ANTI-SOCIALISM, LIBERALISM AND INDIVIDUALISM: RETHINKING THE REALIGNMENT OF SCOTTISH POLITICS, 1945–1970.*

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ABSTRACT. This article presents an alternative interpretation of Scottish politics between 1945 and 1970, a period that witnessed the decline of a once-powerful Unionist tradition, the revival of Liberalism, and rise of the Scottish National Party. While existing accounts have focused principally upon social and economic factors, this study foregrounds the role of ideology and rhetoric. During the 1940s and early 1950s, Scottish Unionists were, like their Conservative colleagues elsewhere in Britain, able to construct a popular, but essentially negative, anti-socialist coalition that prioritised the defence of individual liberty. This electoral alliance, defined by opposition to Labour's programme of nationalisation and expressed via an individualist idiom, was able to attract broad support; it was, however, always provisional, and proved increasingly difficult to sustain after the Conservative party returned to office in 1951. It was, this article suggests, the fragmenting of this anti-socialist coalition in the late 1950s and early 1960s that created the opportunity for both the Liberals and the SNP to present alternative renderings of this individualist appeal, and to emerge as credible political alternatives. Crucially, by the 1960s individual liberty was beginning to be understood in constitutional rather than economic terms.

The quarter century following the Second World War saw the transformation of Scottish politics. In the decade after 1945 election results in Scotland largely mirrored wider British trends, with Labour initially dominant, before the Unionists, as the Conservatives were

labelled in Scotland until 1965, recovered in the early 1950s.[1] From the 1959 general election onwards, however, Labour enjoyed an electoral supremacy that would survive for more than five decades; in contrast, the Unionists, and their Conservative successors, entered an era of sustained decline. Scottish Conservatism's travails were accentuated by the resuscitation of Liberalism and the arrival of the Scottish National Party (SNP) as a credible political force. By the 1970s, a distinctive four-party Scottish electoral contest was established.[2]

Assessments of this period of political realignment have emphasised the importance of several factors. Secularisation eroded the popular Protestantism that underpinned working-class Unionism, exposing the party to accusations that it represented only a remote and Anglicised landed elite, and encouraging younger voters to view the SNP with greater sympathy. Further, the growing reliance of Scots on the public sector for employment and housing, coupled with the relative weakness of the Scottish economy from the late 1950s, entrenched support for the Labour party in urban and industrial areas, while simultaneously lending weight to nationalist criticisms of the performance of successive Westminster regimes. The improved fortunes of the SNP have, perhaps more speculatively, been attributed too to a loss of faith in British identity triggered by economic stagnation and imperial retreat.[3] Equally, political scientists have suggested that the fall in Unionist support after 1959

[1] The name was a legacy of the 1912 merger with the Liberal Unionists. See: C. Burness, *'Strange Associations': The Irish Question and the Making of Scottish Unionism, 1886–1918* (East Linton, 2003).

[2] W. L. Miller, *The End of British Politics? Scots and English Political Behaviour in the Seventies* (Oxford, 1981); I. G. C. Hutchison, *Scottish Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2001), 98–139; E. A. Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle: Scotland since 1880* (Edinburgh, 2010), 263–319.

[3] J. G. Kellas, 'The Party in Scotland' in A. Seldon and S. Ball (eds), *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, 1994), 671–93; R. J. Finlay, *A Partnership for Good? Scottish Politics and the Union since 1880* (Edinburgh, 1997), 'Unionism and the Dependency Culture: Politics and State Intervention in Scotland, 1918–1997' in C. M. M. MacDonald (ed.), *Unionist Scotland, 1800–1997* (Edinburgh, 1998), 100–16, and 'Patriotism, Paternalism and Pragmatism: Scottish Toryism, Union and Empire, 1912–65' in D. Torrance (ed.), *Whatever Happened to Tory Scotland?* (Edinburgh, 2012), 29–42. For contrasting interpretations of the impact of empire, see: T. M. Devine, 'The Break-up of Britain? Scotland and the End of Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 16 (2006), 163–80; J. O. Nielsen and S. Ward, '"Cramped and Restricted at Home"? Scottish Separatism at Empire's End', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (2015), 159–85.

represented the assertion of 'natural' political allegiances, as Scotland's social and economic structure began to be reflected at the polls.[4] It is, in such a reading, the anomaly of earlier Unionist success that needs explanation, with the distinctive Scottish aspects of the party's appeal being highlighted.[5]

Such developments were undoubtedly significant. The intention in this study is, nonetheless, to offer a different perspective, one that both complements and complicates existing accounts by foregrounding the role of ideology in post-war Scottish politics, as disclosed chiefly through political rhetoric. Since the 1920s, Unionists had exploited concerns over the alleged threat posed by socialism to attract the support of erstwhile Liberals, often building upon the purportedly non-partisan anti-Labour pacts established at a municipal level.[6] During the 1940s this anti-socialist appeal was amplified by wartime experiences and the election of the first majority Labour government, imbuing Unionism with an individualist idiom centred upon the defence of individual liberty, and opposed to the expansion of the authority of central government. The principal divide within Scottish political debate after 1945 was provided not by class, or by attitudes towards the constitution, but by this contest between individualism and socialism. Efforts to understand post-war Scottish politics require an examination of why the electoral alliance assembled beneath the Unionist banner, and held together by an appeal to individual freedom, began to disintegrate. We should, then, reconsider the language used by Unionist politicians and their allies, as well

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[4] S. Kendrick and D. McCrone, 'Politics in a Cold Climate: The Conservative Decline in Scotland', *Political Studies* 37(4) (1989), 589–603.
[5] J. Mitchell, *The Conservatives and the Union* (Edinburgh, 1990); D. Seawright and J. Curtice, 'The Decline of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, 1950–1992: Religion, Ideology or Economics?', *Contemporary Record* 9 (1995), 319–42; D. Seawright, 'Scottish Unionist Party: What's in a Name?', *Scottish Affairs* 14 (1996), 90–102, and *An Important Matter of Principle: The Decline of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party* (Aldershot, 1999). See also: Finlay, *Partnership for Good*, 139–40; C. Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes* 3rd ed. (Edinburgh, 1998), 108–9; M. Cragoe, '"We Like Local Patriotism": The Conservative Party and the Discourse of Decentralisation, 1947–51', *English Historical Review* 122 (2007), 965–85.
[6] J. J. Smyth, 'Resisting Labour: Unionists, Liberals, and Moderates in Glasgow between the Wars', *Historical Journal* 46(2) (2003), 375–401; Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, 163–8.

