welcome this step as much as CPAG". Cols. 339-40
- Similarly on the great importance of the new Child Benefits Bill, she commented....."I can best sum up its significance in the terms used by the CPAG in a statement circulated by the group to members for this debate. The Group says.....'The Child Poverty Action Group welcomes the introduction of the Child Benefit Bill. This Bill, when fully in force, will be the most important change since 1946 in provisions within the Social Security system for the main tenance of children. The group has for a long time argued that adequate benefits for all children paid without means-tests are a crucial first step towards the abolition of family poverty and the Bill provides the machinery for this'.....Of course, the group has a number of details which it would like to see altered in the Bill. That is to be expected, and, we can argue them out in committee". Cols 340-41 See also references to group's campaign by Kenneth Clarke MP col. 330 and 387-88 and by Norman Fowler MP col. 343.
16. Finer, S. E. Anonymous Empire Pall Mall 1966 p. 56

their inception, been and continue to remain an 'outsider group'.....
 "which are at best tolerated to the extent that they are allowed to send
 occasional deputations to the relevant department". (17)

Kimber and Richardson argue that groups must....."learn to tell in which
 direction the 'policy wind' is blowing". (18) This can be most effectively
 done, they say, by establishing a good working relationship with decision-
 makers and by monitoring their public statements. The latter has been a
 tactic long employed by CPAG and is best illustrated in Field's belief that
 the group could usefully pressure politicians by constantly and publicly reminding
 them of promises and statements they had made earlier. He described this
 as 'trapping people by what they have said'. However, the 'good working
 relationship with decision-makers' advocated by Kimber and Richardson is
 striking by its absence from CPAGs overall strategy.

Kimber and Richardson note that....."it is clear that, by gaining advance
 warning of departmental thinking, outside groups have been placed in a
 potentially stronger position". However, they conclude that....."the more
 usual situation, of.....groups being presented with decisions, or at most a
 restricted range of options, and having to fight a rearguard action to reverse
 or alter them, is likely to persist". (19)

This has certainly been the experience of CPAG since 1966 and clearly the
 case with Labour's decision to give the Child Benefit Bill a second reading
 in May 1975.

Neither were any of CPAGs amendments to the Bill successful largely
 because, it claimed, Labour backbenchers were reluctant to vote against the

17. Grant p. 3

18. Campaigning for the Environment p. 213

19. ibid

Government even on the amendments they themselves had put down. It was CPAGs view that the Government had set up the committee responsible for revising the Bill in such a way as to ensure that it wouldn't be defeated or tested too closely by the views of outside interests. The group pointed to the fact that the committee was unusually laden with front-bench spokesmen, all unlikely to support the amendments and that one of their own 'supporters', Helene Hayman MP, was apparently prevented from taking her place on it. "when she refused to make a promise of good conduct". (20) The crucial amendment suggested by the group was for the inclusion, in the final statute, of specific target dates for commencement of the scheme. This, the Government refused to do preferring not to have their hands tied.

The Bill received the Royal Assent on the 7th August 1975 to become the Child Benefit Act. It proposed to replace the existing system of family allowances and child tax allowances with a single child benefit payable for each child, including the first. The Government had hoped to introduce the scheme by 1976 after stating that administrative and legislative problems would preclude action in 1975. Now the Government sought to use a similar excuse for postponing the scheme's introduction until April 1977. For the interim, the Government offered a stop-gap measure to aid single parents in the introduction of a Child Interim Benefit of £1.50 per week for their first children. (21) Observers could have been forgiven for viewing this as a prelude to total abandonment of the scheme. Between August 1975 and May 1976 CPAG continued to press for higher family allowances and child tax

20. Potted History

21. Do Not Abandon Child Benefits and Castle, B. 'The Death of Child Benefit' New Statesman 4. 6. 76.
See also Lister, R. 'Family Policy' in Bosanquet and Townsend eds. Labour and Equality p.188.

allowances prior to the introduction of the Child Benefit Scheme. (22) In May 1976, however, the Labour Government confirmed the growing suspicion that the scheme was to be axed and offered only the vaguest of hopes for any future introduction.

The Abandonment of Child Benefits.

For CPAG, the implications of abandonment were clear, not only had a key family support scheme fallen by the wayside but a scheme which was paramount to the Government's overall social policy strategy. The Group commented. "In deciding to shelve the Child Benefit scheme the Cabinet have abandoned the kernel of their policy for family support and a reform which stood beside the new pension scheme as the principle social reform of the present Parliament". (23) This apparent correlation between the pension scheme and family support was to prove, as we shall see, an important factor in mobilising support for the restoration of the child benefit scheme.

22. Following on from its pre-budget memorandum to the Chancellor, Co-ordinating the Attack on Family Poverty, April 1975 in which it called for a big increase in family allowances, relating benefit to average male industrial earnings and the introduction of a home responsibility allowance, at the same time withdrawing the wife's tax allowances except for older wives, the Group issued its first ever post-budget memorandum Reducing the Poor's Living Standards at a Stroke. The reason for this, the Group stated, was that the Government's. "slowly emerging anti-poverty programme has been reversed by the Chancellor's Budget Statement". In June the Group had published a further memorandum Back to the Thirties for the Poor which led to a meeting with the Chancellor on 4th June in which the Chancellor argued that the Group's analysis of Labour's record and strategy for the future was unfair and he disputed, in a letter to the Group on June 25th, the realism of CPAG's analysis of the real value of social benefit's scheduled for November. In December 1975 the Group again raised the issue of Family poverty in its report Poverty: The Facts which was developed further in Ruth Lister's Social Security: The Case for Reform Poverty Pamphlet No. 22
 See Poverty No. 32 Autumn 1975 pp 38-40
Poverty No. 33 Winter 1975/76 p. 29
Poverty No. 34 Summer 1976 pp 20-22 + 24-25
23. Do Not Abandon Child Benefits

The disagreement which arose over the decision to postpone indefinitely the introduction of the scheme was described by Barbara Castle, the Minister who had piloted it through Cabinet and Parliament, not as "a piece of petulance at the short-term constraints on public expenditure....." but as..... "the eruption of a growing anger at the stubborn masculine bias of British politics. It is an expression of despair at the failure of the Government's political will to create a more equal society". (24)

Castle's own frustration, like that of CPAG, was further fuelled by the knowledge that the scheme had been abandoned in the wake of a long, painful and ultimately successful process of persuading the trade unions of the importance of social policy to their members and of the need for them to act in the political arena to secure social justice. She wrote..... "The tragedy of the Government's retreat from the legislation on child benefit which I piloted through the Commons last year is that it comes at the moment when the trade union movement has been converted to the understanding that old-style collective bargaining will not change society. It must comprise social, as well as economic aims". (25)

There was some evidence to support this view. Already in the early seventies Jack Jones had taken an important initiative on state retirement pensions and had been successful in extending his union's bargaining remit to include consideration of the economic wellbeing of pensioners. In doing so he had created a precedent upon which other unions and the TUC could

24. 'The Death of Child Benefit' New Statesman 4. 6. 76.
 25. ibid - This was illustrated in a letter from Jack Jones of the TGWU to the editor of The Times 28. 4. 76 in which he wrote.....
 "Over 3 years ago the trade union movement entered into negotiations with the then Labour Opposition on the importance of the social wage. We realised then that many people's living standards could not be determined through free collective bargaining. The two largest groups so affected are pensioners and children".

come to build. ⁽²⁶⁾ During the Heath administration, for example, the Select Committee on Tax Credits had found Vic Feather and the TUC General Council firmly committed to the proposal that the child credit should be paid to the mother - a commitment which became accepted as official trade union policy. ⁽²⁷⁾ Even by the time that rumours strengthened in February 1976 that Chancellor Healey was to seek a 3% pay limit target for the second phase of wage restraint, the TUCs commitment to the scheme was still firmly entrenched at the core of the Government's White Paper on Public Expenditure. ⁽²⁸⁾

As late as April 1976, a matter of weeks before the Government's announcement, Jack Jones still felt confident enough of the scheme's introduction to write. "The Government has promised the new Child Benefit will become payable for all families next April. Very shortly, therefore, it will be putting the final touches to this scheme. One of the most important remaining decisions is the level at which child benefit will

26. During its 1970 conference the Labour Party had pledged itself to secure a better deal for pensions and, some five years later, the issue was taken up again by Jack Jones. Moving a composite motion No. 39, seconded by the Prime Minister's CLP, Huyton, he had called upon the Government. "to establish a reasonable living standard for pensioners by ensuring that the basic state pension should not be less than 50% of adult male worker's average earnings for a married couple, and not less than 33% for a single person, regarding this as an immediate aim requiring frequent and regular adjustment".
Report of the 74th Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1975
 p. 249-52 and pp 254-61
 The issue was raised again by Jones at the 1977 Conference in composite motion No. 43. Report of the 76th Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1977 pp 233-37
27. Of the transference of allowance from father to mother, Castle notes. "The select committee discussed this exhaustively with the TUC. Vic Feather. . . . kept his nerve and stoutly maintained that the Child Credit should be paid to the mother, despite the consequences. 'We will deliver what we agree to deliver. This is what the Congress will carry'. And it did. The switch from pay packet to the mother's purse became trade union policy".
 Castle, New Statesman op cit.
28. ibid

set. Government is about to decide on the living standards of the nation's 14 million children, and the trade union movement will be watching the outcome with considerable interest". (29)

Jones' comments raise once more the importance of advance intelligence. Here was, arguably, the leading figure in the trade union movement and a senior member of the Liaison Committee under the firm impression, on the eve of the policy reversal, that the child benefit scheme would be proceeding unimpeded. Clearly then, the Government was either not prepared to take the trade union movement into its confidence on this decision (which has interesting implications both for the validity of the social contract and for the TUCs status as an 'insider' group) or its decision to abandon the scheme was a last minute one.

The other obvious explanation for this apparent snub or break in consultation, and it seems the more realistic one, is that the Government intended to introduce another and more demanding phase of wage restraint and wished to reduce public expenditure also - possibly as a rather odd way of showing the unions that the community at large would be making sacrifices also. (30) To have announced its intentions at an earlier date might have aroused trade union suspicion of the severity of the next stage and allowed time for the mobilisation of strong, sustained opposition. Even if the latter holds true it would seem from Castle's comments and from trade union pledges of support for the family, that the Labour Government seriously, and perhaps cynically, misjudged the union mood on this issue.

29. The Times 28. 4. 76.

30. Ruth Lister has commented that. . . . "1976 represented the nadir of the Labour Government policy for families. An increase in CTAs in the budget proved to be a mixed blessing as it meant more money would have to be transferred from the 'father's wallet into the mother's purse' under the proposed child benefit scheme. Worried about the implications of this transfer for its pay policy, the Government lost its nerve and announced the indefinite postponement of child benefits". in Bosanquet and Townsend p. 191

The personality of the new Prime Minister must also be seen as a major factor in the decision to 'abandon', at least temporarily, the child benefit scheme. There is some case for arguing that Harold Wilson deliberately 'passed the buck' on child benefits to his successor, James Callaghan, rather than risking a protraction of his own resignation as Prime Minister. If one accepts the economic argument that the Exchequer could not afford to pay improved family benefits before 1977 and that this recognition was made shortly after Labour took office in 1974 then it could be argued that Wilson sought to hand over the reins of office before this, and other, socio-economic issues gathered force. (31)

This detracts, however, from the major role played by James Callaghan. It may be recalled from earlier chapters that Callaghan's attitude to increases in family support while Chancellor of the Exchequer in the sixties was grudging. He had even attempted to go against the grain of party policy in 1967 with a proposal for a means-tested family benefit.

Keith Banting has noted that in the sixties social scientists and interest groups, in the course of advancing new ideas and policies....."had far greater influence with the intellectual politicians in the Labour Cabinet, such as Crossman, Crosland and Jenkins, than with others such as Callaghan". (32)

Callaghan seems to have assumed, as he had in the sixties, that increases in family support were still unpopular, particularly during a period when wage-earners were being asked to restrain their wage-demands. Banting's view that....."Callaghan had shrewd political instincts, and by 1967-68 he was increasingly convinced of one overriding point: as Labour's problems continued to grow, and their popular support to decline, they could not go on antagonising their political base, the manual working class....."(33) seems to have held as true in 1976-78 as it did ten years earlier.

31. See Bosanquet and Townsend Ch. 1 + 2
 32. Banting p. 142
 33. ibid p. 94

More significantly, as Chancellor, Callaghan had aimed at a regeneration of industrial investment in British industry to counter low growth and falling exports. To do this, he had favoured a restriction in private consumption or public expenditure. He had warned the Commons in 1966 that the choice was a cut in public expenditure or the imposition of "swingeing increases in taxation."⁽³⁴⁾ His view was that those without families, those in full-time employment and especially the skilled manual and middle-income groups "were unwilling to sacrifice their standard of living so that social security could be improved".⁽³⁵⁾

Callaghan and many of his Cabinet colleagues were to sustain this viewpoint throughout the period 1976-79 also, particularly in their subscription to the view advanced by Bacon and Eltis in 1976 that public spending had constrained economic growth.⁽³⁶⁾

Bosanquet notes.....

....."The Labour Government fell heavily for the Bacon and Eltis theory when first announced. Later analysis suggests that a greater degree of scepticism might have been appropriate. The international evidence suggested that Britain's public sector was no larger than that of most other developed countries and, in fact, smaller than some of them.... it was possible that the low rate of growth had come about through quite other reasons and that without expansion of the public sector there would have been even more unemployment. The Bacon-Eltis theory lacked a view of causality".⁽³⁷⁾

Nevertheless, Mr. Callaghan and his own Chancellor, Dennis Healey, appear to have drawn freely upon this theory of expenditure - growth relationships to justify their 'programme of restraint'. The result was, according to Bosanquet, that from 1976 onwards....."the government was attempting to hold back the growth of public spending. This restraint continued for the rest of its period in office. The Government's short term reaction to the

34. Hansard (Commons) No. 744 cols 989-91

35. Banting p. 97

36. Bacon, R. and Eltis, W. Britain's Economic Problem : Too Few Producers. MacMillan 1976.

37. Bosanquet & Townsend p. 30

economic situation was gradually transformed into a social philosophy and a social policy for the longer term". (38)

Child Benefits, inevitably, became part of that 'programme of restraint'. This was borne out in the Government's economic reasoning.

Before the April budget the child tax allowance for a child under 11, the only ones eligible, was £240 per annum - the equivalent of £2.35 a week net of the tax on family allowance. According to Castle, the rate of child benefit needed to ensure that subsequent children received as much help as they did then through tax relief and family allowance was thus £2.24 per week. In the two child family the mother would have gained £4.48 in place of her usual family allowance of £1.50. The father would have lost £2.34 from his pay and, overall, the family would have gained a moderate increase in support through extension of the benefit to the first child. (39)

This bonus, however, was hardly sufficient to encourage the trade unions to give the scheme their whole-hearted support, so Castle had attempted to improve it beyond its apparent 'break-even' level. In doing so she met, as Peggy Herbison had done some years earlier, with concerted political opposition from Cabinet colleagues who sought to utilise the resources of the Government's contingency fund, from which the scheme was to be

38. ibid p. 31
39. Castle, New Statesman 4. 6. 76.

financed, for their own ends. (40) She comments....."obviously a higher rate than the break-even one was desirable in order to make the whole process more palatable. It was about this that I was arguing with the Treasury when I was removed from office". (41)

Immediately prior to this Dennis Healey had announced his plan to increase the child tax allowance to £300, costing the Exchequer some £300 million. Castle's initial reaction was favourable....."It seemed good news at first. A higher tax allowance automatically jacked up the level of child benefit. But it also jacked up the cost in public expenditure. In my innocence I did not see how the argument was developing". (42)

The break-even rate now rose to £2.64. In a two child family the father would lose £3.16 from his pay and the mother's income would rise to £5.28. The overall rise in income would be 62p and the overall cost about £110 million.

40. This point was illuminated by Kenneth Clarke MP in his contribution to the debate on the 2nd reading of the Child Benefits Bill. Commenting on Castle's announcement that the scheme could not be introduced before 1977 because of administrative difficulties he commented....."I am sorry that the Secretary of State repeated several times that it is impossible to introduce it before that date without mentioning the other problems that were authoritatively reported in New Society and The Guardian only a few months ago. In Cabinet Committee, in particular the so called anti-poverty group that the Government have apparently established, there have been great battles between the Secretary of State and her colleagues, particularly her Treasury colleagues. The result was, and we believe that this lies behind the delay and the Government's marked lack of enthusiasm in searching for office accommodation, that the Secretary of State was refused the resources by her Treasury colleagues to implement the scheme before 1977. I suspect that there is very little agreement between her and the Treasury about what this scheme may mean and that this is the principal reason why no benefit level is stated for 1977....."
41. Hansard (Commons) 13.5.75. co. 390
42. New Statesman 4.6.76.
ibid

This provided the room for manoeuvre the Chancellor and Prime Minister needed. "at that price, the argument now ran. . . . the gain to the family - the sweetener for the switch - was not big enough to enable us to sell the loss of take-home pay to the wage earner. And no doubt spending ministers, with their own designs on the contingency reserve, were only too ready to listen to the argument that a figure of £110 million was too high and that cheaper solutions could be found". (43)

Of additional significance was the treatment meted out by the Government to the unions, the co-architects of the social contract. If little else, the manner in which abandonment took place, without apparent consultation, did at least guarantee a trade union reaction to recover pride and purge embarrassment. Castle's own closing remarks veiled an invitation to react firmly. "All we are left with is David Ennals vague statement that the Government intend to bring the scheme in 'in time'. And there are some red faces in the TUC. Perhaps the trade unions will not take their discomfiture lying down. The women certainly won't". (44)

The Cabinet Leak

The speculation which surrounded the reasons for the Government's decision to abandon child benefits and the extent of union involvement in that decision was to end, somewhat dramatically, only two weeks after Castle had offered her own analysis of the debacle. On the 17th June New Society, in an article perhaps unprecedented in the recent history of social policy, published a detailed account of the Cabinet's 'volte-face' on child benefits based upon classified information, including secret Cabinet minutes, leaked to

43. Castle makes the interesting point here that. "under our conventions of Government the decision to raise child tax allowances without first examining the implications for the child benefit scheme was the prerogative of the Chancellor and not of the Cabinet". New Statesman 4. 6. 76.
44. ibid

Frank Field by an undisclosed source. ⁽⁴⁵⁾ To protect the group from any liability of prosecution or damaging litigation, Field acted independently to produce a fully documented account of how the volte-face came about and the reasons used to justify it and was able to illuminate the role played by senior Cabinet Ministers and their counterparts at the TUC. ⁽⁴⁶⁾

The crux of the disclosure began on April 8th 1976, a few days after Callaghan had succeeded Wilson as Prime Minister. On that day, David Ennals in the course of a Cabinet reshuffle, had taken over at the DHSS from Barbara Castle and was to mark the occasion with a memorandum to his Cabinet colleagues informing them that families with children were now receiving considerably less support than the Conservatives had provided between 1970-72 and less even than that provided by the Wilson Government in the late sixties. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ Even the increase in child tax allowance announced by Dennis Healey in his Budget two days earlier had only restored family support to its 1974 level which, in itself, was still markedly below the provision of 1971. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ Ennals had thus concluded with the warning....."If

45. Field, F. 'Killing a Commitment: The Cabinet v. the Children' New Society 17.6.76. For legal reasons Frank Field was only prepared to discuss the 'leak' episode within the parameters and context of the New Society article. In recognition of the need to protect his 'source' - "Deep Throat" - the subsequent discussion in the text is confined solely to the content, not the origins, of the leak and is based almost wholly on the New Society article
46. As Field noted....."The scuttling of the commitment to child benefits is a case-study in how Cabinets decide major policy issues. It illustrates not only the ease with which a majority of the Cabinet can be stampeded against a long-term commitment of the party, but also the way a Prime Minister and a Chancellor can manipulate a situation to their own ends".
New Society 17.6.76.
47. See Bosanquet and Townsend eds. Ch.11
48. Field commented later....."These, then, are the actual words of a Labour Secretary of State addressing his colleagues. He told them in no uncertain terms that apart from one year, 1973, families were worse-off under the present Labour Government than at any time since the late 60s. This is an immensely damaging charge and it is important to remember that it was not made by a charity like CPAG, but by a member of the present Government".
Children Worse off Under Labour? Poverty Pamphlet No. 32
Feb. 1978 p.2

we continue to let child support be eroded by inflation, the whole scheme would be condemned as a trick to give children less, not more". (49)

Ennals' memorandum had advised the Cabinet that to restore the support for a 3-child family to the level it had been under the Conservatives in 1971 would require a child benefit of £2.90. The Chancellor, however, offered his own counter-proposal of £2.50 per week for child benefit plus a 50p premium payment which would only go to the children of single parents and to those families with larger numbers of children.

The Treasury scheme was rejected by Ennals in a further memorandum issued for the Cabinet Meeting of the 4th May. Ennals argued that the Treasury scheme would mean that almost all two-parent families with more than one child would be worse-off in real terms by April 1977 than they were in April 1976. Once more the Secretary of State emphasised his view that to reduce expenditure in real terms in 1977 on family support would be seen by many people as a confidence trick. (50)

By the 29th April the role of the TUC in the issue had also become clear. Field reveals that the Cabinet Minutes of the 29th April record Ennals as saying that failure to increase the real level of support for families would add to the difficulties in negotiating pay policy with the TUC and would be likely to stiffen their opposition to the phasing out of food subsidies. Field goes on to note that. "It was at this Cabinet meeting that members began to discuss the effects of withdrawing child tax allowances on the negotiations for stage 3 of incomes policy. The Cabinet concluded that it might be best to postpone the child benefit if the funds were not available to pay an acceptable rate". (51)

49. New Society 17. 6. 76.
 50. ibid
 51. ibid

Concerned that the Government would be accused of bad faith (and perhaps that the morale of his own Department would suffer at the hands of the Treasury once again) Ennals presented the Cabinet meeting of the 4th May with fresh administrative and financial arguments why the scheme should not be scuttled. The DHSS, he recalled, had already argued that £2.70 child benefit was the lowest desirable rate and that £2.65 was the lowest flat rate which would ensure that no family was made worse off in cash terms. The cost of the latter was estimated at £160 million a year plus a further £45 million for dependent children overseas. At the same meeting further memoranda were also forwarded by the Chancellor and Joel Barnett, Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Both restated the view that a basic rate of £2.45 plus a 50p premium would give a cash filip to all families and a real gain to families with one child and to one-parent families with one child and to one-parent families.

Crucially, the Chancellor also added that there was no commitment to maintain the child benefits in line with inflation as David Ennals had assumed in his previous memorandum. Since he believed that only 7% of families drawing family allowances were poor, the Chancellor argued that the use of premium payments was a more cost-effective means of reducing poverty.

Field charged that after the 4th May Cabinet meeting James Callaghan.....
 ... "began working behind the scenes".⁽⁵²⁾ At the Cabinet meeting of 6th May the new Prime Minister claimed to have received an "excellent report" from the party's whips that had created new doubts in his own mind about the political implications of introducing the child benefit scheme. The Government's Chief Whip, Michael Cocks, reported to the Cabinet that after surveying opinion he had concluded that the introduction of child benefits in April 1977

would have, what Field termed....."grave political consequences which had not been foreseen when the Bill went through the House of Commons". (53) Field went on to reveal that in the ensuing discussion in Cabinet Ministers were of the opinion that the distribution effects of child benefit could not be "sold" to the public before this scheme was brought in in April 1977. Field notes....."In summing up, the Prime Minister commented that to defer the scheme would also require careful public presentation. The two Cabinet meetings of the 4th and 6th May had scuttled the child benefit policy". (54)

It was really after the meeting of the 6th May that the trade union factor in the child benefit equation came to dominate Cabinet thinking. The Cabinet's immediate task was to consider ways of best presenting to the public the abandonment of the scheme. Both David Ennals and Shirley Williams, Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection, now argued that the Government could salvage some respect by modifying the scheme rather than abandoning it altogether. Abandonment was all the more sensitive because the Government had fought two General Elections with family support as a prominent issue and because their commitment had already been placed on the statute book.

