

LABOUR VANGUARD, TORY BASTION, OR THE TRIUMPH OF NEW LIBERALISM? MANCHESTER POLITICS 1900 TO 1914 IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Politics in the Manchester area before the First World War had, it seems, something for everyone. Labour historians have emphasised a rich socialist tradition and especially effective local organisation which, arguably, placed Manchester at the forefront of Labour's pre-1914 advance. Others, such as Clarke and – to a lesser degree – Tanner, highlight a dynamic Liberal Party, re-invigorated by the reforming policies of the New Liberalism, as the key force in local politics. Still others note the continued strength of popular Conservatism in the area.¹ This article opens with a reassessment of Manchester's pre-1914 political reputation. It will be argued that popular support for Labour in Manchester was unexceptional when compared to other cities. Labour's strength was geographically and socially concentrated in a relatively small section of the city. There were few signs in 1914 that, even if freed from the fetters of a restrictive franchise, Labour in Manchester was on the verge of significant electoral gains. Similarly, the much vaunted 'New Liberal' revival, arguably, had only modest popular appeal in Manchester. For Labour and Liberal, much hung upon the fortunes of the 'progressive alliance' between these two parties. In Manchester the alliance worked to the advantage of both partners and remained robust up to the First World War. Manchester Conservatism performed disastrously at the General Elections of 1906 and 1910. Nonetheless, it is suggested here that support for popular Conservatism remained buoyant and that of all three main parties the Conservatives had least to fear from the underlying political trends in Edwardian Manchester.

A second section examines relationships between the social composition of Manchester communities and their electoral behaviour. The influence of religion, ethnicity and social class upon political choice are all explored. All were important, although religion and social class appear to have had most impact upon political outcomes. Clear patterns emerge concerning the social characteristics of areas of, in particular, Labour and Conservative strength. In keeping with the theme of this special issue the main focus is on Labour. Some conclusions are drawn about the social conditions in which Labour thrived in Edwardian Manchester, and the limits this imposed upon the Party's prospects for further growth. These social factors are also explored in comparative perspective, in order to better assess their significance, both for Manchester, and for Labour more generally.

Manchester Politics Compared

Manchester is often seen as an area of Labour success before 1914.² Certainly, as Declan McHugh points out elsewhere in this volume, Manchester Labour was far stronger than its counterparts in neighbouring Salford and Stockport.³ However, when compared with a broader range of large urban centres Manchester falls into the middle rank. Labour performed better in Manchester than in Tory strongholds such as Liverpool and Sheffield, but remained some distance behind the 'vanguard' cities of Leicester, Leeds and Bradford.

Labour's performance in the last three-year cycle of City Council elections before the outbreak of the First World War, highlights both Manchester's standing and Labour's variable performance across the country. In the three elections from 1911 to 1913, Manchester returned fifteen Labour councillors – a respectable total by the standards of the time. That said, Manchester was a very large authority, with a total of 105 seats elected over that three-year cycle. In addition to Labour's fifteen, 27 Liberal and 55 Conservative Councillors were returned.⁴

Nonetheless, when compared to nearby Salford and Stockport, Manchester Labour resembled a beacon of achievement (see Table 1). In Manchester, Labour secured 14.3% of all the available Council seats between 1911 and 1913. In the same period Labour in Stockport and Salford obtained only 4.2% and 2.3% respectively.⁵ Such figures serve to underline the region's reputation as a stronghold of 'popular Conservatism'. Even in Wolverhampton, established in the recent work of Jon Lawrence as a centre of working-class Conservatism, Labour acquired a slightly more respectable 8.3% of council seats over the same three-year period.⁶ Also in the mid-range, slightly behind Manchester, lies Bristol with 10.1%.⁷ At the top of this particular table were Leeds and Leicester with 27.1% and 29.2% respectively.⁸ Cities like these were the real centres of Labour success in municipal politics before 1914. In Leicester, Leeds and Bradford, Labour appeared close to challenging the Liberal and Conservative parties on an equal footing.⁹ In municipal politics Manchester Labour was still very much the third party, more than the marginal force it remained in Stockport and Salford, but not yet capable of posing a serious threat to the main parties.

Table 1: *Labour Councillors as a Percentage of All Elected Councillors in Selected Municipalities 1911-13*

Municipality	Labour Percentage 1911-1913
Leicester	29.2
Leeds	27.1
Manchester	14.3
Bristol	10.1
Wolverhampton	8.3
Stockport	4.2
Salford	2.3

It might be objected that, in the Manchester area municipal results provide a false picture, and that Labour fared rather better in parliamentary elections before 1914. The return of three Labour MPs for Manchester constituencies, and one in the double member Stockport seat, after 1906 suggests that the area was, after all, one of some strength for Labour.¹⁰ Two points should be made. First, all the successful Labour candidates benefited greatly from Liberal support in straight fights against Conservative opponents. These victories were then, rather more evidence of support for the 'progressive alliance', than a popular endorsement of independent Labour politics.¹¹ A point underlined in Manchester South-West. Labour won the seat in 1906, with considerable Liberal assistance, in a straight fight against the Conservatives. However, in January 1910 Labour finished a poor third when faced by Liberal and Conservative opposition.¹² Secondly, in two of the three parliamentary seats held continuously by Labour between 1906 and 1914, parlia-



J.R. Clynes M.P. Labour Representative for Manchester North East.

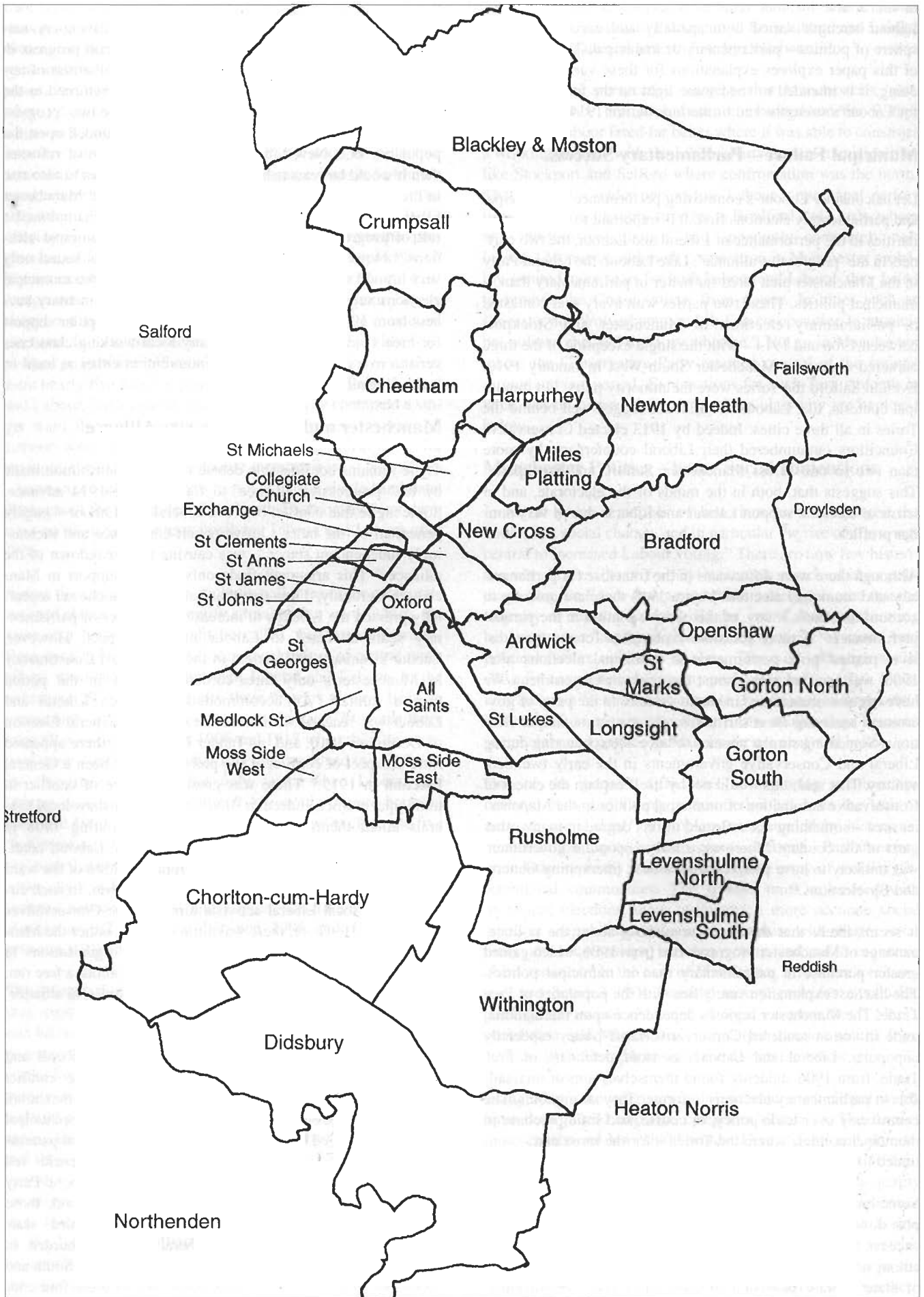
mentary success did not appear to be founded on broader support in the locality. In J. R. Clynes' overwhelmingly working class constituency, Manchester North-East, Labour remained very much the third party in municipal politics. Between 1906

and 1913 wards within Manchester North-East returned nineteen Conservative councillors to the Liberal's six, while Labour secured only four.¹³ Again in Stockport, where Wardle represented the seat for Labour, the Tories dominated the municipal elections between 1909 and 1913 taking 46 seats to the Liberals 29. Three Labour councillors were returned, only one of whom actually won a contested election.¹⁴ Gorton proved the exception. Here Labour dominated both municipal and parliamentary elections. Some of the factors which set Gorton apart are discussed below.