as the worldview they promoted. In doing so, we may relate an assessment of Scottish politics to wider British debates, and especially those that concern the fluctuating fortunes of what W. H. Greenleaf described as the 'libertarian strand' within British political thought.[7] Libertarian in this context should, of course, not be interpreted in a literal or absolute manner, but rather as denoting an inclination to view the growing power of the central state with foreboding, alongside a scepticism regarding the viability of economic planning.[8]

The primary concern here is, then, with the attempts of politicians to secure public support, to convince voters to view matters in a certain way; the focus is, by necessity, on what politicians said. As scholars of political rhetoric have recognised, ideologies are more than sets of substantive policy positions: they are, as Alan Finlayson and James Martin have stressed, also a matter of 'a "mood", an emotional register and a style of presentation'.[9] The analysis that follows is designed to trace the temper of post-war Scottish politics, particularly among that half of the electorate unconvinced by the claims of the Labour party. First, the nature of the Unionist appeal after 1945 is outlined; second, the rise of discontent among Unionist supporters in the late 1950s is explored alongside the upturn in the fortunes of the Liberal party; third, the Unionist response to the 1959 general election is examined; lastly, the implications of the decrease in Unionist support during the 1960s are assessed.

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[7] W. H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition, Volume II: The Ideological Heritage* (1983), 263–346.
[8] See: J. Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden, 1940–1957* (1995), 166–76; E. H. H. Green, *The Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2002), 192–239.
[9] A. Finlayson and J. Martin, '"It Ain't What You Say…": British Political Studies and the Analysis of Speech and Rhetoric', *British Politics* 3(4) (2008), 451. See also: R. Barker, 'Hooks and Hands, Interests and Enemies: Political Thinking as Political Action', *Political Studies* 48(2) (2000), 223–38; A. Finlayson, 'Political Science, Political Ideas and Rhetoric', *Economy and Society* 33(4), 528–49; R. Toye, *Rhetoric* (Oxford, 2013).

The Unionists, in common with their Conservative colleagues in England, contested the 1945 general election on a platform of defending individual freedom and lifting the economic controls imposed during wartime. The campaign culminated with Winston Churchill's infamous radio broadcast, where, echoing Friedrich Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, published the previous year, he warned that a Labour victory, and the ensuing introduction of socialism, would presage a slide into tyranny.[10] The result was, nevertheless, a Labour landslide, with the Conservatives enduring their worst defeat since 1906. Yet the party soon regrouped: at the 1950 general election Labour's parliamentary majority was reduced to five; the following year the Conservatives returned to power, and remained in office for over a decade.

Traditionally, the Conservative revival was attributed to the party's acceptance of the new political landscape created by the war and confirmed by Labour's victory in 1945, one in which the primary role of government was to ensure full employment, manage a mixed economy, and oversee the running of the nascent welfare state.[11] It was, in this model, not until the 1970s that this governing consensus collapsed, amid economic crisis and the Conservative party's turn to the right under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher.[12] Since the 1990s, however, this interpretation has been questioned, and the extent to which Conservative opinion remained unreconciled to the post-war settlement emphasised. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska highlighted the crucial role that opposition to rationing, particularly among female voters, played in the Conservative victory in 1951; likewise, Harriet Jones argued that

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[10] R. Toye, 'Winston Churchill's "Crazy Broadcast": Party, Nation, and the 1945 Gestapo Broadcast', *Journal of British Studies*, 49 (2010), 655–80. On Hayek's influence on the Conservative campaign, which came via the party chairman, Ralph Assheton, see: R. Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931–1983* (1994), 91–9; Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, 219–20.

[11] For key interventions see: P. Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (1975); J. Ramsden, '"A Party for Owners or a Party for Earners?" How far did the Conservative Party really change after 1945?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 37 (1987), 49–63; R. Lowe, 'The Second World War, Consensus and the Foundation of the Welfare State', *Twentieth Century British History* 1(2) (1990), 152–82; D. Kavanagh, 'The Post-war Consensus', *Twentieth Century British History* 3(2) (1992), 175–90.

[12] B. Harrison, 'The Rise, Fall and Rise of Political Consensus in Britain since 1940', *History* 84 (1999), 301–24.

post-war Conservatism was hostile towards redistributive taxation and universal welfare provision.[13] For Ewen Green, notions of a post-war consensus were weakened by the continued influence within Conservative ranks of 'liberal-market' opposition to state intervention.[14] As Green noted drily, the party's slogan in this era was '"Set the People Free", not the welfare state and the mixed economy are safe in our hands'.[15]

Still, these debates have had relatively little impact on studies of Scottish politics, where the conviction that Unionist success hinged upon a combination of an appeal to Scottish identity and an embrace of corporatism remains dominant.[16] Yet this assessment is at odds with the rhetoric often deployed by the party, infused as it could be with Hayekian warnings that the increasing powers accrued by the central state, while perhaps necessary during wartime, had become a threat to personal freedom, and claims that Labour's programme of nationalisation would, if allowed to continue, lead inexorably to totalitarianism. As the party's western divisional council declared in 1948, the Labour government had overseen the erection of 'a crazy economy' characterised by 'crushing taxation, restrictive controls, subsidies and a depreciated currency': the public must choose 'between the Unionist policy of a free economy and the democratic way of life on the one hand, and Socialist State monopoly and eventual servitude on the other'.[17]

Individual Unionist politicians could speak in similarly apocalyptic terms. At a constituency association meeting in late 1946, William McNair Snadden, MP for Kinross and

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[13] I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Rationing, Austerity and the Conservative Party Recovery after 1945', *Historical Journal* 37(1) (1994), 173–97; H. Jones, 'A Bloodless Counter-Revolution: The Conservative Party and the Defence of Inequality, 1945–51' in H. Jones and M. Kandiah (eds), *The Myth of Consensus* (Basingstoke, 1996), 1–16.

[14] E. H. H. Green, 'The Conservative Party, the State and the Electorate, 1945–64' in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), 176–200.

[15] Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, 220. For a considered critique of this revisionist stance, see: R. McKibbin, *Parties and People: England, 1914–1951* (Oxford, 2010), 164–76.

[16] Harvie, *No Gods*, 104, 108–9; Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, 74; Finlay, 'Unionism and the Dependency Culture', 107–8. Although see the suggestive comments in: Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, 271–7.

[17] National Library of Scotland (NLS) Acc. 10424/27: Scottish Unionist Association (SUA) Western Divisional Council (WDC), *Annual Report 1948*, 2–3. Capitalisation in original.