The Ennals-Williams proposals were discussed in Cabinet on May 20th but by now a good deal of the Cabinet discussion was being leaked to national newspapers. The Cabinet's room for manoeuvre was therefore seriously undermined as the early stages of the volte-face were publicised. (55) These 'leaks' produced what the 'source' presumably hoped for - the intervention of those trade union leaders who had stated their commitment to the scheme.

53. ibid
 54. ibid
 55. See The Guardian 19. 5. 76.

On the 24th May they were successful in forcing the Government's hand at a meeting of the TUC/Labour Party Liaison Committee. The Government's position was tenuous enough to oblige it to endorse a Liaison statement which read....."It is of the utmost importance that the new child benefit, to be introduced next year, provides benefit generous enough to represent a determined and concerted attack on the problem (of poverty)."(56)

However, one of the most interesting disclosures of Field was that the full trade union delegation at that meeting were not aware that a small group within their ranks, the trade union caucus on the NEDC, had arranged to meet with the Chancellor and other senior ministers later in the day. At the Cabinet meeting the next day the Chancellor reported that the TUC had been asked, at this private session, to agree to a postponement of the child benefit scheme for 3 years because of the effect the loss of child tax allowances would have on take-home pay. Field quoted the Cabinet minutes directly....."On being informed of the reduction in take-home pay, which the child benefits scheme would involve, the TUC representatives had reacted immediately and violently against its implementation, irrespective of the level of benefits which would accompany the reduction in take-home pay". (57)

TUC leaders and Cabinet Ministers were both opposed to a cut in child tax allowances, on the grounds that this would appear to reverse part of the budget strategy underpinning stage two of the incomes policy. Later that afternoon, in an effort to pre-empt further leaks to the press, David Ennals was instructed to announce in the Commons the effective postponement of the child benefit scheme.

56. Statement of the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee Working Group on Child Benefits 24. 5. 76.
 57. New Society 17. 6. 76.

The New Society leak provides a striking similarity to the wrangles and splits over family support that characterised the Wilson Cabinets of the sixties, where they differ most, perhaps, is in the influence accorded to trade union responses to increases in family support. This produced a good deal of confusion in 1976. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor presented the effect on take-home pay as the key factor in the Cabinet discussions. Moreover, they had also presented it as if it had been suddenly discovered at a later stage - a claim apparently given substance by Michael Cocks unqualified 'survey' of the Parliamentary Labour Party. (58) It was here that the whole affair was made to look a débâcle or fiasco because, as Field rightly pointed out. "the effect on take-home pay had always been the point". (59) It seemed more than probable that the pay argument had been contrived in a moment of pure political expedience by the Government to somehow justify the demise of a policy on which it could not agree and for which it lacked political will. (60) However, in the light of the Prime Minister's

58. In a 'leader' on June 21st The Guardian commented. "Trade union leaders have a chance to start an important repair job today, Last week they insisted they were not to blame for the Government's decision to scrap the child benefits scheme. Yet the evidence that emerged from last week's Cabinet leaks suggests that they were. There are other villains too, of course, such as a Chief Whip who reported serious opposition to the scheme, but there did not need to be a leak to discover the inadequacy of the Chief Whip surveys. Some 111 backbench Labour MPs have signed an Early Day Motion urging the Government to fulfill its manifesto commitment. There could hardly be a more public contradiction than that". See also Child Benefits New Campaign. The Great Child Benefits Robbery. April 1977 CPAG pp 4-5

59. New Society 17. 6. 76.

60. The trade union reaction to the Government's argument about the effects on take-home pay was later summed up by NUPE. "The trade union movement has been blamed in some quarters for the collapse of the child benefit scheme. But the support of the TUC for family support to be paid to the mother, even though this implies a drop in the male wage packet, has been made clear since 1973, when the Tories proposed a similar scheme. The principle was re-affirmed, with TUC support, in both the 1974 Labour Party manifestos. The latest TUC document on the pay policy and the social contract welcomed the child benefit scheme and urged the Government 'to fix the level of child benefits at such a level as to make a determined attack on family poverty'. Child benefits were regarded as a social priority which must be introduced in exchange for the agreement to the latest pay policy, not as something which would endanger the pay policy".
GEN - Information Bulletin of NUPE Research Department July 1976
 para 3. 6

and Chancellor's reasoning, the role and response of the trade union movement bears further examination.

The Reaction to Abandonment

The sensitivity of the child benefits issue, the effects of the disclosures and the public embarrassment of an apparently divided trade union leadership conspired to produce a swift reaction to David Ennals announcement. Four days after the New Society leak the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee met in what has been generously described as a 'spirit of compromise'. (61)

Ostensibly, the Committee met to approve the final draft of the new three year social contract but union leaders made it clear that they required assurances that any future contract would have to carry a clear affirmation by Government that it would revise and execute the scheme within the next year or so. (62)

It is clear that the compromise tone was deliberate and the Government did not resist a rethink on the issue. Indeed this third draft of the contract read "Despite the Government decision, recently announced, to rephrase the child benefit scheme, we believe that the full introduction of this important reform should proceed as quickly as possible.....and provide benefits generous enough to represent a determined and concerted attack on the problem". (63)

61. The Guardian 21. 6. 76.

62. Much of the lobbying conducted towards the TUC was led by Barbara Castle and Ian Mikardo whose aim was to..... "point out that the TUC has been made to look silly by the leaked details of Cabinet discussions leading up to the abandonment of the scheme. The leak showed that an important bargaining counter used by Mr. Dennis Healy was the concern he claimed had been shown by the TUC about the effect of the scheme on wage packets. This, Mrs. Castle and Mr. Mikardo will argue, ran contrary to the TUC's commitment to the scheme which formed part of the social contract".

63. The Guardian 21. 6. 76.
ibid

The Government's U-turn on child benefits, coming as it did in the wake of similar broken pledges on family support during the sixties, had also made its position untenable in the eyes of many of its parliamentary supporters. Already, 2 weeks earlier, 111 Labour backbenchers had signed an early Day Motion urging the Government to fulfill its manifesto commitment. (64) At the Liaison Committee Meeting of 21st June Barbara Castle and Ian Mikardo had galvanised considerable trade union support for reintroduction by demonstrating that Dennis Healey had put union leaders over a barrel and had made them look foolish by encouraging their support for the abandonment of a scheme which was quite contrary to their earlier public commitment enshrined in the social contract. (65)

By Thursday 24th June, James Callaghan had virtually transformed the barrage of criticism his Government faced on the child benefit postponement into an issue of confidence in his administration with a warning to Labour backbenchers that they must choose between instant implementation of the scheme and the continuation of Labour in office. (66)

64. The Guardian 9. 6. 76. and 26. 6. 76.

65. As NUPE noted....."the Cabinet Minutes.....make it clear that the PM played off the Cabinet, the TUC and MPs against each other in an attempt to ditch the scheme without opposition. It began with arguments between Ennals and Healey over the level of child benefits, with Ennals arguing for a rate of £2. 90 and Healey arguing that public spending restraint prevented such a high rate. The argument then shifted, at the end of April, to whether it was worth introducing the scheme at all if there was not the money to finance it adequately. What would be the effect on the pay negotiations? On the 6th May Callaghan told the Cabinet that the Government Whips had warned of the concern of MPs for the political consequences of introducing the scheme. In fact, no MPs were consulted. On the 24th May, Callaghan told TUC representatives that the 'majority view' of the Cabinet was in favour of deferring the scheme. The next day, he told the Cabinet that it was the TUC who were opposed to the scheme! Cabinet Ministers who favoured the scheme thought they were up against the trade unions, even though the TUC had clearly supported the scheme previously".

66. GEN - Information Bulletin - NUPE Research Dept. July 76 para 3. 7
The Guardian 25. 6. 76. noted that "he issued this startling message not once but twice during an unscheduled intervention in a brief but bitter private debate at last night's full meeting of the PLP. He stepped in to rescue Mr. David Ennals.....from a drumfire of demands from Mrs. Castle and others for a significant retreat from the Cabinet's decision to postpone the introduction of the scheme."

moreover, made it quite clear that....."there would be no question of the Cabinet reversing its decision and he added the grim news that the postponement applied not only to 1977 but also to 1978. He warned that the Government had no intention of spending a further £200 or £300 million when public expenditure was being pegged over the whole field of policy". (67) By the 28th The Times newspaper had also joined the ranks of the Government critics and offered its own, substantiated, view that the scheme would be introduced at no extra cost to the Government. (68)

A week later Frank Field offered a CPAG version of how the scheme could be introduced. Recognising that any future compromise must be channelled through the Labour Party-TUC working group on child benefits set up by the Liaison Committee, Field cast his thoughts in their direction. (69) Usefully, four of the six members of the working party were known to be..... "strongly in favour of the child benefit scheme". (70) Field's compromise to the working party centred on the phasing out of child tax allowances, half during the 1977 financial year and half during 1978. In doing so his compromise would partly meet the Government's objection to ending the allowance in one swift blow in April 1977. It would counter the view that the loss in take-home pay for some men would be more than any gain they could get under the wages policy. Furthermore, by amending the Government's Finance Bill in accordance with its plan for phased restriction of child tax allowances CPAG felt the Government could also release money to pay child benefit to at least the very poorest families by April 1977, the original target date for the scheme's commencement.

67. ibid

68. 'How the Full Child Benefit Scheme could be Introduced at no Extra Cost to the Government' The Times 28. 6. 76.

69. The Guardian 5. 7. 76.

70. ibid

Shortly after the CPAG and the Times 'Schemes' were mooted the Liaison Working Party agreed, at its first meeting, to the idea of a phased programme to introduce the benefits scheme authorising, in the process, the preparation of a joint paper from the DHSS and the Treasury outlining the details of how this might be achieved. The meeting also went some way in explaining the apparent ambivalence of the TUC on the Child Benefit transfer of cash from pay packet to purse. It now transpired that the TUC's own Social Insurance Committee had not swerved from its early commitment to the scheme but that confusion had arisen when individual members of the General Council had expressed their personal opposition to it. ⁽⁷¹⁾ There was thus a clear split in both camps, Government and trade union, on the issue.

'Child Benefits Now' - The Campaign

While the child benefits issue had clearly caught the imagination of both Parliament and the media it also provided a focal point around which the hitherto disparate strands of the family lobby and the Women's Movement could cohere. On the 7th June CPAG convened a preliminary meeting of those groups and organisations with an interest in the child benefits issue. Representatives of some 15 groups ⁽⁷²⁾ ranging from Gingerbread and the British Union of Family Organisations to the Family Services Unit and Equal Opportunities Commission subsequently called for MPs to speak against Government plans and announced their intention to organise a large public campaign culminating in a mass march to the TUC conference in September.

71. The Guardian 15. 7. 76.

72. These were: BUFP; Union of Catholic Mothers; National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare; Prisoner's Wife's Service; National Federation of Women's Institutes; CPAG; Women's Liberation Campaign for Financial and Legal Independence; NCCLs Women's Rights Committee; National Council for One Parent Families; London Council for Social Service; National Board of Catholic Wives; Gingerbread; National Council of Women; National Consumer Council and the Family Service Units.

A key aim of the campaign was to....."convince trade unions that the level of family benefit must become part of the negotiations for Stage III of incomes policy". (73)

There are a number of points worth noting here. First, this new resort to the 'public campaign' suggests that CPAG had at least wakened to its failure to influence, respectively, Labour and Conservative Governments and, more recently, the trade union movement. This failure must be attributed in part to its 'cause group' status, although the tactics employed by the group have not always been the most appropriate to its circumstances. The cause group invariably lacks the socio-economic leverage of sectional groups and professional associations and its views and values may often run contrary to those who hold power in society. Ultimately, the cause group represents....."a point of view very far from being generally accepted. But even when its viewpoint is accepted the group cannot expect to be automatically consulted. It is not necessary to the conduct of affairs". (74)

The group's 'peripheral' role had been further demonstrated by the events of 1976. Just as in the late sixties the issue of family support had 'gone underground' to become a private wrangle within Cabinet and the immediate policy-community so, too, in 1976 any sustained influence upon the issue seemed to spiral out of CPAGs reach. In effect the issue passed on to a new phase or tier where CPAG lacked the leverage or the skills to compete. The group had, however, managed to effect some influence on the course of the debate through the leaking of Cabinet Minutes to the media by its Director. Yet even then, as we shall see, the group failed to significantly develop its influence beyond this and the issue went 'underground' once more, on this

73. Minutes of the Meeting held to discuss Child Benefits at CPAG 7.6.76.
 74. See Pym, B. Pressure Groups and the Permissive Society David & Charles 1974 p.14

occasion into the alimentary system of the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee. The group's remaining hope of further influence lay, then, in winning broad public support for an increase in child benefits - something which had been noticeably lacking over the years.

This curious resort to a public campaign when all else had failed meant the group was now seeking the assistance and goodwill of those whom Labour politicians and trade union leaders had described in the past as the chief obstacles to reform. Improved family benefits had been consistently held to be electorally unpopular by Labour leaders. The situation took a further curious turn with the Child Benefits Now Campaign's determination to persuade trade union leaders to incorporate family support considerations in their wage bargaining with Government. That, in itself, could have doomed the Campaign from the start.

By the time of the second meeting of the campaign at CPAG on June 14th the 'lobby' had begun to leaflet backbenchers from all parties and had secured emergency resolutions on the issue for the forthcoming Labour Party Women's Conference. The role of women trade unionists became particularly important. Trade unions such as ASTMS and CPSA, with strong Women's Sections, were noticeably active in their efforts to speed through an early introduction of the full child benefit though, significantly, they, like all other trade unions, were not constituent members of the Child Benefits Now Campaign and remained independent in their actions. (75)

This independence was perhaps best illustrated in the initiatives taken by ASTMS. In June, for example, the union's Women's National Advisory Committee had persuaded its National Executive Committee....."to raise with the Parliamentary Committee the matter of the interim child

75. Interview with Mel Read, Chairman Women's National Advisory Committee ASTMS 11.10.79.

allowance since the fact that this was not to be disregarded for supplementary benefit purposes and also to be taxed meant that there would be no benefit to people most in need". (76)

Subsequently, a deputation from the ASTMS Parliamentary Committee briefed significantly, by its own research department rather than by CPAG, and which included Stan Thorne MP, Ron Thomas MP, Jo Richardson MP and the Union's Assistant General Secretary, Muriel Turner, met David Ennals on the issue of child interim benefit.

Significantly the union had requested the meeting not simply because it had a general interest in social policy or a sympathy towards child benefit campaigners but because it....."now had a substantial number of women in membership and some of these were "single parents" who had to meet the cost of having children looked after while they were at work. After tax deduction there only remained 62½p out of the £1.50 child interim benefit". (77)

This indicated that CPAG may have at least been on the right track in their efforts to demonstrate their common interest with trade unions on some aspects of social policy. It also confirmed the change CPAG had earlier claimed to have detected in the philosophy of some trade unions - a consideration for the 'whole man' rather than 'fragmented man'. ASTMS was still, however, one of only a small handful of unions actively lobbying in support of child benefits at this time and....."in fact, had been the only union involved in initial representations to the Secretary of State on this question". (78) The overwhelming majority of trade unions remained uninterested or inactive.

In the interim, between the campaign meetings of June 14th and July 5th,

76. Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of Women's National Advisory Committee
ASTMS 26.6.76.
77. ibid
78. ibid

the parliamentary debate had reached its peak and had resulted in the setting up of the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee working party. The groups within the 'lobby' were now asked to submit evidence or views to the working party, either individually or collectively, through Teresa O'Connell at Transport House or through Peter Jacques, Secretary of the TUC Social Insurance Committee. In keeping with the theme of a public campaign it was also agreed to launch a petition with badges, stickers, leaflets and the like under the campaign logo of 'Child Benefits Now' with the intention of submitting the petition early in 1977. On the 28th July family organisations, one-parent groups, women's groups and CPAG combined to publicly launch the Child Benefits Now Campaign, the chief aim of which was....."to raise child benefits as a public issue among the community at large and to educate people about the implications of the original scheme and the Government abandonment of it". (79)

The day after Child Benefits Now was launched the TUC issued a statement on behalf of the Liaison Working Party, confirming that a revival of a modified child benefit scheme was imminent. This read.....

"The working party are agreed in principle that the objectives should be to phase in the full child benefit scheme by 1979.....by making child benefits free of tax and clawback in April 1977 and reducing child tax allowances by an equivalent amount and by withdrawing the remaining child tax allowances over the following two years and converting the net resources thus released into increases to the tax-free child benefit rate. In this way substantial progress towards eliminating child tax allowances could be achieved without any further effect on take-home pay in 1977 and child benefit itself would, as originally intended, be made tax free; and the full child benefit scheme would have been introduced by 1979". (80)

However, while the commitment to a revival of the scheme in some form or another had been secured the working party's statement left little doubt that the Government would choose the cheapest and least elaborate option

79. Child Benefits Now: A New Campaign is Launched Press Release of CBN 28.7.76.

80. Child Benefit Scheme. TUC Press Release 29.7.76.

available.....

....."The working party acknowledges that no extra resources beyond the net Exchequer cost of some £95 million already committed by the Government will be made available in 1977-78. The TUC and Labour Party representatives, however, believe that it will be necessary to allocate additional resources from the Exchequer to increase the child benefit rate in 1978 and 1979. For their part the ministerial representatives have made it clear that while no commitment can be given about the additional resources to be made available they will advise the Government that the TUC and Labour Party representatives expect the Government to accept that there is a financial commitment in the agreement reached on the phasing in of the scheme as it concerns the overall level of family support in those years". (81)

Ruth Lister, Deputy Director of CPAG and Co-ordinator of the Child Benefits Now Campaign, summed up the lobby's disappointment with this conservative compromise....."This working party came up with a compromise proposal which cost the Government no extra money, gave no extra money to families but did establish the principle of a tax-free child benefit and the phasing in of the scheme by 1980". (82) In effect, the compromise offered a weak palliative in place of what had been an important and long-awaited election pledge. The Child Benefits Now Campaign's response was to publicly reject the compromise as inadequate and continue its campaign for implementation of the original pledge.

Mobilising Mass Support

While the campaign had been able to sustain the newsworthiness of the issue in the media and at the forefront of parliamentary debate through the activity of a large number of sympathetic MPs from all parties, (83) it lacked

81. ibid

82. 'The Child Benefit Saga' Poverty No. 37 August 1977

83. The lively, and often bitter, parliamentary debate was kept alive by MPs of all parties and was fuelled by a constant stream of Parliamentary Questions, the vast majority of which emanated through CPAG. MPs who were particularly sympathetic to CPAG in this way included Joan Lestor, Ralph Howell, Peter Bottomley, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, Andrew Bennett, Lynda Chalker and Barbara Castle. See for example, Hansard (Commons) Vol 908 1. 4. 76 cols 1560-61 (Peter Bottomley); Hansard (Commons) Vol 913 11. 6. 76. col 814 (Lynda Chalker); Vol 909 12. 4. 76 col 428-49 and vol 919 9. 11. 76. col 151 (Ralph Howell) Vol 931 6. 5. 77 col. 305-06 (Lynda Chalker) and vol 932 24. 5. 77. col 397-98 (Joan Lestor)

the power or influence to carry its demand for full implementation of the scheme to cabinet. It was at this level, therefore, that the support and influence of the trade union movement was crucial. For some months, Ruth Lister, Marigold Johnson and Paul Lewis of the National Council of One-Parent Families, had been lobbying union leaders, research departments and rank and file trade unionists to channel their support behind the issue. Working in parallel, Stuart Weir and Jane Streather had also played a significant part in persuading local constituency labour parties to throw their support behind the campaign by sending resolutions to conference. (84)

By the end of July, in the wake of the New Society 'leak', a number of unions had begun to register their support for an early introduction of child benefits. Most of them were simply restating a commitment expressed two years earlier but confused by the events of 1976. The National Union of Public Employees, for example, announced that at its last meeting the Executive Council had....."decided to oppose the Government's decision to call for the original scheme to be implemented in full and to give support to the campaign initiated by the Child Poverty Action Group, for the restoration of the scheme". (85)

On the confusion surrounding the proposals and the conflicting reports of trade union ambivalence....."The Executive Council noted that the publicity surrounding the postponement of the scheme, which centred round the leaking of Cabinet Secrets in the magazine New Society, had led to considerable confusion over both the aims of the scheme and the role of the trade unions in the Government's decision. It was agreed that information should be sent to Branches to counter this publicity and to enable Branches to campaign for the implementation of the child benefit scheme". (86)

84. See Report of the 75th Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1976 pp 259-261 and 266-69
 85. GEN op cit para 1.2
 86. ibid para 1.3

Moreover, NUPE were concerned that the benefits must be introduced at a level which would make a serious attack on poverty and argued that they should be automatically index-linked to inflation. In a clear call for rank and file support on the issue the union concluded.....

....."A number of constituency labour parties have tabled motions on child benefits for the Labour Party Conference. The Labour Party National Executive Committee and a large number of MPs have expressed opposition to the postponement of the scheme. It is important that NUPE members should now take the lead in the campaign for the child benefit scheme by passing motions for constituency labour parties and trades councils and making this a further part of the general campaign against cuts in public spending". (87)

Some weeks later, after talks with Frank Field, Alan Fisher, General Secretary of NUPE, added his personal support for the new Child Benefits Now Campaign and assisted in distributing their literature among his own union's branches. (88)

The theme was taken up by Alistair Graham of the Civil and Public Servants Association at the TUC Conference. In a motion written in consultation with CPAG and the Child Benefits Now Campaign, the CPSA challenged.....

....."We need to know that the Government has not lost its radical nerve. That even in a period of the most severe stringency it has the imagination to bring about radical changes in the social structure of this country which will help to rid this country of the miserable maze of low pay, low tax thresholds and overlapping means-tested benefits. We are surely all pledged to reduce poverty. The Government, understandably obsessed with its economic problems has lost its way in achieving its social objectives. Let this congress restore it to the right path.....It has been our historical role to fight poverty. Let us take a further major step by getting the child benefit scheme fully off the ground by April 1977 or, if we are too late for that now, no later than April 1978". (89)

87. ibid para 4.2

88. In a letter to all NUPE branches, Fisher wrote....."At its meeting in July, the Executive Council decided to oppose the Government's decision to postpone indefinitely the child benefit scheme and to give support to the campaign initiated by the CPAG, for implementation of the full scheme.....we have now obtained a limited supply of the petition organised by the Child Benefits Now Campaign and I have pleasure in enclosing a copy. Completed petitions should be returned to Child Benefits Now, c/o CPAG.... ..by the end of November". 20.8.76.

89. Report of the 98th Annual TUC Conference 1976 Motion 28

It is clear that the Conservative Party were also generally supportive of the original full scheme, though Prime Minister Callaghan felt much of their willingness to debate the issue in Parliament stemmed from a desire to pillory the Labour Government rather than from a genuine commitment to family support.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Nevertheless, a number of Conservative MPs were to be found actively working on behalf of the Campaign in the lobbies. Indeed, Peter Bottomley remained one of the key figures in the Campaign throughout its course. Christopher Patten, Director of the Conservative Research Department, in a letter to Ruth Lister, even went so far as to reveal his hopes....."that it would be possible for the Conservative Party to officially support the child benefit campaign and for Party spokesmen to sign the petition".⁽⁹¹⁾

Furthermore, it is interesting to note Patten's reservations about the ability of the Labour Government to sustain its economic commitments to child benefits in the light of the cautious compromise offered by the Liaison Working Party....."My only reservation is whether the commitment as set out in the (Child Benefits Now) petition to inflation-proof child benefit could be guaranteed in present economic circumstances. No doubt any Conservative or even Labour Government would seek to do so, but the party may not wish to bind its hands in case extreme circumstances should arise which made it very difficult to fulfill this promise".⁽⁹²⁾

Support for the Campaign, both active and tacit, was also forthcoming from a broad range of non-party political organisations including the National Council of Women, who offered CPAG affiliation to it; the National Union of Townswomen Guilds whose support was more tacit than active; the Working Women's Charter Campaign, the Married Women's Association and the

90. The Guardian 25. 6. 76.

91. Christopher Patten, Director Conservative Research Dept. to Ruth Lister 7. 9. 76.

92. *ibid*

Kingston Area Women's Liberation Group. An interesting offer of active support came from the Secretary of the Social Policy Committee of the National Association of Probation Officers who sent Ruth Lister a complete list of NAPOs Branch Social Policy correspondents. "who would be in a position to instigate action". (93)

By the 23rd September it appeared that the campaigners had secured an early victory as David Ennals, Secretary of State for Social Services, announced in the Commons that the Government had decided that day to phase in the full child benefit scheme by 1979. (94) Ennals announced.