Labour MPs were returned for two further Manchester seats for part of the post-1906 period. In Manchester South-West Kelley represented the seat for Labour between 1906 and 1910. Having lost the seat in January 1910 Labour claims to the seat thereafter rested on weak foundations indeed. There was not a single Labour councillor returned for the wards in this constituency between 1906 and 1914. Labour had stronger claims in Manchester East, where the seat was held for Labour between 1910 and 1914 by James Sutton a miners' Checkweighman and local councillor. In municipal politics Labour strength depended almost entirely on the miners in the Bradford ward, from where seven of Labour's nine councillors were returned. Elsewhere in the constituency Labour fared poorly. Even in Ardwick with its large numbers of rail workers – usually seen as strong Labour supporters – the Tories dominated. Outside the atypical Bradford ward the Tories took thirteen seats, to the Liberal's five and Labour's two.

It is often thought that one effect of the Lib-Lab pact in constituencies where the Liberals stood aside to allow Labour a free-run, was for an expansion of Labour's influence, at the cost of an increasingly moribund local Liberal party. Once local Liberal associations lost the spur of parliamentary advancement some contemporaries believed the field would be left clear for Labour advance.¹⁵ This does not appear to have happened in Manchester. As suggested above, even where Labour's profile gained the boost of a sitting MP, the party struggled to extend beyond pre-existing areas of strength. Moreover, the municipal evidence offers little indication of Liberal decline in such seats. Manchester East was held by the Liberals from 1906 to 1910 and by Labour from 1910 to 1914. Comparing the two periods the Liberals fared considerably worse in municipal elections when the sitting MP was Liberal than during the period after 1910, when the seat was held by Labour.¹⁶ Similarly, in Manchester South-West the Liberal Party actually performed slightly better in municipal politics when there was a Labour MP – 1906 to 1910 – than when under Liberal control between 1910 and the war. In Manchester North-East – held by Labour from 1906 to the outbreak of war – there was no deterioration in the Liberal municipal performance over time (four candidates were returned between 1906 and 1909 and four between 1910 and 1913). Gorton again proved the exception. Here, Liberal municipal performance declined markedly whilst Labour controlled the parliamentary seat.

To summarise, in the Manchester area Labour performance before 1914 presents a mixed picture. Municipal performance was very poor in most of Manchester itself and throughout neighbouring Stockport and Salford. Only in the Gorton constituency and the neighbouring Bradford ward did Labour suggest it was capable of constructing strongholds in Manchester. Yet Labour returned MPs from four Manchester seats and one



Map showing Manchester Municipal Ward boundaries, 1909

of the double-member seats in Stockport before 1914. Thus Labour strength varied both spatially and according to the sphere of politics – parliamentary or municipal. The remainder of this paper explores explanations for these variations. In so doing, it is intended to shed some light on the factors making for Labour's strengths and limitations before 1914.

Municipal Failure – Parliamentary Success

Let us consider Labour's contrasting performance in municipal and parliamentary elections first. It is important to note the similarities in the performance of Liberal and Labour, the two partners in the 'progressive alliance'. Like Labour, the Liberal Party in the Manchester area fared far better in parliamentary than in municipal politics. These two parties won every seat contested in parliamentary elections in Manchester and Stockport between 1906 and 1914 – with the single exception of the three cornered contest in Manchester South-West in January 1910. Even in Salford the Tories were the minority party.¹⁷ In municipal contests, like Labour, the Liberals lagged well behind the Tories in all three cities. Indeed by 1913 elected Conservative Councillors outnumbered their Liberal counterparts by more than two to one across Manchester, Salford and Stockport.¹⁸ This suggests that, both in the minds of the electorate, and in terms of electoral support Labour and Liberal shared very similar profiles.

Although there were differences in the franchise for parliamentary and municipal elections before 1914 these are unlikely to account for much, if any, of this sharp variation in the parties' performance.¹⁹ A more plausible explanation for the 'progressive' parties' poor performance in municipal elections after 1906, was as a reaction against their role in Government. We have become accustomed in recent decades to the party of government receiving short shrift from electors in municipal elections. Something similar appears to have been occurring during Liberal and Conservative governments in the early twentieth century. That said, this would not by itself explain the extent of Conservative domination of municipal politics in the Manchester area – something not reflected to this degree in many other parts of the country. Moreover, a truly unpopular government was unlikely to have performed so well at intervening General and By-elections.²⁰

It seems likely that there was something about the political message of Manchester progressivism from 1906, which gained greater purchase in parliamentary than in municipal politics. The likeliest explanation surely lies with the popularity of Free Trade. The Manchester region's dependence upon international trade in cotton rendered Conservative tariff policy especially unpopular. Liberal and Labour, as stout defenders of Free Trade, from 1906 suddenly found themselves almost unassailable at parliamentary elections in former Tory strongholds. The controversy over trade policy, of course, had little purchase in municipal politics, where the Tories – for the most part – continued to dominate the Manchester region.²¹

Some historians – most notably Peter Clarke – have sought to play down the contribution of Free Trade to Liberal and Labour success. Emphasising instead the popularity, particularly amongst the working class, of New Liberalism with its promise of state welfare provision to tackle poverty.²² Significantly, Clarke pays almost no attention to municipal politics. Arguably,

it was here that voters in the Manchester area displayed their true colours. In the absence of Free Trade as a rallying cry, neither Labour nor Liberal made any very significant progress in municipal politics across the area. Without the albatross of tariff reform, Conservatives in municipal politics returned to the ascendant. Had the parliamentary victories of the two 'progressive' parties in and around Manchester been founded upon the popularity of a New Liberal inspired programme of reforms, then it would be reasonable to expect their fortunes to also rise in municipal elections. Not least because both the Manchester Liberal Federation and the local Labour Party, championed a raft of progressive interventionist policies at municipal elections.²³ However, as we have seen, these policies found only very limited support among the voters. Failure at the municipal elections suggests that Labour and Liberal parliamentary success from 1906 was rather more a function of popular support for Free Trade than the result of any local working class conversion to a programme of state intervention either at local or national level.²⁴

Manchester and the 'Progressive Alliance'

There remains considerable debate over the contribution made by the 'progressive alliance' to Labour's pre-1914 advance. Some argue that conflict between Liberal and Labour – largely generated by the latter's growing self-confidence and increasingly independent stance – was causing the breakdown of the alliance.²⁵ This argument finds only limited support in Manchester. Certainly, it was true that Labour in Manchester repeatedly pressed the Liberals to increase the number of parliamentary seats allocated to Labour under the pact. However, Labour's January 1910 defeat in the South-West Constituency in Manchester's only three-cornered contest in the period proved salutary. An accommodation between Liberal and Labour was reached with relative ease at the General Election of December 1910, and, as Tanner has argued, there appeared little prospect of conflict at the polls had there been a General Election in 1915.²⁶ There was greater evidence of conflict in municipal politics. Indeed in Bradford and Openshaw local Liberals allied themselves with Conservatives during 1908 in opposition to Labour.²⁷ In these atypical areas, Labour, confident of victory, declined to share the representation of the ward with the Liberals as part of the three-year rotation. In such circumstances local Liberal activists turned to the Conservatives for support. However, there was little sign that either the Manchester Liberal Federation, or constituency organisations in seats where the Liberals stood aside to allow Labour a free run, seriously wavered in their support for the 'progressive alliance' before 1914.²⁸