West Perthshire, advised that the 'Socialist [i.e. Labour] policy of concentrating power into the hands of a few political bosses would result in the … final destruction of the freedom of the individual': he urged all 'anti-socialists' to unite, since, if they remained divided, 'they made certain of bringing about the very thing they had fought for six years to destroy – the Totalitarian State'. A year later, following the introduction of direction of labour, Snadden warned that the 'fundamental right of the citizen to choose his own work was being taken away [and] if they did not bring down the Government then the Government would bring down the nation'.[18] Such doom-laden predictions were, no matter how hyperbolic, a common refrain, as Unionists depicted every political issue as evidence of the need to remove the Labour government from office. At a mass rally at Callender House in Falkirk, James Reid, the Unionist MP for Glasgow Hillhead who had served as Lord Advocate in the wartime coalition, stated that the next general election 'would be vital for the future of this country', since if Labour was re-elected, 'they would drift to the left and freedom and prosperity would be so far gone that perhaps we should never recover'.[19] A few months later Reid's Unionist counterpart in Glasgow Central, James Hutchison, declared that nationalisation had created 'a race of sycophants – people who were always wondering if the man above was satisfied'. The public, he lamented, 'simply did not realise just how dangerous a situation was being created for them'.[20] Alan Gomme Duncan, the Unionist member for Perth, was even blunter: if Labour secured another term, he warned, it would mark the 'last general election in this country'.[21]

Of course, none of these hysterical predictions were borne out by events; nor is it clear that the politicians who made them believed what they said. These limitations are,

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[18] Perth and Kinross Council Archives MS 152/2/1/3: Kinross and West Perthshire Unionist Association Minutes, 30 Nov. 1946 and 29 Nov. 1947. Capitalisation in original. Direction of labour was intended to ensure that those out of work were guided towards vacancies in productive, export-led industries.
[19] *Grangemouth Advertiser*, 24 Jul. 1948.
[20] *Falkirk Herald*, 27 Nov. 1948.
[21] *Grangemouth Advertiser*, 18 Dec. 1948.

nevertheless, comparatively unimportant: such statements were, to use Maurice Cowling's formulation, 'a form of exemplary utterance', an 'attempt to provide new landmarks for the electorate'.[22] What matters is that it was through an explicit rejection of consensus, and the promotion of a binary political contest structured around opposition to socialism, that Unionist politicians believed they could win public backing. Clearly, this approach was not total, or necessarily coherent: the party did not reject government action in every field; notably, Unionists, like their Conservative counterparts in England and Wales, considered local government to be an important source of civic identity and an essential counterweight to the expansion of the central state.[23] The dangers of socialism stemmed from centralisation, as embodied by the 'vast State monopolies' created to administer the nationalised industries.[24]

This conception of post-war politics informed the Unionist appeal to Scottish national identity, usually treated as a cynical, if nonetheless successful, effort to provoke opposition to nationalisation from the safety of opposition.[25] There was, no doubt, a degree of electoral calculation present: it was not mere chance that the Unionist promotion of Scottish autonomy coincided with the launch of the Scottish Covenant, a mass petition in support of home rule organised by John MacCormick, the former national secretary of the SNP.[26] And, as Matthew Cragoe has shown, sympathy towards Scottish and Welsh sensibilities was integral to Conservatism's broader 'discourse of decentralisation'.[27] But it would be wrong to dismiss this simply as tactics: as with the defence of local government, the promotion of Scottish distinctiveness was effective because it could be accommodated within, and even strengthen,

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[22] M. Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920–1924* (Cambridge, 1971), 5.

[23] See: SUA, *Scottish Control of Scottish Affairs* (Edinburgh, 1949).

[24] National Union of Conservative Associations, *The Right Road for Britain* (1949), 7.

[25] Harvie, *No Gods*, 108; Finlay, *Partnership for Good*, 139–40; J. Mitchell, *Conservatives and the Union*, 48–50, and *The Scottish Question* (Oxford, 2014), 55–7 and 79–85.

[26] On the Covenant, see: J. Mitchell, *Strategies for Self-Government: The Campaigns for a Scottish Parliament* (Edinburgh, 1996), 144–53; I. Levitt, 'Britain, the Scottish Covenant Movement and Devolution, 1946–50', *Scottish Affairs* 22 (1998), 33–57. On MacCormick, see: M. R. Petrie, 'John MacCormick' in J. Mitchell and G. Hassan (eds), *SNP Leaders* (2016), 43–63.

[27] Cragoe, 'We Like Local Patriotism'.

a pre-existing critique of centralised bureaucracy. It was not just that the growing dominance of Whitehall and Westminster threatened Scottish autonomy: socialism was a form of 'despotism', a political philosophy hostile to 'individuality either in men or in nations'.[28] Equally, Churchill's deployment of quasi-nationalist language when appearing in Scotland during the 1950 and 1951 general election campaigns was tempered by his assertion that it was the prospect of the 'serfdom of socialism' that threatened the union between Scotland and England.[29] Even in the case of John MacCormick's candidacy at the 1948 Paisley by-election, when MacCormick felt he had united Labour's opponents on a home rule platform, local Unionists backed him only on the basis that he was the 'anti-socialist candidate'.[30]

For all that Unionism was defined by hostility to socialism, it was not narrowly partisan in outlook. If anything, the urgency of the threat alleged to be posed by Labour required the construction of a broad-based anti-socialist coalition. This strategy was evident in the 1947 pact concluded with the National Liberals, which saw the parties merge their constituency apparatus in some sixty seats.[31] As the parties declared in a joint statement, there was 'one fundamental political issue', namely 'whether the principles of liberty of the individual' and 'freedom of enterprise' would survive, 'or whether the Socialist doctrine of regimentation, state-ownership and centralised control is to prevail'.[32] National Liberalism, which originated with those Liberals who remained loyal to the National Government after the abandonment of free trade in 1932, has been largely forgotten, with the 1947 agreement viewed as marking the effective end of the party's independent existence.[33] This may have been true in England, where the relative strength of Conservatism was far greater. In

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[28] SUA, *Scottish Control of Scottish Affairs* (Edinburgh, 1949), 1–2.
[29] Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism*, 119.
[30] NLS Acc. 10424/34: SUA WDC Minutes, 4 Feb. 1948. On the Paisley by-election, see: M. Dyer, '"A Nationalist in the Churchillian Sense": John MacCormick, the Paisley by-election of 18 February 1948, Home Rule and the Crisis in Scottish Liberalism', *Parliamentary History* 22(3) (2003), 285–307.
[31] Ramsden, *Age of Churchill and Eden*, 197–205.
[32] NLS Acc. 11368/4: SUA Central Council (CC) Minutes, 2 Sept. 1947.
[33] The only full study is: D. Dutton, *Liberals in Schism: A History of the National Liberal Party* (2008).