. "We have accepted the recommendation of the joint Labour Party/TUC working party that the full child benefit scheme should be phased in over the next 3 years. Introducing the scheme in stages gets over the original snag - the sudden drop in take-home pay during a period when pay restraint is linked with tax concessions. There can now be no possible room for doubt about the Government's determination to introduce the full child benefit scheme at the earliest possible moment. I know that our decision will be warmly welcomed not only by 7 million mothers but by all those who have for so long been campaigning for effective family support". (95)

Crucially, however, Ennals also confirmed that the possibility of extra resources being allocated to the scheme was, as Patten had supposed, remote. "whether it will be possible as recommended by the TUC and the Labour Party members of the Working Party to put any extra resources over and above this to raise the level of family support will have to be decided later in the light of economic and other conditions at the time". (96)

Strengthening the Compromise

For CPAG and the Child Benefits Now Campaign the compromise scheme did not go far enough and was regarded as a poor deal for the 7 million families

93. Roger Williams, Secretary Social Policy Committee NAPO to Ruth Lister (not dated)
 94. 'Government to Introduce Full Child Benefit Scheme' DHSS Press Release No. 76/233 23. 9. 76.
 95. ibid
 96. ibid

who had hoped to see a more generous scheme introduced in 1975-76. (97) Accordingly, on the 1st October, Ruth Lister wrote to both Ron Hayward, the Labour Party General Secretary and to Joyce Gould at Transport House asking them to circulate the Child Benefits Now petition among constituency Labour parties where she felt there was a "very strong feeling about the issue". (98)

Hayward had earlier written to Lister that no such venture could be undertaken until the issue had been aired at Conference. However, with the subsequent success of the Child Benefit resolution at the Party's 1976 Conference, Lister now hoped that permission would be given for an official circulation of the petition among constituency labour parties. (99) This was a rather unrealistic request, however, since Lister was effectively asking Labour Party administrators to participate in or condone what could amount to an undermining of official party and Government policy. In the event, Hayward himself questioned the use of such a tactic, pointing out that.
 "through our normal channels of communication we are able to impress upon the Government the views expressed by Conference and this direct approach is invariably the more effective. I must also add that it is our usual practice to circulate to affiliated organisations material only from other affiliated organisations". (100)

Regardless of the outcome of this request the Child Benefits Now lobby had already resolved to continue their campaign, the next stage of which was to culminate in a public meeting at the House of Commons on November

97. The Guardian 24. 9. 76.
 98. Ruth Lister to Joyce Gould 1. 10. 76.
 99. Ruth Lister to Ron Hayward, General Secretary Labour Party 1. 10. 76.
 100. R. Hayward to R. Lister 12. 10. 76.

24th. (101) NUPE had again expressed their support for continued action and Alan Fisher had, in the interim, agreed to speak at the Commons meeting and assured Ruth Lister that he would press his own executive to donate funds to the campaign. (102) Other unions such as the CPSA, ASTMS, COHSE and the GMWU had also expressed support for or interest in the campaign.

The General Secretary of one such union, the National Federation of Professional Workers, John Fryd, wrote to Lister....."disappointed though we all are at the failure to implement the scheme fully in April 1977, there is really not much prospect of getting the decision revised. We have expressed our disappointment to the Secretary of State and emphasised that whatever the economic difficulties may be there should be no further possibility of any going back on the undertaking which has now been given". (103) Like NUPE, the NFPW also stressed that its own commitment to child benefits had remained constant throughout the saga, and that it, too, had felt slighted by the Government's version of events.....

....."One thing we thought we had to emphasise was the repudiation of the implication which was made at Government level that the Government's failure to hold to its original promise was attributable to trade union pressure to maintain the children's tax allowance for the benefit of fathers instead of paying the child benefit to mothers. This idea seems to have arisen entirely in the imagination of the Treasury officials". (104)

ASTMS also were....."particularly upset at the way in which the Government has put the blame on trade unions for this decision in its public statements". (105)

101. The Campaign had taken the view that....."it was important to keep up the campaign despite the acceptance of the TUC-Labour Party compromise proposal by the Government. The compromise does not go so far enough on two counts. (1) it doesn't mean any more money for families next April and (2) there is no guarantee that we will get an adequate benefit once the scheme is phased in. The Government has refused to commit itself to putting extra cash into the scheme which could mean we end up with a benefit of only £2.70 in 1980".
Minutes of Child Benefits Now Meeting 4.10.76 at CPAG
102. Alan Fisher to R. Lister 6.10.76.
103. John Fryd, Gen. Sec. National Federation of Professional Workers to Ruth Lister 7.10.76.
104. ibid
105. Minutes NNAC (ASTMS) 26.6.76.

The fate of the petition, meanwhile, was raised again by Ruth Lister in a letter to Barbara Castle on the 19th October. Having been discouraged by Ron Hayward on two previous occasions Lister now sought the help and influence of Barbara Castle to whom the child benefit issue had remained particularly dear. Lister wrote.....

....."we realise that the party is approached by a large number of organisations asking for literature to be circulated and that it is impossible for many of these requests to be met. But in the light of the benefits issue, we wondered whether you would be willing to suggest at the NEC meeting that circulation of the petition and an explanatory leaflet would be an appropriate course of action to take on the child benefits resolution". (106)

Though Castle did agree to do so, raising the issue on November 23rd, Hayward subsequently informed Lister, for a third time, that the party would not agree to the distribution of the petition among its branches by a non-affiliated organisation". (107)

Meanwhile, CPAG had made some progress on child benefits at the Labour Party Conference, echoing the success achieved at the TUC. The Group had worked for some time to win constituency support for the issue and must take much of the credit for the successful debate on composite 35 which incorporated some 17 constituency resolutions on child benefits. (108) An interesting feature of the debate was its tactical similarity to that at the TUC where Alastair Graham, a CPAG member, had moved the child benefits resolution in his capacity as a CPSA delegate. Now, at the Party Conference, Wendy Mantle, another CPAG member, led the motion in her capacity as a constituency delegate of Saint Pancras North. As if to confirm CPAGs hand in the proceedings, Stuart Weir, the Group's former Assistant Director, seconded the motion in his role as the Hackney and Shoreditch CLP delegate.

106. R. Lister to Barbara Castle 19.10.76.

107. Hayward wrote to Lister 23rd November 1976....."At today's meeting of the NEC Mrs. Barbara Castle raised your request that copies of the CPAGs petition be circulated to our constituency parties. The matter was discussed but it was felt that, in all the circumstances, we should not on this occasion agree to your request!"

108. Report of the 75th Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1976
pp 259-61 and pp 266-69

The day after Hayward had rejected internal distribution of the petition for a third time the campaign held its first public meeting at the House of Commons with over 200 people in attendance. The meeting was addressed by MPs Jo Richardson (Labour), Kenneth Clarke (Conservative), by Alan Fisher of NUPE, Frank Field of CPAG and by Stanley Orme, Minister of Social Security who, conscious of the Government's unpopularity on the issue, had only agreed to speak provided that it was....."a constructive, forward-looking debate and not just a forum for.....critics to rake over old ground". (109)

Apart from securing the brief attention of the press the meeting achieved little in the way of creating fresh impetus for the campaign or a significant increase in petition signatures. By the second week of January 1977 the total number of signatures was still only a very low 23,000, strikingly short of the rather unrealistic target figure of one million signatures the campaign had set for itself. (110) It must be concluded that if the petition was the principal medium of communication between the campaign and the general public and if the number of signatures was an indication of public support for the campaign then the public campaign, at least, failed.

In March, a new development occurred in the child benefit issue when the arrangements for dispensing benefits to British 'nationals' with children living

109. Stanley Orme, Minister of Social Security to Ruth Lister 12.10.76.

110. Speaking later of the failure of the petition Lister commented...
 ... "A petition was launched, leaflets and badges were circulated and a public meeting was held at the House of Commons in the Autumn at which the Minister of Social Security spoke. However, the campaign suffered from the confusion created by the compromise scheme. Many people thought that we had won and that the fight was over. This led to a rather disappointing response to the petition, though the support given by some major trade unions was heartening. We collected 23,000 signatures in all and the petition was presented to Parliament by Jo Richardson and Peter Bottomley MP". 'The Child Benefit Saga' Poverty No. 37 August 1977 pp 16-17

overseas were examined. The Government's phased compromise now meant that this group of parents would no longer benefit from child tax allowances once the process of phase-out commenced in April 1978. The most significant opposition to the Government's plans came not from an interest group but from a 'Quango', the Commission for Racial Equality. On the 23rd November 1976 the Commission's Chairman, Mark Bonham-Carter, wrote to Dennis Healey, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to express his concern about the effects of the Government proposals upon the parents of children living overseas, particularly members of ethnic minority groups resident in the UK. The Chancellor's reply suggested that the Government were still insensitive to the problem.

Replying on 23rd March 1977 to explain his decision to proceed with the phase-out, Dennis Healey wrote....."This was not an easy decision and, as against the effect for those concerned, we had to take account of a number of relevant factors, including the staff savings which would be foregone if child tax allowances were retained for their group alone, the cost, the generally low level of remittances in relation to the value of the allowances and the incidence of false claims. But these considerations apart, while I do not expect you to welcome the decision, I believe one needs to consider very carefully whether continuing arrangements under which working parents in this position (including minority groups) were seen to have very different levels of take-home pay from other tax payers might not prove damaging overall to community relations". (111)

To the Commission it may have seemed that the Chancellor's reply was almost calculated to offend. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Chairman's reply was equally direct and forceful, Writing on the 30th March,

111. Dennis Healey, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Mark Bonham-Carter Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality 23. 3. 77.

Mark Bonham-Carter commented....."You are right to assume that I would not welcome this decision. In fact, I deplore it. It seems to me to be unjust and racially discriminatory. I very much hope that the reaction to it in the House of Commons will force the Government to change its mind. The arguments you put forward for the change are not convincing....."(112)

The Commission's Chairman was particularly incensed by the Chancellor's inference that to continue paying child tax allowances to parents with dependants abroad could damage community relations. The inference of some sort of backlash against continuation by other taxpayers was remarkably reminiscent of the comments and 'fears' expressed by Labour leaders about raised family allowances and the likelihood of an electoral backlash in 1970. Bonham-Carter was quick to grasp the apparent hypocrisy of the Chancellor's argument and addressed himself to the likely impact on community relations.....

....."This argument seems to me to be particularly offensive. If I follow your argument it is that community relations will be damaged if parents of overseas children continue to claim tax allowances whilst their neighbours receive the child benefit. It is surely equally damaging for parents of overseas children to be denied a grant for their children, paying as they do the same taxes as their white neighbours. Irrespective of community relations it is also unjust". (113)

Perhaps the chief significance of the Commission's intervention, was that the Government's compromise scheme was now attacked on two fronts. CPAG and the Child Benefits Now Campaign continued to lobby for an earlier and more generous scheme, while the Commission's brief political flourish gave way to a more lasting attack on the phase-out of child tax allowances by groups like the Commonwealth Taxpayers Association and the Islington Committee for Community Relations, both of which sought advice and assistance from CPAG on the issue.

112. Mark Bonham-Carter to Dennis Healey 30. 3. 77.

113. *ibid*

114. Pat Haynes, Chairman Commonwealth Tax Payers Association to Ruth Lister 26. 9. 77.

There was some irony in this joint attack. Oddly, the arguments of the protagonists appeared to be partly in contradiction. In a letter requesting support from CPAG some months later, for example, the Chairman of the Commonwealth Tax Payers Association described child benefits as allowing "an unfair and discriminatory dis-advantage to be made against those, mainly new commonwealth families, who have children living back in their country of origin, because the child tax allowances will be phased out next April and child benefit given to all except those families with children abroad".⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Despite some success in raising the anomaly in Parliament⁽¹¹⁵⁾ the Association's view that this new compromise reinforced existing bureaucratic barriers against families being kept whole failed to make any impact upon Government policy.

The Commencement of the Compromise Scheme

On the 1st April 1977 both David Ennals, Secretary of State for Social Services and Stanley Orme, Minister of Social Security, made elaborate gestures of enthusiasm towards a scheme praised for its 'universality' and 'generosity'.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ If their general praise seemed somewhat contrived, Mr. Ormes' specific comments were even more so. "this scheme is a tremendous advance over the method of family support prior to April 1977 which involved child tax allowances and family allowance. These tax allowances are worth little or nothing to those, including one-parent families, who do not make full use of their tax allowance. In the Budget last Tuesday the Chancellor raised tax thresholds. This takes some families with children out of the income tax net. These families will therefore get little or no benefit from child tax allowances but they get the full child benefit. This shows the advantage of the new structure. I believe that the development of the scheme has enormous potential and that we should look forward to a

114. Pat Haynes, Chairman Commonwealth Tax Payers Association to Ruth Lister 26. 9. 77.
 115. See Hansard (Commons) vol. 931 Cols 305-06 6. 5. 77.
 116. Mothers Get Cash for all Their Children: 7 Million First Children Benefit Next Week. DHSS Press Release No. 77/83 1. 4. 77.

time when every child will carry an endorsement which will remove the poverty experienced by many families today". (117)

As if oblivious to the Government's early volte-face, to trade union ambivalence on the issue and to the highly controversial 'leak' episode Mr. Orme still felt able to praise....."the good sense of the Government, the TUC and the Labour Party - through their joint working party - which overcame the phasing-in difficulties and made the start of this scheme this April possible". (118)

Most significant about his comments was the exclusion of any reference to the efforts of CPAG or the Child Benefits Now Campaign on the issue. In speaking of Government-Party-TUC co-operation the Minister had indicated the precise frontiers of the policy community within which the issue had been resolved. The implication was that the efforts of CPAG and the Campaign had been largely incidental or tangential to the decision reached by the 'official' policy community.

The reaction of those outside this policy community to the compromise scheme was critical. On the day it commenced CPAG showed that its universality was misleading and had failed to account of husbands drawing invalidity benefit who had transferred their tax allowances to their working wives. (119) Perhaps the most damaging challenge to the Government's optimism came from The Financial Times. (120) The scheme which Mr. Orme had so enthusiastically described as having "enormous potential" was peremptorily dismissed as....."an immense money re-circulating operation with a

117. New Child Benefit A Social Revolution - Mr. Stanley Orme DHSS Press Release No. 77/85 1. 4. 77.

118. ibid

119. Frank Field to Stanley Orme 4. 4. 77.

120. The important influence that 'serious' newspapers can have upon issues and the actors involved in them has been discussed by Robert Mackenzie in Ehrmann op cit. p. 249

pathetic result". (121) The advantages of the new scheme over child tax allowances was graphically explained by the Financial Times in an unorthodox illustration of 'liquidity'..... "Most families will be about 30p or almost the price of a decent pint of beer, better off every week. Some, at the poorest end of the scale, will be able to have nearly 3 pints; at the higher levels they will have 10p or the cost of wiping out the glass before pouring in the whisky. In the entire history of human folly there can have been few countries that have put so much effort into achieving so little". (122)

For the Financial Times, inter al, the scheme's only consolation was that the principle of transferring money from the father to the mother had been finally established. Nevertheless, this could hardly compensate for the paucity of a scheme which the newspaper attributed to the fact that.....
 ... "Child support, in cash terms, has fallen progressively lower in the order of social priorities....." (123) By 1974 Britain was already well behind her European neighbours in her provision of family support. As a percentage of average industrial earnings family support in Britain in 1974 represented 8%. In Belgium the percentage was as high as 34%, in France 30% and in Italy, the so called 'poor man of Europe' it was 15%. (124) By 1977 Britain had fallen even further behind.

Furthermore, if we examine the value of the child tax allowance and family allowance/child benefit as a percentage of the gross earnings of male manual workers in the period 1964 to 1978 we find the following:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 121. | 'A Mountain that Brought Forth a Mouse' <u>Financial Times</u> 5. 4. 77. |
| 122. | ibid |
| 123. | ibid |
| 124. | ibid |

Family Structure and Value of CTAs and Family Allowances/Child Benefits (125)

	<u>Children Under 11 Years</u>			<u>Children Between 11-16</u>		
	One Child	Two	Four	One Child	Two	Four
1964/5	4.5	9.9	19.9	5.3	11.4	19.9
1968/9	4.0	9.1	20.0	4.8	10.9	23.0
1969/70	3.7	8.5	18.6	4.5	10.1	21.8
1970/1	3.2	7.5	16.5	4.0	8.9	19.8
1971/2	3.7	8.5	18.4	4.3	9.6	20.7
1972/3	3.2	7.4	16.1	3.8	8.5	18.2
1973/4	2.8	6.3	13.7	3.3	7.3	15.7
1974/5	3.1	6.7	14.2	3.5	7.6	16.0
1975/6	2.7	6.4	13.8	3.1	7.2	15.4
1976/7	3.0	6.8	14.6	3.3	7.5	15.9
1977/8	3.0	6.4	13.3	3.3	7.0	14.5
1978/9	3.7	7.5	14.9	4.0	8.0	16.0

The introduction of the scheme in April 1977 did not signal a halt in the Child Benefits Now Campaign. Both CPAG, the Campaign itself and a number of trade unions continued to lobby for a more generous scheme. ASTMS, for example, had already expressed its concern at the low level of benefit to David Ennals in June 1976, and followed this up with a motion at the 1977 Women's TUC Conference, written jointly with COHSE and the Society of Civil and Public Servants, which condemned....."the shameful vacillation of Government on the question of the long standing and much needed policy of introducing a full and effective child benefits scheme and completely rejects the divisive attitude of playing the 'wallet' against the 'handbag'....." and went on to demand....."the immediate introduction of the full scheme as originally planned but index linked to keep pace with cost of living increases and age related....."(126)

On April 1st, Ruth Lister, acting on behalf of CPAG, wrote to Stanley Orme asking for a greater allocation of resources to family support, and a

125. Based on figures supplied in Hansard (Commons) 6.3.79
 126. WNAC (ASTMS) Minutes 30.4.77.

commitment to a system of index-linking benefits to the rate of inflation. It seemed clear, however, that with the new scheme's introduction accomplished the Government could remain more assured than ever of its immunity to change. It was the lobby's hope that the Government would agree to allocate some part of the £2¼ billion earmarked by the Chancellor for return to tax payers in November, to the child benefit scheme. However, attempts to persuade the Government to adopt this course of action and switch resources from an 'electorally profitable' tax rebate scheme to rather less popular family benefit claimants, failed, as they had in the past.

The Government's position was summed up by Stanley Orme in his reply to Lister on May 5th. He wrote.....

....."I think you are well aware of our position.....of course we want as good a rate of child benefit as we can afford. But this cannot be settled in isolation: it has to be considered in the general context of the Government's public spending plans and against other competing claims. I am afraid a November increase is quite out of the question. We have already provided £90 million for families with the introduction last month of a benefit for the first child; and poorer families with children will be benefitting from the regular upratings in Family Income Supplement and other social security benefits later this year. The rate of child benefit must go up in April 1978 because of the next phase of the transfer from child tax allowances. As a member of the Joint Labour Party/TUC and Working Party I am of course very well aware of the call of the TUC and Labour Party members for additional resources for child benefit during this phasing in period". (127)

What Orme did not, or could not, reveal was that the Government, in consultation with the Liaison Committee once more, was already examining the possibilities of further financial support for families from April 1978 over and above the level of provision already announced. On the 15th July, David Ennals announced to the House of Commons such an increase in provision of the order of £300 million which seemed, at least briefly, to pre-empt the demands of the Child Benefits Now Campaign and indicated once more the 'blind lobbying' of group's lacking advance intelligence.....

....."These increases in child benefit mean a really big boost in the cash paid to mothers to help care for their children. Seven million families with a total of fourteen million children will qualify for the new rates..... Part of the increases in child benefit will be paid for by reducing child tax allowances - this is the second stage in the switch from tax allowances to cash benefit for children. But on top of that transfer the Government is putting over £300 million extra into family support next year because we recognise that the budgets of families with children have been particularly squeezed in this difficult economic period". (128)

Furthermore, the Secretary of State now felt able to claim that.....

....."The Government has stuck to its manifesto commitment to bring in this new benefit, a major social advance. We agreed, with the Labour Party and the TUC, that it should be phased in over three years and we have put in a substantial sum of extra money for this second stage. 1979 will see the third phase, when the remaining child tax allowances for children under 11 will disappear and almost all family support will come to the mother through child benefit". (129)

The announcement of the extra support raises a number of points worthy of comment. While CPAG and the Child Benefits Now Campaign may well have created the 'climate of demand' in which payment of the extra £300 million from April 1978 became irresistible, their roles throughout remained those of 'outsider-groups' and therefore, of secondary importance. The event which gave CPAG most, albeit brief, influence during the affair was the New Society 'leak'. The leak did play a prominent part in reviving the issue by enlarging the political debate. It contributed, in particular, to a more determined effort on the part of some, though not all, trade unions to get the scheme off the ground and counter the criticisms of ambivalence that the leak inevitably sparked.

Furthermore, it was CPAG and the Child Benefits Now Campaign, together with those unions such as ASTMS and NUPE which had Parliamentary Committees, which largely galvanised backbench opinion supplied material

128. 'Child Benefit - Government Gives £300 Million Extra for Children
DHSS Press Release No. 77/215 15. 7. 77.
129. ibid

for Parliamentary Questions and debates and which generally ensured that the Government would find its parliamentary reception equally as hostile as that of the media. It was also largely CPAG which maintained a lengthy dialogue with the Treasury and the DHSS on the issue and it was from CPAG, as the most active interest group in the field, that much of the evidence and informed opinion, required by campaigners, the media and, to some extent, the Liaison Working Party itself, came.

In the final analysis, however, CPAG and its supporters were ultimately reliant upon the influence and goodwill of the trade union movement to carry the day. The public campaign as such appears to have had little influence upon the course of events. Perhaps the most realistic assessment of CPAG's influence was that it 'primed' a number of trade unions and their leaders for the later, decisive stages of the 'issue attention cycle' when the final terms of the scheme were agreed within the confines of a policy community comprising of Government, party and unions. CPAG was not and never had been a member of this 'community'. The manner in which the issue was confined to these three interests was borne out by a TUC broadsheet published shortly after the July announcement of additional resources. It noted.....

....." The detailed views of a TUC/Labour Party Liaison Committee Working Party on the phasing in of the child benefit scheme were put to Ministers prior to the Government's announcement of changes in this system of benefit They concluded that child benefits should be increased, firstly to cover reduction in child tax allowances, secondly to protect the level of benefit against inflation and thirdly to secure a real increase in the amount of benefit". (130)

Each of these measures had been strenuously lobbied for and detailed in a stream of broadsheets, articles and memoranda released by CPAG. (131)

Indeed, despite the prior raising of these issues by CPAG in both Ruth Lister's

130. 'Labour' - TUC Information Broadsheet 1. 9. 77.
 131. See Field's scheme in The Guardian 5. 7. 76.

letter to Stanley Orme on April 1st and in the group's memorandum to the Chancellor 'Suffer the Little Children' in June, the supreme irony of the child benefits episode was that much of this 'dialogue' had not been published and so, when the Government finally announced the provision of extra support in July, it could be construed that the Government had maintained its manifesto commitments in a roundabout way and had pre-empted much of the lobby's argument. Indeed, in a reply to Frank Field's June Memorandum to the Chancellor, the latter's Private Secretary was able to blithely comment that....."The Chancellor's announcement on July 15th of an increase in child benefit to come into operation in April 1978, together with recent changes incorporated in the Finance Act, 1977, have overtaken a number of the points covered in the memorandum". (132)

CPAGs 'outsider' status has thus been a serious obstacle to its influence. The group and its supporters have claimed much of the credit for both the recent increases in family allowances and the revival of the child benefit scheme. However, the fact remains that Governments, Parties and Trade Unions have consistently been able to claim that they already 'had the issue in hand' and were working towards a solution when CPAG have claimed the contrary or that only they were taking an active interest. The evidence of ambiguity, ambivalence, broken promises and U-turns suggests that CPAG have more often been right than wrong and that their influence might be more effective than it appears. Their problem remains, however, their ability to demonstrate this influence beyond reasonable doubt. Their lack of advance intelligence and their failure to achieve meaningful consultative access to policy makers gives their claims to influence an assertive, rather than substantive, quality.