In municipal contests between 1906 and 1913 Liberal and Labour managed, for the most part, to minimise conflict between themselves, while endeavouring to exert maximum pressure on the Conservatives.²⁹ When Manchester's municipal wards are arranged by parliamentary constituency clear patterns emerge. In municipal politics, Manchester constituencies fell into one of three categories: first, those where the Liberal Party was the principal challenger to Conservatism; second, those where Labour opposed the Conservatives; and third, seats where, very largely, Labour and Liberal shared the burden. In the first category was, Stretford, and the North-West, South and South-West Manchester constituencies. Across these four constituencies Labour only stood consistently in one ward,

Longsight, where, having stood a candidate in each year, it recorded a single success. Elsewhere in this first group of constituencies, between 1906 and 1913 Labour stood on only three occasions out of a possible total of 152, none of these three took place after 1908. The second category contains constituencies where, in municipal politics, Labour was the principal challenger to Conservatism. Only the Gorton constituency comes into this category. Here the Liberal Party stood on only five occasions from a possible 30. Three of these were in St Mark's ward where they remained the principal anti-Tory force. The only other Liberal candidacies in Gorton occurred before 1910, offering no support for the view that conflict between the 'progressive alliance' partners was increasing as war approached.³⁰ Three constituencies, Manchester East, North, and North-East comprised a third category. Here Liberal and Labour largely shared out the task of opposing the Conservatives in municipal elections. In these three seats, straight fights between either one of the 'progressive alliance' partners and the Conservatives, were nearly five times as frequent as contests involving Liberal and Labour. Each constituency in this category contained a single ward in which almost all contests between Liberal and Labour were concentrated. In Manchester North-East, for example, the existence of a double member ward – New Cross – encouraged all three parties to run at least a single candidate. Throughout the remainder of the North-East constituency there were no municipal contests involving Liberal and Labour after 1906.

Across the city as a whole – including all three of the categories outlined above – we can identify a total of five wards which, for want of a better term, might be called 'battleground' wards. Here, local feeling led to the occasional failure of central party efforts to avoid contests between Liberal and Labour. In the remaining 29 wards of the city there appears to have been an increasingly effective tacit agreement. In these 29 wards there were 92 occasions between 1906 and 1913 when the Conservatives were confronted by what Liberals continued to refer to as the 'Progressive Party', but only seven when Liberal and Labour stood against each other.³¹ All seven occurred between 1906 and 1909. Thus across Manchester, if we exclude the five 'battleground' wards, there were no municipal contests involving both Liberal and Labour after 1909. Indeed, across the entire city – including the 'battleground' wards – the number of contests between Liberal and Labour was falling – from an average of 3.25 per year between 1906 and 1909, to 2.5 between 1910 and 1913.

The 'progressive alliance' in Manchester would, on these figures, appear to have been on firm ground. The Manchester Liberal hierarchy had a firm commitment to its survival and were prepared to make concessions to ensure its success. In Labour circles there were considerably more doubters. The Manchester party's strong socialist element sought to highlight the ideological and policy differences between Labour and Liberal. Some argued there was little difference between the two older parties and that an independent stance would improve Labour's prospects in the longer run.³² However, Manchester Labour's successes before 1914, particularly in parliamentary elections, were to a considerable degree attributable to the effectiveness of the 'progressive alliance'. So, although Labour activists repeatedly proclaimed their party's independence, in practice the tacit electoral pact between Labour and Liberal in Manchester was, if anything, growing stronger as the war

approached. Manchester's 'progressive alliance' was a natural reaction in a Conservative stronghold. Both Liberal and Labour had much to gain and little to lose by collaboration.

A comparative perspective suggests that Manchester's 'progressive alliance' brought Labour some limited benefits. Within the region Labour fared far better where it was able to construct a working alliance with the Liberal Party than in municipalities like Stockport and Salford where confrontation was the norm. That said, in a wider perspective Labour's municipal performance was considerably stronger in Bradford and Leeds, where any 'progressive alliance' had apparently completely collapsed.³³ Moreover, although cooperation in Manchester probably secured more seats for both Labour and Liberal, they failed to remove the Conservatives from power. In cities such as Leicester and Wolverhampton Lib-Lab co-operation in municipal politics checked the Tory advance.³⁴ Not so in Manchester, where the Conservative Party retained control of the council throughout our period. Explanations for such Tory strength in what was an overwhelmingly working class city are explored below.

Manchester Politics – Some Social Dimensions

In recent years a number of historians have challenged the notion that social change, and in particular the rise of class, was central to increased Labour voting.³⁵ There are now few historians who find evidence for any inexorable march of class politics during the Edwardian period.³⁶ It is widely accepted that the majority of manual workers did not vote Labour, and voting behaviour was largely determined by a range of social and political factors unrelated to class. That said, although social class did not predetermine party preference before 1914, it was nonetheless a factor of considerable significance in large urban centres such as Manchester. Some of the relationships between social class and politics in Manchester are analysed below.

One of the greatest difficulties in exploring relationships between class and voting in this period has been the lack of accurate social data.³⁷ A problem compounded by historians' concentration upon parliamentary elections. Parliamentary boundaries typically encompassed a wide array of socially differentiated communities. The smaller units associated with municipal elections allow us to attach more accurate social labels to a single electoral area, and explore with greater reliability the relationships between voting and socio-economic characteristics.³⁸ In the case of Manchester, T.R. Marr's exhaustive and detailed 1904 housing survey, provides a valuable guide to the social character of local communities.³⁹ Marr's social data and Manchester's municipal election results from 1906 to 1913 form the basis of the discussion below.

Using Marr's housing survey, Manchester's municipal wards have been placed into five categories (Table 2). The first of these consists of ten 'slum' wards. Here, 'slum' and unmodernised 'back to back' housing accounted for at least 50% of housing. In a second category of seven wards, better quality working class housing predominated. These are described below as the 'bye-law' wards. Most housing in these wards was governed by post-1875 Corporation regulations. Here were to be found extensive areas of through terraced housing in the 'Coronation Street' style, so often associated with northern urban towns in this period.⁴⁰ Third, a group of four 'business'

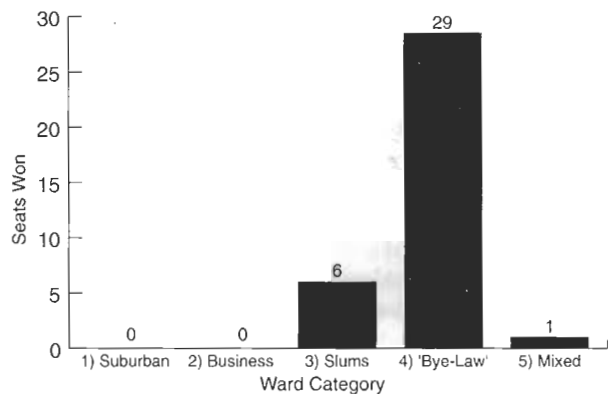
wards formed the commercial heart of the city and were dominated by offices, warehouses and shops.⁴¹ The eight wards where suburban housing predominated comprise a fourth category. And lastly, there were five wards in Manchester which included a range of housing types and where no one housing type was dominant. These wards are described below as 'socially mixed'.

Table 2: Manchester's Pre-1914 Municipal Wards Arranged by Principal Housing Type.

[Following T.R. Marr.]

SLUM	BYE-LAW	BUSINESS	SUBURBAN	SOCIALLY MIXED
St George's	Blackley & Moston	Exchange	Didsbury	Cheetham
Medlock Street	Bradford	St Ann's	Levenshulme North	Longsight
All Saint's	Gorton North	Oxford	Levenshulme South	Newton Heath
New Cross	Gorton South	St James'	Rusholme	Moss Side East
St Clement's	Harpurhey		Withington	St Luke's
St Michael's	Openshaw		Crumpsall	
Miles Platting	St Mark's		Chorlton	
Collegiate Church			Moss Side West	
St John's				
Ardwick				

Figure 1: Manchester Labour 1906-13. Number of Municipal Election Wins in Each Category of Ward



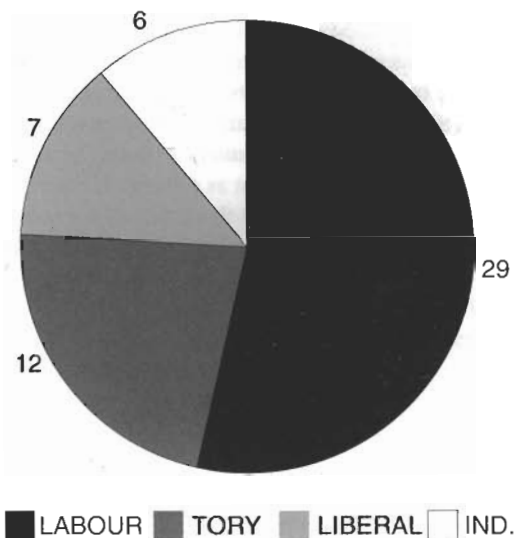
Labour – Strengths and Weaknesses

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the prospects of Labour success were strongly related to social composition. Unsurprisingly, Labour failed to win any seats in either the 'suburban' or the 'business' wards, and had only a single success in the 'socially mixed' wards. These three categories account for just over half Manchester's municipal seats, all of which contained a strong middle-class presence. Labour secured only one of the 136 council seats available between 1906 and 1913 in this half of the city.