Scotland, though, National Liberalism enjoyed a long afterlife, exerting influence throughout the 1950s. Of the sixty joint constituency associations established by 1950, fifteen were in Scotland; in the decade that followed, the National Liberals routinely secured the support of just under one in ten Scottish voters, while the number of candidates adopting some form of the label increased.[34] National Liberalism's appeal was especially potent in the north east, south west and Highlands, areas of historic Conservative weakness: here Unionism bent towards an entrenched Liberalism. Conspicuous too was the prominence of National Liberals sitting for Scottish seats both in the leadership of their party at Westminster, and, after 1951, in ministerial roles at the Scottish Office. Between 1947 and 1964, the position of National Liberal chairman was held exclusively by Scottish MPs, while John Maclay, National Liberal MP for West Renfrewshire, served as Secretary of State for Scotland between 1957 and 1962; Niall MacPherson and James Henderson-Stewart, who sat as National Liberals for Galloway and East Fife respectively, were both junior Scottish Office ministers in this period.[35] The National Liberals were not, as has been suggested, simply 'absorbed' by the Unionists.[36]

More even than support at the polls or personnel in cabinet, National Liberalism offered Unionism's instinctive anti-socialism, inherited from the 1920s and defined by allegations that socialism was a close relative of Bolshevism, and posed a similar threat to organised religion and family life, a more coherent intellectual framework.[37] If, in England, former Liberals were enlisted as 'subaltern anti-socialists', across rural and provincial Scotland the Unionists, through their association with National Liberalism, operated as ersatz Liberals.[38] Post-war Unionism is, then, understood best as composite in nature, as a coalition

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[34] Hutchison, *Scottish Politics*, 76–9.
[35] From 1947 until 1956 the role of National Liberal chairman was performed by John Maclay; Maclay was succeeded by James Duncan, MP for South Angus, James Henderson-Stewart, MP for East Fife, and Colin Thornton-Kemsley, who represented North Angus and Mearns.
[36] C. M. M. MacDonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet: Scotland's Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2009), 205.
[37] On inter-war Unionism, see: Hutchison, 'Scottish Unionism between the Two World Wars' in MacDonald (ed.), *Unionist Scotland*, 82–4.
[38] Green, 'The Conservative Party, the State and the Electorate', 192.

of Conservatives, Liberals and even nationalists united by a shared opposition to socialism. Such a view was given voice by Henderson-Stewart when he addressed a meeting of Unionist and National Liberal activists in South Angus in November 1949. Warning that if Labour was returned to power for a second term then liberal values would disappear 'for a generation', Henderson-Stewart urged Liberal and nationalists to support what he termed the 'coalition led by Mr Churchill', since if there was 'a straight fight in every constituency', Labour 'would be thrashed'.[39] A year later Maclay called similarly for a 'united front' to defeat socialism, and asked Liberals to overlook their historic opposition to Toryism and prioritise instead their shared commitment to individual freedom.[40]

The arrangement with the National Liberals was intended to act as a prelude to a wider pact with the Liberal party. Although a formal alliance would prove elusive, winning over those who traditionally voted Liberal was central to Conservative electoral strategy.[41] As the party's 1950 campaign guide argued, there was 'little fundamental difference between the Conservatives and Liberals such as exists between these parties and the bureaucratic and, at times, totalitarian control of the present Socialist Party'.[42] Indeed, the dramatic fall in the number of Liberal candidates at the 1951 general election was a critical factor in the Conservative victory. But Liberal retrenchment was partly a recognition of electoral reality, as opposition to Labour overrode older party loyalties, and limited the demand for more than one anti-socialist candidate in each constituency. Winston Churchill, upon his return to office in 1951, even offered the Liberal leader Clement Davies the role of Minister of Education in his new cabinet.[43]

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[39] University of Dundee Archives (UDA) MS 309/2/2/3/1: South Angus Unionist and National Liberal Association, Forfar Branch, Minutes, 11 Nov. 1949.
[40] J. Maclay, *Liberalism and the Present Situation* (1950).
[41] McKibbin, *Parties and People*, 167–9.
[42] Conservative Party, *General Election 1950: The Campaign Guide* (1950), 580.
[43] An offer Davies declined: P. Sloman, *The Liberal Party and the Economy, 1929–1964* (Oxford, 2015), 185.

Claims that there was a return to partisan politics after 1945, or that elections in the 1950s were monochrome, two-party affairs, should thus be treated with caution.[44] Such a conclusion does a disservice to the patchwork, provisional nature of Unionism; it also overlooks the motivations of activists and voters. The 'culture of coalitionism' identified by Michael Dyer as prevailing on the centre and right of Scottish politics during the 1930s, but which he suggests was fading by the late 1940s, was in truth revitalised by antagonism towards the post-war Labour government and by the context of the cold war, which encouraged anti-communist sentiment, and granted warnings of a drift towards totalitarianism a certain plausibility, however ridiculous they appear in retrospect. To select one voice as an example: in late 1949, George Ramsay, a member of the executive committee of the Central Ayrshire Unionist association, wrote to Lord Woolton, the Conservative party chairman, to encourage the pursuit of unity with the Liberals. Despite his participation in Unionist politics, Ramsay described himself openly as a lifelong Liberal; crucially, though, while known locally as a Liberal, he was, he claimed, 'better known … as an anti-socialist', active in Unionist politics as it was the only party in the area that was 'fighting Socialism'.[45]

In constituencies with more robust Liberal traditions than Central Ayrshire, informal local agreements, designed to maximise the anti-Labour vote, were reached. The clearest example was Dundee, where cooperation between Liberals and Unionists had existed since the 1920s, a result of the city being one of the few double-member constituencies to survive into the twentieth century. When this changed ahead of the 1950 general election, and Dundee was split into eastern and western divisions, the old agreement, whereby the parties each nominated one candidate, was rendered obsolete; matters were complicated further by

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[44] M. Dyer, 'The Evolution of the Centre-Right and the State of Scottish Conservatism', *Political Studies* 49(1) (2001), 30–50, and 'A Nationalist in the Churchillian Sense'.
[45] Bodleian Library (BL) Conservative Party Archive (CPA) Conservative Central Office (CCO) 4/3/43: George Ramsay to Lord Woolton, 27 Nov. 1949. Capitalisation in original.