132. Ian L. Smith, Private Secretary to the Chancellor to F. Field
12. 9. 77.

The Child Benefits Campaign - A Postscript

A number of important questions arise from the Child Benefits episode. Firstly, what has been the precise nature and outcome, successful or otherwise, of CPAGs relationship with the trade union movement? Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, what are the implications for the future of this type of relationship between the so-called 'fifth estate' and a small cause group should such a relationship be extensively repeated? Furthermore, given the supportive character of the relationship could the orthodox pluralist ethic of competition as the guarantor of social equilibrium require revision or reappraisal. For example, do the events of the Child Benefits Campaign and the intermittent incidents of CPAG-Union liaison which preceded them, suggest a trend towards rationalisation and 'filter' in the social welfare sphere similar to that identified in economic policymaking after 1961?

In other words are the unions destined to become 'gatekeepers' between the state and the host of relatively weak cause groups which seek to represent the impoverished, the inarticulate, the disadvantaged and the structurally underprivileged but lack the political means to do so. Are the unions and the TUC, in particular, as the representative organs of labour, becoming more 'inclusive'? Furthermore, should the unions become even more prepared to take up non-work issues such as abortion, pensions, women's rights, social justice and family welfare, as they have in recent years, are they likely to become further entrenched at the 'critical centres of power'?

Although the impact of inflation, perhaps now generally accepted as endemic to the economy, ⁽¹³³⁾ has ensured that the demand for the raising

133. See Hayward, J. E. S. and Berki, R. N. State and Society in Contemporary Western Europe Martin Robertson 1979 p. 38

of child benefits is an ongoing one the campaign, as such, has subsided in intensity since reaching its peak in 1977. So that, although action on the issue is still taking place, the observations made here are largely confined to the events discussed in Chapter 10. Perhaps what strikes the observer most about this episode is less the fact that the scheme was eventually introduced and more the manner in which its introduction came about. It is not the scheme itself which remains in the memory but, rather, the events and the 'leger de main' which surrounded it - the New Society 'leak'; the ambivalence of the trade unions; the apparent fabrication of opposition to the scheme by senior members of the Government the striking 'wage-packet' chauvinism of the affair, the unprecedented role played by the non-elected Liaison Committee in a matter of state and the extraordinary consistency of the Prime Minister in his attitude to family support.

Out of this complex and confused saga there emerge two clear conclusions. The first is that the introduction of child benefits was not likely to become and, in all probability, would never have become a major political issue without the New Society leak. The track records of successive governments since 1964 on the issue of family support have hardly been auspicious and these governments have not been readily influenced by the activities or reasoning of groups such as CPAG. While CPAG has striven since 1965 to raise levels of support and has, almost certainly, created a climate of

opinion and debate in which the issue has, on occasion, come to the fore there remains little substantive evidence of a direct causal relationship between the group's efforts and subsequent legislation. It is perhaps only in three instances, the administration of the wage-stop, the exposition of the 'poverty-trap' and during the Parliamentary and Liaison Working Party stages of the child benefits issue that adequate testimony to the influence of CPAG may be made.

Indeed, looking back, the history of family support in the sixties and seventies seems littered with broken pledges, priority 'relegations', U-turns, resignations, snubs and lack of political will. In 1974 it seemed that the Labour Party had resharpened its social conscience and the launching of the social contract gave a renewed optimism to the family lobby. However, within a year of taking office, the Labour Party was prepared once more to relegate the priority of family support and perhaps would have succeeded but for the New Society 'leak' and the timely intervention of the trade union movement.

The second conclusion to be drawn from this episode is that while the 'leak' had a crucial catalytic role to perform in exposing Cabinet machination and the manner in which the unions had been misled, ultimately it was the active response of the latter in applying their unique influence over the Labour Government that won the day. As Nicholas Bosanquet notes of CPAGs reliance on the unions....."what they have had is union support at some critical moments, as on the Child Benefits motion. On this occasion it was in the form of the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee which, when it bestirs itself, can be quite a powerful body but usually lacks direction..."⁽¹³⁴⁾ Bosanquet goes on to note from his own experiences on the Labour Party's

134. Interview with Nicholas Bosanquet 22.2.79.

Social Policy Sub-Committee that the trade union representatives.....
 "very often don't have a very strong idea of the direction in which they should
 be going and they are waiting for someone to fire them as it were".⁽¹³⁵⁾ This
 role of 'trigger' or galvanising agent is perhaps the one most appropriate
 to CPAG and is best illustrated in the New Society 'leak'.

Of greater significance is his view that the 'child benefits' campaign
 reflects more generally upon CPAGs impact on British social policy over
 the years....."where I would say perhaps that they have slightly
 failed is that it has all depended on one or two episodes. If it hadn't been
 for the 'Deep Throat' episode one would, in fact, have a rather different
 picture of the CPAG of the last eight years. One would tend to see it as an
 example of futility".⁽¹³⁶⁾

As Bosanquet goes on to note, much of CPAGs apparent 'success' can be
 reduced to its Director's personal effectiveness in exploiting issues through
 the media. Nowhere was this more in evidence than during the 'poor get
 poorer' episode and the child benefit leak. It is Bosanquet's view that Field
 has....."an instinct for the political jugular which has served him well
 on one or two occasions and if it hadn't been for that CPAG might well have
 been as ineffective as Age Concern or Shelter have been, and these pressure
 groups on the whole have been pretty ineffective".⁽¹³⁷⁾

It is an interesting paradox that CPAGs dependence on union support on a
 couple of major issues has constrained it from adopting a more critical,
 and even confrontational, tone towards a major social force which has
 otherwise preferred the role of sleeping giant. On the union role in wage

135. ibid
 136. ibid
 137. ibid

councils, in particular, reform of which the group has advocated for some years, it has had to withhold criticism because of its need for support on issues like child benefits.

It must be said of the child benefits affair that one is left with the firm impression that the TUC, in particular, saw itself as acting largely independently of the groups that made up the 'family lobby'. TUC staff were implicitly critical of what they saw as CPAG's attempts to present itself as the instigator and leader of the campaign. This, together with the reaction to the 'poverty trap' articles would suggest that CPAG is regarded from time to time as too intrusive upon union affairs to warrant anything other than hostility and suspicion. Yet the reality of the child benefits affair is that had not CPAG taken up this issue it seems unlikely that the unions would have taken the initiative. Their own record on family support, admittedly not a primary trade union concern, has been one of prevarication and ambivalence. Had not some unions been embarrassed and angered by the New Society revelations, particularly those not party to the 'caucus' meeting between NEDC representatives⁽¹³⁸⁾ and Senior Cabinet Ministers, then the 'giant' may well have slept on.

Bosanquet's view of the episode is that....."there has been a meeting between CPAG and the unions at the times, and they are rather rare times, when the unions have got very interested in the big themes, or have been pushed by circumstances to become interested in them. But there has been a lack of rapport..... on a day to day basis".⁽¹³⁹⁾

138. These were Lord Allen (USDAW), David Basnett (GMWU), Jack Jones (TGWU), Dan McGarvey (ASBSBSW) Len Murray (TUC) Hugh Scanlon (AUEW)
See CPAG/CBN Campaign: The Great Child Benefits Robbery April 1977 p. 5.
139. Interview 22.2.79.

April 4th 1977 marked the commencement of the new child benefit scheme - the compromise scheme. Under the provisions of this compromise scheme child benefits were to be phased-in over a three year period giving little more than 30p a week to most families in the first year of operation. Under the scheme two parent families received an extra £1 child benefits for their first child while one-parent families continued to receive £1.50. However, the reduction in child tax allowances meant that in real terms the extra £1 was worth only 30p to the standard tax-paying family. The payment for second and subsequent children remained at £1.50 - worth only 62½p after the loss of child tax allowances.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

Progress towards payment of the full benefit was finally made in July 1977. The liaison working party, under pressure from the Child Benefits Now Campaign, the media and from backbenchers, had emphasised the need for additional resources to be committed to the scheme during the phasing-in period. These did not come in 1977 as some interests, CPAG included, had expected. However, in July of that year, as has been noted, the Minister of Social Security announced the channelling of an additional £300 million into the scheme. The last chapter in the Labour Government's handling of the affair came with Dennis Healey's 'Family Budget' of April 1978 in which he provided for a child benefit of £3 by November to be followed by abolition of the under-11 child tax allowance and by the abolition of residual child tax allowances for over eevens in April 1979. In total, the 1978 and 1979 increases in child benefit added up to a net transfer of £830 million to family support.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

In May 1979 a Conservative Government was elected to office with Patrick Jenkin as Secretary of State for Social Services. Mr. Jenkin had

140. The Great Child Benefit Robbery p. 7 and Lister, R. 'Family Policy' in Bosanquet, N. and Townsend, P. eds Labour and Equality H. E. B. 1980 Ch. 11

141. ibid

already set out his party's commitment to the full Child Benefit Scheme in June 1977. Its attractions for the Conservative Party were multiple he said "First, because that is the way to restore the position of families. Secondly, it is the best way to ease the poverty trap. Thirdly, it is the best way to help the poorest families in work - those who earn their poverty. Fourthly, it is the best way to reduce the nonsense of people being much better off out of work. Fifthly, it is the best way of reducing the dependence of families on means-tested benefits". (142)

However, the first Budget of the new Chancellor, Sir Geoffrey Howe, brought no increase in child benefit. The reaction of both CPAG and the Child Benefits Now Campaign, supported by AUEW-TASS, CPSA, NALGO, NUPE and the Society of Civil and Public Servants was to call for an April 1980 increase which would restore the benefit 'lost' in 1979. In its post-Budget memorandum to the Chancellor the group complained that. " . . the failure to increase child benefit was the Budget's greatest sin of omission. It has meant a further decline in the living standards of families relative to the rest of the community". (143)

The group saw this failure to increase benefit as the beginning of yet another 'U-turn' in the history of family support. In his April 1980 Budget, however, the Chancellor announced a belated increase of 75p to be paid from November 1980. The family lobby have given this a mixed reception. The lobby had insisted that a minimum increase, from April 1980, of £1.20 to £5.20 was necessary to restore Child Benefits in line with inflation. Realistically, however, the 75p increase has been seen by some as a reluctant compromise against the backcloth of the Government's public expenditure strategy. Perhaps the most encouraging sign for campaigning groups like CPAG has been the growing support that has emerged over the last year for a child benefit increase, some of it coming from rather

142. Lister, R. The Great Child Benefit 'U' Turn? Poverty Pamphlet No. 45 Feb. 1980 pp 3-4

143. ibid p. 3

unexpected quarters. In January, for example, the Conservative Women's National Advisory Committee publicly urged the Chancellor to increase child benefits in his April Budget because they were....."Deeply concerned about child benefit and the heavier financial burdens which fall upon families with children in 1980"⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ This view was reaffirmed shortly after by the Tory Reform Group also and its Chairman co-authored with Ruth Lister, CPAGs new Director, a letter to all Conservative MPs putting the case for an increase. By the time of the Budget over 50 Conservative MPs had signed an Early Day Motion of Robin Squires MP which called for the Government to increase child benefit in line with inflation.

In February, the Social Responsibility Departments of all the main British Churches took the unusual and unprecedented step of voicing their concern through a joint letter to The Times in which they wrote....."We believe that adequate child benefits are crucial for all families with children but in particular for low income working families. At a time of high inflation, a failure to increase child benefit will mean that many children suffer"⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ More recently, The Daily Star also took up the case for an increase and received 3,000 letters supporting its stand. At the time of writing the Government's future policy on child benefits is unclear. The 75p awarded in the April Budget remains essentially a 'cut' in the real value of benefits, falling some 45p a week below what was required to keep child benefits in line with inflation. At the same time the cuts in public expenditure, high interest rates, more expensive credit and the shift towards indirect taxation have tended to hit those with families hardest.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

144. 'Poverty Diary' Poverty No. 45 April 1980 pp 29-30

145. ibid

146. 'Facts and Figures' Poverty No. 46 August 1980 pp 38-41

Trade Unionists and Rational Self-Interest

The child benefits episode also raises questions about the broader role of trade unions in society and the value of liaison with them for small groups such as CPAG. Although such questions have gained a greater salience with the development of the Social Contract, as Chapter Eight, showed, there are strong grounds for viewing the circumstances and rather contrived consensus politics of the Contract as atypical and largely unprecedented in peacetime - a short term expedient on the part of Government and Treasury to anchor and then reduce wage-inspired inflation.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ Otherwise, it is the tradition and viewpoint of Cousins, Dix, Lea, Donnet, Lipsey and even, of Jack Jones, prior to 1973, that stands out - a tradition that viewed the roles of unions and government as distinct and mutually non-intrusive.

Indeed, there are occasions when the hostility and self-interest of the unions has outweighed the tendency towards co-operation and liaison. It is the view of Jonathan Bradshaw, for example, that the decision of the Education Committee in North Yorkshire to abandon essential school clothing grants for primary school children in the early seventies, was largely the result of strong pressures generated by the teaching unions for the allocation of resources to other uses. After local government re-organisation, says Bradshaw, the Education Committee met with the teaching unions to discuss whether or not these essential school clothing grants should be continued but the unions argued strongly against this because they wanted the money to be spent on what they saw as a more urgent priority - new books. The Council subsequently agreed to abandon the grants and when the York branch of CPAG protested it was assured by

147. See, for example, Marsh, D. and Locksley, G. Recognising Trade Union Power: An Analysis of the Economic and Political Power of Trade Unions in Britain. A paper to the PSA Conference March 1978 Warwick and 'The Strange Death of a Social Contract' New Statesman 26. 1. 79.

the County Council that this had been done with the full consent of the unions. Similarly, Bradshaw cites the case in York itself, whereby the system of 'bussing' deprived children into school during the holidays for hot meals was abandoned. "because the NUPE dinner ladies who administered them refused to do so unless they were paid overtime". (148)

What these examples, together with that of the Electrical Workers discussed in Chapter nine, show is the pursuance by social groups of a perceived rational self-interest. It must be said that in following this path these groups - teachers, dinner ladies and electricians - were simply seeking to enhance or protect their own interests. It is also the case that the findings of this study confirm the Perlman-Richter view that while circumstances may oblige or encourage trade unions to develop a wider social and political interest, that development remains secondary and subordinate to their interest in free collective bargaining and conditions of employment.

In each of the cases cited the interest of the so called 'low income group' was called into direct question with that of the trade unionists from whom it required support. In the first case it was the professional opinion of teachers that, in the short-term at least, expenditure on educational materials was more appropriate than that on school uniforms for poor children. Naturally, the teacher is more likely to see himself as an educationist and not as a 'welfare officer'. His primary and understandable concern will be for the standard of education of his pupils and he may view expenditure on school uniforms as a threat to and detraction from that standard, regardless of the unfortunate stigma and sense of deprivation that claimants may experience as a result.

Similarly, for the NUPE 'dinner ladies' and the employees of the Electricity Boards, action to ease the difficulties experienced by low income groups may not be forthcoming without extra payment or employer 'recognition' of that effort. While trade unionists in such situations may genuinely wish to help and may well feel guilty at withholding that help, they may conclude that their rational self-interest is best served by non-action. Ultimately, in a system where the competition for scarce resources and values is fierce altruism may be at a premium.

This reasoning may, however, obscure a far more important fact about the class antagonisms that pluralism may, in the past, have been thought to reduce or reformulate. In each of the examples cited, if we are to believe the findings of recent studies of the 'working poor',⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ the trade unionists themselves could be viewed only a short distance from the brink of poverty and the situation experienced by those actually seeking their help. The recent major study of poverty conducted by Professor Peter Townsend, for example, found that 33% of the poor were actually part of the workforce and that women, in particular, were conspicuously low paid. Fundamentally, trade unionists may be unwilling to act supportively in such situations because they cannot afford to or because they do not feel they owe it to themselves or to claimants to do so. One effect of low pay, for example, may be the dampening of the individual worker's willingness to act beyond the agreed conditions of employment underpinning that pay.

Additionally, it must be noted that the responsibility to act in support of claimants, the poor and low income groups, may be seen to belong to their employer - the local authority or the state. In a market where resources and benefits remain static or contract while expectations and needs rise a trade-

149. See Field, F. The New Corporate Interest. Poverty Pamphlet No. 23 1976; Bosanquet and Townsend part III; Field, F; Meacher, M. and Pond, C. To Him who Hath Penguin 1977 and McNay, M. and Pond, C. Low Pay and Family Poverty Occasional paper No. 2 of the Study Commission on the Family 1980.

off is essential and, inevitably, those in employment, those with political leverage i. e. those with services or labour to withdraw, will come out on top.

As Miliband notes.

. "Given the weakness of the poor, and their consequent inability to impose their needs upon the political culture, Governments are under no great compulsion to pay close attention to those needs. . . . This imbalance is further increased in periods of economic difficulty and crisis (which means more or less permanently) when calls for cuts in public expenditure are loudly heard on all sides, and when such calls are powerfully reinforced by the pressure of international creditors. In such circumstances, and given these pressures, the poor stand by far the best chance of being sacrificed on the altar of the 'national interest'; whoever else may not suffer, they do". (150)

It might be argued that by allowing the free interplay of interests the state sometimes abdicates its responsibility to the disadvantaged and unorganised. This 'abdication' may be rationalised, in part, by the belief or expectation that 'altruists' or 'voluntarists' will step into the breach, offering 'improved' services for the same salaries, perhaps even working without remuneration in sectors like nursery education and rehabilitation of the mentally ill when their jobs have been 'cut' by reductions in public expenditure, and generally attempting to make good the deficiencies of state provision. In seeking to fill the vacuum created by this situation the 'voluntarist', whether he be a sympathetic trade unionist or a welfare activist, continues to ensure the fulfilment of a recognised social need; in a negative sense, however, he indirectly endorses the state's action (or lack of it) and may contribute to the strengthening of an unfortunate precedent.

In this latter sense, then, the reluctance of trade unionists, in the examples cited, to act supportively on behalf of the claimants may be seen as both rational and politic. What Bradshaw is really suggesting then, through these

examples, is that trade union initiatives in the social policy arena are largely irregular and atypical. This view is borne out by the comments, noted in Chapter Eight, of leading trade unionists in response to the Field-Piachaud analysis of the 'poverty trap'.

Jack Jones, David Lipsey and Charles Donnet each saw a positive role for trade unions to play in the alleviation of poverty, but not at the expense of trade union power and their right to free collective bargaining and certainly not in terms of their members assuming responsibilities considered to have been relinquished by the state. For Jones....."that way lies continued poverty"⁽¹⁵¹⁾ Similarly, for Donnet and Lipsey, improvements in family support would be actively pursued through the TUC....."but not at the cost of agreeing to the continuation of poverty wages or lower real wages for our members".⁽¹⁵²⁾

There exists a clear trade union view, therefore, that had supportive action taken place in the three examples cited, trade unionists would have been negating their own rational self-interest; they would have been placing their future bargaining power at risk and would have been collaborating in the 'abdication' of responsibility by the state. Ultimately, there is no guarantee that such action will be beneficial in all but the immediate short-term anyway. In the long term such action may actually do greater harm to the situation of the poor and the trade unionist. Juxtaposing the situations outlined above with that of the low paid we find one commentator offering the view that....."All experience suggests that the low-paid do not gain from the 'restraint' of other wage earners. On the contrary, their chances of improvement are closely linked with the level of militancy of

151. Jones, J. 'Wages and Social Security' New Statesman 7.1.72.
 152. How to Bargain Away Poverty Tribune 24.12.71. See also, Minsky, S. Reveille for Radicals Random House New York 1969 pp 95-99

the trade unions and upon the latter's determination to assert the claims of labour, not only in regard to wages but over the whole range of economic and social policy". (153)

The evidence of the child benefits campaign confirms that CPAGs relationship with the trade unions in general and the TUC in particular has been largely one of an irritant acting extraneously upon a latent force in order to activate it. Certainly, there is some evidence of an ongoing dialogue between the Group and the TUCs General Council and research staff but, for the most part, the TUC has chosen to go its own way on the advice of its own Social Insurance and Economic Departments. In the process, an underlying sense of 'territoriality' may be detected in the attitude of TUC Staff who may well have felt that CPAGs attempts to influence TUC thinking and cajole it for inertia were intrusive and out of order. The appointment of a Trade Union Liaison Officer by the group had little measurable effect in establishing any sort of formal or structured relationship with the TUC and the officer's success at this level was largely confined to the arrangement of a few ad hoc meetings between the group's leaders and senior staff from the TUCs Economic and Social Insurance Departments.

There is, it would seem, a danger of CPAG staff being seen on occasion by trade unionists as a group of fashionable, middle-class 'do-gooders' representing an organisation perceived at times as a 'Johnny-come-lately' advising, and sometimes instructing, a trade union movement with a long history of struggle behind it, what it should or should not be doing and urging it to adopt a role not altogether consistent with its *raison d'etre*.

Conversely, much of the irritation trade unionists feel as a result of CPAGs broadsides may derive from the uncomfortable knowledge that the group is often accurate in its criticism of trade union inertia.

CONCLUSION

Poverty and Problem Definition

The extent to which the problem of poverty, 'rediscovered' by social scientists in the late 1950s and early 1960s, could be demonstrated in a way effective and acceptable enough to bring about political action depended significantly upon the definition of the problem employed by those seeking to bring about changes. While, as chapter one showed, a popular consensus emerged within the parties, the bureaucracy and the academic world that poverty had indeed not been overcome no such consensus was achieved in defining the problem. Furthermore, the definitions of poverty employed respectively by civil servants, CPAG and academic 'policywatchers' were further confused by the favouring of alternative methods of measuring poverty and also by its causes.

In particular, serious disagreement arose over the use of 'absolute' and 'relative' definitions of the problem and this disagreement as we now reflect was at its most marked in the respective problem definitions of civil servants and the Child Poverty Action Group. It must also be stated that a significant feature of the so called 'poverty debate' of the sixties and seventies was not simply the validity of the intellectual positions adopted but also the 'acceptability' of those positions in terms of policy-making and the resulting allocation of resources.

This study has been largely concerned with the elaboration of one such position, that adopted by the Child Poverty Action Group and its academic precursors, notably Townsend, Abel-Smith, Titmuss, Lynes and Wedderburn. It is important now, therefore, that we place this approach in its proper context by examining the positions adopted by those whom the group sought to influence, Ministers and Civil Servants, and how the use of differing

positions coloured both the strategy and tactics of CPAG and the political responses these drew from policy makers. We must, therefore, consider firstly the major definitions of poverty in currency in the period under study and then move to a consideration of how poverty was actually measured. In doing so we may be able to add further to our understanding of the phenomenon of conflicting problem definition first raised in chapter two. We move on to an assessment of CPAG's relationship with the policy community it has sought to influence and, developing from this, offer some concluding observations about the efficacy and effectiveness of the group's tactics and strategy. We return, finally, in this concluding section to the 'literature' of pressure group politics and consider both how this study of CPAG may contribute to our knowledge and understanding of pressure groups and, in turn, how existing classifications of groups hold relevance for the CPAG case.

Clearly, no single definition of poverty is adequate for all policy and political analysis. The sheer plurality of definitions indicates both the widespread academic disagreement on the subject and suggests that to adopt a single definition is to adopt a 'particular' view and perhaps a particular political posture which itself will be fraught with value judgements, themselves a combination of social, religious and political beliefs. Some writers have attempted to transcend these disagreements by suggesting that apparently conflicting definitions of poverty may well be reconciled in certain circumstances. Marshall Clinard, for example, advises us that"poverty is both an absolute and relative term. In an absolute sense, it means a lack of resources for specific needs; in a relative sense it refers to the extent of those resources in comparison to what other individuals in the society have.... In other words poverty must be defined in terms of the aspirations and expectations of a culture and its capacity to produce these goods".⁽¹⁾

1. Coates, K. and Silburn, R. Poverty: The Forgotten Englishman
Pelican 1975, p.39

However, it is the disagreement rather than the consensus, over approaches to poverty that most strikes the student of British social policy in the sixties and seventies and we therefore devote most of this section to those approaches.