We might expect Labour to fare better in wards where the electorate consisted overwhelmingly of manual workers. However, there was great unevenness here. Manchester's 'slum' wards elected 88 councillors between 1906 and 1913 – Labour was returned only six times. Of these, two were in the double member seat of New Cross, at elections where the Conservatives did not stand a second candidate. Labour only out-pollled a Tory

candidate in New Cross once in our period, in 1911 when T.R. Marr – a prominent campaigner against slum housing – mobilised a considerable personal vote to finish second behind the other Tory candidate. Elsewhere in slumdom, Labour also won twice in Ardwick, probably with the support of many of the wards numerous rail workers. But even here, in Manchester's principal 'railway ward', the Conservatives won three times as many seats as Labour, gaining support via the politics of drink and religious education.⁴²

Figure 2: Number of Municipal Election Victories per Party in 'Bye-Law' Wards 1906-13



Labour's great strength lay in the 'bye-law' wards where housing was of a better standard (see Fig. 2). It seems probable that workers in these wards, were less likely to be engaged in the casual trades associated with the city centre 'slum' wards. The more modern housing – or at least modernised housing – which characterised Labour's strong wards typically commanded higher rents.⁴³ Regularity of employment and possibly also higher wages would have been important factors in enabling manual workers to afford such rents. It seems then, that Labour voters were to be found less among manual workers in general, than among the more respectable sort, where insecurity was less common. It is likely that in these areas trade union and cooperative society membership was higher. Concentrations of highly unionised workers lay at the core of Labour's success in such strongholds as Bradford, where miners were to the fore, as well as Gorton and Openshaw with their extensive engineering works.⁴⁴ Blackley and Moston, despite a semi-rural location, also returned a number of Labour councillors almost certainly with the votes of workers at the Moston Colliery and the nearby Newton Heath carriage works.⁴⁵

Within this group of 'bye-law' wards Labour was least successful in Harpurhey and St Marks. Before 1914 Harpurhey ward included some slum housing in Collyhurst. The combined presence of an Irish community with the city's largest and most active working class Orange Order, made Collyhurst a centre of ethnic and sectarian conflict.⁴⁶ This may have given a Conservative Party pledged to defend Church and Monarchy greater purchase among Protestant workers in the area. For at least a part of our period, the Conservatives were also able to garner votes from Catholics attracted by the Tory commitment to pub-

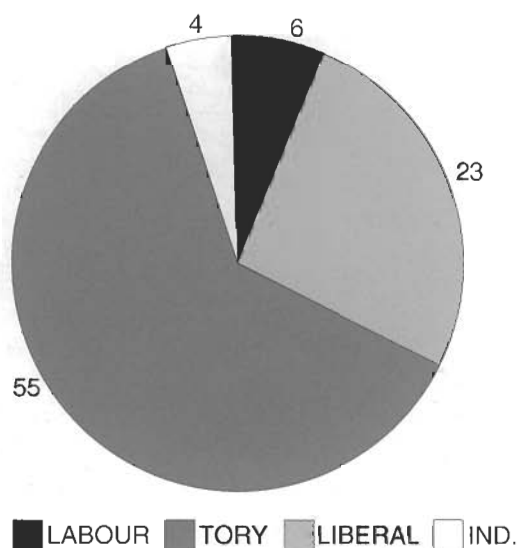


T.R. Marr's map indicating Manchester Housing Types. The 'slum' districts are indicated in dark shades.

lic funding for Catholic – and Anglican – denominational schools.⁴⁷ Nonetheless Labour won the ward on three occasions between 1906 and 1913.

St Mark's, which lay between West Gorton and Belle Vue Gardens, was the only ward in this category where Labour failed to win a seat. Local Liberals appear to have successfully retained the 'progressive' mantle in the ward, which may have contributed to Labour's apparent difficulty in establishing an effective local presence. Conservative candidates found some success with both religious schooling and the drink question. Nonetheless, by 1913 Labour were clearly regarded as a considerable threat to the Conservatives in St Mark's, and duly registered a marked increase in its share of the vote.⁴⁸

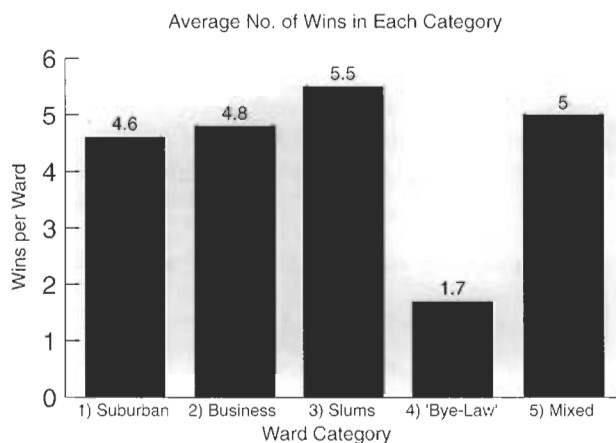
Figure 3: Number of Municipal Election Victories per Party in 'Slum' Wards 1906-13



Just as striking as Labour's strength in the 'bye-law' wards was Tory domination of the slums (see Fig. 3). Manchester's extensive slums were contained within a ring of wards adjoining Manchester's central business district. To the south and west lay St John's, St George's in Hulme, Medlock Street, and All Saints. In the South East, Ardwick and then, further east and north in and around Ancoats, were New Cross, St Clement's, St Michael's and Miles Platting. Collegiate Church – which included Victoria Station – completed the encirclement to the north.⁴⁹ Not only did the Conservatives secure the lion's share of 'slum' seats, but, as Fig. 4 shows, the 'slums' were actually the Tories strongest area. Thus, the Conservative Party averaged 5.5 councillors for the ten 'slum' wards between 1906 and 1913, but only 4.8 and 4.6 for the business and suburban wards. Figure 4: Conservative wins in Municipal Elections 1906-13. Average Number of Wins in Each Category.

It is often assumed that slum-dwellers were very largely excluded from the Edwardian electoral register, and hence that shopkeepers and other middle class occupants of these inner city wards provided the bedrock of Tory support.⁵⁰ More recent work has shown that even the poorest were able to vote under the 'householder' franchise. That said, it remains probable that slum-dwellers were under-represented amongst the electorate as a result of the requirement for 12 months continuous resi-

Figure 4: Conservative Wins in Municipal Elections 1906-13.

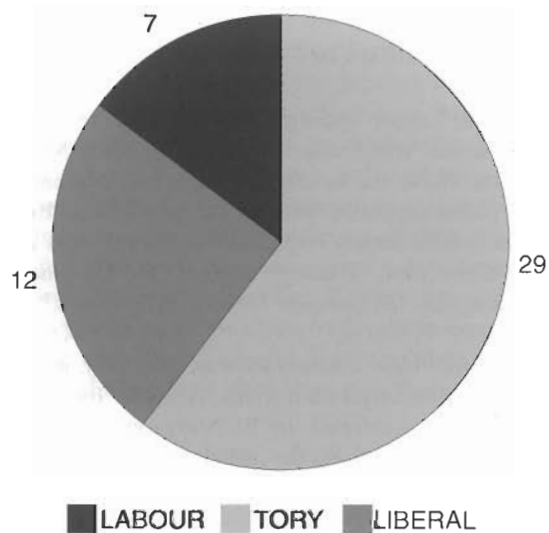


dence. In Edwardian slum districts repeated moves in order to stay one step ahead of the rent collector often proved a necessity of life.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the conduct of politics in these wards strongly suggests that candidates were bidding for support from a predominantly working class electorate. Candidates of all parties – but especially Labour and Conservative – seemingly lost no opportunity to inform electors that they were either of, or for, the working class.⁵²

Municipal Politics and the Manchester Irish

The Conservative grip on Manchester's 'slum' wards was not completely secure. The Liberal Party secured slightly under a quarter of all 'slum' seats and Labour around seven per cent (see Fig. 3). It is tempting to attribute these Conservative defeats, at least in part, to Nationalist feeling among the well-organised and flourishing 'Irish' communities in inner city Manchester.⁵³ Among committed Irish Nationalists a vote for the Tory champions of the Union was anathema. However, in Manchester's 'Irish' communities Nationalist appeals for a Liberal or Labour vote were counteracted by the Catholic Church which generally urged support for Conservative candidates in defence of Church schools. It is usually argued that the Nationalists obtained the bulk of the 'Irish' vote for either Liberal or Labour.⁵⁴ Most contemporary observers support this view for Parliamentary contests, when Home Rule often figured prominently. Municipal contests suggest a different pattern. The smaller units used for Council elections provide a greater focus on the political choices made by Manchester's 'Irish' communities. Perhaps surprisingly, Liberal and Labour actually performed poorly in wards with a strong 'Irish' presence. Manchester contained five wards where the 'Irish' community was particularly active in local politics – St Michael's, New Cross, Miles Platting and Harpurhey, all in and around Ancoats, and St George's in Hulme. Of these, all except Harpurhey were predominantly slum areas.⁵⁵ Across all five 'Irish' wards between 1906 and 1913 the Conservatives won 29 seats – 60% of the total – to Labour's seven and the Liberal's twelve (see Fig. 5).