the Unionist pact with the National Liberals. Throughout 1948 and 1949 the Dundee Unionist association, now incorporating the National Liberals, encouraged local Liberals to agree to an alliance.[46] In practice, this meant supporting a National Liberal candidate in both seats. Initially, the Liberals refused, insisting that they would contest Dundee West, nominating the journalist John Junor and blaming the Unionists for creating a 'situation where two anti-Socialist candidates are going forward in the Western division'. Yet there was little local appetite for separate candidacies, and an Anti-Socialist association was formed just three weeks before polling to press for a pact. Similar demands were made by the Dundee Housewives' association, an organisation that campaigned for an end to rationing.[47] Within days Junor agreed to stand down, on the condition that if the Unionist candidate was defeated then the Liberals would be given the opportunity to contest the seat at the next election. Important here is the fact that none of this was sanctioned by the Liberal leadership: indeed, the national party promoted a last-minute Liberal candidacy in Dundee West. But this was shunned by local members, who viewed anti-socialist unity as the primary aim. Such compromises could work in the opposite direction, as in Greenock, where in 1950 the Unionists stood aside in favour of the Liberals. Likewise, in Ross and Cromarty the Unionist association offered support to Jack Macleod, first elected in 1945 as an independent Liberal, stating that as long as candidates opposed socialism, they had little interest in party labels.[48] At the 1951 election Unionists had reached 'anti-socialist' understandings, whether with Liberals or National Liberals, in twenty of Scotland's seventy-one constituencies.[49]

These tactics were not always successful: in Dundee and Greenock, the anti-socialist candidates, whether Unionist, Liberal, or some combination of both, failed to defeat the

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[46] UDA MS 270/1/1/2: Dundee Unionist Association Minutes, 10 Feb. 1948. Capitalisation in original.
[47] *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, 31 Jan., 3 and 7 Feb. 1950. On the emergence of the housewives' groups, see: J. Hinton, 'Militant Housewives: The British Housewives' League and the Attlee Government', *History Workshop* 28 (1994), 128–56.
[48] *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 20 Oct. 1951.
[49] See the list in: BL CPA CCO 4/3/319: *A United Front Against Socialism*, 16 Apr. 1951.

Labour incumbents. All the same, they illustrate the extent to which Unionist electoral

success in the 1950s was conditional. It rested upon two claims: first, that Labour presented a

threat to individual liberty and economic freedom; second, that the Unionists were best

placed to check, and then reverse, the socialist advance. The question was always how long

such a defensive electoral coalition could last, and whether it could survive the transition

from opposition to government.

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The Conservatives, having defeated Labour at the 1951 general election, were returned to

office with an increased majority in 1955; in Scotland, the Unionists and National Liberals

together secured a majority of both votes and seats. Soon, though, the anti-socialism that

underlay Conservative success began to fray, and the party's vote slumped at a series of by-

elections, climaxing with the Liberal victory at Torrington in March 1958. The humiliation of

the Suez crisis, which ended the career of Churchill's successor Anthony Eden, was partly

responsible; there were, however, other determinants. The stringency of the individualist

appeal employed by the Conservatives in opposition was always likely to prove difficult to

sustain in office. Nevertheless, the return of iron and steel to private ownership, and the

abandonment of Labour's plans to nationalise road haulage, could, when set alongside

reductions in income tax and the abolition of rationing in 1954, be presented as evidence that

the government had delivered on its pledges 'to restore freedom, to reduce the burden of

taxation and to give individual men and women a better chance to live a decent life'.[50] In

Scotland, Unionists could point too to the appointment of an additional Minister of State to

the Scottish Office, and the convening of a Royal Commission on Scottish Affairs, as

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[50] Conservative Party, *General Election 1955: The Campaign Guide* (1955), 1.

evidence of their commitment to the defence of Scottish autonomy from the incursions of

London.[51] For the leadership, this represented the limits of the possible: further attempts at

reform of the nationalised industries, or scaling back of the welfare state, risked controversy.

But for party activists and voters, this caution was a source of frustration, as rising inflation

eroded the position of those on fixed incomes and fostered antipathy towards the seemingly

privileged position enjoyed by organised labour, especially in the public sector.[52]

In Scotland, complaints that the government was failing to live up to its pre-election

rhetoric were heard soon after the Conservatives had regained power: in 1953 there were

demands from Unionist supporters for 'more evidence of the intention to reduce the

government's expenditure of the taxpayer's money'. After the 1955 general election these

grievances were voiced with increasing frequency. In October 1955, Patrick Blair, secretary

of the Scottish Unionist association, reported a widespread 'feeling' amongst the party's

supporters that there had not been a sufficient commitment to reducing public expenditure;

there was, he reported, a feeling that the government was 'too much afraid of voters who will

not support it anyhow at any time', and was doing 'too little' to assist 'the really stabilising

element of the population'. Unionist voters, he warned, were beginning 'to say that it does

not matter which party is in office – they are equally bad'. Here was an early iteration of the

criticism of consensus that would come to prevail on the political right in the 1970s. The

following year, Blair related a desire among Unionist voters for reductions in both the level

of taxation and government spending, amid 'complaints' of what was referred to as the 'slow

torture of the middle classes', some of whom were threatening to either abstain at the next

election, or, worse, vote Liberal.[53] As the annual report of the party's western divisional

council noted, the challenges facing the 'Middle Classes' were being 'frequently and

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[51] Mitchell, *Scottish Question*, 79–85.
[52] Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, 220; Ramsden, *Age of Churchill and Eden*, 294–303.
[53] BL CPA CCO 2/3/18: Scottish Intelligence Summaries, Feb. 1953, Oct. 1955 and May 1956.

vigorously stressed'.[54] By July 1956, the party's president, William Sinclair, was protesting

that he 'found himself continually defending the Government not against recognised

opponents but against declared Unionist Electors, some of whom were threatening to

withdraw their support from the Party'. This anger, Sinclair made clear, was driven by

concerns over 'the cost of living, inflation and the lack of resistance to Trade Union demands

for more and more wages not covered by corresponding increases in production'.[55]

The most notable short-term political consequence of these expressions of discontent

was the emergence of the Middle Class Alliance (MCA) and the People's League for the