Relative Poverty

It was noted in the early chapters of this study that the primary task and subsequent achievement of academic policy-watchers in the sixties was their overturning of established images of society, in particular the view that poverty had been largely eradicated and that it continued only in a residual form or 'pockets' which could be 'mopped up' by the existing machinery of welfare. The task of CPAG's founders, to some degree prepared for in advance of the formal constitution of the group, centred upon the need to force a"reinterpretation of the optimistic mood of 1950-51"⁽²⁾ by advancing an alternative to the prevailing subsistence definition of the problem and the need to force the issue of poverty onto the political agenda at a time when both the major parties were unclear and ambivalent as to the nature and extent of poverty.

As was noted in chapter two...."nowhere was this more important than in the publication of The Poor and the Poorest by Abel-Smith and Townsend in 1965. The work of such academics in raising the issue of poverty within the Labour Party and in providing information about the problem helped initiate an intra party debate that persuaded Labour to incorporate 'an attack on poverty' to its own political agenda".⁽³⁾

2. Birch, R. The Shaping of the Welfare State Longman 1974
3. See p.46

The evidence presented by Abel-Smith and Townsend and later developed and utilised by CPAG, must be seen as having a threefold significance. Primarily, it refuted the popular view that poverty had been eradicated. Furthermore, given that the authors had utilised the Government's own Family Expenditure Surveys as the basis of their research it is clear also that their findings were an implicit criticism of the National Assistance Board's use of a subsistence (absolute) definition of poverty. The corollary of this was that their use of a relative definition of poverty was somehow more appropriate and more effective in calculating numbers of poor.

The term 'relative poverty' may be broadly described as an attempt to measure poverty by comparing a minority with the position of the majority or the average. It is a definition which has enjoyed considerable currency since the early sixties especially among leftwing academics and reformist politicians who have seen in it a close reference to inequality. The Social Science Research Council has defined relative poverty as"the continually moving average standards of that community that are the starting points for an assessment of its poverty, and the poor are those who fall sufficiently far below these average standards".⁽⁴⁾

Holman sees in this definition four key elements"It involves comparisons with other persons; it is connected with standards within a contemporary social environment; it talks of the gap or distance or, to use another word, the inequality between different sections of society; and it depends upon value judgements as to what is right or wrong."⁽⁵⁾ Adoption of the relative definition is clearly fraught with political problems, not the least of which are those which arise when reformers press for a redistribution of income

4. Holman, R. Poverty: Explanations of Social Deprivation
Martin Robertson 1978 p.13
5. Ibid p.14

or wealth and this may well explain the cautiousness with which politicians and civil servants have greeted this view. Official acceptability of the definition is further compounded as we suggested in chapter two by a popular view that once such a definition is accepted poverty can never be eradicated. This may appear to present a curious paradox since it would seem to necessitate a permanence of activity that the founders of CPAG never really anticipated when they first promoted the view. Clearly, however, CPAG have adopted a view similar to that expressed by Kincaid "A relative notion of poverty implies that the extent of poverty in a society can only be estimated in terms of the degree of general social equality that exists. The more inequality there is between standards of living, of privilege at the top and bottom of society, the larger is the number of people which it is reasonable to define as poor."⁽⁶⁾ Socially, then, relative poverty is an inability to achieve a standard of living allowing for self respect, the respect of others and for full participation in society. Ultimately, and here we may come to understand the serious misgivings held by policy-makers about this definition, relative poverty raised fundamental and highly value-laden questions about the social and economic structures of society which, as we noted earlier, Goldthorpe has claimed are highly resistant to change.⁽⁷⁾ The implication of an official adoption of relative poverty is then, that "It means that a general improvement in the standards of living of a society does not necessarily entail a reduction in poverty if all sections benefit to the same extent. Such an improvement will not reduce the gap, the inequality, between them. Further, policies aimed at reducing poverty will involve reducing inequality and will therefore affect the position of the non-poor."⁽⁸⁾

6. Kincaid pp.160-61
7. Goldthorpe, J. Political Consensus, Social Inequality and Pay Policy New Society 10. 1.74
8. Holman op cit p.17

Perhaps the most important observation to be made of the work of CPAG and its academic supporters is that they overturned the view that poverty was simply a limited, residual and historically determined anomaly of a society which was in all other respects fair. Their findings showed that poverty was extensive and entrenched and it was here that their definition of and approach to the problem ran against the grain of British social policy and the assumptions which underpinned it - notably, that 'limited' poverty could be dealt with by marginal social reforms. The attraction of the absolute or subsistence definition for the policy maker was that it largely contained the problem within proportions that could be met by marginal reforms. While 'relativists' such as CPAG may have charged that this was an example of inaccurate problem definition, supporters of the subsistence tradition could point to their 'management' of the problem as creating a firmer possibility of political and administrative success. For ministers and officials the idea of poverty as a relative phenomenon carried the fear that"if the volume of poverty is very considerable, then it cannot be abolished without a radical restructuring of society. In the latter case the elimination of poverty is inseparable from a comprehensive attack on the broader pattern of social inequality".⁽⁹⁾

The irony of the 'rediscovery of poverty' and the use of the relative definition was that it made the use of the absolute definition, the subsistence approach embedded in the tradition of Booth, Rowntree and Beveridge, all the more attractive to policymakers embattled by the claims of multifarious interests for limited resources. The absolute definition did not simply offer a way of rationalising a social problem it also constituted a method for 'satisficing' needs and rationing resources. It is to this approach to the problem of poverty that we now turn.

Absolute Poverty

The absolute or subsistence definition of poverty has, as we have stated, gained wide acceptance both with policymakers and the public at large. It is for the most part, a straightforward and uncomplicated approach to poverty"it seems to accord with common sense and appears to be divorced from personal values of either harshness or compassion. It seems to describe poverty objectively as lack of the income needed to acquire the minimum necessities of life. Those who lack the necessities to sustain life are by definition poor". (10)

Essentially, then, this definition identified as poor those who do not have sufficient resources to achieve some fixed standard of living.

It was on the criteria for establishing such a standard and its resulting application that CPAG, as we shall shortly see, diverged from successive governments and their advisers. It is a definition or approach to poverty that has attracted much criticism. For writers like Kincaid, Miliband, Jordan, Townsend and Rose the 'meaningless' of the absolute definition lies in the fact that a social group whose command of goods and services remains fixed over time in a society in which living standards generally are rising, will suffer a relative decrease in social power.

The National Institute of Social and Economic Research has taken the view that"Absolute poverty is often distinguished from relative poverty as emphasising economic insufficiency (rather than) economic inequality as the primary indicator of poverty; or as the poverty of insufficiency rather thanthe poverty of inequality. Even if this is an oversimplification it reflects the objective in measuring poverty by absolute standards: the

prescription of a minimum standard to be compared with household incomes so as to identify those below the standard".⁽¹¹⁾

A number of difficulties and weaknesses follow from such a definition. Firstly, there is a lack of agreement as to the validity of family income as a satisfactory indicator of living standards. Secondly, the subsistence standard does not properly account for variations in household expenditure patterns. A further criticism of the absolute standard was that presented, paradoxically, by the 'rediscovery of poverty' in the affluent fifties, i.e. the absolute concept carries with it the inevitable elimination of poverty through economic growth. Yet the findings of Abel-Smith and Townsend, inter alia, during this period of apparent prosperity were quite the opposite.

Holman comments that"The subsistence concept is presented as taking into account the needs of individuals. In fact, its methods of construction involve a degree of inflexibility which does just the opposite.... It ignores the possibility that the financial needs of some families are so great as to be above the average".⁽¹²⁾

Furthermore, such a concept also tends to overlook regional peculiarities and disparities by virtue of its assumed universality.

The principal criticisms then, have been of a definition flawed by its stringency, universality and inflexibility. Holman argues that not least the definition"ignored the social, psychological and actual needs of persons. This criticism is the most fundamental of all. The subsistence concept rested on the assumption that poverty means simply a lack

11. NIESR Occasional Paper Poverty and Progress in Britain 1953/73
(ed. Fiegehen, G.C., Lansley, P.C. and Smith, A.D.)
12. Holman p.13

of money to meet physical needs. It crumbles under the discovery that humans are as strongly motivated to meet other needs of a more social nature".⁽¹³⁾

Other definitions of and approaches to the study of poverty abound and may serve variously to obscure further or to illuminate the problem. Chief among these are the behaviouristic method supported by Townsend, discussed in the NIESR study of poverty 1953-73, which claims" to emphasise the relative aspect of poverty and extend beyond a preoccupation with income to embrace other indicators of deprivation."⁽¹⁴⁾ Poverty may also be seen as powerlessness, a view advanced as we saw in earlier chapters, by Miliband and Rose and much favoured by the Claimants Unions...!"In the last analysis to be poor is not just to be located at the tail end of some distribution of income, but to be placed in a particular relationship of inferiority to the wider society. Poverty involves a particular sort of powerlessness, an inability to control the circumstances of one's life in the face of more powerful groups in society."⁽¹⁵⁾ For other writers such as Haggstrom, poverty must be understood in terms of power generated by money and the powerlessness which derives from a lack of it.⁽¹⁶⁾ Our concern here,

13. Ibid

14. NIESR p.17 - Townsend notes"poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of deprivation...." and adds that individuals suffer poverty "when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diets, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary in the societies to which they belong".

Townsend, P. Poverty as Relative Deprivation: Resources and Style of Living in Wedderburn, D. ed. Poverty: Inequality and Class Structure Cambridge University Press 1974.

15. Kincaid p.159

16. Haggstrom states"Money is the generalised source of power over people through a right to control goods and services. As such money is one of the many kinds of power. Poverty, therefore, is one of the many kinds of powerlessness, of being subject to one's social situation instead of being able to affect it through action". Haggstrom, W.C. 'The Power of the Poor' in Riessman, F. et al. The Mental Health of the Poor Free Press New York 1964, p.217

is with the two principal definitions outlined above since it is they that represent the social policy tradition rooted in Beveridge and the qualified challenge to it made by CPAG and its academic supporters. We shall return to the subject of problem definition shortly. We turn next, however, to the measurement of poverty and how this too has influenced the respective views of CPAG and officials of the nature and seriousness of the problem.

The Measurement of Poverty

Invariably bound up with the task of defining poverty is the establishment of criteria for measuring it. It is interesting to reflect that the tools of measurement have been commonly borrowed by CPAG, civil servants and academics alike and have included the Family Expenditure Surveys, the General Household Survey, Census Figures, Social Trends, Reports of the DHSS and SBC and independent academic research. Other favoured methods of measurement have included an index of average male industrial earnings, the welfare ratio model and the prosperity numbers scheme adopted by Wynn.⁽¹⁷⁾ However, because actors have chosen to compare figures over different periods of time, have adopted highly selective samples of household expenditure patterns or have chosen to monitor the position of the 'nuclear' family rather than the 'total' family in a given household the results of their research have shown marked dissimilarities. Clearly, of course, this stems once more from the lack of consistency in the original definitions employed. In other words, as this study has shown, officials and pressure group activists have a vested interest in presenting and analysing a problem in different ways. By applying a particular definition each adopts a particular set of values and anticipates a particular result. The

17. Wynn, M. Family Policy Pelican 1972 Ch.7

partiality that dominates official and pressure group approaches to poverty has been demonstrated by the independent National Institute of Economic and Social Research.

For example, using a range of measures such as the Family Expenditure Surveys drawn on by the NAB and Abel-Smith and Townsend, the supplementary benefit level as an absolute standard and comparisons of the incomes of the poorer groups with those of the median household the NIESR study concluded
...."our principal finding on the extent of poverty is that, on the basis of a constant 1971 absolute living standard, numbers in poverty declined from about a fifth of the population in 1953/54 to about a fortieth in 1973. A fall by a factor of eight in only 20 years is a notable improvement." (18)

Turning to measurement of poverty by relative means alone, however, ..."we found little change: the net income of the poorest fifth percentile was about the same proportion of the median income in both years, so that the decline in the numbers in poverty so measured reflected essentially the growth of the economy rather than a redistribution of income". (19)

Other difficulties and anomalies arise, as NIESR noted, in the samples and scale adopted...."In applying the SB scales to the income distribution in 1971, we examined the effect of using different definitions. We found that the most important element in the definition was the choice of the 'population unit'. Measuring poverty on the basis of the 'nuclear' family rather than the total household has the effect of raising the estimated numbers in poverty by more than three quarters to about $4\frac{3}{4}$ million. It has, of course, long been understood that the smaller the unit adopted the higher the proportion of units and individuals that fall into the category

18. NIESR p.111
19. Ibid

of the poor because of a reduction in the implicit allowance for income sharing."⁽²⁰⁾

The NIESR study demonstrates clearly the difficulties that arise when those involved in the monitoring of poverty adopt a selective analysis of the problem. It points, in particular, to the need to adopt a more consistent and historical approach to the subject "a measure of changes in poverty is of fundamental interest, since fears have sometimes been expressed that poverty in this country is now greater than in the immediate post-war period. A typical expression of such apprehension was that voiced by the CPAG; focusing attention on numbers of people with incomes up to 110% of the Supplementary Benefit Level, the group concluded that poverty had almost doubled between 1960 and 1972. Over a somewhat longer period 1953/4 to 1973, the present study suggests that such poverty has fallen".⁽²¹⁾

Indeed the NIESR clearly saw weaknesses in using the Supplementary Benefit Standard to measure other than contemporary poverty. Rather, over the length of period used by the group (12 years) and that by the Institute itself (20 years) it was more appropriate to identify changes in the income differentiation between poor and non-poor. The NIESR study would therefore seem to confirm our earlier conclusions that for much of the time CPAG, the self-styled 'pressure group for the poor' and policymakers in government have been talking a different language.

This study has presented much evidence to support this view. We noted in chapter five, for example, the serious disagreement between Labour Ministers such as David Ennals and Stanley Orme and Frank Field, Peter Townsend and Professor A.B. Atkinson regarding Labour's record on poverty 1964-70.

20. p.112
21. Ibid

Much of this disagreement it may be recalled arose from different conceptions of the problem and because official figures of real expenditure had not accounted for unemployment, demographic changes and the use of clawback which had involved a switch from child tax allowances and to family allowances and therefore only part of the increases in family allowances could be regarded as net benefit. The Government's claims that expenditure on social security had risen from £1,960 million in 1964 to £3,600 million in 1969 were accordingly hotly disputed by Atkinson and CPAG. They in turn estimated that the actual increase had been less than half the amount claimed.

More recently a 1978 study by the group,⁽²²⁾ of Labour's record 1974-78, has reopened the gulf between their own and official estimates of the problem. Basing its findings on the Central Statistical Offices' analysis of net disposable income the group compared the relative living standards of pensioners, single people and childless married couples with those with children. It also used the annexes attached to the DHSS submission to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth material supplied in Hansard from parliamentary questions⁽²³⁾ to support its conclusion that the value of child support in 1978 was lower than in 1970-71, 1971-72 and 1972-73. Indeed, the group also drew on the Ennal's memorandum to the Cabinet in April 1976, disclosed in the 'Child Benefit Leak' which had warned the Government that the value of family allowances in 1976 had fallen below that provided by Labour in the late sixties.⁽²⁴⁾

However, this often abrasive tactic of 'trapping' people by what they have said and constantly challenging the official view of or remedy for the problem has frequently drawn the view among senior politicians and civil

22. Field, F. Children Worse off Under Labour? Poverty Pamphlet No.32 February 1978.

23. Hansard (Commons) 18.11.77, Vol.939, Cols 415-416

24. Children Worse off Under Labour? pp.9-12

servants alike that CPAG is all too often what Dearlove has termed an "unhelpful group".⁽²⁵⁾ Even ministers broadly sympathetic to the group have been ultimately niggled by what they may have seen as its unwillingness to occupy the middle ground or to understand the procedural norms and values of the bargaining process. We noted in an earlier chapter, for example, Richard Crossman's genuine belief that concessions made to low income groups in Roy Jenkins' 1970 budget...."should have spiked the guns of CPAG and of Peter Townsend and his friends".⁽²⁶⁾ Yet despite such concessions the group still saw fit to launch its 'poor get poorer under Labour' election campaign. Similarly, we find Dennis Healey in September 1975 outraged by the group's repeated claims that the gap between rich and poor was widening under Labour"It is atrocious to keep repeating statements that are wrong."⁽²⁷⁾ In October of the same year we find Barbara Castle complaining of a CPAG inspired Tribunate attack on the TUC and Labour Government for allegedly allowing the poor to get poorer, a repetition, protested Castle, of"straight Child Poverty Action Group propaganda of the kind Dennis has repudiated."⁽²⁸⁾ We have also noted Crossman's view that Harold Wilson was "seriously alarmed" by the Group's

25. Though confined to a study of local councillor perceptions of pressure groups, Dearlove's study of the politics of policy in local government has wider implications. He describes as 'unhelpful' those groups which are seen by local members as tending to press for innovations or a reversal of existing policy commitments and which therefore cut against the grain. This has also been the case with CPAG which, as we have noted, has consistently been a critic of government policy. Dearlove notes (p.157) that councillors thought about groups in terms of three distinct categories (1) The source of the demand i.e. the group itself, what it stands for. (2) The policy content of the group demand and the implications for council activity and resource commitment i.e. the demand itself and (3) The method of articulation adopted i.e. how does the group present its demand, how does it communicate.
Dearlove, J. The Politics of Policy in Local Government Cambridge University Press 1973
26. Howard, A. ed. The Crossman Diaries Magnum (Methuen) 1979, p.706
27. Castle, B. The Castle Diaries 1974-76 Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1980, p.496
28. Ibid p.511

claims; the anger shown by David Ennals and Stanley Orme towards the 'poor get poorer' campaign and the view of Bob Brown, former Minister of Social Security, that the Group's access to the media had given it a position of spokesman-type authority which it frequently uses irresponsibly as if it were the only pressure group making claims upon the government. This type of reaction invariably raises questions about the strategy and tactics adopted by the Group and returns us to the subject of problem definition.

Problem Definition and the Choice of Strategy

While relative poverty may have proved an academically popular and highly media-orientated way of examining the problem and 'packaging' the issue it seems, on reflection, to have carried little conviction for Departmental policy-makers for the reasons outlined above. While CPAG's early campaigns may well have overturned entrenched party political perceptions about poverty no such impact was achieved upon the prevailing civil service view of the problem. It is possible that had the group chosen to confine its campaign to the 'selling' of the rediscovery of poverty alone rather than to attempt to develop this further through its efforts to promote official acceptance of the notion of relative poverty also, its influence upon poverty policy may have been both more effective and sustained.

Keith Banting has claimed in his own study of CPAG that the group has broadly compromised its support for the idea of relative poverty in its acceptance of what he terms the prevailing 'Liberal' definition of the problem which recognises that poverty is a residual phenomenon in an otherwise prosperous society and which assumes that poverty and inequality are separate issues.⁽²⁹⁾ Yet the evidence presented in this study shows that the group has never fully committed itself to this view.

Banting may well be right when he says that the group gave some support to this 'liberal' or subsistence approach in its day to day tactics, however, it is the qualified nature of that support that is most significant. It is true that the group accepted the broad ground rules that shaped the poverty issue yet it is equally true that it has continually sought to bend them in its favour much to the irritation of policy makers.

For example, the group did accept supplementary benefit as an economic 'plimsoll line' and it is worth reflecting that having accepted this it could then have embarked upon a campaign for improved benefits alone. Instead, however, CPAG has repeatedly drawn upon its belief in the relative nature of the problem in its insistence that any official poverty line must take account of the frequent discretionary payments paid to claimants and should therefore equate with about 140% of the basic supplementary benefit rate. Of course, in insisting on a widening of the subsistence analysis the group has inevitably drawn significantly greater numbers of people into the apparent pale of poverty and has drawn an often hostile response from policymakers. This was perhaps best demonstrated during the FIS episode when Government Ministers declared that the new ruling would assist over one half of the households below Supplementary Benefit level. This amounted to some one hundred and ninety thousand households comprising half a million children. It was CPAG's view, however, that civil servants had underestimated the number of families in poverty and that some 300,000 households comprising of 1.3 million people should have qualified for aid of this sort.

We noted earlier that many of the key figures associated with CPAG since its inception have seen the problem of poverty in terms of fundamental inequality and it is interesting to reflect that rhetorical flourishes against such inequality and resort to more strident forms of action and propaganda, notably the 1970 'Poor get Poorer' Campaign and Field's own ill-judged

diatribe against the Conservatives, Has Heath Ratted on the Poor?, have taken place at those times when initiative and action on poverty in general, and family allowances in particular, seemed exhausted. The evidence presented in this study points to a group only superficially and expediently resigned to the procedural norms and values of poverty policy, at the core of which lay a firm official determination to maintain the well-trying, well-understood and readily-manageable subsistence definition of the problem.

Furthermore, such views, frequently presented in abrasive and strident terms⁽³⁰⁾ have undermined the more reasoned and thoughtful efforts of the group which have, on occasion, drawn notable successes such as the temporary use of clawback, abolition of the wage stop and official investigations into Social Security maladministration. Such demands have ignored the fundamentals of the bargaining process which takes as imperative the need to recognise the scarcity of resources, the multiplicity of claims exerted, the need to see the other side's viewpoint and the necessity to establish priorities.⁽³¹⁾ Not to do so may damage what Wildavsky has termed the 'reputation' system that characterises the Whitehall policymaking process.⁽³²⁾

A group's propensity for success, for securing its preferences, may substantially depend upon the 'reputation' it has created for itself - its legitimacy, its expertise, its style and the way in which it presents its claims for resources. To undermine this 'reputation' by exaggerated or too emphatically sectional demands (i.e. without due regard to the notion of a 'national interest') may jeopardise not only the realisation of the demands themselves but the place of the claimant in the bargaining process.

30. Dearlove describes this as "aggressive demand presentation" and concludes that it will, more often than not, be a counterproductive element in group behaviour. p.169

31. See PEP Reshaping Britain: A Programme of Economic and Social Reform Vol. XL, Broadsheet No. 548, December 1974 pp.79-98

32. Wildavsky, A. p.20

As Jordan and Richardson point out"Given that the Department ultimately has the power to recognise 'legitimate' interests, groups cannot with impunity indulge in behaviour which would undermine reputation. The bureaucratisation of problems means that bargains can be struck between professionals who respect the limitation on resources". (33)

The evidence presented in this study has indicated a reluctance on the part of CPAG to break from a continuous and ever more vigorous demand for more resources for the poor. It would be imprudent to dismiss this approach out of hand since the misery of poverty clearly arouses strong political passions that cannot always be subdued by the policymaking process, particularly if one set of actors have never fully accepted the assumptions and values that underlie that process. We may conclude, however, that while the fundamental impasse over problem definition remains unsolved or at best only partially resolved, CPAG will never fully win the confidence of policymakers.

We may recall David Ennals reaction to 'poor get poorer' as an illustration both of conflicting problem definition and of a growing belief within the Labour Government that CPAG's conclusions could only be reached "by the most selective and misleading use of statistics and what seems to be an almost total failure to appreciate the impact of many recent achievements by the Government in the field of Social Security". (34) It is a view, moreover, which, significantly, drew the support of many CPAG 'supporters' within government, notably Abel-Smith, Piachaud and Titmuss all of whom rejected both the analysis of the statistics and the manner in which they had been presented.

33. Jordan, G. and Richardson, J.J. The British Policy Style or the Logic of Negotiation forthcoming in Richardson, J.J. ed. Policy Styles in Western Europe Allen & Unwin 1981
34. Tribune 13.2.70

It is clear, as we showed in chapter five, that conflicting problem definition has created much confusion about the nature and extent of poverty. It is worth recalling that officials rejected CPAG's use of the 140% of the supplementary benefit level as the real poverty line and firmly believed that CPAG had overstated its case. In the Ministry's own major survey of family poverty in the sixties, The Circumstances of Families only the basic level was employed. Moreover as has been pointed out elsewhere, ⁽³⁵⁾ officials never formally acknowledged the idea of relative poverty in government publications. The rediscovery of poverty was largely officially accepted but the extent of poverty, alternative criteria for measuring it and alternative policies for dealing with it were not. The official view that poverty was a residual phenomenon was upheld and brought reforms consistent with the apparent marginality of the problem, notably the introduction of earnings-related schemes and unemployment benefits, a revamped NAB, the later introduction of the SBC and creation of the DHSS, and the temporary use of clawback. In 1971 the Conservatives took this approach to its logical conclusion with their introduction of FIS - a marginal social reform designed to meet a marginal (residual) problem. We must conclude, therefore, that CPAG's strategy has drawn its shape from a view of the problem that, despite some minor procedural concessions, has largely gone against the grain of official policy. ⁽³⁶⁾

In adopting the supplementary benefit level as an economic plimsoll line the group really made only a cursory concession to the subsistence tradition, since this adoption was accompanied by a vigorous insistence on the inclusion

35. Banting, p.76 and Ministry of Social Security Circumstances of Families HMSO 1967 p.3

36. This has certainly not enhanced its chances of sustained access to policymakers or its opportunities to influence policy outcomes. As Moodie and Studdert-Kennedy have noted"a group will be stronger or weaker depending on whether it is swimming with or against the tide of socially accepted standards and beliefs" pp.67-68

of discretionary payments as the norm - a demand unacceptable to government. In effecting what they saw as a compromise with government CPAG's leaders placed tactical advantage above more generalised principles. It was felt that while inequality figured prominently in individual analyses of the problem such analyses could be modified in a group approach which took family poverty and the improvement of family allowances as its target. Yet the evidence shows that as action on poverty has slowed or resources have been channelled to meet other claims upon government the underlying tensions within the group have surfaced and consistency in both policy and tactical terms has been undermined.