Figure 5: Number of Municipal Victories per Party in Manchester 'Irish' Wards 1906-13.



How can we account for the scale of Conservative success in Manchester's 'Irish' wards? First, it should be remembered that even where the 'Irish' were most heavily concentrated they only accounted for roughly half the population. Thus, Conservative strength in 'Irish' Manchester may, in large part, reflect the host majority's hostility to the 'Irish' community. These were, after all, the areas in which conflicts over employment, housing and religious expression were most acute.⁵⁶ Second, the issue of denominational schools had its greatest impact in 'Irish' Catholic wards. It is noticeable that the Conservative grip on the 'Irish' wards slipped slightly after 1910, when the threat to denominational school funding had receded and the Catholic Church curtailed its efforts to support Conservative candidates.⁵⁷ Conservative decline may also have been affected by the renewed prominence of Home Rule for Ireland after 1910.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, in this later period between 1910 and 1913, the Conservatives remained the dominant party in the 'Irish' wards with 54.2% of seats to Labour's 20.8% and the Liberal's 25%.

Third, and probably least significant, was the questionable impact of Irish Nationalist interventions. Even in the 'Irish' wards endorsement by Irish Nationalist organisations, such as the United Irish League (hereafter U.I.L.), often proved a mixed blessing for both Labour and Liberal candidates. Thus, when Labour received the support of the U.I.L. in St George's in 1910 they finished bottom of the poll.⁵⁹ Similarly, in New Cross – which included much of Ancoats – James French, described as an 'Irish Nationalist and Labour' candidate, finished last in 1909, some 234 votes behind his 'Labour' running mate in this double member seat.⁶⁰ The following year the Liberal candidate in New Cross received U.I.L. endorsement and, like his predecessor, finished bottom of the poll behind the Tory and Labour candidates.⁶¹

The Irish presence in Manchester seems to have had a complex and mixed impact upon the city's municipal politics. Community and Nationalist leaders gave strong support to the anti-Tory parties – this usually meant the Liberals.⁶² On the other hand, a strong 'Irish' presence appears to have given Tory politics greater purchase among host communities in 'Irish' areas.

When, in addition, the Catholic Church managed to secure a section of the 'Irish' vote for Conservatism over denominational schools, then the 'Irish' wards, paradoxically, became Conservative strongholds. The Nationalist community leaders appear to have delivered a strong vote for Labour or, more usually, Liberal from within the 'Irish' community – but this was usually insufficient to win seats. Moreover, on some occasions Nationalist endorsement appears to have driven away a number of voters who otherwise supported the anti-Tory parties.

Before 1914 support from Manchester's 'Irish' voters – arguably the only section of the unskilled workers to turn its back in significant numbers on Toryism – did not then act as a the Trojan horse that transported Labour into the inner city. Although younger, active Irish Nationalists were apparently moving from Liberal to Labour, especially in the later part of our period, Labour made only very limited progress among the 'Irish' electorate in municipal contests.⁶³ Labour candidates were slightly more successful in the 'Irish' wards between 1910 and 1913 than they had been during the four previous years. However, even during this later period Labour remained very much the third party in Irish Manchester.⁶⁴

Labour claimed to be the political representative of the working class in Manchester. In reality, before 1914 it represented only a particular section of that class. Labour prospered where the workers were relatively affluent, and relatively free from causal employment. Manchester's male Labour voters were most likely to be employed in manufacturing industry or those sections of the transport industry, like rail, where employment had become regularised. On the other hand, in the commercial heart of Manchester – where housing was poor and overcrowded, and causal employment characterised the transportation, storage and selling of goods in and around the city's many markets – Labour was a marginal presence.

The Social Dimension in Comparative Perspective.

Comparison with other urban centres lends further support to the view that Manchester's social and economic geography was closely related to the voting behaviour of its citizens. A number of historians have argued that religion, in the form of a defensive and relatively militant Protestantism was the key factor underpinning the strength of Toryism across much of Lancashire, including Manchester itself.⁶⁵ Arguably social and economic factors also help explain why Labour in Manchester fell behind its counterparts elsewhere.

The following section compares Manchester with Leicester and Wolverhampton. Leicester is chosen as an example of Labour municipal success. Wolverhampton, in contrast, is typically viewed as an industrial city where Conservatism was particularly strong (see Table 1).⁶⁶

The first thing to note is that in both Leicester and Wolverhampton the slum area was far smaller than in Manchester. In Manchester, over 30% of city councillors were returned by the city's ten 'slum' wards. In contrast, slum housing predominated in only one Wolverhampton ward and two in Leicester, these 'slum' wards returned only nine and thirteen per cent of their respective Councils.⁶⁷ In one respect, politics in these slum districts did reflect the Manchester experience. In both St John's in Wolverhampton and Leicester's Wyggeston ward, Conservative

candidates were more successful than in other predominantly working class wards in their respective cities. In Wyggeston the politics of drink formed the foundation of Conservative success.⁶⁸ In St John's, among the well-established Anglican and Irish Catholic communities, defence of denominational schools proved Conservatism's most effective appeal.⁶⁹ Conservatism was however, less successful in Newton – Leicester's other slum ward. Here, close collaboration between the Liberal and Labour parties, managed to almost totally exclude the Conservatives. This was possibly due, at least in part, to the absence from Newton's municipal elections of Tory candidates employed in the 'drink trade'.⁷⁰

In other respects Labour fortunes in the slums of Leicester and Wolverhampton contrasted sharply with their counterparts in Manchester. As just outlined, in these areas Conservatism fared better than in other working class wards in Leicester and Wolverhampton. Nonetheless, unlike Manchester, Labour candidates were also returned in significant numbers for St John's, Newton and Wyggeston. In Wyggeston Labour was the dominant party.⁷¹ The ward was apparently "densely populated with shoemakers", a trade which provided the backbone of Leicester's union and Labour movement. Here it seems, despite the presence of slum conditions, the composition of the workforce allowed trade union and Labour organisation to flourish.⁷² The highly casualised trades of central Manchester proved far more resistant to trade unionism, without which Labour politics made little headway.⁷³

The Labour Party's own efforts appear to have been significant in the, more modest, advances made in Wolverhampton's St John's ward. Despite sharing sympathy for temperance and secular education, Labour distanced itself from both, developing an independent position on drink and denominational schools.⁷⁴ This approach was designed in part to avoid alienating local Tory working class sentiment. An apparently successful strategy, no doubt contributing to Labour's five unopposed candidacies in the ward between 1902 and 1909.⁷⁵ In Manchester, Labour found greater difficulty in steering a middle course over drink and education. In Ardwick and elsewhere, electoral defeat was the price paid by Labour for identification with temperance.⁷⁶

Labour success in the 'slum' wards of Leicester and Wolverhampton warns against over-generalisation. It is tempting to accept at face value those Labour voices which depicted slums as no-go areas for Labour. Among these were Ramsay MacDonald who argued in 1912 that: "Socialism is not to be found in the slummy and most miserable quarters of towns, but in those quarters upon which the sun of prosperity manages to shine." Similarly, Labour's *Leicester Pioneer* observed: "Labour representation does not thrive in slumdom, where public house influence is at its strongest and Toryism is cheap and popular."⁷⁷ These were reasonable assessments of the position in Manchester, but rather more debatable for Wolverhampton, and, in Leicester's case, largely inaccurate. Context, however, was all. The *Leicester Pioneer's* attack upon slumdom followed a bruising Labour defeat in Wyggeston at the 1911 municipal elections. Interestingly, Labour's defeat occurred at the hands of a Liberal – so much for "cheap and popular" Toryism. The following year Labour triumphed in both Leicester's 'slum' wards and nothing more was heard of Labour's difficulty in the slums. Contemporary political assessments should be treated

with caution. Labour could, as in Manchester, face great difficulty in the slums. The evidence from Leicester and Wolverhampton suggests that, despite some Labour discomfiture, electoral success in the poorest parts of the city could be achieved.⁷⁸