Defence of Freedom (PLDF), pressure groups that demanded reductions in government

expenditure, further tax cuts, and, in the case of the PLDF, the removal of the legal privileges

granted to the trades unions. This so-called 'middle class revolt' has been discussed from the

standpoint of national politics, as part of the background to the electoral revival of the Liberal

party.[56] The activities of the MCA and PLDF, and the January 1958 treasury resignations,

when the chancellor, Peter Thorneycroft, and two junior treasury ministers, Enoch Powell

and Nigel Birch, stepped down in protest at the refusal of the cabinet to endorse spending

cuts intended to curb inflation, have been treated too as a precursor to the politicisation of

inflation in the 1970s.[57] Yet the MCA and PLDF enjoyed a presence in Scotland that should

encourage a reassessment of the basis of Scottish politics during the 1950s; the Unionist

leadership certainly feared that the energies of party members were being diverted by

membership of these organisations.[58] Patrick Blair cautioned Unionists against being swayed

by the aggressive stance adopted by the PLDF in particular: the demand that trades unions

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[54] NLS Acc. 10424/27: SUA WDC, *Annual Report 1956*, 3. Capitalisation in original.
[55] NLS Acc. 11368/4: SUA CC Minutes, 4 Jul. 1956. Capitalisation in original.
[56] Ramsden, *Age of Churchill and Eden*, 294–303. On Liberal attempts to exploit middle-class discontent, see: Sloman, *Liberal Party and the Economy*, 209–12.
[57] E. H. H. Green, 'The Treasury Resignations of 1958: A Reconsideration', *Twentieth Century British History* 11 (2000), 409–30.
[58] NLS Acc. 10424/36: SUA WDC Education and Propaganda Committee Minutes, 25 Sept. 1956; Acc. 10424/50: SUA Eastern Divisional Council (EDC) Minutes, 12 Dec. 1956; Acc. 11368/22: SUA EDC Minutes, 11 Apr. 1958.

should again be made liable for losses incurred as a result of industrial action would, he warned, create a 'tremendous surge of ill-feeling' likely to be electorally damaging. Blair pleaded that the government was trying its utmost 'to arrest inflation and maintain the value of money'.[59]

Despite Blair's efforts, it was difficult to reconcile the pragmatism of the party leadership with the distrust of state intervention and organised labour prevalent among Unionist supporters; moreover, the affinity between Liberals and Unionists, rooted in a hostility towards socialism and concern for individual freedom, was weakening by the second half of the 1950s. The Unionist vote collapsed by upwards of twenty percentage points at a series of by-elections between 1957 and 1959, each time as a result of Liberal intervention in seats not contested by the party since 1950. At Edinburgh South in May 1957, the Liberal candidate polled nearly a quarter of the vote: the Unionist post-mortem attributed the increase in Liberal support to 'disgruntlement' among 'middle-class voters' and a 'feeling that [the] government was not sufficiently Tory', a reference, it seemed, to the failure of the government to pursue further economic reforms.[60] Similar conclusions were reached by Lord John Hope, a junior minister at the Scottish Office and the MP for Edinburgh Pentlands. Hope accepted that the 'cost of living' was an issue; he suggested, nonetheless, that 'something else' had caused 'discontent' to 'develop into anger'. There was, he felt, 'a widespread feeling that the only people who had been insulated against rises in the cost of living were the people who had caused it – the Trades Unionists with their endless wage demands'.[61] Such sentiments were certainly visible: in early 1958, in a letter to the Conservative chairman Lord Hailsham, Gordon Murray, secretary of Dundee Unionist and National Liberal association, recorded local support for the recently departed treasury

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[59] NLS Acc. 11368/22: SUA EDC Minutes, 5 Oct. 1956.
[60] NLS Acc. 11368/24: SUA EDC Executive Committee Minutes, 17 Jun. 1957.
[61] NLS Acc. 11368/22: SUA EDC Minutes, 4 Oct. 1957.

ministers, expressing his hope that the 'prosperity of the country [would] not be jeopardised in pandering to unjust and unrealistic demands, from whatever section they may come'.[62]

The stance adopted by the Liberal party during this period is instructive. Jo Grimond, the MP for Orkney and Shetland who assumed the leadership of the party in 1956, repositioned the Liberals as a progressive alternative to Labour's state socialism.[63] Yet Grimond's defence of individual freedom, criticisms of nationalisation and the welfare state, and support for further reductions in personal taxation, represented a renewal of post-war anti-socialism and individualism rather than a departure. Notably, the Conservative government was now being reproached for being too timid in its reforms, too willing to acquiesce in the settlement inherited from Labour. Grimond accused the Conservatives of 'conserving Socialism', and of failing to address the high taxes and excessive government expenditure he believed to be the 'most damaging legacy of Socialism'. To those worried that a vote for the Liberals would allow Labour to regain power, Grimond replied that 'surely there is no point in keeping a Conservative Government in power unless it is going to be something different *in kind* from a Socialist Government'.[64]

This message was clearly intended to appeal to disillusioned Unionist supporters. In May 1958 there were reports from Unionist agents across Scotland of a Liberal revival driven by a suspicion that the government was 'pandering too much to Socialism' with the result that 'too much is being spent on the Welfare State'.[65] At the June 1958 Argyllshire by-election, the Liberal candidate William McKean, who secured almost thirty per cent of the vote, told the public that, although new to the Liberal party, 'he felt he must take a stand now against the two major parties. If we did not the individual would be crushed'. He offered a

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[62] BL CPA CCO 1/12/552–3: Area Files, Dundee: Gordon Murray to Lord Hailsham, 17 Jan. 1958.
[63] Sloman, *Liberal Party and the Economy*, 204–29.
[64] J. Grimond, *The New Liberal Democracy* (1958), 17. Emphasis and capitalisation in original.
[65] BL CPA CCO 2//20: Scottish Intelligence Summary, May 1958. Capitalisation in original.

programme of tax cuts and restrictions on public and private monopolies. Speaking in his support, John Bannerman, chairman of the Scottish Liberals, echoed McKean's individualism, declaring that his party would return the state to its proper role as 'servant of the people', and would always 'look to the individual's interest'.[66]

By the close of the 1950s the division that had sustained electoral politics in Scotland since 1945 had become confused. The Conservative record in office had, unsurprisingly, failed to match the heights of the party's rhetoric in opposition. Equally, the Liberal revival after 1955, however limited and lacking in lasting parliamentary success, suggested that the longer the Conservative party remained in office, the more exposed it would be to criticisms that drew on the very language of liberal individualism that had been so central to its earlier victories. It was, however, the party's response to the 1959 general election that would prove critical in the ensuing realignment of Scottish politics.