In this sense the group stands in marked contrast to a more 'successful' group like the Howard League for Penal Reform which has secured a semi-permanent insider status for itself. The reasons for this, as Ryan points out, are because"it does not challenge the legitimacy of the criminal law which it somehow views as the expression of the broadly based consensus. Its emphasis, therefore, has traditionally been to uphold the law.This puts the Howard League on the inside track, making ita force for the defence of the powerful".⁽³⁷⁾ The group's lack of consistency and its tendency to move from the tactics of reasoned persuasion to carping criticism and the haranguing of individual ministers when its demands are not met has resulted in a curious and unstable relationship with the policy community in its field and it is to this that we now turn.

37. Ryan, M. The Acceptable Pressure Group Saxon House 1977 pp.4-5

CPAG and the Policy Community

The type of demands made by CPAG, often involving radical fiscal reform, sweeping changes in the wage bargaining process or restructuring of government departments and portfolios (often impervious to the complexities of departmentalism) have not always been consistent with the type of demands and issues processed by a policy community. Moodie and Studdert-Kennedy note, for example, that"the objectives of a promotional group typically will challenge a policy premise which can be changed only at a higher or more public level than the kind of issue which constitutes the bulk of government/role group discussion".⁽³⁸⁾ Gustaffson and Richardson, state that such communities are comprised of two sets of actors - civil servants and 'clients' or interest groups - and both have a close interest in agenda management. Moreover, as they note,"it is quite possible that the most effective means of agenda management might be seeking consensus amongst the competing groups."⁽³⁹⁾ However, it has been the self-assigned task of CPAG to draw attention to and emphasise the cleavage which exists between its own and the prevailing community view of poverty. In a sense the group has therefore not equipped itself either attitudinally or politically to meet the demands of a community that stresses bargaining, trade-off and consensus in the formation of policy. The outcome has been a curious one for the group. It has never been formally defined out of the community but has not, on the other hand, achieved a safe 'insider' status. The ambiguity of the situation may be seen in the fact that even at their most strident the group's views are taken account of yet it has rarely achieved a detailed and sustained influence over policy. Inevitably this has been the outcome of both the content of the demands expressed and the immediacy with which the group has sought their realisation. Again we may compare the experience of the Howard League which as Ryan points out, may owe its

38. Moodie and Studdert-Kennedy p.75

39. Gustaffson and Richardson op cit p.426

influence to its recognition that"major changes in public policy are likely to be introduced in a gradual way. Resources have to be allocated and the various publics persuaded that the changes involved are both necessary and possible". (40)

Indeed, this was precisely the point that Harold Wilson sought to make in his speech at the Labour Party Conference in 1972 when he commented that"Shelter may be right to demand top priority for housing; the Child Poverty Action Group may be justified in calling for a first call on resources for the large family: the Pensioners Associations and MIND have their own views of top priorities, as do other groups.... every one of those organisations can count on support from the Labour Party, and it may be that they are right in calling for high priority in their chosen fields but they cannot all be first. The problem of deciding priorities, often a painful process of deciding the allocation of resources between almost equally excellent causes, is what politics is about". (41)

The scheduling of priorities by both parties has certainly proved a frustrating political reality for CPAG to come to terms with. In the Labour Party, at least, the commitment to end poverty has been more emotional than rational, more a symptom of party myth than a political response to fundamental inequality. Yet Wilson's comments above point to a view wisened by six years of embattled government and demonstrate the credibility gap between politics in opposition and the real politics of office. Furthermore, it is clear that in the sixties the Labour Government was confronted by major economic and political realities that made any determined effort to tackle the roots of poverty both costly and ill-advised. While the strength of Labour's political will in this period may remain a subject for future debate it is necessary to remind ourselves that the party

40.

Ryan p.85

41.

Labours Programme for Britain 1972 p.6

was the focus of expectations and claims greatly multiplied by its long years of opposition and it is equally true that the leadership was faced with the difficult and thankless task of establishing priorities as a means of settling between the competing claims upon it. Indeed it might be concluded that the agenda onto which poverty itself was thrust in 1964 was already considerably overloaded by 1963. The inheritance of what was seen in 1964 as a difficult economic situation and the subsequent failure of the national plan served only to sharpen the difficulties of overload and immobilism and hasten the need for agenda management. Such management required that members of the policy communities be flexible and pragmatic in their approach to the problem of limited resources and to the need to establish priorities and it was here, perhaps, that CPAG's political judgement was at its most faulty and, on occasion, uncompromising.

While it is clear, as chapter two shows, that the leaders and founders of CPAG enjoyed considerable prestige and influence within the Labour Party in opposition it is equally clear that many of them failed to come to terms with the changes in their relationship with and their influence upon the party when it achieved office. The credibility gap that exists between the politics of opposition and those of office is an important one for groups to understand if they wish to extend their influence. Finer notes "policies are usually framed in opposition, not when a party is in power; and in opposition, parties have no civil servants to advise them. Therefore they have to rely on working parties of their supporters and on their research organisations; but these, in turn, tend to seek advice from those who are competent to give it; i.e. the various lobbies. For their part, these lobbies are only too glad to have a party espouse their particular causes. Of course, a party will reject many such supplications; it will alter others to make them harmonize with the claims of other groups sponsored in its programme; it will moderate all such special pleas

to fit the contours of the party's temper, principles and philosophy; and above all it will remember that the party exists to win elections."⁽⁴²⁾

At its most strident CPAG has found itself effectively outside the policy community responsible for poverty policy. It was argued in chapter nine that its lack of success in gaining regular consultations with civil servants on poverty (family) policy derived from a combination of three other factors also. CPAG has never been a representative group of the poor in the direct membership sense and this may well have undermined its legitimacy as a campaigning group for this section of society. The group's legitimacy therefore does not rest with its representativity. Instead, as we showed in chapters two and five, any claim to legitimacy largely derives from the group's role as a repository for knowledge and expertise and perhaps from the need to eradicate a problem that many see as immoral and unjust. CPAG has, since its inception, included both within its full-time staff and its executive individuals with justified academic reputations and professional competence whose roles as 'policywatchers' has at least been acknowledged, if not always agreed with. This latter point is particularly important since the group has not presented any evidence to show that its view of poverty and its challenge to prevailing assumptions and approaches to the problem is widely supported by the poor themselves. Indeed, we might conclude more generally that the incidence of 'scroungerphobia', the electoral backlash feared by Labour Ministers if more aid was given to claimants in the late sixties and the reaction to the administration of clawback suggest that the public at large do not share CPAG's views or support its stand. Clearly, this electoral factor is one that has figured prominently in the deliberations within the policy community. In this sense the civil servant has perhaps been able to claim

a wider mandate than the group and his concern to achieve the 'national' interest may, accordingly have been more defensible than the sectional demands of CPAG. (43)

The suspect legitimacy of groups like CPAG which are not formally mandated by or representative of the people they claim to serve has led Benewick to conclude that they are likely not to be obvious members of a policy community but, rather, inhabitants of the 'thirdworld' of group-government politics. He notes "The degree to which these groups are recognised varies widely and access is likely to be sporadic. At the same time the groups tend to be highly active and at different levels of the political system. Many cannot meet the requisites for legitimacy and even when they do they remain suspect.... It is not just a matter of issue recognition, poverty, for example, is not denied, but of establishing its priorities and promoting its resolution. Since the ultimate satisfaction of their demands may involve a radical restructuring of society and the reordering of priorities may challenge or threaten the balance of power". (44)

43. This claim to a wider mandate stems directly from party political promises to the 'national constituency', often during the course of opposition. Wilson had firmly posted his intentions to seek a 'national interest' in speeches in 1963 and 1964 and had stressed the need throughout 1967 and 1968 to consider the electoral implications of social policy. More recently, the Conservative Manifesto of 1970 had stated clearly that a Conservative government "in coming to its decisions must always recognise that its chief responsibility is to the people and all the people...." A Better Tomorrow 1970. In a similar vein, Finer has commented that "party policy is not a naked coalition of sectional interests. For parties exist to win elections and no sectional interest will be adopted by them unless it is electorally viable; and in Britain nothing is electorally viable which is unlikely to receive endorsement, however vicarious, from a majority of the electorate". Anonymous Empire p.104.

44. Benewick, R. 'Politics without Ideology: The Perimeters of Pluralism' in Benewick, R.; Berki, R.N. and Parekh, B. (eds) Knowledge and Belief in Politics Allen & Unwin 1973.

The second factor which may have contributed to a limited consultative dialogue with policymakers is the provision of information. Here the group has met two problems. The first is the one discussed at length earlier - the fact that such information reflects a viewpoint contrary to official policy and is often highly critical of it. In this sense the group's experience would seem on occasions to bear out Ryan's view that"it is certain that any group which challenges the consensus, to the extent that it offers an explicit ideological alternative is defined out, and becomes a dissident minority".⁽⁴⁵⁾ Furthermore, the 'internalisation' of poverty policy and the exclusion of CPAG from the formative stages of the policy process, would seem to suggest as we noted in earlier chapters, that civil servants have been confident of their own authority in the field and have rarely felt it necessary to extend the 'charmed circle'.

In his own comparative study of rent and family and education policy in the sixties Banting concluded that civil servants were at their most guarded, least amenable to consultation and most certain of their own expertise and authority over their subject in the field of family (poverty) policy. The need to consult with outside interests or to accept the extraneous definitions of the problems raised was much less pronounced in the poverty case than in the rent and educational priority cases.⁽⁴⁶⁾ This sense of

45. Ryan p.157

46. Banting p.106. He notes also that during the seventies the balance between independent and civil service research appeared to be shifting as Departments improved their information systems"If the information balance shifts significantly, so will the policy process. The change may make officials more sensitive to outside efforts; but more probably the capacity to influence the policy agenda through independent research will decline as the civil service builds stronger data defences. Research initiatives will increasingly reflect governmental and administrative priorities and the crucial definition of categories and standards through which social problems are interpreted will settle more firmly into official hands". p.149

'territoriality' has perhaps become even more pronounced since the creation of the DHSS and the establishment of such internal units of expertise and authority as the Social Security Policy Group, the Social Security Operations and Supplementary Benefits Group and the Multi-Purpose Claim Form Group. It is also clear that CPAG's non-involvement in the implementation side of social policy has further weakened its claims to an ongoing and legitimate role, unlike, for example the bodies representing the social work professions.

The findings of Brown and Hill, for example, suggest that it is typically the professional interests such as the BMA and BASW which are most successful as interest groups within the DHSS and that"interests which are not central to the discussions are left out...."(47) CPAG has found it consistently difficult to gain entry to what must be seen as a tightly-knit policy community dominated by departmental, professional and, more recently, as the Child Benefit episode shows, by trade union interests. Its role has more usually been confined to lobbying one of these 'insiders' from the periphery rather than influencing policy from within.

However, this is not to say that the group's role has been entirely peripheral. We stated earlier that its relationship with the community has been a curious and unstable one and it is interesting to reflect that, on occasion, CPAG has moved swiftly from a satellite role to enjoy a brief influence at the centre of power.

This has been well demonstrated in the group's role in influencing the adoption of clawback by the Labour Government and in its pioneering of the acceptance of the 'poverty trap'. However, it is its role in the Child

47. Brown, R.G.S. The Management of Welfare Fontana 1975 p.57

Benefits issue and the leak episode, in particular, that most stands out. Curiously it was precisely the highly internalised and closed nature of the poverty policy community that necessitated the leak. Jordan and Richardson have noted that "Leaks will be made by sectors of Whitehall to mobilise interested parties outwith the Government on their behalf. But the process is perhaps best characterised as 'feedback policymaking'. In other words, policy will have to be issued without much organised group deliberation. Even so policy has to be adapted in the light of experience and reaction. Thus groups do not have insider access to influence all kinds of policy - but even when policy is evolved internally, in the longer term it will only be tenable if it can be 'sold' to an influential constituency".⁽⁴⁸⁾ The interesting observation to be made of this episode is that CPAG's 'influence' lay not in its own political muscle but in its ability to influence more powerful actors with an interest in the issue - the trade unions. Indeed the leaked cabinet minutes were precisely those which demonstrated beyond doubt the manipulation of the trade union 'vote' by ministerial 'leger de main' and which would, therefore, provoke a trade union 'backlash' as, indeed, they did.

The third factor which has constrained the group's influence has been its lack of what Finer terms "socio-economic leverage"⁽⁴⁹⁾, a sanction. Civil servants may not simply have been confident of their own authority and expertise in the field but confident also that a decision on their part to 'overlook' CPAG in consultations was unlikely to have the sort of repercussions that could result if a major economic or industrial group was 'overlooked'. The poor themselves have not been an organised political force in British national politics in the period under discussion and CPAG have made no formal attempt to mobilise them.

48. in Richardson (ed.) op cit pp.24-25

49. See his discussion of the terms in Finer, S.E. The Political Power of Organised Labour Government and Opposition 1974 pp.391-406

The group has enjoyed success within the policy community in a less obvious and more perverse way than that noted above. Its fierce campaign in the 1970 election to point out the deteriorating economic position of the very poor led ironically to a shifting of largely static resources towards that sub-group of the poor and directed attention away from the problems of what the group termed the 'broad poor'. Brown notes that the result of the campaign was that"the Conservative Government consistently advocated the claims of the low paid in the post-election social and incomes policies, having evidently been persuaded that this was what the public wanted" and that"significantly, the greatest challenge to these policies, which eventually brought the government down, came from powerful groups anxious to retain their pay differentials."⁽⁵⁰⁾

Finally, we may add some concluding comments upon the general structure of the policy community which CPAG sought to influence. We have noted throughout this study that a major theme of CPAG's repeated attacks upon the nature of family policy has been the fragmented and compartmentalised character of a policymaking process that has isolated social policy from taxation, fiscal, education and housing policy. Indeed, the group's efforts to bring about reform were, ironically, hampered by the provisions of the 1945 Family Allowance Act which had resulted in the subsequent isolation of family allowances from the development and administration of other social security benefits.

Fragmentation of this type may well hinder group access and confuse lines of responsibility and accountability. Moodie and Studdert-Kennedy point out that"conflict over the formal structure of access may be most immediately important to a pressure group than simply urging its recommendations through whatever channels are currently open to it.

Many of a pressure group's problems might dissolve if, say, two ministries were amalgamated or a new one created...."⁽⁵¹⁾ This is certainly a conclusion which Peter Townsend and Frank Field, among others, were keen to drive home.

While the group's criticisms of the irrationality of the policymaking process may hold some substance⁽⁵²⁾ they have tended somewhat ambitiously and naively, to focus on the totality of British policymaking thus ignoring the very important fact of 'sector rationality'. It was argued in chapter two, that"social policy, fiscal policy and taxation policy may all be constructed quite rationally in the narrow departmental or sectional sense but may be viewed overall as potentially in conflict, as competitive and, in some areas, as irrational. This tendency to make policy in a vacuum is to a great extent dictated and reinforced by departmental prestige, aggrandisement and a pervasive process of bureaucratic socialisation that emphasises the paramountcy of the 'departmental interest' above all else."⁽⁵³⁾

As Gustafsson and Richardson have noted, a clear disadvantage of the sectorisation or segmentation of policymaking is that the policy process can become unco-ordinated and fragmented. One result is that serious goal conflict may arise in a situation in which one policy community adopts a policy that is in conflict with that of another policy community. While recognising the existence of such conflict and the problems of co-ordination that can emanate from it CPAG's determination to expose what it saw as irrationality and fragmentation and its strident calls for sweeping reform of the policymaking system have, on occasion, distracted it from its major goal - the improvement of family allowances. While the group clearly saw

- 51. Moodie and Studdert-Kennedy p.70
- 52. See Holman op cit p.153
- 53. pp.88-89 (Thesis)

such reform as crucial to any effective and long-term solution to family support it made the tactical error of attacking 'Departmentalism' and ignoring the procedural norms and values that underpin the British policy process. Furthermore, it unwittingly brought itself and its policies into a potentially damaging confrontation with the policies and client-groups of major departments such as the Treasury and the Board of Inland Revenue. This 'confrontation' was particularly heightened during the Cabinet Debates on 'clawback'. While the group had repeatedly recognised in its propaganda the existence and greater influence of others within the same, adjacent or competing 'communities' it, curiously, overlooked the fact in its day to day tactics. Furthermore, the group does not seem to have acknowledged the validity of other interests, the existence or furtherance of which it identified as inimical to the poor.

It was noted in chapter nine that in calling for more expenditure on family support and unemployment benefit and in asking for significant redistributive changes in the tax structure CPAG was not only

"creating a scenario for further 'competition' between the relatively weak Ministry of Social Security and the powerful Inland Revenue and Treasury, but for the bringing to bear of the resources and influence of their respective 'client' groups."⁽⁵⁴⁾ It has been a fundamental weakness of the group's campaigns that it has stressed the need for a redistributive approach to the problem of poverty. Such an approach may well be appropriate to a group campaigning at the public level but it has not suited the needs of a group seeking influence over the details of policy. The group has thus not always recognised the need to moderate demands when need be nor to adapt its style to suit the various arenas in which it may operate. Too frequently, the strident style more consistent with a media campaign or a public rally has been applied to the policymaking

arena where a low profile, and negotiating style of reasoned persuasion is favoured. Essentially, the group has dramatised issues and emphasised the lack of common ground between itself and those it seeks to influence when, instead, a need to achieve consensus and areas of agreement was uppermost. The outcome has been an unhappy clash with other interests who have seen their own position threatened by the vigorous campaigning of CPAG. Not unnaturally they have exerted the influence at their own command to protect those interests. Accordingly, the group's campaigns may have sometimes provoked a 'boomerang effect' whereby they have aroused the hostility of other interests whose own political muscle has stiffened government resistance to change.

It is clear from the clawback episode that when CPAG raised issues which affected taxation policy and the Treasury's sole right to determine the budget it not only awakened the defensive instincts of the two most powerful 'economic' departments but any 'authority' which it had exerted over the clawback scheme up to this point rapidly dissipated as the issue once more went 'underground' and then into the alimentary system of the official policy community.

Tactical Considerations

We now turn to an assessment of the principal tactics employed by CPAG as a pressure group for the poor - pressure within and upon the political parties and trade union liaison. The term 'tactic' is used here to describe a variety of procedures calculated to achieve some end - specifically, the alleviation or eradication of poverty. Truman has identified three key determinants of pressure group tactics and behaviour and relates these to the subsequent influence groups are likely to enjoy.

Firstly, factors relating to a group's strategic position in society; factors associated with the internal characteristics of the group and factors relating to government institutions themselves. (55)

We have already considered each of these in part. We have noted, for example, that CPAG does not occupy a strategic position ~~neither~~ by virtue of the urgency of its case, the representativity of its base, its indispensibility to policymaking and implementation ~~nor~~ by its ability to apply 'socio-economic leverage'. We have noted also, throughout this study, the general cohesiveness of CPAG as a pressure group and the considerable authority enjoyed within and on behalf of the group by its Director and Chairman. Furthermore, it has been observed that the nature of government institutions, notably the structure and portfolios of government departments and the roles played by agencies such as the NAB and SBC, have influenced the tactics and posture of the group. This is important if we accept Keefe and Ogul's view that "the structural peculiarities of the government and of the political parties will tend to affect the access of certain groups to the centres of power". (56) This was the case as we shall shortly see, with CPAG's early relationship with the Labour Party. Indeed, it is a major conclusion of this section that the clear variations in tactics employed before 1970 and after indicate that there have been 'two' CPAGs.

We may include here trade unions also as 'institutions' or 'centres of power' (particularly after 1971) which CPAG has sought to influence and whose attitudes, outlook and activities might themselves have helped shape its own tactics and strategy. We should also note the absence of certain

55. Truman p.506

56. Keefe, W.J. and Ogul, M.S. The American Legislative Process
Prentice-Hall New Jersey 1964

sympathetic structures/actors as an influencing force in shaping the group's tactics and strategy. It may be recalled from the introduction, that CPAG entered the 'lists', as it were, alone and unaided by the existence of a wider poverty lobby. CPAG lacked the support, physical and moral, of co-activists other than Shelter whose own interests lay at a tangent to those of the group. Indeed there had been no group specifically concerned with family poverty since the Family Endowment Society disbanded in 1946.

On reflection, the decisions to concentrate on family poverty, in particular, rather than poverty in general, and to change the group's name from the grandiloquent 'Advisory Council for the Alleviation of Poverty' to the emotive and readily identifiable 'Child Poverty Action Group' were important tactical judgements. Use of the term 'Child' focussed interest upon a particularly vulnerable sub-group of the poor whose plight, it was felt, would draw much sympathy and concern and it also developed the findings of Abel-Smith and Townsend. Clearly, the early impact achieved upon the media would also indicate that the name also had an important publicity value and assisted the group's efforts to keep poverty in the public eye. A concentration on family poverty was viewed as a means of delimiting the group's interests and channelling limited resources to a rapidly identifiable issue affecting the key unit in society and it enabled campaigns to be built around a single mechanism, family allowances. It was felt, initially, that adoption of an ongoing campaign to improve family allowances would illustrate the group's concern to do something about poverty in the present whilst an ongoing educative campaign would be mounted as a means to eliminating poverty in the future. As we have already shown it has not always been possible for the group to distinguish between the two.

The evidence presented thus far would suggest that CPAG's influence has been largely exercised at three stages of the social policymaking process - discovery of the problem (of poverty); the definition of it (i.e. the use of the term relative poverty) and the specification of policy alternatives. Its principal role has been the dissemination of ideas and information and the cultivation of changes in attitudes, specifically among opinion leaders, toward the problem of poverty. Substantially, any influence CPAG has achieved has been brought about in what Potter has seen as the orthodox 'attitude group' fashion.... "that of ideas and sentiments brought to bear with political skill and organisation". (57) Similarly, on the occasions when the sentiments have been most strident, the judgement clouded and the influence accordingly diminished the group has also exhibited the characteristics of the attitude group. As Castles notes"the generalised belief inherent in attitude groups gives rise to ready-made solutions to strain, universal panaceas which do not allow for compromise - in other words we would expect faithfulness to principle among attitude groups, rather than a reliance on pragmatic negotiation". (58) Similarly, we may conclude that moral persuasion has been a fundamental strategic essential for CPAG despite its capacity to act as a repository of a particular brand of knowledge and expertise. It is evident that moral persuasion has an important role to play in the group's relationship with and tactics upon the Labour Party and it is to this relationship that we now turn.