'Irish' Communities in Comparative Perspective

In St John's, Labour appeared to form a more productive alliance with the 'Irish' community, than had their Mancunian counterparts. Walsh, the locally prominent Irish Nationalist figure, gave public support to both Labour and Liberal. Both Parties appear to have largely respected Walsh's stance as an Independent Councillor, lending support to his successful campaigns against the common Tory foe in St John's.⁷⁹

In Leicester the 'Irish' community was, unusually, not centred within either of the city's slum wards. Here the 'Irish' vote was most heavily concentrated in St Margaret's ward, where Corah's hosiery factory was the main employer. The ward was closely contested and the Tories regularly played the religious card – pledging to "Train the children in the faith of their fathers" – thereby securing the public support of the local Catholic priest. Nonetheless, Labour remained confident of winning the majority of the Catholic vote, and more Labour candidates were returned for St Margaret's than any other ward in the city – nine between 1903 and 1913.⁸⁰

The 'Bye-Law' Wards

It was argued above that Labour strength in Manchester was overwhelmingly concentrated in wards away from the city centre, which enjoyed high proportions of 'bye-law' housing and the availability of more regular work. Were these patterns reflected in Leicester and Wolverhampton? Of Labour's five strongest wards in Leicester, four included extensive areas of newer terraced housing and little, or none, of the older overcrowded city centre stock.⁸¹ Within all five wards casual work was a much less prominent feature than in central Manchester. While there were no factories on the same scale as in east Manchester, relatively regular employment in small factory or workshop units and relatively high levels of trade union membership were features of these areas of Labour strength in Leicester.

Labour was considerably weaker in Wolverhampton than either Leicester or Manchester. Here Labour only defeated the Conservatives on six occasions between 1903 and 1913. Five of the six wins were concentrated in the two 'east end' iron industry wards of St George's and St Matthews.⁸² These two wards contained a great deal of poverty. However, there was little city centre slum housing and casual work probably featured less prominently than elsewhere. Despite the presence of heavy industry and a number of large factories, levels of trade union membership were reportedly low in the Wolverhampton iron trades.⁸³ This may in part account for the strength of the Liberal Party in these wards. Here it was the pro-Liberal East End Progressive Association, which did most to provide political leadership in the absence of strong labour organisation.⁸⁴

Conservatism Marginalised?

There is one further noteworthy common feature of the Edwardian municipal politics in these three centres. In working class wards that lay outside the slum districts, the Conservative Party

was becoming a marginal force. In Leicester only a single Conservative was elected in the four predominantly working class wards in the seven annual municipal elections before 1914.⁸⁵ This success was largely the result of close cooperation between Liberal and Labour in these wards aimed at avoiding any division of the 'progressive vote.' Seats in these four wards were shared in a ratio of two to one between Labour and Liberal. A similar alliance proved effective in Wolverhampton, although here the Liberals were the dominant partner. In the two 'east end' wards of St George's and St Matthew's, Liberal and Labour enjoyed a close collaboration – each allowed the other a free-run against the Tory in every election from 1897 to 1913. After 1904 the Conservatives won only a single election in these two 'east end' wards. This Conservative win occurred in 1912, a year in which the Conservatives won every contested seat in the city. The successful Tory candidate was a local employer and Director of Wolverhampton Wanderers.⁸⁶

Close collaboration between Liberal and Labour was a less prominent feature of politics in Manchester's respectable working class wards. Indeed, as suggested earlier, in some instances local Liberal and Conservative activists collaborated in an attempt to reverse Labour gains.⁸⁷ The fractured relations between Liberal and Labour in the Bradford and Openshaw wards may have contributed to the Conservative's ability to secure seats in these solidly working class wards as late as 1911 and 1912. Nonetheless, overall the trend towards Conservative exclusion from the wards where the 'respectable' working class predominated was as strong in Manchester as elsewhere. In six such wards in Manchester the Conservatives returned only seven councillors from a possible 46 between 1906 and 1913.⁸⁸

How does this comparative study help us understand the conditions in which Labour flourished? Extensive concentrations of terraced housing were a common feature of areas of Labour strength in each of our three centres.⁸⁹ In Manchester and Wolverhampton, Labour's strongest wards were to be found to the east, in heavy industrial areas relatively remote from the city centre. That geographical distance from the centre may have contributed to Labour's success. Labour markets differed from those of the city centre – casual work was less prevalent. It is also possible that spatial distance contributed to a social separateness in which the urban elite and their concerns were less influential. The development of a distinctively working class neighbourhood was also more likely in such locations.

Of greatest significance for Labour in these localities appears to have been the scale and effectiveness of local trade union organisation. This was particularly true where a significant number of workers from a single trade were concentrated within a political unit such as a ward, or, less commonly, a parliamentary constituency. The prominence of a particular trade or industry – and its associated trade union organisers – was much less likely in the economically diverse city centre. Effective trade union organisation allowed labour activists to demonstrate their worth to local communities. This provided a foundation upon which a subsequent political reputation was later built. That said, before 1914 by no means all local trade union activists were committed to Labour. Where they were not, Labour struggled. Union organisation in the light metal trades of Wolverhampton and among the carters of central Manchester illustrates the point.⁹⁰ Here local activists often associated with Toryism. Where effective local trade union organisation was

clearly associated with Labour politics – as amongst engineers in Gorton, and Openshaw, miners in Bradford and the boot and shoe and hosiery workers in Leicester – then the Party could build its local strongholds. Such areas were untypical before 1914, which suggests that Labour was not destined to expand inexorably in existing social and economic conditions.

Conclusion

Manchester was not among Labour's vanguard cities. The usual explanation for both Tory strength, and Labour weakness, has stressed Lancashire's particularly acute religious and ethnic tensions. To this should be added the sheer scale of 'slumdom' in Manchester, which increased the scope for popular Toryism and restricted the purchase of Labour across a majority of the city's working class districts. In comparison with other inland urban centres, slum housing and casual employment affected an unusually high proportion of Manchester's working class communities. In these conditions popular Conservatism flourished.

Labour in Manchester, on the other hand, prospered in very different circumstances. Labour found its best response among the terraced streets away from the city centre, where work was more regular, and crucially where labour organisations of all types could demonstrate their worth as defenders of working class welfare. Unsurprisingly perhaps, whether in Leicester, Wolverhampton or Manchester, Labour was at its strongest in the most proletarian – but not the poorest – parts of the city.⁹¹ Trade union activists were central to the success of the Labour Party in many localities. From this perspective the unions' most important contribution to the early Labour party lay, less in the provision of finance and candidates for the parliamentary party, and more in building a local politics in which the concerns of certain types of working class communities could be represented by Labour.

Of the three cities examined here, the relationship between social conditions and political behaviour was strongest in Manchester. It is important to stress that while certain social characteristics were commonly found in Labour wards, their presence was certainly no guarantee of success. Nevertheless, Labour found it considerably more difficult to establish itself as a serious political force in the absence of such social characteristics. This renewed emphasis on the significance of social and economic factors does not suggest that Labour's rise was somehow inevitable. Firstly, social factors were only one, permissive factor, among many in Labour's early rise. Secondly, the First World War transformed Labour's prospects at a number of levels. State intervention regularised the markets for both labour and housing, and most importantly it created a relationship between working class economic life and formal party politics which had not existed hitherto. Among other things, wartime inflation, food shortages and alleged profiteering, created a sense of grievance shared by slum dwellers and the more respectable working class alike. Wartime state intervention dramatically increased the purchase of Labour politics in inner-city communities where it had often seemed remote and irrelevant before 1914.⁹²