<div align="center">III</div>

The loss by the Unionists of their pre-eminent position in Scotland in 1959, a result that contrasted with continued Conservative success in England, was believed by contemporaries to be a consequence of Scotland's relatively weak economic performance. Unionists in the west of Scotland were convinced that the national decision to campaign on the theme of rising prosperity had been mistaken, with the 'fear of unemployment' and hostility towards the 1957 Rent Act, which lifted controls on private lettings, strengthening support for Labour in working-class communities.[67] This supposition has been echoed by subsequent

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[66] BL CPA CCO 1/12/556/1: Area Files, Argyll: Report of meeting, Victoria Hall, Campbeltown, 29 May 1958.
[67] NLS Acc. 11368/39: SUA WDC Minutes, 6 Nov. 1959; Acc. 10424/27: SUA WDC, *Annual Report 1959*, 2–3.

assessments, which have stressed the electoral impact of economic concerns, and the extent

to which this assisted the Labour party by increasing public support for state intervention.[68]

To be sure, the Unionists lost four seats in 1959, all to Labour: Central Ayrshire,

Lanark, and the Craigton and Scotstoun divisions of Glasgow. There is, all the same, a sense

that the party misread these results: as Richard Finlay has rightly observed, Labour's gains in

Scotland stemmed from the vagaries of the electoral system.[69] The Unionists had held the

four seats lost by a cumulative majority of fewer than 2000 votes: these were constituencies

secured narrowly in the early 1950s, and the party's support had only to fall slightly for them

to be lost. In truth, the Unionist vote was reasonably resilient in 1959: in tandem with the

National Liberals, the party still outpolled the Labour party across Scotland. Indeed, in

Glasgow, Unionist support amongst the electorate as a whole even increased marginally,

despite the loss of two seats, and the party regained the city's Kelvingrove division, lost at a

by-election in 1958.[70] Claims that Scottish politics had moved leftwards were thus overstated,

and obscured the extent to which Labour's vote had largely remained static. Where Unionist

support did fall this was more often due to the intervention of Liberal candidates.

Yet the signs that the ties that bound the post-war anti-socialist coalition were

beginning to loosen went unheeded. Unionist commentators chose to focus instead on the

contest with Labour, and to continue to treat support for the Liberals uncomplicatedly as a

proxy vote for Unionism. For the *Glasgow Herald*, Unionist in loyalty, the Liberals were a

party 'dedicated to individual liberty'; their improved performance in 1959 could therefore be

treated as signalling 'a firm "No" to policies of restriction and control', and an indication that

'for the majority, the mixed economy now in being, and its efficient management by

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[68] Harvie, *No Gods*, 110; Finlay, 'Unionism and the Dependency Culture', 111; Mitchell, *Scottish Question*, 132–3.
[69] Finlay, *Partnership for Good*, 138–9.
[70] The Unionist vote in Glasgow totalled 34.4 per cent of the electorate in 1955, and 34.5 per cent in 1959: F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1950–1970* (Chichester, 1971).

Conservatism, marks the acceptable limit of government interference with the individual'.[71] Perhaps, but we should note that the Liberals fought the election on a manifesto that called for an end to the closed shop, reductions in inheritance tax, and for council tenants to be granted the right to buy their homes.[72] Grimond, for his part, declared that nationalisation was a 'fiasco' that would in time prove 'incompatible with freedom'; he was equally critical of 'the promise of endless welfare benefits' administered by 'the grandmother state'.[73] There were, then, those for whom the Conservative conception of the relationship between the state and the individual required refinement; after almost a decade in office, for a significant section of the electorate it was no longer enough for the Unionists to claim merely to be better than Labour.

The Unionists failed to acknowledge the threat posed by this new appeal to individualism, discarding their earlier rhetoric of liberty, and emphasising instead their willingness to intervene in the economy, a response that reflected the direction taken by the Conservative party under the leadership of Harold Macmillan.[74] The government accepted the recommendations of the 1961 Toothill enquiry into the Scottish economy, directing investment towards 'growth points'; in 1962, an economic development department was added to a steadily expanding Scottish Office.[75] A year later, a development plan for central Scotland was published, which promised a 'massive programme of national reconstruction and modernisation', and conceded that 'full employment' could 'only be maintained by conscious and far-ranging acts of policy'.[76] By the 1964 general election, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, who had replaced Macmillan as premier a year earlier, could tell electors that he

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[71] *Glasgow Herald*, 9 Oct. 1959.
[72] *Liberalism Leads: Liberal Policy* (1959).
[73] J. Grimond, *The Liberal Future* (1959), 22.
[74] K. O. Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History, 1945–1990* (Oxford, 1992), 209–15 and 223–8; J. Ramsden, *The Winds of Change: From Macmillan to Heath* (1996), 158–64.
[75] I. Levitt, 'The Origins of the Scottish Development Department, 1943–62', *Scottish Affairs*, 14 (1996), 42–63.
[76] *Development and Growth in Central Scotland* (Cmnd 2188, 1963), 1.

recognised 'that in modern conditions there must be a good deal of both central and regional planning'.[77] That year's Unionist manifesto praised the benefits of planning, pledging the creation of a 'vast new economic complex' in central Scotland.[78] As Priscilla Buchan, Unionist member for Aberdeen South since 1946, acknowledged during the campaign, her party now accepted 'far more the need for gov[ernment] to take greater responsibility to promote social and economic change'.[79] Yet these attempts to rebrand Unionism as a modernising creed, one able to deliver a more efficient form of planning than Labour, failed. The party lost a further six seats, reducing the number of Unionists MPs to twenty-four, down from the thirty-six returned in 1955; the party's share of the vote fell by almost a fifth.

The abandonment by the Unionists of the individualist rhetoric of the late 1940s and early 1950s created a space within Scottish politics for the Liberal party. The three Highland constituencies lost by the Unionists in 1964 fell to the Liberals; the presence of Liberal candidates also triggered sharp falls in the Unionist vote in the north-east of Scotland as well as in Renfrewshire and Ayrshire, and led to the loss of West Renfrewshire and Glasgow Pollok to Labour.[80] As the 1960s progressed, however, it would become clear that in parts of provincial Scotland the chief beneficiary of the growing inability of the Unionists to pose credibly as a party committed to the defence of the individual was the SNP. Scottish nationalism's espousal of an intensely individualist stance during the post-war decades remains underappreciated. Yet the nationalist vision was informed by the same fear of an overmighty central state as Unionism's anti-socialism and was often expressed in similar language. The post-war SNP was equally enamoured of the virtues of local government; in 1946 the party newspaper, the *Scots Independent,* could be found employing lengthy