57. Potter, A. Attitude Groups, Political Quarterly Vol. 29. Jan. 1958 pp. 72-8
58. Castles, F. Pressure Groups and Political Culture Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York 1967. p.91

CPAG and the Parties

The strategy of influencing the Labour Party from within was a natural outcome of the affinity between CPAG leaders and their viewpoints and those of the party itself. We noted earlier, for example, that Labour was seen as 'the party of welfare'. More substantially, of course, an early emphasis on winning the hearts and minds of the party was also a logical extension of the influence already enjoyed within the party's social policymaking structures by many of CPAG's early leaders and supporters and a recognition of the role these had played in the drawing up of New Frontiers of Social Security. In adopting this approach CPAG's leaders may be seen to have recognised that, "while they have much to offer to groups, equally they can benefit from group advice, consultation and expertise when it comes to framing specific policies".⁽⁵⁹⁾ Furthermore the prestige and expertise of CPAG leaders and their known support for the party undoubtedly led to an early 'insider' acceptability of those within it. A strategy of party persuasion rather than a grandiose public campaign may also be seen to have resolved, at least initially, the dilemma of limited resources. Indeed the subsequent experience of the group had shown that the public campaign can crystallise resistance to reform, particularly where redistributive expenditure is involved, rather than draw valuable support. It is interesting to note that the Howard League has avoided use of the public campaign partly for the reason that it recognises that"the chief resistance to penal reform comes from general public opinion...."⁽⁶⁰⁾ though it has conducted such campaigns by proxy through its front-group the National Campaign for the Provision of Capital Punishment. Similarly we should note Richardson and Jordan's view that"campaigns are the currency of unsuccessful groups; permanent relationships are the mode of the successful".⁽⁶¹⁾ CPAG have accordingly looked to a close relationship with the policymakers of government and the Labour Party as a substitute.

59. Roberts op cit p.102

60. Potter, A. Organised Groups in British National Politics
Greenwood Press, Westport 1975 p.195

61. Governing Under Pressure p.123

It is interesting to reflect that in the period 1965-69 CPAG may have acted as what Castles terms a 'withdrawn' group.⁽⁶²⁾ Though the group began its life in a blaze of publicity and media attention the evidence shows that the media efforts fell away, little dialogue was either sought or achieved with the Conservative Party and other actors such as the trade unions and welfare groups emerging after 1968. Efforts to work with Shelter in 1968-69 and the TUC in 1967 amounted to little more than a passing search for financial support and were the exceptions that proved the rule. Instead, an exaggerated influence was sought upon the Labour Party, partly because the group was on 'home ground' - it was with the party and its policymaking structure that Tony Lynes and the CPAG Executive felt most assured of influence. It was hoped that a strategy of persuasion upon an 'elite' already broadly sympathetic to the group's aims would create a wider impact. As Castles notes"The withdrawn group very often, despite its profession to the contrary, has very little interest in major proselytisation but conceives its main function to exist in preaching to the converted."⁽⁶³⁾

In effect the early strategy of CPAG was to 're-educate' opinion leaders in the party about poverty, rekindle and restate the party's concern with welfare and to galvanise the party machinery in preparation for a broader governmental assault on the problem. It is worth recalling that CPAG's ideas were most propagated through the quasi-academic vehicle of Poverty and the Poverty Pamphlets, an essentially Fabian tactic, and through polemics in the party's Social Policy Sub-Committee.

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62. Castles pp.96-97

63. Ibid p.96

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While it may well be the case, as Hall et al point out, that most groups seek to cultivate a "carefully created image of party neutrality" thus preserving "the right to criticise and cultivate any party on specific policy issues" ⁽⁶⁴⁾ it is also the case that on certain issues and at certain times it is useful to adopt an insider strategy towards one party in particular. We noted in chapter five for example Pym's view that "some soils are more receptive to reformist plants than others." ⁽⁶⁵⁾

Finer and his colleagues discovered in their survey of backbench opinion in the fifties that Labour Members tended to fall into three broad categories - trade unionists, often holding moderate or right wing views on ideological issues; a non-specific group, comprised of social workers, journalists and party workers who tended to be liberal on ideological matters, though less so on prices, wages and taxation; and a third group drawn from the more established professions whose views fell somewhere between the other two. ⁽⁶⁶⁾ It was Pym's subsequent findings that "Between 1955 and 1966 the trade union group diminished in numbers and influence within the party hierarchy, while the second group probably increased in both. By 1960 there had been a shift to the left on ideological issues among all members. The coming to power of a new generation of MPs with new ideas was a decisive influence in the reforms of the 1960s." ⁽⁶⁷⁾ She adds further

64. Hall, Land, Parker & Webb pp.94-95

65. Pym p.110

66. Finer, S.E. et al Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons Oxford 1961

67. Pym pp.111-112

that"if we want to explain the radical position of the labour benches, the formative influence of the radical pressure groups must feature somewhere in the picture". (68)

It is clear, as we noted in Chapter Five, that a number of reformist groups including CPAG identified the Labour Party as a vehicle for change and accordingly nailed their colours to its mast, notably ALRA and the lobbies pressing for criminal law and social reforms. CPAG, like these groups, saw a value-empathy with this particular party rather than another. For CPAG Labour was the party of the welfare state, social justice and equality and therefore a natural focus for its intentions. This apparent value-empathy was, as we have said, bolstered by the more formalised relations that existed between CPAG supporters and the party's Social Policy Sub-Committee. It would be misleading to attribute any fixed outcomes to apparent CPAG influence within this body but it is clear that this produced a climate of internal debate in which poverty figured frequently.

In many ways CPAG appears to have overreached the parameters of promotional group neutrality. Such groups, as we suggest, may work vigorously for short periods within one party because they identify a coincidence of interest on an issue at a particular time. This was the case with ALRA in the sixties. CPAG, however, has extended this relationship both before 1970 and after, through its overlapping membership with the party in general and the social policy sub-committee in particular; its close involvement in the submission of resolutions to party conferences and its liaison at local (branch) level with constituency parties. The irony of the piece is that Frank Field identified too close a liaison with the party on his appointment as Director in 1969 and sought to distance CPAG

to prevent it becoming a 'socialist tail'. In doing so, however, he contributed to an impasse with the Conservatives, an ill-judged rupture with the Labour Party and, ultimately, opened the way (and created the necessity) for a much closer relationship with Labour after 1972 to make up for 'lost ground'. It might usually be possible to dismiss the latter as a temporary phenomenon, as yet another tactical measure, however it is clear from chapter seven that many within the group see no point in a dialogue of any sort with the Conservative Party. Indeed it is the poverty of such a dialogue that stands out as a confirmation of CPAG's partisanship for most of the period under study, despite the episode of 'poor get poorer' and the Child Benefit 'leak' and despite the public support shown by some CPAG figures in 1972 for the Conservatives' tax credit proposals.

Too close a relationship with one party can, as we have suggested before, prove damaging to a promotional group's broader aims. Calculations of precise party political advantage must be made with the knowledge that since 1945 Britain has had a firm two party system of government and that too close an association with one party may undermine influence with its successor in government. Birch notes that the campaign for comprehensive schools made just such a mistake in 1953 when one of its leading groups, the National Association of Labour Teachers, decided to try to persuade the Labour Party to adopt comprehensive education as official policy.... "This move must have been based on a number of mis-calculations. One was (presumably) that the Labour Party would shortly return to power. Another must have been that the passage of the resolution at an annual conference would commit the next Labour Government to implementing the policy, which experience suggests is very far from certain. In fact the party did not mention schools in its election manifesto of 1955. A third miscalculation must have been that there was no chance of a Conservative Government

allowing local authorities to go ahead with this reform...."⁽⁶⁹⁾ Indeed Birch concludes that its decision to make it a matter of Labour Party policy was"a classical case of a group of reformists using an inappropriate channel for the communication of their ideas".⁽⁷⁰⁾

Clearly CPAG have made similar errors in their dealings or non-dealings with the political parties. While, as was noted earlier, the group's criticisms of Labour's record 1964-70 prompted a closer interest in poverty by the Conservatives at the 1970 election than might otherwise have been expected it is also the case that the group's ill-judged attempts to distance itself from the Labour Party contributed to a return of greater selectivity. Furthermore, the subsequent lack of dialogue between CPAG and the Conservatives after the introduction of FIS in 1971 confirmed the partisanship of the group under Field's direction also and indicates that in what is, after all, a two party system CPAG have largely ignored or alienated one of the two major channels of political influence. It was a combination of both these circumstances, Labour hostility to 'poor get poorer' and the resurfacing of a strident brand of campaigning after the October 1970 budget, and with it a return to 'dissident minority' status, that necessitated a new strategy.

The Trade Union Liaison Strategy

The failure to achieve a sustained priority status for the poor and its exclusion from the policymaking process produced by 1972 a firm recognition within the group, as Chapter Six showed, of the need for an entirely new

69. Birch, A.H. Representative and Responsible Government Unwin 1969 pp.220-221
70. Ibid p.221

strategy to complement or replace the battery of conventional promotional tactics it had adopted since 1965. In turning towards the trade union movement for support CPAG may be judged to have 'discovered' a potentially valuable addition to the promotional group's armoury. In effect the group sought to 'borrow' or ride 'piggyback' upon the political influence of the trade union movement. In the postscript to the Child Benefit's Campaign we considered the efficacy of CPAG's trade union liaison strategy in terms of the union's rational self interest and in relation to the union's concern for 'wages first, benefits second'. It is important now that we reflect briefly on the usefulness of such a strategy for a non-sanction based group such as CPAG.

Perhaps the most important element in CPAG's strategy for liaison with the trade union movement was its underlying conviction that the latter had achieved a position where it could exercise an unprecedented influence over a future Labour Government. Such a conviction recognised, effectively, the role trade unions could play in establishing the priority status for poverty that had largely eluded the group. There was some evidence to support this view. The unions' success in thwarting In Place of Strife, their concerted efforts to neutralise the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, the growing stature of the Liaison Committee and the need for the party to win the TUC agreement on the means to control inflation and stabilise the economy may have appeared to place the unions firmly in the driving seat. Furthermore, their partnership with Government in developing the social contract may have been seen in some quarters as the culmination of the process of elite accommodation that took as its modern starting point the creation of NEDC in 1961. (71)

The view that trade union influence has significantly increased in recent decades has been advanced, inter alia, by Keith Middlemass who has sought to examine their role within the broader development of a 'corporate bias' in British politics. He claims, for example, that social and political equilibrium has been maintained...."because the governing institutions came to share some of the political power and attributes of the state, itself avid to representative bodies to its orbit rather than face a free-for-all with a host of individual claimants". (72)

The evidence presented in this study shows that until the mid-seventies groups like CPAG, claiming to represent the disadvantaged and structurally underprivileged sections of society, had not only been excluded from this process of 'incorporation' but had made no effective attempts to secure inclusion, that is, until the corporate status of the trade union movement appeared to be finally confirmed by its role in the social contract. The attractions of working through and with the trade union movement for CPAG were considerable, not the least because"trade unionism in its widest, non-sectarian sense had become a more immediate, responsive vehicle for the representation of working people...." (73) Effectively, the group was acknowledging the trade unions move away from the secular and defensive representation of the 'fragmented' man to that of the 'whole' man. (74)

Middlemass takes the view that"even if trade union leaders remain diffident about claiming the full political potential of their movement for fear of public recrimination, the movement's representative function has increased, over a wider area of state policy, as a result of the 'social contract' and the powers granted by legislation after 1974". (75)

72. Ibid p.20

73. Ibid p.451

74. See Nicholls, D. Three Varieties of Pluralism MacMillan 1974 p.21

75. Middlemass p.451

Indeed one might argue that CPAG identified the potentiality of a trade union 'integrating' role. As Almond has pointed out...."The activities of interest groups are more complex than just the transmission of influence or pressure. One of their most important functions is the integrating or aggregating role by which narrow interests are assimilated into more general ones. The party is the main integrative agency in the political process. The interest group plays the role of an articulator of interests, but it also has an integrating function."⁽⁷⁶⁾

The readiness of small groups such as CPAG to work through the trade union movement and the latter's willingness to adopt, in part, the role of political patron raises important questions about the nature of pluralism in Britain. These centre, in particular, on the nature of political legitimacy. It could be argued, for example, that the crisis of the thirties and more recently of the seventies heralded both the need for further state intervention and the generation of new and specific forms of consent to bolster the legitimacy of embattled governments. That political legitimacy may be seen to derive substantially from the 'incorporation' of powerful elites whose strategic role in the economy has warranted an increasingly formalised and ongoing participation in policymaking.⁽⁷⁷⁾

76. Ehrman, H. Interest Groups on Four Continents University of Pittsburgh 1967 p.297

77. Hayward notes"the institutionalisation of the interdependence between the public authorities and the interest groups may, in certain spheres, develop to the extent of the partial and informal 'incorporation' of groups into the machinery of government. The degree of involvement of interest group leaders in public decision-making and policy implementation, their willingness to subordinate their sectional interest to what they accept as the public interest, may be such that they cease to be genuinely independent of the state". Hayward, J. and Berki, R.N. (eds) State and Society in Contemporary Europe, Martin Robertson 1979 p.37

A host of writers in the seventies, among them Middlemass, Wootton, Cawson and Barnes, have detected in this 'corporate bias' the development of a trade union voice on issues and policy other than that solely concerned with the economy or industrial relations. The evidence presented in chapters nine and ten shows that, at least on the subject of child benefits, there is some substance in the view that trade unions are both developing a wider voice and are gaining an audience. The trend may appear all the more powerful if it is recalled that in the period 1972-80 individual trade unions and the TUC itself were taking quite deliberate and well publicised stands on a range of non-work issues such as women's rights (CPSA, ASTMS and NUPE), abortion and 'a woman's right to choose' (CPSA, TUC, NUPE), retirement pensions (TGWU), Apartheid (UPOW), Welfare rights and family support (ASTMS, CPSA, GMWU, COHSE and USDAW).

This apparently recently-acquired 'societal' role may be more congruent with trade union interests than at first supposed and may, in part, be the outcome of "pluralist stagnation",⁽⁷⁸⁾ not simply within the State but within the political parties themselves. It was noted earlier that the very inclusivity of the Labour Party as a 'coalition of interests' rendered the task of settling between the competing claims of its supporters, establishing a schedule of priorities and translating the latter into policy and legislation when in office progressively more difficult. Those interests which fail to get their preferences registered on the party's own agenda or those like CPAG which perceive that they are unable to attract sustained party political support for their issue may ultimately be obliged to seek alternative channels of influence. It must be recalled, moreover, that despite brief exchanges on the issue during the 1970 General Election family poverty never achieved the status of a major party political issue likely to spark fierce inter-party debate.

78. Wootton, G. Pressure Politics in Contemporary Britain
Lexington Press Massachusetts 1978, pp.178-80

For CPAG the trade union movement became, in the mid-seventies, the most appropriate 'alternative channel of influence' to conventional party politics. Essentially, liaison with or securing the 'patronage' of the trade unions raised the possibility that if some interests may not always be able to force their way onto the party's agenda they may at least remain within the broader confines of the Labour movement by virtue of trade union accommodation. This is not to say that trade unions could or will supplant the Labour Party as the representative organs of 'suppliant' interests in society. On the contrary, they may be seen to be supplementary to the party's representative functions.

This development has clearly been underway for some time now in the economic field. Middlemass points out, for example, that...."the extension of economic management in post-war years....has only been possible because of the existing nature of the triangular system (Government, Employers, Unions) and the power, inherent in corporate bias, of governing institutions to convey popular consent by means other than those of political parties".⁽⁷⁹⁾ In other words, the accommodation of elites - Smith's "granting of superior franchise" and Middlemass's "Corporate Bias" - has given a de jure confirmation to the de facto emergence of 'mediating institutions', other than political parties, between citizen and state.

Though it would be unwise to make absolute judgements about the growing 'societal' or 'mediating' role of the trade union movement on the basis of this case study of rather limited CPAG-Union relations, the evidence of the Social Contract and the readiness of unions in recent years to take up the causes noted earlier may strengthen the need"to accept that the future may lie in multiple forms of participation rather than in

sovereignty of party".⁽⁸⁰⁾ If CPAG's principal success in the sixties was its role in overturning the established images of poverty and generally keeping poverty in the public eye then its most interesting venture in the seventies has been its exploration of trade union liaison as an additional avenue of political communication for promotional groups.

Not all those writing on trade union influence in the seventies, however, have reached the conclusion that the union's enfranchisement in the 'court politics of the neo-corporate state' has won for them an unprecedented sway over government policy. Indeed, the more one examines the minutiae of policy, rather than focussing on hierarchy and tripartite representation, the less influential the unions appear to be and the more tenuous and inappropriate CPAG's liaison strategy becomes. Marsh and Locksley, for example, note that while the view that the Social Contract enhanced trade union influence is not unsubstantiated it tends to obscure the fact that ... "the trade unions depend for their influence at the macro level on support from, or acquiescence by, Government".⁽⁸¹⁾ Similarly, they add that the Government's responsiveness to trade union representations is likely to be influenced by "its view of its judgement of the likely effect of trade union opposition to its preferred policy".⁽⁸²⁾ Where this has relevance for the foregoing study is in the implication that trade union influence in the economic field is largely a function of the union's capacity to apply sanctions in that field. Their control of, authority over and interest in social policy, while growing, is still far less impressive. Furthermore, the movement still seems much too divided and ambivalent over social policy issues such as family support, the poverty trap and low pay as a cause of poverty, despite the brief success on child benefits, to assert

80. Ibid p.461

81. Marsh & Locksley op cit p.34

82. Ibid

any sustained authority in the field in the foreseeable future. There can be little doubt from this study and others that the unions have given a firm priority to their collective bargaining and industrial functions and have been hostile to initiatives which have sought to relate these to broader welfare strategies.⁽⁸³⁾ As one group of commentators have concluded"where there has been an apparent clash of interests between social policy proposals and effective wage bargaining the former has been treated with suspicion; but even where this problem does not arise trade union expertise has been concentrated largely on the wages front. This choice reflects the priority accorded to earnings as a determinant of individual welfare by most trade unionists and indeed by the whole society".⁽⁸⁴⁾ It must be concluded, therefore, that even in its efforts to seek liaison outside of the conventional two party system CPAG has still met with and has been frustrated by non-acceptance of its definition of and solutions to the problem.

Thus CPAG, in its first efforts to persuade trade unions of the equity of its view that the wage system must take account of family needs, was met with Frank Cousins warning that"wages in general will always be determined in the main by industrial factors, based on some concept of the 'rate for the job' or 'fair wages'. Of necessity one negotiates in the knowledge that the settlement of the minimum rate should give a worker the means to provide a good standard of living and home for the family, but taking into account the size of the family is an additional matter...."⁽⁸⁵⁾

In 1971 Nicholas Bosanquet, having complained that CPAG and the unions were talking a different language, again pointed to the dangers such a view

83. See Holman, R. Power for the Powerless: The Role of Community Action CRRU 1972, p.7
84. Hall, Land, Parker & Webb p.90
85. Poverty No.3 Summer 1967, p.6

would have for liaison and warned that"the advocates of the poor have let themselves be shut off into a special lobby in which they appear only to be concerned with policies for Social Security...."(86) Once again an indictment of the group's failure to consider the interest of other groups. These dangers perhaps reached their high point as chapter eight shows, in the publication of Field and Piachaud's 'Poverty Trap' article and the ensuing exchanges with Donnet and Lipsey. Field and Piachaud had, it may be recalled, claimed that"trade unions can insist improvements in benefits should be a normal and important part of the annual wage negotiations. Then, if the Government concedes adequate increases in national insurance benefits and family allowances, wage settlements may be correspondingly reduced. This latter strategy is in the interests of low-paid families, unions, employers and the Government". (87)

Of course what may have been an entirely rational strategy for restructuring the basis of family support in the eyes of academics and the activists of a promotional pressure group was not entirely consistent with the traditional defensive and sectional goals of British trade unions. This study has shown that while the trade unions have been more comfortable with, and sympathetic to, the idea that family allowances could be used to supplement the income of those wage-earners with families they have been strongly opposed to any suggestion that such benefits could be used as a substitute for higher wage settlements or that consideration of benefit levels should figure in wage negotiations. Indeed, trade unionists have taken the view that family support must remain the preserve and responsibility of the state and not that of a sectional interest group. As Jack Jones warned the group in January 1972"to talk as if

86. Poverty No.18 Spring 1971
87 New Statesman 3.12.71

concessions in the state benefits field can be used as a 'quid pro quo' for wage restraints in some form of 'annual negotiations' is to fly in the face of reality". (88)

Typological Considerations

A chief value of undertaking a detailed study of one particular group is that it offers an opportunity to variously support, qualify, refute and generally illuminate our understanding of the structure, aspirations and behaviour of other groups also. In particular, of course, it contributes to an understanding of how and why the political system may be 'worked' and be seen to work in relation to a particular group or issue. We therefore consider in this final section how a study of CPAG contributes to such an understanding of the political process and how the latter imposes a perspective on the study of the former. We begin with a consideration of interest group classification, a subject fraught with difficulties. While compartmentalising groups on the basis of factors like behaviour, representativity, goals and resources may appear to impose some sense of order upon the pressure group universe it as easily distorts, obscures and exaggerates the often subtle differences and similarities between groups. Our aim here therefore is not to select a pigeon-hole into which CPAG may be confidently slotted. It is, rather, to establish the usefulness of the major classifications or typologies of interest groups and their behaviour to the study of this one group and how the latter may further illuminate them. Such classifications of British interest groups owe much to the early work undertaken by Potter and have developed considerably in both range and complexity since he adopted the bipartite classification of

'the spokesmen of sections' and 'the promoters of causes' in 1961. It was Potter's view that the difference between the two"is in the fact that it is the political task of the former to try to reflect the particular interests of its section, while it is the political task of the latter to try to persuade people, regardless of their sectional affiliations, to subscribe to its point of view". (89)

Potter notes further, and this has considerable relevance to the study of CPAG, not least of its origins, that"The politics of attitude groups are part of the interplay of more or less influential ideas and people in British politics. The organised attitude groups, however, are much less likely to produce the ideas than to help ^apropagate them. Indeed, their first ideas must exist before the organisations: ideas create the common attitudes which are their basis". (90) Such a view holds substantially true for CPAG. We saw in chapter one, the impact of ideas and evidence presented in Abel-Smith and Townsend's The Poor and the Poorest and how these came to influence and galvanise an audience at Toynbee Hall in 1965 into forming the Advisory Council for the Alleviation of Poverty and, subsequently, the Family Poverty Group and Child Poverty Action Group. The work of the latter may have later come to partly question Potter's analysis since, increasingly, the group has generated its own ideas as well as propagating other peoples, but the substance of his view holds true.

Potter's classification would also seem to confirm the distinctions that groups also make about themselves. CPAG has clearly always seen itself as a pressure group for the poor rather than one of the poor. In its summary

89. 'Attitude Groups' p.72
90. Ibid p.82

of Oral Evidence to the Committee on Voluntary Organisations in December 1975 the group eschewed any claim to being a formal spokesman group "CPAG deal with a section of the population that is voiceless and have to try to judge 'where the shoe pinches'. Policies are not always planned but quite often result from responding to situations."⁽⁹¹⁾

If we accept this view and the received classification then we must define CPAG as a pressure group not representing a section of society, the poor, but rather, a group committed to the propagation of ideas and policies whose implementation would of themselves improve the lot of the poor. Yet it is the case that as the group has moved increasingly, through its Citizens Rights Office and Legal Department, into the sphere of welfare rights and advocacy in the mid to late seventies (regrettably beyond the scope of the present study) CPAG has begun to acquire a direct representative role also and it may therefore not fall as readily into one or the other categories advanced by Potter.

Writing in 1970 Wootton suggested that such a straightforward classification may oversimplify and perhaps obstruct an understanding of group behaviour and the criteria for success. It was his view that promotional groups may well be 'anchored' in sectional ones.⁽⁹²⁾ Sanderson, for example, has noted that the promotional image of the National Smoke Abatement Society is somewhat misleading "Manufacturers of smokeless fuels and organisations such as the Solid Smokeless Fuels Federation, have a direct interest, and critics of the NSAS have not been slow to point out that the society is partially financed by members of this kind".⁽⁹³⁾ Furthermore

91. CPAG Summary of Oral Evidence to the Committee on Voluntary Organisations December 1975
92. Wootton, G. Interest Groups Prentice-Hall 1970 p.39
93. Sanderson, J.B. The National Smoke Abatement Society and the Clean Air Act' (1956) in Kimber, R. and Richardson, J.J. (eds) Campaigning for the Environment, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1974 p.28

he goes on to suggest that Finer's popular classification of sectional and cause (promotional) groups is not entirely satisfactory"The society might be thought of as promotional, but this would obscure the sectional elements in its composition. A more useful distinction would be one between groups that are definite and appointed spokesmen for a particular section of the community, and groups that are primarily concerned with the propagation of attitudes...."(94)

More recently, Action to Ban the Sexual Exploitation of Children (ABUSE), a group set up to advance certain standards of morality and to promote particular changes in the criminal law relating to child pornography was found to be 'anchored' in a similar way to the essentially sectional National Viewers and Listeners Association, which financed its propaganda and campaigning activity.⁽⁹⁵⁾ It is interesting to note that if CPAG does continue to develop its work in the field of welfare rights and advocacy it will, curiously, have reversed the 'anchorage' process by establishing itself first (and foremost) as a promotional group with, latterly (and secondarily) sectional characteristics. We should also note the Group's efforts to draw an increasingly promotional stance from the ostensibly sectional trade union movement.