Notes

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1. P. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1971), esp. chs. 7-9; D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1990), pp.131-53; J. Hill, 'Manchester and Salford politics and the early development of the Independent Labour Party', *International Review of Social History*, XXIV, 1981, pp.172 & 198-200. R. McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924* (Oxford, 1974), p. 5. On Conservatism see: A. Kidd, *Manchester* (Keele, 2nd Edn 1996), pp.171-4. J. Walton, *Lancashire A Social History, 1558-1939* (Manchester, 1987), pp.259-63; P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics* (1980), ch.7.
2. Tanner, *Political Change*, pp.143-6; Hill, 'Manchester and Salford politics', pp.172 & 198-200. McKibbin, *Evolution*, p.5.
3. D. McHugh, 'The Labour Party in Manchester and Salford before the First World War: A Case of Unequal Development', *Manchester Region History Review*, 14 (2000), pp. 13-24.
4. Calculated from: *Manchester Courier* (hereafter *M.C.*), Nov. 1911, Nov. 1912, Nov. 1913; Manchester and Salford Blue Books, 1911-1913. The remaining eight seats were held by Independent candidates.
5. Calculated from: Manchester and Salford Blue Books, 1911-1913; *Stockport Advertiser*, 1911-1913.
6. J. Lawrence, 'Class and gender in the making of urban Toryism, 1880-1914', *English Historical Review*, 108 (1993), pp. 629-52. idem., *Speaking for the People. Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998), esp. ch.5. See also idem., 'The complexities of English Progressivism: a Midland Case study' *Midlands History*, XXIV (1999), pp.144-67.
7. Calculated from, *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 1911-1913.
8. Calculated from: T. Woodhouse, 'The working class' in D. Fraser (ed), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980), pp.360, 363; *Leicester Daily Post* (hereafter *L.D.P.*), 1911-1913.
9. On Bradford see K. Laybourn, 'The Bradford ILP and Trade Unionism c.1890-1914' in D. James, T. Jowitt and K. Laybourn (eds), *The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party* (Halifax, 1992), pp.154-5.
10. The victorious Labour candidates were: Hodge in Gorton, Kelly in Manchester South-West; Clynes in North-East; Wardle in Stockport.
11. For example in Stockport – a double member constituency – the single Liberal candidate urged his supporters to use their second vote for the single Labour candidate in opposition to the two Tories. Some 6,000 of Labour's total of 7,299 votes were split with the Liberal candidate. Clarke, *Lancashire*, pp.317-8, 435; D. Howell, *The Records of the Stockport Labour Party, 1896-1951. An Introduction* (Microfilm Published by EP Microform), pp.9-11.
12. Manchester Reference Library Archives (hereafter M.R.L.A.), Manchester Liberal Federation (hereafter M.L.F.) Minutes, 4 and 11 Jan. 1906.
13. Calculated from Manchester and Salford Blue Books, and *M.C.*, 1906-1913. Totals include by-elections.
14. Calculated from *Stockport Advertiser*, 1909-1913. Labour's sole victory was in Shaw Heath in 1911 – a seat subsequently won by Liberal and Conservative in 1912 and 1913. The two unopposed returns were in Reddish North in 1909 and 1912.
15. M.R.L.A., Lancashire and Cheshire Liberal Federation Minutes, 8 April 1910. Cited in Clarke, *Lancashire*, p.325. See also, D. Tanner, 'Elections, Statistics, and the rise of the Labour Party, 1906-1931', *Historical Journal*, 34, 4 (1991), pp.898-9.
16. Between 1906 and 1910 the Liberals only returned one councillor for the four seats in the constituency. Between 1910 and 1914, however, four Liberals were returned. Calculated from Manchester and Salford Blue Books, and *M.C.*, 1906-1913.
17. Clarke, *Lancashire*, pp.413, 424-6. H. Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910* (Aldershot, 2nd edn. 1994), p.245.
18. Total elected councillors per Party in 1913 were as follows. Manchester: Conservatives 57; Liberals 27. Stockport: Conservatives 35; Liberals 23. Salford: Conservatives 31; Liberals 11. Grand total: Conservatives 123; Liberals 61.
19. Tanner, *Political Change*, pp.124-9.
20. Clarke, *Lancashire*, ch.14.
21. In 1907 the local Conservative press gleefully trumpeted the fact that Churchill's Liberal constituency in Manchester was represented by seven Tory and one Liberal councillors: *M.C.*, 2 Nov. 1907.
22. Clarke, *Lancashire*, ch.11 and p.398; idem., 'The end of laissez-faire'.
23. See, Tanner, *Political Change*, pp.133-4, 149-50, on the Liberal Party's progressive municipal programme in Manchester.
24. For contributions to the debate over the popularity of welfare reform among working class communities see: H. Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (1968), pp.1-18; Clarke, *Lancashire*; P. Thane, 'Labour and local politics: radicalism, democracy and social reform, 1880-1914' in E. Biagini and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 244-70; idem., 'The Working Class and State "Welfare" in Britain, 1880-1914', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), pp.877-900; idem., 'The Labour Party and State "Welfare"' in K.D. Brown (ed.), *The First Labour Party, 1906-1914* (1985); J. Harris, 'Society and the State in Twentieth-century Britain' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950*, III (Cambridge, 1990), pp.63-70.
25. K.O. Morgan, 'The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour: the Welsh Experience', *Welsh Historical Review*, 6 (1973), pp.288-312; M. Pugh, 'Yorkshire and the New Liberalism?', *Journal of Modern History*, 50 (1978), pp.1139-55; A.W. Purdue, 'The Liberal and Labour Parties in North-East Politics, 1900-1914: the Struggle for Supremacy', *International Review of Social History*, 26 (1981), pp.1-24; G.L. Bernstein, 'Liberalism and the Progressive Alliance in the Constituencies, 1900-1914: Three Case Studies', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp.617-40; idem., *Liberalism and Liberal Politics in*

- Edwardian England* (1986); K. Laybourn and J. Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour, 1890-1918* (1984).
26. Tanner, *Political Change*, pp.156-7, ch.11.
 27. National Museum of Labour History Archive, Letter from J. Nuttall to Labour's National Organiser (hereafter Nuttall), 5 Nov. 1908 (LP/EL/08/1/113); *M.C.*, 2 Nov. 1908. It seems possible that Nuttall – an opponent of the 'progressive alliance' – exaggerated the scale of conflict between Labour and Liberal in his letter.
 28. M.L.F. Executive Committee Minutes, 20 Jan 1910; 20 June 1912; 9 July 1913; and 8 April 1914. Although Liberals in North-East Manchester repeatedly pressed for an Alternative Vote in Parliamentary elections, this was presented as a method of sustaining the 'progressive alliance'. In 1914 Liberal activists in Manchester East requested permission to stand a candidate at the forthcoming General Election. There is no indication that the request was granted. M.L.F. General Committee Minutes, 6 March 1914.
 29. For examples from the beginning and end of the period see: *M.C.*, 2 Nov. 1906 and 4 Feb. 1914.
 30. For an alternative view see: Lawrence, 'Complexities of English progressivism'.
 31. See, for example, M.L.F. Executive Committee Minutes, 9 July 1913.
 32. See N. Reid, 'Manchester and Salford ILP: A more controversial aspect of the pre-1914 era', *Bulletin of the North West Labour History Society*, 5 (1978), pp.25-31.
 33. Laybourn and Reynolds, *Liberalism*.
 34. In Leicester, Labour worked with the Liberals to keep the Tories from securing positions of power. See, for example, L.D.P., 10 Nov. 1909. In Wolverhampton the Conservatives only secured overall control for 2 years between 1906 and 1913; G. W. Jones, *Borough Politics: A Study of Wolverhampton Town Council, 1888-1964* (1969), pp.359-60.
 35. See, Lawrence, *Speaking*, esp. pp.144, 266. D. Tanner, 'Class voting and radical politics: the Liberal and Labour parties, 1910-1931' in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (eds.), *Party, State, and Society. Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), pp.106-30. J. Lawrence, 'The dynamics of urban politics, 1867-1914' in *ibid.*, pp.79-105.
 36. For a recent exception see, K.Laybourn, 'The rise of the Labour Party', *Modern History Review*, 10, 1 (1998), pp.22-4; *idem.*, 'The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism: The State of the Debate', *History*, 80, 259 (1995), pp.207-26.
 37. For a recent assault upon electoral sociology on this, and other, grounds see: Lawrence, 'Dynamics of Urban Politics'.
 38. Tanner, 'Elections, Statistics and the Rise of the Labour Party', pp.904-5. K.D. Wald, 'Class and the vote before the First World War', *British Journal of Political Science*, 8 (1978), pp.441-57.
 39. T.R. Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford* (Manchester), 1904. As a socialist and an active campaigner on housing issues, it is possible that Marr exaggerated the scale and extent of the housing problem. That said, contemporaries broadly accepted his findings, although his proposed remedies provoked greater debate.
 40. Kidd, *Manchester*, p.128.
 41. The municipal franchise included property owners with low value properties. These were mainly small shopkeepers who "in the wards which contained the town's main shopping area... could be a considerable municipal force." Tanner, *Political Change*, p.125.
 42. *M.C.*, 27 Oct. 1906; *Manchester Guardian* (hereafter *M.G.*), 2 Nov. 1906, 2 Nov. 1909.
 43. R. Rodger, *Housing in Britain 1780-1914* (1989), p.34.
 44. For example, James (or Jack) Sutton rose through the ranks of the local miners' union to become a councillor in Bradford ward and then MP for Manchester East in January 1910.
 45. See Fr. B. Seale, *The Moston Story* (Manchester, 1983), p.79.
 46. S. Fielding, 'A separate culture? Irish Catholics in working-class Manchester and Salford, c.1890-1939' in A. Davies and S. Fielding (eds), *Workers' Worlds. Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939* (Manchester, 1992), p.30.
 47. *M.C.*, 23 & 24.10.06; *M.G.*, 1 & 2.11.06; Nuttall, 5 Nov. 1908; *M.G.*, 2.11.10; Kidd, *Manchester*, pp.171-4.
 48. Between 1906 and 1913 St Mark's returned three Conservative, three Liberal and two Independent candidates. On the conduct of politics in the ward see: *M.C.*, 30 Oct. 1907, 1908, 1909 & 1913; *M.G.*, 30 Oct. 1913; Nuttall, 5 Nov. 1908.
 49. New Cross ward elected two councillors per year. Thus the ten slum wards had 88 seats available over the eight elections between 1906 and 1913.
 50. H.C.G. Matthew, R.I. McKibbin and J.A. Kay, 'The franchise factor in the rise of the Labour Party', *English Historical Review*, xci (1976), pp. 725, 729.
 51. Tanner, *Political Change*, p.110. See also, J. Davis, 'Slums and the Vote, 1867-90', *Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research*, lxiv, 153 (1991), pp.375-88. D. Englander, *Landlord and Tenant in Urban Britain 1838-1918* (Oxford, 1983), p.8.
 52. See, for example: *M.C.*, 23 Oct. 1906 and 1 Nov. 1911.
 53. On Manchester's Irish, see: S. Fielding, 'Irish politics in Manchester, 1890-1914', *International Review of Social History*, 33 (1988), pp.261-84; *idem.*, 'Separate Culture', pp.23-48; *idem.*, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England 1880-1939* (Buckingham, 1993).
 54. Clarke, *Lancashire*, pp.256-7; Fielding, 'Irish politics', pp.280-2.
 55. Fielding, 'Separate Culture', pp.27-8.
 56. *Idem.*, 'Irish politics', p.264. *Idem.*, 'Separate Culture', pp. 27-8.
 57. Clarke, *Lancashire*, p.256. In the 1906 municipal elections, the Catholic Federation established committee rooms on behalf of Tory candidates in Miles Platting, Harpurhey and Cheetham because they supported denominational schools, *M.C.*, 24 Oct. 1906. I have found no evidence of similar activity after 1910, although the Catholic Federation continued to make known its support for particular candidates as late as 1913, *M.G.*, 30 Oct. 1913.
 58. Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp.19-21.
 59. Fielding, 'Irish politics', p.281; *M.C.*, 1 Nov. 1910.