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[77] NLS Acc. 11368/90: *Sir Alec Douglas-Home: The Unionist Candidate* (Perth, 1964).
[78] *Scotland with the Unionists* (Edinburgh, 1964).
[79] NLS Acc. 11884/21: Lady Tweedsmuir Papers, Notes for Adoption Meeting, 24 Sept. 1964.
[80] Liberal intervention also contributed to the loss of Glasgow Woodside at a by-election in November 1962.

quotations from Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* in its editorial column.[81] These inclinations were

heightened by an identification with the small nations of eastern Europe occupied by the

Soviet Union after 1945, which encouraged anti-communist sentiment within nationalist

circles. Self-government was, as a result, often envisaged in instrumental terms, as a bulwark

against a Labour government believed to harbour authoritarian tendencies. As the SNP's

1947 policy statement suggested, the conflict between capitalism and socialism had been

rendered meaningless by the victory of the state, in whatever guise it assumed; the task now

was to defend individual liberty and the rule of law, and to resist the rise of a 'despotism

ruling over an irresponsible proletariat': Scots must choose 'either the road to tyranny or the

way to freedom'.[82]

This individualist version of nationalist politics survived the 1950s largely intact,

finding an outlet in criticisms of the welfare state, which, from a nationalist perspective,

represented little more than a bribe designed to induce loyalty to the British state.[83] The

SNP's 1957 conference programme duly dismissed the post-war settlement as 'a mass of

taxes designed to make the individual look to the state for his needs'; what masqueraded as

compassion was just 'a vote-catching fraud'. The SNP promoted 'independence for the

individual Scottish citizen as well as for the Scottish nation'.[84] Following the 1959 general

election, James Halliday, the party chairman who had unsuccessfully contested the Stirling

and Falkirk Burghs constituency, lamented that Scottish voters appeared content to accept

'concessions and handouts' from central government in 'a spirit of meek and docile

gratitude'.[85] By the early 1960s, as the SNP's electoral fortunes began to improve following

positive performances at the Glasgow Bridgeton and West Lothian by-elections, what Gordon

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[81] *Scots Independent*, Dec. 1946, 4.
[82] *Aims and Policy of the SNP* (Glasgow, 1947: 1962 edition), 3.
[83] *Scots Independent*, 13 Oct. 1956.
[84] NLS Acc. 10090/26: McIntyre Papers, *Scottish National Party: Annual National Conference, 18–19 May 1957*, 29–30.
[85] *Stirling Observer*, 1 Dec. 1959.

Wilson, SNP national secretary during the 1960s and later MP for Dundee East, described as the party's tradition of 'libertarianism and desire for decentralisation' appeared newly relevant to a political contest in which both major parties advocated economic planning of one form or another.[86] In those areas where the Liberals lacked a presence, particularly in central and eastern Scotland, the SNP offered an increasingly potent, and overtly constitutional, critique of the central state that tapped a historic provincial liberal tradition.

IV

Support for nationalisation and the welfare state was, no doubt, widespread amongst Scots in the post-war era; the consistent ability of the Labour party to attract the support of near half the Scottish electorate is testament enough to that. Still, to concentrate on such positive responses neglects the existence of another constituency of roughly equal size, one far more sceptical of economic planning and resentful of the taxes required to pay for the welfare state. For those of the latter inclination, Scotland's sluggish economic performance in the late 1950s and early 1960s was evidence that government intervention had failed, not that there was any need for more of it. This liberal, individualist strand did not disappear from Scottish politics during the upheaval of the 1960s; rather, the ability of Unionism to pose as its dominant political expression declined, and the Liberals and the SNP were able to construct new versions of this appeal.

This would become apparent in the wake of Winnie Ewing's famous victory for the SNP at the November 1967 Hamilton by-election. An opinion survey commissioned by the Conservatives to discover why they had failed to benefit from discontent with the Labour government revealed deep-rooted opposition to what was perceived as excessive government

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[86] G. Wilson, *SNP: The Turbulent Years, 1960–1990* (Stirling, 2009), 56.

intervention in the economy, an opinion especially visceral in relation to the level of personal taxation.[87] The policy group launched to consider proposals for devolution in the wake of Edward Heath's May 1968 'declaration of Perth', which, in reaction to Hamilton, had committed the Conservatives to supporting a Scottish assembly, uncovered a similar liberal ethos and resentment of bureaucracy.[88] The group's report stressed that the popular disenchantment central to the nationalist victory at Hamilton was not unique to Scotland, but was driven by anger towards central government, by 'a feeling that decisions are taken by people far away from the objects of these decisions' and 'a sense of impotence in the face of governmental acts and policies'.[89] It was, however, no longer axiomatic that the natural political home for such sentiments was the Conservative party.

The weakening of a once-dominant Unionist tradition, the recovery of Scottish Liberalism and the rise of the SNP had, to be sure, multiple causes. But the relinquishment by the Unionists of an appeal to liberal individualism was a crucial element within this process, undercutting as it did the coherence of the party's identity, and reducing the distinction with Labour to one of degree, not kind. There was some awareness of the dangers posed by this shift within Unionist ranks: prior to the 1964 election, Lord Dalkeith, the MP for Edinburgh North, warned that party literature was placing 'insufficient emphasis' on what he felt was the 'essential difference' between the two major parties: that the Unionists, unlike Labour, did not regard 'the individual as a cog in the great state machine planned and controlled by the all-knowing man in Whitehall'.[90] Similarly, the inroads made by the Liberals into Unionist support in Angus, Aberdeenshire and the Borders was credited to a wish for

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[87] BL CPA CCO 550/50/1: Surveys of Scottish, Welsh and West Country Nationalism: 'The Motivations behind Scottish Nationalism', Mar. 1968.
[88] G. Pentland, 'Edward Heath, the Declaration of Perth and the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, 1966–70', *Twentieth Century British History*, 26 (2015), 249–73.
[89] NLS Acc. 11368/79: *Government of Scotland Policy Group: First Report to the Constitutional Committee, August 1968*, 3.
[90] NLS Acc. 11368/22: SUA EDC Minutes, 10 Jul. 1964.

'idealism', especially among younger voters.[91] The Unionism of the 1940s and early 1950s had, alongside its traditional role as the representative of important interests within Scottish society, fulfilled this desire for ideological principle, presenting a powerful critique of socialism, and defence of individual liberty and the free economy. But by the 1960s, softened by the experience of office, the party had mislaid this intellectual confidence; there were, moreover, now other parties able to provide the electorate with liberal political ideals. Significantly, however, individual liberty was coming to be viewed through a constitutional rather than economic lens.

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[91] NLS Acc. 11368/5: SUA CC Minutes, 11 Nov. 1964.