Finer has attempted to qualify the use of the term 'pressure group' on the basis that the term"implies that some kind of sanction will be applied if a demand is refused, and most groups, most of the time, simply make requests or put up a caseeven groups which do use pressure do not do so all of the time."⁽⁹⁶⁾ This may appear to negate the use of the

94. Ibid.
95. McCarthy, M.A. & Moodie, R.A. Parliament and Pornography: the 1978 Child Protection Act. Parliamentary Affairs, Vol.xxxiv No.1 Winter 1981
96. Anomynous Empir. p.3

term pressure-group in relation to groups like CPAG but there are a number of points worth considering here. Firstly, 'pressure' or 'sanction' need not necessarily be exclusively associated with what Finer has described in his later work as 'socio-economic leverage'⁽⁹⁷⁾ such as that wielded by trade unions, organised capital and professional associations. It might be argued, instead, that 'pressure' could be as easily associated with its other meanings such as the creation of an atmospheric condition or the creation of a sense of urgency, as it is with the exertion of vulgar force. In these senses of the term the tactic of constantly 'trapping' people by what they have said; 'reminding' parties of their manifesto and other promises; the waging of a highly media-orientated campaign designed to drive home the 'urgency' of a problem; the constant probing and prodding of so called 'party myth'; the employment of tactics such as the 'poor get poorer' campaign and the 'leaking' of cabinet minutes to the media at a critical juncture in the deliberations on resource allocation to the Child Benefit Scheme may all be seen to have contributed to an atmosphere of pressure. If this is not the case then we must ask ourselves why Harold Wilson was "seriously alarmed" by the campaigns of the group, why he sought to allay their fears of a 'sell-out on family policy' at the party conference and why a succession of ministers felt themselves threatened, harangued and compromised by campaigns that claimed a 'morally just' demand for resources as their most significant instrument of 'pressure'.

It must also be said that Finer's reticence about the term overlooks the fact that groups such as the Howard League, the Family Planning Association and the BMA largely forego the use of pressure and derive their close influence over policy by virtue of their expertise or their indispensability

97. Government and Opposition op cit (1974)

to the policymaking and policy implementation processes. Indeed, it is the case with such groups that a need for 'pressure' as such arises when they are unsuccessful or overlooked in deliberations. On another level we may note Moodie and Studdart-Kennedy's observation that"The absence of overt or continuing pressure no more establishes the insignificance of pressure than the absence of war demonstrates the irrelevance of armed forces to the continuance of peaceful diplomatic relations between states."⁽⁹⁸⁾ The implication, then, is that influence over government need not be a direct function of pressure exerted or a threat of pressure.

Moodie and Studdert-Kennedy themselves favour a distinction between 'formal role groups' and promotional groups. They find the term 'attitude group' an unsatisfactory one because"Attitudesvary widely with respect to their organisation, specificity, cognitive content and images; different causes may therefore be supported by individuals with very different kinds and sets of attitudes. It is therefore preferable to stress the object (cause) or the activity (promotion of a cause) in the label."⁽⁹⁹⁾ Such an analysis is clearly appropriate to an organisation like CND which although ostensibly 'norm-oriented' included within its ranks clear 'value oriented' groups like the Committee of 100 and the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War both of which, to varying degrees, rejected the existing system and, in doing so, diverged markedly from prevailing CND opinion. However, the criticism of 'attitude group' seems somewhat less appropriate in the CPAG case where, as we have shown, there is a relatively high degree of cohesiveness and intra-group consensus. The policy debate of 1972 is the exception that by and large proves the rule. CPAG has remained a group concerned to question and change prevailing attitudes to the nature of

98. Moodie & Studdert-Kennedy p.62
99. Ibid p.63

poverty, its definition, its measurement and its remedies. Indeed, as we concluded earlier in this chapter it is the concern to change or modify attitudes which has proved the major stumbling block to a wider and more sustained influence.

This is an argument to which Castles has devoted much attention; It is his view that"attitude groups behave in a significantly different fashion from their interest counterparts, and that the major part of this difference is attributable to the fact that such groups are mobilised on the basis of a generalised belief...."(100)

Such groups he contends may adopt one of two main approaches - they will be norm-oriented or value-oriented. If we accept, as we stated earlier, that CPAG's rather sweeping attacks upon the British socio-economic infrastructure have been essentially rhetorical flourishes unleashed at times of low morale or high frustration then it is clear that the group has remained norm-oriented. Certainly it has favoured redistributive economic measures, fiscal reforms, changes in Departmental portfolios and more effective policy co-ordination but it has not elected to mount a serious and sustained attack on capitalism or liberal-democracy per se, like the Claimants Unions who singularly identify their deprivation with the fundamental contradictions of the economic and political system and who have elicited a bemused and often hostile response from the authorities and the public. The Claimants Unions have thus been strongly value-oriented⁽¹⁰¹⁾ and, as Castles points out"an attack on values involves a challenge to the whole of the existing value system, the stable balance of the components of action; and while campaigning for such a change of

100. Castles p.88

101. See Jordan, B. Paupers: The Making of the New Claiming Class Routledge & Kegan Paul 1973

values may not itself be illegitimatethe achievement of their aim is, at least from the viewpoint of the society as a whole". (102)

Furthermore Castles concludes that because"such groups are defined as anti-social in their aims will obviously have considerable effects on their behaviour". (103)

Hill thus concludes of the Claimant Unions that"In order to avoid either the conventional middle-class pressure group modes ora pattern of individual conflict....they have to develop direct action weapons yet the only such weapon they possess, the disruption of the work of the state agencies, offers little threat to the system. Indeed in many ways the only major sufferers from such disruptions are the Claimants themselves". (104)

CPAG has neither sought to question the system in quite such a direct and fundamental way nor to employ the techniques of disruption and direct action. Indeed, its general willingness to 'criticise from within' has drawn much criticism from the better organised claimant groups such as the Birmingham Claimants Union who charge that the group accordingly endorses and bolsters the very system it is trying to reform. Similarly they argue that the group has still not decisively resolved the issue of whether it should work with or for the poor.

This leads us to other considerations determining group 'type'. In his study of the BMA in 1960, for example, Eckstein concluded that group 'type' would be influenced by the form of activities adopted by the group, the intensity and scope with which its interests or preferences were pursued and, ultimately, its effectiveness in achieving its goals. (105) More

102. Castles pp.88-89

103. Ibid p.89

104. Hill op cit p.176

105. Eckstein, H. Pressure Group Politics: The Case of the BMA
Allen & Unwin 1960

recently, as we noted in the introduction, Grant has suggested that groups may also be classified on the basis of the type of strategy they adopt towards government, by which he means"the combination of modes of action used by an interest group to attain its goals".⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ He distinguishes two key divisions of which there exist a number of sub-types, though he emphasises that "the distinction being made is not based on any measurement of effectiveness or perceived effectiveness".⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Groups which accept the importance of a close consultative relationship with policymakers Grant terms 'Insider Groups'. He notes that"the most important distinguishing characteristic of insider groups is their tendency to adopt a "strategy of responsibility".⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ We noted in earlier chapters that the terms of the Social Contract had imposed upon the TUC such a strategy of responsibility and clearly many other organisations seeking influence upon Government recognise the need for legitimacy, accuracy, reason and confidentiality in their deliberations with officials.

Sanderson says of NSAS, for example, that it recognised the need for "the constant pressure of informed public opinion which can be secured not by costly mass propaganda, but rather by continued education and stimulation of the leaders of public opinion and those who will develop and administer the measures to be taken"and that"The Society has shown a care that propaganda must be backed by sober data; an emphasis on realism in all advocated policies - all these have helped, and although with more hot air and glamour the society might have made more of a stir from time to time, it would in the end have got it nowhere, and its prestige instead of steadily rising, could only too easily have been lost".⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

- 106. Grant p.2
- 107. Ibid p.3
- 108. Ibid p.5
- 109. Sanderson in Kimber and Richardson pp.29-30

Frost makes similar observations of the tactics and style of the Disablement Income Group, noting significantly that it had been asked to submit evidence (and it had strongly welcomed this) to Houghton's review of Social Services in the mid-sixties of which CPAG was so critical. He notes "The Disablement Income Group was asked to submit information and give advice. It had access to the corridors of power. Many pressure groups wish for this but they are not always successful in being listened to by those in power. DIG was respected at a government level because it did its homework, knew its facts and was accurate. Moreover, it had specific, concrete, attainable aims - it knew it wanted to alter the statute books and in what direction." (110)

In the same vein, Ryan notes that the Howard League "would stress its reliance on facts and the accuracy of those facts. Governments and their civil servants can be persuaded by reasoned argument supported by well researched evidence". (111) Another member of the 'penal lobby', Radical Alternatives to Prison (RAP), have seen the League's 'strategy of responsibility' in a more critical light and conclude that the League is "an 'approved group' because it threatens nothing; its council and its membership are to a man within the sacred fold of the establishment; its position is vaguely Samaritan, but infinitely cautious; it believes in 'human rights' but it is not prepared to challenge the Home Office on the penal system wholeheartedly". (112)

CPAG's status as 'Insider' or 'Outsider' is much less clear and we observed in earlier chapters that it appeared to have a hybrid role. In their submission to the Committee on Voluntary Organisations CPAG representatives said of the Group "They do have a strong pressure group

110. Frost, B. The Tactics of Pressure Galliard (Stainer & Bell) 1975 p.84
111. Ryan p.76
112. RAP Newsletter January 1976

role:.... However they stressed that their efforts were not directed towards 'the demonstration' but towards the presentation of accurate facts based on real cases which could not be repudiated. They feel that this has proved to be a most effective form of informed pressure. Despite their critical role the CPAG work with Government Departments and their intervention is usually welcomed. Departments recognise that CPAG do a lot of spade work for them. CPAG will always admit when they are wrong and they feel that this has not hindered them from being taken seriously". (113)

We suggested earlier in this chapter that CPAG has been 'two' groups or that it has, at least, developed through two distinct phases. Certainly before 1969, under the direction of Tony Lynes, CPAG sought an 'insider' status and pursued an 'insider strategy'. The Group's role was singularly educative, its strategy based firmly on elite persuasion and the cultivation of ministerial and civil service contacts that many of its leaders enjoyed through their involvement in the Labour Party and their earlier work in the ministries. The currency of the Group's campaigns lay firmly in the presentation of facts and figures and the specification of policy alternatives.

The group's style between 1965-69 was shaped by two key influences - the subscription of many of its leaders to 'Fabian' norms and values, notably reasoned persuasion and gradualism and the experience of Tony Lynes himself who had come to CPAG from an advisory post in the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance and who was familiar with the Whitehall 'rules of the game'. Criticism of and friction with Government certainly existed but it did not assume the proportions or style which characterised the post-1970 period.

With the arrival of Field and Townsend as Director and Chairman respectively, and the influx of younger, more radical members onto the Executive, the group became more abrasive, more publicity-oriented, more uncompromising. Although the strategy for insider influence was never abandoned and was still recognised for its worth, it is clear that CPAG's belief that under Labour the poor had become poorer led to the conclusion that total dependence on this strategy alone had imposed constraints upon the freedom of the group to criticise in a truly effective fashion and had resulted in the group becoming a 'socialist tail'. Subsequently, the concern to secure an insider role became one element in a broader strategy incorporating party conference campaigning, the formulation and canvassing of constituency resolutions, closer co-operation with the 'lobby' through the FAM movement, The Group of Six, the Finer Joint Action Committee and the Child Benefits Now Campaign and the development of a trade union liaison strategy. Most significantly, CPAG was prepared after 1970 to become, given it saw the need for what Grant terms 'exit' and 'voice', an unhelpful group'.

These distinct phases of action would seem to confirm Grant's observation that"It should not be assumed that insider groups will always adopt a strategy of responsibility and that they will always remain insider groups."⁽¹¹⁾

We noted in chapter five that the perceived changes in a group's environment, its capacity to influence, the sympathy shown towards its aims by policy-makers and the 'mobility' of the agenda may require significant changes of direction and strategy. We would conclude from this study of CPAG that in the period 1965-69 the group followed a largely 'low-profile' insider strategy favouring persuasion, the presentation of accurately researched information and the cultivation of a negotiatory style of bargaining with policymakers and officials. The chief successes of this strategy were the

modifications to the wage-stop ruling achieved by the group and its advocacy of the clawback scheme. In the period 1970-78 we would argue that the group was obliged, because of the perceived changes in its environment and effectiveness, to adopt a 'high-profile' insider strategy which was more polemical, more publicity-oriented and less compromising. Whilst such a strategy carries a high risk of alienating policymakers it may, on occasions draw success. In CPAG's case we would argue that its high profile role in the Child Benefit Campaign and the 'leak' episode in particular was a critical factor in the successful outcome of the scheme, if only for the fact that the group's efforts managed to draw the 'influential constituency' of the trade union movement more decisively into the deliberations.

Grant, also, of course, raises the idea of the 'outsider group' and this, too, has some bearing on the present study, though the group's affinity to this classification seems more tenuous. CPAG has not, for example, been an outsider group 'by choice' - it does not reject the system or wish to replace it, nor has it elected to adopt the tactics of direct action. We may see in this classification, moreover, a rewording of Castles' term 'value-oriented group'. Grant notes of the other type of 'outsider', those who are such 'by necessity', that they"face the problem of gaining government's attention as a prelude to their being accepted as groups which should be consulted in relation to particular policy areas".⁽¹¹⁵⁾ Yet if we recall the origins and the network of contacts enjoyed by CPAG within the Labour Government and the departments we are more likely to conclude that the group's problem has been less one of gaining attention but more of holding it.

We have, thus far, dealt with classifications based on 'interest' and 'idea/attitude' and with those defining by strategy employed. We now move to a consideration of other ways of looking at and assessing the behaviour and character of groups. Wootton has constructed a typology that divides groups into one of four 'cells' depending on their degree of political specialisation and the openness of their membership. In essence he advances a more sophisticated, though not markedly different, version of Potter's earlier classification. Cells one and two, for example, are characterised by groups...."that rest at any particular moment upon a given or closed membership: occupation or function, age, sex, ethnicity and, arguably, both affiliation and locality. But they differ in practice in the extent of prior political involvement".⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Thus we find in 'cell' one, groups with closed memberships and low political specialisation such as some trade unions, commercial bodies, and professional associations such as the Law Society. In cell two we find a similarly closed membership characteristic but more political specialisation. Accordingly, groups like the more radical British Legal Association and the Welsh Language Society reside here. Cell three contains groups with open membership but low political specialisation such as the National Trust, the Georgian Society and the WEA. Cell four, by Wootton's own acknowledgement, contains CPAG, CHE, NCCL, Shelter and Friends of the Earth - the "propagational groups". Such a classification has some uses, notably its attempt to define more precisely. It is clearly a more satisfactory classification than, say, that of Finer who brands bodies like the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Family Service Units and the National Council for Voluntary Service (and presumably CPAG if it had been around at the time) together with the Association of Municipal Corporations and the County Councils Association under the misleading title of 'civic groups'.⁽¹¹⁷⁾

116. Pressure Politics in Contemporary Britain p.19

117. Anonymous Empire pp.14-17

But there are also faults with Wootton's typology. We might argue, for example, that while CPAG membership is ostensibly 'open', the style of the group, its quasi-intellectual image (one verified in internal policy-making and debate) and a National Membership fee of £17 might well preclude the joining of many people. It is no accident that the group's membership is substantally derived from the academic world, the social work profession and from politics. In other words there may be a considerable disparity between ostensible openness of membership and actual membership. Similarly, Wootton's typology confines trade unions to cell one, (closed membership and low political specialisation) yet the Child Benefit episode shows that many unions such as CPSA, ASTS, NUPE, TASS, GMWU and USDAW place great store by their political activities and see them as an important complement to their orthodox 'sectional' activities such as free collective bargaining. Such a typology would therefore seem to contribute little to our understanding of events like the Social Contract. Such unions would, accordingly, appear more at home in cell two.

A more valuable recent guide to group behaviour and goal achievement has come to the fore with the reappraisal of the Beer-Eckstein tradition by Peterson and with the reply to the latter by Newton and Morris. It is Peterson's view that Beer-Eckstein theory has over emphasised the centrality of the administrative channel in British politics to the virtual exclusion of any other. For Peterson"this interpretation of British group politics fails to emphasise sufficiently the way in which group activity varies with different types of political issues". (118)

118. Peterson, P. British Interest Group Theory Reorganised: The Politics of Comprehensive Education in Three British Cities. Comparative Politics III April 1971, p.382

Peterson makes a distinction between issues that are "pluralist", i.e. involving interests that are broader than individual concerns, though narrower than those of social status - and "status group issues", involving the interests of broad social status groups, such as classes, ethnic groups, racial groups and producers and consumers. Peterson's complaint is that Beer-Eckstein tradition"implies that all issues are pluralist in character"⁽¹¹⁹⁾ and the starting point for his refutation of this view begins with his own study of comprehensive education as an issue in three cities.

Peterson draws from Beer-Eckstein theory the conclusion that "pluralist causes" will be those which for the most part can be resolved through administrative channels, i.e. in the deliberations between local and central officials and group officers. He notes that teachers found such channels of influence both appropriate and effective when discussing 'pluralist' issues like pay and conditions of employment. The issue of comprehensive education itself, however, he saw as a 'status group' issue since it involved class interests which were frequently reflected in the position the parties adopted on the issue:

Peterson's findings have subsequently been qualified by Newton and Morris in their comprehensive study of over 4,000 groups in Birmingham.⁽¹²⁰⁾ It is their view that analysis should focus less on whether a group is a producer or consumer and more on whether it is well-established or poorly established. Echoing our earlier observations about the Howard League and the BMA, for example, they note that"established groups, of course, tend to be involved with certain types of issues. By their

119.

Ibid p.385 ^K

120.

Newton, N. & Morris, D.S. British Interest Group Theory Reexamined: The Politics of 4,000 Voluntary Organisations in a British City, Comparative Politics III April 1971 p.382

very nature, they are unlikely to raise status group issues or others that challenge the basic political and social order". Apart from anything else, established groups have a vested interest in the status quo and are unlikely to endanger their favoured relations with decision-makers by espousing controversial policies". (121)

It is Newton and Morris' view that"it is the poorly established groups that are involved in status group issues and, indeed, groups are poorly established partly because they concern themselves with basic political issues. Because both groups and issues are unwelcome in bureaucratic enclaves, the groups are likely to use partisan channels". (122)

These observations have significant implications for our study of CPAG as a pressure group and of poverty as a political issue.

It may be suggested that broadly, and for much of the time that CPAG has been concerned with it, poverty has been the sort of status group issue to which Peterson refers. Moreover, when overt and redistributive changes in income and wealth, changes in the mortgage tax relief system and the switching of substantial levels of resources from, say, defence to social security have been canvassed the status group nature of the issue has been heightened. On reflection, we might conclude that official use of the absolute definition of poverty and the belief in 'marginal reform' for a 'marginal' problem was a useful device for keeping poverty within 'pluralist issue' parameters (emphasising consensus) whilst use of the relative approach tended to heighten the status group qualities of the issue and emphasise the cleavage between socio-economic groups. Whilst poverty was

121. Ibid p.592

122. Ibid

viewed in a 'pluralist' way it could be dealt with through administrative channels of influence and objectively 'managed'. Indeed, we may conclude that it passed into the 'language of technocracy'. As Vallance says "controversial issues of public policy may be removed from the language game of political debate and put into that of uncontentious, apolitical, technocratic 'fact'".⁽¹²³⁾ The exclusion of CPAG and other groups from the Lancaster House Conference may be seen as an illustration of this device. It is clear that when CPAG have become strident in style or have pushed for the redistributive changes discussed the 'pluralist' channels of influence have been closed to them. Instead, they have looked, as Peterson, Newton and Morris suggest groups campaigning on status group issues will, to more partisan channels of influence - notably the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Even here, though, there have been problems. Labour leaders made it clear in the sixties that they would not associate themselves with views emphasising cleavage and which carried (electorally) alarming attacks upon more powerful interests. Similarly, the trade unions have been emphatic about the limitations of their role in the issue and have resisted being drawn into an 'us' versus 'them' argument about resources.

More significantly, perhaps, we should note that when moderate claims favouring the poor have been made - such as wage-stop changes, periodic 'reasonable' increases in family allowances, requests for improvements in Government advertising of benefits to improve take-up (such as with FIS) and when practical 'pluralist' type ideas have been advanced such as temporary clawback and the 'poverty trap' the group has achieved success. Ultimately, then, the success of a demand will depend upon both its nature

123. Vallance, E. Three Languages of Change: Democracy, Technocracy and Direct Action in Benewick, R. and Smith, T. (eds), Direct Action and Democratic Politics, George Allen & Unwin 1972, p.92

and the manner in which it is presented. The 'status group issue'/'pluralist' issue dichotomy bears out Wallaces' observation that a clear"line of differentiation may be drawn between groups with limited aims which are content to work within the established political system and groups with aims which cannot easily be met within the existing political structure". (124)

The major difficulty for CPAG has been the sheer complexity and ongoing nature of the issue it has sought to concern itself with. It continues to be a problem fraught with conflicting definitions, methods of measurement and it affects a section of the public many would see as substantially outside the mainstream of society. Another dilemma has been that, increasingly, 'solutions' to poverty have acquired a zero-sum decisiveness which policymakers have found impolitic to come to terms with. It is interesting to recall that the people who first decided in March 1965 to tackle the problem of poverty outlined to them by Brian Abel-Smith believed that their campaign would be over by Christmas of that year. More and more, CPAG has found itself having to branch out from its principal interest in family poverty to take account of issues such as low pay, unemployment, disability and chronic sickness which have become increasingly interlinked with each other. The group has not enjoyed the relative luxury of being able to conduct a single finite campaign waged by the 'ginger-groups', (125) such as the Wing Airport Resistance Associations' bid to halt the siting of a third London airport in the environs of Cublington. (126) The ongoing nature of poverty and the resistance shown to some of the apparent solutions advanced by CPAG have probably made the

124. Wallace, W. The Pressure Group Phenomenon in Frost (ed.)
op cit p.99

125 For a discussion of this term see Barr, J. The Amenity
Protestors, New Society 1.8.68

126. See Kimber & Richardson Ch.8 and Frost pp.73-81

variation in the group's style and tactics necessary, if only to keep the issue on the boil. This has perhaps been the supreme tactical obstacle for a 'pressure group for the poor' to overcome i.e. how to hold attention once gained. The issue of poverty seems, for the most part, to have remained firmly lodged at stage three of the Downes' 'issue attention cycle' in a kind of political limbo - never quite the source of fierce inter-party debate, never quite removed from the agenda but never able to attract sufficient political and administrative support to speed its significant progress.

CPAG has not been able to pursue the relatively straightforward tactical options of private members legislation, such as DIG have successfully done in their lobbying for a Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act in 1970, (127) as a means of 'doing something effective' about poverty since the problem is both too complex and vague to readily lend itself to such a format. Instead the group has largely stood by the single mechanism campaign updating family allowances. Ultimately, of course, solutions to poverty are about attitudes and resources, and changing the status quo in each is a difficult task as this study has shown.

More positively, we may note that CPAG has made an important contribution to the poverty debate in one very clear sense, in that the information, ideas and pressure it has generated in the last 15 years have exposed government policy to a critical light, have required a greater and more open justification of it and have therefore contributed to a greater rationality in the formulation, implementation and administration of social policy. Finally, we may reflect that the fact that CPAG has not won the sustained attention it has sought for its aims and has not achieved many

of the 'reforms' it has pressed for may well be a testament to the ability of the system to regulate the multiplicity of claims exerted upon it. Far from being an indictment of the system, the experience of CPAG as a group and poverty as an issue may show how effectively the processes of priority - scheduling and agenda management work in a situation of scarce resources and group bargaining.

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