60. *Manchester City News*, 23 Oct. 1909; *M.C.*, 1 Nov. 1909.
61. *M.G.*, 27 Oct. 1910; *M.C.*, 1 Nov. 1910.
62. Fielding, 'Irish politics', pp.269-77.
63. *Ibid.*, pp.280-2.
64. Between 1910 and 1914 seats in the five 'Irish' wards were distributed as follows: Labour 5; Liberals 6; Conservatives 13.
65. See, for example, Clarke, *Lancashire*, pp.53-75, 261-6; Walton, *Lancashire A Social History*, pp.259-63; Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, ch.7. And on an earlier period N.Kirk, 'Ethnicity, Class and Popular Toryism, 1850-1870', in K.Lunn (ed), *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities* (Folkestone, 1980), pp.64-106.
66. Lawrence, *Speaking*, ch.5.
67. *Leicester Pioneer* (hereafter *L.P.*), 4 Nov. 1911. R.M. Pritchard, *Housing and the Spatial Structure of the City* (Cambridge, 1976), p.85. Jones, *Borough Politics*, p.80.
68. Wygggeston was the only one among a group of four predominantly working class wards in Leicester to return a Conservative after 1907. In St John's the Conservatives won all their contests with Labour throughout the Edwardian period with the single exception of a by-election in 1901. In contrast, over the same period, the Conservatives lost all but one of their contests with Labour in the 'East End' ironworker wards of St George's and St Matthews. For a contrasting view see Lawrence, *Speaking*, ch.6. For results and the occupations of candidates in Wygggeston, see *L.D.P.*, Oct. and Nov. 1903-1913. A Tory publican won one of three seats in Newton at the 1913 Board of Guardian's elections, *L.P.*, 12 April 1913.
69. *Wolverhampton Express and Star* (hereafter *W.E.&S.*), 18 Nov. 1897. Lawrence, *Speaking*, p.102.
70. For results and the occupations of candidates, see *L.D.P.*, Oct. and Nov. 1903-1913. A Tory publican won one of three seats in Newton at the 1913 Board of Guardian's elections, *L.P.*, 12 April 1913.
71. For municipal election results see, *L.D.P.* 1900-1913. In Wygggeston Labour won six seats, the Conservatives four, and the Liberals one between 1903 and 1913. Labour also made a clean sweep in the Guardian's elections in 1904 and 1913: *L.P.* 12 April 1913. Indeed, Bernstein describes Wygggeston as 'Labour's stronghold' when outlining the Party's performance in the 1904 Guardian elections; G.L. Bernstein, 'Liberalism and the progressive alliance', p.633. However, in municipal politics Labour proved more successful in both St Margaret's and Aylestone during our period. In Newton, Labour won two seats, the Conservatives one and the Liberals eight.
72. B. Lancaster, *Radicalism, Co-operation and Socialism. Leicester Working Class Politics 1860-1906* (Leicester, 1987), p.155 and ch. 11. The shoemakers union NUBSO organised approximately half the industry's workers in Leicester – an unusually high figure in the Edwardian period. Calculated from *ibid.*, pp.188 & 191.
73. On the extent of casual work in central Manchester see: Marr, *Housing Conditions*, ch.4; Kidd, *Manchester*, p.121.
74. Lawrence, *Speaking*, p.124.
75. *W.E.&S.*, Nov. 1900 to 1913.
76. *M.G.*, 2 Nov. 1907.
77. J. Ramsay MacDonald, *The Socialist Movement* (1912), p.93, cited in Fielding, 'Irish politics', p.283. *L.P.*, 4 Nov. 1911.
78. For a more general discussion of Labour attitudes to the poorest poor see, Lawrence, *Speaking*, pp.148-54.
79. *Ibid.* *W.E.&S.*, 3 Nov. 1913.
80. *L.P.*, 5 Nov. 1910; *L.D.P.*, 3 Nov. 1913. Labour won St Margaret's on nine occasions to the Conservative's two between 1903 and 1913.
81. These four were, St Margaret's, Latimer, Abbey and, the more mixed but nonetheless distant from the city centre, Aylestone. Labour's other relatively successful ward was Wygggeston a city centre slum ward, for which see above.
82. Labour won St George's in 1910 & 1913; and St Matthews in 1904, 1910, and 1913. The single exception was a narrow win in Blakenhall ward in 1911. Lawrence, *Speaking*, pp.127 and 135-6. St James', the third 'east end' ward, was situated in the Wolverhampton East constituency, most of which lay outside the city boundaries. In the municipal arena all three Parties largely ignored the wards in the East constituency.
83. Lawrence, *Speaking*, p.154. See also, Jones, *Borough Politics*, p.89.
84. R. A. Wright, 'Liberal party organisation and politics in Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton 1886-1914, with particular reference to the development of independent labour representation' (unpublished D. Phil., Birmingham, 1977), p.282. Lawrence, *Speaking*, p.132. Jones, *Borough Politics*, p.87.
85. The sole Tory was a 'drink' candidate in Wygggeston ward, *L.D.P.*, 25 Oct. 1904, 1907, 1910 & 1913.
86. *W.E.&S.*, 2 Nov. 1912.
87. Nuttall, 5 Nov. 1908. *M.C.*, 2 Nov. 1908.
88. The six wards were Blackley and Moston, Bradford, Gorton North and South, Openshaw and St Mark's. That is all the 'bye-law' wards (see Table 2) with the exception of Harpurhey due to the extensive slum area in Collyhurst. Of these seven Tory victories, three were the same individual returned for St Mark's in 1907, 1910 & 1913.
89. See, M. Savage and A. Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class 1840-1940* (1994), pp. 64-8, on the development of working class neighbourhoods in this period. Also J. Lawrence, 'The British Sense of Class', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, 2 (2000), p. 316, on terraced streets as the epitome of working class culture.
90. See Lawrence, *Speaking*, pp.104-10.
91. For a contrasting view see, *ibid.*, p.138.
92. T. Adams, 'Labour and the First World War: Economy, Politics and the Erosion of Local Peculiarity?' *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 10, 1 (1990), pp.23-47.